The Use of Images of Food and Drink in the Lyric Poems of Eustache Deschamps

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Abstract

This work is a literary study of the use of food and drink images in the French lyric poems of Eustache Deschamps, based on the edition of his complete works by the Marquis de Queux de Saint-Hilaire and Gaston Raynaud. Its first chapter considers the historical and social sources for such images, examining not only the physical realities of late medieval society, but also the attitudes to those realities which influenced their representation in lyric poetry. The second chapter surveys the varying uses of alimentary imagery in imaginative French literature to 1350, looking at both thematic and rhetorical possibilities. Thus, the first two chapters combine to form a background against which Deschamps's use of historical realism and literary convention can be studied, so that his particular achievements and innovations can be better assessed.

The remaining three chapters concentrate on food and drink in the works of Deschamps himself. Chapter Three discusses how alimentary images contribute to representations of society, sharpening depictions of broad social classes, of smaller social subgroups, of common human experience and of alien cultures. Chapter Four focuses on the implications of ingestion and digestion for the physical and moral individual. Chapter Five examines the rhetoric of food and drink, from their use as elements of proverbs to their role in allegorical satire, metaphor and general poetic structure.

An extended Conclusion sums up the range of Deschamps's food-and-drink poems, pointing to a poet who uses alimentary imagery to expand not just the boundaries of social documentation and satire, but also, and in particular, the boundaries of the genre of the fixed-form lyric. The Conclusion also considers the dual legacy of Deschamps: an expansion in poetic lexicons leading to the more intricate and subtle rhetoric of François Villon and of Charles d'Orléans; and a penchant for comprehensive enumeration leading to the alimentary hyper-abundance of some Renaissance literature.

Declaration

I declare that I have composed this thesis myself, and that the work documented in it is my own.
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personal support.
Of all the better-known late medieval French writers, Eustache Deschamps\(^1\) has consistently had one of the most intriguing, and frustrating, responses from modern critics. While the cults of Guillaume de Machaut and Christine de Pizan inspire among their supporters an ardour and a loyalty to rival the commitment of fourteenth- and fifteenth-century courtiers to the literary and ceremonial passions and fashions of their day, the cult of Deschamps has yet to find a quorum of founder members.

Robert Magnan has previously outlined some of the critical appraisals that have kept Deschamps thus marginalised in the view of readers.\(^2\) Overall, the poet has been attacked again and again, with his perceived fundamental flaws ranging from formal carelessness through lack of poetic grandeur, from conventionality through feigned subjectivity.

This thesis does not set out to negate these criticisms. Deschamps's work does present problems, and these are amplified by its transmission, for the most part, through one rather haphazardly-compiled workshop manuscript\(^3\) which has so far generated just one uneven nineteenth-century edition. I suspect, however, that one of the principal problems with the reception of Deschamps stems from his sheer proximity. Writing 1500\(^4\) pieces of superior quality,

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\(^1\) References to the works of Eustache Deschamps will be taken throughout this thesis from the Oeuvres complètes d'Eustache Deschamps, ed. the Marquis de Queux de Saint-Hilaire and Gaston Raynaud, Société des Anciens Textes Français (Paris: Firmin-Didot, 1878-1903), 11 vols.

\(^2\) Robert Magnan, Aspects of Senescence in the Work of Eustache Deschamps, doctoral thesis (University Microfilms International, 1985), pp. 2-5. In particular we might single out Gustave Cohen's identification of Deschamps as the "éternel précurseur imparfait", Eugène Crepet's judgement that "Ce n'est qu'exceptionnellement un poète, mais c'est au moins un chroniqueur morcelé", and Louis Petit de Julleville's consideration that "Deschamps, à vrai dire, n'est guère un poète [. . . ]; du moins n'est-il guère poétique."

\(^3\) Siméon Luce, in his "Note sur Raoul Tainguy, copiste des poésies d'Eustache Deschamps" (Oeuvres complètes d'Eustache Deschamps, II, pp. vii-xvi), stresses this scribe's particular tendency to interpolate pieces of his own inspiration into the works of others. Marie-Hélène Tesnière, in "Les manuscrits copiés par Raoul Tainguy" (Romania 107 [1986], pp. 282-368), is complimentary about the quality of Raoul Tainguy's production on the whole, but she identifies the principal Deschamps manuscript (Paris, B.N. ff 840) as one that is "copié sans soin, comme à la hâte" and "l'oeuvre d'au moins quatre copistes" under Tainguy's direction. The volume may well have been compiled after the poet's death (Tesnière, pp. 313-315); thus even this attempt at a comprehensive compilation was already most likely well removed from the poet's own influence.

\(^4\) 1500 is a fairly rough total, taking into account repetitions of certain pieces in the main manuscript and being cautious with regard to the "pièces attribuables" included by Raynaud in Volume X of the Oeuvres complètes. A straight count of all the pieces published in this edition (including the prose Art de dictier, Demonstraciones contre sortilèges, and Complainte de l'église, as well as 11 poems in Latin which will not be considered in this thesis) gives
including several of much more substantial length than the ordinary courtly lyric, would be a difficult challenge for anyone, and it is one which Deschamps fails to meet convincingly. Many of his works are uninspiring, whether to the romantic looking for sincerity in courtly rhetoric, the scholar looking for refinement of thought and expression, or the general reader seeking entertainment and too often finding it "tainted" with moralising didacticism. In other words, the poetry of Deschamps does not unfailingly attract any of its readers, and cannot be counted on to yield up flashes of clarification that confirm the consistency of literary history or affirm the kind of timeless writerly greatness attributed to certain giants of the medieval vernacular "canon".

On the whole, in fact, Deschamps defies summing up. No single analysis, and particularly no short paragraph in a condensed literary history, can take full account of his diversity as a writer. No single poem, of those regularly anthologised, can provide a glimpse of much more than a particular moment of the writer's creative career, let alone a realistic image of his life.

Still, there are aspects of Deschamps's work -- apparent preoccupations that emerge again and again -- that can help focus our understanding of this vast corpus. Magnan has studied the ideas of senescence that Deschamps develops; I propose to examine his uses of food and drink.

The poems that act as lures into such a subject stand out against the monotonous conventionality of much of Deschamps's work, for they are among the most vivid and amusing in all medieval literature. Who can help being intrigued by the poet's vigorous complaints against pork meat (1236), his more sardonic observations about the local penchant for mustard in Hainault and Brabant (780), or his solemn rhymed dietary advice on how to avoid the plague (in numerous poems: 708 and 1162 are two examples)? In all these cases, and in many others, food and/or drink provide images of dominant significance and impact. Yet there are also large numbers of poems in which an allusion to food or drink (or to hunger, gluttony, gourmandise or appetite) occurs only in passing, as if such allusions form a kind of sub-language with which the poet is especially at ease. Food and drink images might be assumed to belong in the category of realistic detail, but there are examples in which the alimentary allusion is anything but an injection of realism: where it is part of a metaphor or allegory, or where it derives from pure literary convention.

What is remarkable about Deschamps is that almost anywhere a food or drink allusion could be squeezed into a poem, he produces one. Fully one-fifth of his works -- some 300 separate pieces -- contain one or more references to food, drink or alimentation in a more general, often figurative, sense. In the history of imaginative French medieval literature, his poems stand out for

a total of 1579 items.
their richness in such allusions. It is not that other vernacular poets of the middle ages ignore such matters altogether. Few, however, before or after Deschamps, exploit the notion of man as cooking, eating and savouring creature with as much frequency and variety. Indeed, Deschamps is one of the chief legitimisers of the entry of concrete daily-life imagery into the fixed forms of the courtly lyric. The details he gleans from the world around him – which might be termed "anti-lyric" for their lack of obeisance to the rule of pure beauty and mellifluous sound – in fact help push the idea of lyricism toward our modern understanding of it, as essentially personal writing able to convey an "authentic" and thoroughly human response to the world. This is not to say that Deschamps should be read as autobiography. He celebrates the physical individual, yet not necessarily the real self. It is we, his distant readers, raised on the critical fruits of the Romantic revolution, who cannot stop seeking the man behind the verse.

If Deschamps's wide-ranging use of food and drink is largely new to lyric poetry, nonetheless his emphasis on the corporeal and the everyday makes him one of the quintessential representatives of his time. For the historian of the middle ages, the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries are marked by an especially strong interest in the physical realities of life, and Deschamps's apparently insatiable taste for the world of current events and popular ideas places him in the mainstream of this trend. Still, he is far more than the journalistic historian cum amateur versifier that critics have frequently seen behind many of his poems; he is a poet who happens to consider real life as good a raw material for fixed-form lyrics as any other, and who refines it and manipulates it according to the effect he wishes to produce.

This thesis will concentrate on Deschamps's shorter lyric pieces, though it will make reference to some less formal poems in rhymed couplets and will include a study of the Dit des IIII. offices. It will leave the Miroir de mariage relatively untouched. This is a great source of food and drink allusions, it is true, but most occur in rambling, encyclopaedic lists, as part of the standard or demanded "biens d'un ménage". Our main concern here is to explore the contributions of food and drink to more formal, often fixed-form, poems, in which their presence, especially as a focus, is striking and still quite unusual.

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The thesis is organised into two broad sections. Part I will deal with "preparations"; that is, the historical and literary background to Deschamps's use of food and drink. Chapter One will focus on the poet's raw ingredients: the nature, perceptions and implications of food and drink in late medieval history, society and religion. Chapter Two will look at recipes: the models for use of food and drink in literature which were established over previous centuries, and which Deschamps could imitate, modify, or replace with his own inventions. Part II -- the remaining three chapters -- will constitute a kind of menu, a study of the varied ways in which food and drink were used by Deschamps, with reference both to society and to the individual within it, and of the artistry, or rhetoric, that governed their presentation. Finally, the conclusion will compare Deschamps's use of food and drink to that of some poets of the generations after his, and consider its influence on literary developments of the Renaissance.

Poems by Deschamps will be identified throughout by the number assigned in the De Queux de Saint-Hilaire and Raynaud edition, along with specific line numbers, where appropriate. The following table will assist readers in locating poems within appropriate volumes:

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<tr>
<th>Volume</th>
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<tr>
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<td>IX</td>
<td>1498 (Le Miroir de Mariage)</td>
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<td>X</td>
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Part I
Preparations
Chapter One
A Poet's Raw Ingredients:
Food and Drink in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries

Many of Deschamps's most vivid food and drink images depend on the poet's talent for evoking the world around him. Like a good food critic or "lifestyle" writer today, he draws on his own experiences of diverse tastes, meals, drinking bouts and food habits as source material, sometimes for an entire poem. He observes the way others, individuals and groups, regard and even ingest their daily bread. Often he highlights the physical significance of food, as, for example, in his poems linking diet and health. Certainly he recognises and exploits the pure entertainment value of the alimentary anecdote.

In this direct approach to food and drink, Deschamps as poet is at his most distinct from his precursors in the realm of courtly lyric. Yet, in keeping with the prevailing literary climate of the time, food and drink also furnish Deschamps with images for moral states, allow him to venture into allegorical territory, give him ways of reflecting the creative process itself. If the adage "you are what you eat" had existed in medieval times, it would have had implications far wider than those of physical nutrition. Although Deschamps does exploit the link between food and physical health as lyric material, he also continues to develop more traditional associations between food and moral issues, such as freedom of mind, spiritual health, and human greed.

In his experience of society, then, Deschamps finds both substance for alimentary images and ways of using them. Before we look at these "ingredients" in detail, however, let us briefly address the question of why, in the poet's lifetime, such varied food and drink images are increasingly the material of lyric poetry. The impetus for any new creation is itself an important contributor to the final composition.

1. The Times

In our own century, the society in which Deschamps and his contemporaries lived and wrote has frequently been depicted, if not as a culture in a state of absolute decline and decadence,1 as a sort of historic cul-de-sac sandwiched between the High Middle Ages and the Renaissance.2 In the nineteenth century,

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on the other hand, it was often romantically viewed as a more perfect age in which aristocratic tradition still ruled. The rich illuminations of the period no doubt enticed our grandparents' generation to blur romance, epic and chronicles of widely differing periods together, and to see nobility, order and beauty as stable and dominating forces on all three throughout the middle ages.

Without blackening or brightening Deschamps's era to excess, we can certainly see his society as one in a progressive state of change, and his period as an essential generating force behind the Renaissance and the ages that followed. Michel Mollat presents it this way:

La fin du Moyen Age français a les traits de l'adolescence: les troubles, l'inquiétude, le besoin intense de sécurité, mais aussi l'enthousiasme, la recherche inlassable de l'équilibre. Huizinga a montré "l'automne" du Moyen Age; il eût pu, tout autant, parler d'un printemps.

Deschamps's own world view is often old and young at once, applying the weight of moral interpretation to everyday experience -- but also sometimes humanising and satirising such dark themes as war and political corruption.

The currents of change and innovation that typified late medieval French society have left us a number of concrete manifestations. This was a society

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3 Peter F. Dembowski, in "Chivalry, ideal and real in the narrative poetry of Jean Froissart," Medievalia et Humanistica n. s. 14 (1986), pp. 1-15, addresses the difficulties of post-medieval societies in coming to terms with the chivalric Weltanschauung of the late medieval world. There are two main possible attitudes, he writes: the romantic one common in the nineteenth century, which uses "idealized praise of chivalric values to condemn implicitly or explicitly some aspect of contemporary society", and the cynical view more prevalent now, which constitutes "a radical critique of chivalric values, with a concomitant, albeit usually tacit, comparison of these values to more contemporary virtues." Both attitudes demonstrate "a common preoccupation with contemporary individual and social values." In other words, they represent an almost inevitable but thoroughly anachronistic tendency to impose our own framework on late medieval society.

4 The proliferation of illustrated manuscripts from the fourteenth century onwards ensured that readers in modern times saw (and see) Arthurian, Biblical, Roman and other earlier historical figures mainly in late-medieval dress and settings. There was reciprocal influence between the subject matter of the painting and elements of everyday life of the painter: the former often romanticised the composition, whereas the latter concretised the story. From a distant vantage point, however, the "realism" of these images has tended to become the stock-in-trade of fairy tale-style illustrations, and it is hard for us to sift through and interpret the varied documentary and symbolic values they originally held. For a discussion of anachronism in medieval illuminations, see Nigel Thorpe, The Glory of the Page: Catalogue of an Exhibition of Medieval and Renaissance Illuminated Manuscripts from Glasgow University Library (London: Harvey Miller, 1987), p. 16, and Le Livre au moyen âge, ed. Jean Glenisson (Paris: CNRS, 1988), pp. 172-173.

that built to last, but with a new emphasis on civil architecture. Most of the oldest medieval town buildings still standing date to this time. Moreover, even those that have disappeared (often for reasons not of structural fragility but of war damage or changing tastes) were evidently beginning to show an increased orientation toward indoor, peaceable human activities, despite the disruptions of outside calamities.

Moving from physical structures to literary ones, we find that late medieval society was fascinated by its own immediate history. Various forms of vernacular history-writing had existed since the twelfth century. The fourteenth century, though, became the great age of a new type of chronicle, as exemplified by the Chroniques of Froissart:

Si je disoie: "ainsi et ainsi en avint en ce temps," sans ouvrir ne esclarcir la matere qui fut grande et grosse et orrible et bien taillie d'aler malmente; ce seroit cronique non pas historiee, et se m'en passeroi bien, se je vouloie; or ne m'en vueille pas passer que je n'esclarisse tout le fait ou cas que Dieu m'en a donne le sens, le temps, le memoire, et le loisir de cronissier et historier tout au long de la matiere.

Froissart sets out to cover a set of events within geographical, temporal and thematic limits -- "les grans merveilles et li biau fait d'armes, liquel sont avenu par les guerres de France et de l'Angleterre et des roiaulmes voisins" -- and affirms he will strive for some interpretation to go along with the

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6 Histoire de la vie privée, volume 2, ed. Georges Duby et al. (Paris: Seuil, 1985); Duby's preface, p. 10.

7 See, for example, the manuscript illustration -- and recently-excavated foundations -- of Charles V's library in the Louvre. A miniature from the frontispiece of the king's copy of the Policraticus by John of Salisbury (translated and illustrated in 1372) shows Charles himself seated in the library, which closely matches descriptions of its 1368 construction. (These descriptions are reported in James Westfall Thompson, The Medieval Library [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1939], p. 419.) We know that this was just one aspect of the domestically-oriented changes to the Louvre commissioned by the king. His architect, Raymond du Temple, also added new residential apartments, outside gardens, an aviary and a menagerie.

8 These include retellings of ancient history, pseudo-Turpin chronicles, "long-term" chronicles beginning in a shadowy, semi-legendary past but leading up to current events, universal histories beginning with the Creation and incorporating recent events as minor developments, memoirs focused on a limited personal adventure or on a biographical account of one life. See Diana R. Tyson, "Patronage of French vernacular history writers in the 12th and 13th centuries," Romania 100 (1979), pp. 180-222, and Peter Ainsworth, Jean Froissart and the Fabric of History (Oxford: Clarendon, 1990), pp. 23-32.


straightforward act of chronicling. Throughout, there is a strong sense of authorial presence, as in the chronicle of Jean le Bel (Froissart’s source for the years up to 1361) who himself based “his work exclusively on his own experience and eyewitness accounts.” To judge from the popularity of late medieval versions of the chronicle genre, modern European society was becoming a sort of prototype Time magazine culture, convinced of the significance of its own contemporary events and full of eagerness to record and read about them almost as they happened.

Nor was it only gritty realism that attracted readers. In contrast to modern journalistic pages, where social and ceremonial events are generally relegated to the back pages, ritual, pageantry, and set-piece battles and jousts are given pride of place. Literature -- as typified by the larger-than-life and symbolic acts of the old chansons de geste and romances -- was re-enacted by reality, in the extravagant banquets and tournaments of the period, which were then redocumented as literature. So the chronicle genre came to fill the need for a romantic escapism that was also, paradoxically, a confirmation of conservative values, and at the same time it assuaged the new and growing appetite for truthful recording.

With the chronicles came other forms of detailed records. Some of these,

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13 Ainsworth, Froissart, p. 10, sees such episodes as the Jousts of St. Inglevert as representative of Froissart’s “choréographic” style, “the necessary, pre-existent discursive infrastructure and foil against which or within which Froissart’s less obvious qualities as a writer usually express themselves.” It is interesting to note that in five out of six illustrated manuscripts of Froissart, these jousts are the subject of a miniature (Laurence Harf, lecture, ENS, 12/01/1989), despite the fact that the episode is of little importance in the unfolding of events.

14 One well-known example of this kind of interplay between the ceremonial aspects of life and literature is provided by the practice of swearing oaths on a bird served forth at a banquet. The bird itself was a symbol, usually of nobility, but occasionally of ignobility, around which was built up a ritual that combined collective resolution and individual expression, as each member of the company made a particular promise to be kept until the challenge facing the whole group were met. The earliest recorded historical episode of this kind took place in 1306, with the first literary one dating from ca. 1310 (Les Vœux du Paon of Jacques de Longuyon) but the apogee of the practice was reached at the Banquet du Faisan in Lille in 1454. See Georges Doutrepont, La Littérature française à la cour des ducs de Bourgogne (Paris: Champion, 1909), pp. 106-117; B. J. Whiting, “The Vows of the Heron,” Speculum XX (1945), pp. 261-278; and Agathe Lafortune-Martel, Fête noble en Bourgogne au quinzième siècle: le Banquet du Faisan (1454) - aspects politiques, sociaux et culturels (Montréal: Institut d’Etudes Médiévales, 1984).
such as state documents and official letters, had a clear practical function. Others, such as personal journals (the Journal d’un bourgeois de Paris is an example\textsuperscript{15}) were microcosmic reflections of the popularity of the chronicles; individuals who were only bit-players in history themselves began to consider that their perceptions of the events of their times, as observers rather than actors, might be worth writing down.

Manuscript illustrations began to feature images of real life with greater frequency and authenticity than ever before. Like the chronicles they often accompanied, they could depict dramatic incidents, daily routines, or lavish festivities and processions.

Both written and visual documents did not merely record: they informed. How to achieve moral uprightness had always been one of literature’s principal briefs, but now it told how to achieve physical well-being (with an interest in positive sensual pleasure that went far beyond questions of simple health) and social sparkle. Cookery books, from forming 4\% of book production in the thirteenth century, grew in popularity until they represented 30\% of book production in the second part of the fifteenth century.\textsuperscript{16} Most cookery books were originally produced mainly by and/or for the kitchens of aristocratic households, but their increasing circulation seems to indicate a much wider audience. Of course, not everyone could afford the spices or procure the skilled labour to produce many of the elaborate dishes described in, for instance, the Viandier of Taillevent, but any literate person could enjoy reading about food. Bruno Laurioux, from his study of cookery-book manuscripts, puts forward the suggestion that such literature might function as much as "livres à rêver" as it does as "livres de cuisine".\textsuperscript{17} By Villon’s time, "Taillevent" was certainly a household word, and its gastronomic vocabulary, too, may have become commonplace. Villon’s "Ballade des langues ennuyeuses", which the poet prefaces with the remark that Taillevent has no recipe for the preparation of such meat, nevertheless depends heavily on culinary terminology


\textsuperscript{16} Bruno Laurioux, "Entre savoir et pratiques: le livre de cuisine à la fin du moyen âge," Médiévales. Langue, Textes, Histoire (spring 1988), p. 60. Laurioux takes his evidence for the popularity of the genre from records of ownership, from the survival of large numbers of copies (despite their being increasingly available in cheaper, smaller formats) from the collation of cookery treatises with medical and agronomical treatises in practical multipurpose "handbooks", and from the indiscriminate use of the title of the Viandier de Taillevent whether or not the contents fit the bill, since this work was apparently sufficiently celebrated to guarantee sales of any volume bearing its name.

\textsuperscript{17} Ibid., pp. 68-69; see also Laurioux, "Les premiers livres de cuisine," L’Histoire 85 (1986), pp. 51-55.
for its grotesque imprecations. Gastronomic fantasy could thus become literary image; reader appetites for pleasure are skilfully made to serve poetic tastes for vivid images of invective.

Thus, late medieval society both created and used many kinds of monuments to the concrete aspects of life. There was a desire to possess reality, to integrate it into structure. Documentary records did not need to apply only to one's own expérience vécue to be of interest; their value was heightened by an evocation of luxury not immediately available to most people, or by a description of misery outside the direct experience of the majority. Reality was being drawn to serve as the material of imagination for people at all social levels.

The embracing of the outside world in this way reflects a significant shift in mentality from that of earlier medieval centuries. Auerbach, following Huizinga, sees the "creatural realism" of the closing middle ages as an essentially negative development, replacing individualism and philosophical thought with a pessimistic, crude obsession with physical existence. Yet he acknowledges the "spontaneous vigor of the sensory" which allowed creatural realism to supply "the Renaissance with a strongly counterbalancing factor against the forces working toward a separation of styles that grew out of the humanists' emulation of antiquity." I would suggest that the "spontaneous vigor of the sensory" does not necessarily go with an involuntary and despairing abandonment of all higher things; rather, it can be chosen for its honesty, its humour, its very everyday and universally human qualities. Deschamps's generation and those that followed, in at least some of their writing, make the everyday as worthy of literature as the grand themes and esoteric language of earlier periods. As for lack of "individualism" -- is not the individual physical response as worthy of consideration as the psychological one? In our era, after all, we are used to reading mental states through physical actions, and may find (for example) a straightforward exposition of a character's thoughts unchallenging and even importunate, since such a technique restricts our rights and freedoms of literary interpretation. This is not to say that Deschamps's poems of outward experience are necessarily revealing of the inner self: that tends to remain guarded, as with nearly all medieval poets. But physical images can tell us a great deal about the poetic

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process—its instruments and its goals.20

What is certain is that a change in apprehension of society (and its individual members) by society has left us with much more precise views of individual physical lives and specific circumstances than are evident in most previous medieval literature. Whether that shift was triggered by a dramatic combination of the cataclysmic events or by a simple evolution in social structures is hard to determine. Much has been made of the "calamitous fourteenth century",21 and it is true it was a time in which cycles of horrendous famine, war and disease, along with religious and social instability and upheaval, affected vast numbers of people. We shall be considering later the specific effects of such global conditions on perceptions of food and drink.

On the other hand, it may be that the new materialism stemmed less from a sudden shake-up of old values and an abrupt undermining of security than from a gradual re-alignment of medieval society. Joseph Polzer, for example, sees the obsession with physical mortality as "a byproduct of a remarkable late-medieval prosperity which gave rise to the growth of towns and the democratization of religious devotion."22 People were simply more frequently surrounded by the trappings of an urban existence, including huge graveyards and hospitals. Polzer points out that the Pisan "Triumph of Death" precedes the plague by nearly two centuries; the iconography of physical decay originated with urbanisation, not with the agonising and unprecedented effects of the Black Death.

Images and ideas involving food, drink, and consumption -- extensions of the organic living body -- whether in secular or sacred contexts, are likewise very much in keeping with society's movement toward a more humanity-centred view of the universe. But what of their presence in lyric poetry, particularly that of Deschamps? The fixed-form lyric was, as we shall see in the next chapter, an especially startling framework for such new alimentary realism. Deschamps


21 In particular, in Barbara Tuchman's popular study, A Distant Mirror (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1978).

himself, in his *Art de dictier*, gives only quite roundabout clues as to the reasons for his choice of subject matter. Basically, he makes it clear that the primary concern of the poet ought to be creating "musique naturele", which, like its "artificie" counterpart (that is, sung or played music) is essentially a healing and restoring force:

Musique est la derreniere science ainsis comme la medicine des VII. ars; car quant le couraige et l'esprit des creatures ententives aux autres ars dessus declairez sont lassiez et ennuyeiez de leurs labours, musique... leur chante... tant que par sa melodie delectable les cuers et esperis de ceuls qui aux diz ars, par pensee, imagination et labours de bras estoient travaillez, pesans et ennuyeiez, sont medicinez et recreiez, et plus habiles apres a estudier et labourer aux autres VI. ars dessus nommez.

That it should provide a break from study, an entertainment that at the same time strengthens its audience for a return to more arduous labours, is all that is asked of this "music". Deschamps’s guidelines for composing poems, which follow, are nearly all concerned with sound and form. His only mention of suitable subject matter occurs at pages 270-271, when he airily affirms: "Et ja soit que ceste musique naturele se face de volonté amoureuse a la louenge des dames, et en autres manieres, selon les materes et le sentement de ceuls qui en ceste musique s'appliquent..." In other words, the person who has the gift of being able to compose poetry is entitled to rhyme on any theme, using whichever images he likes. (The reference to love poetry appears to be a sop to tradition, but is certainly no indication of the varied nature of the predilections Deschamps himself will show.)

For Deschamps, then, there are no limits, other than formal and aural ones, on the material of poetry. He sees no reason to set up barriers against the flood of experiential images provided by his times. If life is integrated into poetry, then poetry becomes an equally natural element of life. A lyric poem should be able to be as full of realism as any other artistic, scientific or historical work of the day, and as able to offer instant recognition to its

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24 *Ibid.*, p. 269. The omitted sections of this passage refer specifically to melodic music; yet Deschamps makes no separate claim for the purpose of his "natural" music, and we can assume that the object of both varieties is one and the same.

25 He does mention later (p. 281) that Serventois are normally about the Virgin Mary or other divine subjects, but adds that as these do not constitute a noble genre, he will give no examples.
audiences.26
The years surrounding Deschamps’s lifetime thus saw a re-evaluation of life, and a re-evaluation of art. Nevertheless, the turbulent times yielded responses that were far from uniform. Let us turn now to a second raw ingredient for the use of food and drink in literature: possible perspectives on the changing outside world.

2. Alternatives of Interpretation

As we have seen, late medieval society appeared to have a collective desire for self-documentation. Many of the records it has left us best match the chronicle template; they give us “facts” or details that allow us to follow their authors’ understanding of the world around them. Yet, as with even the most factual news reports today, such documentation cannot act as a direct mirror to events. There is always a strong element of reaction involved in creating the image.

More extremely, this response may take the form of a partial or complete denial of the world of actualité. Dominique Boutet and Armand Strubel point out that the pressures of events in the late middle ages could lead to two main interpretive positions: that of evasion or “dream”, and that of lucid awareness of the outside world, leading to action.27 There could also be approaches between the two alternatives: for example, acceptance of a limited segment of the real world, which could then be tailored to the demands of the literary construct.

Lyric poetry, no matter what its subject matter, always has a strong capacity to work on a level beyond -- or perhaps within -- what is (literally) matter of fact. Images and details, including those related to food and drink, are made to underline moral and political points, to sketch characters, to add affective nuances. . . the list of functions is long. Lyric poets of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries are in effect verbal miniaturists, working within the confines not of a partly-filled manuscript page, but of a poetic fixed form. Just as manuscript illustrators might orient their illumination toward a given primary function -- ceremonial, dramatic -- so poets choose a

26 However, as Dieter Ingenschay notes in “La rhétorique et le monde quotidien chez Eustache Deschamps” in Du Mot au texte. Actes du IIIème Colloque International sur le Moyen Français, Dusseldorf, 17-19 Sept. 1980 (Tübingen: Gunter Narr, 1982), p. 259, Deschamps does not choose images randomly, but in accordance with some pre-existent literary principle: contextualisation of a proverb, praise of the lady, “carnavalisation”. Deschamps’s literary antecedents will form the subject of the next chapter.

general thrust — moral, didactic, invective, anecdotal, and so on — for each short lyric. But words are their colours, and words to do with food and drink, representing primary human concerns, have particular evocative value.

The variety of uses to which Deschamps puts food and drink derives in part from the uniqueness of his poetic stance. It is easiest to define this stance by taking a single subject (albeit a non-food one), the plague of 1349, and examining how Deschamps's perception and presentation of it differs from those of two writers whose careers overlapped with his.

Guillaume de Machaut, in his *Jugement du Roi de Navarre*, typifies the "writerly" approach to the outside world. All the events are presented, yet the literary construct dominates. There is an impression of retreat at several points in the poem. While the body of the work consists of an evasion into the hypothetical world of the *jeu-parti*-type debate, the frame describes the poet's literal retreat from the plague:

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Je ne fui mie si hardis
Que moust ne fusse acouardis.
Car tuit li plus hardi trambloient
De pâour de mort qu'il avoient.
Si que trés bien me confessay
De tous les pechiez que fais ay,
Et me mis en estat de grace
Pour recevoir mort en la place,
S'il pleust a Nostre Signeur.
Si qu'en doubtance et en cremeur
Dedens ma maison m'enfermay
Et en ma pensee fermay
Fernement que n'en partiroie
Jusques a tant que je saroie
A quel fin ce porroit venir . . .
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(433-447)

Here, in fact, is a double gesture of self-enclosure: within the house, and within the poet's own thought. (As well, of course, he has already set himself "apart" from the human world by putting himself in a state of grace, prepared to face death if necessary.) Moreover, the historical material itself is internalised. Machaut presents the events of 1349 in an order that is

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29 Jacqueline Cerquiglini, in Guillaume de Machaut et l'écriture au XIVe siècle (Geneva/Paris: Slatkine, 1985), p. 165, discusses Machaut's general use of the outside world, with its "crise des signes", as a backdrop for "la question amoureuse": "L'originalité de Machaut est de rabattre l'ensemble de ces problèmes très présents chez lui sur la question amoureuse. Il maintient, par là même, la fiction de l'éthique courtoise de l'époque précédente, tout en la sapant par cette mise en contexte. Ainsi, la crise des rapports sociaux s'évoque dans la personne du poète; de plus, l'émeute du désir qu'il connait est perçue par lui comme un écho, au niveau du microcosme humain, de l'émeute sociale et cosmique."
emotional, not chronological: he begins with natural portents (an eclipse, a rain of blood, earthquakes), then describes the devastations of war, then the alleged poisoning of wells by the Jews and the massacres with which the Christians retaliated, then the grotesque behaviour of the Flagellants. The plague does not arrive until Nature has entered the fray, causing first frightful storms, and then pestilence; finally, it is God who unleashes death upon the world. Thus, Machaut has replaced all temporal, historical logic with the logic of poetry, building cataclysm upon cataclysm till the climax is reached. He uses the outside world only to illumine the inner world of morality, meditation, and pure emotion. He is, as Michel Zink has termed it, "celui qui ferme les fenêtres."30

Froissart, on the other hand, with his Chroniques, exemplifies a very different kind of apprehension of reality. Whereas his source, Jean le Bel, gives the events surrounding the plague in their historical order, linked by causal relationships (plague - Flagellants - massacre of the Jews), Froissart adjusts his account to increase the emphasis on human action. He begins with the Flagellants, and not until he has devoted an entire paragraph to their acts of penitence does he explain why they appeared:

Si fu ceste cose commencié par grant humilité, et pour prier à Nostre Signeur qu'il vosist reffraindre son ire et cesser ses verges; car en ce temps, par tout le monde generalment, une maladie, que on claime epydimie, couroit: dont bien la tierce partie dou monde morut.31

Thus, he deals with the Black Death in one (at most two32) sentences. When he goes on to speak of the slaughter of the Jews, it is without establishing any connection with their designated role as scapegoats in the reaction to the epidemic. In this instance, then, Froissart keeps notions of divine punishment and human blame well out of his account. He is concerned with the observation and recording of human, political history. He is, again in Zink's words, "celui qui ouvre les fenêtres."

It might be argued that the above variations in approach are partially dictated by genre, that the two writers have very different goals in mind and that these are reflected in their respective choices of verse and prose. However, Machaut's writing remains largely focussed on a closed-in world over the full range of his work, whether it is a question of courtly lyric or the more innovative and extensive Voir dit. Froissart, on the other hand,

30 Zink, lecture, 8/11/88.


32 In the Rome rédaction. See Froissart, Chroniques: Début du premier livre, ed. George Diller (Geneva: Droz, 1972), p. 894, where there is a reference to the swellings that were symptoms of the plague.
demonstrates that he can be as much at ease with the conventions of courtly lyric as with the more outward-looking chronicle genre. Still, within individual works of both Machaut and Froissart, there is a will to separate the outer world of events from the inner one of lyric interpretation, or at least to keep one clearly dominant over the other.\textsuperscript{33}

With Deschamps, however, neither perspective nor style nor theme appears to be limited by form. He is a kind of Janus figure with regard to late medieval literary history, incorporating both the traditional taste for courtly rhetoric and the "modern" one for actualité into the genre of the fixed-form lyric. At court, he says in one ballade, it is wisest "D'avoir . . . un piè hors et l'autre ens" (208, refrain). Though he revises this position elsewhere (1104, refrain) when he has become even more thoroughly disillusioned with court life, the split perspective summed up in the above line is quite reasonably applicable to his work as a whole. Deschamps is privy to a number of "closed" worlds: that of the royal administration, that of royal and ducal families, that of the kitchen, that of the drinking society, that of the typical gentleman's household. In addition, he often chooses to write within the confines of courtly convention. Many of his poems are love lyrics or ballades "de moralitez" which conform to the literary clichés of his day. All

\textsuperscript{33} Froissart's pastourelles do show an unusual interest in reproducing realistic peasant dialogue. Still, they are primarily concerned with encoding actual historical situations, mostly faits divers from courtly circles, into what remains essentially a literary construct. The peasant settings are thus an artificial pretext for topical comment; these poems appear to the reader not as a slice of life, but as a witty puzzle to be solved. See introduction and pastourelles in Jean Froissart, The Lyric Poems of Jean Froissart, ed. Rob Roy McGregor, Jr. (Chapel Hill: North Carolina Studies in the Romance Languages and Literatures 143, 1975).

\textsuperscript{34} The second ballade actually incorporates the refrain of the first partway through its opening stanza:

\begin{verbatim}
Il fut un temps qu'a la court frequenter
N'estoit que bon, et d'y tenir son corps,
Pour vir honneur, pour vaillance hanter,
Oir les bons qui gouvernoient lors
Aprandre d'eux et estre aux vertus fors,
Mais assez tost aprés changa li temps,
Qu'avoir a court un pie hors et l'autre ens
Fut le meilleur, et d'y scavor du hont;
Mais au jour d'uy je voy que c'est grant sens
D'avoir deux piez de tois poins hors de court.
(1-10)
\end{verbatim}

So it is that Deschamps presents appropriate responses to court set into a stylised continuum of historical time, with the modern situation of the prospective courtier being unreservedly negative. Nevertheless, the relationship of the individual to the courtly milieu is still a matter of choice; if anything, the decadence of the times forces a more clear-eyed awareness of all the court's attractions and dangers.
these continue more or less unchanged against the background of political and natural upheaval that coloured the poet’s time. But Deschamps is outward looking as well: he fights in armies in Flanders, endures uncomfortable diplomatic travel through Hungary, Lombardy and Bohemia, witnesses and suffers from the ravages of the routiers, enjoys the vibrancy of Paris—and uses all these experiences as grist for the writer’s mill. He is the one who both opens and closes the windows. In the rondeau that purports to be written while he was suffering from the plague (647), his handling of the subject of the epidemic seems to combine the opposite approaches of Machaut and Froissart. Like his poetic master, he shuts himself into his room, more out of fear than out of public spirit:

Je n’ose de ma chambre partir<br>Pour la bosse qui m’est venue en l’aïne . . .

(1-2)

But he will not give up contact with the outside world; if he cannot be in it, he wants it brought to him:

De vo vin blanc me vueilliez repartir . . .

(3)

Nor will just any wine do; he wants

. . . du plus vert, ou seray martir.

(5)

Green or young wine was not only considered the healthiest drink, but also the most prized in terms of flavour, being unaffected by the risks of unstable conservation and unscrupulous adulteration.35

Thus, Deschamps closely observes the offerings of concrete reality. Then, he either makes reality itself the main material of lyric, or draws details from it to intensify the colours of a poem belonging to an enclosed rhetorical space.

The retreat from the world in rondeau 647 is, however, not a writerly one. This act of enclosure in Deschamps does not of itself lead to a more reflective, self-contained style of poetry. In fact, the paradox of Deschamps’s writing is that he is most vigo_rous, most personal, when he takes on the untamed outside world. The closed worlds of courtly life can provide him with material for sensational exposés — but they can also lead him into a tangled web of turgid moralising and insincere but traditional sentiment. The broader world of

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general human experience, on the other hand, almost always provides him with a means of expressing fresh, individual thought. The overall impression is that with Deschamps it is not a question of just completely "poeticising" real experience, nor of keeping it as objectively neutral as possible. What matters is the cross-draught. His poetic persona delights in laying the private world of the court before a wider public, and also in bringing some of the voices of the people before courtly audiences. The fascination of humanity, for Deschamps, is not just in man's interaction with history, but in his relationship to his fellows, within the enormously varied contexts supplied by the status quo.

Times were complex and uncertain, and several approaches to their interpretation were possible. Yet food and drink, constant necessities, were increasingly allowed to be a centre of interest. We turn now to an examination of their nature and value in late medieval society.

3. Food in Society

3.1 Questions of Taste

It has often been implied, or stated outright, that medieval diners cared little about the taste of what they ate.36 This conclusion is based on two observations. First, descriptions of medieval banquets often concentrate on the spectacular lineup of entremets or the details of service and presentation, making little or no mention of food. Second, the idea of flavours produced from medieval recipes may strike us as odd and unappealing: most modern Western cooks will shy away from a Brewet of Stag Testicles, or spiced eel custard tarts with "a lot of sugar" on top.37 Even more innocuous-sounding dishes such as roast crane and heron were notably tough and indigestible.38

Both observations are in fact misleading. The "ignoring" of food is a reflection more of convention than of taste. This procedure has roots in a rhetorical tradition present in vernacular literature from the earliest

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37 Le Viandier de Taillevent, ed. Terence Scully (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 1988), items 193 and 194, p. 246; see also Scully's translation, p. 300.

38 Joop Witteveen, "Swans, Cranes and Herons," Petits Propos Culinaires 24 (November 1986), 25 (March 1987), p. 54, and 26 (November 1987), p. 66. Apparently, swans were a delicacy; both cranes and herons needed special preparation to be enjoyable, though.
romances: that detailed menus may not be given because "too long a list would bore you", because "the magnificence of the feast defies description", and so on. Froissart adopts this topos for his description of the banquet in honour of Isabeau de Bavière's entry into Paris. He gives a lot of attention to non-edible detail: the furnishings of the table and dressoir, the crowd, the seating order, the programme of entremets. Food, however, is dismissed within one sentence: "Des mets qui étaient grands et notables, ne vous ai-je que faire de tenir compte..." By taking the emphasis from the dishes served to the ceremony surrounding the meal, the chroniclers imitate in their descriptions of real life the literary techniques used to imply a magnificence limited only by imagination.

That feast descriptions are rare in the chronicles does not mean that those same feasts were not keenly observed from other angles. Froissart's "foodless" description of the coronation banquet of Henry IV is completed by a detailed menu in an anonymous manuscript. A very negative account of the banquet following Henry VI's entry into Paris in the Journal d'un bourgeois de Paris shows that high expectations of feast-fare could be dashed, and that there was plenty of grumbling when they were:

Item, ilz furent si mal servis que personne nulle ne s'en louoit; car le plus de la viande, esprêchement pour le commun, estoit cuite le jeudy de devant, qui moult sembloit estrange aux François, car les Anglois estoient chefs de la besogne, et ne leur challoit quel honneur il y eust, mais qu'ils en fussent delivrés. Et vrayment oncques personne ne s'en loua, mesmement les malades de l'Hôpital-Dieu disoient que oncques si pouvre ne si nu relief de tout bien ilz ne virent à Paris.

This passage alone is enough to refute the notion people in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries were indifferent to questions of gastronomy. Not only do they complain about the food, they blame its poor quality on the English. It seems likely that ethnocentric criticism of English food habits was already becoming a widespread practice in French society by this time.

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41 Ibid., vol. 16, pp. 208-209.


As to the criticism of medieval cuisine on the evidence of surviving recipes, this stems partly from certain misconceptions, and partly from a post-culinary-revolution vantage point from which we, in the twentieth century, cannot shake ourselves free. A standard modern view of the principal characteristics of medieval cooking, outlined by Marianne Mulon, can be summarised thus:

1. abuse of spices
2. mixing of multiple flavours - sweet, salt, sour
3. use of a variety of multiple cooking methods (no longer the standard boil/fry progression of Apicius)
4. meat-centred menus.44

It goes without saying that the practice of most of these features was restricted to wealthy or noble households. But the dishes produced through such ingredients and methods would, in Mulon’s view, have represented a late medieval gastronomic ideal. Yet were medieval eating habits really so cleanly set apart from our own?

The question of the "abuse of spices" is one no contemporary culinary historian has left unconsidered. Spices form a large percentage of the ingredients in almost any medieval recipe. Opinions on the quantity in which they were used, however, are extremely varied.45 The only estimate I could offer to add to theories already developed would be based on a wedding-dinner shopping list in the Menagier de Paris, in which over two pounds of mixed spices are to be bought for a total of about sixty servings, a lavish amount indeed; but the author adds that "petit demoura d’espices", and there is nothing to say that some of these spices might not have been used as part of the "desserte" course, to nibble along with hypocras.46 Terence Scully argues that speculation on quantities of spices can only be just that. Amounts given in most recipes are quite vague, and we rarely know exactly how many mouths were meant to be fed.47


45 W. E. Mead, in The English Medieval Feast (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1967) and A. Franklin, in La Vie privée d’autrefois (Paris: Plon 1888-1891) suggest that spices were used in enormous quantities; Constance Heiatt and Sharon Butler, in Curve on Inglvsch EETS S.S. 8 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), that they were added in amounts similar to modern ones; while Bruno Laurioux, in "De l'usage des épices dans l'alimentation médiévale," Médiévales 5 (November, 1983) proposes quantities considerably larger than what we are used to, basing this conclusion on one fifteenth-century feast in Auvergne.


47 Le Viandier, pp. 309-311.
Whether or not the quantity of spices was excessive, their presence in medieval food and drink was highly significant. First, they were thought to produce therapeutic effects. According to the Galenic theory of humours, all foodstuffs were defined by two out of four possible qualities: hot, cold, moist or dry. One ate to compensate for any imbalances in one’s own body, the ideal human condition being warm and moist. If a person became feverish, for example, the natural balance was upset, and his condition turned hot and dry. Fruit, which was cold and wet, and thought unhealthy under most circumstances, could help in this situation.49

Spices played an important role in adjusting the balance of foods before they were eaten. Any dish considered indigestible because of its inherent properties (the crocchar of boiled beef, pork and mutton, all thought cold, were the most common of these) could be rendered more acceptable through spicing, in the form of a sprinkling of poudre (mixed spice), or a particular sauce.50 Curiously, truffles, which by the eighteenth century were generally believed to have the strong heating effects of an aphrodisiac,51 in the middle ages were thought cold and moist, requiring a heating sauce or condiment to be healthily edible.52 They were, however, already a delicacy at court, with an evidently ambivalent image (see Deschamps, II, 215). It is perhaps more than a coincidence how often Galenic theory came to reinforce class distinction. The commonest meats were thought hard to digest, but domestic and rarer game birds by themselves were mostly viewed as congenially close to the human condition.53

Spices, along with herbs, also had their medicinal or magic uses. Marjoram, for example, was supposed to clear iron (from weapon wounds) from the body; cloves were something of a panacea — an aphrodisiac, and, through their scent,

48 Lorna Sass, in "The preference for sweets, spices and almond milk in late medieval English cuisine," Food in Perspective, ed. A. Fenton and Trefor McOwen (Edinburgh: John Donald, 1981), pp. 253-260, follows a similar approach to the one below in her discussion of the purposes of spices. These are categorised as medical, religious or political.


51 Brillat-Savarin, La Physiologie du goût (Flammarion, 1982), pp. 100-104.

52 "Platine", "L’Huitre et la truffe," L’Histoire 7 (May 1978), pp. 106-107. The author points out that pre-eighteenth-century truffles were probably not the same variety as those eaten today.

a preventative substance to carry against the plague. The latter could also be used in a mixture to relieve shortness of breath. Cumin was thought to ease stomach cramps, and, in common with saffron, it could be used in a poultice to cure red (or blackened) eyes. Cardamom was used in anti-emetic preparations.

The religious year gave spices another of their functions, since they were among few luxury products that were not forbidden over Lent and fast-days. While their use could not be completely reconciled with the ideals of self-denial that underlay Lenten practices, it could boost what was perceived to be a depressing meal of fish and vegetables into the gourmet category. One of the fish-day menus in the Menagier de Paris includes "anguilles renversées", for which a recipe appears later in the book: the instructions call for the eels to be cooked in red wine, flavoured with ginger, cinnamon, cloves, cardamom and nutmeg, and garnished with more wine, verjuice and vinegar. Most of the other meatless dishes on this menu could be prepared with spices as well. Evidently, for complaints about Lenten diets to be convincing, they had to depart from the lowest common denominator, the mass of society for whom no expensive seasonings were available to break the monotony of dried, salt fish.

In addition to all this, the claims of Saussière, in Deschamps's Dit des offices, confirm that just as today spices were appreciated not only as luxury products, but for the flavours they provided:

La cuisine vaudroit petit
Se ne lui donnoye appetit
Par les divers gousts que je fais.

(1360, 355-357)

The third important function of spices, however, had little to do with taste or health. Because most spices remained relatively costly throughout the middle ages, their use was a sure sign of wealth. In the codified ethic of chivalry that lasted to the end of the middle ages, liberality remained a quality to be admired in nobles; thus, giving the most lavish feast possible

55 Aldebrandino of Siena, p. 185.
56 Ibid., pp. 186-187.
57 Ibid., p. 188.
59 Menagier, pp. 182 and 234.
brought honour to the host as much as to the guests. Spices formed a significant part of the special provision made for Jean le Bon during his captivity in England. His dishes were seasoned with sugar, ginger, aniseed, mace, cinnamon flower, cloves, cubeb, spikenard, cinnamon, galangale, cardamom, nutmeg, and three kinds of pepper – whereas those of his entourage were flavoured only with garden substances such as garlic, verjuice, and occasionally herbs and mustard.60 Indeed, the use of spices and status were closely linked, so much so that external controls had sometimes to be applied when a person displayed a culinary ostentation thought to be unfitting to his station.61 Peasants who stray even accidentally into contact with spices are ridiculed in the fabliaux;62 their proper foods ought to be only of the simplest kind. Clerics, small merchants and urban poor should aspire no further than to the use of round pepper. Wealthier bourgeois and small gentry could enjoy an additional layer of privilege: ginger, cinnamon, saffron and cloves formed the essentials of their spice cupboards,63 though for Deschamps the list also includes cardamom, bay leaves and long pepper (Miroir de mariage, 1373-1375).

Spices, then, had both physical uses and psychological ones. They were bringers and assurers of health, variety -- and power.

The unfamiliar mixing of flavours that forms the second distinctive feature of late medieval cuisine stems not only from spices used, but from their combination with other products. A recipe for saraginee in the very early Enseignemenz involves a blending of sweet, sour and salty tastes. The eels are cut into chunks, salted and fried, then boiled along with breadcrumbs, sugar, wine and verjuice, and finally seasoned with cinnamon, spikenard, cloves and vinegar.64 Before we take this recipe as an absolute confirmation of the wall between modern and medieval taste, we might consider the sum of its ingredients more closely. The taste of such a dish would undoubtedly have resembled some Middle Eastern preparations still eaten, or perhaps Indian chutney;65 and we must bear in mind that the culinary innovations brought back by the Crusaders from the Arab world continued to influence European cooking for a long time. Even the name of this dish evokes the Saracen world, the land of an enemy both

60 Bruno Laurioux, "De l'usage des épices . . .", p. 29.


63 For a full discussion of spice and class, see Laurioux, "De l'usage des épices . . .", p. 29.


65 Mennell, pp. 53-54.
formidable and admired. Tastes did evolve over subsequent centuries, and the *brouet sarrasinois* in manuscripts of the *Viandier* has slightly changed spices and omits the sugar. In fact, in French cooking, sweetening in "savoury" dishes seems to have been reserved more and more for invalid preparations and the occasional elaborate *entremets*.

Even without the sugar, medieval food tended to have a complexity of flavours that we rarely see. Although garnishes were meant to have a modifying effect on the properties of a given dish, it was rare for only one condiment to be thought appropriate to one meat. A heating effect might be added by spices; it might also be provided by garlic or onions. There is an openness in medieval cuisine that corresponds to some aspects of medieval literature: in a period before the compulsion rigidly to separate tragedy and comedy from each other, there was no need, either, to separate cheese from figs, or eels from sugar.

The greater the variety of ingredients, the richer the outcome—a philosophy as applicable to Deschamps's corpus as to any banquet.

The multiple cooking methods so often required by one recipe reflect the essentially aristocratic origins of the medieval cookery books that are still available to us. Cooking was a fundamental sign of a culture's self-imposition on nature; therefore, the more times and ways an item was cooked, the stronger the degree of control asserted. In the *Menagier de Paris*, at least one recipe is explicitly eschewed for its complexity, inappropriate to a bourgeois table:

> 364. Poules farcies coulourees ou dorees. Elles sont *primo* soufflees et toute la char dedans ostee, puis remplyes d'autre char, puis

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67 *Viandier*, p. 147.

68 The same was less true of English cooking, which tends to make much more frequent use of sugar throughout the medieval period, and indeed up to the present day, according to one French historian. Jean-Louis Flandrin, in "Internationalisme, nationalisme et régionalisme dans la cuisine des XIVe et XVe siècles," *Manger et boire au moyen âge*, discusses general national characteristics, taking "blanc manger" as his test case; writing as "Platine" in "Variations franco-britanniques," *L'Histoire* (5 October 1978), he submits that the English were less restricted than the French in their notions of what went with what: "Comme si le cuisinier anglais avait en général plus de fantaisie, ou moins de principes, que le cuisinier français. Inutile de préciser vers laquelle de ces deux formulations m'entraîne mon chauvinisme gastronome."

It should be noted that Terence Scully does not agree with the idea that there was a significant reduction in the use of sugar in France over the last centuries of the middle ages, and that Bruno Laurioux even postulates a "nouvelle cuisine" in the fifteenth century which used sugar on a grand scale ("Entre savoir et pratiques," p. 61). Sugar's popularity may in fact have gone on much longer than Flandrin believes. Clearly, however, in the later middle ages the French were already regarding their own culinary talents with a good deal of ethnocentric favouritism (see the *Journal d'un bourgeois de Paris*, p. 252, quoted above), and changing tastes may have been involved.
In the medieval tradition, if the foodstuffs of a meal are named individually - bread, garlic, onions, cheese, peas, and so on - especially if they are clearly uncooked or unspiced, the meal in question is by definition a peasant affair. Complexity, like lavish spicing, enhanced class.

The emphasis on meat that is apparent in medieval cookery books is similarly a reflection of their origins in the kitchens of the wealthy. The idea that fourteenth- and fifteenth-century diets for all classes were meat rich is probably exaggerated. It is true that the Black Death left an underpopulated Europe rich in food supplies for a while, but the honeymoon with luxury was brief. Economic and social instability followed quickly; the price of labour became exorbitant, and the voluntarily-unemployed began filling the streets of the towns. Beggars, prostitutes and vagabonds were driven to crime out of hunger; they were hardly benefitting from Europe's chance at alimentary prosperity.

The traditional view of a meat-dominated diet has tended to link it with a deficiency of vegetables. Certainly, the paucity of vegetables on the most elaborate menus might lead us to believe that the wealthier classes were in perpetual danger of vitamin deficiency, while the peasants, with their legume- and grain-rich diets, were in some ways healthier. (This does not, of course, take into account the risk of famine and its effect on unbalancing the limited diet of the latter group.) The reality is more likely that vegetables were eaten regularly by all classes; it is just that often, like bread on modern French tables, their presence goes without saying. The Viandier gives few recipes for vegetables, but item 154 acts as a kind of summary, both for how commonly they were used and for how they were thought of:

154. D'autres menuz potaiges . . .
D'autres menuz potaiges comme poree de bettes, chouz, navetz, poreaix, veel au jaunet, et potaiges de ciboules sans autre chose, poys, feves frasees, pillez ou couillez ou atout le haubert, chaudun de porc, brouet aux yssues de porc-femmes en sont maistresses et chacun

69 Braudel, p. 140.


71 Christopher Dyer disputes this claim, particularly for the English aristocracy, whose diet he views as deficient in vegetable nutrients. See Dyer, Standards of Living in the Later Middle Ages (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), pp. 64-65. However, Teresa McLean, in Medieval English Gardens (London: Barrie and Jenkins, 1989), pp. 197-223, while not questioning the low status of vegetables in general, presents much evidence for their widespread cultivation, in as much variety as was available at the time.
It is interesting that a few dishes involving meat are also included in this list. All but "veel au jaunet" feature offal, and two are specifically said to use the offal of pork, the humblest of meats. No doubt these were as ubiquitous and inexpensive as the vegetable preparations with which they are enumerated; perhaps the main divisions to be made with respect to medieval cookery are not meat/fish versus vegetables, but luxury platters versus everyday fare. There seems to be an edge of contempt in the writer's mentioning of any of the dishes listed above: they are women's work, and tripes, in particular, appear unworthy of "his" Viandier.

In the less aristocratic cookbook of the Menagier de Paris, vegetables are present in most menus, and are particularly prominent in the fish-day examples. (It may be that vegetables, as in Deschamps's anti-Lenten poems, were only really noticed when meat was unavailable.) As well, several pages are devoted to recipes for their preparation. The variety of tastes sought is quite remarkable, given the limitations on vegetables available. Several recipes each are given for old and new peas and beans. The section on pource or greens is subdivided according to specific varieties – leeks, cress, beet tops, spinach -- and according to whether one is making a dish that is "white", "green" or "black", and finally according to whether the dish is to be served in meat-time or Lent. Particularly interesting is the concern for the nature of individual varieties – spinach is explained as having longer, greener, more delicate leaves than other greens -- and for keeping them green by avoiding overcooking. All this presents a marked contrast with the offhand dismissal of such everyday fare in the Viandier. There are also recipes for different kinds of cabbage and for turnips.

Moreover, earlier in the second distinction of the same treatise, we find a section on gardening, giving practical instructions for planting and maintaining a complete medieval kitchen garden, including both vegetables and a great variety of herbs.

Meat, then, was associated with opulence and careful preparation, but vegetables, mentioned or not, formed a real common denominator for late medieval diets. They were not viewed as particularly beneficial, and were to be avoided at times of plague (Deschamps, 1290), but they were staples in any household (1407) and bland, comfort foods for the old (191). Their very commonness led to their frequent use in proverbial contexts, and they had

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72 Chefs of any status were already almost invariably male.

73 Menagier, pp. 197-204.

74 Ibid., pp. 118-124.
various other literary uses which will be explored later on.

One important food which is not covered by Mulon’s categorisation is bread. Like vegetables, it was usually taken for granted within the structure of the meal. It had, however, a value well beyond food, actively shaping medieval social and economic structures. It occupied "le premier rang entre les choses qui donnent nourriture à l’homme", being eaten by everyone in quantities as large as a kilo a day. Grain harvests might be uneven, but people found ways of always having bread, whether of wheat, rye, barley, oats, or, if the situation were really dreadful, of ground legumes and straw. In the urban environments that dominate settings for writing in the late medieval period, such extreme solutions were rare. Still, bread was a symbol of suffisance; having a provision of bread made the key difference between comfort and starvation. Thus, everything to do with it -- grain fields, mills, bakers, market values -- was a source of immediate interest. A fertile grain field was a favourable attribute of any estate; a mill was a vital link in feudal structure, as was the communal bake-house; a baker was an essential element of developing urban life (and hence, a cheating baker was a particularly heinous scoundrel).

Bread could serve as tableware as well as food: thick slices of heavy trencher bread soaked up juices of meat taken from communal platters. But not all coarse bread served only in this capacity. Many different qualities were made, and one ate the best one could afford. For the wealthy, this was usually "bon pain blanc", something like the small golden loaves to be seen in fifteenth-century paintings of the Wedding Feast at Cana, or even the Last Supper. For the less privileged, there was "pain bourgeois". The poor ate "pain faitiz" or "pain bis" or even "pain de retrait", made from the residue of

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78 Desportes, Le Pain, chapters 1 and 2.
79 Desportes, Le Pain, pp. 171 ff.
80 Trenchers could also be made of earthenware, wood or metal, and trencher bread could be used in combination with any of these. See Bridget Ann Henisch, Fast and Feast (Pennsylvania State University Press, 1976), pp. 66-67.
the last sifting of the flour.  

Bread, along with pastry, could be festive as well as ordinary. In fact, in terms of public appreciation, the best quality white bread could be conflated with cake. As symbol, bread had its own inherent duality: freshly baked with quality flour it was to be linked with "toutes les délices du corps et de l'esprit", whereas old, dry and coarse, it signalled poverty or mortification of the flesh.

Far from being plentiful and attractive but tasteless, the ideal medieval meal was a complex construction, designed to maintain health, to radiate social and cultural connotations, and to provide sensual pleasure. Individual foods slipped easily into the domain of symbol. But perhaps the most characteristic trait of medieval diet is its carnival of flavours: its privileging of variety and its eclectic mixing of different tastes within a single dish. Nature, in medieval cookery, is almost always to be thoroughly improved by an admixture of the exotic, then tempered by the experience of professionals from the best kitchens in the land.

3.2 Eating, Drinking and Social Milieu

We have already discussed some of the general associations between cuisine and class. Most of the preceding section, dealing with questions of taste, applies only to those sectors of society that could afford to choose. Deschamps and the other poets we will be considering all had enough contact with the eating practices of the well-off to use what they saw in a considerable part of their work, though their view might be from the very middle of a court supper (Charles d'Orléans) or from a jealous distance away (Villon).

However, their writing also gives glimpses of the eating habits and constraints of other social groups: the clerics, the towndwellers, the

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82 Desportes, Le Pain au moyen âge, p. 91.
peasants. The aim of this section will be to produce a "miniature" for each class, outlining a few significant features of their practices at table.

3.2.1 The Aristocratic Table

In Gower's *Mirour de l'omme*, the aristocracy are presented as particularly prone to the influences of Delicacie, the second daughter of Gluttonnie. She

\[
\begin{align*}
&\text{Es noblez courtz la bouche enfile} \\
&\text{De ces seigneurs tantsoulement} \\
&\text{Si est privé de leur famille} \\
&\text{Qu'es tous delices reconcile} \\
&\text{Leur goust au Gule proprement} \\
&\text{Pour vivre delicatement}\ldots
\end{align*}
\]

This is a moralist's criticism, yet if we study the actual dining practices of the aristocracy at the end of the middle ages, we are struck by the extraordinary concern for luxurious detail. It was not just a question of what they ate, though their gourmand cravings might know no limits, but of all the formality and complexity that went into the act of dining. "Souez delis et mole norreture" (388, l. 17) cause a weakening of power and authority, warns Deschamps, in moralist mode, but a tremendous amount of power and authority must have been channelled into organising the noble feast.

Painted representations of noble banquets, just like chronicle accounts, often keep the presence of actual food to a minimum. One typical illustration of a banquet scene shows servitors, diners, salt nefs, an elaborate ship-shaped entremets alongside an entire siege scene, but no food to speak of.\(^6^7\) Some other banquet scenes depict small round loaves and platters of rather scrawny-looking birds, but such a spread hardly compares with the menus we know were offered. In the image of themselves that nobles wish to project, the accent falls on indications of permanent prosperity, rather than the fleeting magnificence of a *cygne revêtu*.

Needless to say, eating practices outside of occasions worthy of recording, in written or visual form, were probably much more simple than those indicated by banquet menus and descriptions. At every meal in a noble household, however, there was a comparatively large number of mouths to feed. Domestic servants involved with meal preparation and table service could not take their


meals at the same time as the others, but among the rest of the household there was no "upstairs, downstairs" division: everyone sat together in the great hall, though they were not all served with the same quality of food or attentiveness. The ratio in aristocratic meals, at least for the most important diners, was probably even higher. Each of the four "offices" depicted as personified abstractions in Deschamps's Dit des .III. offices (1360) would in reality have represented a large number of people moving between a steamy kitchen and an elaborately-organised hall. The co-ordination of such a team was necessarily a complex logistical feat.

The hall, throughout most of the middle ages, remained a multi-purpose room, and permanent tables were rare, though the occasional one existed in the finest households. Most eating surfaces were simply boards laid atop trestles, and most diners sat on benches or stools, though a few of the most honoured guests might have chairs. The ideal setting for a meal seems to have been outdoors, in a fertile wooded area surrounded by on-the-hoof and on-the-wing versions of what was about to be consumed. As this arrangement was rarely feasible, the floor of the indoor hall was strewn with may, green grass, violets and other flowers, no doubt partly to absorb odours of people and food, and to perfume the room, but also, in this most artifice-filled of ceremonies, to play up links with nature.

One of the most significant parts of the setting was the tablecloth. Eating from the same cloth with someone was a symbol of equality; a double cloth was

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88 Cf. The Travels of Leo of Rozmital, tr. and ed. Malcolm Letts, F. S. A. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, Hakluyt Society, 1957), pp. 46-47. In the feast given by Philip the Good for the travellers (1465) the most honoured guests were actually placed in a separate room: the according of privacy had begun to act as a mark of extra consideration by the end of the middle ages. It was not, however, a fashion that completely replaced the old very public feasts until well into the Renaissance.

89 Richard II's household is said to have amounted to 10,000 souls; see Hieatt and Butler, eds., Curve on Inglysch, p. 20.

90 Menagier, pp. 186-188.


93 Menagier, p. 186.
used as a mark of distinction for kings and other dignitaries. The cloth was the sign of civilisation, and seems to have been used at all levels of society. It could, however, be more or less impressive according to the condition it was in – all the stronger a symbol because it required care. A filthy or nailed-down cloth disgusts Deschamps (1318 and 1325); the owners are not worthy of their class, or their pretensions.

Beyond the cloth, the wealth of an establishment dictated the degree of table opulence. Table utensils were not in common use, though spoons were sometimes provided, and diners brought their own knives. Manifestations of luxury were therefore created through serving pieces, including ewers, salt nefs and displays of precious metal dishes on the hall’s dressoir. Shared platters were a given of medieval dining, though the most important diners might eat à couvert, their dishes brought under individual covers to keep their food hot. As for the others, they could only hope they would not have to share with too many. Deschamps criticises both German and Bohemian habits (1305 and 1325) which involved ten or twelve people eating from one dish. Alongside the collective interest in table manners, the desire to make eating a private act was evidently strengthening.

The food of the aristocratic feast, if often perceived as unsuitable for detailed representation, was nonetheless a sign of richness. We have already discussed the value of spices in bringing honour to a household. The dishes which they flavoured could arrive as many as twelve at a time, and a whole dinner consisted of anything from two to four of such courses. Although, because of the vague numbers of diners, we cannot be sure how much people ate, it seems that portions were lavish. Still, the ostentation of so much food does not necessarily mean individual excess; leftover food, along with sauce-soaked trenchers, could be distributed to the poor.

Of the dishes consumed, game was particularly associated with the noble classes. Their penchant for hunting, depicted in various romances and manuals, is well-known, but the large number of recipes for game and wild fowl, along with records of repeated attempts by nobles to reserve their monopoly on game
capture, show that they enjoyed eating the fruits of their sport. Most wild food was seen as more aesthetic and delicate than what was domestically available.

Between the courses came the *entremets*. These seem to have started out as simple dishes to aid digestion, then evolved into fantastic concoctions of pastry, sugar and/or meat, or even non-edible *tableaux vivants*. In the fifteenth-century Burgundian banquet of the *Voeu du Faisan*, there were sixteen monumental entremets, including a pie containing 28 musicians. The eating habits of the aristocracy elicited ambivalence in those who documented them. Lavish “staging” of dinners was admired, but the “delicacie” behind their catering was condemned. The freedom taken by nobles to choose their dining hours and peculiar gourmandises was revelled in by themselves, but seen as irreverent and unhealthy by outsiders, and probably resented, too, as a privilege not shared by anyone else. On the other hand, partakers of the noble feast not influential enough to control its course resented the inflexibility within the structure of the aristocratic meal; it was a huge collective event forcing conformity and even hypocrisy of tastes.

Whatever the angle from which they were viewed, dining habits of the nobility were an inexhaustible source of literary inspiration.

### 3.2.2 Food and Drink in the Urban Environment

The wealthier bourgeois households were close to the nobility in the kind of food practices they followed. We have seen, however, how they drew the line at delicacies which could only be concocted by a chef in the employ of an important noble. Indeed, the use of *entremets* whose value was more visual than gastronomic seems to have been rare: while some elaborate dishes are given in the menus of the *Menagier de Paris*, they are simply listed as part of each course, not isolated as glamorous extras. Moreover, some of the servants described in the detailed list given for the wedding festivities of Maistre Helye were to be hired for that occasion alone. In the bourgeois milieu, then, a large well-trained permanent kitchen staff could not be taken for granted.

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99 Benoist, "Gibier," pp. 75-76.


102 Cf. the clearly indicated role of *soteltes* (entremets) as gastronomic punctuation points in *Two Fifteenth-Century Cookery Books*, pp. 57-58.
There is concern for more than just how food is prepared; the Menagier also gives instructions on how it should be disposed of:

Deux maîtres d'hôtel pour faire lever et ordener l'assiette des personnes, un asseur, et deux serviteurs pour chacun table qui serviront et désserviront, gesteront le reliefs corbeilles, les saules, et brouet es seilles ou cuviers, et retraiteront et apporteront la desserte des mes aux escuiers de cuisine ou autres qui seront ordonnes a la sauveur, et ne porteront rien ailleurs.\(^{103}\)

Thus, overall, the comfortable bourgeois existence revealed in the Menagier de Paris emulates that of the aristocracy, but with considerable reserve. No matter how prosperous such a household might be, its members remained conscious of practical concerns, including costs and what to do with the leftovers.

Intimate dining in small groups was more likely to be possible in the bourgeois milieu than in the noble one. A fourteenth-century Italian miniature shows a very well-appointed table being used by just one couple.\(^{104}\) The love/sex triangles typical of fabliaux such as the Dit des perdrix, in which an adulterous wife prepares a chicken for her clerical lover as a kind of culinary foreplay,\(^{105}\) could only be imagined in a milieu that is prosperous yet without the impersonal corporate atmosphere created by the perpetual ebb and flow of a tide of domestics.

Not all towndwellers belonged to the comfortable classes so often satirised in the fabliaux. The city offered a wide range of alimentary experience outside the home to citadins rich and poor. Many people were themselves involved in food-related professions, as butchers, poulterers, wine merchants, spice sellers, keepers of market stalls, or vendors of prepared foods: bread, pastry, sauces, freshly cooked pies, even grilled offal.\(^{106}\) Every citizen of the town came into contact with such traders daily. The city could almost be equated with the foods sold there:

\(^{103}\) Menagier, p. 188.

\(^{104}\) M. Closset, "Us et coutumes de la table du XIIe au XVe siècle à travers les miniatures," Manger et boire au moyen âge, vol. II, pp. 26-27. The illustration discussed is taken from a manuscript of the Decameron, Bibl. de l'Arsenal MS. 5070. It is interesting to note that the vogue for privacy in dining in France lagged behind the same fashion in Italy, and only became widespread in the sixteenth century. The settings for the fabliau, like their plots, represent a deliberately limited choice of realistic elements.


Adieu connins, perdriz que je reclaims,
Adieu Paris, adieu petit pastez!

(Deschamps, 871, 7-8)

The city stroller might well take his cookshop purchases directly to a tavern, to be washed down with new wine. While taverns had their shady associations — one thinks of the frequent accusations of fraud levelled at tavern-keepers, and of the close links between drinking and gambling — they were also meeting places, centres of social life, as much as the church. Indeed, they could be viewed as an inverted image of the church:

La maison Antecrist est la taverne: quant seulz qui voient bien cler i viennent, ils s’en partent tous aveugles, quant ceulz qui bien vont en yssent, il ne peuent aler, quant ceulz qui bien parlent en yssent, il ne peuent parler. En la taverne sont faites les meslees, en l’eglise sont faites les pes; l’en va en l’eglise pour aourer et en la taverne pour maugreer. Cheulz qui ont perdu le sens le recouvrent en l’eglise; ceus qui sont sages et de bonne memoire sont folz et desordenez au partir de la taverne. Ainssi sont contraires les euvres Antecrist aus euvres Jhesu Crist.107

Wine, far from being a generic beverage to be ordered indiscriminately, was already the drink of connoisseurs. Origin was important, with Burgundian wine from Auxerre being the most highly prized, followed by wines from the vineyards of the Ile de France, then wines from La Rochelle.108 (Bordeaux rarely entered the French ratings, as from the twelfth century to the end of the Hundred Years War its vineyards principally supplied English drinkers.)109 As we have seen, young wine was usually preferred to old.

Alternatives to wine were available, though normally only in regions where wine was scarce. In the French mainstream view, they were all vastly inferior. Water, except from the crystal springs that flow through literary peasant picnics, was thought dangerous, and city water undoubtedly was (1496, 6). Cider, ale and beer were all, in varying degrees, foreign drinks, and at a time when the Bretons were in a state of unrest, the Flemings frequently in open revolt, and the English overrunning the country, their traditional beverages earned no more esteem than they themselves.

Besides, none of these had quite the imaginative potential of wine. Just as

107 Les Livres du Roy Modus et de la Royne Ratio, ed. G. Tilander, SATF (Paris, 1932) vol. I, p. 149. For a lighter, more exuberant treatment of the theme of tavern as inversion of church, see “In taberna quando sum_us” and other drinking songs from the Carmina Burana.


the Church used language linked with food and drink (in the words of the mass and the act of communion) as a source of power, so the taverns combined language with their new offerings to draw people in. The crying of the wine was in itself street drama, its imagery full of promises of transport away from the everyday.

Drunkenness certainly happened during aristocratic banquets, as a result of free-flowing wine\footnote{Travels of Leo of Rozmital, p. 37: The baron's squire Schaseck recounts that after a feast at the court of Philip the Good of Burgundy he was so drunk he could scarcely reach his inn. On other occasions he comments on the Burgundian court's general love of heavy drinking.} – but as a subject, with all its negative connotations of trickery and violence, and all its positive ones of inspiration and transcendental experience, it is chiefly represented in connection with town life.

The towndwellers' milieu comprises a closed element: the intimate, domestic scene; and an open one: the busy public market or tavern. In both cases, food and drink are often much in evidence. Whereas eating and drinking among the nobility should only ordinarily be depicted set well into a heavy frame of ceremony, eating and drinking among the people of the town could be represented as the practical, everyday, yet varied and vibrant activities that they were.

3.2.3 Food and Drink in Ecclesiastical Settings

It is difficult to generalise about the eating habits of the religious. The details of their diets depended on the particular vows they had taken and, increasingly in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries on the dictates (or vagaries)\footnote{See Caroline Walker Bynum, Holy Feast and Holy Fast (Berkeley: University of California press, 1987), especially chapters 4 and 5.} of their own conscience. Anchorites were warned, in the Ancrene Riwle, not to go too far (i.e., never to fast on bread and water), since the external rules, concerning physical activity, were of little importance compared to the ones governing spiritual life.\footnote{Ancrene Riwle, tr. M. B. Salu (London: Burns and Oates, 1955), p. 182.} Clearly, ostentatious asceticism was frowned upon, despite (or maybe because of) the fact that much of the medieval public was extremely impressed by harsh, sometimes miraculous fasting. Gerson expressed concern that

Mysticism is brought into the streets. Many people take to it, without suitable direction, and indulge in too rigid fasts, too protracted vigils, and too abundant tears, all of which disturb their...
brains.\textsuperscript{113}

Although many religious did exhibit superhuman self-control through physical deprivation, others enjoyed the luxury of the table all too much. The most frequent literary portrayal of the clergy is a satirical one, based on the idea that their pretensions to abstinence and continence were, in fact, pretence. The hypocritical, lusty and lustful parish priest is a typical character in the fabliaux. The fourteenth-century English Land of Cokagne, unlike its more innocuous French counterpart,\textsuperscript{114} is an anti-clerical satire built out of a vision of a supposed monk's utopia, a food-filled improvement on Paradise.\textsuperscript{115} Such depictions of the clergy as closet pleasure seekers certainly have some basis in fact,\textsuperscript{116} and they were embraced by popular opinion as the appropriate completion to the corruption already visible in the ecclesiastical orders.

However, most mainstream religious life was neither as strict as the mystics' existence nor as licentious as the popular stereotypes implied. Indeed, aside from the fact that fasts were probably more rigidly observed, diets of those in orders were usually quite similar to those outside. Social distinctions within the clergy mirrored those in the secular world, so that an abbot's table was naturally better appointed than a priest's. Nonetheless two fourteenth-century ecclesiastical councils found it necessary to rule that regular fare of all religious should be limited to "soup and two other courses, with an entremets if they had guests."\textsuperscript{117}

\textsuperscript{113} Quoted in Huizinga, p. 175. (Taken by Huizinga from Gerson's Opera Omnia, ed. L. Ellies du Pin, Hagae Comitis, 1728, 5 vols.)

\textsuperscript{114} Li Fabliaux de Coquaigne in Fabliaux et contes des poètes francois . . . , vol. IV, pp. 175-181.


\textsuperscript{116} Denys Hay, in Europe in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries (London: Longmans, 1966) reports that some of the picture of a decadent clergy is not contradicted, "though it is toned down, by such impartial evidence as is supplied by visitation records and the canons of provincial courts" (p. 303). He goes on to quote from a list of 41 canons enacted by a provincial synod at Paris in 1429, including

20. Bishops and rectors will ensure the complete compliance with the legislation concerning the life and conduct of clergy, and especially in regard to the prohibition of clerics frequenting inns, involving themselves in temporal matters, trade, dealing in wine and cereals, playing ball in public . . . (pp. 304-305)

\textsuperscript{117} Menagier, note p. 316.
We know more of monastic food habits from account books than from any other source. Food and drink were not meant to be an object of interest for those who had renounced the world. Paradoxically, the paucity of actual descriptions or illustrations of clerical meals probably fuelled the public's ongoing assumptions of their extravagance.

3.2.4 The Table of the Peasant and the Pauper

The true eating habits of the poor are the ones in which late medieval writers take the least interest. They would rather align the peasant or pauper with a particular role -- living symbol of fulfilled independence, or abject personal victim, or worthless rogue -- and tailor his menus, and their accompanying rhetoric, to suit.

Michel Mollat and Christopher Dyer are two historians who have taken an interest in the majority; that is, the undernourished masses who filled city streets, and the hard-working agricultural labourers whose diets fluctuated with each year's harvest.

It was never very impressive. Urban diets, writes Mollat, were inadequate in protein, fats, calcium, and vitamins A, C and D. A typical artisan might eat poor quality bread with only a few scraps of meat, cheese, milk or vegetables. In the country a high proportion of starches and legumes were consumed, generally with little meat, and that salt rather than fresh. Mollat underlines the fact that prophylactic measures advised during times of plague were literally unavailable to the poor. They could not afford the young, white "meats" (the category includes not only poultry and young game, but mixed dishes such as blanc manger, pale in colour and mild in flavour) that were counselled, nor give up the vegetables that were condemned, and they certainly could not escape the confined living quarters that seemed to breed the contagion. The message was simple and hopeless: the best way to avoid

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118 See, for example, A Small Household of the XVth Century: the Account Book of Munden's Chantry, Bridport, ed. K.L. Wood-Legh (Manchester: Manchester University press, 1956). Sometimes, however, cookbooks copied and used in monasteries survive. Bruno Laurioux ("Entre savoir et pratiques," p. 67), notes the specialised nature of these: recipes are organised according to the ecclesiastical calendar.


pestilence was to be rich.

One of the rare contemporary illustrations that could be considered a realistic depiction of peasant life shows nonetheless a certain will to systematise the meal, despite its simple and meagre components. In BN Facsimile 537, peasants are shown at an outdoor meal in the middle of a field. All they are eating is bread dipped into a common pot of wine – but there is a cloth draped over the knees of the diners.122

4. External Influences on Food and Drink

We have just examined the experience of food and drink separately for each social class, as if it were a static, closed, unchanging affair. In reality, though, certain external forces cut across all levels of society, altering eating habits and perceptions of food and drink for everyone. In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, the influences of historical events – famine, plague, international war, internal unrest – were brusque and dramatic. In addition, there were continuing religious pressures, governing both moral and physical responses to food.

4.1 Historical Events

Famine could be the result of naturally-occurring crop failure or man-made destruction. In the years following the Black Death, when depopulation meant that there was no longer a need to eke out an existence from barely arable land, nature was far less frequently the culprit than humanity. The history of the Hundred Years War is filled with sieges, field-burnings, and other devastations. Froissart gives examples of the havoc wreaked by the English almost casually; for instance:

nompourquant à lor retour il ardirent une bonne ville c'on dist Creci-sure-Selle, qui point n’estoit fermée, et grant fuison de ville et de hamiaus là environ.123

The writer of the Journal d’un bourgeois de Paris expresses more open indignation. On the 14th of September, 1415, he reports, Harfleur was taken by the English

et tout le pays [fut] gasté et robbé; et faisoient autant de mal les gens d’armes de France aux pauvres gens, comme faisoient les Anglois,

122 Closson, p. 28.
et nul autre bien n'y furent.

It is evident from this passage that it was often hard to tell whether one army was any worse than another. Bands of routiers, French and English, out for personal gain when their salaries ran out between campaigns, were probably the most destructive of all.

Other authors have devoted much research to giving a full picture of the deprivations and sufferings endured during the Hundred Years War. We will concentrate on how those sufferings changed attitudes to food and drink.

First, the precariousness encouraged a preoccupation with fertility. The garden-plenty of the literary locus amoenus was now, more than ever, an ideal against which to measure reality. Deschamps, for example, condemns Flanders for its infertility, praises the great estates of courtiers for their agricultural potential, and bemoans the devastation of his own property at Vertus.

Shortages of food and drink also led to a growing tendency to embrace daily routine as a commodity of particular value. Froissart's enthusiasm for faits d'armes and prouesse was thus countered by the concern of the Menagier de Paris for individual morality and successful management of a single household. The writer of the Journal d'un bourgeois de Paris sets all the sieges and celebrations of Paris against a running record of food prices and availability. Deschamps devotes numerous poems to the praise of a life that is not luxurious, but adequate and above all self-sufficient. Staying in control of one's own existence, with upheaval threatening it at every turn, was a strong desire and a significant challenge.

Some reactions to the pressures of the times may have been more lurid than an admiration of fertility and suffisance. The unusually high amount of premature death, through war or plague, may have contributed to the popularity of the "mangeur mangé" theme in literature. People were surrounded by decaying or discoloured flesh, living and dead, a visible reminder that the human body was ultimately "meat for worms." The more gluttonous the appetite of that flesh had been during life, the richer the banquet it would provide. Conversely, the more emaciated and mortified the flesh, the less of a barrier it formed between the soul and spiritual immortality. Thus the body itself

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124 Journal, p. 77.

125 See Henri Denifle, La Désolation des églises, monastères et hôpitaux pendant la Guerre de Cent Ans (Brussels: Culture et Civilisation, 1965; originally published Paris, 1897), and Mollat, Genèse, especially chapter 3, "Permanence des calamités et de la misère."

became "food", in a sort of crude physical imitation of Christ's sacrifice.

Returning to the activities of the living, we find one more strong influence on attitudes to food and drink. The political climate in France throughout the period of the Hundred Years War meant a great increase in diplomatic travel by civil servants such as Deschamps. Voyages might be on internal business – improving of north-south relations in order to increase centralised control of the kingdom – or on international missions, such as Deschamps's trip to Hungary (1384-85) to negotiate the proposed marriage between Louis, brother of Charles VI, and Marie, princess of Hungary. In addition, the developments of the war itself led to frequent displacements of anyone associated, however reluctantly, with the royal army. Deschamps was in Flanders for at least three campaigns, and in the region of Calais during a period of unsteady truce with the English.

All this movement led to a wider public than ever before being exposed to the food and drink of other cultures. The recurrent atmosphere of tension, however, did not make that public open-minded. Food and food habits of foreigners were almost always seen as barbarous in some respect; they became the materials for the construction of national stereotypes.

4.2 Religious Forces

The late medieval period saw certain doubts arise about the integrity and usefulness of religious authority, even of traditional piety altogether. From 1378, the official Church was afflicted by schism, its two rival popes obviously connected with temporal politics. But the crisis of faith went far deeper than a distrust of Church hierarchy. The misery of the times must often have made human affairs seem beyond God's control. During the Black Death, priests often fled the pestilence rather than hearing the confessions of the contagion-ridden dying. The vulnerability of individual humanity thus began to weigh rather heavily against the self-sacrificing ideals of pastoral Christianity. According to Boccaccio, people began to experiment with different responses to the immediate threat of death: retreat behind closed doors, epicurean carelessness, a "middle course" of moderate living and herbal preventative medicine, or flight. No matter what action they took, some


survived and some died.\textsuperscript{129} In such brutal circumstances, then, God might appear to be at best capricious and at worst indifferent.

Thus, in some of the Christian population, a quiet scepticism had been stirred. Yet paradoxically, despite the failings of the Church, many of the manifestations of popular piety were stronger than ever. A gradual concretisation of the elements of worship had been going on since the twelfth century, when the accent of the mass began moving from the enactment of a shared meal to the moment of transubstantiation.\textsuperscript{130} From the fourteenth century, however, the emphasis on physicality in personal religion becomes overwhelming. It was an era of mystics, with their ideas of perfect union with Christ through spiritual and physical identification. Christ's sufferings, rather than his resurrection and act of redemption were the focus of meditation. Along with such rather disgusting pious acts as the drinking of pus by Catherine of Siena\textsuperscript{131} came strikingly graphic images of Christ's body as the Mystic Mill or the Mystic Wine Press. The pious were actually depicted as eating and drinking the physical products of Christ's voluntarily tortured body.

In a sense, such physical images brought Christian practice close to joining a secular refusal of religion. In both cases, the preoccupation with the concrete could easily overwhelm or efface the spiritual.

In the course of this chapter, we have already touched on the food practices of those in religious orders. It remains for us to look at the broadest and largely unchallenged influences of the Church – on the understanding of gluttony and the patterns of fast and feast.

Gluttony had formed one of the canon of seven capital (deadly) sins since at least the age of Gregory the Great.\textsuperscript{132} Other sins might be added or subtracted in diverse representations of the theme, but Gluttony was a constant. In some conceptions, it was even the root of all the rest; this idea was based on the premise that it was Gluttony, not Pride, that caused Adam to bite into the apple.

Like Luxury, it was a sin with inherent ambivalence. Even biblical example legitimised feasting, and eating was a necessary act to stay alive.\textsuperscript{133} On the other hand, losing control and indulging in any of Gluttony's five branches --


\textsuperscript{130} Bynum, \textit{Holy Feast and Holy Fast}, pp. 48 ff.

\textsuperscript{131} Bynum, pp. 172-173.

\textsuperscript{132} For a comprehensive treatment of Gluttony, see Morton Bloomfield, \textit{The Seven Deadly Sins} (Michigan: State College Press, 1952).

\textsuperscript{133} Henisch, \textit{Fast and Feast}, p. 2.
eating at the wrong time (too early, before mass), eating too often, eating continuously and overstuffing oneself, eating too eagerly, or eating too "delicately" — was a serious transgression.

In the later middle ages the charge of gluttony was an ever-handly weapon for attacking the extravagant food practices of the court and the nobility. Yet it was not always put to use. There was a difficulty in deciding at what point a display of plenty ceased to be a noble act linked to largesse and became a contemptible one linked to excess. In the case of Deschamps, the decision depended on which voice he chose to adopt for a given poem: the adaptive one which accepts a corrupt world as inevitable and even aligns itself with court practices, or the obdurate one which supports the absolute world of Church-backed morality.134 For the generality of society, too, the perspective to be taken on the world — moral or secular — was more and more a matter of choice.

Whether people were deeply religious or increasingly laicised and/or sceptical, there was one area of their lives over which the Church continued to exert a powerful control: the following of dietary laws. The Church governed daily meal times, weekly days of abstinence from animal products, and major annual fasts. Morning eating before mass and late-night snacks were frowned upon,135 a good Christian ought to content him or herself with (at most) a light, late breakfast, a main midday meal, and a simple supper. On Wednesdays, Fridays and Saturdays, he or she should keep regular fasts, each with its own significance.136 On Ember Days and during Lent, fasting was to be especially strictly observed.

Church laws on fasts and feasts determined many aspects of medieval life. The vast salt herring industry, for instance, was developed to serve the majority of people for whom that and that alone was the staple dish throughout Lent. The overwhelming impression of reactions to Lent is that many people were more depressed by the discomfort and monotony of the protracted fast than impressed by its significance. In A Fifteenth-Century School Book, one of the passages set for translation captures the spirit of a typical complaint:

Thou wyll not beleve how verry i am off fysshe, and how moch I desir that flesch wer cum in ageyn for I have eie non other but salt fysh this lent, and it hathe engendyrde so moch flewme within me that it

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136 Wednesday was supposed to be the day Judas took money for Christ's betrayal, Friday the passion, and Saturday a fast kept in honour of Mary and her virginity. See Henisch, Fast and Feast, p. 29.
stoppith my pypys that I can unneth speke nother brethe.137

Establishing which foods were permitted and which were not, for those who could afford to choose from a wider variety than salt herring, was a somewhat dubious affair. Sea mammals such as whale and porpoise were permitted, as was barnacle goose, explained here with some bemusement by Leo of Rozmital's clerk Tetzel:

They provided for us an unbelievably costly banquet lasting three hours, and among the dishes they gave us to eat what should have been fish, but it was roasted and looked like duck. It has wings, feathers, neck and feet. It lays eggs and tastes like wild duck. We had to eat it as fish, but in my mouth it turned to meat, although they say it is indeed a fish, because it grows first out of a worm in the sea, and, when it is grown, it assumes the form of a duck and lays eggs, but the eggs do not hatch anything . . .

Caroline Walker Bynum proposes that this notion of transformation corresponds well to late medieval preoccupation with the physical incarnation of the Host as Christ.139

Even to those who continued to eat varied, richly-spiced meals throughout Lent, an official fast was an imposition, and as such it stirred rebelliousness. Lent was not entered peacefully, but with protest: a rowdy last fling with everything about to be given up. Carnival formed a brief intense reign for an order utterly opposite to that which dominated the Church year; it was a celebration in which everything wild was right.140 The conflict between "Caresme" and "Charnage" was often enacted in battle form, both in street activity and in literature. Interestingly, in Deschamps's chanson royale 350 "Contre le carême", the outside world of historical events seems to join the allegorical one: the poor people oppressed by Lent are a close image of the innocent sufferers in the Hundred Years War.

138 Travels of Leo of Rozmital, p. 58.
139 Bynum, pp. 60-61.
Conclusion

The time in which Deschamps lived and wrote is part of a period that laid unprecedented stress on the physical and the concrete. Detail is one of its passions, and can be employed as much in the service of moral criticism as of neutral realism. Food and drink provide images for class distinction, for ceremonial celebration, for examples of pious behaviour. They can also undermine the very foundations of the rigid status quo, by drawing attention to the eclecticism, humour and vulnerability of human tastes and existence.

Deschamps draws on the world around him for both kinds of images, sometimes mixing the two. The moral and social significance of food and drink is never far from his poetry, but the "objective" reality of experience is important in his work as well. Pleasure and disgust are played off against one another, so that we see an individual's response to both the security and the upheaval to be found in society as a whole. Food and drink, by their unbreakable links with ingestion, represent an active taking on board, a savouring, of all the possibilities offered by the social circumstances of the times.
Chapter Two
Recipes: Food and Drink in Imaginative French Literature to 1350

While elements of the material world are increasingly present in late medieval literature and art, and while writers of the period undoubtedly drew raw ingredients from personal and collective experience, they were far from being the discoverers of the literary potential to be found in the kitchen garden, the noble feast, or the local tavern. Rather, they could draw on rhetorical models and traditions of previous centuries, experimenting with, and sometimes challenging, unwritten notions of appropriateness to genre or to register. This chapter will survey some of those models, as it explores the uses of food and drink in imaginative French literature to the mid-fourteenth century.

Let us first consider some general characteristics of the relationship between food and the literary text. For the reader, especially the one approaching a text from a point of view several centuries away, images of food and drink have a strong, immediate effect. They underline the universally human nature of the speaker or character in question: he or she, like us, experiences hunger, appetite, taste, satiety, overindulgence, and so on. At the same time, when particular foods or beverages are mentioned, they help encapsulate what distinguishes us from the society about which we are reading. There is nothing more specific to an individual, real or imaginary, modern or medieval, than what he or she consumes; by extension, the diets and tastes laid out in literature can be an expression of the essential being of a character or nature of a society. Thus, food or drink, or an idea relative to either, can act as a marker: of wealth, of poverty, of belonging to one social class or another; of nationality or other origin, of inclusion or marginality; of frugality or extravagance; of asceticism or sensuality. Moreover, in addition to their functions in a realistic context, food and drink can provide materials for metaphor and allegory, as well as weapons for satire.

Yet, with all these possible functions, the presence of food and drink in literature remains something of an anomaly. "On ne parle pas la bouche pleine." Allusions to literal food and drink do not slip unobtrusively into a text; they either interrupt it with a momentary reminder of the body beyond, or become its whole focus. Only when food or drink is transformed into part of a governing metaphor does it cease to draw attention to itself as extratextual material.

Of course, alimentary factors may relate to generating forces behind narrative: hunger, for instance, motivates the action in many a folk or fairy tale, as well as in some of the fabliaux and in many branches of the Roman de

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Motifs of ritual food – raw versus cooked meat, animal sacrifice, cannibalism, torture by tantalization – are common to many mythologies. In these cases, however, food and drink work at a primary level, part of the fabric of the tale, just as they are woven into all human life. It is not our purpose here to study the fundamental anthropological meaning of food in stories and ceremonies common to all ages.

Instead, we turn to the "obvious": the allusions to food and drink, metaphorical, ceremonial or realistic, that are embroidered in vivid colours onto the surface of a text. As such, they often serve as reminders of the pragmatic, ungainly nature of the body, as set against the intellectual integrity that the text itself represents. To mention details of food and drink in a text that is not about them (that is, not a cookery book, manual of diets or table manners, chronicle description of a feast, etc.) is to draw attention to the tension between imagination and reality, between the romantic ideal of creation as a quasi sublime activity supposed to be divorced from the mundane, and the undeniable fact that even poets need to eat, and are at least as interested in their next meal as the rest of us. There is a hierarchy of food images: the simplest and most common are also the most easily distanced from their everyday nature, transformed into symbol. A magic draught, a single communion wafer, simple bread or wine – these can all be absorbed into epic, romance or courtly lyric without betraying their underlying relationship to simple physical satisfaction or social convention. But develop a meal menu, multiply specific foods or beverages in a list, or use modifiers relating to taste, odour or economic quality, and one has allowed food and drink their full power of interruption, their capacity to reassert momentarily the existence of a whole world beyond the text.

Thus, specific, literal food and drink allusions bring in elements that, while natural and necessary to life, are unnatural and foreign to many forms of literature. In particular, such imagery can appear ill-suited to writing of the high or grand style. In post-medieval literature, exclusion of the everyday from tragic or heroic works became de rigueur. Already in Chrétien de Troyes, however, heroes generally eat or drink only when some positive significance can be attached to the act, due to circumstances surrounding it: they are mad, or they are lost, or they are being entertained by a host as enigmatic as the Fisher King. Specific foods are usually named when a meal is meant to underscore a particular moral state, and social realism is rarely sought for its own sake. On the other hand, allusions to food and drink seem

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2 Both Jacques Le Goff, in La Civilisation de l'occident médiéval (Paris, Arthaud, 1964), pp. 290-292, and Piero Camporesi, in "Bread of dreams", History Today 39 (April 1989), pp. 14-21, have seen a relationship between historical famine and certain kinds of literature – the ripaille of words in the Cockaigne myths, for example; the driving, scheming hunger in the Roman de Renard; the general proliferation of fantasies relating directly to hunger and famine.
thoroughly at home in more "popular" works: satirical poems, fabliaux, comic drama and so forth. In fact, they are more than at home, frequently bursting without warning from the confines of the kitchen to play a role in the incarnation of torment, the techniques of seduction, the progress of dissipation, or simply the enjoyment of a feast. In such contexts, the folly and fallibility of human existence is often centre-stage, and how better to enhance its presentation than by a reminder of our physical enslavement to a combination of nourishment and hedonism?

This is not to say that realistic food and drink must be completely excluded from various serious genres; indeed, medieval French writing is far less rigid than that of later periods about keeping the cerebral or spiritual separate from the corporeal. However, the writer of epic, romance or courtly lyric who chooses to emphasize food and drink is also choosing to bring out the complete, familiar humanity of his characters or voices, and quite likely to acknowledge their comic side.

Whether mentioned briefly or described with passionate interest, food and drink almost always undergo some kind of transformation or distortion in the passage from table to text. Few works give attention to eating and drinking in direct proportion to the importance these activities really hold. Instead, alimentary images are carefully chosen and adjusted -- understated or overstated -- to smooth or exploit the interruptive effect they produce.

No one variety of interruption or image is exclusively appropriate to one genre, or even to one period (though, as we shall see, some general tendencies can be recognized). Just as food and drink are often exceptions to the rule of "literary" structure or language, so their depiction and imagery can be exceptions to the norms, themselves problematic to chart, of literary history. Moreover, literary food and drink in the late medieval lyric are not just the progeny of earlier lyric imagery. Because the subject-matter and language of Deschamps, in particular, expands and sometimes explodes previous notions of what was acceptable as the material of lyric poetry, recipes for his and his contemporaries' use of food and drink can be found in many types of imaginative writing. For this reason, the present chapter will consider food and drink in a variety of earlier genres.

If, then, we accept that food and drink are natural interruptors of serious discourse, we can subdivide food and drink allusions according to the kind of

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3 Claude Schumacher, in "Naturalism or the impossible temptation: Tilly's Charcuterie fine", (Romance Studies, Winter 1983-84), for example, discusses the dramatic result of depicting characters almost exclusively at meal times. "We never see the characters at work -- we only meet them off-duty, when they should be able to be themselves and express something of their inner being. Tilly shows that there is nothing to show. The act of eating, in its obsessiveness, loses contact with the everyday world in which we need food and becomes a quasi-religious ceremony devoted to the God 'Meat'"(p. 101).
interruption they provide. Is it a one-word reminder of the physical world, as in a proverb or proverbial comparison? Is it an illustration that helps define or confirm a real or fictitious social group, as in a court feast, tavern drinking bout, or pastoral picnic? Is it an element in the inversion of the whole of official society, an instrument of satire or parody, an adjuvant of Carnival? Is it, finally, an interruption so strong that it takes over, and makes food or drink the key to a mystical or sensual metaphor, using the concrete to contain the abstract?

1. The Proverbial Interruption

One of the most succinct uses of the food or drink allusion in medieval literature is as a key term in a proverb or fixed expression, which can itself be inserted into a larger text. In this case, then, the food or drink image is doubly distanced from its literal reality. It is present only as part of the set phrase that has been implanted into the text, so has rarely been chosen for its direct appropriateness; and within the proverb, it usually has already acquired a metaphorical significance that overrides its literal one.

Nevertheless, the concreteness of the food or drink named can pierce through all these layers of meaning and rhetoric to call attention to itself, and to the non-literary origins of the expression. Paul Zumthor has qualified the "épiphonème proverbial" as "marqué comme provenant (réellement ou fictivement) d'un hors-texte." A culinary or alimentary image is a particularly efficient reminder of the general physical realities that make up the non-literary world.

Proverbs, sentences and proverbial phrases appear in all kinds of Old French literature, though more concentratedly in some than in others. From quite an early stage, too, they were collected for their own sake. Li Proverbe au vilain, for instance, which dates from about 1180, is a series of 280 six-line stanzas, each of which illustrates and is followed by a proverb, which in turn is concluded with "ce dit li vilains." In addition, at least 26 manuscripts from the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries include

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5 I have decided to cast the net quite widely in my consideration of what constitutes the proverbial, following definitions outlined in James Woodrow Hassell, Middle French Proverbs, Sentences and Proverbial Phrases (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1982), pp. 1-9.

straightforward lists of proverbs. While such enumerations tell us little about the use of popular expressions in literary texts, they do give us an idea of the concentration and kind of alimentary images in proverbial speech, and they prove that proverbs were already considered worthy of interest and compilation.

Because proverbs and proverbial expressions, often involving food or drink, are very much a part of Deschamps's rhetoric, it is worth exploring at this point some of the main features of proverbs in earlier texts. Our examination will focus first on food and drink within the proverb itself. It will then turn to the use of culinary or alimentary proverbial material in the context of a more developed text.

1.1 Food and Drink in Proverbs

Words pertaining to food, drink and consumption occur in a fairly small proportion of the proverbs in published compendia: between seven and ten per cent. Such statistics, however, reflect only one version of each proverb, which may have many uncounted variations; and they do not take into account whether that proverb was rare or common in speech or writing. Only an exhaustive search through all available texts could give us even an idea of the overall concentration of alimentary proverbs in Old French literature. Still, lists are convenient tools for learning which alimentary words are the most common, and how they may be used.

"Pain" and "vin" are, predictably, the most frequently found, followed by various forms of "manger" and "boire". Bread, as the one universal food, was equated even more strongly than today with the idea of subsistence; it stood for food in general. Likewise wine was the universal drink (though in quality there would have been an enormous difference between the beverage of wealthy connoisseurs and the locally-produced wine typically available to peasants) but it can also add colours of exoticism through its associations with luxury, distant lands, sensuality, inspiration and intoxication. The proverbs that incorporate bread and wine underline these qualities, and bring out a few others.

For example, there are many instances of bread standing for basic subsistence:

Qui pain a et santé, riches est si nel set.\(^{8}\)

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7 See introductory material in Joseph Morawski's Proverbes français antérieurs au XVe siècle (Paris: Champion, 1925).

8 Li Proverbe au vilain, 102.
Quelque pain, nul fain.9

It can also be a key to independence:

Use de ton pain, tu seras frans.10

It can act as part of a warning against excessive ambition:

Fous est, qui court a meillour pain que de froment.11

— or foolish living:

Le pain au fol manjue on avant.12

And by the fourteenth century, the expression "rendre de tel pain souppe" -- to give someone a taste of his own medicine13 -- is common enough to indicate that it had probably been current for some time.

Wine is instrumental in variations on the classic in vino veritas:

Vin et confession descouvrent tout.14

— and even more common in versions of in vino loquacitas:

Plus a de paroles en un mui de vin

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9 Morawski, 1770.
10 Morawski, 2457.
11 Li Proverbe au vilain, 54.
12 Li Proverbe au vilain, 77. The preceding stanza runs as follows:

Ce ai je bien vëu
Que j'ai jadis èu
Conpaignon sage et buen
Qui par son bel prametre
Le mien me faisait mettre
Et gardoit bien le suen.

With the pragmatic cynicism often found in medieval literature, it is the hapless victim who is blamed here, and not the "friend" who comes off best at the other's expense.

13 Middle French Proverbs, p. 7.
14 Morawski, 2488.
It is regularly used to show result linked with origin:

Li vins sent le terroer.16

In itself, it is linked with congeniality:

Toute religion s'accorde a bon vin.17

But its dark side is also solemnly acknowledged:

Par vin, par fame et par dez
Si vient tout homme a povretez.18

Overall, then, if bread is basically a positive, substantial commodity in proverbs, wine is a more shadowy one, whose caprices can make it friend or foe.

Uses of the verbs "manger" and "boire" are too varied to give anything like an accurate notion of a typical value. However, a couple of very common topoi can be identified. The first is the wolf-predator/sheep-victim couplet:

Qui se fait brebis le leu le mengue.19

-- and many other variations. A second commonplace emphasises the economic aspect of food and drink, as it evokes a vivid instance of tavern recklessness:

Tel cuide boivre autrui sercot
Qui paie sovent tot l'escot.20

Beyond bread and wine, foods found in a proverbial context tend to be of the

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15 Li Proverbe au vilain, 43. A different version of a proverb comparing the power of two alimentary/potable substances is found in the Yvain of Chrétien de Troyes, ed. Mario Roques (Paris: Champion, 1982): Kei taunts Yvain that "plus a de paroles an plain pot / de vin qu'an un mui de cervoise" (592-593). Wine is clearly the substance most likely to lead to wild boasts.

16 Morawski, 1135.

17 Morawski, 2390.

18 Morawski, 1603. The sense of the proverb provides an entire theme for the Griesche poems of Rutebeuf.

19 Morawski, 2126.

20 Morawski, 2340.
humbler kind, attesting to the popular origins of such expressions. Mutton, occasionally beef, and frequently pork (often as lard or bacon) and chicken are the meat of the proverb. Cheese is generally unglamorous --

Qui a fourmage pour tous més
Y le doit (bien) taillier espés.\textsuperscript{21}

-- can be linked with folly --

A foul fourmaige.\textsuperscript{22}

-- but occasionally becomes a gourmet treat:

Oncques Deus ne fist tel mariage
Comme de poires et de formage.\textsuperscript{23}

Fruit, like wine, is often linked with its own origins: never a good apple grew on a bad branch, and so forth. Otherwise, it can be positive or negative, though its sweet taste seems to win out over its dubious effects on health.\textsuperscript{24} On the other hand, I can find no compliment to any vegetable. Peas, cabbages, garlic, shallots, onions and lentils -- along with eggs, herrings, figs, prunes, pears and apples (reappearing in a strictly negative guise) -- are all most frequently found in depreciatory comparisons. Their unpopularity no doubt stems from their associations either with ubiquitous peasant food, or with that even more universal source of misery, Lent.\textsuperscript{25}

1.2 Proverbial Food and Drink in Texts

Probably the commonest use of any proverbial food is in the depreciatory comparison. We still say something is not worth a bean; in medieval literary speech, however, the array of edibles that could be used to demonstrate

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{21} Morawski, 1793.
  \item \textsuperscript{22} Morawski, 33. For further proverbial links between the fool and cheese see G. Schoepperle, "Pour le commentaire de Villon: Note sur la Ballade des menus propos," Romania 49 (1923), pp. 113-117.
  \item \textsuperscript{23} Morawski, 1443.
  \item \textsuperscript{24} For evidence concerning the possible ill effects of fruit, see Deschamps, 1291 (with corrections proposed by Hoepfner in "Une ballade d'Eustache Deschamps", Romania 50, 1924, pp. 413-426).
  \item \textsuperscript{25} For the unpopularity of figs outside Lent, see introductory material in A Small Household of the Fifteenth Century, p. xxv.
\end{itemize}
contempt is vast.

Such expressions are particularly common in the chansons de geste, given epic heroes' "propensity to boast" and corollary urge verbally to crush their adversaries. Robert Harden distinguishes food as one of six main categories of terms used in such put-downs. He also points out that particular foods tend to be chosen for smallness, malleability, dull or bitter taste, or banality—hence the vegetable's popularity in these comparisons.

A typical example may be found in the Moniажe Guillaume, with the pagan king insulting the French defence thus:

Ferés, païen! Frangois erent ja outre,
La lor defense ne vaut une excaloigne...  

However, depreciatory comparisons involving food make an appearance in other genres as well. In the Conte du graal of Chrétien de Troyes, the young rustic Perceval, in his first encounter with Arthur, is unimpressed with the King's explanation of his debilitating humiliation over the Red Knight's insult to the Queen.

"... Ci ot honte laide et vilainne,
existe la reine an est antree,
de grant duel et d'ire anflamee,
an sa chanbre ou elle s'ocit,
ne ne cuit pas, se Dex m'ait,
que ja an puise eschaper vive."
Li vaslez ne prise une vive
quanque li rois li dit et conte,
ne de son duel ne de la honte
la reine ne li chaut il... 

(960-969)

The disdain that Perceval shows for Arthur's troubles is a deft way of depicting the valet's own gauche selfishness; it is also, however, a simple, direct reaction, one which makes Arthur's rigid devotion to chivalric honour and rhetoric look rather foolish. The proverbial comparison, with its use of the lowly chive as the main term, reinforces the difference in outlook of the two characters and the contrasts between their as-yet separate worlds. Arthur piles words onto his expression of the Queen's outrage, whereas Perceval boxes
the whole problem away as unworthy of the King's and his own concern. He does not even respond verbally to Arthur's lament; it is the narrator who relates his reaction, as if to underline Perceval's total lack of interest in the affair. From the account of an unforgiveable breach of quite arbitrary protocol (involving wine, the noblest drink) we are thrown into the world of unaffected common sense (incarnate in the chive).

It is fairly straightforward to put a food comparison into a text, no matter what the genre: there are enough ignoble foods to fit most rhyme schemes, and the basic comparison formula is flexible enough that the author can choose the one he thinks most appropriate. It is another matter, though, to integrate a whole, closed food proverb. As with any proverb, this involves an evident stocktaking, assessment or comment on the part of the speaker, which brings the flow of narration or dialogue to a temporary halt. Because of this, complete proverbs are best suited to didactic texts, or ones which include didactic moments; for example, the romances of Chrétien de Troyes, some of the fabliaux, and any non-narrative poetry that has a moral slant to it.

Thus, in Chrétien's Yvain,29 we find Kei drawing authority for his mockery of Yvain from a proverb:

- Bien pert que c'est aprés mangier,  
  fet Kex, qui teire ne se pot:  
  Plus a paroles an plain pot  
  de vin qu'an un mui de cervoise. . .  

(590-593; cf. p. 52)

It is the invoking of universal truth, rather than any respect for Kei's individual opinions, that enforces the put-down here.

If, as Bernard and Jaqueline Cerquiglini have suggested, the proverb "violente le code courtois",30 it is by no means eschewed by the courtly writer. As well as being essential to the personal lexicon of such not-quite-courtly figures as Chrétien's Kei,31 it can find its way directly into courtly genres. Wendy Pfeffer has shown, for instance, how the popular proverb can be an


31 Kei is certainly a courtier, but he represents a strand of bluntness at odds with ideals of courtly behaviour. "Chrétien," writes Jean Frappier in his Etude sur Yvain ou le Chevalier au lion de Chrétien de Troyes (Paris: Société d'Édition d'Enseignement Supérieur, 1969, p. 139) "s'est contenté d'en faire un médisant et un outrecuidant: l'antithèse vivante chevalier de la Table Ronde, poli et courtois autant que preux."
important rhetorical component of the courtly jeu-parti.32

However, in popular genres, it not only appears as an old woman’s witticism or a fabliau’s moral; it can also be "acted out" by a large section of text. The tavern scenes in Courtois d'Arras, Le Jeu de saint Nicolas, and Le Jeu de la Feuillée all dramatise the dangers of wine, women and dice warned of in proverbs noted above (p. 52), as do several of Rutebeuf’s "poésies de l'infortune".

The proverb, by Deschamps’s time, is thus a well-established element of a range of literary genres. The sub-group of proverbs dependent on food and drink, however, remains unusual in "straight" lyric poetry. In choosing to use such proverbs so extensively, both in humorous, popular poems and in serious, moralising ones, Deschamps takes a stance that is defiant in its all-inclusiveness. The wisdom of the vilain, with all its earthy metaphors and its resonance of popular speech, is frequently the chief authority invoked by the poet in support of his ideas. Much of the poet’s straightforward appeal is due to his reliance on such "common knowledge". He flatters his readers by elevating the simple and sensible, in which they have always believed, to a key position in his poetic compositions.

II. The Social Break: Food and Drink, Class and Culture

Allusions to diet in imaginative works must be used with extreme caution as sources on social history. Often, we can be sure that even the most concrete of alimentary descriptions are not meant to be viewed as realistic. The dishes served to Guillaume at various points in his cycle are in keeping with the aristocratic norms of the twelfth century; the quantities in which he, one man, consumes them, however, invite disbelief. In this and similar cases, a gigantic appetite is used to support heroic stature, literally and figuratively.

In general, the rhetoric of food and drink does not reflect social realities, it reinvents them to serve literary ends. The following section will study not what literature tells us about food and drink in society, but what food and drink, presented in a social context, tell us about literary structures and effects. The discussion will address the depiction of food and drink in noble, bourgeois and peasant milieux, as well as how alimentary allusions help show interaction and exclusion among different social groups.

2.1 Imaginary Nobles, Real Food?

As indicated in Chapter One, the noble classes are rarely depicted in connection with concrete food or drink. The preferred self-image of this social group is far more dependent on moral and aesthetic ideals than on physical realities. Specific food and drink images are used particularly sparingly in early romance, but they are also kept to a minimum in many epics. Feasting or banqueting scenes occur regularly and often at significant points in the action; however, writers seem wary of introducing the potential distractions of detailed meal descriptions.33

 Chrétien de Troyes's use of food and drink is fairly typical of twelfth-century romance. He does not ignore it altogether, but overall, he gives much more attention to the trappings of the meal than to what is consumed. One of his most complete aristocratic menus, associated with Erec and Enide's mid-quest meatless supper at Arthur's camp, fills fewer than four lines:

Ce fu un samedi a nuit  
qu'il mangierent poissons et fruit,  
luz et perches, saumons et truites,  
et puis poires crues et cuites.  

(Erec et Enide, 4237-4240)

(Some other food-related passages are longer, but include a smaller number of aliments.) Such a meal is obviously cooked, and varied within the limits set by fast-day customs, but there are no references to spices, quantities, precise modes of preparation, or presentation.

By contrast, the service of the grail meal to Perceval in the palace of the Fisher King occupies several pages. The food, however, is relatively unimportant. The setting is emphasised, and the opening meat and wine are described in some detail:

Li premiers més fu d’une hanche  
de cerf an gresse au poivre chaut.  
Vins clers ne raspez ne lor faut  
a cope d’or sovant a boivre.  
De la hanche de cerf au poivre  
devant ax uns vaslez trancha,  
qui de devant lui treite l’a  
a tot le tailléor d’argent,  
et les morsiax lor met devant  
sor un gastel qui fu antiers.  

(Perceval, 3268-3277)

33 There are exceptions. The surviving fragment of Gormont et Isembart, for example, indicates a lost episode involving the service of a peacock which could not be eaten, while Raoul de Cambrai also features feasting scenes.
But this is a meal which accentuates activity, rather than static abundance, and the real food is shortly overwhelmed by the repeated appearance of the grail, and Perceval's repressed curiosity about it. As if to reflect this focus, Chrétien keeps the rest of the meal vague:

Li mangiers fu et biaux et buens.  \(\text{(Perceval, 3303)}\)

Significantly, it is only once the meal is over that the dessert of exotic and costly fruits and spices can again be given in concrete detail. This supper has been primarily a visual, mystical feast rather than a simple act of bodily nourishment.

It is easy to see how the assumption that medieval diners were uninterested in what they ate has been backed up by glances into early texts, such as those of Chrétien, and also of Marie de France. The latter is even more reticent about specific foods. In her Lai de Lanval, the otherworldly feast offered to Lanval by his mysterious lover is recounted this way:

L'ewe li donent a ses meins  
E la tuaille a essuier;  
Puis li aportent a mangier.  
Od s'amie prist le super:  
Ne feseit mie a refuser!  
Mut fu serviz curteisement  
E il a grant joie le prent.  
Un entremes i ot plenier,  
Ki mut pleiset al chevalier,  
Kar s'amie baisout sovent  
E acolot estreitement.\(^3\)

The only "dish" mentioned here is the entremets, which is evidently of the non-edible kind. Meals in early romances and Marie's Lais are regularly long on tables, napes, henaps, tuailles, colpes, etc., but make little acknowledgement of what is eaten and drunk in the courtly hall.

There are a number of reasons for this reticence. First, the courtly origins and audiences of all such texts are significant. No matter how lavish the feast described, it can always be broken down into relatively ordinary foodstuffs. If a peasant does not consume lark or partridge regularly, he is certainly aware of them, both on the wing and on the platter. Most foods are to some extent public and common, and the acts of eating and drinking definitely are. What distinguishes the noble diet most thoroughly from that of others, then, is not what is eaten but how it is served up. So to emphasise the "nobility" of a text, the best procedure is to outline the setting and perhaps

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leave audiences with a coy hint that the food and drink involved would boggle
the imagination.

Similarly, to omit or strictly limit details of food and drink in texts with
a strong accent on the merveilleux reinforces the separateness and
inaccessibility of the world depicted. The inhabitants of Faerie or even
Arthurian half-reality do not eat the same food as us, or at least in their
world it tastes different.35

Finally, there is the matter, discussed in the introductory section of this
chapter, of the incompatibility of food and discourse, the problem of
integrating eating into action. The questing hero of early romance eats when
there is a structural purpose to it; he does not keep a wallet of oats in his
saddlebag. Indeed, even when a meal represents an important moment in the
plot, the details of it are often omitted. The “interruption interrupted” is a
standard device for launching a whole series of events or exploits: a rich but
vague feast at court is suddenly disrupted by the arrival of an unknown, and the
company is jerked away from the pleasant complacency of eating and drinking to
be pushed into involvement in adventure.

Already in Chrétien, however, physical food becomes important when it cannot
be taken for granted. Yvain’s madness reduces him to the level of a wild man
whose only concern is survival, hence the focus on his hunting, and his eating
of raw meat. His return to sanity can be charted through food and drink; the
bread and water and cooked game he consumes realign him physically with the
rest of humanity, while his silent co-operation with the hermit over meal
preparation is a kind of acknowledgement of the social norms of communal
dining.36 As we shall see, the motif of food and drink for the outsider comes to
the fore in some thirteenth- and fourteenth-century romances.

35 Developing the line of thought that otherworldly equates with not-very-
toothsome, the Middle English Land of Cokaygne (in Historical Poems of the
Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries, ed. Rossell Hope Robbins; New York:
Columbia U. P., 1959) presents the ultimate in otherworlds, Paradise, as a
gastronomic purgatory:

bo3 peradis be miri and bri3t
cokayn is of fairir si3t
what is per in peradis
bot grasse, and flure and grene ris?
bo3 per be ioi and gret dute
per nis met bote frute.
per nis halle, bure, no benche
bot watir, man-is turst to quenche.

(p. 121, ll. 5-12)

Before we examine those works, however, let us return to that other category of early vernacular narrative, focussed on the "fighting community" rather than the courtly world as a whole: the chansons de geste of the twelfth century. Their use of food and drink can be quite different from that of romance, depending on the predominant orientation of an individual work. In the Chanson de Roland, for instance, the accent is on heroism in the face of adversity, with the epic struggle between Christians and Saracens manifesting the ongoing war between right and wrong. Food and drink are unworthy of attention alongside the loftier preoccupations of the text. (A strong physical component is nonetheless supplied through the battle scenes themselves. In most of the chansons de geste, the carnage bears a very literal resemblance to butchery—the profusion of cleft spines, hacked-off limbs, exposed sinews and entrails, etc., effectively turns men's bodies to meat.) The nearest we are brought to the kitchen in Roland is Ganelon's humiliation at the hands of the imperial cooks. This incident is a variation on what Curtius calls kitchen humour; the cook had been the object of ridicule because of his dirty duties and greasy appearance since Roman times, and to have Ganelon tormented by Charlemagne's kitchen staff is to show how worse-than-untouchable his treachery has made him.

In several poems of the Guillaume cycle, on the other hand, literal food and drink are both abundant and specific. In the Chanson de Guillaume, the opening scene shows Tedbald and Esturmi so drunk they can barely stand up, and it is in fact their drunkenness that leads to the rash decision to take on the Saracens without summoning Guillaume. (Interestingly enough, given Islam's interdiction of alcohol, the Muslims in chansons de geste are as likely as Christians to be portrayed as wine-impaired.) Later in the Chanson, though, the consuming of food and drink appears in a more positive light, as something mainly done to restore strength after an exhausting exploit or a discouraging loss. The messenger Girard is well fed by Guibourc at a high table:

Ele li aportat un grant pain a tamis
E dunc en après sun grant mazelin de vin.
Girard mangat le braun porcin,
E a dous traiz a voidé le matelin

37 The term is from Lynnette Muir, Literature and Society in Medieval France (London: MacMillan, 1985).


39 All references to the Chanson de Guillaume are taken from La Chanson de Willame, ed. Nancy V. Iseley (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1961).

Guibouc’s reaction makes it clear that a healthy appetite not only marks the young messenger as a relation of Guillaume, but also shows his strength and valour:

"... Ben dure guere deit rendre a sun veisin
Ne ja vilment ne de champ fuir."

(Chanson de Guillaume, 1057-58)

After the defeat at Archamp, Guillaume himself consumes almost the same meal, plus a peacock and two loaves of wastel bread. He marks his depression by choosing a low table, but his appetite does not seem hindered. After his second defeat, however, the quantity of food Guibourc has prepared for 4000, most of them killed, finally overwhelms her returning husband, physically and morally. He sits at the lowest table of the prepared but empty hall, and though he does eat, the excess of food has become more the material of rhetoric than of physical strength.

Dunc prent s’amie par les mances de paille
Sus munterent les degrez de marbre;
Ne trovent home que service lur face.
Dame Guiburc li curt aporter l’eve
E aprés li baillad la tuaille
Puis sunt assis a la plus basse table,
Ne poins de duel seer a la plus halte.
Il veit les bancs, les formes e les tables
La u soleit seer sun grant barnage.
Il ne vit nul juer par cele sale,
Ne deporter od eschés ne od tables
Puis les regrette cum gentil home deit faire.

"Ohi, bone sale, cum estes lung e lee!
De totes parz voz vei si aurre,
Beneit seil la dame qui si t’ad conreié.
Ohi, haltes tables, cum estes levees!
Napes de lin vei desure getees,
Ces escuiles emplies es rasees
De hanches e d’espalles, de niueles e de obleies
N’i mangerunt les fiz de franches meres
Qui en l’Archamp unt les testes colpees!

(Chanson de Guillaume, 2387-2407)

Interestingly enough, this non-meal has many of the rhetorical elements, albeit negated, of the romance courtly feast: the concentration on the hall, the tables, the abundance, the social games, the conviviality. It is as if failure in the battlefield has led to a return to the softer side of courtly life, as typified by the preoccupations of romance. When the macho world of epic adventure collapses, there is time for eating, but no true pleasure to be
gained from it.  

With the introduction of the gigantic Rainouart in the second section of the poem, the associations between appetite and valour reappear with a vengeance. Not only is Rainouart capable of consuming prodigious amounts of food (2675-2680), but his strength is actually complemented by his continuing presence in the kitchen. At Guillaume and Guibourc's castle, he chooses to work and sleep there:

Espee ceinte vait les hastes turner. (2855)

Despite the bouffonnerie of his character, he comes across as infinitely more honourable than the knights who taunt him. A professional association with food and drink -- not to mention the yoke that is his chosen arm -- ought to exclude him from knightly battle according to the prevailing noble world view, but the author of the Chanson de Guillaume enjoys turning the assumptions of his characters (and audiences) on their head. (However, it is little surprise when Rainouart turns out to be really the brother of Guibourc.)

In the later Moniage Guillaume and Moniage Rainouart, the larger-than-life qualities, in particular appetites, of both characters are pushed to extremes. The monks complain about Guillaume's eating habits:

A paines june de midi dusqu'a none:  
Au main menjue trois mices grans et bones,  
N'i remaint point de mie ne de croste.  
Quant a des feves si demande la joute  
Et les poissons et le bon vin encontre;  
D'un grant sestier n'en remanra ja gote.  

(Moniage Guillaume, 1ère rédaction, 201-206)

Given a monastic diet, Guillaume cannot help eating more than one man's share. However, individualism again comes off better than conformity. Guillaume's appetite is coupled with a dedication to liberality that puts the monks' self-

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41 In some ways, the depiction of the hall in Guillaume resembles that of the violated Heorot after Grendel's raid in Beowulf. Formerly the scene of merrymaking, it has become a place of sorrow. However, unlike in Beowulf, where it is introduced as a focal point for the gathering of warriors, the hall has not previously furnished much interest in Guillaume. There is something very moving about the description of a vanished world whose presence has been barely acknowledged beforehand. Guillaume pays tribute to the complete humanity of his knights when it is too late for them to show it themselves.

42 All references to the Moniage Guillaume are taken from the Cloetta edition, op. cit.

serving stinginess to shame.

In the early romances, food and drink tend to be overshadowed by the ritual of the courtly meal, whether lavish feast or small private dinner. In twelfth century epic, they may act as support for characterisation, physically and morally sustaining the knightly individual, making him stand out amongst his fellows. For true attention to details of food and drink within the noble world, however, we must turn to a group of later romances that generally reject the merveilleux (though they certainly stretch the bounds of the probable) and avoid getting caught up in blow-by-blow accounts of military escapades. These are the thirteenth-century Guillaume de Dole and Escoufle of Jean Renart, and the fourteenth-century Roman du Comte d'Anjou of Jean Maillart.

It has been noted that "près d'un vingtième des 5600 vers de Guillaume de Dole est consacrée à des narrations quasi pantagrueliques. Et la proportion n’est pas moindre dans L’Escoufle: le récit d’un seul repas y occupe presque cent vers de texte."44 Certainly, Renart shows none of the restraint of more traditional romance in dealing with food and drink. (His interest in meal descriptions is all the more evident and amusing in that he uses what could be called a courtly demurring formula – "Ne sont pas a conter legier / Li mes, tant en i ot divers" (5449-50) – then goes on to describe the feast anyway.) His attitude toward food and drink, however, is more that of the studied gourmet than of the abandoned Pantagruel. In his meal coverage, we see a sustained concern with food preparation and quality. In Guillaume de Dole, for example, we read of "flaons de let" and "porciax farsiz" (1243) and find allusions to seasonal variation in diet:

N’est rien qui a viande mont
Por qu’ele soit bone en esté,
Dont il n’ait a grant plenté ... 

(375-77)

In L’Escoufle, it is not just the author who shows regard for preparation and quality, but also the practically-minded fugitive Guillaume. During his flight with Aelis, he orders a picnic:

Il fait le soir en la touaille
Lier le sel et les gastiax,
Et si fait remplir ses bouciaus
De bon vin froit u de raspé.
Li pasté sont envelopé
De l’une part en la besace;
En l’autre tele eure est fouace
U char froide u geline en rost,

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Puis la ferme, c'on ne li ost
Sa viandé et son afaire...

(L'Escoufle, 4296-4305)

With the interest in specific food and drink comes a more realistic presentation of the courtly household. For noble diners, the food may be in season, but for lesser members of the household, quality control is rather looser. When Guillaume makes self-deprecating remarks about his table to the Emperor Conrad's messenger Nicole, saying that the Emperor's board must be far superior, the latter replies

-"Sire," dit il, "ce n'est pas doute,
Mes venoison qui flere toute
De senglers, de cers sanz seson,
De ce avons a grant foison,
Et de pastez viez et moussiz:
Quant il ne sont preuz as souriz,
Lors sont il bon as escuiers!"  

Because versions of this state of affairs are referred to at several other points over the two romances, we can confirm a strong edge of cynicism in Renart's view of courtly life. He exploits his own position on the margins of noble society: he can relish food and drink as a romancier writing in the more standard tradition could not. Rita Lejeune has likened his concrete style and ironic perspective to aspects of the fabliaux; however, there is not quite the same preoccupation with economic and sensual overtones of food here. Rather, Renart presents the most complete and accurate vision so far of food in the aristocratic household.

Maillart's Roman du comte d'Anjou (ca. 1316) shows even more of an obsession with food and drink. Alice Planche has calculated that a sixth of its lines deal with alimentation, though a large number of these consist of simple references to "manger", "boire", "pain" or "vin". The misadventures of the count of Anjou's daughter, however, take her through extremes of luxury and deprivation, and when particulars of meals are given, they are among the most revealing in medieval literature. It is after she and her governess have left the court of her incestuous father that she gets her first taste of harsh reality. An old woman agrees to give the two companions bread,

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Mes il n’estoit mie sanz paille,
Ainz ert dur et noir et moysi.

_Le Roman du comte d’Anjou_. 1100-1101

The sight of it sets the young girl off on an extraordinary lament, 58 lines long, in which almost every kind of medieval luxury food is mentioned, in every guise (1104-1162). Vegetables are absent from the catalogue, as is _grosse char_ — beef, pork, and mutton. The girl remembers only fowl (wild and domestic), game, fish, and pastries, along with their garnishes and the ways in which they were prepared. Of beverages, she recalls only wine, scented, spiced, or naturally flavoured from fourteen different regions.

If, in this evocation, words fill "tant mal que bien" the hollowness left by hunger, it is not long before the girl must turn to real food to keep going. This is first the disdained bread itself, and later a full meal prepared by a humble woman of Orléans:

Mez, s’auncun me fesoit demande
Quiex mes ne quans elles mengierent,
Je di que pois reschaufez ieren
Du jour devant, et puis des oez.
Male viande iert a leur oez:
Du pain noir et de l’iaue plate.

Reheated peas, themselves the food of the poorest and an attribute of fools; eggs, which an aristocrat would never eat as an independent dish; bread of the coarsest kind; water — here we have what is probably one of the most accurate reflections of a peasant diet in literature, complete with acknowledgement of its unappetising character. Yet it is only when an aristocrat consumes it that it becomes worthy of note.

In the _Roman du comte d’Anjou_, when food and drink can be taken for granted, they remain almost as vague as in the romances of Chrétien. But Maillart sends his heroine on a forced march through the real world, and then her food and drink, both remembered and real, come sharply into focus.

To sum up: the food and drink of nobles in narrative genres may be quite specifically outlined from a very early stage, as in the _Guillaume_ cycle, but more in the cause of myth-making than of realism. Otherwise, the tendency, in both romance and epic, is to concentrate on action, which references to eating

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47 Jean Maillart, _Le Roman du comte d’Anjou_, ed. Mario Roques (Paris: Champion, 1931). All references to the _Roman du comte d’Anjou_ are taken from this edition.

48 Planche, "Table," p. 258.

and drinking would only delay. Meals shared with poor and isolated hermits are occasionally described, but not too thoroughly; hard days in the forest are very much temporary inconveniences for early heroes. By the thirteenth century, with a move away from the merveilleux, courtly feasts are observed more carefully and with a more critical eye. But the setting remains limited; the bottom level of society included is that of the squires, who are still within the castle walls, albeit lacking a place at its banqueting tables. It is in the fourteenth century that the romance heroine finally sets off into the real world. Even before she goes, it is clear that the commercial society of wine-producing towns has influenced the literature of the court; only through her travels, however, does the court world come into vivid contact with that of the rural and urban poor. Food and drink are dramatic markers of the clash. The food and drink of the literary noble are no longer contained in a fictional space more rarefied than that of the real-life social stratum of the nobility, but contextualised. The cloak of courtliness has been torn.

It remains for us to take a brief look at aristocratic food and drink in lyric poetry to the mid-fourteenth century. The use of alimentary imagery in the courtly lyric before Deschamps is not unknown, but it is rare enough to be striking when it does occur. In general, to be a worthy lover and a courtly poet, in northern France at least, meant eschewing most allusions to the base, mundane aspects of human existence. Thus we have, in Thibaut de Champagne, for example, only heavily rhetorical images of nourishment, ingestion, digestion: food and drink with the taste removed. Chanson 24 includes this stanza:

\[
\begin{align*}
& \text{En moi n'a pas abstinence} \\
& \text{Que je puisse ailleurs penser} \\
& \text{Fors qu'à, ou conoissance} \\
& \text{Ne merci ne puis trouver.} \\
& \text{Bien fui fez pour li amer} \\
& \text{Car ne m'en puis saouler . . .}
\end{align*}
\]

(17-22)\(^50\)

Chansons 4 and 58 are other pieces that feature food or drink transformed for figurative use. We will be looking at such non-literal use food and drink in more detail toward the end of this chapter.

The courtly sub-genre of the sotte-chanson does feature numerous references to food and drink.\(^51\) But their presence here actually reinforces their absence from the mainstream grand chant courtois. For the sottes-chansons are parodies, poking fun at the conventional settings and rhetoric of courtly poetry. The role of food and drink in creating these literary insiders' jokes

\(^{50}\) Les Chansons de Thibaut IV de Champagne, ed. A. Wallenskold, SATF (Paris: Edouard Champion, 1925), pp. 47-44.

\(^{51}\) See the poems published in Deux recueils de sottes chanons, ed. Arthur Långfors (Helsinki: Academia Scientiarum Fennica, 1945).
will be examined later.

There are, however, a few poets working just within the bounds of thirteenth-century court culture who manage to bring food and drink into the lyric without obviously parodying existing conventions. Many of Colin Muset's chansons, for instance, are the clearest precursors in French literature to at least a part of Deschamps' repertoire of food-and-drink poems. For Muset, like Deschamps after him, portrays himself as a bon vivant from whose mind the delights of the table are never far away. Of the 21 poems Bédier attributes to him, 10 make food and/or drink a significant theme. The foods mentioned are generally quite noble fare: chickens, capons, wine, fat roast goose, jancellie (jaune ailli), tarts, sucking pigs, beef (improved by being served "a la verde savor"), mallards, pheasants and venison. But the catalogue does not exclude simple pork, mutton and beef, the grosse char of everyday eating for middle and upper classes. Sauces are named, but not spices; information about preparation is given only allusively. Muset's gastronomic pleasures are those of the diner; his lists are never heavy with detail, but seek to create swift, vivid impressions of physical experience. His treatment of wine is similar: unconcerned with the snob appeal of origins, he speaks rather of "vin sus lie" (stored still, so that the sediment is kept well away from the rest of the contents of the barrel) or "cleir" or "Froit et fort et friandel".

Muset's rapport with the court would probably have been that of a typical trouvère/minstrel. At times, he would have been privileged to enjoy its luxuries to the full; at others, unfairly (in his eyes) denied enough sustenance to count as salary. The contexts in which he uses food and drink reflect his varying circumstances.

In several cases mention of food or drink completes an image of sensual love in a pastoral setting (I, II, IX, XV). This group of poems, despite their concrete imagery, have little of the earthy peasant atmosphere found in pastourelles and bergeries. The lady of the meadow is simply but richly dressed, and the food or drink the poet shares (or would like to share) with her is sometimes vague, but never rustic.

Food may also appear, in Colin Muset, as a kind of antidote to love. In the tenson (IV) between Jacques d'Amiens and the poet, Muset tries to discourage his colleague from love because of the falseness and greed it entails and the misery it brings. For himself, he says:


53 In the "Dit de Franc Gontier", peasant food — onions, garlic, etc. — will be celebrated as a symbol of the rejection of the corruption of noble life. Here, on the other hand, it is a case of courtly delicacies linked with the elitist and even literary conventions of the outdoor May frolic.
Even here, the vocabulary of food and drink is still strongly tinged with eroticism. The fat capons suggest fleshly pleasure; the cakes, "blanc come flor", are described in similar terms to a desired lady; the "vin sor lie" evokes ideas of a bed.

His allegiance to food and drink is certainly more stable than his loyalty to the lords in whose courts he performs. But then, eating and drinking are comfortable indoor activities, in contrast to following one's employer around on military campaigns. The song "Quant je voi lou tans refroidier" praises the pleasures of sitting by the fire with clear wine and fat capons, rather than riding forth to set fires and lay waste to the property of one's enemies. The opposition between private life and public war, between the comforts of home and the misery of forays into foreign lands in hostile weather -- these are themes that will be greatly developed by Deschamps, with particular reference to food and drink.

Even peace-time life in court has its drawbacks, in particular the fickleness of patrons. In "Sire cuens, j'ai viei", Colin Muset complains of not having been paid, and proceeds to describe two scenarios, one in which his shrewish wife reacts to a purse "de vent farcie", and a second in which the whole household celebrates his return "le sac enfle". The ripple effect of wealth is twice demonstrated here: directly, in the delight with which it is welcomed, and indirectly, in that it makes the poet's bourgeois household into a kind of mini-court in its own right. The poet has returned a prince, and typically, food adds to his pleasure:

Ma fame va destrousser  
Ma male sanz demer;  
Mon garçon va abuvrer  
Mon cheval et conrer;  
Ma pucele va tuer  
Deus chapons pour deporter  
A la jansse alie;  
Ma fille m'aporte un pigne  
En sa main par cortoisie.  
Lors sui de mon ostel sire  
A mult grant joie sanz ire  
Plus que nuls ne porroit dire.  

(V, 37-48)

No wonder, given the choice, he will seek to winter in a court which can be counted on for liberality:
The above poem is a sketch of a minstrel's Utopia, at least as far as physical conditions go. It should be noted, though, that Colin Muset is only rarely concerned with physical pleasures and problems for the whole of a chanson. In general, his allusions to food and drink are concentrated in the last or penultimate stanza. Thus, a poem often appears to progress (or regress?) from a literary or moral beginning to a solid base in human needs and comforts. Yet despite his own precarious existence, and despite the earthiness of some of his phrases, Colin Muset remains a poet of the court. He does not attack or ridicule his patrons, but writes in their style, only appending or occasionally interweaving references to food and drink in order to provide humour at his own expense, or a joking reminder of the importance of things courtiers might well take for granted.

Still, Muset remains quite exceptional in his liberal use of food and drink in aristocratic settings, both literal and literary. The courtly lyric did stay considerably less susceptible to gastronomic temptations than narrative genres of the same milieu. Only Deschamps will truly develop the technique of mixing concrete food into courtly form, forms that by his day will be more structured than ever -- even as the courtly world becomes increasingly vulnerable to change.

2.2 Food, Drink and the Fictional Towndweller

Literature concerning the town and its inhabitants, whether or not it is actually the product of such a milieu,54 is distinct in its typical themes,

images and forms from that which focuses on the court. The characteristics of this literature include a considerable interest in sexuality (rather than codified love), topical debate and satire (rather than adventures from a distant, invented world), and economic reality (rather than the philosophical opposition between avarice and largesse). With regard to food and drink, whereas the imaginary aristocrat eats and drinks selectively, in terms both of what is consumed and of the importance of that consumption in narrative or lyric structure, the imaginary towndweller is a voracious omnivore. This is not to say that his activities always involve a disproportionate amount of eating and drinking. However, he (or she) is open to the consuming experience in all its details: its succulence and sensuality, its logistical problems, its variability according to fortune.

One point needs clarification here: who is this "towndweller"? I have chosen to avoid using the term "bourgeois", laden as it is with connotations concerning degrees of wealth or class. For the purposes of this discussion, the towndweller will be any character whose existence is formed or affected by some relationship to secular community life, whether that community be village, town or city. The interfaces between the intellectual (or pseudo-intellectual) student, the wealthy merchant, the female administrator-of-household, the parish priest, the prostitute, the rogue, and the struggling poet, as afforded by such a community, are all important in the literature of the town.

Just as the real-life sphere of the towndweller is distinct from that of the noble, so his literary space is his own. While he tends to be a marginal figure in epic or romance, he is often a central one in drama or fabliau. As for short poems, both noble and "peasant" far outstrip the towndweller as a source of inspiration for mainstream lyric compositions. On the other hand, the food and drink of the towndweller may provide the subject matter of a merry "chanson bachique", or a point of realism in the dits of Rutebeuf.

Drama is a source for some of the most straightforward representations of town life. Within a play whose overall structure is shaped by didactic or satirical purpose, a town scene of careful realism can reinforce the invitation to the audience to identify with the onstage action. In particular, we find in the 13th-century plays from Arras a wealth of indications concerning food and drink in the context of the urban environment, and especially in the context of the tavern.

Tavern scenes occur in all the Arras plays except Le Jeu de Robin et de Marion (which chooses an alternative set of literary conventions -- those of the pastourelle and bergerie -- as determining forces on its setting). Each of
Courtois d’Arras,55 Le Jeu de saint Nicolas,56 and Le Jeu de la Feuillée57 makes use of action set within a tavern as moments of significant impact on the overall development of the play. In Courtois, for instance, the tavern scene contains the entire “rake’s progress” of the prodigal son in one evening’s revelry and dupery. Where the parable in Luke 15 mentions the son’s misfortunes only fleetingly, Courtois imagines them vividly, devoting 334 out of 662 lines to the protagonist’s delights and downfall. In St. Nicolas, the tavern scenes are multiple -- 251-313, 588-991, 1016-1183, 1274-1333 – and provide the ongoing base for the thieves who put St. Nicolas to the test. In Feuillée, by contrast, the actual time spent in the tavern is rather brief: just the scene occupying lines 899-1096. This is, however, the episode that concludes the play; the tavern is, in effect, the play’s destination, the final gathering-place for the “bourgeoisie bestounee d’Arras”.58

The tavern is always partially defined by allusions to food and drink consumed there. Courtois is lured into its premises through a combination of his own fantasy and the tantalising cry of the host’s “boy”:

Dieus! tant escot de sols et maille!
Quant avrai jou tout ce gasté?
Qui eüst un cambon salé
et plain pot de bon vin sor lie,
sor un petit de raverdie
se fesisf ja trop bon mucier!

[the boy cries the wine]

Chaiens est li vin de Soisgons!
Sor l’erbe verde et sor les jons
fait bon boivre a hanap d’argent;
çaiens croit l’en a tote gent,
chaiens boivent et fol et sage,
chaiens ne laisse nus son gage!

(96-108)

The naïve Courtois takes the advertisement, such a neat reply to his wish, for reality. Throughout the scene that follows, the idea of the tavern as a place of decadence and deceit will develop, enhanced by touches such as Pourette’s doubts on the quality of the wine being drunk. The offerings of the tavern are in evident contrast to the simple life that Courtois has left behind on his

55 Courtois d’Arras, ed. Edmond Faral (Paris: Champion, 1911). All references to Courtois will be taken from this edition.


57 Adam de la Halle, Le Jeu de la Feuillée, ed. Jean Dufournet (Ghent: Story-Scientia, 1977). All references to Feuillée will be taken from this edition.

father’s estate (where he ate bread and peas\textsuperscript{59}) and the elemental existence to which he will be reduced as the swineherd of the bourgeois (eating bread full of straw and sour, bitter peas\textsuperscript{60}) but they form the link between the two. From a rural paradise, Courtois will pass through a “Vile Taverne”\textsuperscript{61} to arrive at a disenchanted, spoiled (and realistic) version of rural life, before returning once again to his father’s house. The excitement of the tavern’s food and drink disguises its danger.

In St. Nicolas, Raoulet’s wine cry is a good deal more elaborate:

\begin{verbatim}
Le vin aforé de nouvel
A plain lot et a plain tonnel,
Sade, bevant et plain et gras,
Rampant comme escuireus en bos,
Sans nul mors de pourri ne d’aigre,
Seur lie, court et sec et maigre,
Cler con larme de pecheour,
Croupant seur langue a lecheour:
Autre gent n’en doivent gouster!
\end{verbatim}

(642-50)

But then, he is targeting Pincédés, a more seasoned connoisseur of the good things in life than Courtois. The sales pitch includes a tasting:

\begin{verbatim}
Vois con il mengue s’escume
Et saut et estinchele et frit!
Tien le seur le langue un petit
Si sentiras ja autre vin.
\end{verbatim}

(655-658)

We shall return to an examination of the rhetoric in this passage. What is important to notice here is that it is rhetorical, full of vivid metaphor; that the wine in a sense ennobles the situation, which is in itself just a case of an employee trying to attract business from a rather unprepossessing potential client.

In Feuillé, wine is treated more cynically from its first mention onward. Only the monk, the outsider, needs to have it “sold” to him; the rest of the company, regulars, can joke about its quality:

Guillot: . . . il fu voir escaudés en yaué,
Si sent un peu le rebouture.

(943-944)

\footnotesize

\textsuperscript{59} I. 51.

\textsuperscript{60} I. 498-499, 508-511, 542-554.

The comment indicates that we are once again in the stereotypical tavern setting, where the host is dishonest and the wine impure. Despite all this, most of the play's cast is to be found there: familiarity has hardly bred contempt.

Wine is not drunk alone, but the foods in these scenes play only a supporting role. Salt ham and herring, producing a prodigious thirst, are the tavern-keepers' means of keeping the drink, and money, flowing.62

From even before the first drop is poured, wine elicits from the heterogeneous urban gathering responses ranging from respect to contempt, from greed to flamboyant verbal imagery. As it is consumed, it generates much garrulous conversation, especially about itself. The qualities most admired in wine may have changed between the thirteenth century and the present day, but the passion for discussing them has remained constant. However, whereas modern-day wine appreciation seems to be largely a preserve of the elite, medieval literature shows it to be a much more democratic pursuit. We have already seen how the courtly-romance heroine in Le Roman du comte d'Anjou mourns the array of wines she used to enjoy at her father's court. In the Arras plays, we see thieves, prostitutes and cheating landlords in taverns alongside wealthy bourgeois and clerics, all well-versed in the significance of origins, age, storage, dispensing procedure, colour, and viscosity of wine -- and all made vulnerable by it, at risk of being stripped of their hypocritical veneers, or simply gypped of their purses. At first transformed by hyperbole into a symbol of luxury and inspiration, wine very easily becomes the instrument of deceit.

Nevertheless, the depiction of wine in tavern scenes also gives full honour to the inherent pleasure in the recklessness of intoxication. If separated from its costs and consequences, the drinking of wine is first and foremost a festive act. The group of short poems that Jeanroy and Långfors have called chansons bachiques63 devote themselves to praising such uncomplicated pleasures. It is not certain to which milieu they belong, but they are more like the poems of the Goliards than of the trouvères. One could easily imagine such songs being composed to commemorate the positive side of the tavern experience, or even to be sung during a drinking bout. In several of them, the collective voice gives the sense of a specific group of drinkers celebrating


Some of the characteristics of Deschamps’s “drinking society” poems are already visible here.

If the chansons bachiques are poems for a night out, several of Rutebeuf’s dits seem reflections of the morning after. The persona that Rutebeuf most frequently adopts in his personal poetry is that of the “poor fool who has lost everything.” In Rutebeuf, food and drink are rarely examined or enjoyed for themselves; they are just the route to, or a sign of, the poet’s present misery. Sometimes that misery can be partially traced to origins in the tavern, as in the Griesche d’esté: range font du vin trere; Or entre boule, Ne bovent pas, chacun le coule; Tant en entomènt par la goule, Ne lor souvient Se robe acheter lor covent. (77-82)

(The perspective here is so affected by hindsight that the feeling of joyful abandon has been overwhelmed by the cold reality of the aftermath.) Sometimes, too, the poet’s grumblings can be the result of a general, inexorable decline in fortunes; in this case, food allusions stand for result rather than cause. In Le mariage Rutebeuf, the poet writes:

Avant que viegne avril ne may Viendra quaresme. De ce vous dirai ge mon esme: De poisson autant com de cresme Avra ma fame; Grant loisir a de sauver s’ame; Or geûtnt por la douce Dame Qu’ele a loisir . . .

(81-88)

Lent, in Rutebeuf, is not just a literal season, but an image for a dismal, protracted state of affairs that can occur at any time. It needs little illustration. Indeed, Rutebeuf’s use of food and drink rarely goes beyond the mention of a few elements: bread, wine, fish, cream. Literal food in his work is just enough to show the difference between starvation and survival, poverty and plenty, distress and pleasure.

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64 Ibid., XLIII, XLIV and XLV.
Both comic theatre and the poetry of Rutebeuf seek to portray aspects of real and public city life. By contrast, the fabliaux create a fictional, private urban space. Instead of bringing individuals into contact with a wider world, they select a few characters and a limited setting, wiping out what is extraneous. The presence of food within this space is often exaggerated; it is there to emphasize aspects of the narrative or the didactic message, rather than to strive for verisimilitude.

For example, in the Vilain asnier,67 food demonstrates the rigidity of class distinction. A peasant faints in the "rue des espices" and can only be revived by having a piece of dung waved under his nose. The moral, of sorts, is to keep to one's own nature. The story seems to reflect a kind of paranoia over the shifting fortunes that were a fact of town life.

In the fabliaux, too, food can be served up behind closed doors in situations that clearly link it to sexuality. Marie-Thérèse Lorcin has studied how "bain, amour et gastronomie" often go together.68 Food and drink are not only a part of foreplay, they also demonstrate distinctions not of class but of affection. In Du prestre qui fu mis au lardier,69 a husband is told by his three-year-old daughter that, when he is away, it is, of course, a case of the choicest morsels going to the lover.

Sometimes the fabliaux describe the diet of a character who is poor, or make use of hunger as a motivation to action. More typically, however, these stories deal with the adventures of those who have plenty of material assets, yet who do not require the decorous restraint of description that is accorded to nobles at table in more aristocratic genres. Most characters in the fabliaux relish their food. The woman in the Dit des perdrix70 cannot resist the smell of partridges as they cook; her indulgence in these, coupled with language rich in suggestiveness, hints at the insatiability of her other appetites. This image of woman as consuming machine forms part of many a


68 Marie-Thérèse Lorcin, Facons de sentir et de penser: les fabliaux français (Paris: Champion, 1979), pp. 120-123.


misogynist portrait from the thirteenth century onward.\textsuperscript{71}

It is the priest, however, whose culinary and sexual appetites are often the most luxurious. In the fabliau Du prestre et du chevalier,\textsuperscript{72} the priest is presented as worldly in the extreme, keeping not only a mistress but also a very fine table (for which he plans to make his guest, the knight, pay dearly). Food and drink demonstrate his corruption and greed in the first instance, not only through their abundance, but through the priest's assignment of a specific monetary value to each item proffered. His parody of liberality will prove his undoing when the knight decides to retaliate by demanding that sexual services be added to his bill. The progression from nourishment to sex in such a literary context is almost seamless. In the end, the cleric must accept responsibility for his own fate and renounce the sin of covetousness.\textsuperscript{73} Food and drink, in this fabliau, help provide a concrete, specific weight of deceit in the priest's dealings with the knight, which the knight successfully converts to fodder for his own revenge.

2.3 Food Habits of the Religious in Literature

We have already seen (Chapter One and above) how secular literature often portrayed the religious as overly fond of their food. At the same time, of course, mystics were producing their own writings, in which severe asceticism, often conveyed through inverted or negative food images, is central.\textsuperscript{74}

In some works, too, a writer uses food to help mark the difference between

\textsuperscript{71} Cf. Gobin de Reims, chanson satirique XXXI in the Jeanroy and Lángfors collection. In fact, Gobin debases women's sexual appetites by claiming that women are easily "bought" for a little food or drink:

\textit{En non Dieu, ce dit GOBIN:}
\begin{itemize}
  \item Mainte feme fait par vin
  \item Assez de desloiauté;
  \item Por un pasté de conin
  \item Ou por l'ele d'un poucin
  \item En fait on sa volenté.
  \item Ce n'est mie chiere vile
  \item Quant por un pasté d'anguile
  \item Puet on tel marchié trover.
  \item Cil est fous qu'i met vint livres,
  \item Estre doit tenuz pour yvres,
  \item Bien doit le borel porter.
\end{itemize}

\textsuperscript{72} Montaiglon et Raynaud, \textit{Reçuil}, volume II, pp. 46-61.


\textsuperscript{74} See Bynum, \textit{Holy Feast and Holy Fast}, especially Chapters 4 and 5, pp. 113-186.
good clerics and bad, between ideal and fallen. Rutebeuf’s Dit des Cordeliers is an example. The Franciscans themselves are ennobled through the metaphorical use of spices: "Devant l’Esperie vendent de lor espices; / Ce sont saintes paroles en coi il n’a nul vices" (49-50) whereas their enemies, the abbess and her priest Ytiets, are denigrated through their association with petty theft of cheese (54) and nepotistic entertaining. Ytiets offers to eat leaves and branches rather than let Franciscans hear confessions in his church, but Rutebeuf exposes his rather more lavish ordinary habits:

Bien le deit sosfrir mes [sire] Ytiets li prestres.
Paranz a et parentes mariez a grant festes;
Des biens de Sainte Yglise lor a achetez bestes;
Li biens esperitiex est devenuz terrestres.
(97-100)

It is of course quite artificial to isolate food and drink allusions in this poem – they are minor contributors to a complex polemical structure. Nevertheless, they do reinforce the notion that clerics should maintain certain standards, but are often nowhere close. The inverted “transubstantiation” of "biens esperitiex" into "biens terrestres” underlies many a satirical portrait of a cleric.

2.4 The Déjeuner Champêtre and the Fictional Peasant

In the works we have considered so far, peasants seem to materialize only when characters of more fortunate classes are set astray from their usual milieu and blunder upon the hovel of a woodcutter, widow, poor hermit, etc. Although the meal offered by this humble host to his unexpected guest may save the latter from starvation, it is little appreciated: leftover peas and coarse mouldy bread, coupled with menial company, become simply one more trial for the hero to endure.

There is, however, a more agreeable literary image of the peasant diet to be found in some pre-1350 works. This is that of a simple, natural déjeuner sur l’herbe being enjoyed by a company of simple, natural people. Helen Cooper has stated that the shepherd in medieval bergerie literature has two universal occupations: making music and eating. In fact, the latter of these is not so evident as all that. The pastourelles of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries actually make very rare mention of food or drink, leaning instead upon details

75 For a full discussion of the Dit as political poem, see Regalado, pp. 73-76.

from *reverdie* convention: flowers, grassy glades, songs with light nonsensical refrains.\(^77\) Although these poems are meant to relate a risqué encounter, not only between two individuals but between their two separate worlds, and although it is the shepherdess rather than the knight who is portrayed within her element, the *pastourelles* remain the product of a courtly fantasy. As with much of the output or the courtly world, it is "love" (here, really any corruption thereof, ranging from seduction to rape) that takes pride of place. Details of setting are only given as they may render an essentially unlikely, awkward and potentially exploitational situation more graceful. To depict the shepherdess as gnawing on a piece of garlic at the moment she strikes the knight's eye would undermine this goal of "gentrification".

The explosion of food attributes for peasants does not really take place until the mid-fourteenth century -- just before Deschamps's period of creative activity. However, in the thirteenth century there are a couple of precursors to this vernacular convention. In *Aucassin et Nicolette*, the shepherds, encountered first by the heroine and then by the hero, are presented each time as in the middle of a meal\(^78\) -- although it is no more than a loaf of bread shared out over a cloak they have spread on the ground, albeit with "mout tresgrant joie". In *Le Jeu de Robin et de Marion*,\(^79\) much more attention is paid to food and drink. Marion's mistaking of "heron" for "herring" in effect converts the artificiality of the knight's sport to the concrete reality of plain Lenten food. Bread, fat cheese and apples are Robin's "lover's gifts", and are recycled, with great practicality, as lunch (116-159). Later, with the other shepherds, a more substantial meal is eaten: bread, salt, cress, more (leftover) cheese and apples, two salt hams, fresh sheep's cheese, roast peas and cooked apples (658-672). In addition, Robin promises

\begin{verbatim}
J'ai encore un tel pasté,
Qui n'est mie de lasté,
Que nous mengerons, Marote,
Bec a bec, et moi et vous.
Chi me ratendés, Marote,
Chi venrai parler a vous.
\end{verbatim}

(675-680)

and

\begin{verbatim}
Que jou ai un tel capon
Qui a gros et cras crepon,
\end{verbatim}


\(^{79}\) *Adam de la Halle, Le Jeu de Robin et de Marion*, ed. E. Langlois (Paris: Champion, 1924). All references will be taken from this edition.
Que nous mengerons, Marote,
Bec a bec, et moi et vous.
Chi me ratendés, Marote,
Chi venrai parler a vous.

(683-688)

Whether the last two dishes are to be eaten literally, or whether they are simply metaphors for sexual dalliance, they are consistent with what has gone before: quite plain, elemental foodstuffs, salted but unseasoned and unsauced, to be washed down with spring water. Adam de la Halle keeps the didactic possibilities of his peasants understated, but makes it clear they are content with their lot. When Huart is asked to name the foods he likes best, his choices are not much more elaborate than what will be consumed onstage:

Boin fons de porc pesant et cras,
A le fort aillie de nois.
Chertes, j’en menjai l’autre fois
Tant que j’en euch le menison.

(565-568)

As for Marion, she uses food-reinforced ideals as one of her rebuttals to the knight:

LI CHEVALIERS
Ne soies envers moi si fiere,
Prendes c’est oisel de riviere,
Que j’ai pris, si en mengeras.

MARIONS
J’ai plus kier men fromage cras,
Et men pain et mes boines pumés
Que vostre oisel a tout les plumes;
Ne de riens ne me poés plaire.

(383-389)

Food and drink, in Robin et Marion, are partly there to contribute to caricature, allowing the audience to feel superior to the humble and childlike shepherds. However, they also serve to turn those same shepherds into models of admirable loyalty, buoyancy, wholesomeness and simplicity.

In the mid-fourteenth century, the foods enjoyed by Robin and Marion’s little company will be gathered up, concentrated, and enumerated, along with a few others, in the description of the picnic shared by Franc Gontier and the fair Helaine. But then the message will have become overt: simple

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80 The dishes named are part of two of the many songs that have been inserted “whole” into Le Jeu de Robin et de Marion; thus, they may not be directly tied in with the action of the play. Moreover, these foods appear often in the fabliaux in connection with sexual activity.

81 Adam emphasises the naturalness of the peasant diet by following it through the digestive tract.
independence is better than power in a corrupt world. As the pastoral poem is re-worked over the late fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, becoming a framework for political thought or an allegory of contemporary times, food will often remain present, reassuring audiences of the honest and direct intentions, both of peasant spokesmen and of poets.

3. The Transforming Meal, and the Meal Transformed: Food and Drink in Parody, Satire and Allegory

We have seen how food and drink, in pastoral texts, can go beyond their own literal reality to become banners of sincerity and directness. However, they are perhaps more often used to overturn the literality of a text. Food can be the keystone of parody simply by occurring in a context where it is unexpected. It can humanise allegory to a degree far beyond that of formal personification. In the allegorical satire of Raoul de Houdenc's Songe d'enfer, it is food imagery that makes hell both grimly disgusting and amusingly familiar. In the "pure" allegory of such texts as La Bataille des vins or the Bataille de Carême et de Charnage, food and drink take on a life of their own, absorbing human likes and dislikes, revelries and sufferings into mock titanic struggles.

Let us consider first the case of parody. We have already mentioned, briefly, the use of food and drink in sottes chansons. An example will illustrate how they work within serious structure to produce comic results:

Quant voi vendre char de porc soursamee  
Aus bais estaus au debout des maissiaus,  
De bone Amour ai si la pance enflee  
C'ausi jolis suis com arbelestiaus.  
Dont voil trover chansons, motés, fabliaus . . .  

(VI, 1-5)

In this case, the formula of the natural, lyric setting is undermined from the first line; instead of (for instance) "When I see the flowers beginning to bloom . . . ", it is "When I see spoiling pork meat being sold . . . ". The classic romantic love - poetic creation pair are present in the stanza, but separated and surrounded by meat, bloated bellies and tumbling acrobats. Food and drink are typical of the non-courtly images that generate the humour of these chansons.

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82 This is Långfors's guess of the meaning of "arbelestiaus". Godefroy, however, proposes "little crossbow ", a translation of appropriate sexual suggestion.
Similarly, food and drink figure in parodies of the epic. The most notable of these is the *Chanson d’Audigier*, a grotesque burlesque that is laden with alimentary images, of a kind. In the eighth laisse we find a description of the wedding feast of the hero’s parents:

Les napes estendirent sor estronz sés
et èmpres si mengeent fromaiges trés
puis on eì emprès un autre més;
quatre raz eschaudéz fu entromés.
"Hé Deus! dist Turgibus, que entremés
"qui or etist a boivre un poi après!
"Donc bevez, dist Rainberge, sire ge vés:
"assez aizr a boivre a toz voz més,
"quar j’ai le ventre plain de vent punnais."

Not only is this kind of attention to the details of feasting rare in "straight" chansons de geste, but the details (the rats) themselves would literally upset any "straight" banquet. Food has become a source for images of disgust.

A more benign use of food in parody is found in the famous battle scene at Torelore in *Aucassin et Nicolette*. Instead of weapons, the people fight with fresh cheese, eggs, overripe wild apples and mushrooms. The whole situation mocks the bloody battle scenes that characterize and even dominate much epic literature.

Food and drink become the instruments of satire in Raoul de Houdenc’s *Songe d’enfer*. The hell of Raoul’s vision, as its editor has pointed out, "reek[s] not of sulphur and decay, but of garlic." It provides, incidentally, one of the earliest and most detailed vernacular sources on cuisine outside of cookery books. Hell’s victims, in this allegorical journey, have actually become food, nourishing devils just as their earthly sins have nourished further vices.

Some of the dishes are singularly appropriate:

Aprés champions ont eì
Usuriers cras a desmesure,
Qui bien avoient leur droiture:
Cuit estoient et s’erent tel
Qu’il estoient d’autrui chatel
Lardé si cras desus la coste;
Devant et derriere et encoste
Ot chacuns deus doie de lart.

Raoul goes on to explain that they are never so fat that hell’s recipe does not lard them further, but that they are no special treat, since they are always

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84 Madelyn Timmel Mihm, *Introduction to The Songe d’Enfer of Raoul de Houdenc*, p. 17.
available.

The language of the Songe d’enfer mixes real, concrete foods and allegorical, abstract ones freely: "Papelars a l’hypocrisie" (no doubt also evoking "hypocras" — l. 591); "Sausse de feu, finablement / Destempree de dampnement" (495-496);

Noirs moines a la tanoié,
Vielles prestresses au civé,
Noires nonnains au cretonné;
Sodomites bien cuis en honte.

(592-595)

Thus the infernal banquet continually serves up new surprises, taking the reader from the language of pure admonition to a strange concoction of torment, cannibalism and gastronomy. Menu terminology ties the whole fantastic vision together. The idea for the Songe may have originated in medieval iconography of Hell as cooking pot, but the detail of it depends on the verbal imagination of its author.

If people are turned into food in the Songe d’enfer, the opposite happens in the allegorical battles between Lent and Carnival (La Bataille de Carême et de Charnage85) and among the various wines of France (La Bataille des vins86): food and drink become animate. Because of their own concreteness, food and drink make the ideal combatants in such vigorous and violent battles. These two sample struggles are, however, quite different from each other.

The Bataille de Carême et de Charnage is a pitched conflict between two opposing seasons and ideals, represented as a feudal battle involving two great lords and their armies of foods. Charnage eventually triumphs, with the help of Noël, and Carême is banished for all but six weeks of the year. The theme is not a new one in this thirteenth-century version, and will be reinterpreted at least until the seventeenth century,87 in forms ranging from Deschamps’s ballade 350 to street drama. The use of food in this context keeps the situation popular and inclusive: it evokes everyone’s experience of Lent and Carnival.

The Bataille des vins is a more contained allegory: inside a court, before two human characters (the king and the English priest),88 wines from all regions


88 The use of the English priest as judge of the wines combines two popular stereotypes: that the English were habitual drunkards (see Peter Rickard,
of France argue and fight for supremacy, extolling their virtues of strength, drinkability, and lack of unpleasant after-effects. The authorial voice maintains a certain distance from it all, keeping the audience mindful of the gastronomic delight produced by grouping all the best wines of the kingdom together in one room. A witness would have seen not only "comment estrivoient", but

\[
\ldots \text{com li vin estinceloient} \\
\text{Si que la grans sale et la chambre} \\
\text{Samboit plaine de basme et d'ambre.}
\]

(160-162)

Food and drink as the material of allegory always retain their ability to conjure up fantasies of taste and aroma, the pleasure of the feast or the monotony of the fast. They do so through a combination of their own inherent character, and the relationship that the author creates between them and their rivals. Allegory is comparatively free of metaphorical embellishment; it is shaped out of visions of eating and drinking that already exist.89

4. The Rhetoric of Food and Drink: Metaphors of Taste, Figurative Nourishment

To find a consciously rhetorical treatment of wine, we must return to its "crying" in the streets of the real world, or the realistic representation of it. Raoulet's speech in St. Nicolas is not unique in its many-faceted presentation of the noblest drink. We find a similarly complex and fascinated view of wine in Alexander Neckam,90 a similar touting of it in the Crieries de Paris.91

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90 See Urban Tigner Holmes, Daily Living in the Twelfth Century Based on the Observations of Alexander Neckam in London and Paris (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1952), p. 88. In this extract from De utensilibus, we find Alexander's praise of good raisin wine: it is clear to the bottom of the cup, with the clarity of tears of a penitent; the colour of oxhorn; and "It descends like lightning upon one who takes it—most tasty as an almond nut, quick as a squirrel, frisky as a kid, strong . . . [as] a house of Cistercians or grey monks, emitting a kind of spark; it is supplied with the subtlety of a syllogism of Petit Pont; delicate as fine cotton, it exceeds crystal in its coolness."

91 In Fabliaux et contes, ed. Barbazan and Méon, vol. II, pp. 276-286, especially lines 123-126:

\[
\text{Si crie l'en en plusors leus,}
\]
But the detail of Raoulet’s cry will serve as an indication of the kind of figures wine could generate.

Much here is purely technical, to the same degree as modern wine-tasting terminology. The wine is sapid, supple, solid, full-bodied, high in alcohol, smoky, yet young: the last being the only guarantee of quality in a society which could not safeguard preservation conditions. But what of the similes, “Rampant comme escuireus en bos” and “Cler con larme de pecheour”, and the metaphorical “Croupant seur langue a lecheour”? It would seem that these are all versions of standard ways of expressing ideas about wine (as the resemblance of their rhetoric to that of Neckam suggests). Yet they nonetheless invite more reflection than simple proverbs or empty clichés. “Rampant” may mean, literally “translated”, high in alcohol—but what is suggested are the quick, light movements of a wild animal, not dangerous but hard to capture. The clarity of the sinner’s tear describes the pale colour of wine that has not turned golden from prolonged contact with its wooden barrel; but it also evokes the special, almost exaggerated purity of those who have sinned and been redeemed. Wine that crouches on the tongue of its taster is wine that leaves a lasting impression; but there is also a sense of dynamism in the expression, as if the wine were preparing some further surge of action.

One of the “trois dames de Paris” also uses the expression “sus la langue croupir” in connection with the taste of fine wine.92 On the whole, their admiration of the wine is less elegantly expressed than Raoulet’s cry—but then, it is meant to be a spontaneous response, not a rehearsed sales pitch. Still, when Dame Tifaigne speaks of “un vin clers, fremians, / fors, fins, fres, sus langue frians, / douz et plaisanz a l’avaler!”93 she enhances her enthusiasm with alliteration and internal rhyme.

The language of wine does present it as active, lively, elusive. Words translate its physical qualities, but also enhance its mystique. Food, on the other hand, is less glorified. In aristocratic lists, it is enough to recall its preparation; the listing of sauces and accompaniments stirs the tastebuds just as descriptions on a modern menu might. In more plebeian descriptions, we find adjectives like “eras” and “rosti” just as effective in evoking an appreciative response from the characters concerned.

Food and drink can also themselves be metaphors for abstract ideas. In particular, the female body is often “transformed” into food or drink, either

Le bon vin fort a trente deux,
A seize, à douze, à six, à huit;
Moult mainent criesor grand bruit.

92 Margue Clouve: “le buverai a petit trait / pour plus sus la langue croupir . . .” III. Dames, ed. Ménard, I. 133.

93 Ibid., II. 33-35.
in a mystical context or as a symbol of romantic love. Caroline Walker Bynum's book, Holy Feast and Holy Fast, explores the former idea in depth. Many courtly lyrics feature the Virgin Mary as fruit of all redemption, holy elixir, sweet spiced wine. But the notion of woman as secular lover/nourisher also has a range of applications, from quite specific ones (Nicolette in Aucassin et Nicolette is sweeter than a grape or a piece of bread soaked in wine\(^4\)) to subtler presentations. Thus, Thibaut de Champagne depicts his beloved as an intoxicating drink from which he is forced to abstain (Chanson III); and an anonymous chanson de croisade expresses the pain of separation in terms of unsuppressable hunger:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Ne plus qu'enfes ne puet la faim sofrir,} \\
\text{Ne l'on nel peut chastroier d'en plourer} \\
\text{Ne croi je pas que me puisse tenir} \\
\text{De vous, que suel baiser et acoller,} \\
\text{Ne je n'ai pas en moi tant d'astenance...} \quad \text{\(95\)}
\end{align*}
\]

Conclusion

Deschamps, his contemporaries and successors could find models for many of their uses of food and drink in earlier texts. They could draw on proverbs as a means of letting the commonest foods demonstrate the most universal of truths. They could exploit conventions regarding dining and drinking habits of different classes, either straight, to create images of realism (or propaganda), or, by playing with connotations and context, to reinforce stereotypes or produce parody or satire. They could imitate authors who used food and drink in comic allegory, either by reworking an existing theme or by inventing an original mock battle (Deschamps's Dit des \text{III. offices} is an example). They could borrow lyrical images of wine, and make food govern metaphor according to traditional rhetoric.

But they were not bound only by what was written. Deschamps, especially, was to play a principal role in making all kinds of food the material of conventional fixed-form lyrics. No one had ever thought of building a ballade around tripe or mustard before. Neither had anyone taken full advantage as food as an expression of individuality (albeit an individuality that was itself a created persona). Few had bothered to see if practical information could be made something greater through poetic skill. Deschamps took his images from all aspects of the world around him, as well as from the literature of the time,

\(^4\) Aucassin et Nicolette, XI, p. 74.

and paved the way for a new freedom of metaphor, allegory and general gastronomic frankness in the generations that followed.
Part II

The Menu: Food and Drink in the Poems of Eustache Deschamps

Food and drink, in Deschamps’s writing, can be presented as a part of everyday life, reflecting or illustrating life’s celebrations, catastrophes, banalities. They can also figure as examples of accepted literary expression; that is, in contexts made familiar (or at least proven workable) by literary tradition, whether in form or in substance. In either case, each alimentary image has a function and purpose specific to its setting, whether it be generating a moment of simple recognition, translating a moral message, providing material for satire, achieving a striking metaphor, or any combination of these.

Separating what reflects réalité vécue from what mirrors réalité écrite or simply réalité imaginée can be problematic. How do we classify a very literal meal set into a poem designed not to induce salivation, but to provide a set of symbols for ideal womanhood (ballade 485)? How should we view imagery borrowed from the classical locus amoenus topos and adapted to a real geographical location (ballade 61; lay 307, 235-247)? And is physical reality any less a reflexion of daily life for having also become literary convention? In the face of these questions, the solution fairest to Deschamps seems to be to avoid any attempt at classification by degree of realism at all. Historians may have appreciated anatomising his poems for the parts that shed light on fourteenth-century events or mores, but Deschamps himself often mixes temporal reality and timeless moral absolutism. It may be granted that some of his food and drink allusions are more serious than others; a ballade about ubiquitous mustard (780) does not operate on the same plane as one condemning the capital sin of gluttony (183). As well, many of his poems refer to recognisable incidents or sets of historical circumstances, while others present a glimpse of an apparently stable and continuous world order. Yet in all cases, the food or drink named is stirred into a carefully constructed context. At most, we are given an artist’s representation of contemporary life, never a piece of that life itself.

Even the most apparently straightforward compositions reflect a chosen apprehension of reality. The choice is not only between naturalism and literary artifice, but also between the amoral and the moral. As Christoph Strosetzki sees it, Deschamps knowingly exists in a corrupt, court-dominated

1 In any case, as Paul Zumthor has pointed out, "histoire" et "fiction" ne s’opposent pas, dans l’intention du conteur médiéval, aussi nettement qu’elles le furent en d’autres temps: leur opposition importe beaucoup moins qu’une autre, qui s’établit entre enseignement et non-enseignement, doctrina et nugae: Essai de poétique médiévale (Paris: Seuil, 1975), p. 165.

2 Christoph Strosetzki, "Réflexion moraliste chez les Rhétoriqueurs: les actes du langage chez Deschamps" in Du mot au texte (Tübingen: Gunter Narr,
world, but can speak either as one who adapts himself to its norms or as one who conforms to a universal moral law beyond it. He is a part of the court, and a keen observer of the multi-tiered society that surrounds it; a bon vivant, and a moral critic of excess and abuse of wealth. To call any of his poems more reality-based than another is to raise the question of whether physical reality is any more solid than moral.

For this study, then, historical reality and literary visions of reality will be dealt with together. Chapter Three will consider "Food, drink and society in Deschamps": how the poet represents food and drink within the social structures of his day, and also how he works with food and drink images within the literary fictions that may stand in for such social structures. It will cover his use of food and drink relative to different classes, and to the class system; to the social subgroup; to family life; to the dictates of religious custom; to the upheaval of war; to travel and ethnocentrism. Chapter Four will concentrate on "Food, drink and the individual", with the individual treated first as a physical being, then as a psychological and spiritual one. Hence, it will address the subjects of food and drink for health, and for the different ages of humankind; of food and sexuality; of the body as food in life and death; then the power of taste and consumption in governing moral conduct, in depicting a real or imaginary character, and in shaping our perceptions of the poetic persona itself. In this way, it will move from an examination of the physically private process of ingestion to the psychological subjectivity that develops from it, via a brief look at food's role in the relationship between the individual and his God.

Chapter Five will leave behind all aspects of food and drink as reflections of reality -- historical, conventional or moral -- and, re-examining some poems already considered along with several new ones, turn to food and drink in linguistic and literary structures: proverb, allegory, metaphor, rhetorical arrangement. How does Deschamps use concrete substances as the building blocks of literature? What is the language of food and drink? How can alimentary tastes and qualities be expressed as words, and how do the nouns and verbs of food and drink, as words themselves, develop ideas of other things?
Chapter Three
Food, Drink and Society in Deschamps

1. Stable Social Structures

1.1 The Class System

One of the distinctive developments in Deschamps's work is that, in a sense, the embourgeoisement of the world, even as presented in lyric poetry, is complete. I do not mean by this that Deschamps only speaks with the poetic voice proper to the non-courtly literary tradition, but that stylistic tendencies normally associated with it can now be applied to the most aristocratic of subjects and genres. In pastoral convention, shepherds and peasants had traditionally eaten rather well, and Deschamps follows the pattern when he depicts Robin and Marion at their meal. Town life appears in his writing as colourfully as any fourteenth-century townsperson might recall it, full of sights, sounds and tastes of the streets and taverns, as well as glimpses into the workings of private households; nor is the sexual/gastronomic ragout offered by cities such as Paris and the fabliau-type narrative tradition ignored. But Deschamps's nobles, although in some contexts they may still be shielded from the full light of realism, are now frequently as completely human as anyone else. Deschamps's presentations of court life are only awe-struck, obsequious or admiring when flattery, propaganda or the occasional very personal note of praise is called for; otherwise they tend to be either complicitous or critical. His nobles eat and drink well, and may be celebrated for their luxurious tastes, or condemned for the delicacy, hypocrisy and excess that accompany them, or simply mocked for the way they negotiate the meals they consume.

Moreover, the dividing line between the people of the town and the people of the court is frequently blurred. Deschamps's period is one of great mobility,

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3 For a discussion of Deschamps as a "bourgeois poet", see Jean C. E. Rault, Eustache Deschamps, poète bourgeois (PhD thesis, University of Toronto, 1973). Rault takes Bédier's definition of "bourgeois" literature as his starting point, and concentrates on Deschamps's satirical and licentious verse. However, there is no proof that these compositions did not entertain courtly audiences at least as frequently as urban ones.

4 An example of this approach is found in chanson royale III, 315. Here, the two peasants do not eat such a lavish, varied menu as in Philippe de Vitry's Dit de Franc Contier; their meal is bread, chives/green onions, and spring wafer. But their attitude to it -- that it is more than sufficient for their needs, and in strict contrast to the excesses of the court -- amounts to a praising of the chosen moderate life, more accessible to the middle classes than the peasantry in any real circumstances.
military and civil, geographical and social. Members of the small gentry such as himself might complain when the ruling powers turned a cold shoulder toward them, but the bitterness of their complaints stems at least partly from the fact that, until then, they had done extremely well in the courts of Charles VI, Louis d’Orléans and other great nobles. The official titles that Deschamps held -- squire, sergeant-at-arms to Charles VI, bailli of Senlis, maître d’hôtel to Louis d’Orléans -- indicate something of the diversity of his professional life, while his poetry shows the variety of milieux with which he was in regular contact, and the different ways in which he perceived them.

Fictional peasants may be admired, but real beggars are roughly viewed: Deschamps shows a strong desire to keep their world out of contact with his own. However, he is comfortable with all aspects of prosperous city life in Paris, the provinces and abroad (and harsh with cultures that do not attain his standards), as well as at home enough in the court to be offering verse counsel for free and observing the revelries of Louis d’Orléans, the fragile health of Charles VI, and the general conduct of their retinues at close range.

In all this, Deschamps typifies the rising star of his social class in the late fourteenth century. However, social mobility in Deschamps’s time does not mean only upward movement. Taverns in earlier literature had frequently served as a rather socially heterogeneous setting, grouping people from all levels of urban society together, but blood nobles were rare visitors; the socially heterogeneous atmosphere of the tavern was still below their separate world of courtly entertainments. In Deschamps, however, the drinking scene or ongoing drinking society is difficult to pinpoint on a social ladder. The “Fumeux” might be a group composed chiefly of his own peers, the “Frequantans” any company of bons vivants accustomed to seeking their pleasures at neighbourhood

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5 For a discussion of the physical peregrinations of different individuals and social groups, see Philippe Contamine, La Vie quotidienne pendant la guerre de cent ans (Paris: Hachette, 1976), Chapter 3, especially pp. 80-91.

6 The grievance of having been forgotten by those who had formerly favoured him is a leitmotiv in Deschamps. One example of its expression, in metaphorical form, is the ballade VII,1301, whose apt refrain runs “Crier me fault: ‘Oublie, oublie!’”

7 See ballade VI, 1299, reacting to street beggars, whose refrain runs “Prenez, pandez, et ce sera bien fait”; also ballade V, 923, against the rustic “danse au son du chalumeau”:

Prince, l’en puet en tout cause trouver
Des ars mondains, excepte du dancer
Aux instrumens des hommes bestiaux,
Qui par leur son font les gens enchanter
Et hors du sens maintefois ressembler:
C’est de dancer au son des chalmeiaux.

8 See Volume XI, p. 15.
taverns (charte 1400 and lettre 1418). But the Ordre de la Baboue (ballade 927) includes several high-ranking officials from the court of Bourgogne, while at the chateau of Boissy (ballade 1343), the noblest peers of the land, such as Louis d’Orléans and Jean de Bar, may be depicted in their cups in the same way as anyone else. This is not epic drunkenness, as at the opening of the Chanson de Guillaume, but a social drink run a little wild; it is a matter of one evening’s revelry, with no serious consequences. Thus, in Deschamps’s writing, figures of nobles have lost some of the dignity that literary convention accorded them, which frees them to participate in some “bourgeois” amusements. They do not frequent the tavern, but the tavern’s atmosphere of inspiration mixed with madness becomes accessible to them all the same.

1.2 Images of the Noble’s Meat and Drink

If, in Deschamps, stereotypes of class (and in particular, of the prosperous classes) are no longer pure, but modified by contact between different groups and different literary styles, we can nevertheless explore the role of food and drink in the new, composite portraits that are emerging, both of the noble and of the towndweller. Food and drink are rarely the sole strokes in such portraits, but because of their compact evocative potential, they are often significant ones.

In the case of nobles, the old courtly auras are sometimes preserved. This is particularly evident in the poetry of love, in which the idea of the romantic relationship is frequently conveyed by a vocabulary of nourishment, kept as simple and non-gastronomic as possible. The workings of such metaphorical language will be studied in detail in Chapter Five; for now, it is enough to note that Deschamps does take up the well-established tradition⁹ of representing the courtly lady, or the poet-narrator’s action of loving her, as food:

Pour ce languy et suy en aventure:
Sur l’arbre sec voui faire mon demour.

La tout mon temps ma demeure feray,
Puisque je n’ay ma douce nourriture... 

(Ballade 415, 15-18°)


¹⁰ The context is the poet’s complaint over separation from his lady on the first of May. The arbre sec is the legendary tree in the valley of Hebron supposed to have withered at the death of Christ. Medieval tradition told of prophecies that this tree would be miraculously restored to life when a Christian prince had a mass sung under its branches. In the meantime, the whole notion of the arbre sec evoked exoticism, remoteness, isolation, barrenness. See Le Jeu de saint Nicolas, ed. Henry, p. 392. Deschamps undoubtedly chooses
Of course, "nourriture" is not only food in medieval lexicology, but also nurture, custom, education; its non-alimentary meanings help make it a gracious word that accentuates the spirituality of desire. Other expressions, as we shall see later, appear basically non-physical, yet contain a physical dimension. A princess who is "pour un roy tresjoieuse pasture" (Ballade 463, 18) may evoke quasi-celestial meadows of pleasant existence, but she is also, quite literally, a dish fit for a king.

Nevertheless, such courtly metaphor is all a far cry from the mortar-and-pestle crudeness we find applied to less noble situations, in Deschamps as in the fabliau literature before him.11

In what I have named "country house poems", the noble way of life is not just protected, it is celebrated. A particular château or property is named, then qualified in the most glowing terms. Food and drink tend to be shown as potential rather than actual in these contexts: forests full of game, well-stocked fishponds, fields of grain, vineyards. An example is Ballade 61, on the château of Beauté:

Sur tous les lieux plaisans et agréables
Que l'en pourroit en ce monde trouver,
Edifiez de manoirs convenables,
Gais et jolis, pour vivre et demourer
Joieusement, puis devant tous prouver
    Que c'est a la fin du bois
De Vincennes, que fist faire li Roys
Charles -- que Dieux doint paix, joie et santé! --
Son filz ainsné, dauphin de Viennois,
Donna le nom a ce lieu de Beauté.

Et c'est bien drois, car moult est delectables;
L'en y oit bien le rossignol chanter;
Marne l'ensaint, les haulz bois profitables
Du noble parc puett l'en veoir branler,
Courre les dains et les connins aler
    En pasture mainte fois,
Des oiselez oir les douces voix,
En la saison et ou printemps d'esté,
Ou gentil may, qui est si noble mois:
Donna le nom a ce lieu de Beauté.

Les prez sont pres, les jardins deduisables,
Les beaus preaulx, fontenis bel et cler,

the image here to produce a sense of desolation, but one not quite without expectancy of some miraculous improvement.

11 See, for example, ballade 1227.
Vignes aussi et les terres arables,
Mouëlins tournants, beaus plains a regarder,
Et beaus sauvoirs pour les poissons garder;
Galatas grans et adrois,
Et belle tour qui garde les destrois,
Ou l'en se peut retraire a sauveté;
Pour tous ces points, li douiz princes courtois
Donna le nom *ce lieu de Beauté.

The accent on fertility may be partially tied to the uncertainties of fourteenth-century food supply, especially given that Deschamps concentrates elsewhere on agricultural poverty, either as a direct consequence of the ravages of the routiers or of English armies (the poems dealing with the desolation of Vertus provide examples of this), or as a symbol of the hardships of life on campaign in hostile foreign lands (almost invariably qualified by Deschamps as barren and particularly unyielding of good things to eat).

However, the praise of a land for its foodbearing properties is by no means an exclusive trait of late medieval custom or literature; for it is certainly to be associated with notions of the ideal landscape that had existed since Homeric times at least.12

The practical purpose of such a poem seems obvious: flattery, in return for, or in expectation of, patronage. There are several other ballades (144 on Coucy, 454 on Bièvre, 483 on Cachan) which follow almost exactly the same pattern. In addition, the chanson royale 393, which outlines Charles VI's tour of the Vermandois, presents a whole catalogue of country properties, each as charming as the next: Coucy, Saint Aubin, Foulambray, Saint Gombain, Novion, Saint Lambert, Costiere. The images originate with the classical *locus amoenus* tradition, yet may be touched with the occasional convincing contemporary, and practical, detail. Thus, in 483, there is not only an evocation of hunting and fishing as the noble pleasure sports they were in Deschamps' time, but also a set of directions on how to find this terrestrial paradise:

Près de Paris une lieu trouver
Pourrez l'ostel en lieu tresconvenable.
Hors Gentilly vous fault acheminer;
Lors verrez vous l'enclos bel et estable;
Pour tous cuers getter d'esmay,
Plaisans odours de roses et de glay,
Petits bateaulx par ou on va peschant,
Et pour connins recouvrer sans delay
Je n'en scay nul plus propre que Cachant.

Similarly there is geographical precision in ballade 454; Bièvre is "a trois lieues de Paris" (refrain). And the "itinerary" structure of 393 enhances its pretensions to realism. The country house poems are thus quite bland and

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generalized, but nevertheless a form of portraiture. Food and drink are part of the complete image, and the image of completeness, being sought.

Setting such idyllic views of courtly life next to something quite different can generate a more specialised use of food and drink. In the Lay de Franchise (307), the principal named setting is once again Beauté, and once again its fields, mills, gardens, reservoirs and vineyards are catalogued. However, this poem is less simple court flattery than a series of linked moral messages disguised in May Day greenery. The Beauté scene is framed with several other episodes and states of contemplation, which will now briefly be outlined.

The speaker begins with a didactic if rather pointless observation (its only function is to justify his expedition) concerning the force that habit exerts over thought and custom, and then goes on to describe how the blossoming of nature reminds him of May, and of maying rituals. The Beaute scene is framed with several other episodes and states of contemplation, which will now briefly be outlined.

The latter are busily engaged in activities of custom but not of reason: cutting greenery for decorations, singing, weaving wreaths and belts of flowers, making and playing wooden pipes, reciting love poetry; in short, acting out a kind of aristocratic interpretation of how the (stereotypical) happy peasant lives. They are surrounded by birds and gentle wild creatures, and led by the handsomest king in the world. The entire scene might be a live enactment of revels depicted at the centre of a millefleurs tapestry. Moreover, its prestige is enhanced by echo's of Roman de la Rose-type allegory:

La fut Honours; la fut Joie et Soulas;
La fut monstre de Vaillance li cas;
La fut parlé des grans faiz anciens;
La sont aucuns pour armes advocas;

13 The flower is described with its colours being given all their possible symbolic weight: white for purity, red for "shame" or modesty, gold for high value. Although it is never named, it has been identified as the basic model for Chaucer's "daysye" in the Legend of Good Women. Here, as there, the reader is being directed toward a classic courtly allegory scenario. The Lay will, however, take a number of different detours before reaching its conclusion.
La pour Amours murent plusieurs debas
Et questions... (183-188)

The allegorical tone is thus not allowed to take over, but quickly broken down into more controllable units: talk of arms and of love. And on the whole, the conversation is pessimistic. One of the company begins

... "Povre est nostre merriens;
De telz amours ne vaillance n'est riens,
Car au jour d'ui touz sommes d'oneur cas,
Et ne faisons fors que feste de bras
Et requignons d'envie comme chiens."
(191-195)

The gloomy mood is taken up by ladies who complain that courtly love has become dishonourable. One of them points out that "sanz amour ne peut estre prouesse" (211) and that "Convoitise les terres perdu a / Qu'avoit conquis Emprise, Amour, Largesse" (220-221). And the king promises to take all this to heart — along with Deduit, Hardement and Leesce (224). The return of allegorical language brings a kind of relief, almost as if language has the power to disguise any genuine problems the court might have. The group is again lighthearted enough to dance and play their way to Beauté.

At this point, a conventional "country house" description is inserted (238-247). All hints of self-analysis seem forgotten. Beauté, with its "natural" pleasures, somehow validates the courtly status quo.

In the Lay de Franchise, however, food and drink do not remain a delicious potentiality offered by the land. The king's party have come for a banquet. The meal is described in the sort of conventional terms that are standard in earlier literature when it comes to depicting the noble at table: plenty of emphasis on the richness of the setting and the stellar company, but only the vaguest of details concerning the abundant food and drink:

Moult orent mes ains qu'on eust disné;
Les menestrelz a touz les mes cornerent;
En grant joie celle feste menerent,
Et de bons vins sont ce jour abuveré
Ou quel ains grant joie demenerent.

De mon buisson sailli comme une beste,
Et quant j'oy veu le disner et la feste
Et les essais que l'en faisolo de vin,

. . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . .
Les grans estas, la viande et tempeste
Qui la estoit, la noise et le hutin,
Je rissi hors et reprins mon chemin.
(256-267)

The passage above, along with the description of courtly setting which precedes it, seems to show how any moral depth that exists within court life can be
overpowered just by the aesthetics of it. The courtiers who appeared, moments earlier, to be carrying on an honest self-appraisal, are now no more than participants in the ceremonies of their class. From line 265 onwards, there is a strong note of cynicism in the observer's report (and the poet is careful to present himself as an observer, not personally involved in the courtly scene surveyed): the final impression of the scene is of "tempeste", "noise" and "hutin". Even among such refined company, then, when morals are superseded by aesthetics, the latter in turn are easily reduced to a kind of chaos.

All this is driven home by the contrasting appearance of Robin and Marion, eating their simple meal of bread and spring water, and extolling the fundamental gifts of franc vouloir:

Puis dist Robins: "Marion, deshonneste
Sont grans mangiers et cilz qui les apreste
En peril est qu'il n'en muire en la fin;
Plus eureux vif que ne font, par ma teste,
Ces grans seigneurs qui ont tant de moleste
Et qui doubtent la poison d'un coquin
Et en aguet vivent soir et matin.
Mon pain est bon; ne faut que nulz me veste;
L'eaue est saine qu'a boire sui enclin;
Je ne doute ne tirant ne venin;
Le boys me craint dont je couppe la creste:
J'ay franc vouloir sanz os et sanz arreste;
Plus riche sui que Roy ne palazin.

(274-286)

The Lay de Franchise is at first glance a rather puzzling piece. The poet seems to switch sides, going from paying homage to a grand style of literature and life to expressing admiration only for simplicity and independence. In many of his shorter poems, he adopts one position or the other; rarely both. Here, however, he in fact uses his description of the noble experience to show not only its shortcomings but also its seductive joys; he must consider and acknowledge all its beauties and pleasures before finally choosing "the better part". Indeed, it is his courtly pilgrimage that has physically led him to Robin and Marion:

Et Dieux vueille celle flour remerir
Et le doulz may qui m'ont fait avertir
Par Marion et Robin seure dance.

(308-310)

So the fertile wealth of the country house and the food and drink of kings are used here to build up an image of the aesthetically delightful noble life—and to set up that same image to dissolve when faced with what is truly essential.
By the end of the poem, the "realistic" details\textsuperscript{14} have become completely subordinate to the moral message that they have helped convey.

In another context, however, it is material conditions which dominate. Ballade 798 describes a non-specific courtly-countryside setting that must be left behind for a sea voyage. This is not a country house poem like the others, for it alludes to conditions that could apply to almost any noble household far from the city. Indeed, these pleasant details may constitute a hyperbolic pastiche standing in for the poet’s memories of dry land in general. In any case, the standard luxuries are evoked, along with some more concrete touches that seem to compensate for the anonymity of the location. The poem begins

Adieu vous dy, boys, rivieres et pars,
Deduit de chiens, d’oysiaux et de voler,
Adieu connins, perdris et fresches chars,
Adieu frois vins, dames c’on doit loer,
Adieu la terre ou l’en puet reposer,
Douce eau eauussy, adieu! ‘Trop me fait mal
Quant je vous laiz pour apprendre a humer;
Desor me fault boire a un vermail.

Adieu molz liz, adieu piteux regars,
Adieu pain frèrs que l’en souloit trouver . . .

(1-10)

Thus, particular foods and drinks appear, all coloured with the emotional weight of regret. The simple, one-adjective qualifications that accompany several of them -- fresches chars, frois vins, douce eau, pain frèrs -- besides reminding us of the importance of quality and taste, seem to underline the naturalness of such a diet, as if these essentials are surely not too much to ask. Of course, for the majority of the population, fresh meat and chilled wine, simple though they are, would have been quite unaffordable. Moreover, food and drink are only a part of the long list of courtly luxuries into which they are woven.

At sea, by way of strong contrast, the whole experience can be summed up as bad weather, bad company, and bad eating conditions:

\begin{verbatim}
Il me convient porter honuer aux lars,
Aux commutres qui ne font que sifler;
Il me convient aux et becuit rфессer,
Et chevauchier un perilleux cheval;
Voirre n’aray ne tasse, et pour trinquer
Desor me faut boire a un vermail.

Maiz qui pis est, forray de toutes pars
En ces vaissiaux bruire la haute mer,
Frapper ces vens et escrit ces gars,
L’un mettre a bort, l’autre desgusiller,
L’un dessus l’autre et venir et aler,
\end{verbatim}

\textsuperscript{14} In fact, almost all used here depend more on literary tradition than true realism.
The only foods actually named are "aux" and "becuit" (13), but they are complemented by the mention of seasickness (20), and the refrain emphasises the speaker's aggrievance that he will have to drink from a lowly metal cup.

Interestingly, the poem's structure pits not only variety and colour against dull routine, but also a kind of static, controllable, known world, as exemplified by the list of nouns in the first part (to line 10), against an active, wild and uncertain existence, as exemplified by the predominance of verbal expressions in the second.

In this poem, then, the accoutrements of aristocratic life are there not to flatter any particular place or figure, but to confirm that the whole noble order has a rightness and refinement utterly lacking in life at sea. Although the "adieux" are made in a rather staid structural framework, the materiality of their content remains striking. The notion of nobility is traditionally enhanced by a dignity of style that precludes questions of bodily comfort. Here, though, the elite come across as sensual, vulnerable -- and rather soft.15 Images of food and drink are part of the speaker's mental security blanket: they provide the ballast of nostalgia against the upheaval of an unpleasant projected future.

This is not the only occasion on which Deschamps exploits the contrast between life on land and life at sea. In ballade 84, he reverses the perspective of 798, placing himself comfortably at court in Paris, but recalling the misery of professional "gens de mer". The poem begins with a mocking benevolence, as the poet wishes sailors the luxuries he is enjoying at court:

Je vous souhaide entre vous, gens de mer,
Qui avez chaut dedenz vostre galeée,
De ce bon vin frisce, friant et clair
Dont a la court est ma gueule arrouisée,
Poucins, perdrix, connims a la gelée,
Et de ce pain legier de Carpentras,
Lit et coisin, la lavande et blans draps,
Beau cueuvrechief pour couvrir vostre teste,

15 It must be admitted that the authorial voice is strong and significant in this poem; Deschamps happens to be expressing nostalgia for a particular level of existence, but he is a habitual fan of comfort over hardship in many of his poems. The priority status of physical well-being in Deschamps will be explored in the next chapter.
Eau douce, gesir hault et non bas;
Qui ainsi fait, ce n'est pas sens de beste.

(1-10)

It soon becomes apparent, however, that such conditions are not to be hoped for at sea. Stanza two is full of stormy weather, vomiting and other unappealing details:

Car vous estes en peril de tumer
Souventefoiz en tempeste formee,
Et lors vous fault en la soulte avaler,
Gesir envers et la gueule baee,
Pour la pueur la vomir mainte goute,
Le cul a bort mettre, crier: helas!
Le patron est en poupe souvent las,
Qui doubte fort le vent et la tempeste,
En requerant Dieu et saint Nicolas:
Qui ainsi fait, ce n'est pas sens de beste.

(11-20)

This is truly the court ambiance turned upside down: from sleeping in the comfort of a raised bed to sleeping in a baggage hold, from fragrance ("lavande") to stench ("pueur"), from the gentle watering of the mouth ("gueule") with excellent wine to the open mouth (also "gueule") ready to emit vomit.

In stanza three the sailor’s diet appears in a description that is more colourful than ever, mixing vermin and worms with comestibles:

Becuit vireux, et poulz, puces et ras,
Le vermical, les vers en l'eaue a tas,
Au mieulx venir un pou de char mal preste:
A Paris suis en joie et en soulas:
Qui ainsi fait, ce n'est pas sens de beste.

(25-29)

While the images of sea life strengthen, the contrast offered by the court is never forgotten, and re-emerges as a taunting vision in the envoy, in which the poet urges the sailors to disembark and partake in the "joie", "feste", "viande" and "vin" available on shore (as if it were only a matter of choice). Deschamps, freed from the constraint of sea travel himself, cannot resist a smug contentment in his own situation. There is no real sympathy for the mariners here, only a kind of delicious shudder at their rough existence, presented, no doubt, to a courtly audience for its entertainment.

We have already noted in passing poems in which the humanity of nobles is emphasised through their capacity to enjoy a good drinking session. An example, ballade 1343, will help illustrate the point.

Je vy en chastel de Boissy
Monseigneur le duc d'Orliens
Jehan monseigneur, Lebreth aussi
Et leurs gens fort boire liens;
Le vin fist mout d'estudiens:
La fut Louvet licencié
Qui de Beaune a quatre a crié;
Bruneval, par force de vin
Croit sur tous comme enragié:
Sine dubio, c'est latin.

L'oste n'ot pité ne mercy
Crie de ses vins et de ses biens,
A l'un boit la, a l'autre cy;
Es voyrres ne demeure riens:
"Je boy a toy! - Je le retnis!"
Dist l'un, a l'autre s'a plegié;
N'eusse esté, je fusse noye.
Bruneval du mal Saint Martin
Croit sur tous comme enragié:
Sine dubio, c'est latin.

Labreth n'ot pas le cuer failli,
A tous boit com bons crestiens,
Aufemont, Beaumont et Canny,
Gaucourt, Garenciere ist des liens
Qui jeunes, nouveauax, anciens,
Prunelé, Croisy ont moillié
Voirre, rompu et despecié;
Bruneval qui ot l'esvertin
Croit sur tous comme enragié:
Sine dubio, c'est latin.

[envoy] Prince, après ce qu'om ot mangié
Et beu tant qu'om estoit blecit,
Vont estuver li pelerin,
De leurs corps firent grant marchié:
Touz nuz ont vo chambre assiegé,
Et la Bruneval en la fin
Croit sur tous comme enragié:
Sine dubio, c'est latin.

The language of the medieval university and that of popular piety thus
mingles with the language of pure carousel. This in itself is nothing new; it
is an integral aspect of Goliardic poetry and of parodies of religious
song.¹⁶
But here the situation is taken out of its clerical home base and re-
interpreted for and by nobles. The reworking is not very sophisticated. It is
as if the whole drinking-song genre, already imitating a pleasantly jostled
state of mind, has arrived in fragments, to be grasped at randomly by members
of the courtly company. The brief snatch of dialogue foreshadows Rabelais'
drinking-scene exchanges;¹⁷ indeed, Rabelais' satire often works like an
opening-out of Deschamps, with real grands hommes being succeeded by imaginary
giants, real drinking-talk by the fantastic symposium, and varied but

¹⁶ See Jeanroy and Långfors, Chansons bachiques, chanson XLIII ("Or hi

¹⁷ Cf. Gargantua, V: "Les Propos des bien yvres."
manageable food and drink by incredible abundance.

But Deschamps, in this and other pieces of its kind, goes no further than the court he knew for his individual stamp. The actual wines mentioned in the poem are rather vaguely identified -- "Beaune", prunelé -- but so many courtiers are named here that the poem's chief function must surely be to amuse some or all of them, and/or compeers who were not there on the actual occasion; it is rather like a photo enlargement put on display after a stag night.

A further point may be noted here, in connection with the blurring of class distinction. The "bain, amour et gastronomie" triplet that Marie-Thérèse Lorcin identifies with the fabliaux seems reflected in the envoy of this ballade.18 If the "amour" element is not strictly present, there is nevertheless a clear connection between wine, bath, nudity and "outrageous" behaviour.19

This is far from the only view of "real" court life that Deschamps presents with the aid of food or drink, however. There are many other ways in which eating and drinking practices can help create a convincing illustration of the noble world. Occasionally, they are used in relation to specific historical incidents or situations. Ballade 1029, for instance, evidently refers to one of Charles VI's early attacks of madness, along with its interpretation and treatment:

Eschançons, queux et escuiers tranchans,
Maistres d'ostelz, pannetiers, tous offices,
Huisiers d'armes et escuiers servans,
Sergens d'armes, ne soiez plus si nices;
Departez vous quant le roy disnera
Et tous autres, puis que cliz le dira
Qui ne veult pas qu'om face au roy assault
A son manger, ou mal vous en prendra:
Alez disner, ce dit maistre Regnault,

Car vous estes trop la chambre eschaufans.
Saussiers, gardez le roy de fors espices,
Faictes vergus d'osille, et vous, enfans,
Ne demandez rost, brouet n'escrevices;
Cilz qui tranche tout vous refusera.
Le médicin le plat avoir vouldra
Pour mieulx scavor qu'il n'aist es queux deffault,
Ce mot orrez en sa chambre ou il va:
Alez disner, ce dit maistre Regnault.

(1-18)

The first stanza here deals with people: the staff of the royal household and the guests who would ordinarily eat with the king. The second is concerned

18 Marie-Thérèse Lorcin, Façons de sentir, pp. 120-123.

19 A gentler hint of the eroticism-gourmandise link is the be found in Charles d'Orléans's rondeau CCCXLVII, "Souper ou baing et disner ou bateau."
with food preparation. The medical advice of maistre Regnault regarding both has as its aim a reduction of heat for the relief of the young king's fevered brain. Deschamps's interest in the medical properties of food will be discussed in the next chapter; the role of food in this poem is, however, more than just prescriptive. The whole idea of the royal banquet is both an emblem for personal pleasure and a symbol of the kingdom as it ought to be. So, from the urgent imperatives of the first two stanzas, the tone turns to one of wistfulness: for a return of the temporarily forfeited feast, and for a return of the king's health, intimately connected with the physical and spiritual wellbeing of his court:

C'est un dur mot aux compagnons galans
Qui de ce plat avoient benefices,
Le temps passé; tristes sont et dolans
Qu'en un seul lieu est tourné li eclipses,
Mais, se Dieu plaist, il roys respassera,
Mais que li plas en plusieurs lieux luira
Com le soleil qui va puis bas, puis hault,
Tant que ce mot de tous poins cesserà:
Alez disner, ce dit maistre Regnault.

(19-27)

The syntax at lines 21-25 is, I believe, deliberately ambiguous: the king is the eclipsed sun, but is it he or the shining food platters (or both) that will rise to their former glory once again?

Another example of a poem where food allusions are connected to a particular episode in history is ballade 1427, written following the disaster of Nicopolis. The poem is a kind of ubi sunt piece, focussing, curiously, not on the nobles who perished, but on the privileged lifestyle that was lost with them. The moral message is a sober one, particularly as expressed in the final stanza and the envoy:

Prince, abisme est li jugemens
De dieu et ses pugnissemens;
Il l'a bien moustre a ce tour:
En Turquie est ses vengemens,
De loing, par divers mandemens,
Pour noz pechiez plains de venin:
Je ne voy que tristesce et plour
Et obseques soir et matin.

(31-38)

Yet the accoutrements of noble life -- no doubt part of the reason for God's anger -- are presented here not only as signs of moral hollowness. We see the nobles in graceful action, jousting, dancing all night, sounding their horns the better to take their horses over sudden jumps. With all this comes
The waste of food and drink matches the waste of lives, both frivolously lived and tragically lost. But it is nonetheless accompanied by "grant luour / De torches": a brilliance of existence that Deschamps, moral critic though he is of court life both here and elsewhere, will not extinguish, despite the blackness of death and divine judgement that now surrounds the fallen nobles.  

Aristocratic food and drink appear more frequently in contexts of less historical weightiness. Deschamps's usual perspective in such poems is slightly marginal. Although, as châtelain of Fismes, he was head of his own substantial household, he uses the point of view of "lord" rarely, and mainly in burlesque poems and charters. Otherwise, he prefers to take advantage of his middling position in the courts of the great -- as huissier d'armes or maître d'hôtel -- to table close observations concerning servants, patrons and guests.  

Sometimes it is aspects of the practical workings of a noble household that provide him with his poetic material. Food or drink is almost always mentioned, however briefly, in such a context; their preparation and service in the courts of Deschamps's literary creation appear as significant as any affairs of state. The well-run and stable household is a sign of formidable solidarity and strength (another reason for the tone of anxiety in ballade 1029, in which the upheaval in routine reflects the weakness of the king's health). Thus, in ballade 1133, Deschamps outlines a sort of group portrait of the squires of the king's court in 1396. Wine is only mentioned once, as a lead-in to a third stanza full of yet more praiseworthy names, and the idea of food occurs only obliquely, through references to the "office" and to the "varlet trenchant". From the poem's quasi-heroic beginning to its envoy, however, the tone is muscular. The message seems to be that physical sustenance, and those involved in providing it, are as vital to the protection and honour of the king's court as loyal acts of prowess and the champions who achieve them.

Those who serve are not always as reliable as the king's squires are said to be. In an amusing pair of poems, Deschamps focuses on the master-servant  

20 The "luour" may be intended simply as a further expression of waste, but for the modern reader, at least, its connotations of brightness cannot be ignored.  

21 We might consider whether his curious ballade 1432 (refrain: "Un chien doit presque tout savoir"), which follows a dog on its roamings from hall to private chambers to market to kitchen, could be a sly reflection on his own versatility and semi-visibility at court, and the secret, untapped knowledge of affairs of state, war and private life that his position brings.
relationship. Ballade 850 purports to be spoken by a servant for hire, who boasts of his capacities and versatility. Again, the food reference is a passing one: "Je sçay trancher, moy en cuisine offrir" (4). This talent is one of so many that, as the speaker insists in his refrain, "Nulz, Dieu mercy, ne me scet rien apprendre." Ballade 852, however, spoken by a master, offers a very different perspective on a similar situation:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{J'ay un varlet, qui le vouldroit louer,} \\
\text{Que son pareil ne trouveroit on mie.} \\
\text{- De quoy sert il? - De boire et de jangler;} \\
\text{Il het chevaux; ne leva en sa vie} \\
\text{Sanz lui trois foiz appeler.} \\
\text{En cuisine ne scet un oeuf pelé,} \\
\text{Non pas servir lui meismes a la table,} \\
\text{Mais il scet bien viande demander.} \\
\text{- Je n'en veull point; varlet soit il au diable!} \\
\end{align*}
\]

Over the course of this second ballade, almost all the claims of the first are overturned. But here there is a particular emphasis on food and drink, with a strong suggestion that when laziness prevents one from doing one's proper work, the time is easily filled in with physical self-indulgence. Interestingly enough, the servant's ignorance of cooking is expressed via an echo of proverb: "ne scet un oeuf pelé" recalls the depreciatory comparison, "ne vaut un oeuf pelé". By this choice of words, the speaker accentuates the utter worthlessness of his "varlet". The servant's failings in the realm of service are especially deplored, because he turns them to his own advantage. In stanza II, he is unfindable [?]

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Fors au disner, la est il servissable} \\
\text{Pour desservir souvent sans commander.} \\
\end{align*}
\]

The servant's eagerness is no doubt due to the customary perk that allowed staff to eat any of the leftovers from the lord's table, once these were desservis.

Aware as he is of the mechanical complexity and pitfalls of noble and royal

\[22\] In reality, this pair of poems could reflect the household arrangements of wealthy bourgeois as much as of nobles. Indeed, the implied interest in value for money is more appropriate to the bourgeois milieu than to any other. I have chosen to discuss it here because many of the skills the servant boasts of find their original raison d'être in the customary workings of the noble household, though they have subsequently been adopted by a broader cross-section of the population.

\[23\] See Harden, "The depreciatory comparison," pp. 67-68.

\[24\] The half-line before the quoted passage is missing, so the paraphrase is part guesswork.
meal service, Deschamps does not go without acknowledging the pure gastronomic variety -- and variability -- of the aristocratic banquet. In both the Dit des IIII. offices (which will be studied in Chapter Five), and ballade 1437, food rather takes over from the issues of hierarchy or supremacy that are also in question. In the former, the result is a pitched "food fight"; in the latter, more a gathering of abundance:

Sanz vin tout office mandie,
Mais par li a l'en char et poys,
Pain, brouet, avoine et tremoys
Lumiere, fruit soir et matin,
Buche et charbon; tous les galloys,
Falctes obeissance au vin.

(25-30)

The spirit of enjoyment here is at least subjacent, as it remains even in most of Deschamps' more technical pieces on the organisation behind the noble feast.

The poet thus regularly exploits the possibilities offered by culinary activity behind the scenes. He does not, however, ignore the destination of such activity: scenes from the banqueting hall, or long-term moral consequences resulting from luxurious and gluttonous self-indulgence. In these cases, the principal actors, and accused offenders, are the nobles themselves.

Unlike earlier romance writers and chroniclers of his own time such as Froissart, Deschamps is generally little concerned with the ceremonial aspects of feasting. (The description of banquet hall and programme in the Lay de Franchise appears to be an exceptional and deliberate taking-up of literary convention.) Instead, he focuses on the relationship of his noble subjects with their food and drink, and what this can reveal about their class as a whole.

In ballade 844, for example, he categorises their physical approach to food. The poem is an imaginative tour de force, and I quote it now in its entirety.

Tristes, pensis, mas et mornes estoye
Par mesdisance et rappors de faulx dis
A une court royal ou je dinoye,
Ou plusieurs gens furent a table assis;
Maiz oncques mais tant de nices ne vis
Que ceulx furent que l'en veoit mengier.
D'eulx regarder fu de joye ravis:
Oncques ne vi gens ainsi requinier.

Li uns semboit truie enmi une voye,
Tant mouvoit fort ses baulifres toudiz;
L'autre faisoit de ses dens une soye,
L'autre mouvoit le front et les sourcis;
L'un requignoit, l'autre torcoit son vis,
L'autre faisoit sa barbe baloier,
L'autre fait le veel, l'autre fait le brebis:
Oncques ne vis gens ainsi requignier.
D'eulx regarder trop fort me merveilleoye,
Car en machant sembloient ennemiz;
Faire autel l'un com l'autre ne veole,
L'un machoit gros, l'autre comme souriz;
Je n'oy oncques tant de joye ne ris
Que de veoir leurs morceaulx ensacher.
Or y gardez, je vous le jure et diz;
Oncques ne vis gens ainsi requigner.

Princes, qui est courroussez et pensis
Voist gens veoir qui sont a table mis:
Mieulx ne porra sa tristesse laissier;
Des grimaces sera tous esbahis
Que chascun fait; j'en fu la bien servis:
Oncques ne vis gens ainsi requignier.

This ballade shows Deschamps's skills of observation at their keenest; the descriptions are at once cartoon-like and easy to visualize with regard to real faces. The air of metamorphosis -- humans or parts thereof being transformed into animals or objects -- is evocative not only of real experience but of literature; one thinks of Odysseus's men turned to pigs on Circe's island. And while the physical deformation of eaters in action could be found in any social group, it is significant that Deschamps has chosen courtiers. By concentrating on how silly-looking they become through the very action that links them incontrovertibly to their fellow human beings (even to peasants, the most typical "grimacers" in medieval iconography), Deschamps in effect demonstrates that they are not superior, but full of an innate comique that is common to all humanity. Yet only as an observer, at a little distance from full involvement in court life, can he perceive the humour of the situation.

And, as he warns repeatedly elsewhere, participating fully and solely in the court world is dangerous, both economically and morally. In Deschamps, the food and drink of the court often underline the precarious security it provides, and emphasise both its dominance and its hypocrisy. For a start, the lifestyle is physically unhealthy (256). The court is fickle in its favours (1000 and 1301). Finally, in order to succeed there, one must sacrifice both independence and honesty (1033).

Despite his criticism of court life -- which is in any case somewhat offset by those poems in which he admires it -- Deschamps reaps a large percentage of his harvest of food and drink images from the world of the court, whether that world is defined in realistic or literary terms. What happens there is essentially public, and the diffusion of it, in either glorified or negative terms, is a task which the poet willingly undertakes.
1.3 Food, Drink and Urban Life

As we have seen, Deschamps favours a peripheral perspective on the court, allowing him to be privy to its tastes and activities, but also to observe and criticise its shortcomings. When he writes about city life, however, he (or the narrator he creates) is generally much more independently active and involved in the world around him. Rather than being part of a closed hierarchy whose different degrees are more or less accessible to him depending on fortune’s mood, he is a member of a vast public, surrounded by sights and sounds that are at once diverse and part of a constant which the individual cannot change. If, in considering the use of food and drink in urban settings, we leave aside for the moment pieces related to formal drinking societies, women and family, and foreign urban encounters (all of which will be examined separately), we are left with a small but rich group of poems concerning public structures and norms — especially Parisian ones — and coloured by the individual’s responses to these.

The city or town is a place where the unwritten rules of courtesy do not apply. In many ways, the luxuries available are similar to those found at court, but they are not requested and granted; they are bought and sold. It is not so surprising, then, that food and drink, in Deschamps’s urban poems, appear most frequently in connection with horses. In Champagne, he (or the character whose viewpoint he narrates) can apparently provide directly for his own teams, but in Paris, where he is often obliged by royal bureaucracy to stay for indefinite periods, he must pay someone else for their keep.

Sometimes the horses themselves are held partly to blame for the inconvenience caused (rondeau 666); sometimes, as in rondeau 1439, horses and household are viewed with equal grumpiness:

Gens et chevaux m’ont tout le cœur nercy
Car chacun d’eulx veult mangier comme uns ours . . .

(8-9)

Alternatively, it may be the tavernière who is depicted as unreasonably demanding. In ballade 791, the ostesse has cut off rations of hay and oats for the speaker’s three horses, and is threatening to sell them to recoup the cost of their feeding.

Ballade 884 re-sets the situation with a somewhat lighter touch. A deliberate use of the Picard dialect helps define the speaker as an innocent “abroad” to whom the cold economic realities of Paris have come as a shock. He himself is well looked after through the hospitality of friends, but his horses and “varlets” are costing him heavily.

Je trouve assez qui me donne a mignier
Et qui me fait bonne chiere a Paris,
Mais mi queval sont sur le tavernier,
Qui ne treuvent ne paren ne amis;
Quant j'ay compte je suis tout esbahis,
Car pour chacun me fault paier .II. saulx.
Les .III. par jour font .VI. solz parisis:
Ainsi seront tuit mignez mes quevaulx.

Choula me fait mainte foiz requigner.
Et mi varlet veulent estre fournis
Qui vont au mien le liiere cerquier
Et qui veulent du vin boire toudis;
Et mes hostes qui m'onouroit jadis,
De mes rouchins enquiret aux mareschaulx;
Pour s'i paier fait sur tout mettre pris:
Ainsi seront tuit mignez mes quevaulx .

(1-16)

The poem thus brings out the hostility of the city, at least in terms of its financial stress. As for the refrain, I think this refers to a figurative using-up rather than a literal selling for meat: the speaker will probably have to leave his horses behind in payment for their keep. There is a neat contrast between the "mignier" of the first line, associated with "bonne chiere", and the glum participle of the refrain, in which the empty plate, so to speak, has been forcibly brought to the speaker's attention.

As with most other subjects, however, Deschamps does not restrict himself to creating a single, consistent impression of city life. Paris is also, in his work, the nonpareil of urban settings. Aspects of food and drink are not always involved in its praise: ballade 170 concentrates on its intellectual purity, material wealth and "human resources" (knightly and royal inhabitants); rondeau 171 on the general prosperity if offers. In ballade 169, the presence of food and drink is oblique, restricted to locus amoenus imagery (13: "Vignes, bois a, terres et praerie"). Other food-related substances -- "espices et sucre" -- do appear as well, but only in connection with exotic, idealized places: Jerusalem, Egypt, Galilee, etc. The fact that Paris is declared superior to such faraway lands, with its natural, wholesome wealth being more impressive than the refined, costly spices brought in from elsewhere, is significant in supporting the parti-pris of the poem.

It is only in ballade 871 that the food and drink of Paris are evoked as a part of a realistic vision of the city as a whole. It is, to be sure, a selective vision, consisting only of the best of town life, as seen through the

25 Two other French cities, Reims and Troyes, are the subject of glowing eulogies, especially in (for Reims) ballades 172 and 312 and (for Troyes) rondeaux 640, 641, 642, 643. However, in none of these pieces does food or drink play a major role. Feasting is occasionally mentioned (in 312 and 643), but generally to stress the nobility of a place rather than its variety and wideranging appeal.

26 The terms are thus very similar to those used in Deschamps's "country house poetry".
eyes of a young lord about to leave it all behind to participate in Charles VI's expedition to Languedoc. The poem is thus a variation on the congé genre, already similarly playfully used by Deschamps in ballade 798, and it runs as follows:

Adieu m'amour, adieu douces fillettes,
Adieu Grant Pont, hales, estuves, bains,
Adieu pourpoinz, chauces, vestures nectes,
Adieu harnois tant clouez comme plains,
Adieu molz liz, broderie et beaus seins,
Adieu dances, adieu qui les hantez,
Adieu connins, perdriz que je reclaime,
Adieu Paris, adieu petiz pastez!

Adieu chapeaux faiz de toutes frourettes,
Adieu bons vins, ypocras, doulez compains,
Adieu poisson de mer, d'eau doucettes,
Adieu mousters ou l'en voit les doulez sains
Dont plusieurs sont maintefoiz chapellains,
Adieu deduit et dames qui chantez!
En Languedoc m'en vois comme contrains:
Adieu Paris, adieu petiz pastez!

Adieu, je suis desor sur espurettes,
Car arrebours versera mes estrains;
Je pourray bien perdre mes amourettes,
S'amour change pour estre trop loingtains.
Crorez seray, desirez et dessains;
Car li pais est detruit et gastez.
Si diray lors pour reconfort au mains:
Adieu Paris, adieu petiz pastez!

The refrain leaves Paris linked with a distinctly gustatory memory. Otherwise, food and drink images are scattered throughout the first two stanzas, mixed with non-edible delights. In the first stanza there are the "hales", where food is sold, along with "connins" and "perdriz", both foods often associated with sexual suggestion in the middle ages. The "douces fillettes", "estuves", "bains", "molz liz" and "beaus seins" of the same stanza all hint that the sexual dimension is indeed to be recalled in this case. The second stanza includes a more neutral set of alimentary allusions, though through their near-doubling -- "bons vins, hypocras", "poissons de mer, d'eau doucettes" -- an accent is placed on their abundance, as at a richly-furnished banquet. Food and drink are here interwoven with both fashion ("chapeaulx") and popular piety ("doulx sains"). Moreover, the regretted "doulz sains" are almost certainly more than saintly images; a punning on saints and breasts is in keeping with the fashion for mixing piety and sex in satirical literature of

27 It is clear that Deschamps himself is not the speaker, for he did not accompany the royal party on the 1389 trip. See Deschamps, Volume XI, p. 61. In addition, the knightly status of the narrator is indicated through aristocratic details within the poem: courtly clothing, furnishings, riding accessories; 'dames', 'amourettes'.
Deschamps's time. By setting his food and drink images into such a multifaceted context, the poet indicates their total integration with every aspect of city life.

The third stanza, however, is devoid of such allusions. The absence of food and drink references, even negative ones, reinforces the forecast bleakness and barrenness of the territory for which the speaker is striking out. By the end of the poem, the affectionate, nostalgic refrain has become a kind of mantra, comforting the speaker over the lost reality of Parisian delights.

The narrator of this poem would certainly have appreciated the kind of sensual, abandoned revels that feature in ballade 1343, on the festivities at Boissy. Yet whereas 1343 represents noblemen in clumsy, drunken authority over a closed environment, 871 shows a very open environment seducing one who must leave it. The impression of Paris that emerges is distilled from precise, clear images that somehow add up to infinite variety.

The device of contrasting a pleasurable "here and now" with a miserable prospect is one we have already seen in ballade 798, down to the formula of the repeated "adieux". Food and drink, in Deschamps, frequently help encapsulate a whole way of life, a cultural comfort, that is lost or about to be lost. The pleasures of the body are unabashedly placed where ideals of perfect love normally stand in courtly lyric.

Until now, we have examined poems dealing with people who are all above a certain class threshold. The situation of the outsider in Paris, despite the distress of his temporary cash-flow crisis, is by implication normally quite comfortable. Only in the unfamiliar environment of Paris does his standard of living become threatened. As for the speaker who is off to Languedoc, he is clearly usually in a position to afford many of the entertainments he so mourns giving up. As previously mentioned, Deschamps does deal with the urban poor, but never in connection with food. More specifically, he accuses the beggars he sees (ballade 1299) of faking illness and exploiting the generosity of the Church and its almsgivers. It is important, in a poem such as this one, that the featured characters (really no more than types) remain not quite human, so that there is no weak point in the author's attitude of contempt for them.

Eating and drinking, as already discussed, provide an inescapable reminder of a character's humanity — a possibility that the speaker might one day break bread with him. Now, while there is some interest in lowering the "superhuman" noble to vulnerability through food and drink, there is none in raising the ignoble hypocrite to fellowship via the same means — even though hunger may well be at the root of the latter's problems and activities. In dealing with the habitual poor, Deschamps goes no further than visual impressions, and shows no sentiment but annoyance.

The middle classes of the urban community are depicted more often behind closed doors – in family situations or private drinking parties – than as participants in public urban life. Occasionally, however, there is a glimpse of what it is to live and work directly in connection with the city. In ballade 1301, the speaker compares himself to a seller of oublies. The literal sense of the word is already twofold: an oublie is both the not-yet-consecrated communion wafer and a thin, crisp pastry: heavenly salvation and earthly indulgence. The poet exploits it figuratively as well, giving it personal and political significance: he has been forgotten by his friends, and especially those in high places, on whom his livelihood depends. The poem as a whole will be further discussed in Chapters Four and Five. For the moment, let us note only that its central metaphor derives from the street cries by which goods, edible and non-edible, were hawked. It is clearly implied that the speaker, in the past, has only heard all these cries, not made them; that is, he was one of the city’s observers, its patrons. Now, as a witness to fortune’s unkindness, he finds himself forced to be a part of the city’s working community, crying his oublies.

The city in this poem, despite the realism with which it is depicted, remains more pretext than focus, the source for the governing metaphor. Sometimes, however, the reality of the city can be important as literal rather than figurative background. An example is ballade 1433, in which the city of Orléans has more to do with the speaker’s physical hardship than his mental/moral state. Indeed, the situation is very straightforward: a scholar, studying in Orléans, writes to his father asking for more money. The expenses of student life are detailed: books, clothing, officially-levied charges, lodgings, all the small services that must be paid for – and food and drink.

This is hardly the letter of a son hovering between health and starvation. The list is one of luxuries, and the speaker seems well-assured of his own deserving of them. Clearly, however, he has already been living beyond his means, for he "owes everywhere". The expensive wines, the taverns and the bakeries are all part of a far wider, more complete cityscape, which in Deschamps glitters as much with its own sense of indispensability as with the silver it requires.

1.4 Food, Drink and the Pastoral Ideal

There are two principal kinds of peasants in Deschamps. The first, which has some relationship to peasants of the real world, is the helpless and wronged victim of war and pillage. The second, which is an almost entirely literary creation, is the content, free, independent labourer. In both cases, food and drink are often associated with him, whether to evoke sympathy or
simply to act as an identifying tag for a literary commonplace.

The first kind of peasant will be dealt with as part of a later unit of this chapter: food, drink and society at war. We turn our attention now to his "unreal" image, the literary progeny of Franc Gontier, himself the culmination of a long pastoral tradition.29

The Dit de Franc Gontier was written by Philippe de Vitry in the generation immediately before that of Deschamps.30 Its first stanza is filled with a description of the setting and meal enjoyed by Gontier and his dame Helayne, including:

Fromage frais, laict, burre, fromaigee,
Craime, matton, pomme, nois, prune, poire,
Aulx et oignons, escaillonge froyée
Sur crouste bise, au gros sel, pour mieulx boire.

No noble would think much of this as a real meal. It is raw and coarse; ingredients are eaten singly, rather than cooked and spiced together, and all of them are themselves humble to start with. Yet there is a sense of variety and relish here that mirrors that of the courtly meals recorded by Colin Muset. One of the poem's themes, then, is that true wealth is more a matter of perspective than of material.

Indeed, the Dit de Franc Gontier explores the didactic possibilities offered by peasant life in several ways. On a more direct level, Franc Gontier specifically compares his simple existence favourably to that of courtiers. He does not fear poisoning by enemies, and he need not abase himself before tyrants. Because, "jusques là", he has felt no envy, ambition or gluttony, he has remained out of line of the sergeant's rod. Throughout the poem, food imagery continues to help define the wholesomeness of his existence. The kisses that follow the meal are part of the "doux mè de nature" (13), and, says Gontier, "Labour me paist [my italics] en joieuse franchise"(28).

The influence of this poem was widespread. In the late fifteenth-century manuscript used by Piaget,31 it is coupled with a poem by Pierre d'Ailly32 on the misery of the tyrant's life. The actual table of the rich household receives a far more slanted treatment here than it ever does in Deschamps' poems, with

29 For a survey of earlier pastoral literature involving food and drink, see Chapter Two, pp. 77-80.

30 A short study of Philippe de Vitry's life, work and reputation, including an edition of the Dit de Franc Gontier, is to be found in A. Piaget, "Le chapel des fleurs de lis," Romania XXVII, pp. 55-92.

31 Piaget, Romania XXVII, pp. 63-65.

32 B. 1350, d. 1420; theologian and chancellor of Paris.
food and drink not just elements in excess and signs of servitude, but links with sin, decay and death:

Le mal glouton par tout guette et advise
Pour appetit trouver, et quiert maniere
Comment sa bouche de lescherie esprise
Son ventre emplisse com bourse pautonniere.

Mais sac a fiens, pulente cimitiere,
Sepulcre a vins, corps bouffi, crasse pance,
Pour tous ses biens en soy n'a lie chiere
Car ventre saoul en saveur n'a plaisance . . .

(13-20)

An even better-known response to Franc Gontier is of course Villon’s Contreditz Franc Gontier.33 The fifteenth-century poet returns to the literality of the peasant situation, comparing it with the life of a corrupt but wealthy priest and his mistress, and effectively calling the bluff of anyone who claims to prefer peasant simplicity to the trésor of the luxurious life.

Deschamps, in his adaptations of the Franc Gontier myth, does not delve as deeply into its antithesis — the physical corruption of the rich and powerful — as Pierre d’Ailly, nor does he challenge the stereotypes of peasant life as forcefully as Villon. Occasionally, he inserts an idealised image of peasant existence into a context that is at least semi-realistic, with interesting results. Virelai 751, for instance, is narrated by a young novice who feels she was consigned too young to the convent, and has determined to leave it, attracted, among other things, by the curds-and-bread picnics of her rustic peers:

Je vi l’autre jour Marette,
Yseut, Margot et Hennette,
Qui mengoient du maton
Dessus l’erbe nouvellette . . .

Chascun portoit sa houlette
Et du pain en sa lourette . . .

(18-21)

(30-31)

The tone of the poem is playful and coquettish, as demonstrated by the second stanza —

Du cloistre me suis retraitte,
Ou l’en doit rendre contrette
Ou corps de rude façon,
Femme borgne ou contrefette,
Non pas fille joliete,
Qui scet baler du talon.

(6-11)

-- and it reads like a cross between the "Virelai d'une pucelle" of Deschamps himself and the bergerie-style games and activities of Adam de la Halle's Robin and Marion. Food is only a part of the varied pastoral pleasures the young novice has been missing.

The temptation of nuns by worldly delights is a traditional theme of literature and folklore, and here, as elsewhere, it provides a mixture of sympathy and titillation. However, the underlying scenario is in fact quite credible; children put into monastic institutions at a very young age would almost certainly have yearned for the freedom of the "world". Would they, though, really have missed the "maton" and "pain" of the limited peasant diet? Overall, in this virelai, Deschamps is doing little more than comparing two stereotyped visions, avoiding any possible ambiguities to be found in either the religious or the pastoral experience.

Not all peasants in Deschamps are shown as completely content with their lot. The shepherds in ballade 1009 debate changing their life for that of the bands of armed horseman they have seen,

Car bergiers ne sont que meschans
Tant comme ilz gardent les moutons.
Pain bis, prunelles et boutons,
Frommaige et let est leur deduit . . .

(7-10)

After this, the entire ballade concentrates on the routiers; so it would appear that food and drink, along with the work involved in keeping herds, are the only major areas of complaint. Moments of honest appraisal in Deschamps's writing, such as this one, only confirm the conscious conventionality with which he normally exploits the peasant diet.

Certainly, on the whole, he sticks rather closely to the Franc Gontier model. In both the Lay de Franchise and ballade 315, the key physical elements of Franc Gontier's life reappear as aspects of Robin and Marion's existence. These include the simple meal, the manual work, the sense of freedom, and (with intriguing specificity) the lack of risk of being poisoned. There are, however, a few significant differences.

First, the meal in Deschamps is reduced to a minimum: bread and water in the lay; bread and water with green onions in the ballade. Deschamps is actually schematising the peasant diet here, partly, perhaps, because only shorthand is now needed to recreate the familiar literary topos; and partly, it seems

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34 Examples can be found in texts ranging from the fourteenth-century miracle play, La Nonne qui laissa son abbaie, to Monty Python sketches.

35 In the final analysis, however, the pastoral life, despite its drawbacks, is accepted as preferable to that of the violent itinerant soldier.
likely, to show that sufficiency, almost gourmandise, can be achieved through attitude alone. Second, Robin is a more didactic character than Gontier, instructing Marion on the reasons they are so fortunate. The emphasis, in both poems, falls heavily and explicitly onto the notion of "franc vouloir" (l. 285 and refrain, respectively). This is more than the "assez" of Franc Gontier; it has become the key to the greatest wealth of all.

We have already analysed use of the courtly meal in the Lay de Franchise, and how the simplicity of the peasants wins out in the end. In ballade 315, the courtiers whom Robin describes eat too, but it is an unnatural meal: "Mangier leur vis pis que viande crue" (46). Raw meat, as is demonstrated through the episode of Yvain's madness in Chrétien's Chevalier au Lion, is the food of the uncivilised man, the diet that links him to animals. To eat something physically worse, within the context of court society, would be almost impossible; Robin's observation may therefore be interpreted figuratively, in the sense that the nobles who seek to profit from the court must "swallow whatever nonsense is fed to them".

The peasant-type diet, in Deschamps, is not always set into a pastoral frame. In ballade 1258, for example, there is a return to the level of detail found in Franc Gontier, but with an even more convincing list of common foodstuffs. Cabbage, peas, beans, bacon, rye, wheat, barley bread, fruit, lettuce, leeks and turnips are all named—here more as staples than as picnic supplies. Eschewing the picturesque charm of the woodcutter's idyll, Deschamps presents this "menu" straight, as the only physical sustenance we truly need:

> Vous qui avez chox, pois, feves et lart,  
> Saille, forment ou pain d'orge a mangier,  
> Par vo labour, et pouez tost ou tart,  
> Et franchement lever, dormir, veillier,  
> Ne vueiliiez pas vo franchise avilier  
> Pour estat nul, com font les curriaux  
> Ne pour vivre de preieux morsiaux  
> Ou la mort gist par convoituse envie,  
> Mais mangez, frans, fruiz, laitures, poreaulx,  
> Car il n'est riens qui vaille franche vie.  

(1-10)

The rule of "franche vie", he implies, is for everyone to seek, not just the lower orders of society. Indeed, Laura Kendrick has, I think rightly, identified the pastoral in Deschamps as part of the same ethos that praises the "état moyen".  

---

Rather, he is promoting a new world order, in which the affairs of state are run through an alliance between king and hard-working, independent counsellors, untainted by old feudal loyalties and rivalries. What matters most in setting up such a society is preserving one's freedom from greed and from domination by others.

A final "peasant" ballade, 1265, allegorizes the choices to be made. Robin, having left the service of Franchise for the service of "Estat mondain et convoituse vie" (22) returns to his first mistress, contrite. Food images help develop the contrast between the free life (pain, bouillie, douce eau, grain) and the subservient one (vin, viande). There is even a metaphorical food proverb for Robin's experience of subjection: "L'orde salle m'a bracé ce levain" (19). So food plays a part in conveying the idea of intrusive, external forces interfering with what is natural.

As we have seen, the stereotypical peasant, partly defined by his or her food and drink, can be inserted, in Deschamps, into a context of limited realism. On the whole, however, Deschamps's use of the peasant diet owes little more than its tradition to the lighthearted feasts of Le Jeu de Robin et de Marion or even the first stanza of the Dit de Franc Contier. In those cases, the meal does help underline notions of class distinction; yet it has retained a colourfulness and tantalizing quality (for its partakers) that gives it a charm of its own. In Deschamps, peasant food and drink, with or without its traditional pastoral frame, is present not for its charm, but for its message: broadly stated, that peaceful, honest self-sufficiency is better than an exploitational and exploited position in relation to wealth and power. This in turn is applicable to a far broader cross-section of society than the class of woodcutters, seamstresses and shepherds, and in particular to those members of the rising bourgeoisie for whom the choice between service-servility to court ethics and successful independence is a real and immediate question.

1.5 Food and Drink in the Social Subgroup

Analysis by class alone does not fully cover Deschamps's use of food and drink in connection with stable social structures. The poet also gives alimentary allusions a significant role within various social subgroups, such as dining or drinking parties or societies, women, married couples, and families.

The etymological meaning of the word "companion" -- one who shares bread with another -- is particularly appropriate to Deschamps's poetry. Whether his companions are depicted literally at meals with him, or simply at table over

37 Cf. the selection of bread proverbs in Chapter 2, pp. 50-51.
refreshments more liquid than solid, the poet often uses food or drink to sketch an impression of his fellows, and of his own relationship to them.

Sometimes the grouping is almost intimate, in size if not in sentiment. In rondeaux 579 and 580 we hear Deschamps complaining about the trials of eating with "Savoisi" and "Poitiers": Gaston Raynaud identifies both as "persecutors" of Deschamps,38 apparently chiefly on the grounds of ballade 803, in which they, along with six others, are indeed accused by the poet of tormenting him. In reality, both were well-established members of the households of Louis d'Orléans and Charles VI, and while Deschamps may have had his differences with them, there is nothing to prove a lasting enmity.39 On the contrary, the tone of the two rondeaux seems to indicate a joking camaraderie.40 The grievances expressed in 579 are more like those of a child complaining that a sibling has got more than his proper share than anything else:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Je n'ose aler souper a court} \\
\text{Pour Savoisi et pour Poitiers} \\
\text{Qui lopinent trop volentiers.} \\
\text{Sur ce me font souper trop court,} \\
\text{Mangier n'y puis, n'a quart, n'a tiers.} \\
\text{Je n'ose aler souper a court} \\
\text{Pour Savoisi et pour Poitiers.} \\
\text{L'un d'eulx a ma viande court,} \\
\text{Et l'autre au vin; poussins, plouviers,} \\
\text{M'arrache des poins; amy chiers,} \\
\text{Je n'ose aler souper a court} \\
\text{Pour Savoisi et pour Poitiers} \\
\text{Qui lopinent trop volentiers.}
\end{align*}
\]

And in 580, the wry irony is unmistakeable:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Qui fisiciens veult avoir} \\
\text{Pour pou mengier, je li ensaigne} \\
\text{Que Poitiers et Savoisi prengne;} \\
\text{Ces deux feront bien leur devoir,} \\
\text{De bien riffler, quoy qui avaigne . . . }
\end{align*}
\]

(1-5)

Poitiers and Savoisi, claims the poet, are certainly helpful to anyone who is trying to lose weight.

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38 Volume X, *Index des noms propres et des matières.*

39 Poitiers also appears in the more neutral contexts of ballade 1132, a flattering directory of knights of the king's household in 1396, and ballade 922, where he is simply one of the guards on duty at the Châtelet.

40 We might compare the outrage over rude behaviour that is expressed here to that of rondeaux 578 and 585, the first a formal complaint against a fart, the second a dispute over which of two bedfellows is responsible for another fart.
It is because it is a question of food here that the lightness of tone is maintained. In "pure" insult poems (such as 803), it is often hard to be sure that bitterness is not real, that the curses are not meant to have some effect. Here, on the other hand, we have three table companions competing for a bit of meat, in a court setting where, certainly, serious deprivation is no threat. Deschamps makes himself a Charlie Chaplin-type victim figure, with the other two almost vaudeville caricatures, small-scale greed made flesh.

This poem alone is enough to overturn some of the accepted fallacies concerning medieval dining. Court eating here has a strikingly human dimension to it: the diners may be antagonistic toward each other, but they are also in close personal rapport -- close enough, in fact, to fight over the food before them. There is no sign here of the ostentation and rigid etiquette often ascribed to formal feasts. And what of the allegation that courtly diners cared little about the taste of their food, as long as it was a visual treat? Deschamps is interested in retaining and consuming, simply and specifically, his share of the "viande", "vin", "poussins" and "plouviers". The latter two dishes especially evoke a particular, desirable -- and desired -- taste experience.

This does not, of course, disprove the existence of formal dining occasions, at which dignity and spectacle could be of great importance. It does, however, allow a glimpse of daily living within the noble hall, and of familiarly small-scale relationships functioning within the hierarchical courtly setting.

We have already noted that drinking societies, both formal and spontaneous, exist both inside and outside court in Deschamps's work. More often than not, the poet allots himself a leading position in such groups. The effectiveness of poems about societies such as the Fumeux derives to a great extent from their blending of structure and anarchy: structure as represented by their form, frequently a burlesque on royal charters or commissions; anarchy as represented by wine, revelry and a general subversion of the norms of official culture. The Chartre des Fumeux (1398), for example, begins with a parody of traditional letter-opening, addressing not a single correspondent, but a broadly inclusive cross-section of authority figures from all levels of society:

Jehan Fumée, par la grace du monde
Ou tous baras et tricherie habonde
Empereres et sires des Fumeux,
Et palatins des Merencholieux,
A tous baillis, prevosts et seneschaux,
Dus, contes, princes, tresoriers, mareschaux,
Gardes de villes, de pors et de passaiges,
Aux admiraulx qui gardent les rivaiges,
Au Connestable et a tous les sergens
De nostre empire et a tous lieutenans;
Semblablement, a tous noz justiciers,
Auxquelz ces lettres s'adreceront premiers,
Et a chascun d'euix en division,
Amour, salut avec dilection!

(1-14)
Not only has he substituted the grace of the world for the grace of God, but he has created an entire bureaucracy for the "alternative" empire of the Fumeux, all within the bounds of the salutation.

From its beginning in mock-stately decasyllables, the poem quickly (at l. 29) slips into octasyllables, whose effect is one of easy, almost jingly rhymes. The versification thus enhances the frivolity of the content, which concentrates at first on a sort of Identikit by which members of the Order of Fumeux may be recognized. Several of the characteristics described are food- and drink-related, either literally or through language. Hence, "Trop sont saiges après le vin, / Mais rien ne sevent au matin . . ." (57-58); "Paresceus sont d'ouir la messe, / A boire n'ont nulle paresse . . ." (121-122);

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Et Plaisance a tout son dragier} \\
\text{Les sert si bien de ses espices} \\
\text{Que nulz d'eulx n'y a, tant soit nices,} \\
\text{Qui ne soit siens a son depart . . .}
\end{align*}
\]

(104-107)

Viewed in isolation, the above citations might seem to imply only gais lurons; but throughout the poem they are clearly linked with signs of folly. Wine-drinking is a catalyst for all kinds of exuberant and wilful eccentricity, though not, in itself, the focus of this charter.

Moreover, while subjects of the "emperor" are to be found in all walks of life, they are particularly common in religious orders and churches "Qui sont en nostre garde mises" (146). Indeed, Deschamps shows considerable relish elsewhere in his work in depicting the clergy as bons vivants. It is true that he is equally adept at serious criticism of the Church for its worldliness and corruption.41 However, when literal food or drink play a significant role in a poem's rhetoric, its clerical anti-hero becomes more bon compagnon than bad priest. The priorities of Frère Bernard (ballade 826) give him much in common with Rabelais' Frère Jean des Entommeures, although he does not share the latter's martial instincts:42

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Je n'ay cure, se dist frere Bernars,} \\
\text{D'alor conquerre les estranges paiz,} \\
\text{Ne d'estre preux ou Julius Cesars} \\
\text{Ou comme furent Alixandre et Daviz,} \\
\text{Ne du sans de Salomon,} \\
\text{Ne que faye la beaute d'Absalon,} \\
\text{Qu'a nulle rien qui soit ne sui enclin} \\
\text{Fors que toujours assez boire de vin.}
\end{align*}
\]

41 See, for example, ballades 943 and 954.

42 See Gargantua, XXVII.
D'avoir longe et priz de toutes pars,
De grant richesse, de puissance, d'amis,
De chiens, d'oiseaux, de rivières, de pars,
Que plusieurs m'ement ou que soye haiz,
Ne de dame de renon
Tant soit plaisant, ne dorroie un bouton:
Pour mon deduit je ne veil en ma fin
Fors que tousjours assez boire de vin.

Et se l'en dit que je soye coquars,
Et que je deusse estre preux et hardiz,
Je voy assez plus vivre les couars
Que ceux qui vont contre leur annemis;
Un trait d'archier les a tost a mort mis;
Maiz quant j'oy a mon bandon
De ce bon vin dont Beaune nous fait don,
Estre ne quier cler ne parler latin,
Fors que tousjours assez boire de vin.

It is perhaps wrong to single out Frère Bernard in a section dealing with groups of social eaters and drinkers. But his love of wine is characteristic of the cleric as literary type, and it would seem, from the Chartre des Fumeux, that he shares it with his compereers. The ballade he narrates is not only very good-natured anti-clerical satire, but also a parody of courtly convention. We have seen how the "country property" and courtly love details of stanza two belong to aristocratic tradition; in addition, the structure and rhetoric of much of the poem closely imitates that of Machaut's ballade notée 38, whose refrain runs "Je voy assez, puis que je voy ma dame". The irony, of course, is that most of the things Bernard offers to forego for "enough wine" should never have interested a friar, either mentally or physically, in the first place. However, when he professes himself willing to give up being a cleric and speaking Latin, the reductio ad vinum is complete.

The connection between the religious and their drink goes beyond the literal. In the case of the "Ordre de la Baboue", the drinkers are members of the distinctly secular court of Burgundy, but the rhetoric with which their society is described owes much to the vocabulary of religious foundations. The ordonnances of the Ordre de la Baboue may be unique, in comparison with any normal religious Rule: they involve, principally, a constant pouring and chugging of wine. But the new abbey has its own "abbot" and "monks" (courtiers), and "On y sert Dieu," claims the poet euphemistically, meaning that one drinks, all the canonical waking hours. So the commonplace of the


44 Deschamps plays on the general assumption that drinking all the wine one wants is a corollary of being a Latin-speaking cleric, implying that Frère Bernard would give up the very foundations of this privilege in exchange for the privilege alone. The final refrain, then, is the ultimate unwitting declaration of worldliness on the part of the speaker.
religious as habitual drinkers has been converted into the actuality of courtiers drinking religiously.

Both the spirit of Frère Bernard’s profession and the atmosphere among the "monks" of the Ordre de la Baboue are entirely that of the Fumeux pieces. Within this kind of alternative "organisation", created as the antithesis to logical culture, the expectations of society are consistently flouted, and the most desirable possible conduct amounts to drinking and carousing with one’s fellows.

The Fumeux are not the only alcohol-fed society for which Deschamps creates "official documents". The Chartre des bons enfants de Vertus en Champagne (1400) is directed particularly at the frequenters ("Frequentans") of the taverns of Vertus. It is thus openly and primarily about drinking, in an urban rather than a courtly setting, and sets forth a list of points to which every good drinker should adhere. Even those directly relevant to food or drink are too numerous for all of them to be mentioned here. We may note, however, the pervasiveness of alcohol in the life of a Frequentan which matches the presence of references to it in the charter. In the daily routine it should be drunk from first thing in the morning to last thing at night (18-20); in the weekly routine it takes precedence over mass:

Nulz ne voist oir haulte messe,
Car le dimanche, pour la presse,
Tous ensemble et chascun se passe
Moult legierement d’une basse;
Car plusieurs, l’eau benoite faicte,
Incontinent font leur retraicte,
Et viennent a la boucherie
Cerchier trippes ou lecherie:
Lors vont boire diligemment.

(219-227)

(Food here, as in Gargantua IV, functions chiefly as an incitement to drink more wine.) Types and kinds of wine are recommended – strong and clear for summer, young and rough (with laxative properties!) for winter (112-121). The wine of Beaune, here as in many other medieval texts, is to be preferred to all others. There are even recommendations on how to behave in taverns. It is essential, says the sovereign of the Frequentans, to consume on credit for as long as possible,

Et se hoste et hostesse dit mot,
On les doit souvent laidengier,
Et non pas souffrir leur dangier,
Qu’adès sont buveurs en estat;
Mès taverniers deviennent mat
Par creance dont ilz s’esmaient . . .

Et se vins fault soudainement,
Du cul du pot si roidement
Devez sur la table ferir
Que vostre hoste le puist oir,
This charter, then, has furnished us with one of the most complete and detailed literary views of fourteenth-century tavern "protocol" in existence. Here, unlike in Rutebeuf and the dark tradition to which he belongs, the drinker is not the victim of malevolent dice and cheating landlords, but the conscious manipulator of the whole scene, loyal upholder of all the traditions of exploitation and scallywaggery associated with the tavern. His special appreciation of the wine of Beaune reflects his gastronomic delight in the variety of experience surrounding it. In this poem, Deschamps appears a true heir of the Goliardic tradition.

A man's relationship with his cronies, in Deschamps's time as today, tends to be viewed traditionally as a sociable, unfettered, freely-chosen one. Despite the numerous guidelines for self-respecting drinkers set down in Deschamps's burlesque charters, commissions and letters, the essence of the lifestyle they portray is its iconoclasm. Is it the official rule for men to remove their hoods at court as a sign of respect, even in the dead of winter? Then let the Fumeux be authorised, even constrained to keep theirs on, on pain of death, or at least deafness (1398, 163-243). Is it customary for gentlemen to offer one another unstinting hospitality? Then let Deschamps offer his friend Galhaut the use of his Paris house, but with so many conditions as to make any notion of genuine generosity utterly absurd (lettre 1403). Deschamps, both as leader of the Fumeux/Frequentans and as teasing friend, exercises considerable individuality (even eccentricity) and control over his own and others' conduct. If a man cannot do this, he may become the unhappy bullied diner of 579-580, or worse, the sycophantic lackey so scorned by Robin the woodcutter.

Yet when it comes to relationships with women, Deschamps asserts that a man's position may well be affected by more than a tinge of fate. Deschamps does write conventional courtly love lyrics in which the female character remains perfect because of her very remoteness, and his own wife seems to have been a loyal, virtuous, hardworking and submissive partner to him. Besides doing everything else the way the speaker, whether Deschamps or not, likes it best, the wife in ballade 1184

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\[45\] See Raynaud's Introduction, Volume XI, p. 18; also ballades 1151 and 1184. In fact, there is no reason to assume that the speaker in the latter represents Deschamps himself, especially as the description of his wife is so flattering as to be uncharacteristically flat and colourless. Could this portrait not be just the other side of the coin to some of the vixens and loathly ladies that the poet sketches elsewhere?
... pour mangier tousjours m’aprestera,
A son pouvoir, ce à quoy mon cœur muet ...

(25-26)

and the speaker thanks God and the glorious virgin for giving him "si douce compagnie".

In spite of all the effusive praise bestowed upon woman here, there is still no escaping the fact that the female of the species, once honourably espoused, is no regular drinking companion, but a rather sobering partner for life. And though 1184 may accentuate the positive in such a relationship, it also implies, through its fervent gratitude to God, that any man who finds such a woman is extremely lucky, and not at all typical.

More generally in Deschamps, married and marriageable women are viewed with all the suspicion and criticism that Deschamps can mine from the antifeminist tradition which he inherited. First, in practical terms, both weddings and wives are costly and demanding. Deschamps transmits this theme in various versions, with food and drink often forming part of the material needed to satisfy both convention and physical requirements of a married couple. Ballade 1234 is largely a warning against the cost of weddings, including that of the "divers morceaux, / Vins et grains en grant habondance" (17-18) which are required to feed guests. A lengthy section of the Miroir de Mariage (XV) details all the needs of a newly-founded househhood, as do lettre 1407 and ballade 1451. Foodstuffs, in the form of spices, bacon, oil, lard, fruit, vegetables, cheese and sweetmeats are listed, interspersed with other material possessions. This kind of list format reinforces the bulk and weight of paraphernalia that accompany the sudden responsibility attached to the ominous first step into marriage.

Second, once married, the woman becomes a model of rapaciousness and perversity. In ballade 213, she is depicted as power-hungry and dominant, through a series of Biblical, Classical and Arthurian exempla. The refrain brings out her figurative voracity: "Il n’est chose que femme ne consomme." But her power to vex is often expressed in a more concrete way, and especially through references to literal food and drink. Just as the ideal wife was praised for serving her husband exactly what he wanted, as long as it was in her power to do so, the "real" wife is criticised for denying her mate his preferred meal. This practice, it seems, is particularly probable in a "January-April" marriage between a man of sixty and a girl of fifteen (ballade 880). 

46 Major antifeminist writers and works which Deschamps is likely to have known and used, either directly or indirectly, include Theophratus, Aureolus (via Jerome, Adversus Jovinianum, book I), Jean de Meun, Roman de la Rose, and Matheolus, Lamentations. See Raynaud, XI, p.165, and Jean Rychner, Introduction to Les XV. Joies de mariage (Geneva: Droz, 1967), pp. x-xix. Rychner also suggests that the Quinze Joies might have preceded and influenced Deschamps’ Miroir de Mariage.
Deschamps is rather fatalistic about the outcome in this case, blaming the husband for choosing a union in which no harmony is possible:

Vieux homs ne fait que merencolier,  
Jeune femme a entendement subtil;  
Il veult dormir et elle veult veillier  
Et veult aler aux roses ou courtil;  
Elle est fresche et il est mol;  
S'il veult des pois on lui donra du chol... 

(19-24)

The food image here, involving the commonest everyday vegetables, comes across as standing for many further points of incompatibility. In particular, peas were often viewed as a food for the old, with cabbage being a more generally consumed vegetable; thus, the husband’s desires symbolise his decrepitude. Nevertheless, the use of the impersonal "on" does reinforce the idea that the woman can barely help her lack of rapport with her spouse.

Ballade 929, on the other hand, consisting of a dialogue in which one man warns the other against marrying under any circumstances, lays the blame for all the torments of marriage on the wife’s wilful behaviour. "Quant tu vouldras avoir des eufs, / Tu auras porrée ou frommaige," declares the adviser. Again, the foodstuffs are common enough to stand for unreasonable caprice in general, and again, the wife is not specifically designated as the perpetrator of the affront to her husband’s desires. Yet this time, through the use of future rather than conditional tenses, there is a definite and imminent quality to the husband’s projected disappointment — and who but the wife will bring it about?

So food comes to help represent the disillusionment inherent in life as part of a permanent union. However, marriage brings further problems, in the shape of children. They are expensive to raise from the start of life, and in the end, whether good or bad, a trial to their parents, or so run the complaints of ballade 1004. Food and drink — bread, wine, milk, cheese and meat — are part of the list of requirements for bringing up a family. Once again, they are solid staples; it would seem that family life and luxurious eating habits are as incompatible as a typical husband and wife.

There are examples in Deschamps’s work of more neutral, even sympathetic treatments of marriage and family. Virelai 564, addressed to a “princesse en couches” (probably Valentina Visconti) offers quite tender advice, particularly concerning the best choice of nurse "Dont tresbon lait puist yssir”. Ballade 1235, on the other hand, features an unhappily-married woman who has long since borne all her children to the “rudes paisans” who is her husband. The fertility image of breasts giving milk is overturned here: the speaker nevertheless defines them using food imagery, for, as she says, "Tettes ay com souflez d’un four". There could be no better way of evoking dry hollowness where there used to be potential to nurture.
The idea of the woman’s body as food will be discussed in greater depth later. At this point, however, we may sum up the role of food and drink in showing a woman’s real position within a marriage, inside the greater whole of society. In general, she is linked with practical food, ranging from basic staples to the more costly and varied “essentials” that stock the larders of a gentleman or wealthy bougeois. She is seen as in charge of domestic matters, yet they hardly furnish her with an opportunity for autonomy. The most she can do is substitute cabbage for peas, and even then such an act will be judged as calculated to cause pain to her husband. With a few exceptions, food and drink in relation to women, marriage and family in Deschamps only emphasise the burdens that all three place on men.

1.6 Food and Drink in Religious Custom

For Deschamps, gourmet of the alimentary expression, the main interest in food and drink as elements of religious observance is, paradoxically, concentrated on their role in official fasts of the Christian year. He makes these fasts the subject of no fewer than five short lyrics, four definitely his, and one attributed.\(^\text{47}\) Three of these poems show a strong and spirited bias against Lent, while the other two solemnly support Church-imposed times of restraint. Some aspects of this group of poems, such as the rhetoric of personal complaint and the use of food in internal and external structures, will be saved for discussion in Chapters Four and Five.

At this point, though, it is worth recalling the social impact of Lent which Deschamps interprets in the more materially-oriented of his Lenten poems. By Deschamps’s time, Lenten restrictions generally meant no animal foods, including eggs and dairy products, and no food at all before midday; a simple supper was also allowed. Four weeks of the year, on Ember Days, similarly strict fasting was imposed. However, there was scope, both moral and economic, for varying the rigour of the fast. If one was well off, one could not only buy special religious dispensations to eat forbidden foods;\(^\text{48}\) but one could also eat rather well on a meatless diet, provided that this included exotic spices, good wine, almonds, and perhaps the occasional morsel of such dubious “fish” as beaver tail or barnacle goose.

For the poor, of course, Lenten eating habits were quite another matter. It is not surprising that when Deschamps writes about Lenten sufferings, he takes

\(^{47}\) Chansons royales 350, 352; ballade 1198; rondeau 625; attributed ballade (Volume X) 20.

\(^{48}\) The Butter Tower in Rouen is an example of how such payments could be put to constructive use. See Chapter One, p. 43, for further general details concerning Lent.
the situation of the humble as his main point of departure. Whether his reflections on the trials of the fast are based on his own experience or not (and he was probably never personally restricted to such monotonous diets) is immaterial. What is certain is that he enjoys using food to draw a visceral response from his audience, and there is no better way of doing so than to insert food images tinged with disgust into a dreary context familiar to all.

Ballade 1198 purports to be written from the depths of a particularly trying winter, Lent 1402 (1403 n. s.). Although Lent is linked with pestilence and relapse into chronic illness, and although its slow passage makes work seem more unrelenting than usual, the misery of the poet is defined largely in terms of food. Eating, which he used to find sweet, has become bitter to him, and bitterness unlightened with nostalgia suffuses the poem. Peas and beans are expensive, bread rancid, wine costly, oil and onions spoilt. But it is fish that dominate the food lists of this ballade: the desirable sorts impossible to find in edible condition, the ubiquitous herring "Caqués et sors, jaunes, noirs et puens, / Mal en sausssès," (5-6), the whiting "viez" and "hors saison" (6). In all, twenty different kinds of fish are mentioned, and the sheer variety of the catalogue, in a different set of circumstances, could help evoke a feast. Here, however, a few well-placed modifiers -- "deffendus", "nuisens", "lymon flairens" -- ensure that it remains more of an anti-banquet.

In this ballade, Lent does not progress, alter, retreat; it has taken over an interminable present. If we break the poem down in terms of subject matter, we find it runs food - disease - food, food - disease - food - work - food. The dull throb of the ill-treated stomach seems to underlie the whole structure.

On the other hand, the very emphasis on good food gone bad, along with the complaining tone, indicate that the speaker is not "at the worst": he retains an awareness that things could and should be better, though it is Lent. By contrast, the "povres gens" of the allegorical chanson royale 350 are depicted as helpless victims. The 23 different Lenten foodstuffs forced on them are almost all earthy, peasant, vegan fare; mention of fish is reduced to "Harens puanz, poissons de mer pourris" (22). The allegory of this poem turns on the battle between Lent and Carnival, but Deschamps's depiction of the lot of the poor during Lent -- as the main sufferers in a conflict between two great powers -- has a great deal in common with their permanently precarious real situation during the Hundred Years War. Subjected alternately to siege warfare and the ravages of marauding routiers, they all too often found their food supply in year-round danger of becoming as uncertain and unpalatable as at Lent.

In Deschamps, the ecclesiastical calendar typically constitutes an authoritarian, interfering force on people's diets. But at least its times of greatest impact were predictable. In both chanson royale 350 and attributed ballade 20, the festive spirit wins out in the end over physical discomfort, with the victorious return of Charnage/Pasques. Real war, besides making
future survival uncertain, made present complacency impossible. The people knew neither the day nor the hour when their daily routines might be lost for good. We turn now to a study of Deschamps’s use of food and drink in relation to war.

2. Social Change

2.1 Food, Drink and Society at War

War was an intermittent disruptor of security for people at all levels of society over Deschamps’ lifetime. Although his generation was too young for the early battles of Crécy and Poitiers, and did not live to witness Agincourt, it saw the launching of many smaller campaigns, particularly in Gascony and Flanders. Deschamps himself knew the hardships of war both as soldier and as civilian, participating in three separate French expeditions to Flanders in the 1380s, and having his house “des champs” in Vertus destroyed by the English in 1380. All these personal experiences are well exploited in his poetry.

His poems also make it clear, however, that the problems caused by war were not limited to damage done by official armies. The routiers, bands of professional soldiers, both French and English, who were at loose ends — and unsalaried — between campaigns, roamed the French countryside appropriating meat and grain as needed, and terrorising the peasantry. As mentioned above, food was often in short supply.

In poems such as chanson royale 350 (“Contre le Carême”), Deschamps uses the terminology and consequences of real war in an allegorical context. Lent is an invader and a besieger, equipped with baskets of artillery; once in control, he becomes a sadistic taskmaster to the people he has conquered. When the tables are turned by May, Mardi Gras and Easter, he in turn will suffer humiliation and servaige at the hands of the gloating victors. The style and spirit of the warfare described here are very like those of many conflicts during the Hundred Years War, especially those smaller disputes by which territory was retaken bit by bit. As for the effects of this kind of war, the hunger and suffering of the poor was indeed one of the most common.

However, Deschamps does not always reset war into such a carefully structured context so far from its literal reality. Sometimes he uses literary convention as a frame, into which he sets actual historical circumstances.

49 These were the Battle of Roosebeke in 1382; the Bourbourg campaign in 1383; and the siege of Damme in 1385. See I. S. Laurie, Eustache Deschamps: His life his contribution to the development of the rondeau, the virelai and the ballade (unpublished PhD thesis, Clare College, Cambridge, 1962).
This is true of a category of poems that I will name "politico-pastoral". We have already come across an example of one of these: ballade 1009, which features a group of shepherds discussing the pros and cons of life as an armed routier, and finally rejecting it in favour of their own quiet but worthy existence. The politico-pastoral poems' basic characteristic is that they depict the events of the day through the views and conversation of stereotypical shepherds.

An example more specifically concerned with the official war is chanson royale 359:

Entre Guynes, Sangates et Callays
Soubz une saulz assez pres du marcage,
De pastoureaulx estoit la un grant plays,
Qui paisssoient leurs brebiz en l'erbaige;
Dont l'un disoit que c estoit grant dommaige
Qu'il convenoit laisser le pasturer
Pour les treves qui devoient cesser.
Lors dist Brehiers: J'en diray ma hesmée.
Ailleurs nous fault nostre bestail mener:
Nous n'arons paix aux Anglois de l'année.

Adonc parla Bertrans li contrefais,
Qui aux autres departoit un frommaige:
Je tien, fait il, que treve arons ou paix,
Car au traïté sont venu pluseur saige.
Thierri respont: Ilz perdent leur langue,
Car ilz ne font fôrs l'un l'autre assoter;
Et si oy l'autre jour recorder
A un pastour de l'anglesche contrée
Que se Calais puet ainsi demourer,
Nous n'arons paix aux Anglois de l'année.

The poem continues into increasingly detailed analysis, always presented through peasant dialogue.

This kind of pastoral setting for a political subject has, I think, two purposes. First, the use of the peasants' perspective underlines the far-reaching ramifications of the hostilities. Everyone is affected, down to those who occupy the lowest level of the social structure. Indeed, as this poem makes very clear, that bottom level of society is also the one which has the most direct control over the food supply. When the pasturing work of shepherds is disturbed by outside events, everyone's alimentary stability may be rocked to some extent.50

Second, the simple presence of the shepherds allows Deschamps to exploit the accepted value of the pastoral tradition in literature. According to that tradition, the fact that these are shepherds almost guarantees that they should

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50 The fifteenth-century Journal d'un bourgeois de Paris records several periods during which crops around Paris were ruined because fields could not be tended by workers forced to take refuge inside the besieged city.
be more honest and open than anyone else. Their discussion will therefore result in a more accurate and convincing representation of the situation than could be provided by an intellectual exposition. The cheese they share out is not only a realistic detail to lend authenticity to the conversation, it is also a rhetorical device to reinforce their trustworthiness, for it affirms their literary kinship to down-to-earth characters as Franc Gontier, Robin, Marion and friends.

Such, broadly, are the roles of food or drink in all such politico-pastoral pieces: they may be short, almost throwaway references, but they emphasise both the universality of war's afflictions and, because they contribute to his rhetorical familiarity, the dependability of the shepherd or peasant concerned in transmitting the right message.

So much for reality through a filter of obvious artifice. Deschamps also deals with the subject of war's upheaval directly, in poems where food and drink again make a significant contribution.

Sometimes, the target of his criticism is the same as that of the shepherds in 1009: the routiers. In ballade 5, he specifically addresses the lifestyle of these bands of raiders. Theirs is a worse métier than usury, he says, and as well as forcing those who choose it to become murderers, thieves, accessories to crime, violators of monasteries, rapers of women, arsenists and betrayers of neighbours,

\[\ldots en ce faisant suesrent trop de dangiers,\]
\[De fain, de frot, de mauvais logement;\]
\[Mieux leur vausist estre au monde bergiers \ldots\]

(17-19)

Thus he uses physical comfort – food, shelter, and stable, peaceful work – as one of his clinching incentives against such a life.

When it is his turn to become the victim of a group of English raiders through the burning of Vertus and of his own "maison des champs", he mourns not just the destruction of buildings, but the loss of his native region's capacity for abundant food and wine production. Ballade 835 laments:

\[Je fu jadiz de terre vertueuse,\]
\[Nez de Vertus, le paiz renommé\]
\[Ou il avoit ville tresgracieuse\]

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51 Deschamps's use of pastoral motifs in relation to current events is nonetheless more straightforward than Froissart's. Shepherds do not demonstrate events cryptically or allegorically; they actually discuss them with a certain degree of sophistication. The resulting poems are less charming, but more urgent.

52 Interestingly, in ballade 175, one of their leaders is likened to a number of predatory animals, including the wolf. The refrain runs, "Pour quoy veulz tu les brebis et leur laine?" Thus, the contrast is again drawn between the stable, peaceful, pastoral life and the precarious, rapacious and restless one.
Dont li bon vin sont en maint lieu nommé;  
Jusques a cy avoit mon nom nommé,  
Eustace fu appelé dès enfans;  
Or sui tous ars s’est mon nom remué:  
J’aray desor a nom Brulé des Champs.

Ballade 836, moreover, specifically refers to the region’s present and future agricultural ruin:

Le terroir yert désormais deserté,  
On ne tendra compte de la vinée,  
Car il sera mal fait et labouré  
Et si yra par tout la renommée . . .

Deschamps’s almost fatherly corrective advice to the routiers and his distress over the destruction of the Vertus vineyards by some of their colleagues are in fact mutually reconcilable, given that both attitudes reflect the high priority he himself places on good food and drink. This same gastronomic lust makes his own enforced going on campaign a particularly miserable experience. In Ballade 19, apparently written during the long siege at Damme, Deschamps likens the various Flemish expeditions of the French army to a series of interminable religious offices. After bemoaning the lack of bread, wine, eggs, ducks, cocks and hens – the last three hardly staples – he finishes:

Prince, en Flandres voy longuement chanter:  
Courte messe aim, beau disner, grant cuisine;  
Pour ce vous veull humblement demander,  
Quant sonnera le retour de matines.

War is incompatible with the good life, but sets off yearnings for it that easily break into the mock-spiritual frame of the poem.

However, war also encourages a compensatory distortion of perception: if Deschamps is deprived of his habitual comforts, the blame for this can handily be laid on the Flemings and their country. The Flanders of Deschamps’s poetry bears a considerable resemblance to the country described by World War One soldiers: it is short of everything except mud. Or is it? In ballade 812, Deschamps qualifies Flanders as follows:

Sur tous paiz et toutes nacions  
Orguilleuses que l’en doit moins cremir,  
Qui n’ont vivres, fruis, terres ne moissons,  
Fors marchander quant on leur veult souffrir,  
Et qui veulent en commun signourir,  
Est le froit paiz de Fländres . . .

Some of the text appears to be garbled or illegible.
Thus, it may be poor in natural assets, but it can gain these by trade when permitted to do so. This is not the only point at which Deschamps hints that living by trade is less honourable than supporting one's population through one's own resources. Furthermore, just as in the "country house" poems and the elegies for the lost beauties of Vertus, fertility of the land appears to be a sign of inherent goodness, in this and (for instance) poems about Brie, the barrenness of the country amplifies all its other failings. Deschamps's pronouncement on Flanders' natural poverty is therefore to be taken with a pinch of salt; it serves his rhetorical purposes rather too neatly. In any case, it is clear that by trade or other means, the Flemings can and do find ways of feeding themselves, but the invading army gets poor pickings from their land. In criticising their country, Deschamps is most often only complaining about the living conditions likely to be experienced by any soldier on campaign.

In other poems relative to the Flemish expeditions, his food images become more specific. Ballade 876 begins:

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Je n'oy oncques tel talent de venir
Pour avoir draps ne pour manger harens
En la terre qui fait les gens honnir
Pour les maulx pas ne dessus les Flamens
   Comme jay d'en retourner.
Riens n'y ay fait fors que moy enbouer,
Gesir vestu, boire eau, et en la fin,
Avoir pou pain, soy tout le jour armer:
Je suis perduz quant on ne boit de vin.
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(1-9)

Here he has again grudgingly acknowledged the economic success of Flanders, by naming its sources -- cloth and herring -- but still manages to present the country as the root of his misery. Even if he were not there under wartime conditions, he would still be pining for wine, for Flanders is ale country, unable to offer the sensual pleasures that French literary tradition has already long attributed to wine-drinking. With the mere mention of wine the poet evokes a whole world of luxury and civilisation as a contrast to his present circumstances. The third stanza concludes:

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Trop froit y fait; en France vueil aler,
Si vivray bien, la prendray maint lopin
Pour le default que jay eu recouvrer:
Je suis perdu quant on ne boit de vin.
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(24-27)

It is as if the return to France alone will generate a good meal.53

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53 In ballade 1317, France is indeed made out to be almost automatically satisfying in every respect:
Although we become well acquainted with the "cold land of Flanders" as Deschamps depicts it, we never actually meet a Fleming in convincing human form, let alone get to know his eating and drinking habits. The Flemings are the only unambiguous enemies Deschamps encounters in the course of his fighting career, and he keeps his distance from them. As with the feigning beggars of Paris, he does not allow them the fundamentally human attribute of being seen in association with the same food and drink as anyone else.

The situation with the English is quite different. For one thing, it is mainly the English themselves, and only rarely their country, who appear in Deschamps's poetry. England's relationship with France over most of Deschamps's lifetime could be better described as "uneasy" than "hostile". In many ways, the two countries maintained quite close ties, as Deschamps's praise for a few notable English figures such as Chaucer and Richard II testifies. There was even a certain respect for England's military strength in France, and its soldiers are spared the scorn and invective showered upon the rebels from the Low Countries. Overall, the people of Albion appear as worthy rivals to their French counterparts.

This does not mean they are liked. In the politico-pastoral poems, they are usually the villains in the background, the cause of uncertainty in all aspects of French life. But at the end of the day, they are no worse than the French; it is the destruction caused by the advances, retreats, sieges and "unpaid leisure activities" of both armies that keep farmers and shepherds from earning their livelihood.

Unlike the Flemings, the English appear as individuals in Deschamps, participating in one-on-one verbal sparring matches with Frenchmen. Ballade 868 features a sample exchange:

Franch dogue, dist un Anglois,
Vous ne faictes que boire vin.
- Si faisons bien, dist li François,
Mai vous buvez le henequin;
Roux estes com pel de mastin.
Villequot, de moy aprenez

O douz pais, terre treshonourable,
Ou chascuns a ce qu'il veult demander
Pour son argent, et a pris raisonnable,
Char, pain et vin, poisson d'yaue et de mer,
Chambre a par soy, feu, dormir, reposer,
Liz, orilliers, blans draps flairans la graine,
Et pour chevaluz foing, litiere et avoine
Estre servis, et par bonne ordonnance,
Et en seurte de ce qu'on porte et maine:
Tel pais n'est qu'en royaume de France!

It is true all this has to be paid for, but even then prices are unfailingly fair.

It is unlikely that Deschamps ever actually visited England.
Thus, the poem not only alludes to the folk belief that the English had tails, but associates each nationality with its national tipple. To the Englishman, the Frenchman, with his excessive wine-drinking, is an indolent luxury-lover. To the Frenchman, on the other hand, the Englishman, with his addiction to ale, is a ruddy-faced drunkard. (In fact, the Frenchman's insults occupy most of the next two stanzas, enabling him to win this particular round by default.)

One of the most notable things about this conversation is that it shows that the English and French do talk to each other. And as the insults become more ludicrous, it is clear that the whole exchange is more of a joke than a serious trading of hostilities. However, drink nonetheless partially embodies the ethnocentrism that developed in both peoples as a kind of moral reinforcement against the enemy.

Deschamps uses food and drink in relation to war in two general ways. Alimentary allusions may help to illustrate the damage done by battle, and the suffering caused to civilians and soldiers -- in realistic or allegorical contexts. On the other hand, they may act as literary or verbal buffers, allowing a kind of control to be taken by stressing the universal and familiar aspects of the situation (as in the politico-pastoral poems) or by reducing the enemy to a stereotype made up of physical deformity and habitual drink (as in the English-French exchange of insults).

2.2 Civilian Travel and Impressions of the Foreign World

Deschamps did not only notice foreign food habits and gastronomic inconveniences when brought into contact with them through war. As a court official he travelled widely on civilian business as well. Sometimes his journeys took him only as far as his neighbouring province of Brie, which he professes to find sadly lacking in the kind of resources he enjoys most. In a letter to his friends, the "frequentans" of Crespy (1418) he complains:

Durs vins y a, neant charnus,

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55 For studies of this and other stereotypes, see Le Débat des hérauts d'armes de France et de l'Angleterre, ed. Léopold Pannier and Paul Meyer, SATF (Paris: Firmin-Didot, 1877), especially introductory material; also P. Rickard, Britain in Medieval French Literature 1100-1500.

56 In ballade 893 (which contains no food or drink references) a similar exchange comes very near to landing Deschamps in an English prison at Calais. The clichés of 868 are removed from a possible real-life context, thus downplaying the actual delicacy of the French-English situation.
Aspres de goust, de liqueur nus,
Buche vert sanz famblé, qui fume,
Et froide chambre qui enreme... (7-10)

and

Et s'ont Brioys trop de langaige
Pof un pou de meschant frommaige
Qui ne puet ou pais pechier,
En disant que chacun l'a chier... (25-28)

It is interesting to note that Brie is already well-known for its cheese57 -- and also to note the slightly jealous tone in the voice of a Champenois.58

If Deschamps finds such small trips traumatising, how does he react to international travel? In a few cases, he is quite positive about it. The city of Brussels (Rondeau 552) receives glowing adieux similar to those used for Paris, with "vins de Rin", "Connins, plouviers et capons et fesans" forming the gastronomic part of its charms. Lombardy also gets very good press from Deschamps. He visited there in 1391 with Louis d'Orléans, Jean de Vienne and Philippe de Bourgogne, and the whole party was lavishly entertained by Louis's father-in-law, Giovanni Galeas Visconti.59 In ballade 1037, the sojourn appears as one long round of dancing, singing, money, fine robes and clear wine.

However, his reactions to most other foreign places range from bemusement to disgust. The former is evident in his appraisal of eating habits in Hainaut and Brabant. I give ballade 780 in full as a demonstration:

En Haynaut et en Brabant ay
Aprins a sauces ordonner:
Es hostez ou je me logay
Me fist on toudiz apporter
A rost, a mouton, a sangler,
A lievre, a connin, a ostarde,
A poisson d'eaue douce et mer,
Tousjours, sanz demander, moustarde.

Harens frés quiz, et demanday
Carpe au cabaret pour dyner,
Bequet en l'eaue y ordonney,
Et grosses solles au soupper.
A Brusselles fiz demander
Sauce vert; le cleric me regarde;
Par un varlet me fist donner
Tousjours, sans demander, moustarde.

57 Machaut, in the Voir dit, features "frommages de Brye" in his courtly imitation of a peasant meal, with gastronomic rather than critical overtones. Cerquiglini, Guillaume de Machaut, pp. 132-134.

58 For further complaints about Brie, involving food and drink references, see ballades 790 and 897.

59 See Laurie, Eustache Deschamps, and Oeuvres Complètes, vol. 11, p. 64.
Sanz li ne bu ne, mengay.
Avec l'eau la font meller
Du poisson, et encore say
Que la graisse du rost gester
Font en la moutarde et bouster.
D'en servir nulz d'eux ne retarder:
La arez vous, pour vostre user,
Toujours, sans demander, moutarde.

Prince, gingembre, c'est tout cler,
Clos, sapfran, graine n'ont d'eulx garde,
Maiz a chacun font destramper
Toujours, sans demander, moutarde.

The poem is interesting for a number of reasons. First, it shows (l. 13) that there might be some disputing Brussels' perfection, and so constitutes yet another proof that Deschamps's poems should not be taken as a wholly accurate reflection of one man's opinions. Second, it gives one of the most detailed impressions of possible menus to be found in Deschamps, and, to my knowledge, the only clear reference to local habits of food preparation as dependent on no other criteria than those of taste (ll. 18-21). And third, of course, it sums up a whole subculture by means of its food habits, highlighting the amusing intractability that these reflect.

On other voyages, Deschamps appears less than amused. Aside from praising the citizens of Prague for their piety (rondeau 1330), he has nothing but criticism for the people and customs of Germany, Bohemia and Moravia. And, as usual, his complaints depend partially on aspects of food and drink.

His travels to Eastern Europe took place in 1397, on a diplomatic mission for Louis d'Orléans. In his poems, he never mentions the outcome of his commissions to Wenceslas of Bohemia and the Marquis of Moravia, only the hardship suffered in carrying them out. It should be said that on this occasion, in contrast to the Lombardy expedition, the party consisted of civil servants, without illustrious patrons. In any case, he seems eager to blame the culture at hand, rather than his own comparatively insignificant status, for the kind of reception encountered. In Germany (Ballade 1305) this encounter involves a lot of people perversely insisting on speaking German, as well as the local custom of riding a longer, more rigorous day, and the regular practice of cramming twenty people into one bed, and worse, ten hands into one dish:

Nape aront orde et embrouillie;
Dix en un plat, comme truans,
Sont servis; touz boutent dedens
Leurs mains jusqu'aux jointes des doys...  

(25-28)
It is easy to see how such dining habits could offend one who was at this point maître d’hôtel to the Duc d’Orléans, in charge of the appropriate service of meals, among other duties.

Bohemia is the target of even more colourful complaints. Chanson Royale 1325 devotes three of its five stanzas to food-, drink- and meal-related grumbling, this time with specific attacks on the kinds and quality of dishes served, rather than just table customs. Rondeau 1326 then sums up the essence of the country:

Poulz, puces, puour et pourceaulx
Est de Behaigne la nature,
Pain, poisson salé et froidure,

Poivre noir, choulz pourriz, poreaulx,
Char enfumée, noire et dure;
Poulz, puces puour et pourceaulx.

Vint gens mangier en deux plateaux,
Boire servoise amere et sure,
Mal couvher, noir paille et ordure,
Poulz, puces, puour, et pourceaulx
Est de Behaigne la nature,
Pain, poisson salé et froidure.

Again, food and drink dominate. The accumulation of alliterative plosives underlines the impression of the speaker’s revulsion; the words of the refrain suggest an involuntary exclamation of disgust: “pouah!” Suggestions of stench and rot are intermingled with all mentions of food; in this poem, nothing of value has escaped contamination. In addition, the refrain links food with parasites. The human body is thus simultaneously the eater and the eaten, caught in a web of forced consumption and indigestion. There could be no more effective means of conveying the poet’s misery in Bohemia than the cocktail of unpleasant and unnatural elements featured in this rondeau.

Were the Central Europeans really so universally uncouth? It seems unlikely: the royal houses of Bohemia and Bavaria were closely linked to that of France, and probably at least as cultivated. But concrete images of disgust, especially dependent on activities common to all, such as eating and drinking, are particularly effective rhetorical tools. Deschamps uses food and drink to encapsulate foreignness, to isolate and elevate his own culture in relation to others, to show inclusion or exclusion. By limiting most of his analysis of other cultures to a glance at their external habits, he is protecting himself. His chauvinism acts as security through the disorienting experiences of a traveller in the late fourteenth century.
Conclusion

Throughout his work, Deschamps acknowledges and celebrates eating and drinking as social experience. He may focus on particular classes, subgroups or nationalities at their food or drink, or he may show how outside forces and circumstances -- religious observances, war, social change -- cut across such divisions and recall, in the end, the physical commonality of humanity. He uses both literary convention and realism with regard to social food and drink, and often experiments with a blend of the two.

What are the principal particular effects of his food and drink allusions on images of different social groups? Nobles, on the whole, are made more fully human, but not necessarily in a positive way. "Human" means vulnerable, to sickness, alcohol, overeating, ugliness, hypocrisy -- and outside criticism. Towndwellers, in general, are less closely scrutinised and less thoroughly exposed by the poet than courtiers; the world of the city itself comes across as diffuse, tantalising and seductive, but with a capacity to leave its more unfortunate visitors in the lurch. Food and drink in the city are at once a part of its charms and a plain economic commodity which must be paid for. For the literary peasant, food and drink are an ennobling symbol; simple as they might be, they stand for independence, honesty and freedom. For the realistic peasant, on the other hand, harvests are not abundant blessings; they are either shorthand for stereotyped characterisation, or just one more casualty of the troubled times. Drinking societies have links with the past (Goliards) and project their own familiarity for the future (student burlesques of all generations have precursors here), in large part through their language of physical indulgence. The specific antics of the Fumeux may be dated, but the notion of an alcohol-nourished pleasure culture is not. Food images in Deschamps also point up the perversity of women in marriage, linking Deschamps's writing to the antifeminist tradition -- and ongoing vogue -- of his time. Lists of pantry supplies help add an impression of further weight to the inherent burdens of family life. Lenten complaints use images of food to disgust and commiserate with, but ultimately entertain their audience. The moaning of the poet and his characters over material discomfort actually lighten the solemnity of the Church-imposed fast. Finally, food critiques help circumscribe foreign cultures, contributing to clear, if unflattering, caricatures.

Part of the reason Deschamps's "social group" poems are so enjoyable is that they do deal in stereotypes. Each of these poems lets most readers/listeners eavesdrop, recognise thoroughly, but then step back. There is a sense that most of these groups, however familiar to audiences, are not specific, complete images of the audiences themselves.
However, in alluding to what is shared by all mankind, Deschamps does not eliminate the relationship between food and drink and the independent individual. The collective dining or drinking experience depends, at a fundamental level, on individual capacities for hunger, taste, and so on. Deschamps rarely ignores the physical and mental compulsions behind approaches to food and drink. These will form the next part of this study.
Chapter Four
Food, Drink and the Individual

In a sense, food and drink in Deschamps, and for that matter in any literature which deals with human mores, never stop being a social issue. James Boswell once defined the human being as "the only animal that cooks." We can take this definition a step further (for cooking is not merely related to taste and digestion: it is an expression of positive interest in the conventions of the meal) and suggest that the human being is the only animal who idealises -- and sometimes idolises -- the collective dining experience, at least within European and Asian cultures. When we share a meal, we endow the act with enough ceremony and significance, provided by table setting, sequence of courses, rules of etiquette and so on, to distance ourselves thoroughly from grazing sheep or lions devouring a freshly-killed carcass. The company is important; even if the meal is a lone one, we often eat it to the accompaniment of radio or television, as a substitute for absent fellow diners. And even when no one can see us, we usually use a knife and fork rather than reverting to the finger-feeding which served most of our medieval forebears well enough. Our eating habits are socially conditioned, and whatever their cultural variations, they are deeply ingrained. Moreover, our tastes themselves, preferences or aversions, appear to be more socially determined than innate.

Nor are we just passive absorbers of tradition, for we continually invest and re-invest our food-related habits with meanings appropriate to specific circumstances. To divest food and drink of all their social trappings and uses is to become, like Yvain in Chrétien's Chevalier au Lion, a wild man. Even then, the active rejection of predetermined influences on food and drink is a strong indicator of their overriding power in ordinary circumstances.


2 In medieval times, furtively-consumed "rerosers", taken privately late at night, were frowned upon for reasons including superfluousness, possible licentious associations, and simple unsociability. See Henisch, Fast and Feast, p. 17. We can compare this to modern society's disapproval of eating, and especially drinking, alone; there seems to be an assumption that society, just by its presence, exerts a civilising influence that is otherwise all too easily thrown off.


4 Paul Fieldhouse, in his preface to Food and Nutrition: Customs and Culture (London: Croom Helm, 1988) lists twenty possible uses of food in society, a list gleaned from M. A. Bass, L. M. Wakefield and K. M. Kolasa, Community Nutrition and Individual Food Behavior (Minneapolis: Burgess, 1979). The list includes only two specifically physiological functions: "Satisfy hunger and nourish the body" and "Prevent, diagnose and treat physical illness". All the rest, whether relative to the individual or to society, are largely socially-shaped and would have an effect on one's fellows or observers.
This is all to say that before we can study food, drink and the individual in Deschamps, we must accept that most of his ideas concerning personal alimentation are at least coloured, and often strongly influenced, by notions that were widely known and accepted by his society. The difference between this and the preceding chapter will be one of focus. Instead of looking at the uses of food in specific social contexts, we will study them in relation to the individual — as body, as spiritual being, as personality. "Man . . . is an intellectual being who can theorise and rationalise about what he tastes and smells; without remembering that, one can hardly understand the fine discrimination developed by, say, connoisseurs of French wines or of haute cuisine." Not only, of course, does the human being have this capacity, but also the inclination to apply it. Deschamps lived hundreds of years before the official invention of gastronomy, but his multiple uses of distinction by taste make him a forefather of the art. Daniel Poirion has noted the importance in Deschamps's work of the "présence du moi physique . . . cette référence constante au thème biologique [qui] apporte un grand changement à la tradition que représente Machaut." Christine Martineau goes further, characterising the poet somewhat whimsically:

Deschamps est un homme de notre temps. Il nous ressemble. Homme mûr tentant de freiner la marche du temps par le jogging au petit trot et des aliments achetés dans une de ces maisons de diététique comme il en fleurit partout dans nos rues; vieillard hantant les cabinets des gériatres et se faisant faire à l'occasion des injections de sérum Bogomoletz.7

This depiction seems a rather overly corporeal and anachronistic definition of the poetic persona, and in any case, it is a portrait drawn from only selected samples of Deschamps's work. Nevertheless, it captures the dual nature of Deschamps's approach to the body: it is both physiological being, to be protected and maintained, and determining force on attitude and action. Moreover, just as the body itself has both physiological and psychological power, so the food and drink that nourish it can relate to either the physical

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5 J.G. Prick, "Quelques aspects de l'anthropologie de l'olfaction gustative: les bienfaits spécifiques du vin français" in Evolution psychiatrique, vol. 42, no. 3-2, pp. 861-76; quoted in Mennell, All Manners of Food, p. 2.

6 Poirion, Le Poète et le prince, pp. 231-232.


8 Martineau herself indirectly acknowledges the latter limitation on p. 51: "Au point, nous semble-t-il, que celui à qui l'on livrerait ce champ lexical, après l'avoir isolé du reste de l'oeuvre de Deschamps, croirait se trouver devant celle de Rabelais!" [my italics].
or the psychological individual -- or both.

1. In Sickness and in Health: Food, Drink and the Human Body

The fact that Deschamps makes physical health the subject of so many poems is striking. In earlier periods, a poet might depict himself as starving for love9 or simply starving;10 equally, he might show relish in the description of a lavish and varied meal11. However, no poet writing in French before Deschamps, to my knowledge, takes such an interest in the uses and abuses of food and drink specifically in relation to physical health. (In matters of moral health he is in somewhat more abundant company.) The Galenic properties of food were primarily the material of medical and health treatises. Sometimes such texts became something close to cookery books,12 with suggestions on how to make various foods most easily digestible, and there is no doubt that their teachings affected the kind of instructions given in cookery books such as the Viandier. However, the influence of medical theory in most imaginative and lyric literature is so diffuse as to be almost imperceptible. The presence of onions, garlic and shallots in the picnic of Franc Gontier and Dame Helayne may have something to do with their assumed aphrodisiac properties (or, more bluntly put, the fact that they "donne[n] talent d'user femme"13). Aldebrandino of Siena, whose words have just been quoted, mentions also that garlic is a natural remedy for animal bites and a good "adjuster" of cold foods distant from the natural human condition, so that they may be digested more easily. On the other hand, he also specifically calls it the "triacle des vilains", thus underlining its lowly status. Other foods in the Franc Gontier meal are strictly a mixed bag in terms of theoretical medical value: dairy products variously considered hard to digest (matured cheese) or gently close

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10 Rutebeuf, Povretei Rutebeuf, 1. 29.

11 Cf. several of the poems of Colin Muset, as discussed in Chapter Two.


13 Aldebrandino of Siena, Le Régime du corps d'Aldebrandin de Sienne, ed. Louis Landouzy and Roger Pépin (Paris: Champion, 1911). By the time of Villon's Contreditz Franc Gontier, however, garlic's medical value as an aphrodisiac seems to have been superseded by a social one as a turn-off.
to the composition of blood (milk, cream, fresh cheese), but dangerous fruits and indigestible "pain bis". The common thread among the dishes consumed is certainly more humility than healthfulness.

Even if all the ingredients listed did share a basic soundness with regard to health preservation and disease prevention, Franc Gontier's diet would not read like a medical prescription. In this poem, it is the literary heritage that dominates; the pastoral, organic nature of the feast which is most important.

In several of Deschamps's poems, however, it is literary convention which is kept low-key, and ideas about health which are pushed to the forefront. Rondeau 647, virelai 708, ballades 1162, 1290, 1452, and rhymed-couplet piece 1298 all deal with sickness, with food or drink involved in either cause, symptoms, cure or prevention. In addition, the Notable Enseignement pour continuer santé en corps d'homme (1496) provides 226 lines of rhyming couplets on the general maintenance of health.

Although some of the poet's precepts pertain to unspecified illnesses or the simple preservation of sound health, it is the pressures of the plague which most often form their raison d'être and frequently determine their content. Deschamps's lifetime spanned several outbreaks of the Black Death, and there must have been years in which the disease was an unavoidable source of concern for everyone he knew. Perhaps scientific pronouncements on its medical aspects had not previously filled many lines of lyric poetry -- but Deschamps is never one to shirk new literary ground where a topical subject is involved. A great deal of prose source material was available to him from treatises being published in France14, and an audience regularly attacked by plague, or fear, or hypochondria, was always at hand.

In the following examination of the subgroup of poems related to illness, we will concentrate first on food and drink as principles of overall meaning and structure, then on the significance of particular foods and beverages named.

Ballade 1290 offers a thorough list of "causes et raisons dont vient l'épidemie." The first stanza deals with air corrupted by mouldering bodies, human excrement, burnt detritus -- and pigs,15 the only animate element of a desolate landscape. Fields, cities and châteaux are all equally affected. The second stanza takes us indoors, attacking dangerous eating habits and diets:

La bouche avoir gloutue, vie outragueuse,
Boire et mangier sansz appetit du corps,
Longue seoir a table est perilleuse
Chose, et de mes plusieurs faire rappors,
Et trop sale cerf, vaches, bues et pors,


15 Cf. ballade 1236, against pigs.
From the generalities, the list of states of the first stanza, we have moved to one basic activity: dining. The unbroken four-line list of foods from line 15 emphasizes the idea of the "bouche gloute" at line 11; it is as if all these foods are entering the body at once in a kind of negative abundance. For they are far from the attractive, aristocratic dishes that the "delicate" glutton would prefer. There is a prevalence of the gro^char often omitted from idealised noble menus; of common fish and "bestiaulx" (fish with animal names); of fruits and vegetables; of wine and bread at the opposite end of the quality scale from where they should be. The message appears to be: eat greedily of mean foods and you will be ill.16

In the third stanza, the body in effect encounters its environment; internal meets external. Food is no longer explicitly discussed, though eating and drinking very likely form a corollary element of a "vie luxueuse" and time spent in communal "Estuves, bains":

Vivre d'eaues de terre maracaguse,
Estre au gros air quant li brouillas est fors,
Trop main lever, vie luxurieuse,
Sanz mouvement soy courcier est la mors;
Trop chaut, trop froit quant sont ouvers les pors,
Estuves, baings frequenter entre ceaulx
Qui sont infects gens, pourris et meseaulx,
Gendrent a maint semblable maladie,
Et telz choses en ces cas principaulx
Font en mains lieux causer l'epidemie.

(21-30)

Thus, in this poem, food and drink act as dangerous components of the portrayal of the individual, who in turn becomes a component of the potentially lethal encounter between man, his fellows, and his natural world.

If a person gets sick, what then? The focus narrows to the present, concentrating on the progress of the illness and the decline of the individual, and leaving out the cocktail of circumstances that may have led to his succumbing. 1298, a piece written in rhymed couplets, consists simply of an ordered list of six symptoms. Food, or lack of it, is the characteristic of the fourth: "Le quart, rien par appetit prandre." Eating and drinking very

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16 Separation of physical health from moral is not yet complete at this period. Eating without appetite, and eating beyond one's natural appetite are two of the traditional branches of Gluttony (see Chapter One, pp. 42-43), and thus as hazardous as eating specifically discouraged foods.
lightly is therefore the poet's only suggested course of action:

Lors fault pou boire et pou mangier,  
Non souper et faire abstinence:  
Je n'y sceay meilleur ordonnance.  

(16-18)

This underlines the crucial importance of dietetics in a world dependent on medieval notions of medicine. Diet is truly one of very few means of attempting to regulate the body's responses. In the work of a poet as concerned with public balance and order as Deschamps, it is not then surprising that food and drink appear so often, for they have inherently prescriptive properties that can be applied, figuratively or literally, to the ills of the world as much as to the diseases of the body.

Let us return to a more specific physical ailment: the plague. Rondeau 647 has already been discussed (Chapter One) as a kind of physical representation of Deschamps's poetic stance. Just as, afflicted by the epidemic (at least within the poem's fiction) he encloses himself inside, but cannot resist calling for a tonic substance from the outside world, so, in his writing, he respects the formal boundaries of fixed form and (in some instances) courtly convention, yet actively seeks to pull in physical details from personal and collective experience. However, the nature of the wine in this rondeau is worth closer consideration. Ideally, in ordinary circumstances wine was thought best if moderate in every way -- between old and young, between strong and weak, between sweet and bitter17 -- and moderately consumed as well. However, "vin verdelet" was good for coleric temperaments, hence a useful antidote to a temporarily coleric condition induced by fever. The use of an addressee in this poem suggests that the poet has a very specific vintage in mind, that even in illness he draws distinctions between different values and (probably) tastes. Yet the simple single "cure" requested in the poem contrasts sharply with the comprehensive lists of do's and don't's in other plague pieces. The panic is in the contemplation of illness; once the speaker has fallen victim, feeling his chances perhaps small, only one medicine is really needed. Young wine becomes the essence of life.

If food or drink can contribute to the causes of illness, if lost appetite can manifest its effects, if a particular kind of wine can act as cure, it is still nevertheless most desirable to avoid disease altogether. Virelai 708, and ballades 1162, 1291 and 1452 all concentrate on positive action that can be taken to sidestep the "epidemic". Dietetic practices are never the only element of such a strategy; however, its discussion always occupies a

17 See Aldebrandino of Siena, p. 19.
significant proportion of the lines of each piece. The recommended foods are balanced with a few interdictions, and the whole meal strategy is presented as part of a regime that seems devised to ease the mind as much as the body. Indeed, 708, 1162 and 1291 all open with advice for psychological well-being dependent on an evasion of the contagious zone, to be replaced by surroundings and company as pleasant as possible. (1452, as well as 1496, include similar counsel later on.) Thus ideal eating and drinking habits are always part of a wider ideal of living.

What, then, does this healthy, prophylactic diet consist of? The Notable Enseignement provides the most detail, but in effect it is only expanding upon basic traits present in all the poems. These include "bon vin"; smallish land fowl such as partridge, pheasants, young chickens and capons; coney (thought similar to delicate fowl in terms of digestibility); fresh white bread; and certain spices and sauce ingredients, such as ginger, cinnamon, saffron, verjus and vinegar. As was evident from 1290, most other foods should be avoided, from milk products through exotic wine drinks, coarse common vegetables and

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18 The following analysis accepts as logical and correct the changes to punctuation proposed by E. Hoepffner in "Une ballade d'Eustache Deschamps", Romania 50, 1924. In 708, some 7/40 lines are devoted to food or drink. Wine is mentioned twice; four foods are named positively, one negatively. In 1162, 8/24 lines are alimentation-related. Again, there are two mentions of wine, plus nine positive foods and three negative ones. In 1291, 11/36 lines deal with food or drink; wine appears once, along with ten positive foods and sixteen negative ones. In 1452, 11/30 lines mention food or drink; wine appears once, and there are fifteen positive and five negative foods.

In 1496, over half the lines are specifically to do with food, drink, eating, digestion, or the moral implications of any of these.

19 708: Pour fuir l'epidimie,
     Reboutez merencolles,
     Vivez liement
     Et faictes departement
     Du lieu ou elle est fichie.

1162: Qui veult son corps en sante maintenir
     Il doit courroux et tristesce fuir
     Laissier le lieu ou est la maladie
     Et frequenter joieuse compagnie.

1291: Qui veult fuir la persecucion
     Et le peril d'epidemie avoir,
     Vivre le fault en consolacion;
     Du lieu regnant le couvent remouvoir . . .

The plague is thus equated with cold/dry melancholy. Logically, most of the foods listed by Deschamps as "to be avoided" are those said in Aldebrandin's Régime to generate cold, viscous humours.

20 708; in 1162, "bon vin", "cler vin"; in 1291, "cler vin"; in 1452, "vin cler net et bon"; in 1496, "vin soutil, rouge et cler". Most of these qualities are as much a part of gastronomic appreciations of wine as they are of medical advice concerning it. 708 and 1496 also mention the recommended practice of cutting wine with water.
flavourings, and most kinds of fruits. Deschamps’s versified exhortations closely follow the guidelines given in plague treatises such as the Compendium de Epidimia per Collegium Facultatis Medicorum. As Boccaccio implies in the Decameron, such programmes had no proven effect; yet their popularity shows some of the willpower, or panic, of a threatened population.

The regimen sketched out by Deschamps, following the mainstream medical advice of his day, is essentially a selfish one. He is not recommending hedonism ("vous garder des faiz luxuriaux"—1291, l. 29) but "sobre et nette vie" (1452, l. 5). Still, such a life involves almost total freedom of choice. In order to follow it, a person must be able materially to surround himself with sweet smells, to stay indoors in "infectious" weather, to leave dangerous districts behind, to dress well, to season with costly spices the kinds of foods that only the rich could regularly afford. Were these foods truly healthier than the quasi-vegetarian meals consumed by the poor? In theory, probably not. However, white bread generally meant less risk of adulterated flour; white meat meant less recourse to long-stored salt-flesh of dubious nutritional value; few vegetables meant that one was actually getting enough animal protein to be dependent on garden produce for almost all calories consumed; and spices meant the psychological boost of knowing one was balancing the humours of everything one ate. As Michel Mollat has explained, the poor were completely excluded from any possibility of following dietary and other recommendations with regard to the plague. To them, such advice amounted to a suggestion to "be as rich as you possibly can."

Thus it is that in Deschamps, moral moderation and sobriety are often not empirical virtues, but also a matter of choice — for men and women who could afford to live prodigally — going hand in hand with a healthy, expensive diet. However, the quality of self-restraint as a means to self-determination and independence is one that should be sought always, not just when health is threatened. Therefore, before we turn to an examination of food and drink in relation to morality, let us look briefly at food and drink in relation to the general status quo of life.

The body is a source of fascination for Deschamps, and not just when it is being tried by unusual circumstances. It may be shown simply justifying its own pleasures on medical grounds, as in ballade 925, in which the speaker eagerly embraces the "fine wine" and aristocratic diet" remedy for summer heat. More often, though, it is regarded as a potential time-bomb, to be cautioned

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21 Issued by the Faculty of Medicine in Paris in October 1348. See Coville, Ecrits.


23 All the wines mentioned in this poem are light, and to be diluted with water -- traits thought to provide a cooling effect.
against self-destruction. Ballade 198 warns how "trop mangier" and "boire trop", among other things done to excess, can shorten life. Virelai 557 sets health above all other riches, and again warns how eating and drinking can jeopardise it (ll. 6-16). Ballade 1203 provides details on how the damage can be done:

Mais font plusieurs mainte gourmanderie
De trop veillier, de jouster, de dancier,
De prandre en eulx courroux, merancolier,
De faire en brief trop grant chevaucherier,
Du bas mestier frequenter estre engrans,
Boire a chascun, comme font les Normans;
Ce fait adonc fièvre et mal concevoir.
Chascun donroit alors vignes et champs,
Mais qu'il peust bonne santé ravoir.

(12-20)

An excess of food or drink is clearly just one among many harmful overindulgences. Line 19 raises an interesting idea: "Vignes et champs" represent the kind of affluence that has invited trouble in the first place. Thus, when the consequences of profligate behaviour are felt, the very roots of privilege will be willingly jettisoned to save health, the poet foretells.

Ballade 1121 is less concerned with abuse of material wealth than with misuse of God-given pre-eminence. Beasts eat logically, while humans, who ought to be "reasonable", eat according to many whims and no laws of restraint:

Las! bien sommes glouz et chetis
Plus que bestes sanz congonnance,
Quant nous passons noz appetis
Pour goust de bouche et emplir pance,
Dont nous faisons au corps grevance;
Le chief duel, l'estomac, les rains,
Des excès dont nous sommes plains
Tant que souvent nous fault vomir,
Braire, doloir, getter grans plains,
Sanz reposer et sanz dormir.

Les chevauls, bestes et brebis,
Tout animal en sa substance,
S'ilz passent .111. fois ou dix
Par un ruissel, nul ne s'avance
De boire, puis qu'a souffisance
A but une foiz; ceuls sont sains;
Mais sanz raison a nos .111. mains,
Voulons vins, viande engloutir
A toute heure, s'en sommes vains,
Sanz reposer et sanz dormir.

Prenons aux bestes nostre advis,
Laissons nostre folle plaisance
De mangier et boire touchis,
Fors sans plus pour no sustenance;
Car on en muert, de l'eure incertains,
Soudainement; ne soit contrains
L'apetit de le faire ouvrir
Qu'à son gré, ou trop yert destrains
Sanz reposer et sanz dormir.

Princes, mangons par atrempançe,
Quant faim et solf est en balance,
Moiennement, sanz trop remplir,
Et après faisons abstinence
Jusques nostre appetit s'avance
Sanz reposer et sanz dormir.

Appetite in this poem, as in 1298, is essentially a positive force, which can however be corrupted by being made to conform to the tastes of others. The reference to it in the envoy, in conjunction with the refrain which has served as a negative phrase throughout the rest of the ballade, appears bizarre, and the juxtaposition may indeed be an unfortunate result of the poet's entrapment by his choice of refrain. On the other hand, appetite itself may have become the subject of the final line: the envoy would then mean that "we must balance our eating habits carefully until normal, regulatory appetite takes control again, never ceasing to be vigilant." A third possibility is that the final line should be linked with the "nous" subject of the main clause; the stanza would then indicate that we should be vigilant of diets and diligent in exercise until appetite returns.

Sometimes the human weakness of gluttony may be dramatised by personification. Ballade 398 is a complaint by the feet against the mouth's greed:

Bouche, les piez fort de toy nous plaignons,
Qui par excèes nous donnes trop de pâine;
Pour assouvir ton ventre ne cessons
De travailler: sera ta panse plaine
Jamais nul jour? . . .

(1-5)

Later, the feet accuse the hands of complicity:

Mains, avisez les griefz que nous souffrons;
De noz douleurs estes cause certaine:
A la bouche bailez aux et ongnons,
Viandes et vins trop plus qu'il ne conviengne . . .

(21-24)

Interestingly, besides the generic "Viandes et vins", the only foods mentioned by name in this poem are "aulx et ongnons". It is thus raw greed that is at issue here, not extravagant delicacy of tastes.

Similarly, in rondeau 685 the culz lodges a protest against the ventre puans for its habit of overloading. The scatological implications are thoroughly exploited:

Ventre puans, par Dieu, je vous lairay,
Vostre culz, sur qui ne vous puis porter;
De tant mangier vous vuiellez deposter,

Ou autrement plus ne vous serviray;
Faites moy droit, je veul a vous compter.
Ventre puans, par Dieu, je vous lairay,
Vostre culz, sur qui ne vous puis porter.

Vostre courroye et vo tasse lairay
Cheoir; du tout ne faites que souffler,
Et en alant comme uns pourceaulx rouffler.
Ventre puans, par Dieu, je vous lairay,
Vostre culz, sur qui ne vous puis porter,
De tant mangier vous vuiellez deposter.

In these two ballades, the human body has been reduced to a collection of physical parts, but at the same time, the parts have been elevated to rudimentary character status. This transformation through language results in a humorous exaggeration of the importance of ingestion; the intellectual process of metaphor places the physical being on the written equivalent of an IMAX screen, and makes a creative product of a destructive consumer. The fabliaux provided Deschamps with many models of such denaturing of nature.24

In all the poems linking food with bodily health, moral arguments against gluttony are at least latent, if not explicitly raised. Eating and drinking have implications considerably beyond their purely physical effects.

2. The Moral Being

Gluttony is not very convincing as mortal sin in Deschamps. Where in traditional theology, self-restraint would have its reward (and excess its punishment) in an afterlife, in Deschamps's work the principles of overcoming one's compulsions are adopted in the hope of clinging onto this life. Indeed, as Christine Martineau emphasises, Deschamps habitually concentrates on the living body25 instead of the corruption of the flesh and the glorification of the soul. Even in ballade 969, which opens by calling the human body "Charogne a vers", the accent is only on human mortality, not what happens after its term has been reached. Deschamps shows only limited interest in the topos of the


"mangeur mangé". How a person eats has little to do with lightening the soul, and more to do with putting off the day when the soul must be the ultimate consideration.

The sin of Gluttony in a pure form, as an iconographical entity belonging to the whole allegorical tradition of the Seven Deadly Sins, makes surprisingly few appearances in Deschamps’s work. When it does appear, it may be linked with an example of overindulgence only in the most desultory way, the example acting as a kind of defining tag. For instance, in ballade 183

Glotonnie fut sur son ours posée
Onques ne vi si dolereuse gent.
Celle mettoit tout a destruction,
Par gourmander avoit la pence emflee . . .
(15-18)

It is interesting to note that Envy (Convoitise) and/or her attribute the dog are often given more developed portrayals, their significant characteristic being that they eat without appetite and beyond their fill, out of pure greed.

Even when any of the traditional Seven are mentioned, it is generally in a context designed to illustrate or allegorise a particular crisis. The vision of the Seven Deadly Sins in ballade 183 pointedly implicates concrete contemporary evils in French society. However, more often, the sin itself goes unnamed, while its manifestations are used to demonstrate some much broader form of corruption. In other words, the language of individual eating and drinking practices may show the decadence of a whole society; a world upside down.

Sometimes the criticisms raised in poems featuring such language are general, and may be applied to any or all levels of society. In ballade 22, the phrase "Les grans pêcheurs voy sir a haute table" is not meant to refer to a specific court setting; rather, it represents the general condition that evil is rewarded. In ballade 933 it is a part of society, the young generation, that is criticised. Whereas

Les chevaliers du bon temps ancien
Et leurs enfans aloient a la messe;
En doutant Dieu chacun vivoit du sien,
L’en congoissoit leur bien et leur prouesse,

26 See Martineau, "La nourriture et la mort ou du jeune monastique au theme de la fin chez Villon", Manger et boire, volume II, pp. 325-330. The article discusses the theological notion that an ascetic life would be rewarded with a swift passage to heaven, unencumbered by the weight of a heavy mortal body. On the other hand, "Plus le corps est lourd de chair et de craisse, plus profond il sera enfoui dans la terre, et plus il sera joyeusement attaque des vers."

27 Although each of the Seven Deadly Sins had various possible animal associations in medieval iconography, the bear was one of Gluttony’s most frequent mounts. See Bloomfield, Sins, appendix.
Diet is alluded to only very obliquely in the first stanza – "vivoit du sien" - while in stanza two the "jeune enfant" are "gourmans et plains d'ivresse". This is an example of notions of food and drink being used as part of a sudden insurgence of realism, disrupting the artificial and fragile balance of the ideal. There is also a resonance here of the church-tavern couplet, in which each acts as an inversion of the other.  

In ballade 98, overeating is linked with indigestion, and appetite suppressants/constipation inducers are counselled for "chacun" by the poet.
The idea operates both on the level of personal physical gluttony and on that of the greed of those who snatch property beyond their needs and station. In the envoy, the expansion of the theme is confirmed by the fact that souls and subjects, rather than stomachs, are feeling the pain:

Princes, mieulx vault encor tart que jamais  
En son grant mal prandre un mitigatif,  
Pour moins grever son ame et ses subgies;  
Car chacun fault prandre un restraintif.

In all these cases, food or drink images reveal the seriousness of personal dissipation or ambition. Such personal intemperance acts in turn as a symptom of the ills of all of France. The moral model Deschamps builds up is one of collective guilt, given greater weight by its references to familiar individual responsibility.

In other instances, however, he calls upon the individual to maintain his own moral standards by resisting the pressures of society, and in particular, of court society. This is the haven for the greatest abuses of food and drink, and for all the other vices that these imply. Sometimes such poems are

28 See, for example, Le Livre du Roy Modus et de la Royne Ratio, paragraph 76.
confessional (256), sometimes ironic (1033, 1070), sometimes crusading (1081).
In many of them, however, food or drink intervene, as a means to physical health
(in contrast to the chaotic courtly anti-routine); as signs of the greed and
hypocrisy of the court; and as emblems of personal independence.

The court is not always present as a "control" in human attempts at
moderation and self-sufficiency; indeed, such efforts are all the more
admirable when not reinforced by attacks on other people's living habits. As
with his use of peasant diets as positive examples, Deschamps picks the
simplest of foods to typify some of the praiseworthy aspects of the person who
chooses the golden mean. In ballade 970, the argument is made partly through
analogy: tall towers are open to the buffeting of winds while low buildings are
safe, and he who falls from a tower suffers greater injury than he who falls
from an oven (an oblique reference to the wholesome life, as symbolised by
bread?) In the envoy, however, the earthiest of images prevail:

Prince, qui a terre, aumaille et pasto,
Charrue ou beufs, et scet aler entour
Pour labourer, et a grain et frommaige,
Feves et pois, du gros pain cult en four,
Seurement vit: Dieu nous doint par doucour
Labour des mains et hostel de mesnaige.

Two points may be raised here. First, this is hardly the simplest possible
lifestyle. The fortunate person described owns considerable land and
livestock, and though he knows how to work his own holdings, does not
necessarily have to do so unless circumstances force him to. The second point
grows out of the first: this course of action is a matter of calculated
insurance, against natural misfortune, but also against the fickleness of one's
friends and Fortune herself. (The theme of abandonment by those whom one has
served is a frequent one in Deschamps.)

Overall, while the ideal of moderation may seem at first glance to be a
universal, spiritual one, it is very frequently, in Deschamps, linked to some
highly practical end. Refrain from gluttony incidentally because it damages
the soul, but primarily because it threatens the health of the body. Live
simply partly to avoid a disproportionate love of material things, but mainly
to safeguard your own future. Aspects of moral uprightness are often urged
through physical imagery; but more profoundly and cynically, they are hardly
worth pursuing unless for some physical end.

We return now to some further specific physical contexts in which Deschamps
exploits food and drink imagery.
3. Food, Drink and Sexuality

There is nothing coy about Deschamps's use of food to convey the lusty character of sex. He may use food or drink for more transcendent imagery when it comes to love, or for more realistic detail when it comes to marriage -- but for Deschamps, sex, love and marriage are three quite separate matters. The language of love is often that of nourishment, and the language of marriage that of the larder, but the language of sex is that of gourmandise or kitchen techniques. It is an approach to the rhetoric of sexuality long exploited by the fabliaux.

In ballade 779, two young lovers, feigning religious devotion or perhaps just coyness, are pointed out to us for what they really are:

Veez vous celle qui fait la papelarde
Et celui la qui fait le beguin?
Ilz seront cras, car li uns l'autre larde,
Ilz ont un mal dont il cheent souvin,
Et pour ce sont entre'eux deux pelerin,
Et vont souvent au baron sainct Foutart
Qui les garra de ce mal en la fin;
Maiz je me doubt que ce ne soit trop tart.

The mention of grease in this context recalls the sexual suggestion of the "cras frommaige" in Marion's bosom in the Jeu de Robin et de Marion. And, of course, the verb "larder" implies penetration or at least close enwrapping (in cookery, this procedure involved either insertion of salt pork into the flesh of another meat, or the laying of fat pieces over and around the roast.) The fact that the "papelarde" and "beguin" do this to one another suggests a particularly embroiled embrace, in which each party is both "cook" and "dish". There may, too, be a double meaning intended in the word "souvin": on their backs, and also under the influence of wine. The "disease" which causes them to behave this way will not be cured by wine, verjus or mustard, all ingredients normally used to give some measure of balance to food thought difficult to digest alone:

Car il convient qui tel mal a qu'il arde,
C'on ne le puet bien refraindre en la fin,
Par aigre vin, par verjus, par moustarde.
En juene temps ou sexe femelin
Quant on trueve le jeune masculin,
Lors ces deux malux se joignent d'une part . . .

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En juene temps ou sexe femelin
Quant on trueve le jeune masculin,
Lors ces deux malux se joignent d'une part . . .

29 An imaginary saint, of obvious associations.
In other words, sex is an inevitable victor among the young.

In old age, however, impotence takes over. The third stanza of the poem focuses on what is left of the body after the fires of youth have deserted it:

Quant on est vieulx, li maulx du sant retarde
Et faut du tout a voisine et voisin;
Si est saiges qui longuement se garde
De ce grief mal ou trop nuit le connin;
C'est ce qui fait le mal de saïnt Foundin
Venir dessoubz, les corps esprent et art:
Lors laisseront li viellart ce huyn,
Maiz je me doubt que ce ne soit trop tar.

Interestingly, this stanza is free of any definite reference to food or drink; gastronomic abstinence in language thus echoes and reinforces the sexual impotence in life.

The envoy sums up the universal implications of the ballade, linking alcohol and lust for the young, but acknowledging the withdrawal of the aged from such "medicine" and such activity:

Princes, qui boit chacun jour de fort vin
Par son boire devient frere Frappart,
Et quant vieulx est il retret son engin,
Maiz je me doubt que ce ne soit trop tard.

Food and drink images in the poem are mixed throughout with allusions to illness and remedies, but the rueful tongue-in-cheek approach to the subject ensures that their frivolous, erotic connotations triumph.

In ballade 1227, it is the speaker who is self-declared victim, lamenting his loss of sexual prowess. The sexual act is rendered metaphorically by the grinding action of mortar and pestle, with the speaker comparing his present performance to what he used to achieve:

Helas! mainte femme me fuit
Qui me souloit suivir de prés,
Quant j'estoupoye leur conduit
Et que je fu jeunes et frés;
Mais quant mes membres s'est retrès
Et qu'il ne peut faire besongne,
L'une rechigne, l'autre grongne;
Si fis je jadis mon devoir,
Dont je me treuue en grant essoingne,
Par defaut de bon vit avoir;

Dont j'ay fait de jour et de nuit,
Et sanz raison, pluseurs excès;
C'est la chose qui plus me nuit,
Dont je suy mas, tristes et secs.
Un mortier use six pilés;
Trop y broyay, s'en ay vergogne:
Tousjours veult mortier qu'on besongne
Et broye, c'est sanz lui doloir;
Plus n’en puis, tel broyer ressongne,
Par défaut de bon vit avoir.
Mais je me reconforte et cuit
Que du temps que je fu variès
Les mortiers sont cassez et vuit,
Combien qu’ilz voudroient adès
Qu’om leur broyast sausse et brouès;
Mais plus ne sera qui en soingne;
Ains fauldra que chacune
des vieilles pour son trou mouver:
Ma dame a prins pour moy un moingne,
Par défaut de bon vit avoir.
Princes, le broyer m’a destruit
En jeusne temps, pensez y tuit;
Gardez vous d’ainsi encheoir.
Par jeunesse ay esté seduit,
Tant que jamais n’aray deduit
Par défaut de bon vit avoir.

Man and woman are thus metonymically reduced to their sexual organs for a good deal of the poem, and these are in turn rendered as mechanical objects.30 Although these are kitchen implements, and although their use in this context cannot help but recall the familiar medieval image of mustard- or spice-grinding for sexual intercourse, the poem itself is almost devoid of edible substances. The exception is at line 25: "Qu’om leur broyast sausse et brouès". But the reference here is to unsatisfied appetite, with sauce and broth standing in for all that has been/would be most savoured in sexual experience. The poem’s accent remains on sex as a purely mechanical endeavour, now disrupted by material breakdown.

In fact, Deschamps does not often mix sexual and gastronomic pleasures with the kind of unfettered exuberance that may be found in some of the fabliaux, or (thoroughly tainted with scatology) in Audigier. The gloom of time overshadows sex as it does many of life’s other joys, and certainly time’s passage obsesses the poet more than the brief moments of satisfaction within it. Even then, as frivolous activity, the large-scale drinking society easily wins his vote (in terms of frequency as a subject) over a one-to-one sexual encounter. Other references to food and sexuality in Deschamps are fleeting euphemisms, passing vulgarities.31 On the whole, he shows more interest in verbal wit than in sensual language.

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30 Again, this literary dismemberment owes a good deal to the fabliau tradition (see Bloch, Scandal). Deschamps’s use of it, however, is more subtle and personal than that of his precursors. Rather than isolating body parts for a scene of immediate titillation, he does so for a rather bleak overview of a lifetime.

31 See, for example, the opening lines of ballade 877, and also the risqué word-play in the "questions and responses" of strophic poem 1443, especially the latter at line 332.
One further ballade may demonstrate how Deschamps emphasises links between sexuality and senescence through food images. It is 778, and it focuses on a woman, neither as voracious consumer nor even as willing participant in sexual activity. She is a dévote whose "amour est en pensée divine" (I. 10), and the poet urges her to reconsider human attachments. The third stanza presents his arguments:

Du monde avez du tout laissé la haste
Ou vous fustes jadiz juene meschine:
En rost fustes, or serez mise en paste.
Il en est temps, car vos biauté decline;
En charité donnez de vo cuisine
Aux povres gens, et ne soiez crueuse
A vos amis, fressaincte chose et digne:
Jamaiz nul jour ne serez amoureuse.

(17-24)

The poem thus uses culinary imagery to qualify both sexuality and ageing. The subject of the poem has left behind the "spit" of the world (perhaps a phallic suggestion) where she passed her youth, evidently being prepared for consumption. She may shortly become less tantalising, too. Meat that could be roasted was generally quite young and moist, since roasting is a drying process, whereas baking in a pie with liquid preserved natural moisture while warming moderately, a fitting treatment for a tough old joint. The poet pleads with her to give of her "cuisine" as if it were alms. As with the pair of lovers in 779, she is both cook and dish; in control of her own destiny, but asked to give all her physical being -- as a service to humanity? Perhaps such an appeal uses the only terms by which such a devout woman can still be approached. Still, its chances of success are rather undermined by the unflattering image of ageing that has gone before.

Indeed, as a poem whose message is closely related to that of the "Gather ye rosebuds while ye may" type, this piece is singularly undiplomatic. Woman should be nourisher and feast, it seems to say; but there is little room for serious consideration of her tastes and desires over the course of the meal. This attitude is typical of the carpe diem tradition, but it is often more delicately expressed.

4. Food, Drink and Growing Old

Despite all the precautions that may have been taken to avoid disease, moral rot or the wearing-out of certain parts, time's effects on the body are ultimately unavoidable. In ballade 128, Deschamps compares life's passage to

32 See Scully, "The Opusculum ..."
that of a year. Using the refrain to repeat, "Pour ce, tristes, te di adieu, Jeunesse," he likens childhood to spring, its young plants tender and fragile, and the prime of life to summer and autumn, when "vignes et blez" first ripen, then are harvested. All three seasons have some part in youth, but winter, the stage from which the poet now regards his own past, is alone in being devoid of all potential nourishment.

It is old age that, of all life's seasons, most often preoccupies Deschamps. Robert Magnan, in his study of Aspects of Senescence in Eustache Deschamps points out that ageing is of greater interest to the poet -- unusually for the time -- than death itself.33 The body in the grave is dealt with summarily, as we have seen with regard to the moral implications of food, sin and death. There is not much that can happen to a dead body, other than its slow disappearance.

An ageing body, on the other hand, undergoes progressive stages of deterioration, each one a small agony and perhaps exploitable as a minor ploy for sympathy in the poet's relationship with his public. Food and drink contribute in a number of ways to the overall image drawn by Deschamps of the Old Man -- usually himself.

The old age poems making reference to food or drink can be placed in three sub-categories: state, regrets, and privileges of the declining years of life. In the first category we find some of Deschamps's most striking rhetoric. Ballade 965 grows out of an extended metaphor in which an old man is compared to an old saddle, and "Toudis fault ouvrer en viez selle" (refrain). Food and drink are only obliquely alluded to in this poem; at line 31, when the poet writes "Mai a es dens, ne puet mangier", and perhaps at lines 35-37:

Le costé d'angoisse li fent,
Si fault pour purger la matere
Boire poison, prandre cristere . . .

So real food has become inedible, because of problems with both teeth34 and digestive system, and only medication can be consumed in its place. This is certainly a dire state of affairs to one so interested in taste as Deschamps. Nevertheless, the tone of the poem is rather positive overall; it is about maintenance, not resignation.

Some of the content of ballade 1266 is related to that of 965, yet its thrust is distinctly pessimistic. Its refrain repeats "Ce sont les signes de la mort." The first-person narrator takes us through every aspect of his physical

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34 Toothache, unassociated with old age, is also the subject of its own ballade, 834. One of its most painful consequences is the inability to eat or drink.
decrepitude, and is surprisingly frank about the psychological perversity of old age, too:

Couvoiteus suis, blans et chanus,
Eschars, courroceux; j'adevine
Ce qui n'est pas, et loe plus
Le temps passé que la doctrine
Du temps present; mon corps se mine;
Je voy envix rire et jouer,
J'ay grant plaisir a grumeler,
Car le temps passé me remort;
Tousjours vuell jeunesce blamer:
Ce sont les signes de la mort.

(11-20)

The third stanza returns to physical problems:

Mes dens sont longs, foibles, agus,
Jaunes, flairans comme santine;
Tous mes corps est froi§ devenus,
Maires et secs; par medicine
Vivre me fault; char ne cuisine
Ne puis qu'a grant paine avaler;
Des jeunses me fault balar,
Mes corps toudis sommeille ou dort,
Et ne vuell que boire et humer:
Ce sont les signes de la mort.

Again, the inability to eat is raised, but with more explicit bitterness. The speaker is actually living off medicine; his teeth and dry, thin body conspire to make swallowing anything else painful. Moreover, he must make a joy of his fast -- an idea akin to expecting a cream addict to relish a low-cholesterol regimen. At the end of this stanza, there is a kind of separation between the speaker and his body. It is the latter which is blamed for, yet unquestionably in control of, the way the speaker must live out his days. The scapegoat is also the ruler.

This idea touches on a central paradox of the body in Deschamps's work: it is both the key to taste and preference, hence freedom and individuality, and one of the ultimate dominators of human action.

It is not only the present hardships of old age that furnish Deschamps with poetic material, but also the losses and damage that time has wrought. In ballade 1105, the poet mourns the disappearance of his sexual powers with rather more wistfulness than in 1227:

Mais fusse riche a souhaitier
Se j'eusse mon vit d'Orliens. ...

(9-10)

35 Deschamps almost certainly studied law at Orléans in his youth, and evidently found time for recreation there. See Oeuvres, vol. XI, p. 13.
Food and drink — "Richesce, vin, blef en grenier" (l.16) only intervene as things the speaker would willingly give up for a return of his virility. They appear as a sort of stray thought, amid fond memories of how he used to be loved. And because such staples, elsewhere in Deschamps, frequently represent the true essentials of life, the offer to sacrifice them here is particularly comic. The poem reads like a parody of some of Deschamps's didactic lessons in what is really necessary, and is confirmation that light satire and serious moralizing are equally natural components of Deschamps's poetic voice.

In ballade 1391, the "straight" moral tone returns. In the form of a fable of a peasant and a dog, Deschamps complains of masters who treat their loyal servants badly when the usefulness of the latter has come to an end. (The grievance of employer ingratitude appears regularly in his work, in various forms; ballades 1447 and 267 are further examples.) Here, it is in fact the fable framework that provides the logical justification for the use of food. The master of the ageing mastiff "Son pain lui restraint et potage / Mal pour bien lui guerredona . . ." (10-11).

In the second stanza it becomes clear that the exemplary relationship of the past has been based to a large degree on aspects of food. The dog has not only protected his master from wild beasts and intruders, but kept him in game:

Mes corps bien vous acuisina
Don't je deusse avoir mon viaige.
Mais quant fruit fault, nul guerdon n'a!
Advisent cy tuit foul et saige.

(21-24)

Food has come, yet again, to signify subsistence. By extension, it acts as a key to maintaining binding, interdependent relationships or to establishing secure freedom.

The advantages of the troisième âge are certainly difficult to see from the poems surveyed so far; yet ballade 1266 has already offered a clue to some of these in its portrayal of an old man's personality traits. Old age causes, even requires, eccentric behaviour. In other poems, old age vindicates certain rights and privileges that would be denied to any young, active man. In ballade 191, "Comment un homme ne se doit armer puis qu'il a passé cinquante ans", the tone is rather defensive, as if someone were actually asking the speaker to

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36 Bread and potage are not particularly anthropomorphic allusions; both were regularly used as dog food in medieval times. Bautier discusses a hierarchy of flour qualities, ranging from that used in fine white loaves to that turned into "dog bread".
take up arms after the age of fifty.\textsuperscript{37} The main argument against going to war here is based on the inherent rapacity of such activity. At this stage in life, a man ought to be living quietly on his own wealth "acquis loyaument" (l. 6) rather than taking the possessions of others. In particular, it is evident that it is now of some urgency to

\begin{quote}
\textit{Penser a Dieu, querir remission}
De ses pechiez, a son salut entendre,
Non pas tolir d'autrui possession . . .
\end{quote}

(13-15)

The poem concludes:

\begin{quote}
\textit{Mieulx lui vaust en s'abitacion}
Mangier des pois ou aucun art aprandre
Que soy user en tel confusion:
Bonne vie fait a bonne fin tendre.
\end{quote}

(17-24)

Peas were, in literary tradition, an attribute of fools; in peasant life, one of few readily available staples.\textsuperscript{38} Thus, here, they call up overtones of dotage and poverty. Furthermore, as a puréed soft food, they would be ideal for the elderly in practical terms, sparing strain on loose, aching teeth, and being one of few dishes that could actually be swallowed. Nevertheless, the eating of peas is proclaimed by the speaker as a choice, a kind of rejection of the variety of active life in favour of simplicity. It is also, along with "learning some craft", a means of killing time, of embracing a routine designed to cause no further trouble to one's soul or one's fellows. All debts to society have been discharged, and if the old man keeps to himself, no more may be incurred.

In ballade 865, the speaker is no longer expostulating on why he should drop out of society; he has already been forced to transfer both military and love allegiance to "Vielle". Now he has new duties:

\begin{quote}
Desor me fault tost coucher,
Bien couvrir, dormir le main,
Bonne viande manger,
Avoir bon vin et bon pain;
Pour les grans excès me plain
Que j'ay fait ça en arriere;
Vielle m'a dit: "Je te prain;"
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{37} The poem may indeed refer to resistance on the part of the poet to participation in yet another campaign. More likely, however, given its generalised voice, it is simply part of a whole group of poems in which Deschamps focuses on senescence, using the experiences and sensations of his own life to lend authority to his claims of what old age (and indeed all the ages of mankind) should be like.

\textsuperscript{38} Ménard, "Les fous," pp. 441-442.
Tu porteras ma banniere. (11-16)

The sting of ageing is still not quite gone; in the third stanza the speaker is reminded of how women no longer love him -- and of how his body can forecast weather.

The language of military campaign in both the last two poems, whether realistically or figuratively employed, is no accident. Deschamps has expressed some of his most thorough gastronomic misery in connection with the material conditions on past expeditions. Old age at least allows relief from such unstable living, and at best offers a complete reversal of it; the poet in 865 is standardbearer for an army that requires long sleep, warm coverlets, good food, wine and bread. And though he is sexually worn out, he is still in a physical state to appreciate the simple comforts of life.

Overall, though, it is a sense of loss that dominates Deschamps's poems about old age. Eating peas is no spectacular treat, after all; and, in the first two poems discussed, even that much nourishment is an unlikely luxury for the age-imprisoned man. He will never again love or be loved as he used to, or give service for recompense in a balanced relationship. Even the "bonne viande", "bon vin et bon pain" of 865 are nothing compared to the variety of tastes and experience that he is used to savouring.

5. Eating, Drinking and Character

Few of the many personalities used by Deschamps in his poems are characterised by their individual relationship with food and drink to the degree that his own persona is. For instance, the fellow writers to whom he pays homage -- Chaucer, Machaut, Christine de Pizan -- are admired for their art, not for how they lead their daily lives. They are not mixed up with fleshly concerns. However, both Chaucer and Machaut appear as spiritual nourishers. Deschamps asks the former for a draught from the source of his inspiration:

A toy pour ce de la fontaine Helye
Requier avoir un buvraige autentique
Dont la doys est du tout en ta baillie,
Pour rafrener d'elle ma soif ethique,
Qui en Gaule seray paralitique
Jusques a ce que tu m'abuveras.

and identifies the latter as one "qui m'a nourry et fait maintes doucours" (447, I. 5). Of course, "nourrir" in this context is to be understood primarily in its figurative, and courtly, sense of "raised, educated". It remains that
Deschamps requests, or claims to have had, some form of sustenance from both these writers. But it is Deschamps himself who thirsts and "eats" in these cases. His mentors are not shown as needing sustenance themselves, only generously dispensing it.

The nobles of his acquaintance appear mainly in groups. The names dropped with regard to the "Ordre de la Baboue" or the smaller dinner-time groupings of ballades 800 and 803 do not receive much individual attention through their involvement with food or drink, but at least they are historical people. On the other hand, a character like "Frere Bernard" is given a fairly detailed portrayal, much of it based on his drinking preferences, but almost all of it cliché. There is nothing to say that this description of a stock "clerc bon vivant" relates to a particular individual. It is a question of particularisation of a general idea, not portraiture. The lady of ballade 778 is a slightly different case, more a negative entity than a character. "Jamaiz nul jour ne serez amoureuse": the refrain, like the rest of the poem, concentrates on revealing her incompleteness. Her love is given over to God, and her "cuisine" is simply prepared and re-prepared, but not given out at all. That she is the speaker's addressee emphasises how her character is carefully and cynically circumscribed by the poet's own perspective. As with Chaucer and Machaut, but physically this time, she appears in relation to someone else's needs – or appetites.

If the lady of this ballade actually existed, and if she ever encountered this poem, she might well have breathed a sigh of relief. Deschamps can be a good deal more critical of those subjects whom he addresses in the second person. A number of his poems are given over to strings of insults, which often involve organic imagery.

One of the most food-based of these insult poems is ballade 777, directed at "someone" who belches too much. Food and drink enter in excess, and leave again by all the wrong channels:

Tu, qui me faiz si puant route,
Et qui gettes si ors sangloux,
Pendus soit qui l'aprint tel note!
S'a fait tes ventres qui est glous,
De trop boire et mangier jaloux
Tant qu'il te sault par les conduis
Et par la bouche comme uns loux
Estront, par la! g'iray par huys.

Li vins es narines te flote;
Tu poiz, tu boiz, tu es estoux,
Ton ventre joue a la pelote
Et bruit; maudit soit il de tous!
La froideur, la rume et la toux
En reuppant par ta bouche aduis,
Et en dy comme merveilloux:
Estront, par la! g'iray par huis.

Va chier, laisse tel riote,
Yet despite all its details, this ballade is no portrait either. Its subject is completely reduced to his bodily functions, or conversely stated, his relationship with food and drink is blown out of all proportion to become his whole being. In fact, there is no need to associate such a diatribe with a real person; the poem is a blason of Gluttony based on ingestion and (in)digestion. Nevertheless, the focus remains on a single, individual body. What Deschamps is exploiting here is the power of such a body to convey an impression of the utmost disgust. The notion of Gluttony, distanced and rather sanitised through traditional iconography, has here become a common noun, concentrated in all its human applications. Just as in 398 and 685 individual body parts make an exaggerated villain of overindulgence, here the individual body demonstrates Gluttony as victor.

Occasionally, though, food and drink are used for subtler effects of character definition. Buried in the allegorical vision of ballade 388 is a reference to the dream-king's inefficacity, as partly encouraged by eating practices and other frivolities:

\[
\text{Souefz delis et mole nourreture } \\
\text{Te getteront de ton royaume fuer.} \\
\text{(17-18)}
\]

Since the whole vision is, in the envoy, rather pointedly suggested to be applicable to the present state of government in France, this is no doubt a disapproving reference to the conduct of Charles VI. What might "mole nourreture" be? Then, as ever, soft foods were fed to invalids. But tender foods were also the sort of delicacies normally restricted to nobles. (It is interesting that "Nature" views these with scorn. When Deschamps writes moralising poems against the court in his own voice, he condemns excess far more frequently than délicacie, being, to all appearances, quite partial to the occasional treat of "mole nourreture" himself.) In any event, this two-line slur is little to go on as a character description, but with the other concerns

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39 Compare Charles d'Orléans, ballade 91, discussed in the general Conclusion: another poem focussing on a pseudo-individualised type.
of the poem, it highlights the indolence and impressionability that threaten the strength of the king as ruler.

Two members of his court are given more detailed personal portraits. The first of these has been identified by Raynaud as "Alexandre le Boursier, receveur général des aides"; Deschamps no doubt reflects popular opinion by renaming him "Alixandre le Poing Clos". Although the text of ballade 869 is imperfect, and in some respects unclear, it is possible to deduce that its subject is happy to spend other people's money, giving lavish entertainments and sternly upholding high standards of service and abundance when his own purse is not involved, but being an absolute miser at home. Throughout, his attitudes to food, drink, and meal organisation are used to demonstrate his character:

Je scay un large despensier  
Qui conquiert tout par pertuesse;  
A siès d’autrui est le promier,  
La scet il monstre sa largesse;  
Tout demande et prant, rien n’y lesse;  
La sert chascun de trop beaus mos,  
Et se vous demandez: “Qui esse?”  
C’est Alixandre le poing clos.

Il scet blamer le bouteillier,  
Le queux, le maistre et la maistresse  
S’ilz ne font bien appareillier;  
La veult de gent veoir grant presse  
Et que la viande ne cesse  
Et que toudis ait vin en pos  
..........................  
C’est Alixandre le poing clos.

Chiès li ne veult riens espargnier;  
Il boit vin de vingne gouesse,  
Pain halé, froumaige en quartier,  
Lart, vergus, c’est toute richesse,  
Trois et trois .m. œufs,\(^\text{40}\) trop se blesse,  
Donne mainte fois, tant est souls,  
Aux estrangiers, honneur l’adresse:  
C’est Alixandre le poing clos.

It is easy to see how such a description could imply the kind of man willing to squander the nation’s resources while keeping to an avaricious, penny-pinching lifestyle when it comes to his own wealth. The poor quality, plain and measured (“froumaige en quartier”) food and drink that Alixandre serves up at home are the antithesis of the traditional courtly feast of romance, designed to show the liberality of its host, while the "liberality" that he does show is sham, dependent on the resources of others which he directs as if they were his own.

\(^{40}\) Raynaud notes that "Ce vers paraît altéré". Does Alixandre willingly give away large quantities of eggs, which cost him next to nothing and are not considered a worthy food on their own by any but the poorest strata of society?
However, by keeping the subject relatively anonymous, Deschamps prudently allows an illusion of fiction to remain possible. Should anyone complain that he is making political allegations, he could insist that this is a harmless piece about an individual with eccentric food habits.

A more enigmatic portrait, despite its more open rhetoric, is that of "le jeune de la Barrée" (ballade 894). It is hard to see exactly what Deschamps is trying to show about this unidentified courtier, except perhaps his volatility:

Aussi tendre comme un poucin,
Et plus doulez que n’est miel en rée,
Qui tant couché et dort grand matin,
C’est li enef de la Barrée.
Une heure haitez se désirée
Et va saillant comme uns poissons;
L’autre est simples comme espousée:
Il a toujours eufs ou pigons.41

Une heure veult estre hutin,
L’autre heure double la gelée;
Une heure il faut coussin,
L’autre heure est la chambre fermée;
Autre heure a la teste enrumée
Et lui convient boire poisons
Et rostir en la cheminée:
Il a toudis eufs ou pigons.

Pour ce lui faultra en la fin
Une litiere bien voirée;
Il fait bon estre son voisin
Pour avoir de la cumine;
Une heure veult de la purée,
L’autre heure connins et chapons;
Sa vie est toute triboulée:
Il a toudis eufs ou pigons.

Is this a victim of fragile health – or a hypochondriac (stanza 2, 9-15)? A gourmand (stanza 3, 19-20, 22)? A capricious spirit? A grown-up or adolescent spoiled brat? The comparison to honey in line 2 has a potential sting to it; the young courtier could be, like the substance itself, sweet but dangerous to disturb. "Sa vie est toute triboulée" would seem a rather sarcastic expression of sympathy -- "life is hard when one has to keep abreast of such inconsistent desires" -- but it could be a neutral comment. The poem as a whole depicts a way of life of which Deschamps, in moral mode, thoroughly

41 The refrain may suggest a proverb: a variation on the feast-or-famine opposition? However, I have found no expression that is very close to this.

42 I do not agree with the editor's gloss of cumine as "potion" au cumin. It is either a sauce or a dish in which cumin is a dominant flavour. See, for example, Scully, Le Viandier de Taillevent, recipes 12, 13, 75 and 96. However, Scully does point out cumin's medicinal value as an appetite stimulant, and one of the Viandier recipes (75: "Comminee de poisson") can be adapted for the sick by the addition of sugar.
disapproves; yet it is also one recalls rather fondly when he is on military campaign or peacetime travel through countries whose living conditions and food habits he regards as barbaric.

Overall, it is a description curiously (for Deschamps) untinged with any indisputable authorial opinion, at once one of the clearest yet most mysterious views of noble figure of the fourteenth century.

The clarity comes from the sharp impressions made by images and description, many of them related to food or drink. In the first stanza, the young courtier is presented in very organic terms, compared to several "living" foods: a tender chick, honey in the hive, jumping fish. We do not know if the "tendre" refers primarily to youth or spinelessness or emotional tenderness, all possible meanings in Deschamps's time, but it may well be there to suggest all three. The "saillant" action of the fish could imply both firm health and particular energy. And what of the "oeufs ou pigeons"? Are they "simplicity or luxury" (eggs were peasant food, pigeons more aristocratic), "balanced completeness" (birds and eggs to produce more of them), or simply a suggestion that De la Barrière always makes sure he has what he wants?

In the second stanza, at line 15, the cosseted enfant almost becomes a dish himself, as he "roasts" by the fire. Then in the third, there is a particular concentration on his changing culinary tastes. We don't know whether this is a direct result of his supposed sickliness, or more the kind of inexplicable cravings which medieval texts frequently report for pregnant women. What is certain is that there is an element of power in his behaviour; he seems to get what he wants, however odd his desires.

6. Food as Focus

There are instances, in Deschamps, where food or drink itself is the "individual", as much a poetic subject and an influence on human action as if it were a living character. Setting aside the ubiquitous mustard of Brabant and Hainault, which has already been examined as a regional particularity, we are left with only three specific foods to which Deschamps devotes all or most of one or more poems, plus the young wine of a particularly disastrous year. All three foods — truffles, pork and tripe — come under attack, though the poet's

43 See Deschamps's Miroir de Mariage, II. 3784-3843.

44 "Purée", sometimes meaning boiled and crushed vegetables, seems a strange request for an aristocrat. However, in at least three other contexts within Deschamps's oeuvre (La Farce de Mestre Trubert, I. 620; lettre 1409, I. 3; lettre 1410, I.23), the word is used to mean wine (no doubt a reference to the crushed grapes set aside for fermentation), and it would appear that this is the meaning to be understood here.
representation of tripe is more ambiguous than that of the other two. As for the wine, the poet claims it has nearly killed him.

Truffles (ballade 215) are condemned as unhealthy. Cold in themselves, hence alien to the ideal human condition, their décoration is nonetheless hot, causing fevers and acute discomfort which the poet claims to have suffered:

\[ J'enai mangié, dont mon las cuer se sent \]
\[ De pis avoir que d'aces de tierçayne. \]

(17-18)

Most of the poem reads like the impassioned testimonial of one who has eaten a poisonous mushroom and survived. The final stanza, however, raises a new dimension:

\[ Ne je n'y voy nulle curacion \]
\[ Fors de fuir, car ou elle repaire \]
\[ Vendra la mort et tribulacion, \]
\[ Courroux de cuer, qui n'aura lectuaire \]
\[ De primevoirre briefment \]
\[ Mais nul n'en veult user presentement; \]
\[ Je ment: si fait a la cour souveraine, \]
\[ Ou plusieurs sont par ce fruit attendant \]
\[ De pis avoir que d'aces de tierçayne. \]

Clearly, the truffle is not only the speaker's nemesis, but flavour of the month with the court. Its warm reception there is perhaps yet another symptom of the folly of court life. Deschamps' proclaimed hostility to it would then also be a declaration of independence from court fashions and expectations, an independence he advocates on many other occasions. The device of the rhetorical lie, a form of antithesis, suggests a link with other poems of social criticism.\(^{45}\)

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\(^{45}\) An example is ballade 1096, "Contre la faussete des gens des cours". It begins:

\[ Qui sont ceuls qui aux cours roiauxx \]
\[ Ont ordonnance et retenue? \]
\[ Les bons, les saiges, les loyauxx, \]
\[ Pour ce est la court bien maintenue; \]
\[ Chascun s'i ayme, retenue \]
\[ N'y est, chose que l'en ne paye, \]
\[ On y sert Dieu d'entente vraye, \]
\[ La est Veritez sanz mensonge, \]
\[ Pitié, Charité s'i essaye . . . \]
\[ J'ai menti, je croy que je songe. \]

(1-10)
There may be an element of word-play here as well. A "trufe" (as opposed to the "trufle" of the poem) is a falsehood, deception or trick. It would not be surprising if Deschamps wished to associate the court with a penchant for deceit, as well as a penchant for dangerous luxuries.

Finally, on a purely physical level, there may be erotic implications. We know that by the eighteenth century, truffles were thought aphrodisiac, but that generally in the middle ages they were considered cold. However, Deschamps may be hinting at a new vogue for consuming them as sexual stimulants. "Fuir" could be a version of "fourir" (=plough, plant, "screw") while the remedy of spring -- the mating season -- or primrose -- a treatment for a swollen penis -- may be singularly appropriate. The poet may be suggesting that licentious sexual activity is hotter and more dangerous in itself than tertian fever, or he may be reminding readers of its potential consequence: sexually transmitted disease.

His poem on pigs and pork (ballade 1236) takes us far away from the world of the court. It does, however, offer an extraordinary glimpse of the non-noble medieval community, with its pigs wandering the streets as a public nuisance until their almost ritual slaughter each December. The poem's basic approach is explanatory, although its tone becomes at times melodramatic:

S'avez vous la cause pour quoy,  
Quant aucun tue son pourcel,  
A ses voisins en fait envoy
Et leur en donne maint morsel
De l'eschine, du haterel,  
Des boudins, d'autres laridiaux, 
D'andouilles, jambons, des nonbliaux,
Du soult que l'en prangne en gre prie?
Pour ce que trop a fait de maulx:
Pourcel ne fist bien en sa vie.

Pors se boutent en un aunoy,  
En un jardin, en un prael,  
Tout gastent et font tant d'annoy
Qu'il n'en est a nul homme bel;
Ilz boutent par tout leur musel, 
Vignes, blez fouillent, poys, naveaulx, 
Enfants estranglent es berseaulx;
Chascun les court sus et escrie, 
Tant sont mauvais et desloyaulx:  
Pourcel ne fist bien en sa vie.

Qui plus est, de vendre n'ont loy

---

46 "Trufé", "truphe", "treufle", "trufe", and "truffle" are all given in Godefroy, Dictionnaire de l'ancienne langue française as possible spellings for "trufe", meaning "tromperie", "moquerie".

47 Platine, "L'huitre et la trufe."

Iswolsky Helene case against pigs. It is dangerous for connotations of the hands and their habit tainted "leprous" effects on meat. It shows Godefroy example or a apply "mesel". But kinds of body); and an indication of how food-sharing strengthened and even rescued nearby rapport (pork meat, despite its unworthiness, is an acceptable recompense for damage done by live pigs). For all Deschamps's criticism of "ors porecauls" and his final pronouncement, "Ce n'est pas viande de roy," there are few references to its taste or to the potential dangers it poses in terms of health. It is a mean food, but a vital one—for social distinction, for manifestations of generosity, for survival in the case of many people—and the poem tacitly accepts all this.

When the focus narrows to tripe, a term which in Deschamps refers to all kinds of offal, the context narrows as well: not a year in ordinary society, but a few hours over an extraordinary meal. Deschamps's first poem on tripe (ballade 1272) has distinctly proto-Rabelaisian aspects:

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In spite of the ambiguous syntax here, I am certain that "seursemé" and "mesel" apply to pork meat, not Jews or Saracens. We have already seen an example of a sotte-chanson in which pork is qualified as "soursamee", and Godefroy shows that the most common application of the word was to substandard pork. It was certainly still consumed, chiefly in the form of sausages, but was meant to be advertised and sold separately from "good" meat.

Pork of any quality was officially thought rather dubious in terms of its effects on health. Aldebrandino of Siena says that young pork was particularly dangerous for people of moist, cold complexes, engendering gout in the feet, hands and buttocks, as well as gallstones. It may be that the scarred effect of tainted "leprous" pork was thought to be contagious in some way.

It is certainly unusual for Moslems and Jews to be openly admired, yet their habit of shunning pork seems welcomed by the poet as support for his own case against pigs.

For a full discussion of Rabelais, the "material bodily principle" and the connotations of tripe, see Mikhail Bakhtin, Rabelais and his world, tr. Hélène Iswolsky (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), especially p.
On parle de paons rostis,
De furterelles, de pigeons,
D'allouettes et de perdrix,
De faisans, de connins, d'oiseons,
De grues, oes et chappons
Et d'autres volilles en terre;
Mais je ne voy viande guerre
Dont l'en face moins de dangier
Que de tripes, tous temps ont guerre.\(^{52}\)
Chascuns veult des tripes mangier.

On en a de vache et brebis,
De bœufs, de pourceaulx, de moutons,
Boyaulx cuillers, pance et le pis,
Teste de veau, les trotignons,
Foye double, rate, rongnons,
Dont l'en suelt l'un l'autre requerre;
Quant l'un s'en vient, lors l'autre y erre;
S'elles flairent sur le rostier,
Maint son nez en estoupe et serre;
Chascuns veult des tripes mangier.

Car tripes sentent leur pais:
On treuve bien du bran au fons.
Lors sont compaignons esbahis:
"Py," fait l'un, "que bran ne mangons!"
L'autre dit: "Prenez des porgons,
Ou vous pourrez puour acquerre.
- Non feray: versez en ce voirre.
Que l'en puist la vieille escorchier
Qui les vendit, qui les enerre!"
Chascuns veult des tripes mangier.

Princes, les petits compaignons
Ayment tripes, aulx et oingenons,
Car on en fait maillie et denier,
On s'en esbat a genoilons,
On en dort, on en fait ors sons;
Chascun veult des tripes mangier.

In terms of rhetoric, there is a great abundance and variety of food names before we even get to the offal. The organ meats, too, are served forth in all their diversity. In the third stanza there is a snatch of conversation involving excrement, wine, colourful cursing. But what is the attitude to tripes that actually emerges from all this? And, used as poetic material, what further implications can tripes have?

\(^{52}\) Raynaud glosses this as "On leur fait toujours la guerre." It probably means that they are always under attack from people keen to gobble them down.
There is no doubt that offal was officially thought a rather disgusting food, though suitable for the humble. It was seldom thoroughly cleaned, and to eat tripe was to consume the excrement still clinging to the freshly-grilled intestines, etc. At the same time, there was a festive side to consuming such food, for it did not keep well, and normally had to be eaten in huge quantities on the day that animals were slaughtered, while most of the rest of their flesh was salted down for the winter. Deschamps captures something of the resulting ambiguous appreciation of tripe from the very first stanza. They are actually preferred to far daintier foods, he claims in lines 7-8, and finally concludes, despite their limitations in terms of hygiene, that "Chascuns veult des tripes mangier."

What emerges is a food and an experience that many love to hate. We all "eat shit", the poet implies. We blame those who sell these products, yet still wash them down with wine. As for the sellers and other "petits compaignons", they enjoy the profits, the festive ambience, the utter takeover by the body - in the form of animal guts, of human appetites, and finally of human guts: "On en dort, on en fait ors sons ..." Tripe are, as Bakhtin has said, life and death, excrement and food.

The whole poem is a kind of soûte-chanson run wild. It doesn't parody a tight sequence of courtly conventions, but starts with one, the courtly feast, and quickly overthrows it for an image of a world that is the complete antithesis of order and logic.

The rondeau, 1273, which follows this poem, takes tripe almost full circle back to a conflation with literature itself. But this will be material for the next chapter.

The extraordinary rhetoric of ballade 1374, in which new wine is compared to abrasive tools, implements and articles of all kinds, is also worthy of separate examination. The scraping comparisons are the only suggestions of taste we are given; the rest of the poem is devoted to describing the poet's physical response to this dangerous draught ("Car quant j'en boy, destruis sont mes boiaux," begins the second stanza, spiralling into ever greater anatomical detail after that) and to mourning the fine wines he is wont to drink (in classic ubi sunt style). In contrast to the tripe discussed above, this wine is so bad it has been stripped of its most of its organic properties, other than its power to cause physical illness. The disgust of the connoisseur is so complete that it denatures its object; this wine almost ceases to be a drink at all.

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53 Cf. Bakhtin, op. cit.; also Philippe Contamine, La Vie quotidienne pendant la guerre de cent ans (Paris: Hachette, 1976), pp. 215-216. The "trois dames de Paris" certainly enjoy them as part of their wild drinking binge - yet the whole episode represents a departure from the supposed norms of respectable bourgeois behaviour.
A common thread in all these poems devoted to a single type of food or beverage is the underlying interest of the poet in taste and consumption. Even where a whole poem does not focus on food or drink, his personal appetites are often vividly highlighted. His responses to food and drink, and the fact that he does respond to them so frequently, help shape the nature of the persona he has left to us.

7. Food, Drink and Poetic Voice

It would be wrong to assume that everything Deschamps writes about food or drink is a documentary expression of what he feels. However, he is interested in portraying himself, at least in some of his poetry, as an eating, drinking, freely responding, fully human character, and food and drink help him do this.

The most vivid and memorable self-image that the poet offers us is that of the grumbler. Indeed, the word is hardly strong enough to express the tones of righteous indignation that pervade some of his complaints. Occasionally, he narrates his misfortunes as one singled out by fate for some undeserved punishment. In ballade 1224, his perpetual trials are spelled out in economic terms, which are in turn fleshed out with (mainly edible) commodities. His two main problems, he says, are that if he sells anything, he must do so cheaply, while if he needs to buy anything, "On le me vent plus qu'il ne vault / la moitié" (6-7). In the second stanza, he explains:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Car se j'ay vins, bestes, ahans,} \\
\text{Cras pourceaulx, laines pour draper,} \\
\text{Vaiches, brebis, moutons au champs,} \\
\text{Poulains, fromens, pour moy aider,} \\
\text{Foins avecques, buche a moler,} \\
\text{Feves, poys, noix dont hulle sault,} \\
\text{Je treuve l'achateur si caut} \\
\text{Que du marchie se veult demetre;} \\
\text{Pour noient tout donner me fault:} \\
\text{Maleureux suis par toute la lettre.}
\end{align*}
\]

(11-20)

In this way, a stock of materials which in so many other poems of Deschamps would signify ample subsistence and insurance against future hardship has been turned into a millstone around the speaker's neck. If he had all the wealth in the world, he would still be unlucky.

Personal misfortune is similarly the focus of ballade 1301, in which the author depicts himself as a street-vendor of oubles. Here, however, it is not a case of an inescapable and ongoing fate, but a sudden fall from Fortune's grace. The food he cries, its name taken figuratively, is, ironically enough, a reminder of how he has been forgotten. His dependence on the "sales" of a "food" at all emphasise the precariousness of the situation in which he finds
himself: he is almost down to a level of elemental survival.

However, the poet faces unpleasant situations more commonly with pugnacity than with resignation. In his complaints concerning life on military campaign and in foreign cultures, the very violence of his rhetoric shows an attacking spirit. Being able to sum up Bohemia as "Poulz, puces, puoir et poureauix" (rondeau 1326) may create a disgusting view of that country, but it also declares the superiority of its appraiser. In another poem (ballade 1318) Deschamps details the disadvantages of the foreign experience in general, not even deigning to identify the culture to which he is referring (it may well be an amalgamation of those of Bohemia, Moravia, Hungary and Germany), only casually indicating that it is not that of France:

Poisson salé, char de porc enfumée,
Piteux brouet aréz XII. en un plat,
Es estuves sanz chambre a cheminée,
Cervoize et pain, la orrez grant debat;
Chascun y tient au disner son estat,
Et la serez servis a l'ordonnance
De vostre hoste, non pas a vo plaisance,
Mais de telz mès como il plaira a lui;
Faire autrement n'est pas en vo puissance;
Mal fait mangier a l'appetit d'autruy.

Encor ara nape trop mal buée,
Crass e orde, noire com cornillat,
Aucune foiz a la table clouée
Sanz plus oster tant qu'il en dure esclat.
Mais de laver ne fault faire debat:
Un bacin plain aréz d'yaue; or s'avance
Qui veult laver. Sausse n'arez ne jance,
La ne fait on reverence a nullui;
Sée qui puët, qui ne siet l'oste tance;
Mal fait mangier a l'appetit d'autruy.

Mais aussistost que la nape est ostèe,
Qui vin a but, son fait yroit de plat,
S'il ne pairoyt sa porcion donnée,
Et qui faim a, pour neant s'en debat,
Attendre fault l'oste comme un prelat
A son plesir; se jeune est qui veult dance,

Soupper n'ara, dont trop esbahis susy,
J'aime bien mieulx la costume de France:
Mal fait mangier a l'appetit d'autruy.

[envoy] Prince, on a lis, chambre mal ordonée,
Gros draps et durs, sanz fenestre fermée,
D'une coute ma couverture y truy;
Sanz cuevrecleif, on a robe emplumée;
En refroitouer, par la Vierge honoûrée,
Mal fait mangier a l'appetit d'autruy.

(1-30)

Clearly, this poem could be read as simply a sociological document, expressing more xenophobia than disinterested observation. Still, the conclusion of the refrain lays emphasis on the presence of an individual: despite its proverbial
form, its message calls for independence of taste, freedom to follow one's own habits.

Physical comfort, with the cultural refinement that invariably accompanies it, is almost always a worthwhile goal in Deschamps. Even when a first-person narrator is not used, or is only vaguely present, the strength of his interest in material well-being shines through. Ballade 350, against Lent, uses the language of attack and siege to introduce the horrors of the Lenten season; from there, most of the poem concentrates on disliked food as artillery or instruments of torture, until the preferred dishes return with the triumphant retinue of Charnaille. Deschamps thus reveals a clear bias for the good life,54 largely, as above, through images of what it is not. Ballade 906, against winter, begins with a similar frame of rhetorical exclamation:

```
Alarme! Alarme! Yvers est descendus
Sur le pais, a froide compaignie:
Il en a ja mains mors et enfondus.
Armez vous tost pour sauver vostre vie,
Car nulz ne tient contre s'artillerie;
Vent et gresil fait traire a ses archiers;
Gelee et noif . . . . . . . . . . .
Et bise fait la bataille premiere;
Les mal armez assaudra premiers;
Garnissez vous, avant qu'iver vous fiere . . .
```

(1-10)

From here, however, it concentrates on positive responses rather than sufferings endured. There is a special interest in the details of luxury, in terms of clothing, household furnishings, food and drink, that goes beyond the requirements of fending off winter's fury. The wardrobe Deschamps describes is not only warm but fashionable. Similarly, the meal is full of components from a noble feast, including a reference to service:

```
Le chaut cive et bonne espicerie,
Des meilleurs vins, chapons, connins, plouviers,
Garnache avant, ypocras soit portiers . . .
```

(25-27)

The envoy to this particular ballade has a certain air of afterthought:

```
Princes, yvers les povere gens guerrie,
Les mau vestus et les chetis escrie
Perdre leur fait planche, pont et barriere;
Les riches non, car chascon estudie
Contre le froit, et, quoy que nulz vous die,
Garnissez vous, avant qu yver vous fiere.
```

54 That is, within the context of this ballade; as we shall see, he also presents an alternative view of Lent in ballade 352.
Until now, the poem has concentrated almost exclusively on that class able to garrison itself against winter's assault. The mention of the poor appears as a sign of Deschamps's "universal" moral voice, suppressed by the colourful conceits of the rest of the poem, and perhaps only grudgingly admitted here by the poet himself. (Deschamps quite often shows such a compulsion to "accuracy", setting pithy incidents or descriptions into contexts that explicate and balance their meaning.)

Indeed, food or drink can and do help define Deschamps's moral voice as well as his personal one. We have seen how he uses simple, staple foods to advocate a life of self-sufficiency and independence. But in such poems, there is not a strong sense of persona in the way that there is where specific details of food or drink are raised.

For Deschamps enjoys presenting himself as a connoisseur. Food and drink matter to him, and, as long as he chooses a subject that can avoid entanglement with moral issues, he can let this show. Ballade 1374, so disparaging about the year's new wines, can be so because Deschamps is used to better, as he makes plain in the third stanza. On many other occasions, he praises the wine of Beaune above all others. In ballade 925, where it is a question of the ideal diet in the heat of the summer, he shows himself conversant with the terminology used to capture a good wine; this language will be discussed in Chapter Five. And in ballade 1317, there is some question as to whether France would have such loyalty from the poet were it not for its material conditions, including its "Char, pain et vin, poisson d'yaue et de mer", which are featured in the poem well before any mention of security or justice.

Conclusion

The particular significance of a food or drink is easier to isolate when that item arises in connection with an individual body rather than with a more general group. In the latter case, food and drink complete and develop images of society. In the former, however, they can be a key to action or definition. In plague poems, for instance, food and drink of different varieties are often part of the cause and part of the cure. They have a specific medical function to accomplish. In poems relating to moral health, excessive food and drink, by their very solidity, concretise the exhortations or lamentations of a given poem. Food images deflect direct language for sexuality, yet in Deschamps -- unlike in most fabliaux -- they tend to heighten impressions of dessication and barrenness rather than lust and eroticism. When used in connection with the ageing body, however, food and drink rarely transform reality; instead, they recall the inevitable and progressive limitations of old age. Peas or medicine intervene as the only sort of diet available to the decrepit body.
Individual characters are sometimes depicted through particular food peculiarities. The Young De la Barée and Alixandre le Poing Clos are clearly members of court, yet food habits set them apart from their peers. These habits certainly have broader implications than the literal, though what exactly they represent must often remain enigmatic.

Finally, food or drink can be an "individual" in itself, a subject to be explored and interpreted. When elevated to this level of importance in the poem's structure, the food or drink in question becomes a vehicle by which the poetic voice itself is sharpened and amplified.

Still, the "individual" in Deschamps tends, with a few exceptions, to be either "everyman" or his representative par excellence, a role the poet claims for himself despite his own idiosyncracies. In dealing with individual nutrition, morality, sexuality and ageing, Deschamps sets himself up as an expert. He concentrates on the way things are, or could be, for every one of his audience. They all need to worry about the plague. They all need to strive for moderation and independence. They are all rather ridiculous in their sexual relationships, which are in turn as common as mustard. They all grow old. They all eat the same ubiquitous meats, at least at some point in their lives. The poet draws himself in witty detail, even sets himself apart from others -- yet enlists his audience as sympathisers and supporters. In the end, the individual is rarely more than the example of the masses.

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55 Notably the young De la Barée and Alixandre le Poing Clos.
Chapter Five
The Rhetoric of Food and Drink in Deschamps

In literature, food and drink are almost inevitably bound up with notions of social practice, or individual consumption, or both at once. Ballade 844 is an example of the last of these categories, since in it Deschamps breaks the court meal down into a study of component characters, each attacking a component dish in his or her distinct way, but never loses track of the particular collective context in which such people-watching sport is possible. On the whole, for a substance to be treated as alimentary, it must bear some marks of association with those who consume it.

Just as inevitably, however, the presence of food or drink in a text reflects a rhetorical choice on the part of a writer. He or she does not write about comestibles simply as a fanatic who cannot help it (though the writing about food can certainly generate apparent pleasure for an author), but because images of food and drink will have a certain effect on his or her audience.

So it is with Deschamps. His allusions to food and drink, as we have seen, can often be assigned a significance relative to his society or to man in general, whether as ingester, gastronome or glutton. The written allusions, however, are themselves ingredients in the various lyric offerings he concocts. Viewed together, his different rhetorical treatments of food and drink help us to interpret the nature of the whole feast he sets forth.

Food and drink regularly appear in Deschamps's work in simple, pithy expressions or tales, borrowed whole or as fragments from everyday life, popular wisdom, and specific written sources: proverbs, proverbial phrases and fables. Against the background of our earlier examination of food and drink in proverbs in general, and of proverbial food in literature (Chapter Two), this chapter will try to determine what conclusions can be drawn from Deschamps's particular use of such "pre-packaged" alimentary images.

Proverbs in poetry represent a double insertion of food into language,¹ so the reader is often kept at two removes from the material reality of the dish concerned. In other cases, however, notably allegorical satire, food enters discourse directly, and its tastes, smells and textures are exploited for all they are worth. A study of Deschamps's creation of literary battle scenes with realistic food and drink as both stakes and weapons will form the second section of this chapter.

But food and drink need not be magnified into attributes of abstractions to provide a source of interest. Deschamps also takes care to define and modify them in more ordinary contexts, using both traditional and "personal" descriptive vocabulary to shape the responses of his audience. A third section of this chapter will be devoted to how literal food and drink are represented in

¹ See Chapter Two, p. 50.
his lyrics: words about food and drink.

The words for food and drink can take alimentary images well beyond the realm of realism and direct sensory appeal. Section four will look at the figurative use of food and drink, in relation to love, morality, politics and literature.

Finally, there will be a survey of Deschamps's use of food and drink overall. What effect does his build-up of food and drink images -- line upon line in many instances -- create? What, in other contexts, does an avoidance of them mean? What kind of food poet, primarily, is Deschamps: carnivalesque, domestic, plain gluttonous? And how does his use of food and drink shed light on his entire oeuvre?

1. Food and Drink in Proverbs, Proverbial Phrases and Fables in Deschamps

The nature of proverbs and proverbial phrases means that they tend physically to occupy just a tiny section of any given poem, and at most feature only a concise reference to food or drink. (Deschamps, in moral mode, uses proverbs of all kinds, with food-related ones forming just one manifestation of a general penchant; indeed, even true proverbs are only a particular and sometimes hard-to-distinguish sub-category of a much broader range of sententious pronouncements favoured by the poet.) Nevertheless, proverbs and hence their component foodstuffs can stand out because of their extra-textual character; in Deschamps, the proverb acts as a call upon a vast tradition of popular wisdom, backing up, very often, the poet's personal moral exhortations. As an element of each individual poem, the proverb can be further emphasised through its use as a refrain. Occasionally, moreover, Deschamps writes a piece that focuses on the proverb itself, justifying its validity by giving a realistic anecdote to illustrate its literal plausibility.

The proverbial foods Deschamps uses are, as always, common staples or unexotic items of produce, chosen for their associations with subsistence and their familiarity in everyday life. Like many medieval writers, he makes particularly regular use of stock depreciatory comparisons dependent on such foods. In chanson royale 325, he weaves them into a debate between two people over the importance of material wealth. The eventual loser argues, in the second stanza, that of such temporal riches

\[
... \text{tout ne vault un chol;} \\
\text{Tost ont perdu ce qu'ils avoient;} \\
\text{Par cas soudain perdent le col,} \\
\text{Car leurs richesses les ennoient} ... 
\]
But his sparring partner later also uses a depreciatory comparison, to opposite effect:

Par povreté rien n’en aroient:  
Adès fine il qui a argent. 

Pour ce ne valent un flajol  
Povres salges; rien ne pourroient  
Avoir n’acquerir; leur aïol  
Ne firent pas ce qu’ilz vouloient. 

(30-35)

A humble vegetable thus stands for the worthlessness of riches, and a humble musical instrument for the dismalness of poverty. In the first case, the cabbage, consumable but nourishing, is by implication more solid and useful than wealth and ambitious aspirations. The second comparison is imbued with cynicism: the flageolet was often the instrument of the idealised contented peasant, but here it is exposed as valueless, like the poor sage himself. Is the food comparison chosen as a means of dragging the rich person back to the concrete world, and the non-food one as a means of making fun of any peasant aspirations to beauty and aesthetic enjoyment? As individual proverbial phrases, the two lines may well draw their comparison elements more from rhyme scheme demands than from any conscious idea. It remains that in the rhetorical organisation of the poem, they balance each other. As "beginning" and "end" phrases, spoken about opposite groups of people, they encapsulate the evolution of arguments in the poem. As food and non-food expressions, they emphasise the specific failings of each group: the rich have lost touch with the basic needs of life, whilst the poor are not worth their own literary romanticisation. But as phrases built around two complementary aspects of simple life, they end up creating a common bond of self-deception between the foolhardy rich man and the foolishly happy peasant.

Ballade 928 is a poetic tour de force on the narrator’s bad luck. If every aspect of the natural world were filled with money, riches, honours and jewels, and all these fell like rain, complains the poet,

Ja sur mon corps n’en cherroit une goute.  
Et qui pis est, vous puis bien dire encor  
Que qui donroit treslout l’avoir du Rin,  
Et fusse la, vaillant un harec sor  
N’en venrroit pas vers moy viy un frelin...  

(10-14)

The herring was, of course, cheap, plentiful, and detested for the boredom it engendered through its too-frequent appearances on Lenten tables. The type mentioned here is the darker variety, and while there is no evidence that this was more poorly regarded than its "white" counterpart, it has traditionally
been used as an image for leanness and dessication, and may have represented a particularly meagre meal for medieval diners. The presence of the adjective "sor" may also reflect a natural linguistic impulse toward reinforcement by étouffement. In any case, in this ballade, the humble nature of the dried fish contrasts sharply with the riches that evade the poet. The prosaic reality of the herring heightens our impression of the poet's gloom: the very accessibility, even inevitability, of it as a Lenten staple stands out against the elusive fantasies that constitute many of the rest of the poem's images — yet the poet is sure he will not even receive this simple foodstuff's worth of good fortune.

Both the comparisons discussed so far retain clear links with the sort of ordinary speech from which they might have come. In chanson royale 325, the proverbial food comparison is in the most oral guise possible, since it is represented as spoken in conversation. In ballade 928, where it is a question of the narrator's sufferings, an intentionally personal tone is evident throughout: in the realistic economic allusions, in the fanciful conceits — and in the very combination of the two. The proverbial comparison underlines the verbal nature of this flood of indignation, through its loose syntax (II. 13-14) and through its role as an almost conversational bridge between the hypothetically-withheld treasures of the Rhine and the more down-to-earth reality:

Onques ne fuy de nul donneur afin;
Biens me default, tout mal me vient souvent;
Se j'ay mestier de rien, on le me vent
Plus qu'il ne vault, de ce ne faictes doute.

(15-18)

The emphasis on the orality of such expressions is quite typical of Deschamps's overall use of proverbs and especially of food proverbs. If the line in question is not actually spoken by a created character, then very often it is delivered by the poet's own persona in especially vivid voice. This is not to say that the entire poem must make a feature of such a "personal" tone. Often the proverb is most effectively used within a broad moralising framework; the poet seems to imply that a gem of popular wisdom from his subconscious has suddenly popped out at the poem's surface, so apt and complete as to encapsulate exactly what he was trying to say. Proverbs, in Deschamps, do not just come from a pool of collective fixed ideas; they are spoken, personalised.

Bread, as in many medieval texts, is the most commonly-featured foodstuff in whole proverbs. It may be used as part of a general moral admonishment; in ballade 163, for example, the refrain runs "Telz a pou blef qui a assez pain cuit." Although the poem does not explain the proverb from a literal point of view, it illustrates the expression from real-life experience: health is all that is really necessary, it advises, and there is no point in amassing earthly
stores (grain) as long as the essential (bread) is available to you. In stanza two, the saying is actually identified as a proverb, and the didactic quality of the ballade is heavily underlined:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Qui en ouvrant prant ainsi son deduit,} \\
\text{S'il lui souffist, ce proverbe n'oublie:} \\
\text{Telz a pou bief qui a assez pain cuit.}
\end{align*}
\]

(14-16)

In the third stanza, the rhetoric becomes more dramatic. We are given a scene that is individual and general at once, in the same way as the vignettes in the XV. Joyes de mariage, or sections of Deschamps's own Miroir de Mariage:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{A paines puet riches horns reposer} \\
\text{Ne bien avoir, toujours merancolie,} \\
\text{De l’un avoir veult a l’autre tirer;} \\
\text{Tousjours defrit, toujours brait, toujours crie} \\
\text{Que povres est, et ne lui souffist mie:} \\
\text{Lors vient la mort en une seule nuit} \\
\text{Qui le destruit et a coup lui escrive:} \\
\text{Telz a pou bief qui a assez pain cuit.}
\end{align*}
\]

(17-24)

Paradoxically, it is only death which has really brought the proverb to life, shouting it to the rich man for whom it has been an easily-ignored maxim until now.

Sometimes the line between proverb and moral truism is blurred, and it is hard to be sure whether a line is proverbial or just exemplary. This is so in ballade 1018, on the subject of the dangers of court life:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Ne doit chaloir a homme qui sens a} \\
\text{Et qui scet a art d’estat royal suivir,} \\
\text{Car li riches com li povres mourra,} \\
\text{Et si fait bon sa franchise ensuir;} \\
\text{Qui sert a court il ne fait que fuir} \\
\text{Puis ça, puis là, et vit a grant dangier:} \\
\text{Il fait trop bon son pain en paix mangier.}
\end{align*}
\]

(1-8)

The sentiments expressed throughout this poem correspond to those of several other anti-court pieces, but the refrain bears distinct traces of proverbial thought patterns in its concise, pictorial structure. It could be certainly be compared with one of the proverbs documented by Hassell: "Mieux vaut un morceau de pain sec, avec la paix, qu’une maison pleine de viandes avec des querelles." This is itself a version of Proverbs 17:1: "Better a dry crust

---

\(^2\) James Woodrow Hassell, Middle French Proverbs, P14, p. 189.
and with it peace than a house where feast and dispute go together.\textsuperscript{3} The first half of the proverb remains in clearly identifiable form in the Deschamps poem, whereas the second half is "translated" by a more developed description of stress-filled and inconstant court life. Interestingly, too, the two elements of the proverb are reversed in the ballade, with the pessimistic -- and more developed -- view of luxury preceding the ideal scenario of simple self-sufficiency. As is often the case in Deschamps's work, a moral point is hammered home through negative rather than positive example, reflecting the poet's self-styled position as defender of uprightness in the face of overwhelming decadence.

The critical image of the court is particularly sharply delivered in the third stanza:

\begin{verbatim}
S'il vit a court sa vie abregera;
Car comme serf fault aler et venir,
Matin lever et a tart se couchier,
Et si le fault parjurer et mentir,
Trair derrier et par devant blandir,
Estre flateur, traire, losengier;
Pour ce conclus et puis bien maintenir
Il fait trop bon son pain en paix mangier.
\end{verbatim}

(17-24)

Here again, the refrain is presented as a kind of speech -- an original conclusion, or a happy turn on a prefabricated phrase? Either way, it is the work of a writer for whom proverbial ways of thinking might well be so ingrained as to lead to spontaneous, natural variations on well-known expressions.

In any case, we can find confirmation of Deschamps's awareness of the original proverb underlying this refrain in another poem: chanson royale 370. The envoy begins:

\begin{verbatim}
Princes, mieulx vault, se Salemone ne ment,
Un mors de pain qui est pris liement
Qu'une grant court de viande planiere
Ou tristesce est et en vie souvent ...
\end{verbatim}

(41-44)

Proverbial bread is not always an image of nourishment or wholesomeness. In the words of characters other than the poetic persona of Deschamps, it can become bound up with an idea of exploitation. Ballade 1022 is a dialogue between two thieves, with one boasting of his successful practices to his friend. The result is a vivid account of the type of petty crime that flourished in Deschamps's time, delivered with the relish of the cutpurse, rather than the disapproval of society. The proverb occurs only in the third

\textsuperscript{3} Quoted from the Jerusalem Bible, popular edition (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1974).
stanza, and its sense is not completely clear:

- Et qui plus est, bien sçay combatre
  D’un coutel profitablement,
  Une male fendre et abatre,
  La desrober incontinent.
- Et se tu es prins d’un sergent,
  Comment fais tu? - Je trume a plain;
  Je me rescoux bien du villain,
  Au moustier cours la droite voye
  Et fais tourtel d’autrui levain.
- C’est beau gieu, mais qu’om ne te voye.

(21-30)

In this instance, the making of tourteau — a rather delicate egg bread — from someone else’s leaven seems to refer to devising a quick alibi from the ongoing and legitimate activities within the walls of the church. But the expression also provides an apt metaphor for the thief’s lifestyle as a whole, since he makes a practice of using the fruits of others’ labour as the basis for his own prosperity.

Deschamps uses versions of "[faire/rendre] de tel pain souppe" on several occasions. Interestingly, this proverb provides an image typically chosen by female characters in his poetry. To give someone sops made from the same bread means, to these women, to pay one’s partner back for infidelity by having an affair of one’s own. In ballades 1232 and 1473 the complaint and consequent strategy are put forward by a wife as she determines to cuckold her unfaithful husband. In both poems the woman insists that her husband’s actions are truly indefensible, since she herself is young and attractive still:

Ouil, par Dieu! maint m’en parole
Qui me va cuer et corps offrant;
Je ne suy ne laide ne mole,
Dont il me doit estre laissant;
J’en trouveray bien pour un cent.
Puisqu’il brise son mariage,
Par saint Arnoul, aussi feray je!
D’autel pain veull souppes trempier
Et prandre de ce douz ouvrage,
Si j’en puis nullement finer.

(1232, 21-30)

Car ce n’est pas par mon default:
Juene suy, tendre et s’ay bon corps,
Milleur que celle ou le ribault
Va souvent faire ses deppors,
Et la se souille comme uns pors.
Au retour m’en fait grigne et louppe:
Sçavez quelz en est mes confors?
Je lui feray d’autel pain souppe.

(1473, 9-16)

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4 See Hassell, p. 188, for further examples of this usage.
The two poems brilliantly exemplify a bourgeois domestic situation whose layers of seemingly solid convention are being ruptured at every weak point. If one partner is not playing by the rules -- including the one that says a young woman should be loved for her beauty (and there is an implicit acknowledgement here that an old wife no longer deserves such attentive treatment) -- then the other wastes no time in following suit. The choice of a bread proverb fits in well, both with the domestic realism of the situation and with the stereotype of woman as nourisher. In the first example, the speaker claims a right to self-indulgence, rather than affirming her duty to others; in fact there is a nice twist here on the usual structure of the expression, since instead of wanting to serve her husband a taste of his own medicine [bread], the wife wishes to partake of the same dish to which he is already helping himself. In the second poem she seems simply to be promising, "I'll feed him, all right." Either way, she is turning the cliché one of her perceived chief roles in life on its head.

In the strophic riddle game of 1443, the context is obviously courtly and the emphasis is on wit rather than verve and indignation (the conditional voice helps ensure the depiction of a cooler attitude) -- but a variation of much the same proverb reappears:

DEMANDE
Noble dame qui tant sçavez,
Se vostre ami, qui bien vous sert,
En jouant vous changoit les dez,
Aroit il pas chapeau de vert?

RESPONSE
Si je sçavoie de certain
Que ciz qui m'aime me changast,
Je feroie, ne s'en doutast,
A lui d'autel paste levain.

(45-52)

The bread and sops have been exchanged for dough and leaven, a rarer turn of phrase and possibly a gentler one, since it has connotations of food preparation rather than active, sly "force feeding", but the sense has not really changed.

What about when a woman is beyond sly revenge, or witty repartee? The Lay du desert d'amours uses a bread proverb to express despair. Its narrator is a woman past her prime (over thirty!) who has lost the admirers and chances for love that she once had. As a self-portrait, at least in terms of character self-analysis, the piece owes a good deal to Jean de Meun's representation of the Old Woman in the Romance of the Rose. However, whereas the Old Woman has had a lifetime of sexual experience, the lady in the Lay has largely missed out,

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5 It was, and still is, common practice to raise bread using a small portion of dough from a previous batch: the sourdough principle.
having accorded her love to just one suitor who abandoned her when she got too old. The tone of the Deschamps poem is wistful and introspective where that of the Old Woman's speech is crudely pragmatic. (With Villon's "Belle Heaulmière", the same theme will again become blunter in its expression; yet the poignancy will be maintained.)

The bread proverb appears when the reminiscences are finished and the lamentations have just begun:

Qui m'a si tost améné
Et donné
XXX. ans? Mon aage est finé
De jeunesse; ay cuit mon pain;
Viellesse d'ui à demain
S'a tout mon beau temps cassé.
Rien n'ay tenu en ma main;
Prinse a l'aïn
M'a Folour; je muir de fain
De ce que j'ay refusé,
Jeune, sote ou temps passé
En douz aage premerain.

The proverbial image of bread, cooked, unalterable, but unconsumed, is neatly countered by the image of hunger "for what I have refused." The speaker is stuck in a situation in which no one wants what she has to offer, and there is no possibility of changing that, while she herself is belatedly discovering sensual desires that cannot be satisfied.

Another common food that Deschamps uses in a proverbial context is bacon. Unlike bread, whose significance is usually in its ubiquituousness, bacon stands for a small luxury, the kind of food that rescues peas or beans from a blandness forced on them by Lenten restrictions or poverty. The person who has eaten it -- "qui a mangié le lard" -- is therefore any guilty party who has indulged himself at the expense of his fellows. The expression may also imply a transgression of rules, in particular of the Church-imposed fasting that was obligatory at Lent.

In one of Deschamps's poems featuring the proverb "savoir qui a mangé le lard", the poet explicates it thoroughly as a literal problem before raising its figurative application; in the other, it is used simply as part of a string

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6 The language is more sensual; instead of bread images, the "belle Heaulmière" chooses sausages:
  Cuisses ne sont plus, mais cuissectes,
  Grivelees comme saucisses.
  Villon, Testament, 523-524)

But the speaker, like Deschamps's character, claims to have dedicated herself to one lover, in her case an abusive man who has died thirty years previously.

7 See recipes 11 and 12 in The Viandier of Taillevent, ed. Scully.
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of imprecations. In the first example the materiality of food in the expression is of paramount importance; in the second, it seems quite incidental.

Ballade 1079 is the one that features the miniature drama of the stolen bacon:

Uns preudoms fut en un village
Qui devoit donner a disner
A un homme de son linaige;
Si ot fait feves atournier
Au lart, mais quant il fist drecier,
Les feves trouva seulement
Sanz le lart; lors dist a sa gent:
"Je feray de vous grant essart!"
L'un responst: "Faictes autrement;
"Saichiez qui a mangié le lart!"

- Certes, voirement, le scaray je.
Vous me voulez deshonourier,
Qui oestez le gras du potaiège,
De quoy je me doy gouverner.
Ailleurs m'avez peu desrober
En blef, en vin; on donne, on vent:
Je vois trop bien appercevant
Que j'ay perdu, mais c'est trop tart:
Et si m'avez tuit fait serment!
Saichiez qui a mangié le lart!

- Maistre," dist l'un, "vous estes saige:
"Sur chascun devez regarder;
"La cresse de char par usaige
"En chaleur ne se puet celer."

Lors regarda, si vit fumer
Le sain de l'un; adonc le prant,
De sa mauvestie le reprant,
Au juge l'envoya a part
Pour faire justice, en disant:
"Saichiez qui a mangié le lart!"

[envoy] Prince, maint sont mal gouvernant
Sur finances d'or et d'argent
Qui en prannent plus que leur part,
S'acquestent et vont maisonnant:
Saichiez qui a mangié le lart!

8 The story told here bears a strong resemblance to the fabliau Le provost a l'aumuche, printed in Nouveau recueil complet des fabliaux, ed. Willem Noomen and Nico Van den Boogaard (Assen/Maastricht: Van Gorcum, 1983-1991), vol. IV, pp. 37-44. In this tale, a provost snatches a large piece of bacon from the pois au lard being served at a feast to honour his returning lord, and hides it under his hood. As he is seated next to the fire, the grease begins to melt and pour down over his face and clothing. The story highlights the insult that such personal greed offers to honoured guests; it is the opposite of the generosity that should prevail in noble households.

Deschamps may well have known a version of this fabliau, and adapted it for use in his poem.
In the first stanza, despite the apparent simplicity of the "village" situation, the idea of food as a means of honouring a guest is raised. The theft of the best part of the dish is particularly galling to the preudom as it only comes to light at the time of service, when it must inevitably bring shame upon the host. The second stanza stresses that such a theft is both extraordinary (15-16) and disloyal (19).

The culprit is of course eventually traced by the grease melting onto him in the heat; to paraphrase in terms of a modern proverb, he cannot keep up appearances when he finds himself in the hot seat. In the envoy, Deschamps makes it clear that the whole poem has been a fable that clothes an attack on those who skim extras from the royal treasury which they should be defending. The "grease" of their actions is evident in their extravagant building projects, but it has not been made solely metaphorical. After the fable has been explained, and the realm of fiction left behind, the fat is still on their mouths — so Deschamps leaves his targets with a slur rooted in physiognomy, adding literal sliminess to his more objective allegations, and so enhancing their rhetorical force.

In chanson royale 1285, the expression "Vous me direz qui a mangié le lart" is hurled at a cleric who stands accused of some crime for which secular law is powerless to try him:

Ribaut, paillart, truant atruandi,
Lasche de cuer, cahymant et couart,
Joueurs de dez, poulleux apaillardi,
Rongneux, tigneux, coquin et papelart,
Vous me direz qui a mangié le fart . . .
(1-5)

The whole poem brings out the smug hypocrisy of a specially-protected clergy. The person "who has eaten the bacon" is, as previously mentioned, the guilty party in any crime, and there is no indication that the offence of the cleric in question has had anything to do with real bacon. Yet the choice of expression here is prophetically appropriate for someone who abuses the laws of the Church. About 150 years after the writing of this poem, Clément Marot was to write a series of pieces based on the consequences of his having actually been arrested for literally eating bacon during Lent. By his time, such a charge had become tantamount to an accusation of heresy.9 If Marot's line "Prenez le, il a mangié le lard" is to be read at face value in the first instance, it is nevertheless also an evocation of a well-known proverb, and as such, helps qualify Marot's situation as a kind of ludicrous melodrama. Proverbs coming true ought to be the stuff of Deschamps's exemplum-style narratives, not of the

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realilty of Marot’s situation as a Huguenot. Where Deschamps dramatises a figure of speech, Marot shows contempt for his dangerous position by rendering it as a proverb.

Proverbial food need not appear only in relation to human appetites. In Deschamps’s day, as now, animals figured frequently in proverbs. Ballade 1350 is built around the dictum “Deux chiens sont mauvais a un os.” As with ballade 1079, the poem begins with a literal demonstration of the proverb. However, instead of introducing its metaphorical applications only in an envoy, this ballade devotes the next two stanzas to two different levels of these. I give the ballade in full below:

N’a gaires que je m’en aloie
Pour querir mon esbatement
O deux levriers que mout amoye,
Nourriz d’un let; mais en alant,
Treuent un os qu’ilz vont rungant,
Dont entr’eulx mut trop grans rios,
Et se combatent durement:
Deux chiens sont mauvais a un os.

A grant paine l’os leur tolloie
Et les desmeslay en present.
Mais ainsis que je retournoie,
Vy deux gens qui vont riotant:
Pour amours ont trop grant content,
Car, bien l’entendi par leurs mos,
Pour une dame seulement:
Deux chiens sont mauvais a un os.

Lors dis que je retourneroie.
Si fis je, mais en retournant
Viz gens de court, que vous diroye?
Qui s’aloient fort regrignant,
Tous d’un estat, chascun contemp
D’estre seulz et d’avoir le loz.
Pour ce dit on communement:
Deux chiens sont mauvais a un os.

Thus the poem moves from two rival dogs to two rival lovers to a broad phenomenon of jealous rivalry among different members of court. A spilling over of content links each stanza to the next, so that while the proverb passes from a literal setting to two different figurative ones, the whole narrative remains within the realm of realistic possibility. Each time the poet turns away from one manifestation of the proverb, trying to leave the scene behind, he is forcibly confronted by another. In this way the inescapable multi-layered truth first demonstrated by animals is confirmed by human actions, at the level both of individuals and of society.

At the same time, the principal progression from animals to humans is shadowed by an underlying one of humans to animals. The dogs of the first stanza are anthropomorphically presented — frères de lait combatting each other like rival knights in epic — whereas the "lovers" of the second are
engaged in a most uncourtly struggle over a lady who is compared to a dog's bone, thus reducing love to a matter of brute sex. In the third stanza, with its regrignant courtiers, all human ambition becomes little more than a squabble between animals.

The image of two dogs fighting over a bone may be drawn from — or may have fed into — the traditional association of the dog with the capital sin of Envy. The ewe, however, normally has no such aggressive connotations, featuring more often in proverbial and other contexts as victim of the voracious wolf. It is therefore quite interesting that Deschamps chooses the proverb, "Encor n'ont pas brebis souppé" to show apprehension of a danger that still looms.

The setting is chanson royale 337, and the line is its refrain. The poem belongs to the politico-pastoral group in which perceptive, articulate peasants comment on the political and military events of the day. The proverb's presence is rendered especially natural by the poem's dialogue structure, and by the speech habits and lifestyle of the women. As in the Evangiles des quenouilles, simple women are here associated with practical wisdom, and they are as likely as their male counterparts to have farming and husbandry as one of their main concerns.

Three stanzas (1, 4 and 5) will provide a good indication of the poem's overall spirit:

N'a pas long temps que m'en aloye
En pelerinaige a Boulongne.
Femmes trouvay enmi ma voye
Dont l'une filloit sa couloune:
Et l'autre, qui estoit yvrongne,
Disoit: Nous sommes bien trompe,
Aux Anglois n'avons paix n'alongne;
Encor n'ont pas brebis souppé.

(1-8)

Par la mere Dieu, je vourroie
Que paix fust, sanz plus vestir brongne:
Pour gens d'armes plus ne fuioye;
Ne m'ont laissié une escalongne;
Mais l'en dit que couls de Bourgongne
Viennent. Tout sera atrappé:
Qui a rien bon si le repongne;
Encor n'ont pas brebis souppé.

(25-32)

Ne demorra bestail ne proye,
Blef ne vin; qui vouldra se songne;
Poucin, chapon, geline n'oye,
Ne cheval d'abbé ne de moigne,

10 Deschamps himself evokes this link in several pieces; an example is ballade 1.

We may note, in passing, an adaptation of a depreciatory comparison at line 28: the companies of armed men have so pillaged that the speaker is left without a shallot, that is, with absolutely nothing of value. In stanza five, Deschamps's interest in food as a means of survival for a threatened population comes to the fore, and we have, as in other such politico-pastoral poems, a list of potential foodstuffs that will disappear if battles continue.

But what exactly does the refrain mean? It obviously could be rendered into English by a colloquial modern phrase such as "we're not out of the woods yet." However, it may be the English who are the "ewes" -- still hungry, and not yet finished their day's activity -- or the French, still unsafe, at risk of being attacked by wolves before the security of nightfall. If the first interpretation is valid, it shows just how far proverbs can stray from direct realism: the mild sheep may well have become part of the menace.

Sometimes animals associated with food and drink appear in a more developed context. This is exactly the case in ballades that are built around animal fables. With a few possible exceptions, these short versified tales are not of Deschamps's invention, but versions adapted from various Isopets and Renard stories. Some seven of these (36, 70, 177, 232, 251, 364, and 1131) make use of food or drink in much the same way as their sources do. A familiar example is the fable of the fox and the crow (ballade 232), in which Renard, motivated by "grant fain", tricks Thiesselin into dropping the cheese from his mouth. That is really all the depth there is to mention of food and drink in this poem; Deschamps shows no great interest in altering the character of the original tale by bringing his own rhetorical tags to the fore.

Chanson royale 364 is a resetting of the familiar tale of Renard, Ysengrin and the female ape, current not in the French Renard branches but in the Flemish Reineke. The story involves Renard coaxing a meal out of the ape by complimenting her mendaciously on the beauty of her children. Ysengrin then applies to the same hostess for a meal, but when he comments on the real ugliness of her offspring, he is set upon with blows, and driven away not just hungry but barely alive. The refrain is "Tuit voir ne sont pas bel a dire."

The poem stands out in Deschamps's work as one of the few that uses true

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12. Raynaud identifies 299 and 915 as probable originals; but the first of these is more allegory than fable, and the second is more an exposition of a general state of affairs in the animal world than a self-contained tale.

hunger as the driving force behind its action, and of course its content is entirely borrowed. Deschamps as a poet may be concerned with staple foods, with the principle of suffisance, but he rarely raises the spectre of famine. Distressing and inadequate diets, yes, but starvation, no.

Proverbial food and drink, and fables in which alimentary themes are significant, allow Deschamps to combine his "universal" moral voice with the kind of culinary or gustatory allusions he normally uses in connection with the real world. Food and drink can actually enhance the weight of a message through their representation of solid, straightforward popular wisdom, while at the same time lightening diction to the familiar and the savoureux.

We have concentrated on proverbs and fables that are present in a recognisable form in Deschamps, that can be extracted intact and commented upon. However, Deschamps, like many of his predecessors, uses proverbial ideas in subtler ways as well. When his characters eat coarse bread and praise the independent life (see, for example, chanson royale 315), they are acting out the dictum, "Use de ton pain, tu seras frans." The ribald garrulousness of his drinking society poems backs up the truth of the saying:

Plus a de paroles en un mui de vin  
qu'il n'a en cent charetees de froment

— and variations. Deschamps presents such societies as organisations, with their activities, exuberant though they are, contained within a certain structure. It is as if even as he lauds their high living, he keeps a grip on himself, and a certain ironic distance from the merrymaking. He supplies the snippets of drunken dialogue, but retains his own lucidity, taking the proverb's implicit warning as a guide for his own position more as observer/documenter than as participant.

2. Food and Drink in Allegorical Satire

In proverbs and fables within Deschamps's lyrics, the materiality of the food or drink named may add significantly to the poem's rhetorical impact. Still, more often than not, food is not literally present. In the allegorical satires of his Dit des .illl. offices (1360) and chanson royale 350 ("Contre le carême"), on the other hand, realistic food and drink are accorded an importance out of all proportion to their role in ordinary life, providing much of the substance of the debate or conflict, as well as an exaggerated abundance

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14 See Chapter Two, p. 51.
15 See Chapter Two, p. 52.
the first of these pieces is not actually a lyric, but a short play. There
is no record of its having been performed, and it contains no stage directions.
However, its manuscript rubric states that it is "a jouer par personnaiges",
and even if this indication (admittedly more likely editorial than authorial)
were not present, it would be clear that this is a highly performable work. It
has long speeches periodically sharply cut by quick, energetic exchanges, and
many actions -- mostly different kinds of blows -- are called for by the text,
especially in the final climactic mêlée. Moreover, its speeches are linked by
the mnemonic device so commonly found in medieval drama: the last line of one
is rhymed with the first line of the next. Although it is thus more drama than
lyric poem, it is not out of place in this study. For one thing, its dramatic
qualities are no more marked than those of many of Deschamps's ballades, which
are regularly written in dialogue form. For another, it has close thematic
ties to shorter pieces on the theme of the noble household, most notably
ballade 1437 on the primacy of wine. Finally, it constitutes such a
concentrated treatment of food and drink and all their personal and social
applications that it acts as a distillation of many of the ideas Deschamps has
raised concerning nourishment and gourmandise throughout the entire body of his
work.

The playlet belongs to a subgroup of allegorical literature which Armand
Strubel has simply qualified as "dits" -- comprising, really, almost all such
longer works post 1240 that do not concentrate on the allegory of love.
Specifically, it is a mixture of debate and battle, with the measure and
organisation of the first dissolving into the chaotic activity of the second.
Its closest generic ancestor is probably the Batalle des vins of Henri
d'Andeli, although the social setting of the Deschamps poem is much more
realistic, and the allegory more fluid. Indeed, this is the sort of piece that
might well have been integrated into a real social situation, in accordance
with the late medieval taste for allegorising many aspects of daily life; it is
easy to imagine it as, for example, an entremets at a courtly banquet.

Structurally, the Dit is built largely around discord and progressive
fragmentation, and it encourages us above all to enjoy the diversity of the
claims and arguments put forth. Its conclusion explains it all as an
illustration of the headaches and powers of a maître d'hôtel. (Indeed, it was
most likely written, at least partly, out of Deschamps's own real experience as

16 Armand Strubel, "La littérature allégorique" in Précis de littérature
maître d’hôtel for the Duke of Orléans.) However, there is also an underlying unity in the chaos of this piece, for it reflects the overall importance of variety, individual taste and balance of elements in any gastronomic feast.

But what role do food and drink play in the overall unfolding of the action, and in the build-up of the conflict? At first, it is a somewhat indirect and carefully contained one. Significantly, the Dit’s primary concern in terms of subject matter is with service to the tables of king and court, not food and drink per se. The speakers themselves are offices — not true abstractions, but functions — and as such are unusually complex characters to treat allegorically. Even in real life, an office involves a mixture of people, food, equipment, and physical space. Here, the identities of the offices fluctuate; sometimes they are providers of the product that is their responsibility, and sometimes they become that product. Thus Eschançonnerie can state "Je sers de vin le Roy de France" (14) but Panneterie can accuse her of being the wine that intoxicates:

Tu fais batailles et ryos
Uns saiges homs est par toy sos.

(71-72)

Similarly, Panneterie can speak of her own "lieu" where "N’a que beau pain et linge blanc" (135) but Eschançonnerie can treat her as if she is the linen, and not so white at that:

Nappe orde, mouillie et trouée,
Povre touaille renouée!

(161-162)

A few lines later, though, Panneterie is back to being addressed as possessor of the cloths:

On feroit bien d’un lavement
De tes nappes, a un couvent
Bonnes soupes et gras potage . . .

(163-165)

The different facets of the foods and drinks with which each office is associated actually encourage the multiplicity of characteristics for each one.

The fluidity of the characters means that they can move nearer to, or farther away from, the foods or beverages with which they are associated. Eschançonnerie and Panneterie in particular have a haughty, "noble" side which, they imply, has everything to do with abstract values and social hierarchy, and

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18 See Deschamps, Volume XI, p. 66.
as little as possible to do with the messy business of eating and drinking. Cuisine and Sausserie are by definition more attached to the kitchen, but they too have their pretensions:

Cuisine
Par moy est la court gouvernée
Et son estat soustenu;
Certes tout seroit bien perdu,
Se saligent ne gouvernoye.

Sausserie
Mais g'ý ai voulu obvier
Par mon sens et ma doctrine.

Aspirations to wisdom and learning are normally rather incompatible with the acts of eating and drinking. Here, however, Sausserie claims for her a knowledge of the medical theory which postulated that adverse reactions to various foods could be prevented through adjustment to their natural condition (hot, cold, moist, or dry) by the addition of various balancing spices, sauces or condiments. Sauce-making becomes blurred with sauce itself, which in turn becomes physician.

The general shape of the Dit, however, is marked by an evolution of arguments from lofty and abstract to base and increasingly concrete. The ideas dwindle and the foods proliferate, until in the final row, language makes a glorious hodgepodge of characters and food, implements, weapons and blows. Direct references to food and drink in this dialogue provide considerable information on the tastes and dining habits of the court. But they are even more interesting for their contributions to the rhetoric and structure of the piece.

The fact that the Dit deals with issues of food and drink is itself influential on its overall character. As previously mentioned, this is, in terms of genre, a combination of debate and battle. The summary settling of the dispute by an outsider -- the maître d'hôtel -- is a typical way of breaking off either kind of dispute. However, the nature of the battle depicted here is distinct from that of, say, the Bataille de Caresme et de Charnage in the very triviality and restricted sphere of interest of its subject matter; it is, after all, only really about the process of producing a meal for courtly tables. The situation being dramatised is no more than what would have happened in Henri d'Andeli's Bataille des vins, if the author had pushed that fiction a step further:

Se vin eussent piez ne mains
Je sai bien qu'il s'entretuaissent . . .

Here, the personified characters do have hands and feet, and by the time the
struggle has become physical, none of the four offices has anything very articulate to prove, other than that the other three are lying. A debate on questions that are ultimately inconsequential, except for their festive value, has predictably degenerated into a brawl, where the theatrical interest of Punch-and-Judy style blows has easily overridden the reasons for which they are being dealt.

The images of food and drink used are of great importance in the progress of the dialogue from superfluous but civilised to petty and downright crude. We might note, before beginning to examine this specialised use of food and drink references, that they can also serve simply to nudge the action onward. Two of the characters are, in effect, invoked by mentions of the product they govern. Cuisine, for instance, does not appear until after Panneterie has asked:

Que vault chars ne poissons sallez,
Se li pains n'est toujours delez?

It is in the following speech that Cuisine breaks onto the scene with an insult to Panneterie, followed by a declaration of her own worth. Similarly, Sausserie arrives as if in response to Eschanconnerie's mention of wine in "broués" and "potaiges" (331-332) -- "wet" creations of Cuisine that are just one step away from sauce.

But let us return to the relationship of food and drink to the level of the sentiments and actions in the Dit. The first reference to actual drink made by Eschanconnerie has spiritual overtones: "On fait par moi le sacrement / Du vin" (7-8). She goes on to link her functions with joyous entertainment at ll. 8-9 -- already a rather swift desertion of the highest things, yet one expressed with the most courtly possible language: "esbatement", "joie", "soulas". She follows up with proofs of her status and widespread power (11-22). The next time wine is mentioned, it is in the form of hypocras (23), a spiced beverage suitable for the "yssue" course of finer dinners. Eschanconnerie then goes on to say how much in demand she is with people from all walks of life (26-43) and claims that this is why she is justly "cherie sur tous estas" (45).

It is left to Panneterie brusquely to evoke the physical act of drinking to excess, with her first line: "A! Dame Yvroingne, parlez bas . . ." (46). In the speech that follows, she further develops her scolding of Eschanconnerie for the latter's connection with drunkenness, but not before she has made some lofty claims of her own. Bread, like wine, is a sacrament (55); it feeds the great and the many (57-60); "C'est la premeraine viande / Que chacuns au

19 Menagier, pp. 175 ff.; recipe, p. 270.
Eschançonnerie reacts to Panneterie’s prim accusations with scorn, and much
of the vocabulary of the insults she directs at her fellow "office" is drawn
from the latter’s own wholesome "strengths" -- bread and baking -- which she
turns on their heads, stressing their commonness:

Povre chetive boulengiere:
Il n’y a bergier ne bergiere
Qui ne t’ait a son desjunon.
Tu ne seras se meschans gens non . . .
Tu n’as pouoir fors d’une miche
Ou d’un morsiau de pain faitis
Donner . . .

(80-88; see also 92-95, 100)

In this speech, however, Eschançonnerie’s jibes are not limited to those
dependent on snob value, though these are still there (89-91); taste and
texture have also begun to be factors:

Que vault pain sec en un couvent
S’il n’ya a vin pour le mouillier
Ou graisse pour l’amolier?

(106-108)

Alimentary detail has begun to moisten and enrich the language.

The first three long speeches, then, have already presented us with a range
of values for alimentary allusions, whether as the materials of self-praise or
the weapons of invective. References to food and drink will be used in both
ways throughout the Dit, becoming increasingly vivid. Each boast invokes the
protests of the "enemy"; but it is the insults that are particularly
inflammatory to the battle. And no wonder: they often consist of turning a
rather attractive image into a thing of disgust. Earlier, in a different
context, we saw Panneterie’s claim, "En mon lieu / N’a que beau pain et linge
blanc" (134-135) taken up by Eschançonnerie in a completely negative way (161-
165). The latter goes on, after ranting about Panneterie’s soiled cloths, to
talk about how they affect the bread:

20 "Premeraine" can be taken in the sense of "first" or "most
noble/important". It is interesting to note that Françoise Desportes, in Le
Pain au moyen âge (Paris: Olivier Orban, 1987) does designate "la paneterie
[auprès du roi]" as "le premier des six offices de l'hôtel, avant
l'eschançonnerie, la cuisine de chair et de poisson, l'écureuil et la fourrière"
(p. 139). She also quotes from the XVIIIth-century treatise, L’Agriculture
et maison rustique: "Il est tout à fait certain que le pain tient premier rang
entre les choses qui donnent nourriture à l’homme . . . C’est le dernier petit
perdu et le premier recouvré en maladie" (p. 7). Obviously Deschamps has set
aside both official and nutritional "idées reçues" concerning the importance
of bread in exchange for the freedom of writing the Dit without indicating a
standard favourite. Aesthetics and taste dominate the arguments of the poem.
Mais les gettes tout en un tas
Sur ton pain qui en est tous gras.

(173-174)

Similarly, Cuisine's rather succulent catalogue of offerings:

Tousjours vont les gens par les voies
A tous gras plus tous plains de souppes . . .
Je leur depars de cras lopins
De boulli, de rost, de connins,
De faisans, d'oes, de chapons,
De poucins, lappereaux, paons,
De perdrix et d'autre volille;
Il n'a riens de bon en la ville
Dont je ne soye devanciere . . .

(262-263; 267-273)

is changed by Panneterie into something extremely vile:

Quant la viande est toute crue,
Uns paillars, uns souillars la rue
Sur un fiens tout pilmee
Quant il a sa teste gratée
Ou son cul; puis la prant'spren
Et l'euvre, puis, un aultre est près,
Tous deschaulx, vilz, salles et ors,
Qui n'a vestu dessus son corps
Qui vaile .IL sous de tournys:
De telz gens est servis ly Rois.
Sa viande va par cent mains
Ains qu'il l'ait, encor est ce au mains . . .

(297-308)

Cuisine is treated to particularly picturesque food insults by the other two offices as well. It is worth remembering that cooks and all things culinary had been a standard subject of comedy for centuries before Deschamps; Cuisine is thus an especially ready target for mockery.21

At times, all four offices seek to support their alimentary boasts or insults with social or literary associations. They attempt to place a value on themselves, according to their power, to the quality of people they serve, and/or to the amount they cause people to spend. In addition, Panneterie, who cannot claim much monetary value for her principal product, bread, produces a literary alternative borrowed from the pastoral tradition of praise for the simple life (115-122). All these self-judgements represent a wilful if futile stab at subordination of instinctive, bodily concerns to more codified, principled ones. Panneterie even asserts, "Je ne suy pas femme de sanc; / Mon pain ne fait nullui combattre" (136-137). She is, of course, shortly to prove herself wrong.

21 Curtius, European Literature, pp. 431-435.
When the combat does break out it is as if isolated phrases related to war and table service have crashed into one another with as much vigour as the four offices. The mêlée of language of blows, food and utensils in effect creates the fray. Several times, Deschamps makes use of words with multiple meanings. When he has Eschançonnerie cry "Vous averez ceste colée / Et ce lopin de ce pot cy" (414-415), he is playing on the two possible senses of "lopin": that of "morsel" and that of "blow". Obviously, the effect of a clout with a piece of food would be quite different from that of a clout with a pot, but Deschamps manages to suggest both at once. Panneterie's reply is similarly laden with possibilities: "Ha dya! te joues tu ainsi? / Je veuil jouer: tien ceste briche!" (416-417). Gaston Raynaud gives only "coup" as the sense of "briche", but it could also mean "loaf", as well as a kind of game. Thus, Deschamps evokes not only the general idea of a blow, but also of one with a weapon particularly appropriate to Panneterie, tying the whole action in with the language of playing that has led up to its delivery. Over the next two lines he takes the idea of bread and pushes it a step further, so that "miche" becomes a metaphor for strength or power, and "levain" represents something like mettle: the stuff the speaker is made of.

There are several other instances of "kitchen language" entering the battle. To Panneterie, Eschançonnerie declares: "... vous n'arez froment ne orge / De ce mois, qu'il ne vous souviegne / De mon fait ..." (422-424). Receiving wheat and barley is so much a part of Panneterie's existence that this threat becomes an alimentary approximation of "You're going to feel this every time you sit down." Cuisine gives Eschançonnerie a blow with a "cuiller" and threatens: "Tant vous bateray vostre pel / Que il faulra de vin un baril / Pour vous getter de ce peril" (442-446). If the spoon is Cuisine's weapon, then the wine is Eschançonnerie's defence -- her life-blood, her antiseptic, and her consolation.

Sausserie, like Cuisine, begins her participation in the actual fray with a reproach. But it is a half-hearted one, degenerating into a threat before the sentence is finished:

C'est mal fait, veuillez tout laisser,
Dame Cuisine, a ma requeste,
Ou vous arez par mi la teste
Incontinent de ce pillet.

(448-451)

From now on, the pestle, earlier a secret to Sausserie's magic (397) will be her particular arm of war.

Cuisine's retort involves an oath by "Saint Poul" -- no doubt not only a
slight deformation of the spelling of “Saint Paul”, but also an evocation of chicken — and also a likening of Sausserie to an "ors moustardiers". It is significant that, in the list of elaborate sauces that Sausserie has already given (346-354) neither mustard nor any preparation involving it has figured at all. Mustard was, as Deschamps’s ballade 780 indicates, the most ubiquitous of seasonings, especially in certain regions, and everywhere it was regarded as the "poor man’s pepper". Grinding mustard was also a popular metaphor for sexual intercourse. Hence, calling Sausserie a mustard-pot is reducing her to the most plebeian roots of her real function, and also making a sexual slur on her reputation.

The brawl scene in the Dit des IIII. offices is a piece of virtuoso writing, in which the language of food and drink make the action of physical conflict particularly vivid. At the end of the piece, however, there is a summary resolution, brought about by the maitre d’hôtel appearing like a deus ex culina. He turns a negative debate into a positive reconciliation, a set of diverse elements into a meal:

Bien sçay que l’Eschançonnerie
A grant pouoir par son donner,
Et le Pain fait honnourer;
La Cuisine fait chaude bouche;
Si fait la Sausse, qui y touche,
Bonne saveur avoir aux dens.
Advis m’est que ce sera sens
Que vous soiez amis tous quatre,
Et ne voulez plus debatere,
Car il fut’hui ne hier
Que l’un n’eust de l’autre mestier.
Souffise a chascun son estat;
N’aiiez plus ensemble debat:
Departez vous en bonne paix.

TOUS QUATRE

Nous le voulons, acors est fais.
Chantons doncques a chiere lie,
Sanz plus debatre ne tenes:
    Avec bonne compaignnie
    Fait il bon joye mener.

(470-488)

So it is that various kinds of food and drink, having stepped out of their ordinary positions in daily life to enliven the conflict by claiming star status for themselves, return docilely to cooperative roles dedicated to the pleasure of mankind. The song which ends the play can be compared to the snippets of religious music which conclude the Miracles de Notre Dame and other

— The idea of foods as saints and martyrs is exploited thoroughly in the sermons joyeux. See Recueil de sermons joyeux, ed. Jelle Koopmans (Geneva: Droz, 1988).

— Henisch, Fast and Feast, pp. 102 ff.
early drama; it is a confirmation of the piece's status as a performable work that is in some respects a parody of serious theatre.

Deschamps's most famous poem against Lent, chanson royale 350, also releases food and drink temporarily from their ordinary places in human existence. In this case, however, the significance accorded various unpleasant foodstuffs for the duration of Lent reflects how most people, especially the less-privileged, came to regard them over that purgatorial season of monotonous meals. The poem is a re-working of the allegorical battle of Lent and Carnival, which had already had several literary manifestations by Deschamps's time. The relationship of some of its vocabulary to the real-life sufferings of the Hundred Years War has already been discussed. However, the rhetoric of food in this poem is at least as important as in the Dit des IIII. offices, for it shapes the progress and breaking of the siege that Caresme mounts against Charnage and Mardi Gras. The alimentary allusions in this piece are of two types: allegorical abstractions relating to food practices, and lists of actual foods eaten during meat-time and Lent. Only Caresme, Charnage and Mardi Gras are consistently personified; the other animate characters in the poem are real people, albeit for the most part of humble status. Thus, as in the Dit, we have allegory that is thoroughly integrated into the human world, though on this occasion the context is far more generalised than that of the noble household. In contrast to the scenario of some other Lent-Carnival battles, the foods themselves remain inanimate: weapons or dishes, but not soldiers. However, because the personified characters are not depicted in any physical way, the lists of foods also substitute for detailed portraits of their governing abstractions.

The poem incorporates some 51 different "real" foodstuffs, with allusions in every stanza, including the envoy. They form a logical progression, taking the poem from meat-time through Lent and back again. From the simple, colourful raw ingredients in the first stanza which people are forced to abandon, we move to the drab vegan assortment of stanza two, requiring the drudgery of long cooking. In stanza three, Caresme becomes more pressing: instead of just forcing people to cultivate their own dreary diet, it assaults them with even less attractive ammunition:

Harens puanz, poissons de mer pourris,
Purée et pois et feves en un tas,
Pommes cuites, orge mondé et ris.

(22-24)

Not only does Deschamps exploit the alliterative plosives and rough rhythms of

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25 See Chapter Two, p. 82.

26 See Chapter Three, p. 126.
this passage to enhance the impression of aggressive attack, he also seems to have evoked smells and textures deliberately. Since the foods named constitute Caresme's "artillerie", there is a suggestion here of external administration of food -- something akin to tomatoes being thrown at bad vaudevillians -- and in such a situation, odour and feel would be more important than taste.

Food does not remain on the outside for long, however. Caresme moves on to a kind of direct interference with the natural condition of the human digestive system:

Dieux! qu'il a fait de mal aux moines gris
Et aux Chartreux, maintes religions!
Toudis leur fait june et afflictions,27
Et a pluseurs tenir povre mesnaige,
Le ventre emfler souvent par ses poisons.
Maudit soit il, et benoit soit Charnaige.

Aux bien peuz fait avoir ventres plas,
Il vuide ceuls que javoie raemplis,
Souppe a huile leur donne et avenas,
Corde leur çaint, trop leur est ennemis.

(25-34)

Thus disagreeable food becomes Caresme's instrument of torture, tightening belts and bloating bellies with indigestible fare.

Ultimately, however, it is bound to be overthrown. In stanza five, Charnage appears with a triumphal feast, including foods as appropriate to meat-time as those in stanza one, but more obviously prepared. What we have here, in fact, is a sketch of an actual dinner menu:

... car le dimanche es plas
Yert Charnaige avec ses bons amis;
Harens seront, figues, raisins honnis;
Poree au lart, pastez, la ne faillons,
Connins, cabriz, oes, tartres et flaons.

(43-47)

Lent's ubiquitous herrings, figs and raisins will be humiliated, predicts Mardi Gras, by the heartening entrance of more tempting foods. "Poree" is not particularly exotic, but it will be dressed up with bacon just emerging from its forty-day ban. "Pastez" have been associated elsewhere in Deschamps (ballade 798) with all the small delights of Paris, and here, along with "tartes" and "flaons", they represent carefully-made parcels of gustatory pleasure, as opposed to the bland, unadorned dishes that have plagued Lenten

27 A reference to the year-round rigorous cycles of fasting and abstinence within certain religious orders, here depicted as as unpleasant as a prolonged Lent.
tables. "Connins", "cabriz" and "oes" are all aristocratic foods, and the first of the three also has strong sexual connotations, appropriate to the licentious celebrations that prevailed before and after Lent. There is alliteration in these lines, but not so intense as at lines 22-24, and it is lightened by sharp changes in vowels that follow the initial consonants: po to pa, co to ca. The emphasis is on variety rather than on an oppressive sameness. All in all, this passage underlines the impression that the struggle is past, and that the festivities can take over.

The envoy, in terms of content, acts as a summary of what has gone before: suffering caused by the deprivations of Lent will be succeeded by the triumph of meat-time. But the grip on the allegory has been abruptly loosened. "Nous" -- the people of reality -- have replaced "Mardi Gras", "Charnage" and the faceless "povres gens" of the poem. Instead of being besieged and taking revenge, this "nous" will suffer patiently. The envoy, in fact, reduces what has gone before to a self-conscious piece of rhetoric rather than a skillfully imagined and maintained drama.

This leads us to what Deschamps may really be trying to show about Lent, not just here but in a whole range of poems dealing with fasting. It is for his anti-Lenten, anti-fasting poems that Deschamps is most often remembered. They entertain through their vivid images -- gustatory, olfactory, tactile -- and through their tone of complaint. It is enlightening and enjoyable for us to encounter medieval palates as discriminating, medieval stomachs as sensitive, as our own. And although all three in the group focus on Lent, their prevailing mentality belongs to flesh-time. They are preoccupied with food, bodily experience, material existence. Two of the three express gloating triumph at Lent's downfall, thus epitomising the carnivalesque spirit in which pagan anarchy was allowed, briefly, to dominate Christian order. From our secular point of view, it is easier to relate to such poetry than to religious lyrics.

Deschamps's approach to Lent and fasting is not only secular, however. Rondeau 625 and chanson royale 352 present Christian self-restraint in a completely different light. 625 is a stern exhortation to keep Ember Day fasts, but 352 is about Lent, and a very close partner to 350. Instead of emphasising the practice of Lent, it stresses its purpose. Its recurrent themes are purgation, redemption, divine mercy.

Both pro-fasting poems are virtually free of allusions to literal food and drink, though they do allude to doing without. In 352, however, there is

28 Recipes for all three appear in the Viandier.

29 The others are 1198, and 20 in volume X's appendix of attributed pieces (both anti-fast), and 625 and 352 (both supporting such Church-imposed times of restraint).
spiritual food — the fruit by which Eve wrought "nostre damnation" (11-12),
the fountain of divine love "dont li ruisseaulx rescuscite les mors" (36-38).
Taken as a pair, 350 "against Lent" and 352 "for" it exemplify the dichotomy of
food in late medieval literature: it can be the most concrete, most realistic
of images, or part of a surreal, mystical construction.

The poems against Lent are reinterpretations of Carnival; the body triumphs
and spiritual concerns are forgotten. The poems in praise of fasting, on the
other hand, are Lent. In them, the human body appears only in the most distant,
transformed guises, as if it has been humiliated out of existence through
obedience to divine law. In poems 20 (of the attributed pieces) and 350, a
conventional war against Lent is fought and won, for the opponent's only powers
are unpleasant physical ones. But the poems defending Lent scorn such a
struggle; purged, themselves, of food weapons, they represent Lent as a much
more formidable force against the pleasures of meat-time, one whose strength,
exemplified by the Church militant and spiritual refreshment, comes from an
entirely different plane.

Thus, the two types of poems act as adversaries of one another. The battle
in 350 is only really a struggle within a struggle, subsumed into the debate
over whether the physical or the spiritual should govern human existence. If
there is no declared winner in this debate, nevertheless the poems that avoid
entanglements with food, signs of corporeal dependency, are the ones whose
message asks to be taken the more seriously. Indeed, Deschamps's own retreat
from wholehearted immersion in comic allegory at the end of 350 seems evidence
that he sees complaints against Lent as joking ways of boosting morale, and of
developing the cantankerous aspects of his own poetic persona—but never of
making a serious challenge to the principle behind it all.

Food and drink in allegorical satire in Deschamps play an essential role in
developing the sensory appeal of these pieces. At the same time, however, by
keeping bodily concerns so central, they delineate the limitations of such
works. Taste here is ultimately for entertainment, not edification.

3. Words for Food and Drink

As we have seen previously, Deschamps's personal stamp is on much of his
writing about food and drink. Often it is just the fact that he presents so
many subjects via alimentary lists or images that sets him apart from other
lyric poets of his time. Ballade 1451, for example, is little more than a
rhymed list of foods and household goods that a young couple will need in their
married life. The first stanza runs

Il vous fault pour vostre mesnage
Entre vous, mesnagiers nouveaux,
Coustes, coussins, liz et fourraige,
and is followed by further enumerations in which food is combined with other supplies. Here, and in the vast majority of cases, food or drink is simply present, unmodified or given only the most anodine of qualifications. When health is at issue, the appropriate wine tends to be "cler, net et bon" (1452); bread "bon" or "cuit d'un jour"; other dishes and spices are simply either recommended or discouraged.

The technique of enumeration used to present such simple fare is itself a rhetorical device, and beloved of Deschamps for all sorts of thematic contexts, not just those concerned with food or drink. Poirion has linked Deschamps's "prodigieuses énumérations . . . à l'art oral des jongleurs, au délire des sots," using the ramblings of Jean Fumée to support this idea. But he also points out that enumeration was equally important in courtly hyperbole, particularly for praise of the ideal lady. Deschamps, with his sober lists relating to household goods or healthy diets, is perhaps no more likely to be adapting an oral tradition of "ivresse verbale" 'upwards' than he is to be adapting a written one of dignified, worthy accumulation 'downwards'. In any case, the enumeration in such practical poems seeks neither to entertain nor to exalt, but to give the most complete and inclusive presentation possible of a given theme.

On occasion, Deschamps goes beyond unadorned enumeration and gives particular attention to a descriptive vocabulary for food and drink. The poems discussed in the "food as focus" section of the previous chapter furnish some examples of this approach. Most of these, though, concentrate on the physical make-up, properties and connotations of food without attempting to define its actual taste.

Wine is a different story. Deschamps's appreciation of it can be expressed in passing or in detail, through traditional images or original ones, but it often seems to generate a strong rhetorical flavour of its own. Even when he writes as if confined to his chamber with the plague (rondeau 647), he takes care to ask for "le plus vert" wine to be brought to him.

Ballade 925 depicts the poet asking the court physicians for advice on withstanding the summer heat. Their counsel on wine includes language
reminiscent of the cry of Raoulet in the *Jeu de St. Nicolas*\(^2\) -- perhaps less fanciful, but even more musical. One often has doubts about Deschamps’s own gift of "musique naturelle"; not here, though:

- Maistre, et quel vin? - Au froit faictes l’assaut,
  Qui soit raiant, gracious, vert, claret,
  Frique, friant, odorant, vermillet . . .

(12-14)

Later in the same poem, he describes gratefully the effects of the wine "si froit, si radelet" (33). All the adjectives conspire to make this drink something out of the ordinary. There is repeated emphasis on its coldness ("froit", "frigue"), the perfect antidote to the poet’s sufferings. "Vert" and "odorant" are quite objective perceptions, but the greenness indicates the wine’s value, and the very fact that its bouquet is important links it again to human appreciation. "Friant" captures its quality of being a treat for the tongue. "Claret" and "vermillet" are standard diminutives used to enhance the impression of aesthetic pleasure. As for "raiant", "gracieus" and "radelet" -- brilliant, gracious, and lively -- all serve to push the wine very near animation. The poet might almost be writing of a vivacious woman. He is equally, however, writing in a strong tradition of wine rhetoric, whose earlier manifestations can be found in drama and fabliau.

The sound patterns in lines 13 and 14 are also particularly effective. Each begins with short, light vowel sounds, flows into longer, darker ones, and returns to the surface at the end. It is the ideal music to reflect a good draught: tempting, thirst-quenching, then leaving you ready for more.

The experience of drinking, when examined in close detail, is not always such a pleasant one. In ballade 1374, previously touched upon in Chapter Four, the too-new wine of the present year is given a tongue-lashing by the poet that is almost as vicious as the assault he claims it has launched on him:

Plaine d’acier dont l’en fait les cercaux,
Ne besague aux deux bouz acerée,
Fers de glaives, ne dagues de Bourdiaux,
Rasoirs fanchans, faux a faucher la prée,
Les ferremens dont on euvre en galée
Ne les hoyaux a raclar parchemin,
Les aguilles qu’om vent par le chemin,
Ne dädaines qui trespercent le corps,
Ne se puelent comparer au vert vin
De l’an present, dont je suy presque mors.

(1-10)

True, he is not really saying drinking this wine is like swallowing such a collection of sharp objects -- but that it is worse than swallowing any of them.

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\(^2\) See Chapter Two, p. 72.
Nevertheless, the result of this build-up of images is to evoke quite the most uncomfortable mouthful I have ever encountered in literature. It is hard to imagine a more scathing comment on a wine’s roughness in any age than these images that are so abrasive in their own nature.

The only less appetising images for food and drink occur when an even more elaborate list of non-comestibles is specifically ordered to be served to slanderers for dinner. This happens in ballade 25 of the attributed pieces in Volume X:

De couperos, d'alun, de vers de gris,
De sal gemme, de souffre vf saillant,
De realgar, d'elbore blanc et bis,
De sublimé, d'arsenic undoyant,
De salpetre, de vitreol lauisant,
D'armoniac et de bol armenique
Avec folson de chair et de basilique,
En potage par morselès luyans,
En my la mer, chascun sur une brique,
Soient servis au disner mesdisans!

Après soient pour eulx servir convis
Tous envieux, au col un beau carquant,
Et portent ros: cox vix et chas pourris,
Sausse de fiel aigre et mal odorant,
Serpens farcis, cameline en doublant
Ayent avec, et pour boye autentique
Yauve puant habonduament, sy que
Leurs estoumas n’ayent frissons nuysans!
En tel estat moystement, loings de dique,
Soient servis au disner mesdisans!

Pour entremais soient boteraux pris,
Laisardes, tirs, couleuvres d’abondant,
Et pastés faiz d’arrement paremplis!
Sy ayent tous jeuné .III. jours avant,
Pour mielx mengier, et tant qu’au remenant
Tarte, flaonnes de chaux vive qui pique,
Ypocras fait d’aloes epatique,
Sanz eulx lever jusqu’à .III. mille ans,
De tous ces mês pour vivre par phisique
Soient servis au disner mesdisans!

Pres de la soit un chastel noble et frisque,
Sus terre assiz par soubtille pratiue,
Dont leur ravel voient loyaux amans,
Affin que de courroux melencolique
Soient servis au disner mesdisans!

S. V. Spilsbury has identified this ballade as a probable precursor to Villon’s “Ballade des langues ennuyeuses”, and while there is a chance that it is not by Deschamps, our poet certainly shows himself to be a master of the imprecatory ballade elsewhere.33 Indeed, he may well have pioneered what was to become a very popular and flexible genre, whose basic stanzas could be re-used

33 Examples are 773, 806 and 1288.
with varying refrains.34

In any case, the revolting feast set forth for slanderers in this ballade -- indeed, practically forced down their throats -- recalls a couple of other meals in literature: the devils' banquet in Raoul de Houdenc's Songe d'enfer, and the marriage feast in the Chanson d'Audigier.35 Here, however, the menu is far more eclectic. Instead of (for instance) being served userers "hash'd and ragoo'd"36 in several different manners, these "diners" are subjected to a never-ending onslaught of inedible preparations, which they are forced to eat in full view of a noble castle full of "loyaux amans". The slanderers in this poem are thus implied to be evil-sayers of a particular kind: the losengiers who hinder true love in courtly tradition. Even in such a brutally abusive poem, then, Deschamps's courtly influences are in evidence.

The "foods" and "drinks" consist of alchemical supplies, rotting animals, contaminated water, ink pies, flans containing live biting dogs, and so on. A nice touch is provided by adjectives and garnishes: "elbore" (perhaps hellebore, a remedy against madness) is "blanc et bis", as if it were bread, vitreol "luisant" like fine wine, rotten cats and stuffed snakes accompanied by bitter bile sauce.

It all adds up to a rhetoric more flamboyant than is typical with Deschamps's use of food and drink. However, the poem would not be at all out of place among some of his other imprecatory ballades (773, 806, 1288) which employ the same basic syntactical organisation. When non-alimentary substances are used as food, that food can in turn be transformed into something else: here, formidable weapons of invective. The strength of the attack comes from the inherent opposition in the metaphors. We expect food to be a positive source of nourishment, yet in this poem, eating has become excruciatingly, explicit torture.

4. Food and/as Language: Figurative Nourishment

Real food and positive nourishment can also become something beyond their own substance. Deschamps, like many of his precursors, uses alimentary metaphors in relation to love. The instances of this technique are both too

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35 See Chapter Two, p. 81.

numerous and too derivative\textsuperscript{37} too be studied in detail individually, but some general ideas concerning such metaphors can be identified.

First, they have nothing whatever to do with the "food-sex" couplet. The courtly lady as nourisher is quite different from the partner with whom one is engaged in some vigourous "mustard-grinding". She is worshipped, joyfully praised and thanked, but never mixed up with any too-specific foodstuff.\textsuperscript{38} Indeed, she is most often simply associated with some form of the verb "nourrir". This could, of course, mean "raised"\textsuperscript{39} (cf. ballade 447, in which Deschamps says that "Machaut m'a nourry"\textsuperscript{40}), but usually it is used in Deschamps's love poetry to indicate some ongoing relationship of supply-and-demand-style sustenance. Examples are to be found in ballade 415: "Sur l'arbre sec vueill faire mon demour . . . / Puisque je n'ay ma doulce nourriture"; ballade 479: "Tuit my desir sont et ma nourriture / En bien amer ma belle et bonne dame"; virelai 559: "Faictes mon triste cuer gay, / De vo douce norriture / Par doux octroy que je n'ay / Lors aray douce pasture . . . ", and several other poems. In addition, there are many related images, such as, in virelai 712, "Las! mon boire, mon mengier / Est souvent de li prier" and, in ballade 533,

\begin{quote}
Et les vrais cuers qui mectent leurs effors
En bien amer n'ont pas d'amour le pain,
Mais les mauvais; les bons meurent de fain
Des biens d'Amours, dont n'ay crouste ne mie:
Ains me brasse trop perilleux levain,
Se fortune ne me veult estre amie.
\end{quote}

(25-30)

Here, bread, the most basic of staples, comes to stand for a love that is the key to life itself, yet has so far been denied the speaker. The actual hunger of the speaker is also, paradoxically, turned to a kind of food: the "trop perilleux levain" he must accept if his fortunes do not change.

As is evident from the above examples, images of love as nourishment need

\textsuperscript{37} We have seen their use by Thibaut de Champagne in Chapter Two; Machaut, too, is a regular exploiter of such images. See for example ballades VII and XXVI (joyful and sad "nourriture", respectively) in Guillaume de Machaut, \textit{Poesies lyriques}, ed. V. Chichmaref (Paris: Champion, 1907-1909), vol. I.

\textsuperscript{38} In many ways, she can be compared to late medieval images of the Virgin Mary as a source of divine nourishment. See Bynum, \textit{Holy Feast and Holy Fast}. However, being human, she is, to her lover/worshipper's chagrin, capricious and not simply generous in how she bestows the "food" she has to offer.

\textsuperscript{39} This meaning is closely related to, even generated by, the stricter sense of "to nourish", "to feed".

\textsuperscript{40} Even here, there is some uncertainty as to whether the verb is to be taken to mean literally or figuratively raised; this is one of the sources for the much-contested assertion that Deschamps and Machaut were blood relatives.
not always be positive ones; they can as easily represent a matter of "food" withheld as of satisfaction longed-for and perhaps granted. What they inevitably are is conventional. Deschamps's use of food-related ideas in such contexts gives him little scope for individuality; indeed, his love poetry on the whole is quite undistinguished, only fulfilling the rhetorical norms of his age.

There are a few other instances of figurative food and drink in his poetry which are more interesting. Ballade 485 is a charming tableau of an Ascension Day picnic, which the poet "moralises" rather heavily in the third stanza via an unambiguous allegorical explanation:

Par la dame est la biauté figurée,
Par le mouton humble contensément,
Et la purté, par la blanche nappe ouvrée;
Par porée le doux acointement,
Par la verdeur, fermeté d'ayment
Et par le jour toute perfection.
Dancez, chantez, menez vous liement:
La fête aux dames c'est l'Ascension.

(17-24)

If one had felt like singing and dancing earlier in the poem, Deschamps's didactic tone here has rather taken the desire away.

Figurative food and drink in Deschamps, when not related to romantic love, are often linked with some moral message. Other examples occurs in chanson royale 1012, on the current state of religion. The second stanza begins:

Depuis .LX. ans en ença,
Convoitise a mis son levain
A la court-Dieu . . .

(11-13)

And at stanza three, the metaphor is developed:

De dolente heure s'avança
Cilz qui pestrít aux gens tel pain . . .

(21-22)

The message furnished by such figurative use of food is not always just an observational comment; it may take the form of a specific, personal exhortation. Ballade 1049 is an "Allégorie à la vigne" directed at the king himself:

Plant de vigne tresrenommée
Qui tant de bon vin porté à
Dont la liqueur est tant amée
Qu'a tousjours parlé en sera,
Honnis soit qui vous deffera
Car vous estès de bon raisin
Cueillis vert, ce vous aidera:
Muez vostre verveur en vin.  

The vine-to-wine images are developed throughout the poem, urging Charles VI to take firmer control of his own kingdom. They recall late medieval iconography of Christ as the True Vine, and so provide a Christological image for the young king.

In ballade 1301, the poem of the *oublies*, the poet uses figurative food to allegorise his own situation. The description of the market scene acts at first as a lure into the poem (just as the cries themselves would attract passers-by at a real market), but quickly leads to the poet's personal complaint:

\[\text{J'ay esté de divers estas} \]
\[\text{Et oy crier plusieurs cris,} \]
\[\text{La cote, la chappe, vieulz draps,} \]
\[\text{L'engin a prandre les souris,} \]
\[\text{Pastesz chauls, le sel blanc, le ris,} \]
\[\text{Chastaingnes, frommaiges de Brie;} \]
\[\text{Mais a present suis esbahis,} \]
\[\text{Crier me fault: "Oublie, oublie!"} \]

Over the course of the poem, however, the market scene becomes mixed with non-consumer goods -- wooden boxes, bits of paper -- and the language turns ambivalent. By the end, with only oblique references to court, the poet has clearly indicated that he is no seller of pastries in some picturesque urban setting, but a forgotten voice very close to his patrons' elbows, and anxious to be heard. The *oublies* in this poem have many connotations -- simple alimentary abundance, religious devotion (as communion wafers), special self-indulgence (as pastries), abandonment. By letting the final resonance grow stronger through the poem (while the refrain still echoes with the other three), Deschamps "soft sells" his way to courtly attention.

There is, however, one particularly intriguing use food in relation to language, in which any single moral thrust or personal plea is difficult to identify, and seems, in any case, unimportant. This is in rondeau 1273, Deschamps's second poem about tripe:

\[\text{Quant on cherche des tripes les feuillés} \]
\[\text{Et des boyaulx la lettre et l'escriture,} \]
\[\text{On y treuve moult de bran et d'ordure;} \]
\[\text{Et de la vient vers et jaunes brouès,} \]
\[\text{Dont l'en pueth bien se purger par nature,} \]
\[\text{Quant on cherche des tripes les feuillés.} \]

\[\text{Tel deduit n'a a mangier cent poullés;} \]
\[\text{L'un tire aux dens quant il sent tripe dure,} \]
\[\text{L'autre dit: "Fy! otez tel pourreture,"} \]
\[\text{Quant on cherche des tripes les feuillés.} \]
"Fueillès" can mean membranes, and at one level the poet is having a simple linguistic romp based on its other sense of leaves of a book. But, in a way, he himself is the one who seeks the "lettre et l'escripture" of tripe, turning the meiest of foods into the subject matter of poetry. "Et de la vient vers" – from this comes verse – as well as green and yellow broth: a euphemism for bile. But from what, exactly? From the cooking tripe, or from the act of writing? In fact, writing appears, like tripe-eating, to be a choleric activity which is its own purgation. Gobbling tripe may be as filthy and self-indulgent as writing, and writing as filthy as tripe; but in either there is as much pleasure as rot, and pleasure the very potential for disgust. This poem is not only about eating rough food, but about stripping writing of its pretensions, and doing so with relish. Such subversive unravelling of the writing myth is like tripe-eating in carnival time, more enjoyable than any conventional banquet ("cent poulles") of courtly language. Rondeau 1273 is a poem that dramatises its own creation as much as it does the ambivalent delights of tripe-eating.

Conclusion

Food and drink, in Deschamps, often create an impression of plain common sense (proverbs) or direct, naïve realism (food lists in plague poems, domestic "pantry" treatises, traveller's tales, and so on). In an earlier era, such images would have been viewed as natural and artless, with their implementation rendering their literary contexts equally artless. Within individual poems, Deschamps can be very conventional and unexciting. The key word here, though,

41 Although I have not found any earlier examples of such a conflation between literature and offal in French literature, there is a later one: the Nouveau et joyeux sermon du mesnage in Recueil de sermons joyeux, ed. Jelle Koopmans (Geneva: Droz, 1988), pp. 368-378. This text, dated about 1530, contains an Inventio bearing remarkable similarities to Deschamps's poem:

Libertas est et cetera
Ces parolles on trouvera
Au livre des tripes d'un veau
Qui jadis fut fait de nouveau,
Capitulo plein d'herbe verte,
Folio illumine de merde.

Despite the more precise theological terms exploited here, it may be that both texts derive from a common carnivalesque tradition.

42 See Bloch, Scandal, Introduction.
is "conventional". Spilsbury points out that, despite the probable novelty of Deschamps's imprecatory ballades, both imprecation as a poetic mode and enumeration (saving the main point for the refrain) as a structural device in the ballade were long-established literary traditions. Her observations underline the conscious literarity of Deschamps's writing. Deschamps chooses food and drink for their earthiness at times, but only within the context of the particular poem being written. So, while proverbs, plague advice and domestic images may appear to be "neat" as undiluted whisky, they are actually devices: validating a moral message, creating a frisson of fear alongside a guide to a happy dénouement, underlining the material demands and comforts of married life. Deschamps does not hesitate to build up alimentary images, in positive or negative abundance, so that their sheer unmodified weight and variety create as strong a poetic impact as any overtly-stated moral.

He does not hesitate, either, to contrast presence and absence of food for rhetorical effect. Chansons royales 350 and 352 present opposite images of Lent through such a technique, but often Deschamps uses it within a single poem. Ballade 871 moves from a food- and pleasure-filled first two stanzas, with little action, to a foodless third stanza, relating a reluctant but purposeful departure. Several poems on sex use food images when virility is being discussed or remembered, but drop them when the theme of impotence replaces it.

Even in poems built on an entertaining ripaille of food or drink images, Deschamps finds ways of making them serve poetic structure. The Dit des IIII. offices and the food-centred Lenten poems all use evolution and contrast in food imagery as fundamental structuring devices.

In such poems, too, Deschamps lets the exuberance of the physical animate the composition. He delves into his own language, making food and drink contribute to allegorical debate; he intellectualises the utterly corporeal without making it pretentious. Rather, he uses it to make fixed-form compositions appeal to the senses and not just the psyche.

He enjoys distorting the evocation of sensory pleasure as well. In his diatribe against wine and his ballade against slanderers, non-edible substances are linked with ingestion, creating a grotesque gustatory-culinary humour.

Even in serious moral works, Deschamps can use food and drink allegorically, the category of imagery helping to indicate the naturalness of an issue or situation, or subtly urging that such naturalness be restored.

Rondeau 1273, however, is perhaps the poem that comes nearest to furnishing Deschamps's manifesto when it comes to the rhetoric of food and drink. In both the vigour of its language and the unbound nature of its subject, it reflects

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his overall approach to alimentary allusions. Deschamps uses many varieties of images, and they are far from being uniformly vulgar, despite their material/bodily origins. Neither are they uniformly exaggerated, nor uniformly understated. Deschamps is neither a Colin Muset nor a Rabelais, presenting food as part of the ultimate in physical pleasure; nor is he a Charles d’Orléans, gently and subtly turning food to allegory. Instead, acknowledging that food and drink are a vital part of all aspects of human existence, he taps his images for a broad range of literary possibilities. Even while they are enhancing literature, however, food and drink are unmasking it, as no more valuable and no less delightful than an immediate gorging on tripe. Food as literary device helps turn literature back into a diet for all. It took Deschamps’s use of food in lyric poetry to free it for new roles in allegory and metaphor, and to let the real feast — from delicate coneys and hypocras through plebeian tripes and brutal raw wine — be served and re-served in all its diversity in the pages of literature of the Renaissance.
Conclusion: Yssue

The sheer abundance of food and drink allusions in the lyric poetry of Eustache Deschamps produces a cumulative weight of imagery that can be misleading. Critics -- Raynaud,1 Martineau2 -- have previously gathered his alimentary references into lists of varying detail and laid them before the reader as if they constituted a single feast. Raynaud subdivides the bill of fare into plain foods, delicacies, sauces and sweets (with passing references to foods and foreign cuisines which Deschamps dislikes), while Martineau produces thirteen different categories of foodstuffs corresponding more to modern notions of nutrition than to medieval ones of gastronomy. Both are impressed by the array of wines mentioned by the poet, along with the odd allusion to water, ale, cider, or prunelé. In producing such census-type summaries, both Raynaud and Martineau seem to be aiming at a similar goal: the portrayal of Deschamps as a gourmet and bon vivant, a clear precursor to Rabelais.

The poet, however, is far more subtle than the critics in his serving forth of food and drink images. He is clearly interested in such images, but by no means always as part of some gastronomic banquet. Many of the foods listed pell-mell by Raynaud and Martineau actually appear as items to be avoided, at least under certain circumstances. Indeed, as a general rule, Deschamps gives more detailed accounts of negative culinary experiences than of positive ones. Some foods occur far more frequently than others, but in different guises: bread (for example), as we have seen, can have diverse connotations depending on whether it is used literally, metaphorically, or proverbially -- and on the particular phrase in which it is to be found.

Food and drink often have a great deal of social significance in Deschamps, but it is not normally of the codified kind favoured by most of his predecessors. The diet and drinking habits of nobles are almost never used to turn them into icons, protected in their exalted state from entangles with simple bodily functions, as was the tendency in early romance, nor to create an impression of heroic stature, as sometimes occurred in epic. Instead, the food and drink of courtiers are either weapons of moral criticism (independence of mind being incompatible with a life ruled by courtly fads) or keys to humanisation. They may be used with reference to specific incidents, or to specific people. The poet himself can give insider's reports on the taste of luxury, as well as how it is achieved; when he wishes to be, he is determinedly a part of the courtly world, as both consumer and administrator. He implies that no aspect of its operations or its morality is beyond his awareness.

This is what keeps him from appearing the same kind of lyric gastronome as

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2 In "Corps chrétien, corps païen," especially pp. 57-59.
Colin Muset. Colin Muset writes as an essentially joyous, spontaneous responder to conditions that are outside his control. If his luck is bad, he will go hungry, or be sent to fight in feudal wars; if good, he will have a fine meal, or perhaps a whole winter of fine meals. It is not that Colin Muset is innocent of the ways in which his noble patrons influence his fate. Rather, he chooses to write poetry that both appeals to their sensual desires and flatters their sense of potency.

Deschamps is far more than a minstrel writing to delight the court. Indeed, many of his poems are either jokingly or seriously critical of it or its individual members. When he uses the topos of rejection by his patrons, the tone is enlightened, cynical and often bitter. He casts his net over a far broader spectrum of human experience, too. Instead of producing caricatures of urban types, he concentrates on creating brush-stroke portraits of whole cities, with their eating and drinking experiences highlighted. Meals are described in detail only when frightful; otherwise Deschamps's interest is in individual tastes -- local wines, pies, cheeses, and so on -- as part of a whole remembered sensory (and often sensual) package.

He does not shy away from unpleasantness, either, fully recognising that a bad gastronomic encounter can produce a great poetic conjointure. A good deal of the effect comes from playing on an "us/me against them" situation. So he writes poems about life at sea, about the bleakness of Lent, about the hazardous existence of the routiers, about misery on military campaign, about the horrors of foreign cooking and table manners. These are certainly for the entertainment of others at his own expense, yet despite his complaints, there is a sense that he enjoys collecting such a variety of experiences for their own sake. Volume VII happens to contain a high concentration of travellers' horror stories and xenophobic complaints, yet in the very midst of these we find a ballade (1311 -- foodless, it is true) extolling the wonders, oddities and variety of the known world, whose refrain runs: "Il ne scet rien qui ne va hors."

Deschamps takes up many pre-existing traditions of gastronomic imagery, playing on links between nourishment and courtly love, food and sex, self-indulgence and religion. He uses stereotypes from the Franc Gontier myth, both directly and as built-in character references for peasant spokesmen discussing real-life affairs. He adapts the theme of the allegorical battle between Lent and Carnival for two of his poems (350 and 20 of the attributed pieces) and exploits its resonances in three others (352, 1198 and 625). He also integrates the carnivalesque spirit into a more original allegorical satire, the Dit des IIII. offices.

In one respect, the last work named is doing no more than making a feature of technical aspects of food and drink normally taken for granted, certainly by any aristocratic audience. This technique, often in less flamboyant form, is a
specially of Deschamps. So it is that we find much lyric space given over to staples, to pantry supplies, to dietary advice both in ordinary times and in times of plague.

Overall, in fact, Deschamps integrates a great deal of ordinary, or at least elemental, food and drink into his poems, and comparatively little in the way of fancy dishes. Sometimes the simple (or simply luxurious) foods are enhanced with affective rhetoric, or indeed are themselves used metaphorically. But more often their insertion is itself the striking rhetorical feature, as they force a recollection of the body with far more frequency than is typical of the works of any serious poet prior to Deschamps.

Indeed, previously, vernacular lyric poetry was dominated by a canonical range of courtly subject matter and imagery, and still largely free of alimentary allusions. Foods and drinks named were usually the simple ones, especially bread and wine, whose metaphorical, even mystical overtones meant that they could be kept far removed from their literal reality. Even Rutebeuf, not a courtly poet nor even a lyric one, and known for his effets du réel, keeps food and drink sketchy and schematic. Deschamps opens the larder doors and uses shelves full of raw ingredients for the first time. As well, he makes lyric poetry out of packaged formulations previously labelled "chronicles only", "romance only", "fabliau only". Common foods such as mustard, pork, tripe and vegetables enter his poems alongside truffles, game, precious spices and fine wines. For the first time, literature -- albeit in the form of a multitude of short pieces -- is able to furnish an almost-complete overview of normal medieval eating and drinking practices, though it still largely, and conservatively, excludes the poor.

The presence of so much alimentary imagery may be a factor in the resistance to taking Deschamps seriously as a poet. Yet his daring and varied use of food and drink forms a linking stage in the evolution of literary style. There are two main directions the use of alimentary imagery could take from this point: a more intricate and developed exploration of medieval rhetorical techniques, and a Renaissance explosion into hyper-abundance. François Villon and Charles d'Orléans exemplify the first of these developments, and there is no one more apt than Rabelais3 to demonstrate the second, though some verse writers of Rabelais's time will also be considered below. Something of Deschamps's legacy4 is to be found in the works of all of these.

3 Rabelais's identity as a prose writer sets an immediate barrier against close intertextual relationships between his work and that of Deschamps. But the rhetoric of culinary abundance in Deschamps is not entirely securely lodged in fixed-form courtly lyrics; his vigourous enumerations invite a movement towards the comprehensiveness of prose.

4 The term is used rather loosely. Spilsbury, in "The Imprecatory Ballade", p. 393, notes that Deschamps's poems enjoyed popularity throughout the fifteenth century and well into the sixteenth, though they are usually
Villon is perhaps Deschamps's most obvious literary heir. There is a fair amount of literal food in his poetry (though he does not use it in nearly the proportion to be found in Deschamps's own work). In the Testament, he reflects on the different destinies of his former companions. Some have died, some have joined religious orders, some are poor:

Les autres mendient tous nuz
Et pain ne voient qu'aux fenestres . . . (235-236)

and some have become "grans seigneurs et maistres":

Bons vins ont, souvent embrochez,
Saulces, brouetz et groz poissons,
Tartes, flans, oeufz fritz et pochetz,
Perduz et en toutes façons.
Pas ne ressemblent les maçons
Que servir fault a si grant peine:
Ilz ne veulent nulz eschançons
De soy verser chacun se paine. (249-256)

The list here is reminiscent of some of Deschamps's finer gastronomic spreads (chanson royale 350, last stanza) but almost precious in its detail (why three ways of preparing eggs, not after all, a typical noble dish?) and certainly cynically mocking in its tone: the wealthy ex-companions do not exploit wine-stewards, but work hard to keep their own cups full. The passage is the more effective because of its near-juxtaposition with the brief lines on paupers, formerly as much galans as the rich men described above. There are no figures in Deschamps quite so abject as these men who watch the bread of others, without having access to any of their own.

Food and drink images in Villon are generally meant to leave a bitter taste in the mouth. Even if lavish in themselves, they can be used to insult "beneficiaries" or to mock hypocrisy. The fetching of food and drink for clients in the "Ballade de la Grosse Margot" is no more than highly-interested hospitality. The "Ballade des langues ennuyeuses" probably copies Deschamps's (attributed) ballade 25, but sets it into a frame which makes the recipe even more sub-human:

anthologised without attribution. It seems most probable that Villon and Charles d'Orléans did know Deschamps's work, and that Villon actually imitated a genre whose invention has been tentatively credited, by Spilsbury, to Deschamps: the imprecatory ballade. Meanwhile, Christine Scollen-Jimack has explored similarities between Deschamps and Marot in "Marot and Deschamps. The Rhetoric of Misfortune," French Studies XLII, no. 1 (January 1988), 21-32. On the whole, however, I think Deschamps's influence on later writers was not so much direct as directive; he paved new rhetorical roads which they could, and did, follow, creating their own innovations as a result of the changed ground surface.
Sy alé voir en Taillevant
Ou chappitre de fricassure
Tout au long, derrière et devant,
Lequel n’en parle jus ne sure;
Mais Maquaire, je vous assure,
A tout le poil cuisant ung deable,
Afin qu’il sentist bon l’arseure,
Ce recipe m’escript sans fable . . .

(1414-1421)

It would be bad enough to subject human tongues to ordinary culinary treatment, but here they are given diabolical attention. Maquaire is a figure of uncertain origin, but about Villon’s time he figures in the carnival drama, La Bataille de Saint Pensard à l’encontre de Caresme as the chief cook and lieutenant of Caresme. Saint Pensard’s corresponding lieutenant is the god Bacchus himself, which leads us to identify Maquaire as a sort of anti-Bacchus, a god of physical misery. Villon places him in Hell, recalling the devilish kitchen and banquet created by Raoul de Houdenc.

Often, for Villon, food and wealth are linked, and share a kind of contamination. In the Contreditz Franc Gontier, the vision of the priest and his mistress is as cynical, in its way, as the realistic reappraisal of the happy peasant myth.

Altogether there is very little in Villon’s work of the light touch and uncomplicated, pleasurable connotations that Deschamps often applies to his own use of food and drink. If Villon presents himself as leaving the world with a final draught of “vin morillon” (T, l. 2022), it is because he wants to show how little he values the world, not how much he values the wine. Villon makes food and drink into serious satirical ammunition — images normally associated in life with pleasure here reveal contempt, and make even the modern reader feel rather inadequate.

What Villon has done, with his concrete food and drink images, is take grim control over the literary potential of items that may be (if his claims are to

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6 This last moment of the Testament has in fact been interpreted in various ways. For David Kuhn, the drinking of the wine is a “sacrement viatique”, a gesture of triumph and control over the poet’s final voyage. See La Poétique de François Villon (Paris: Armand Colin, 1967), p. 334. For Jean Favier, in François Villon (Paris: Fayard, 1982), the wine is contaminated:


(p. 184)

There may be validity in both these readings, but neither denies the act of drinking in the face of death its potential for a nonchalant insolence.
be believed) physically quite beyond his reach. Food and drink are unsettling interruptions of lyric beauty, but help anchor Villon’s work in a broader reality that is, as he views it, anything but idyllic.

Charles d’Orléans, on the other hand, never comes close to the darker side of food and drink in his own experience; he speaks as one who always has more than enough, and can play with alimentary imagery much as his chefs might have experimented with luxurious ingredients. Some of his poems, most notably rondeaux written after his return to France from captivity in England, use literal images to celebrate the pleasures of eating and drinking. An example is rondeau CCCXXXVIII:

Puis que par deça demourons
Nous, Saulongois et Beausserons,
En la maison de Savonneries,
Souhaitez nous de bonnes chères
Des Bourbonsains et Bourgignons.

Aux champs, par hayes et buissons,
Perdriz et lyevres nous prendrons,
Et yrons pescher sur rivieres,
Puis que par deça [demourons,
Nous, Saulongois et Beausserons.
En la maison de Savonneries.]

Vivres, tabliers, cartes aurons
Ou souvent estudierons
Vins, mangers de plusieurs manieres;
Galerons, sans faire prieres
Et de dormir ne nous faindrons,
Puis que par deça [demourons.]

There are échos here of Deschamps’s “country house” poems, but a more participatory, “insider’s” tone. Charles d’Orléans is not just admiring, he (and his companions) are enjoying.7

Two further rondeaux emphasise the associations between alimentary images and sensual pleasures even more:

En yver, du feu, du feu,
Et en esté, boire, boire,
C’est de quoy on fait memoire,
Quant on vient en aucun lieu.

Ce n’est bourde, ne jeu,
Qui mon conseil voultra croire:
En yver, [du feu, du feu,
Et en esté, boire, boire.]

Chaulx morceaulx faiz de bon queu
Fault en froit temps, voire, voire;
En chault, froide pomme ou poire

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7 It is interesting that Charles d’Orléans’s “nous” is often more exclusive than Deschamps’s “je”.
C'est l'ordonnance de Dieu:
En yver, [du feu, du feu!]

(CCCXLVIII)

Souper ou baing et disner ou bateau,
En ce monde n'a telle compaignie,
L'un parle ou dort, et l'autre chante ou crie,
Les autres font balades ou rondeau.

Et on y boit du vieil et du nouveau,
On l'appelle le désduit de la pie.
Souper ou baing [et disner ou bateau,
En ce monde n'a telle compaignie.]

Il ne me chault, ne de chien ne d'oyseau;
Quant tout est fait, il faut passer sa vie
Le plus aise qu'on peut, en chiere lie.
A mon advis, c'est mestier bon et beau;
[Souper ou baing et disner ou bateau.]

(CCCXLVII)

The simplicity of the language is striking; there are really very few references to specific aliments here, none of the cluttered lists that fill Deschamps's lyrics. Yet both poems are filled with a sense of gastronomic luxury.

This is true despite the fact that their underlying themes are quite different. Rondeau CCCXLVIII is actually a health poem dealing with essential balance and therapeutics. Yet the mantra-like repetitions in the refrain, underlining the exquisitely apt and simple contrasts to be sought, along with the minimally-modified but precise alimentary language ("Chaulx morceaux", "bon queu", "froide pomme ou poire") cloak any didactic intent in seductive evocation.

CCCXLVII, on the other hand, is a poem of "Nonchaloir" in its pleasantest guise. Here, the poet blends the language of gentle sensual indulgence with that of various pastimes, including making "balades ou rondeau". It is a remarkably different approach to literature from that shown by Deschamps in his rondeau 1273, on tripes. There, writing is linked with the commonest yet most enjoyable of food experiences, so inextricably as to be "found" in the viscera themselves. Moreover, the language of seeking and finding is itself significant; the poem tells of an irreverent and lusty delving into the very guts of experience. Charles d'Orléans, by contrast, presents writing as part of an unpressured day's entertainment, along with drinking old and new wine. There is no stress on production; it is not "balades et rondeau", but one or the other, whichever can be devised more easily and naturally. For Charles d'Orléans's privileged world is laid out as a kind of alternative Nature, built on wealth and artifice and a sense of everything being accomplished as
ordained.

There is a marked difference overall in poetic voice between Deschamps and Charles d'Orléans as well. Deschamps's poems represent a persona perpetually and reluctantly on the move. Despite his awareness of what an ideal social and moral world should be, he cannot control his own destiny. He seems to whiz by the varied sights, sounds, smells and tastes of Paris and other delightful places, always conscious that he must leave them behind. The theme of the gastronomic paradise lost, driven home by some present alimentary hell, is a frequent one. In Charles d'Orléans, however, especially the later poems, we hear the voice of one who has arrived. If he is moving at all, he is floating, as he partakes with enthusiasm of a present feast.

Charles d'Orléans also uses food and drink images for erotic suggestion, usually with much more delicacy than Deschamps. Rondeau CLXXIV undoubtedly refers to a woman -- lower of rank? younger? darker of hair? All details of her identity are protected behind the image of her as a "fres et nouveau pain bis":

En changeant mes appetiz,
Je suis tout saoul de blanc pain,
Et de menger meurs de fain
D'un fres et nouveau pain bis.

A mon gré, ce pain faitiz
Est ung mourceau souverain.
En changeant [mes appetiz,
Je suis tout saoul de blanc pain.]

S'il en fust a mon devis,
Plus tost anyut que demain
J'en euusse mon vouloir plain,
Càr grant désir m'en est pris,
En changeant [mes appetiz.]

The emphasis has shifted from hunger, the traditional plea of the courtly lover, to appetite: it is much more a question of caprice than need. We might note also that appetite has lost its physiological connotations; no longer healthy or abused, natural or unnatural, it has become simply a metaphor for desire.

Love's temptations can be rendered, in Charles d'Orléans, by more varied images than fresh brown bread, however. Rondeau CCLXXXIII describes "l'amoureuse cuisine":

Dedans l'amoureuse cuisine,
Ou sont les bons, frians morceaux,
Avaler les convient tous chaux,
Pour reconforter la poitrine.

Saulce ne faut, ne cameline,
Pour jennes appetiz nouveaux,
Dedans [l'amoureuse cuisine,
Ou sont les bons, frians morceaux.]
This time, the poem conveys the sensual heat of youthful passion—without attempting to reproduce it. The woman is depicted as a tender hen, neither bony nor tough, literally "cut thin with agreeable knives", or perhaps (figuratively), slim with an attractive figure (sides). The "plaisans cousteaux" could also be a phallic image. How different this discreet allegory is from Deschamps's likening of a woman to food in ballade 778! In the ballade, food images are used to present the woman in question as formerly "succulent", but now well past her prime. As well, whereas Charles d'Orléans creates an artificial conceit—love's kitchen—in which woman figures as part of the whole, not the centre of attention, Deschamps addresses a particular person, with rather unpleasant bluntness. It is one thing to be made part of a fanciful scenario; it is quite another to be told that your attractiveness is fading via images so down-to-earth that they could not be misconstrued.

Charles d'Orléans, like Deschamps, also uses food images in connection with the diminishing of his own sexual capacities. Unlike the earlier poet, however, he writes without anguished regret; his attitude is more one of calm amusement:

Mon chier cousin, de bon cueur vous merchie,
Des blans connins que vous m'avez donez,
Et outre plus, pour vray vous certifie,
Quant aux connins que dites qu'ay amez,
Ilz sont pour moy, plusieurs ans a passez,
Mis en oubly; aussi mon instrument
Qui les servoit a fait son testament
Et est retrait et devenu hermite;
Il dort toujours, a parler vrayement,
Comme celui qui en riens ne prouffite.

Ne parlez plus de ce, je vous en prie,
Dieux ait l'ame de tous les trespassez!
Parler vault mieuxx, pour faire chiere lie,
De bons morceaulx et de frians pastez,
Mais qu'ilz soient tout chaudement tastez!
Pour le present, c'est bon esbatement,
Et qu'on ait vin pour nettier la dent:
En char crue mon cueur ne se delitte.
Oublions tout le viel gouvernement,
Comme celui qui en riens ne prouffite!

(LXXXV, 1-22)

Here we find the "connins" and "viande crue" that have been linked with sexuality at least from the time of the fabliaux. Yet the context is one of refusal; the speaker affirms, without bitterness or boasting of past conquests, that he is too old for that sort of thing. All urgency is attenuated, by the
gentle letter format, and by the verb "parler" (sex has become a topic of conversation, rather than an activity). The foods of lines 14 and 15 have their own sensual qualities, and may suggest some form of mature sexual interest. Even so, the speaker does not abandon himself to them/it, saying only such morsels provide good present entertainment, if wine be on hand "pour nettier la dent"; lust toned down by an almost-fastidious delicacy.

The third stanza leaves all traces of food/sex suggestiveness behind, and moves into the language of love allegory:

Quant Jeunesse tient gens en seigneurie,
Les jeux d'amours sont grandement prisez;
Mais Fortune, qui m'a en sa baillie,
Les a tout de mon coeur deboutez . . .

(23-26)

So it is that Charles d'Orléans, despite beginning with images offering great potential for crude eroticism, creates a ballade in which sexuality is relegated to a limited role in a well-ordered life.

The "kitchen" in the Charles d'Orléans rondeau CCLXXXIII is as much concerned with "health" as "gastronomy", playing on the notion of love as medicine to the heart. One of Charles d'Orléans's courtiers at Blois, Simmonet Calilau, develops a medical analogy much further:

Pour bref tels maulx d'Amours guerir,
Esgrun de Duell te fault fuyr,
Les poix au veau te sont contraires,
Quant les fleurs de plaisans viaires
Sont dedans mises au boillir.

D'oubliete te peut servir,
Et l'erbe de Non souvenier,
A faire bons electuaires,
Pour bref [tels maulx d'Amours guerir.]

Du triacle de Repentir
Pour tes accez faire faillir,
Prendras sur les apoticaires;
Avecques siropz necessaires,
Faiz en sucrez de Deppartir,
Pour bref [tels maulx d'Amours guerir.]

(CXVI)

Here, the echos of the straight "medical advice" poem, as favoured by Deschamps, are strong indeed. The conceit seems to exert a rather mechanical force over the images; the allegory may be admired for its technical effectiveness, but it does not take the reader onto new imaginative planes where technique merges seamlessly with meaning.

In Charles d'Orléans's use of food and drink, however, the key word is integration. Deschamps used concrete alimentary images widely, expanding the lexical field of the lyric, but Charles d'Orléans concentrates on exploiting
their evocative and metaphorical potential, on confirming the lyric power of such a vocabulary. He actually uses ideas of eating, drinking and ingestion to complicate and refine the range of courtly allegory.

His skillful use of images can occasionally produce a poem that spills over the bounds of the courtly. Ballade XCI describes a drunkard:

Visage de baffe venu
Confit en composte de vin,
Menton rongneux et peu barbu,
Et dressé comme un coquin,
Malade du mal saint Martin
Et aussi ront qu’un tonnelet;
Dieu le me sauve ce varlet!

Il est enroué devenu,
Car une pouldre de raisin
L’a tellement en l’œil feru
Qu’endormy l’a comme un touppin;
Il y pêle, un chacun matin,
Car il en a chault le touppet;
Dieu le me sauve ce varlet!

Rompre ne sauroit un festu
Quant il a pincé un loppin
Saint Poursain, qui l’a retenu
Son chier compaignon et cousin,
Combien qu’aient souvent hutin,
Quant ou cellier sont en secret;
Dieu le me sauve ce varlet!

Prince, pour aler jusqu’au Rin,
D’un baril a fait son ronssin,
Et ses esperons d’un forêt;
Dieu le me sauve ce varlet!

In spite of the subtlety and control of the rhetoric, what comes through here is a figure from the carnival tradition. The poem, in its objectification of the human body, could be compared to some of Deschamps’s portraits of grotesques: courtiers transformed into beasts (ballade 844); a man reduced to his most offensive bodily functions (ballade 777). Yet the conversion here is not, in the end, a reduction; it is an expansion from individual to idea -- festive idea, but idea nonetheless. The comments of Alice Planche are illuminating:

Par mimétisme ou par association d’idées, chaque trait du comportement appartient à l’ordre de la vendange et du cellier. La carnation a la couleur du moût, le ventre l’enflure du tonneau que, par ailleurs, le buveur finit par chevaucher, éperonnant avec le forêt cette monture qui, en guise de sang, laisse couler son vin. Le caractère de charge est accentué par l’intervention de Saint Pourçain, peu orthodoxe patron des buveurs. La dernière scène nous fait passer à dos de tonneau, du domaine de la plaisanterie à celui de la solie, ou d’un comique pré-Rabelaisien. Ce n’est plus un homme abusant de la bouteille, c’est le résumé et la synthèse de toute une
In this poem, then, figurative use of food and drink has ended up evoking a tradition whose whole being depends on its physical associations. Charles d'Orléans's wine images have brought the theme full circle, through courtly control to bacchic abandon.

If Deschamps's innovative insertion of food and drink allusions into lyric poetry can lead ultimately to such carnivalesque images, it can also point the way much more directly. We have already discussed his particular versions of the battle between Lent and Carnival. It is worth adding that his poems (chanson royale 350 and ballade 20-attributed) constitute something of a missing link in the recorded history of the tradition: they are the only literary versions we have between 1330 and 1457, according to the study of Grinberg and Kinser. But there are other ways in which Deschamps embraces what Bakhtin calls the "material bodily principal." His interest in tripe, his drinking scenes with their snatches of conversation exchanged among the revellers, his mixing of food and combat in the Dit des IIII. offices -- all could be called proto-Rabelaisian.

Yet essentially Deschamps is not a carnivalesque poet. Rather, he is one who sanctions the entry of food and drink into official literature, acknowledging their natural role in all life, social and moral, individual and collective. Associations between food and drink and the festive spirit are a part of this role, but only a part. Indeed, despite their gentility, the food and drink poems of Charles d'Orléans are more uniformly festive than those of Deschamps.

In fact, Deschamps's chief contribution to the development of Rabelaisian ebullience, is, I think, his comprehensiveness. If we look at the accounts of the "Adolescence Gargantua" (Gargantua, Chapter XI), or of his early study in Paris (Chapter XXI), we find that there, too, nothing is left out. A sample paragraph will give an idea:

Puis fiantoit, pissoyt, rendoyt sa gorge, rotoit, pettoit, baisloyt, crachoyt, toussoyt, sangloutoyt, esternuoit et se morvoyt en archidiacre, et desjeunoyt pour abatre la rouzee et mauvais aer: belles tripes frites, belles charbonnades, beaulx jambons, belles cabirotades et forces soupes de prime.10

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9 Grinberg and Kinser, "Les Combats." Deschamps's poem 350 is placed by the authors between a Spanish narrative poem and a Swedish one in dialogue. Only from the mid-fifteenth century does the battle theme attain widespread popularity in written form.

(And this all happens when the day has barely begun!) To a great extent, no doubt, Rabelais is satirising the penchant of his precursors to make solemn lists, whether they be of plague remedies or household goods. But he is drawing also on the vitality with which a poet like Eustache Deschamps imbued images of food and drink.

Sometimes, too, in Renaissance verse literature, we see rhetoric that may owe something to Deschamps’s use of abundant food and drink in veritable banquets of disgust. Both Jean L’Espine du Pontalais and Jean Bouchet use specific descriptions of food, drink and meals in anti-courtier satire. Their immediate source, identified by P. M. Smith, is the neo-Latin De Curialum Miseriis Epistola of Aeneas Sylvius Piccolomini (1444) who was himself influenced by Lucian and Juvenal. Yet the rhetoric of their criticisms of wine—

Vin puant, aygre et aquatique,
Tout frot, tout chault, tout lunatique,
Tout corrompu, les vers dedans;
Pour seulement le mettre aux dens
Ilz en cherront hors de la bouche . . .

(Du Pontalais; quoted p. 73)

— and dining habits—

Vous y verrez tant de gens mal repeuz
Qui des morceaux tant frians qu’ilz ont veuz
N’en auront fors l’odeur de la fumee . . .
Vous n’y verrez jamais la nappe blanche
Fors en huyt jours une foiz le dimanche . . .

(Bouchet; quoted p. 75)

— recalls Deschamps’s indignant diatribe over new wine in ballade 1374, and his numerous complaints about life at sea and abroad. The difference is that the Renaissance poets, although drawing on a classical commonplace, are describing life in their own courts, whose excesses and injustices are now demonstrated to be completely rotten, unredeemed by any quality of luxury. The anti-court poetry of Deschamps himself is cautious and almost vague compared to this, at least in terms of its food allusions; he presents the court as offering largely positive material temptations which, while attractive in themselves,

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12 From Les Contreditz, folio CXL recto-verso.

13 From Epistres, folio 10 recto.
must be refused by the individual wishing to retain freedom of mind. What was rhetoric appropriate to foreign, hostile experiences in Deschamps's writing has become material for attacking targets much nearer home in the sixteenth century; and the two Renaissance poets use their negative food images to give an impression that both language and courtly experience are running riot. It is perhaps significant, also, that the extracts quoted above are part of long verse compositions rather than concentrated short lyrics; it is as if the enumerative techniques of Deschamps have burst their bonds to find a more natural home in such discursive works.

Food and drink, in Deschamps, appear in almost every conceivable context. Their presence can seem clumsy; the poet rarely integrates his alimentary images with the sharpness of Villon or the smoothness of Charles d'Orléans, and rarely allows the "material bodily principal" to take over completely. What he does do is collect and develop a whole array of possibilities for them, drawn from life and from literature, offered to a generation increasingly loosening itself from the conventions of the medieval past.

The use of food and drink as literary material is a practice that inevitably, inherently questions its own seriousness. How can something so substantial and practical enhance creation, unless it is clearly subsumed into a more profound message, or transformed into part of a figurative construct, or allowed to dominate a work whose festivity is its own justification? Deschamps uses food and drink in all these "artificial" ways, but he also dares to let their ordinariness shine through on many occasions. Does using such pedestrian images in fixed-form lyrics make him a pedestrian poet? Hardly; but it does make him an apparent aberration in the course of literary history. Without Deschamps's open approach to images, however, the variety and refinement of later metaphor, the subtlety of representation, and the exhilaration of the Renaissance banquet might be the poorer. Deschamps's poetic feast has its dull, predictable dishes and its revolting ones, among the more tempting offerings. The courses can mount up innumerably, yet the poet always lurks about as the model maître d'hôtel, making sure reader enjoyment doesn't get out of control, ready to put a moral gloss on his rhetoric almost -- but not quite -- as often as he fills the glasses. At the Yssue, though, as we leave the hall with our hands full of spices and comfits, we understand that this has been far more than a meal to be just casually tasted, enjoyed and then forgotten.
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**IV. Food and Drink in Literature**


