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POSTMILLENNIAL MEDIA –
DISCOURSES WHERE
FOOD CULTURES MEET
EVERYDAY PRACTICES

Monograph

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The monograph is based on the author's research on food and foodways in the 21st century media. The author studies the relationships between food, popular culture and media within the postmillennial theoretical framework of hypermodernism and digimodernism, combining the specific methodologies and approaches of media studies and food studies. Reflecting the growing presence of food in lifestyle genres of present-day media and a wide range of its functions in various media discourses the author justifies the need to combine critical media literacy with food literacy.

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INTRODUCTION

*“You can't just eat good food.
You've got to talk about it too.
And you've got to talk about it to somebody
who understands that kind of food.”*
Kurt Vonnegut

Postmillennial consumer societies manifest themselves predominantly through mediated discourses. These began to become more occupied by food and foodways in the last decade of the 20th century, pushing factual news and documentary genres, together with other lifestyle elements of popular culture, into the periphery of consumers' interests. The fascination with food and cooking has reached a peak in the second decade of the 21st century, with all print, broadcast and new electronic media regularly covering food in its numerous forms and demonstrations and shaping hyperconsumers' identities through presentations of lifestyles based on, among others, new eating habits.

Academia has responded to these tendencies by absorbing food studies into the agenda of academic fields in humanities and arts in which food had not previously been considered worthy of interest. The production of food studies research has achieved a greater visibility through the emergence of new academic journals and the continuing rise in the publication of books dedicated to food and foodways and their representation in popular cultures.

To date, the most comprehensive study of food and popular culture is the 2018 book *The Bloomsbury Handbook of Food and Popular Culture* edited by Kathleen LeBesco and Peter Naccarato. In their

introduction to the book, the editors outline the main aim of the study, claiming that “while the importance of food across the cultural landscapes has a long and rich history, over the last thirty years, with renewed media attention, we have witnessed a remarkable extension of food’s influence as it has become intertwined with various facets of popular culture” [LeBesco, Naccarato 2018: 1]. In order to critically examine these mutual interactions, they bring together more than thirty experts from across the world to focus on various aspects of consumption, communication, practices, aestheticism, and socio-political contexts.

Other academic publications which have appeared in the first two decades of the 21st century have attempted to define, redefine and analyse variety of aspects of food and foodways in the context of their cultural representations dealing with broader themes, including, among others, *Food in Society* by Peter Atkins and Ian Bowler (2001), *Food and Cultural Studies* by Bob Ashley et al (2004), *Near a Thousand Tables: History of Food* by Felipe Fernandez-Armesto (2004), *Food is Culture* by Massimo Montanari (2004), *Everyone Eats: Understanding Food and Culture* by E. N. Anderson (2005), *Food: The Key Concepts* by Warren Belasco (2008), *Food and Culture: A Reader* edited by Carole Counihan and Penny van Esterik (2008), *The Meaning of Cooking* by Jean-Claude Kaufmann (2010), *Food and Culture* by Pamela Kittler et al (2011).

These more general studies have been accompanied by a wide range of books which deal with more specific topics: for example, *Bodies out of Bounds: Fatness and Transgression* edited by Jana Evans Braziel and Kathleen LeBesco (2001), *Kitchen Culture in America, Popular Representations of Food, Gender and Race* by Sherrie Inness (2001), *Eating Right in the Renaissance* by Ken Albala (2002), *How We Eat: Appetite, Culture and the Psychology of Food* by Leon Rappoport (2003), *Exotic Appetites: Ruminations of a Food Adventure* by Lisa Maree Heldke (2003), *Food in Art: What Makes a Masterpiece?* by Brigitte Baumbuch (2005), *Meals to Come: A History*

of the Future of Food by Warren Belasco (2006), *Appetite for Change: How the Counterculture Took on the Food Industry* by Warren Bellasco (2007), *Shopping for What Never Was: The Rhetoric of Food, Social Style, and Nostalgia* by Carlinite Greene (2008), *Cuisine and Culture: A History of Food and People* by Linda Civitello (2011), *Food and Social Media* and *Food Media: Celebrity Chefs and the Politics of Everyday Interference* by Signe Rousseau (2012), *The Philosophy of Food* by David Kaplan (2012), *Art and Food* by Peter Stupples (2014), *The Language of Food: A Linguist Reads the Menu* by Dan Jurafsky (2014), *Food in Art: From Prehistory to the Renaissance* by Gillian Riley (2015), *A History of Food in Literature: From the Fourteenth Century to the Present* by Charlotte Boyce and Joan Fitzpatrick, Joan (2017), *Media and Food Industries: The New Politics of Food* by Michelle Phillipov (2017), *Food and Literature* by Gitanjali Shahali (2018), *Organic Food, Farming and Culture* edited by Janet Chrzan and Jacqueline Ricotta (2018), *Gender and Food* by Shelly Koch (2019), *Food Values in Europe* by Valeria Siniscalchi and Krista Harper (2019), and many other publications.

Researchers in humanities applying multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary methodologies and approaches focus on a variety of economic, political, social, and cultural aspects of historic and contemporary production, distribution and consumption of food and its presentation, representation and commodification in cultural production. The breadth of diversity of academic interests and the developing and changing research ‘tastes’ which the field enjoys are visible on the website of the Association for the Study of Food and Society, currently the most active and representative association of food studies professionals. This organisation was established in 1985 and defines its main goal as “promoting the interdisciplinary study of food and society” [<http://www.food-culture.org/>]. Many of the authors mentioned above are fellows or members and the Association provides access to sources, grants and information about food studies

publications. The Association also publishes its own journal *Food, Culture & Society* through Routledge Publishing.

Food studies publications dedicated to research into food mediation in the 21st century show that it is not only (critical) media literacy but also food literacy which is important for individuals of the new millennium. Changing eating habits, complex food cultural symbolism, foodways and their media foodscapes require much more than a merely cursory knowledge of media and food practices. Food has become an important element of identity formation for individuals and social groups and its mediation provides valuable information about the ways in which individuals and social groups perceive themselves and others and about their representations in popular cultures.

The research presented in this monograph attempts to address some of the issues mentioned above by trying to provide arguments and justifications for the need of a combined media and food literacy. In the first chapter, 'Food and culture – food studies and humanities', the development of food studies as a discipline extending into the scholarship of the humanities is outlined and food as a concept is examined in the context of its manifold functions, multiplied meanings and identity formations.

The second chapter, 'Food and foodways – media and representations', develops the discussion over the extensive mediation of food and foodways and its economic, technological, social and cultural aspects. The chapter also provides a concise outline of the history of food media.

The third chapter, 'Food literacy – media literacy', focuses on changing and emerging paradigms of the metamodern period of the new millennium. The core paradigms which are exerting the most dominant impact on individuals' functioning in the hypermodern era are analysed as essential media and food literacy categories.

Chapter Four, 'Food practices – hypermodern practices', analyses the role of food narratives in genres of both old and new media

approaching each food element from the hypermodern perspectives of excessive consumerism as enhanced by technological advances.

The fifth and last chapter, 'Food for – lifestyle media – thought', investigates the characteristics of food and foodways appearing in lifestyle genres that can be attributed to their participation in digimodernist cultural trends and shows the spectrum of food media intertextuality and the new forms of connectivity function performed by food in contemporary cultural production.

At this stage of the research, the author does not intend to use culture-specific examples that would either appear not representative enough for the individual arguments or those which would create conditions likely to lead to partial or biased interpretations of the elements under discussion. The research presented in this monograph is still a work in progress and is partially supported by the VEGA project 1/0447/20 *The Global and the Local in Postmillennial Anglophone Literatures, Cultures and Media*. The partial conclusions are valid only for its scope offered in the text of the five chapters of this monograph.

CHAPTER ONE

FOOD AND CULTURE – FOOD STUDIES AND HUMANITIES

*“I hate people who are not serious about meals.
It is so shallow of them.”
Oscar Wilde*

In the 21st century the meaning of food and its perception, signification, and representation are very far from the more elemental understanding of food as the essential material for the survival and well-being of human life. The physiological function of food is overwhelmed by its symbolic meanings and social significance, and thus when dealing with food the contexts of social status, behaviour, cultural identities, emotions, and numerous other features should always be taken into account. Consequently, the study of food is no longer limited to the research domain of sciences such as agriculture, biology, chemistry, geography, or medicine; it has entered the realm of humanities and arts as the study of food culture. The last two decades have seen a number of studies that explore food as a central element by focusing on historical periods of various civilisations, geographical conditions of nutrition, geopolitics of nutrition, ethnic groups and their identities, social aspects of cooking and eating, national, regional, and local varieties of cuisine, and many other aspects, proving the potentially broad scope of Food Studies scholarship.

The emergence of Food Studies within the academic field of arts and the humanities began on the American continent with a series of essential works originating in Northern American academia, such as studies by Ken Albala (2002), Warren Bellasco (2008), Carole

Counihan (1999), Lisa Maree Heldke (2003), Sherrie Inness (2001), David M. Kaplan (2012), Sidney W. Mintz (1996) and Psyche Williams-Forsen (2006).

Researchers in Europe also turned their attention to this topic, for example in the work of authors such as Fabio Parasecoli, Emma-Jayne Abbotts, Michel de Certeau (1998), Jack Goody (1998), Wolfgang Schivelbusch (1993), Anne Meneley, and also the Australian author Jane Roscoe (2001). The field has also undergone a relatively rapid and wide diversification of food-related disciplines and enjoys a theoretical richness of different approaches. The spectrum of food culture which once focused primarily on the practices, attitudes and beliefs of the production, distribution and consumption of food, has been enriched by the new concept of ‘foodways’, defined by the Merriam Webster Online Dictionary as the “eating habits and culinary practices of a people, region, or historical period” [<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/foodways>]. The field has been expanded by academic communities into the study of the ways in which individuals and groups prepare and consume food within historic and current circumstances both shaped by and expressing identities, communities, values, status, and relationships.

The author Silvia Baučková (2015) has written that several research approaches can be distinguished in Food Studies on the basis of those used by scholars in their works. Three of the above mentioned researchers, Warren Bellasco (2008), Carole Counihan (1999) and the late Jack Goody (1998), follow an anthropological/sociological approach focusing on three main fields of interest – food security, eating and ritual, and eating and identity. A more historical approach to food is used for instance by Sidney W. Mintz (1996) and Wolfgang Schivelbusch (1993) and food historians usually employ one of the three most dominant strands – the comprehensive approach, the specialised approach or the popularising approach. A third, philosophical approach is taken by Lisa Maree Heldke (2003), David M. Kaplan (2012) and many other food scholars whose interest in food

covers a broad range of topics [Baučeková 2015: 55-75]. In addition to these three main approaches, Food Studies research in the 21st century is also directed towards the study of culinary cultures [cf. Inness 2001].

The cultural and social contexts of nutrition and appetite are seen as important factors affecting food and health choices and cultural representations associated with food habits are further examined by individual authors and research groups as issues of food construction, food representation, national, regional and local identities as related to national, regional and local cuisines, the contrasts between continental and other European cuisines, and food markets and globalization. Scholars approach food and cooking as a phenomenon of identity construction, and as a social category closely related to gender, class, education, ethnicity, and religion. They study food as an element that functions within globalized societies and evolving nation states, food as a constituent of integration, food as an object which can be translated from one place to another, from one period of time to another, from the domestic to the public sphere and vice-versa. They analyse meanings attributed to food in national, regional and local cooking, the representations, practices and performance of food, the contrasts between erudite and popular forms of gastronomy, domestic and professional cooking, natural and artificial foods, slow and fast foods, and many other products of food culture. Cultures of eating are studied within their historic and contemporary perspectives including complex spectacles such as fasting and feasting. Travel literature uncovers the marvels of hospitality and its representation while a historic perspective of food studies looks back at periods of hunger, famine and starvation both in wartime and peacetime. The ethics of consumption is investigated within the broader contexts of the ecology of eating, global warming and overpopulation. Eating disorders are analysed together with the phenomenon of the beauty myth and its body/image representation in various literary and media texts, while the concept of food as spectacle finds its place in the realm of so-called 'food porn' in social media.

The emergence of Food Studies within the new humanities and arts directions of Food Studies research have enriched the range of academic journals, e.g. *Annals of Behavioral Medicine*, *Anthropology of Food*, *Appetite*, *British Food Journal*, *Cuizine*, *The Digest*, *Food and Foodways*, *Food Culture and Society*, *Food History*, *Gastronomica*, *International Journal of Eating Disorders*, *International Journal of Food Studies*, *Nutrition Anthropology*, etc. The number of scholarly books dedicated to food proves that food studies has moved from the margins to the centre of academic interest. Aspects of food history, food development, creation, marketing and representation, local, national and global foods and their identities, the art of cooking, food in particular genres of literature, media, pop-culture, gender and class perspectives of food, examined together with everyday eating habits, diets and disorders, food security, and food ethics, all requiring interdisciplinary approaches, have invaded the scholarship of historians, anthropologists, sociologists, economists, folklorists, scholars in gender and cultural studies and also of researchers in media studies.

The diversification of eating habits in developed societies have also resulted in the growth of new words with food-related components, e.g. foodie, foodland, foodscape, foodstock, foodoo, etc. Numerous new food collocations have entered our everyday vocabulary – emergency food, food aid, food guide, food riot, food safety, gourmet food, organic food, raw food, etc. And of course this is in addition to the many new food-related words that are registered every year by online dictionaries, for example arancini, macaron, acai, elderflower, artisanal, flatbread, food insecure, chef's knife, chicken of the woods, and many others, all of which serve as fertile source of material for linguistic research.

Universities all over the world offer courses on food and degrees in Food Studies. The most comprehensive list of academic journals on food, food degrees offered by Northern American and European universities, as well as various information about food research, conferences on food, and food studies resources can be found on the

website of the Association for the Study of Food and Society that covers both the Northern American and European food research spectrum [<http://www.food-culture.org>].

However, it should be stated that arts-based interest in food is not in fact as recent a development as we might expect. Similarly, a great deal of research which we might consider to be purely scientific often have a humanities and arts studies outreach. One example of this former trend is Aristotle's treatise *On the Soul* (republished in 2019). As early as 350 B.C. the philosopher discusses the nutrition as one of the five most basic functions of living organisms. In the text he argues that compared to the nutritive power belonging to all living organisms, the appetitive power can only be found in human beings, because humans alone are capable of the sensory activities of desire, passion and yearning (i.e. of the soul) during the process of consumption of food by the body [Aristotle 2019].

In order to illustrate the latter, we may consider the controversial book *Catching Fire: How Cooking Made Us Human* by Richard Wrangham (2009). The author is a biologist and primatologist and he sees the invention of cooking as representing an essential step in the evolution of human beings. He argues that the invention of cooking allowed *Homo erectus* to spend less time and energy digesting food, leading to more efficient digestion and that the nutritional benefits gained in this evolution freed up more energy for brain growth and increased functionality (the human brain consumes around one quarter of the energy requirements of the human body). He goes on to claim that the fire which was used for cooking provided warmth for the humans who gathered around the fire and that fire was also used as a weapon against predators. The time saved on eating and digestion could be used more efficiently. He also proposes that this was the beginning of a new distribution of household duties and labour between men and women. He summarises his multi-disciplinary argument, which encompasses biology, anatomy and sociology, by stating that it was cooking which made the human diet truly human and that it was this

that led to the rise of humanity within the human families of that time [Wrangham 2009].

Although the essential biological and social roles which food and cooking play for human beings both individually and socially remain unchanged since the times of *Homo erectus*, food culture has grown exponentially. The 20th century is often marked as the century of the food industry and as the period when our fascination with food truly begins. Warren Belasco (2008) states that food is “our biggest industry, our most frequently indulged pleasure, and perhaps the greatest cause of disease and death” [Belasco 2008: ix]. While eating is of course an everyday activity, it is only when analysed that its full complexity is revealed. As James L. Watson and Melissa L. Caldwell (2005) write in their introductory text, “for anthropologists food is not just a topic worthy of inquiry in its own right; food is a universal medium that illuminates a wide range of other cultural practices” [Watson, Caldwell 2005: 1].

Researchers attempt to answer questions related to the changing ways in which food is consumed by asking who acquires food, who prepares it and who is at the table when the food is consumed. Scholars in Communication Studies [cf. Barthes 2008, Greene 2008, Jacobsen 2004] perceive food as a form of communication within social groups which is influenced by social roles, group rules and traditions and which thus uncovers the attitudes, practices and rituals of the social group. The cultural context of this communication refers to values, knowledge, habits, lifestyles, attitudes, beliefs, symbols and their interpretations. Thus, food communication is manifold – food communicates, food is communicated and participants communicate about food.

According to some researchers [cf. Barthes 2008, Buonanno 2008], food exists in narrative discourses within social contexts. “Thus, food, remaining the means of satisfying the basic human needs, is by the means of the narrative transferred into a different sphere and becomes as element of culture” [Shevchenko 2017: 113]. Stories

related to food become food narratives and very often they are transformed into Roland Barthes' (2008) cultural representations and cultural myths. As Roland Barthes explains, "When he buys an item of food, consumes it, or serves it, modern man does not manipulate a simple object in a purely transitive fashion; this item of food sums up and transmits a situation; it constitutes an information; it signifies" [Barthes 2008: 29]. For Roland Barthes, food is first consumed as a sign prior to being actually eaten. As a cultural representation it embodies the processes of preparation, distribution, presentation and consumption. These processes are performed in various cultural contexts. Roland Barthes (1973) is still quoted as the most inspiring structuralist in the development of food studies. He analyses semiotic representations of food choices and food elements in media discourses, with particular emphasis on the advertising of food. Peter Atkins and Ian Bowler claim that "for Barthes, food was central to various aspects of life touching the body and the mind" [Atkins, Bowler 2001: 6].

Milly Buonanno (2008) defines narratives as "our fairy tales and our myths, our moral tales, the burning fire of imagination whose flame, as Walter Benjamin said, gives warmth to our cold and wretched life" [Buonanno 2008: 71]. She develops this idea by arguing that each particular period brings its own stories of imagination, with its own specific narrative content and narrative form depending on the media available at the time. Contemporary cultures often stress elements of sexuality and erotica, in both visual and verbal representations. Under the slogan 'sex sells', food narratives often employ either implicitly or explicitly sexualized angles. Advertisements for food depict women as sexual objects, as sexually available, in their capacity to arouse desire in men as food consumers; hence female sexuality is linked to food commodities and the commodities themselves become eroticised. Intangible attributes such as beauty, desirability and sexuality are attached to tangible food products making the consumer believe he/she can buy both and the fire of imagination of which Milly Buonanno writes starts to take flame.

Food is an important element within the spheres of the construction and representation of individual and group identities. Food is perceived and used symbolically as a phenomenon related to relationships, conventions and traditions. People welcome guests and friends with symbolic food items which vary from country to country. In predominantly Christian countries, people offer bread to their guests, and bread is served before meals in most restaurants in Western Europe. Celebrated holidays and special dates in the calendar are associated with special food. While some of this food is linked to the religious identity of specific individuals and groups, other food habits are associated with local, regional, and national traditions or with ethnic habits (e.g. fish at Christmas Eve's dinner in Slovakia, roast turkey at Christmas dinner in Britain).

Moreover, food has the ability to cross social spheres and can be related to both the private sphere (e.g. domestic food preparation and consumption, eating in) and the public sphere (e.g. food production, food shopping in grocery stores or at the market, the consumption of food in public, eating out). Food preparation in both spheres involves power relations within a given food culture, addressing home, family, and gender identities. If the private sphere is typically connected with eating in, home-cooked meals and the personal touch, then the public sphere is associated with eating out and the anonymous and industrial preparation of food in impersonal restaurants and bars. While the former is characterised as a predominantly feminine sphere (women remain the predominant producers of food at home in most countries), the latter is mostly masculine. Women are the main purchasers of consumer goods, including those related to food, so one can find numerous examples of advertisements in newspapers and magazines that contain food narratives strongly enhancing gender stereotypes. Gender but also class, ethnicity, nationality, and religion are frequently discussed identities related to food.

Marcel Danesi and Paul Perron (1999) claim that culture is “a way of life based on a signifying order that is passed from one generation to

the next” and which draws on the signifying order of a first community [Danesi, Perron 1999: 23] and that society is “a collectivity of individuals who, although they may not all have the same tribal origins, nevertheless participate, by and large, in the signifying order of the founding or conquering tribe” [Ibid.: 24]. Based on this statement, the meaning of food in the construction of individual and group identities is even more obvious. An even more specific link between food and identity formation is provided by Claude Fischler (1988). He argues that one identity dimension runs from the biological to the cultural and that another links the individual to the collective, suggesting that “Food is central to our sense of identity. The way any given human group eats helps it assert its diversity, hierarchy and organisation, but also, at the same time, both its oneness and the otherness of whoever eats differently. Food is also central to individual identity, in that any given human individual is constructed, biologically, psychologically and socially by the foods he/she chooses to incorporate” [Fischler 1988: 275].

All of the above quoted opinions about the relevance and importance of food in identity perception and formation share the same underlying elucidation about identity being crucial to all people, allowing individuals to situate both themselves and the other, enabling them to make sense to their existence – all through a performance that is interrelated to food – through giving meaning (by following a specific diet), through reaction (the consumption of healthy food), through socialising (with friends at the dinner table or in a restaurant), etc. It is therefore possible to state that identity is performative [cf. Greene 2008] and that the performance of identity is a part of everyday practices, in this case the practices connected with food. And although some of the characteristics of food are those associated with its essential, ordinary, quotidian, commonplace or omnipresent nature, its prominence in identity performance and in understanding culture through practice is obvious.

Nonetheless, the practices of everyday life are not the only domain for food and its performance. Food culture registers works of art in

which food and food-related elements appear and which can be read and interpreted as food expressions or food texts. If we look at fine art, numerous examples of food in paintings, sculptures, opera and operetta performances are easily found [cf. Riley 2015, Baumbuch 2005]. Food belongs to regularly appearing themes and components in literary works, both in poetry and in fiction [cf. Boyce, Fitzpatrick 2017]. Popular culture also records food in folk and other festivals, music, performances, etc. [cf. Walker 1999, Stupples 2014]. And finally, the media represents a separate, almost unlimited territory in which food culture is produced, presented, represented, reproduced and mediated, and as such it deserves special attention.

CHAPTER TWO

FOOD AND FOODWAYS – MEDIA AND REPRESENTATIONS

“There is no love sincerer than the love of food.”
George Bernard Shaw

The 21st century can be characterised as the century of food culture and the extensive mediation of food has opened up new possibilities for the social construction of various cultures across the world. By the 1990s food and food related elements had become a major focus of interest of all old and new media. The first two decades of the new millennium record a remarkable amount of published cookbooks and food memoirs, numerous new food magazines appearing on the press market, food advertising everywhere, food programmes on radio, food reality TV shows, food TV channels broadcasting non-stop, culinary festivals and the emergence of local restaurants with a variety of food themes and their own websites, food blogs and limitless other food content on the Internet, and mobile phone food apps. They all provide new material for research not only in the field of Food Studies, but also in Cultural Studies, Gender Studies, Media Studies, Communication Studies, Linguistics, Sociology, Pedagogy, Psychology, Anthropology, History and many other fields which examine the relationships between society, culture, food and media production and consumption and address questions connected to the role which food plays in the creation of meaning for contemporary individuals [cf. Ashley et al 2004, Avakian 2014, Civitello 2011, Jurafsky 2014, LeBesco, Naccarato 2008, Rappoport 2003, Rousseau 2012, Watson, Caldwell 2005, etc.].

Food and foodways have become objects of fascination for consumers of both old and new media of all social categories. Cookbooks, diet books, food travel guides regularly reach the bestsellers' list, lead all other genres in the publishing business and occupy many metres of shelf space in all major bookstores [cf. Amazon Best Sellers 2019, www.amazon.com]. Newspapers of both the popular and serious press cover food issues, often featuring them on their front pages, while many newspapers also include regular food supplements [<https://www.independent.co.uk/topic/food-supplements>]. Magazines on food have become more diverse and specialised, and the countless number of food advertisements and food commercials in both print and broadcast media are ample evidence of consumers' obsession with food and cooking. Radio stations air food-related programmes and publish recipes on their websites [<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b006qnx3>]. Cooking shows on television worship chefs who were, are, or will later become celebrities due to their culinary abilities (which may be either perfect or abysmal), demonstrating recipes which may be either exotic or mundane. Those with more free time at their disposal can watch 24-hour food channels, and not only locally-produced content; the proliferation of cable and satellite networks allows them also to watch similar channels produced in other countries (e.g. *Food Network* in the USA, *Food Network* in Canada, *Lifestyle Food* in Australia, *UK Food* in the United Kingdom, *Cuisine TV* in France, or *TV Paprika* in Hungary).

The Internet, incorporating old media, new media and other new means of communication, serves as a platform for food, cooking and eating in their various connotations. Website users are offered food shopping services together with recipes, advice from prominent chefs, cooking competitions, live chats about food and cooking, articles about food products, food services, restaurant reviews, food forums, and many other activities linked to food, cooking, eating, and cuisine. The rise in the numbers of food blog sites [Rettberg 2008] has led to the appearance of searchable food blog directories in which such blogs are

listed [<https://www.thefoodsociety.org/>]. Food chats are hosted by Facebook, Twitter, and other social networks and online forums that regularly organise various food-related competitions, for example e.g. the best recipe for ..., the best photograph of..., the best chef, etc. Numerous online projects also exist offering free videos, animations, music, photos and games related to food and cooking [<https://www.agame.com/games/food-games>], while social platforms such as Instagram are flooded with photographs of meals, restaurant designs, and food-related selfies [Dujardin 2011]. The space allotted to various elements related to food is enormous and continues to expand further.

For younger generations of new media consumers in particular, food culture mediation has been taken over by new information and communication technologies. Digital technologies have combined with internet-enabled electronic devices to incorporate online content and services and new consumers can enjoy digital food practices; for example, ordering food from a restaurant online, using smartphones to search for a restaurant nearby and checking online reviews to find out if it is trendy enough, or purchasing food products from local farmers via their own websites.

But it is not only new technologies and devices that serve the needs of the new consumer. Media content is also being adapted to meet their new requirements and expectations. Trends which emerged at the end of the 20th century such as tabloidisation and the growth in infotainment in journalism and the personalisation and individualisation of content continue to gather pace [Tomaščíková 2008] and they are being joined by the hybridisation of genres and lifestyle programming [Palmer 2008] visible in both old media, e.g. reality TV and new media, e.g. YouTube videos. It is becoming less and less possible to separate individual media and individual genres and therefore convergences in both media and genres are becoming far more noticeable. Thanks to the media and genre convergences a consumer can watch their favourite food reality TV contest via mobile phone; reality TV chefs can publish

their own cookbooks, advertise them on their own websites, offer interviews for a radio show and organise a book promo in a local supermarket, the recording of which is then uploaded onto YouTube. But as Henry Jenkins claims, “Media convergence is more than simply a technological shift. Convergence alters the relationship between existing technologies, industries, markets, genres and audiences” [Jenkins 2004: 33].

Moreover, food culture belongs to the mainstream in social media and no element of food culture in the 21st century can function successfully without using social networks. Social media play a crucial role in the promotion of food by food producers but also by individuals using new marketing strategies, hence they are a powerful marketing and economic tool. In addition to this, they also mediate exchanges of food messages (both textual and pictorial) between users enabling their social interaction. Social networks stipulate the authenticity, immediacy, and creativity of food culture for users who share their food culture experience through social networks. Facebook, Twitter and Instagram have done much to change new consumers or foodies’ perceptions and consumption of food; they influence what is eaten, where people eat, styles of cooking, etc. Posting photographs of food, commenting on the quality, design and service of eating establishments, offering recommendations and reviews have become a regular part of social interaction and influences the eating habits of foodies and their online friends.

Yet the mediation of food has a long history. If we look for the earliest written recipes, they can be found on Akkadian tablet fragments that have been dated back to ca 3500 B.C. One of the fragments located in Mesopotamia includes a recipe in cuneiform for a bird bouillon. The Greek poem *The Life of Luxury* written by the Sicilian Arcestratus in ca 350 B.C includes fragments of text about fish. Obviously, it would be some time before the first true cookbook would be written, but one of the earliest to appear was the Latin text *De Re Coquinaria*, attributed to the Roman writer Marcus Gavius Apicius, in the first century A.D.

The text contained cooking instructions and recipes for sauces and other meals and was first published in English translation in 1936 [Civitello 2011: 408].

The real beginning of the history of written culinary knowledge comes in the Medieval period and brought about a major change in food culture. The best known medieval English cookbooks written in Middle English in the 14th century list *The Forme of Cury*, compiled by chefs at the court of King Richard II of England in 1390, and *Utilis Coquinario*, which described recipes originating in England and which also includes the earliest recorded recipe for ravioli [Carroll 1996: 45-51]. The first record of a cookbook written in Arabic, *Riyad al-nufas* written by al-Maliki in Tunisia, dates back to the 10th century and contains recipes from the 9th and 10th centuries [Civitello 2011: 408]. The 12th century Indian treatise *Manasollasa* included descriptions of vegetarian and non-vegetarian cuisines [Achaya 2000: 85], while the earliest Chinese recipe book dates from the 11th century, written anonymous under the title *The Illustrated Herbal*. The earliest cookbook in Korean, the 17th century work *Eumsikdimibang*, is also significant in that it was the first cookbook to be written by a woman in East Asia [Buell, Anderson 2000: 1-10].

Massimo Montanari analyses the meaning of the cookbook and its (mass) distribution. He focuses on the transformation of cuisine from oral to written record as an important historic cultural phenomenon and claims that “<...> with the development of a written record of cuisine which made the cumulative increase of knowledge possible, man has answered the need for an authentic and unique body of information, of a kind unavailable, at least in material tangible form, to societies still clinging to oral traditions. Written cuisine permits the codification, in an established and recognized medium, of the practices and techniques developed by a specific society. Theoretically speaking, orally transmitted cooking, is destined not to leave traces of itself over time” [Montanari 2004: 35].

In preserving cultural artefacts related to food and cooking by recording them in written form, early cookbooks also allowed data about gastronomical traditions to be made available to scholars which had not been accessible before. The cookbooks contained much more than simple recipes; they represented cultural elements providing a more complex picture of the food-related traditions involving personal and social group (or family) histories, information about aspects of health and diet and much more. It is therefore possible to conclude that the birth of a culture of food can be attributed to the birth of the cookbook proper.

The development of printing technology allowed for a wider distribution of recipes and the diffusion of gastronomic texts throughout the literate population, a process which thereby one again shifted culinary culture onto a different level. The earliest printed cookbook, *De Honesta Voluptate* written by Bartolomeo Platina, appeared in Rome in the 1470s, followed shortly thereafter by the first German title, *Kuchenmeysterey*, published in Nuremberg in 1485 [Ashley *et al* 2004: 153] and the first French work, a 1490 printing of *Le Viander*, a compilation attributed to Guillaume Tirel, also known as Taillevent, which had appeared in manuscript form one century earlier. Further east, the first printed Polish cookbook, *Kuchmistrzostwo*, was published in 1532 [Civitello 2011: 408-409].

Noble families in 16th and 17th century England regularly organized large scale banquets and it is in this period that the concept of cooking as an art form began to develop. Chefs started to publish their own cookbooks in an effort to prove their artisanal skills, with an eye to being hired by wealthy patrons. Some of these cookbooks were used on the American continent until the year 1796 when the first American cookbook written by Amelia Simmons under the title *American Cookery* was published in Hartford, Connecticut [Wilson 1957: 16-30]. The cultural significance of food and its direct link with social status is furthermore underlined by the appearance of the first advertisements for food. The food elements were presented alongside those for books,

medicine, cures, and remedies, and tended to promote food and drinks that were at first consumed by the upper classes. English weeklies first reported on coffee in 1652, on chocolate in 1657, and on tea in 1658 [Civitello 2011].

Krishnendu Ray (2008) uncovered the first articles about restaurants in American newspapers in the early 1830s and he identified the early 19th century as the period when, firstly, gastronomy established its secure place in the print media, and secondly, the mass production of cookbooks aiming at middle-class and working-class began. Towards the end of the 19th century cooking and food started to appear regularly in newspapers and magazines, accompanied by related advertisements [Rappoport 2003: 156]. Cooking was introduced to British television as early as in the 1930s.

The modern tradition of female cookery writers was first initiated in 19th century America by Eliza Acton with her cookbook *Modern Cookery for Private Families* published in 1845. The book establishes the format for the modern style of writing about cookery where the ingredients are listed and the cooking time is specified for each of the recipes described in the book. This approach was followed by other female writers such as Isabella Beeton and her serialized publication of *Mrs Beeton's Book of Household Management* which included coloured illustrations of individual recipes, and also by Mary Stuart Smith who in 1885 published the *Virginia Cookery Book*, and by Fannie Farmer with *The Boston Cooking School Cookbook* of 1896 [Pearce 2004].

The 19th century (1861) also saw the first food-related bestseller in Russia with *Подарок молодым хозяйкам* (A Gift to Young Housewives) by Elena Molokhovets which contained more than 4000 recipes. Food-related topics also offered career opportunities to female researchers: in 1881 Ellen Richards, the first woman to study at MIT, published her book *The Chemistry of Cooking* [Civitello 2011: 408-409].

Other significant cookbooks of the period from the 13th to the 20th centuries include *Kitab al-Tabikh* written in 1226 by Muhammad bin

Hasan al-Baghdadi; *Liber de Coquina* from the late 13th – early 14th century by two unknown authors from France and Italy; the oldest cookbook in Portuguese *Cookbook of Infanta* written by Maria of Portugal in 1565; *The Good Huswives Jewell* from 1585 by Thomas Dawson; *The English Huswife* printed in 1615 by Gervase Markham; *Arte de Cocina, Pastelaria, Vizcocheria e Conservaria* by Francisco Martinez Montño, a cook at the court of King Philip II of Spain printed in 1680; *The Closet of the Eminently Learned Sir Kenelme Digbie Knight Opened* by Kenelm Digby printed in 1669; *Eumsik Dimibang* of 1670 written by *Jang Gye-hyang* of the Andong Jang clan of Korea; *Arte de Cozinha* written by Domingos Rodrigues and the first cookbook to be printed in Portuguese in 1680; *Compendium Ferculorum, albo Zebranie Potraw* by Stanisław Czerniecki, the first cookbook printed in Polish in 1682; *The Art of Cookery, Made Plain and Easy* of 1747 by Hannah Glasse; *Hjelpreda I Hushällningen För Unga Fruentimber* of 1755 by Cajsa Warg; *The Experienced English Housekeeper* printed in 1769 and written by Elizabeth Raffald; *A New System of Domestic Cookery* of 1806 by Maria Eliza Rundell; *Le Cuisinier Royal* printed in 1817 and written by André Viard; *Domestic Cook Book: Containing a Careful Selection of Useful Receipts for the Kitchen* published in 1866 by Malinda Russell and the first known cookbook by an African American woman; and lastly *La scienza in cucina e l'arte di mangiar bene* of 1891 by Pellegrino Artusi; *The Cook's Decameron: A Study In Taste, Containing Over Two Hundred Recipes For Italian Dishes* printed in 1901 authored by Mrs. W.G. Waters [<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cookbook#History>].

The first cookbook in Slovak, simply titled *Prvá kuchárska kniha v slovenskej reči* (The First Cookery Book in Slovak Language) was written and published in Pest (now Budapest) in 1870 by Ján Babilon (1987). Second and third editions of the book were published in 1894 and 1907, respectively. The first edition, which took 20 years to produce, was published in two volumes and contained more than 1500 recipes and visual material in appendices presenting the position of

Slovak cuisine in Central Europe. As with many other early cookbooks in national languages, it serves as a valuable historic, social and cultural artefact documenting not only the culinary traditions and social aspects of family life in that period, but the book also had a significant didactic function.

Written in semi-popular style and using original Slovak vocabulary and terminology, Ján Babilon's work teaches future professional cooks not only cooking techniques, procedures and practices, but also the basics of hygiene, the economical use of ingredients and tips for improving the appearance of meals when served. He understands cooking not as a skill but rather as an art (Kochkunst) and the cookbook is intended to help every chef to master their individual arts. From the style of writing it is obvious that the author has modelled his work on the German cookbook writing tradition rather than that of Hungary.

For sociologists Ján Babilon's book is a valuable source of information on gender roles and family life. In his descriptions the author portrays a middle class housewife who lives in a town as someone who is more interested in reading books and newspapers and playing the piano than cooking and serving meals to family members, indicating that these are activities which would typically be left for servants, housekeepers, etc. In the same manner he comments on the typical roles of male members in families as being linked to finances, or on the aspects of household financial management, the purchase of items for the kitchen, the production and preservation of fruits and vegetables, and the suitability of certain meals for sick or pregnant family members.

The 20th century introduced seemingly infinite variations in the culture of food in terms of national (e.g. Chinese), regional (e.g. Mediterranean), local (e.g. Londoner's), ethnic (e.g. Jewish) cuisines, flavours (e.g. spice), ingredients (e.g. vegetarian), diet (e.g. gluten-free) and other lifestyle-based specifications producing incalculable number of cookbooks in the majority of countries. And finally, in the 21st

century the mediation of food culture is even more dynamic than ever before and is manifested through all means, types and genres of existing media. Food has found its 'digital' home in social network accounts, in online communities of food lovers, food activists and it has thereby invaded all spheres of an individual's life through media products both old and new.

CHAPTER THREE

FOOD LITERACY – MEDIA LITERACY

“All sorrows are less with bread.”
Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra

The economic, social and technological changes of the last two decades of the 20th century have brought about new requirements for media literacy among consumers of media products in the 21st century. An understanding of narrative paradigm appears to be essential for ‘media literacy’ as defined by Joshua Meyrowitz (1998), Fran Ilich (2004), Gunther Kress (2003) and many others, and must also be complemented by communication and energy paradigm, post-postmodern or metamodern paradigm, and visibility paradigm. A complex understanding of all of these paradigms, leading to a wider sense of media literacy in the 21st century, allows us to grasp more fully the role which food plays in media, i.e. food literacy.

(Food) narrative, as was mentioned above, dominates all old and new media products and its importance is further strengthened by the growing participation of the visual mode in all forms of human communication. Narrative connects elements of the media communication process and engages the media consumer in the process of communication and, consequently, consumption. Helen Fulton (2005) states that narrative is perceived as a natural inner structure which is common to all humankind. At the same time, it plays one of the most important roles in acquiring economic profit, as it is used to sell products. From the marketing point of view, narrative mediates the sale, presenting the products of media to their potential customers. Thus, we can see narrative strategies being applied in films, adverts,

commercials, television news bulletins, comics or newspapers [Fulton 2005: 3-4]. Marie-Laure Ryan (2004) claims that narrative is not an artefact based on language, but is instead a mental, cognitive construct that is created by signs. It is constituted from pieces of reality, by setting and by agents/characters who perform their roles in actions/events and thereby make changes in the world of the narrative. For her “narrative is a mental representation of causally connected states and events which captures a segment in the history of a world and of its members” [Ryan 2004: 47].

Food appears in various narrative forms in different media genres: for example, newspaper articles dedicated to food, documentaries about historical and contemporary food and drink elements and ingredients broadcast on radio, references to food in television news programmes, cooking narratives in morning television, reality game shows focusing on food, food and cooking reality shows presenting chefs, breaks within and between individual programmes taken by countless commercials for healthy and/or tasty eating and drinking, or through the macro-narrative form of food magazines, cookbooks, television channels devoted to food, or food festivals. Ordinary audiences can become direct or indirect participants in the narratives by being invited to send their recipes, by being given the chance to become ordinary or extraordinary chefs on the television screen or simply by watching the programme, trying out some of the recipes, or discussing them with other people.

Statistics on audience shares show that television food narratives are commercially successful but further engagement can be found in follow-up elements on related websites; for instance, online course entitled “How to become a tv chef” [http://www.ehow.com/how_6804054_become-tv-chef.html].

Food narratives in various types of media attract not only those who enjoy cooking or are in some way professionally involved in the food industry but even those who do not enjoy cooking. One possible interpretation of this is that the narrative content itself becomes

secondary and it is the narrative form that attracts viewers and holds their attention.

Joshua Meyrowitz (1998) deals with critical ‘media literacy’ that expands an individual’s ability to decode images, messages, and spectacles and to become an autonomous, active citizen. No attempt to grasp and understand various messages produced by the media can be successful unless users can learn to acquire specific analytic skills which will help them to discover, study and interpret its elements and then to uncover the cultural and institutional structures and mechanisms of their functioning. Meyrowitz specifies three kinds of media literacy. The first type of knowledge about media is more connected with the production factors of the various media. Thus, media grammar literacy takes into account distinct media languages that vary from one medium to another [Meyrowitz 1998: 429]. The second type, medium literacy, deals with media as distinct environments, incorporating the influence of characteristics of each medium on its messages. This literacy shows how one medium is different from another and how the nature of each medium forms the main aspects of communication at all its levels [Ibid.: 432-434]. The third type is called media content literacy. It highlights media as channels carrying messages, the meaning of which is presented through a variety of elements. The forms of media content literacy provide the ability to analyse intended and unintended messages, to identify various genres of content, cultural, institutional and commercial forces and to understand that individuals and groups interpret messages differently [Ibid.: 425-426].

Similarly, Fran Ilich (2004) backs the need for media literacy, moving to the area of digital literacy under which he subsumes the capacity to read and write in different media and to read the code within ‘cyber lingo’, an activity which is neither easy nor an isolated act. The complexity of media literacy in the 21st century has also been analysed by Gunther Kress (2003), who confirms that “[i]t is no longer possible to think about literacy in isolation from a vast array of social, technological and economic factors” [Kress 2003: 1]. Kress also

stresses the dominance of imagery when he says that “[t]he logic of image now dominates the sites and the conditions of appearance of all ‘displayed’ communication, that is, of all graphic communication that takes place via special display and through the sense of sight” [Ibid.: 6].

Gunther Kress (2003) defines four essential factors of literacy in the new media age. The first is social and is characterised by a weakening or disappearance of relevant social framings. The second factor is economic and reflects the changing communication demands of the economies of knowledge and information. The third is communicational and deals with new uses and arrangements of modes of representation. The fourth and last factor is technological and relates to the facilities of the new media [Ibid.: 10].

The communication and energy paradigm of the turn of the 21st century is characterised by revolutionary changes in the economy and in the technology of the new era of the new millennium. Jeremy Rifkin (2011) terms this era as the Third Industrial Revolution and dates its beginning to the 1990s. He predicts the immanent convergence of internet technology and renewable energies into an *energy internet* that will change the world and sees this new era as a period in which people will produce and share green energy in the same way that they share information using relatively cheap computers, laptops, or Internet-accessible mobile phones [Rifkin 2011: 1-2].

Jeremy Rifkin discusses the diachronic perspective of changes starting in the Bronze and Iron Ages, and he terms the 19th century as the era of the First Industrial Revolution, a period based on the introduction of coal and steam-powered technology into the printing industry, resulting in printed books, newspapers and magazines which were capable of reaching masses of consumers. In Rifkin’s concept, the 20th century is called the Carbon Era and the people of the 19th and the 20th centuries are characterized as fossil fuel people. In his opinion the Second Industrial Revolution of the 20th century can be described as the oil era, with the development of centralized electricity supplies, electrical communication and suburban construction resulting in the

creation of motorway infrastructure for the economic expansion of the automobile age on both the European and American continents. This energy aspect is then joined by the information and communication technology revolution in the IT sector and the phenomenon of the internet in the 1990s. The author sees that the old media technologies of “telephone, radio and television were centralised forms of communication” [Ibid.: 20] suitable for the management and marketing of the economy of centralized fossil fuel energies, and he points to 2008 as the beginning of a new period in human history as the process of globalization reached its peak – the period of the Third Industrial Revolution.

The results of the processes that began with the First Industrial Revolution can be also embraced by the phenomenon of climate crisis, a long-term increase in the spread of weapons of mass destruction, the dramatic growth of urban and suburban centres and more and more rapid technological advancements; all of these phenomena have been incorporated by environmental philosophers into the term *Anthropocene* [cf. Angus 2016, Biermann, Lovbrand 2019, S’ahel 2019a, S’ahel 2019b]. According to Richard S’ahel (2019b) “[t]he Anthropocene is then an unwanted by-product of human activities, such as pollution, extensive use of plastic and concrete, nuclear weapons tests or factory farming of domesticated animals” [...] “Another consequence of the unstable Anthropocene climate and its extremes, such as heat waves, torrential rains, hurricanes with high-velocity winds, is a threat to food production and availability of potable water – with hundreds of millions people already suffering, especially in the tropics and subtropics” [S’ahel 2019b: 341-342].

Threats to food production and the availability of drinking water are by no means concerns of environmental philosophers alone, nor are such fears unique to the beginning of the 21st century. As Warren Belasco claims “nothing is more frightening or far-reaching than the prospect of running out of food” [Belasco 2006: vii]. Three thousand years ago Homer wrote that “A hungry stomach will not allow its

owner to forget it, whatever his cares and sorrows” [Ibid.]. In the 21st century many countries of the Third World face shortages of water and food, while simultaneously, developed countries are faced with the consequences of the overconsumption and waste of food and in the ongoing obesity epidemic. Eating disorders and genetically modified food production are now causing distress which is comparable with that caused by the lack of food and bio-products. Local food production is forced to compete with a globalised food market and food delivery system. Experts and scholars in agriculture, biology, medicine, geography, economy, environmental studies, together with anthropologists, sociologists, psychologists, historians, political scientists and food studies researchers engage in multidisciplinary debates about the future of food – its production, distribution and consumption. The results are mediated by scholarly publications in academic journals, books, online debate forums and online conferences.

Another paradigm paralleling the period of the Third Industrial Revolution is defined by scholars of humanities and arts as the period marking the end of the postmodern era and the rise of postmillennial post-postmodernity. Various authors use different terms to characterize this period of new developments – for Jeffrey T. Nealon it is *post-postmodernism*, Gilles Lipovetsky refers to *hypermodernity*, Alan Kirby calls it *digimodernism*, Robert Samuels terms it *automodernity*, Nicolas Bourriaud describes it as *altermodern*, Raoul Eshelman focuses on *performatism*, and Vermeulen and Akker try to embrace all of these new trends with the term *metamodernism* [Rudrum, Stavris 2015]. The authors of the metamodern paradigm have opened up an academic forum which allows us to discuss new theoretical approaches to the arts and literary and media texts that may be capable of addressing the main challenges of contemporary media within the new cultural paradigm, and also permit us to discuss communication and cultural studies within their changing contexts.

Many of the postmillennial scholars mentioned above, Jeffrey T. Nealon being one of them, use a very similar economic assessment to

describe the shift from postmodernism to post-postmodernism. Jeffrey T. Nealon sees post-postmodernism as an economic condition in much the same way that postmodernism was an economic condition of its own period, arguing that it is impossible to separate culture and economics, either now or in the past. Once the Cold War period had transformed into the era of globalized capitalism through economic deregulation and decentralization over the course of the 1980s, the world market was opened to global capital. Postmodern consumers gradually realized that values were not fixed, but that they were instead socially constructed depending on contexts that were constantly undergoing change. Post-postmodern consumers live in a culture dominated by neoliberalism and globalization where, according to Jeffrey T. Nealon, all of the postmodern tendencies are intensified and reach a culmination [Nealon 2015: 75-76].

Gilles Lipovetsky also deals with economic powers and markets in his definition of hypermodernism that embrace the complexity of the changing aspects of individualism. For him, hypermodernism is not a new sociological trend, but is instead an extreme form of consumerism, or hyperconsumerism, which is typical of the economic intensification of market powers (see Jeffrey T. Nealon's characteristics above), creating a culture with the constant demand for more and more commodities and services, also specified as a cult of excess. The new possibilities of communication and consumption which have been brought about by digital technologies and globalization have diminished geographical and temporal limits [Lipovetsky 2005]. The postmodern period that, according to Gilles Lipovetsky, brought about a significant social and cultural reorganization of democratic societies characterized by a substantial rise in consumption, communication and individualism at the end of the 20th century has ended and been replaced by an epoch of “[h]ypercapitalism, hyperclass, hyperpower, hyperterrorism, hyperindividualism, hypermarket, hypertext. . .social classes and class cultures are fading away... The State is on the retreat, religion and the family are being privatised, a market society is imposing itself” [Lipovetsky 2005: 30-31].

For Jeremy Rifkin, new communication media suit the needs of the management and marketing of newly distributed forms of energy. Rifkin compares the attitudes of a different generation by describing the young, educated generation that has grown up using social media and which is part of a global community identifying with Facebook and for whom the “patriarchal thinking, rigid social norms, and xenophobic behaviour of their elders is so utterly alien” [Rifkin 2011: 17]. This Third Industrial Revolution generation, or the generation of *the second modern revolution* as defined by Gilles Lipovetsky, entertains some of the almost forgotten traditional values of sociability, voluntarism, autonomy, morality, and love [Lipovetsky 2005]. Jeremy Rifkin also quotes examples of when this Internet generation challenged “the centralized media conglomerates in the West with peer sharing of music and information... and “in the Middle-East by challenging the centralised political rule of autocratic governments” [Rifkin 2011: 18].

Another example of a new postmillennial paradigm related to the media sphere is extensive visibility. Transparency, visibility, and invisibility are concepts which should be taken into consideration in the period of extensive media coverage of both public and private spheres. Thanks to the new technologies from the end of the 20th century described above there has been enormous growth in new media, and the world has become increasingly transparent.

Although people in many countries have almost unlimited access to vast quantities of information and data, they have very limited control over what can be made visible in a media text [Kráľ 2014]. New internet-based media possess the ability to create new varieties of visibility that seem to be pervading both public and private spheres. The decision on what becomes visible and what stays invisible in a media text is closely linked with marketing forces and with the concept of identity, and thus with the main social categories of education, class, gender, race, and ethnicity. The choices are often scrutinized further by political substantiation and ideological endorsement. As a result, there are serious limitations to media transparency, and therefore we can

discern the contrast between the hypervisibility of certain issues and the invisibility of others. In her final chapter entitled *Concluding Remarks: Fractal Visibility*, Françoise Král specifies that in the 21st century “visibility has become polymorphous and has migrated to different loci, some of which have a non-elitist and seemingly democratic operating mode (forms, chat rooms to name only a few)” [Král 2014: 179]. Placing the most intensive diversification of visibility into the period of hypermodernity, she continues by discussing media genres: “The fact that visibility has become an increasingly complex phenomenon, ubiquitous and incredibly diversified also raises the issue of the status and nature of the type of visibility produced by the new media and in particular of the art forms which are designed to have a large impact” [Ibid.: 179]. Finally, Françoise Král comes up with yet another new paradigm, by defining the 21st century as the *century of omnivisibility*, with all old and new media genres having an impact on everybody as an agent of visibility, and she terms this paradigm as *fractal visibility* [Ibid.: 180].

Food and cooking belong to the elements that enjoy the top positions on the visibility ladder in the hypermediation period of hyperconsumerism. If we want to determine why there is suddenly such a frequent focus on food and food preparation and why they have become hypermediated in both old and new media since the beginning of the 21st century, it is necessary to analyse changes in the private and public spheres, new developments in power relations in specific food cultures, aspects of transformation in the home and family, and a variety of new identities within the pre-existing categories of class, gender, ethnicity, nationality, religion, etc. Hypermediated food and cooking convey the economic, social, political and aesthetic meanings of their practitioners (agents) in societies signifying individual or collective identities. These are studied using various methodologies which uncover the complexity of relationships between culinary practices and hyperindividuals’ identities.

Hyperconsumerist profit-making food and cooking are omnivisible in cookbooks, newspaper food supplements, lifestyle magazines, food commercials on the radio, television chef shows, films, internet forums and mobile phone applications, with agents of visibility from all possible backgrounds, with no real control of their increasing visibility due to intertextuality mechanisms, food imagery and narrative multiplication in local and global media and social communication networks of these hypermodern times.

CHAPTER FOUR

FOOD PRACTICES – HYPERMODERN PRACTICES

*“How can you govern a country
which has 246 varieties of cheese?”*

Charles de Gaulle

The frequently heard slogan of ‘You are what you eat’ could in fact be replaced in the 21st century with the motto ‘You are what you watch others eating.’ Both old and new media produce and offer diverse lifestyle narratives to satisfy the ever more diverse needs and wishes of the hypermodern consumer. Depending on age, media literacy and economic capacity, hypermodern individuals search for mediated practices which they can connect to and/or apply to their own everyday practices. Due to the influence of multimedia and the internet, hyperconsumerism, represented in economic terms by shopping malls and non-stop customer services, is practiced via lifestyle magazines, new genres of reality television, and the constantly growing number of food sites and food mobile phone applications. In what Gilles Lipovetsky terms the *society of fashion* (2005), consumer goods are replaced by leisure practices, sports activities by online games, advertising by information, hygiene by self-education, beauty treatment by dietary practice, etc. Ordinary everyday activities follow the mediated hypermodern practices that are driven by the search for novelty, travel, well-being, and entertainment. Soňa Šnircová, together with many other postmillennial cultural studies authors, claims that the identity construction of the hypermodern individual results in rather extreme forms of individualism, self-creation, self-construction, self-assertion and self-transformation [Šnircová 2019: 216], to which

Jeremy Rifkin adds that “[i]f freedom is the optimization of one’s life, it is measured in the richness and diversity of one’s experience and the strength of one’s social bonds” [Rifkin 2011: 222].

Hyperindividuals focus on their quality of life, and they want to be interconnected and independent at the same time. Their social behaviour reflects the above described self-construction which is performed in their acts of their everyday existence, including those of food preparation and consumption. Academic publications dealing with ordinary culture or popular culture rank cooking amongst the practices of everyday life, ranging from elementary acts and rituals such as walking, talking, dwelling, driving and working/producing to more complex practices such as reading, listening and observing, especially when related to practices of media consumption. Michel de Certeau (1984) connects the art of cooking with rituals, with the organization of a network of relations, with the composition/manipulation of a space, and with marketing structures. Delia Chiaro understands food preparation and consumption as something more than basic biological functions. She claims that “[t]he consumption of food in Western society is no longer simply a human function carried out for reasons of physiological sustenance. Nowadays, food represents a series of complex social and psychological factors... Thus, not only are we what we eat, but we have also become selective consumers of what we *think* will help us achieve a certain status or condition” [Chiaro 2008: 195].

According to Michel de Certeau (1984), many daily practices are narrativized using specific procedures and tactics. People tell stories about their everyday lives, and narrativity is present in researchers’ discourses in which they deal with case studies, life stories and stories of groups, thus “a theory of narration is indissociable from a theory of practices, as its condition as well as its production” [de Certeau 1984: 78]. He develops this thought further by stating that “[s]ocial life multiplies the gestures and modes of behaviour (*im*)printed by narrative models; it ceaselessly reproduces and accumulates ‘copies’ of stories” [Ibid.: 186]. Although written almost 40 years ago, his characterization

applies fully to the new internet genres of food blogs, food chat rooms and social networks, which in both visual and written modes tell, cite and recite food stories. In the second volume of *The Practice of Everyday Life* (1998) he and his two co-authors develop the idea of food practices into a much more complex concept encompassing the description of social, economic, political and cultural concepts.

Hypermodern food practices are very different from modern or post-modern ones. The hypermodern media instructs people about what they should eat and drink or what they should do to stay 'in'. Just as the media in the 1990s used photographs and videos of McDonald's opening its first restaurant in Moscow to bring the model for fast-food and an icon of the American lifestyle to the newly minted capitalist consumers of former-Communist countries, it plays a similar role in 2013 by providing the same audiences with the imagery of the new global phenomenon of Starbucks which it associates with young, popular, and online culture.

According to Delia Chiaro (2008) many nations in the 21st century practice "an extreme of gourmet cooking boasting the most highly paid chefs in Europe, many of whom have risen to the status of media superstars" [Chiaro 2008: 195]. Hyperconsumers have access to other nations' culinary traditions not only when they travel but also through travel reality shows on television or online food blogs written by those who have travelled to these places. As with many other cultural practices, cooking and eating practices become, according to Július Rozenfeld [2019: 233], both globalised and localised. Hypermodern media allow food practices to break free of the limitations of space and time. They are hypermediated to each hyperindividual's own cultural practices. This richness of mediated food practices makes hyperconsumer lives full of diverse lifestyle experiences. The hyperindividuals of the 21st century use both old and new media in their search for narratives of imagination, and the images and narratives of the lifestyles that they wish to acquire. They are directed to what they should eat, drink and do in order to be stay 'relevant' or to eat safely,

healthily and well. Food narratives of cooking contests, game shows and food-related documentary series encourage hyperconsumer viewers to engage in fantasy. Hyperindividuals are exposed to the idea that their dreams can be realized through the consumption of these food fantasies on public and commercial channels.

These food practices are, on the other hand, accompanied by a distinct absence of certain food-adjacent practices such as waste separation and recycling, and largely ignore issues such as food waste, eating disorders or obesity. On this basis, we might agree with Gilles Lipovetsky's (2005) characterisation of hypermodern practices as of a synthesis of order and disorder, moderation and excess, care and ignorance. One result of this is the growth of lifestyle programming in the old media, the extensive use of social networks by younger generations who want to take care of their health but who also suffer from bulimia and anorexia at the same time, the profusion of blogs addressing environmentalist and third world issues, and the avalanche of porn sites.

According to Gilles Lipovetsky (2005), the extensive mediation of food practices is one of the elements that characterises postmillennial times. On the one hand, hyperindividuals live for the present, in constant movement, demanding continual novelty and desiring to be happy. Their lives are characterized by flexibility, adaptability and endless improvement. Their well-being, self-fulfilment, comfort and leisure require immediate satisfaction. "Consume without delay, travel, enjoy yourself, renounce nothing: the politics of a radiant future have been replaced by consumption as the promise of a euphoric present" [Lipovetsky 2005: 37]; this approach can be summarized as the cult of the new, and it finds its realization in lifestyle food magazines, celebrity cookbooks, food travel memoirs, cooking shows, internet recipe sites, and food festivals, but also in tourist guides to local restaurants or food markets, newsletters published by breweries, postcards of countries with typical local foods, or mobile phone applications to search for and evaluate restaurants, etc.

However, the cult of the new is also accompanied by anxiety about the future caused by hypermodern deregulation, resulting in the constant fear of unemployment, the questionable quality of education and training, and changes in healthcare [Ibid.: 46]. In particular, concern about health and longevity is very much linked to food narratives in the media – diet cookbooks, cookbooks for healthy eating and losing weight, television programmes providing programs for physical exercise, nutrition manuals in magazines, and online information about bulimia and anorexia. Of course, it is not only young hyperconsumers who consume these products, but nonetheless they are representative of the cult of health among hyperindividuals.

Moreover, mediated food practices participate to a large extent in the formation of and changes to the group identities of hyperindividuals. Food participates in the process of defining individuality and an individual's place in a society. Cultural theorists of the beginning of new millennium claim that the concept of cultural identity has acquired a broader meaning and a more prominent status in various spheres of the existence of both individuals and of groups. Notions of hypermodern self-creation, self-transformation and belonging or interconnectedness function together on a cultural scene that is on the one hand under the influence of globalisation and on the other hand frames identity not only within national but more often within regional and local perspectives. Thus, hypermodern individuals require much more complex mechanisms that link their present with their past, both in a tangible material sense of artefacts and also in intangible mental categories of ideas, traditions, and events. And they look for these in various texts and cultural practices, including food practices.

Looking at food practices in the past, we find that anything related to food has always had rules and meaning, and many of these remain valid even today. Food and food practices communicate meanings of class, ethnicity, religion, and other group affiliations. In the introductory chapter to her extensive study *Cuisine and Culture: A*

History of Food and People (2011), Linda Civitello summarises many food practices which date back to prehistory; how it was decided who was allowed to kill for food, or to farm for food; what utensils were used for which food; who ate with whom and when; what was served to whom. Linda Civitello also describes how these practices and their rules and meanings varied from continent to continent and from country to country, and by placing her findings within the context of attitudes to food, nature and the environment she also draws conclusions about identity – religious, ethnic and national [Civitello 2011: viii]. An even more complex portrayal of the essential identity foundations for food practices is provided by Deane W. Curtin and Lisa M. Heldke, the editors of the book *Cooking, Eating, Thinking: Transformative Philosophies of Food* (1992), a selection of texts dealing with philosophies of food. In the chapter titled “From Culture and Cuisine”, the author Jean-Francois Revel postulates the question that gastronomy tries to answer; “How to eat well without really taking nourishment?” [Revel 1992: 145]. The chapter goes on to speculate on the economic constraints that forbid or allow the pleasure of eating, concluding that “gastronomical pleasure can really be experienced to the fullest only if variety, a contrast, and hence a multiplicity of dishes and wines is offered. Therefore, the summits of this art are reached in precisely those periods when the refinement of recipes allies complexity of conception with lightness of touch of execution” [Ibid.].

Other authors disagree with Revel’s limitless quest for novelty and variety. Advocates of ‘comfort food’ argue that “[v]ariety is not universally desirable” [Heldke 2003: 11] because it is the familiarity of food that brings comfort and security, and there are often economic and health reasons to support the uniformity and repetitiveness of meals [Ibid.]. Supporters of comfort food are in a minority because the vast majority of hyperconsumers pursue their quest for novelty, uniqueness, and exoticism, accumulating specific cultural capital of unique food knowledge, exotic food tasting experiences and the collection of new authentic recipes. Some authors warn that the societies of developed

countries tend to forget that only about 25 percent of the world's population enjoy abundant food supplies from a wide choice of food options; 75 percent of humankind eat only available food or suffer from food shortages [Anderson 2005: 97].

Food identity factors of class, religion and ethnicity are and have always been performed through food sharing or food solidarity (status, class), collective consumption of food (family, friendship group, networks), feasting (religion), food selectiveness (religion) and many other acts. In the hypermediated food practices of the 21st century there is one social category that pervades various layers and levels of both individual and group identities of a hyperconsumer – that of gender. As all aspects of these food practices are gendered, from the choice of individuals in food narratives of domestic or professional cooking, through narrators and protagonists, down to the plots, settings and themes, they can therefore either affirm conventional representations of social roles or disrupt them. Even if televised food narratives make the audiences of the 21st century believe that male members of the household can be active cooks within the family, thereby embodying a new conception of masculinity, statistics provide clear evidence that the majority of everyday domestic cooking is still performed by female members of the household.

Family, another social identity context and one which is inseparable from gender, constantly dominates food studies dealing with cooking. In his book *The Meaning of Cooking* (2010), Jean-Claude Kaufmann discusses the issues of family identity and family relationships focusing on the dominance of kitchen as the space where the identities are created and changed. He also addresses the family meal as a social construct and characterises the processes of cooking and eating as the basis for the formation of personal relationships. Other, mostly feminist philosophers and sociologists, tackle different issues relevant for family identity within the domain of food, cooking and eating; for example, cookery as a domestic science, the roles of

food in the representation of womanhood in popular culture, eating disorders and food taboos [cf. Heldke 2003].

Food practices as hypermediated by the media industry constituting the mainstream of the 21st century has reached peak of the art as defined above by Jean-Francois Revel. These practises are both hyperconsumer-driven and hyperindividual-oriented. Food blogs, mobile phone restaurant apps, food photo-sharing websites and food maps – they all actively serve the identity choices of the food practices of their consumers whose main considerations fall within the above mentioned categories of health, well-being, welfare and the performance of distinct individual lifestyles. The variety of food genres in different media reflect the heterogeneity of the consumers of food media. Signe Rousseau claims that “food media as they exist today cater to everyone from complete beginners in the kitchen to accomplished cooks; from *foodies* or self-confessed *food porn* addicts to those who enjoy watching humiliations and victories in competitive settings; from food activists (including *healthy, local, sustainable, or organic* eaters) to those who delight in thumbing their noses at the so-called food police” [Rousseau 2012: x]. These food practices are often described as food hedonism and food, according to Michelle Phillipov [2017: 14], is “a burgeoning entertainment industry, with an ever-growing number of television programmes, websites and social media forums dedicated to cooking and food-related lifestyles... [and] the food media industry is a complex one, characterized by diverse market segments” and consequently by diverse consumer groups.

Kathleen LeBesco and Peter Naccarato claim that “[w]hile on the surface food culture offers its consumers education, entertainment, and escape, it implicitly invites them not only to appreciate the beauty and pleasure of well prepared food, but also to consume the subtle messages embedded within these representations” [LeBesco, Naccarato 2008: 1]. Thus, food narratives in cooking shows not only have the potential to change consumers’ cooking practices, but they may also persuade them to become more active consumers of foodways – food products, food

services, food preparation tools; in other words, they can manipulate consumers to buy and use foodways products. Audiences watching cooking shows on both national public and commercial television channels, or food channels broadcasting non-stop not only in the countries of their origin but also in other countries over cable and satellite networks, are exposed to mediated food practices that in both their plots and their presentation carry “the work of ideology” [Hartley 2002: 154]. The ideology, whether as dominant cultural beliefs or as political ideas potentially present in food narratives, may lead to either a strengthening or a change in identity factors – assumptions, stereotypes, attitudes and behaviours of the individuals who form their audiences.

Thus returning to the motto which we amended at the beginning of this chapter, in the 21st century people are no longer what they eat, although their daily diets do in fact shape their identities. Hyperconsumers living in media foodscapes filled with mediated food narratives in print and on the large or small screens, consume the products of the food industries; they get new recipes from chef shows, they find inspiration from food blogs, they learn about new restaurants from a tweet, they discuss new food styles at parties, and much more. They are what they watch other people eating.

CHAPTER FIVE

FOOD FOR – LIFESTYLE MEDIA – THOUGHT

*“Pull up a chair.
Take a taste.
Come join us.
Life is so endlessly delicious.”
Ruth Reichl*

Genres of popular radio and television shows are as old as the media types themselves but it was in the 1990s that tabloidization, infotainment and lifestyle programming began to dominate all media. Lifestyle genres have become the most visible constituting element of broadcast and new media both in form and content in print. The attraction of lifestyle content for the media industry can be attributed to audiences’ fascination with the genre, the relatively low production costs involved and its appeal to advertisers providing sources for production and distribution. According to the theoreticians of the postmillennial paradigms described above, the intensive growth of lifestyle-related content is a manifestation of hypermodernism and digimodernism and their technological foundations resulting in the interactivity and anti-elitism of all cultural production. Lifestyle narratives with imagery, stories and themes relevant to the everyday life of the hypermodern individual consumer are to a certain extent created by individual consumers themselves, thanks to the spread of the new technologies of computers, mobile phones and new interactive media.

Thinkers of metamodernism and other humanities scholars follow the tendencies of lifestyle genres to address the identities of hypermodern individuals in dominating perspectives of the class,

family, gender, sexuality, and ethnicity. The narratives of lifestyle genres offer consumer fantasies of the potential changes in, for example, appearance, home and free-time activities, and they therefore also address the possible transformation of the self, i.e. the transformation of identity. Many authors characterise lifestyle media culture as being surveillance-based and participatory in its form, and narcissistic, emotionally persuasive and self-reflexive culture in its content [cf. Biressi, Nunn 2005]. Lifestyle genres function primarily as a means to provide a platform for everyday social reality. The dominant mode of their narratives is dramatic. The narratives supply dramatized stories that are directly accessible to the audiences and have important cultural significance. Regardless of how unoriginal, banal and repetitive they may appear to be, they nonetheless offer valuable material for understanding the world in which their audiences live. While they by no means mirror reality faithfully, nor do they distort it; instead they select, refashion, discuss and comment on the issues and problems of their audiences' personal and social lives.

Furthermore, lifestyle genres are considered to provide answers to all conceivable questions and to provide ideas for all types of changes and pleasures for hypermodern individuals who are surrounded by a rapidly growing media market, flooded with hundreds of new radio stations and television channels, using dozens of mobile phone applications and searching on millions of websites. Lifestyle genres supply hypermodern consumers with fresh daily content in new short-form genres which can be produced cheaply at a faster turnover. The product placement which is so typical of lifestyle genres and the endorsement of the right products guaranteeing self-improvement in one of the lifestyle areas also bring in a higher income from advertising. Thus lifestyle becomes an agent of hyperconsumerism, with content focussing on celebrities, gossip and domestic subject matter such as cooking, gardening, home, pets, physical enhancement through health, fitness and beauty and the purer consumerism of shopping, fashion and travel.

Alan Kirby (2009) sees lifestyle genres as the most representative examples of digimodernist texts on the grounds of their developing and incomplete character, multiple directions, irreproducibility, fluidity, and multiple, social and anonymous authorship [Kirby 2009: 57-60]. These features are present in food and cooking reality television programmes and can also be found in food blogs, mobile phone restaurant apps and food websites, and they actively serve individual lifestyle choices of food practices. Digimodernist consumers navigate the internet while searching for a new recipe, they vote for a contestant in a cooking contest, or travel vicariously to Australia with someone interested in local cuisine via the docu-reality television genre. The anti-elitist, banal, naïve and often somewhat simplistic content offers simple narrative themes, a variety of topics for discussion, inoffensive conclusions, regular simplifications and generalisations, and together with the choice of protagonists and celebrity narrators, represent the trivial postmillennial lifestyle cultural products which can often be perceived as meaningless, mindless, trivial, conformist, rude, violent or even pornographic. Very rarely do we hear any mention of the more serious issues related to food production, preparation and consumption or its effects on public health, the economy or the environment.

Food narratives in lifestyle genres successfully combine all of the domains of lifestyle content in both the private and the public sphere – the household (home, garden, pets), personal enhancement (health, fitness, beauty) and shopping (fashion and travel). They allow the introduction of fictional food narratives into dramatized factual forms. This merging of private and social public lives is accompanied by entertainment features. The domestic skills of the cooking process are combined with gardening and with the interest in healthy organic products; new recipes are demonstrated which aim to help with weight loss and allow participants to fit into fashionable clothes which in turn bring in more income from advertising for private companies; practical advice on food preparation is a means to self-improvement and well-being, and as such it serves didactic goals; portrayals of interesting

localities in both urban and rural environments are combined with visits to traditional local eateries or new and *chic* restaurants, local breweries and distilleries, and often incorporate the preparation of traditional local meals on the spot or visits to local households, etc.

Television food narrative forms vary across individual genres of television. They may range from the secondary, background presence of a chef who cooks his favourite meal while the presenters are occupied with other activities, with the presenters only occasionally stopping by the kitchen corner to comment on the progress of the chef, a format which is typical for morning television schedules. The most visible forms are the commercials for food and food-related commodities which are chosen to correspond with the target audience, hence consumers. Food narratives are central to television quizzes and game shows, cooking contests, chef shows or food-related travel documentaries. The success of the real cookery lifestyle programming boom can be seen in the expansion of food narratives into television prime-time in the last two decades, with the traditionally day-time formats with their more feminine connotations becoming more hybridized and seen as a solid part of prime-time programming.

As has already been suggested above, food narratives represent narratives of imagination and they help construct hyperconsumerist fantasies that are sold to the viewers with the help of professional chefs, celebrity chefs, or eccentric amateur chefs. Chefs provide direct and explicit advice for the consumption of these fantasies or prompt the audiences to buy cook-books or other food-related products. They instruct the audience in the art of cooking by teaching them the art of food-related lifestyles. The hyperconsumer is exposed to the idea that their dreams can be realized through the process of the consumption of these food fantasies. The chefs not only construct the food fantasies, but they also provide recipes for the viewers to produce their own dreams; they not only educate their consumers, but, and this is indeed a priority for them, they entertain, offer an escape from reality, invite the consumers to enjoy the pleasure of beautifully arranged and well served

food in exotic destinations. For instance, in the hybrid reality genres of the travel documentary and the travel food show, the chef attracts consumers by transporting them to exotic locations via media tourism, selling them the tastes and sensations of colourful meals from unusual restaurants and allowing them to enter the realm of food fantasies without having to leave the familiar comfort of their armchairs.

In some studies, the popularity of television cooking shows is compared to the attraction of a spectator sport. In both cases individual consumers watch professionals at work as they demonstrate a level of skill which seems unachievable for the viewers at home. The cooking process is presented to the viewers as a ritual with the symbolic meaning of the transformation of raw to cooked acting in a similar fashion to the transformation of the sports activity into a winning goal. Moreover, in both activities there is a strong element of voyeuristic satisfaction [Rappoport 2003: 193].

Food narratives also typically display a high level of intertextuality. Chefs become celebrities and as such they appear in a wide range of different genres of media; in newspaper articles, in advertisements, in articles in lifestyle magazines, on radio talk shows, in terrestrial and digital food media (e.g. food television, YouTube, tweets, blogs, Facebook posts), as authors of cookery books, etc. Celebrity chefs become brands in and of themselves and this allows them to present their own lifestyles in tandem with their recipes. They invite hyperconsumers into their homes, the design of which is granted an importance equal to that of their chosen recipe. They teach their audiences more about how to live than about how to cook; they allow their viewers to imagine the transformation of their mundane lives into celebrity lifestyles through the spectacle of culinary practices. Their dominant role is that of lifestyle narrator and consumer industry enhancer.

Food also serves its elementary function as a connecting element, not only in lifestyle genres of television where people who do not know each other meet are brought together through their discussions of food;

indeed, in such media, it is the food itself which enables them to get to know each other. Food also facilitates social bonds in other media discourses. Print advertising and commercials are full of images of people meeting over a cup of coffee, a drink, a meal or by cooking together. Food is a central trope of numerous television and theatrical films and in many other it facilitates the encounters of the protagonists or the development of the plot. Nonetheless, Massimo Montanari's claim that "on all social levels sharing a table is the first sign of membership in a group" [qtd. in Charron, Desjardins 2011: 1] takes on a new aspect in the discourse of new media, where or via which hyperindividuals can come closer to each other in a more virtual sense and where they create their own communities through virtual social networks.

In the last two decades, the rapid advances in technology and the multiplying functions of the internet and their subsequent effect on social networks mean that the experience of sharing a meal around the table with friends has been replaced by sharing photos of meals with 'friends' who are usually grouped to more than one virtual social network. The instantaneous sharing of information and lifestyle images via mobile phone applications together with data providers enabling the constant presence of hyperindividuals in virtual spaces has created an environment which supports the formation of ad-hoc social groups and sub-groups, such as, for example, the followers of a digimodernist consumer's social network account. The content of social networking, i.e. the content of the popular culture of hypermodern individuals, is created and posted by the members of the social groups themselves; it is preserved and shared further by the technology and stored in its memory. The integrity of these new social groups existing in social media is either non-existent or very limited. The increasing use of social media motivates hypermodern consumers to feel free to share their views, opinions, and images without paying heed to the consequences for themselves or their social groups.

Food and foodways are bought, prepared, consumed, preserved and shared in online foodscapes. Digimodernist consumers document and share everything they produce and consume, including food. Hypermodern producers aim to create products that combine the lifestyle elements of popular culture, fashion, food and which can be practiced and consumed online. The visualisation of both the production and consumption of food lifestyles is essential because it is the visual presentation that attracts hyperconsumers and makes the consumption and sharing more authentic, appealing and displayable on social media. Many researchers analysing this phenomenon of food imagery use the term ‘food porn’ [cf. Taylor, Keating 2018]. They examine concepts such as ‘eater-tainment’, or ‘context-free eating’, and they try to provide answers to issues over the role of media in the presentation of what is considered ‘good food’, how it should be prepared and shared, and how consumers should resist the intensive food production industries.

Food-related content and other lifestyle social media of the digital era has had a visible impact on the work of professionals. For instance, professional food critics’ reviews of restaurants, meals, new food diets and trends are contested by an avalanche of amateur consumer reviews in the forms of social network posts, blogs, short texts in online newspapers and on magazines websites. Even pre-election canvassing, which in the past consisted of meetings between candidates and potential voters over a formal fundraising dinner or drinks reception has been replaced by online campaigning on social media, a more ‘virtually’ interactive approach. Political candidates use their own websites, social network accounts, blogs, etc. Some parties and/or individual candidates offer discounts on certain food items purchased on election day [<https://militarybenefits.info/election-day-freebies-discounts-promotions/>], while some restaurants sponsored by political parties offer special election promotions for their customers/voters [<https://www.qsrweb.com/articles/restaurant-marketing-calendars-include-election-day-promotions/>].

An analysis of data from search engines and online platforms shows that food and cooking related searches have been among the top search categories in the second decade of the 21st century and some of the most popular food services also offer their own online shopping-assistant service [<https://blog.google/products/assistant/order-your-favorite-food-with-google/>]. YouTube uploads register food and cooking videos of both celebrity chefs and amateur cooks and 10 percent of users have searched for ‘how to cook’ videos on the platform [<https://www.youtube.com/analytics>]. Online platforms also allow hypermodern individuals to get involved not only in direct food consumption but also in other food related activities. Food activists, local and/or organic food producers, alternative food movements, eating disorders support associations, food sustainability specialists – they all work on their projects and try to create social support groups on the platforms by offering digital practices and everyday online food interaction, including webinars, discussion forums, etc. proving the importance of digital connectivity in the modern age and suggesting yet another alternative to the slogan ‘you are what you eat’ – ‘You Are What You Tweet’ [cf. Rousseau 2012].

CONCLUSION

*“Cooking is at once child’s play and adult joy.
And cooking done with care is an act of love.”*

Craig Claiborne

In the text of this monograph, the phrase ‘you are what you eat’, a motto which is also found in so many of the sources consulted in the writing of this book, has been modified into several new versions. These are ‘you are what you watch others eating’ and ‘you are what you tweet’. Indeed, depending on the focus of the food representation and/or mediation and the acquired identity by the food media consumer, it might be possible to offer even more variations on the theme; for example, ‘you are what you cook’, ‘you are what you food-shop’, or ‘you are what you food-blog’. Besides, even more varied alterations open up if we shift our attention beyond the foodscapes.

The food media identity which an individual adopts or acquires depends on many factors. The research presented in this monograph is intended to prove that media literacy enhanced by food literacy may contribute to the active functioning of hypermodern individuals in the 21st century consumer society; individuals who can then find their own place and role in the foodscapes of hypermediated discourses. Instead of drawing final conclusions, which would be quite impossible as this research is very much a work in progress, I propose an alternative, more personal evaluation of the processes that have formed my own food media identity. The following observations aim at supporting the points which have been presented above – that food is much more than a material or a source of nutrition.

Food is ...

Food is – my childhood memories.

Many of my childhood memories are linked to food. Whenever and wherever, I eat strawberries, the image that invariably comes to my mind is of myself as a five or six-year old child sitting on the ground in my parents' garden eating unwashed fruit freshly picked from the strawberry patch. I suddenly feel the same freshness of the late spring soil and again and again I admire the naturalness of the red colour of the fruit before it is transformed into the juicy taste of my father's strawberries...

This strawberry myth has one more representation which is linked to the regular spring visits I used to make to Paris. The early strawberries brought to France from one of its former colonies were an irresistible temptation as I made my way back from the 'Mitterrand Library' (The Bibliothèque nationale de France) or from the 'Beaubourg Library' (The Bibliothèque publique d'information inside the *Centre Pompidou*). Eaten unwashed, yet again, the strawberries made an ample reward for a day spent studying (of course) food and foodways.

Food is – my favourite meal.

French potatoes *à la my mother* could not, cannot and never will be replaced by any other meal. As a seasoned traveller who is not afraid to try unknown meals and is brave enough to choose from menus in languages I do not know, I still think there is nothing better than my mother's 'French potatoes'. In fact, there is very little resemblance to the original French potatoes which we find as a standard side dish in many French meals, except perhaps for the presence of potatoes in the dish. Everything else is an enhancement added by Slovak cooks, both in form and in content. Layers of sliced potatoes alternate with layers of sliced hard-boiled eggs, layers of sliced sausages of at least two

different types, well covered by sour cream and well-seasoned with salt and black pepper, not to forget the thick layer of pork lard which serves as the foundation for all this... The French would be very surprised when introduced to this Slovak version. My 80-year old mother never needs to ask what she should cook when I go back to visit my parents. She knows because mothers know everything about their children and their favourite meals.

Food is – a special treat from a friend.

During my visits to Palma, my Spanish colleague and friend always treats me to special meals and even more special red wines (but because I am quite a slow learner of good red wines, we have recently moved on to Spanish ‘cava’ of which I am a much faster learner). During one of my first visits he treated me to a fantastic ‘black rice,’ a meal with a long history, endless variations and changing representations that depend on consumers’ characteristics and expectations. The owner of the small family restaurant brought us a huge pan with the best ‘black rice’ I have ever eaten. That evening I could recite the *Oda a la paella* (the Ode to Paella) with its author José María Pemán y Pemartín. This poem celebrates the way in which paella respects its individual ingredients while achieving a harmonious whole...

*¡Oh insigne sinfonía de todos los colores!
¡Oh ilustre paella
porfuera con subblusa de colores,
quemadita por dentro con ansias de doncella!
¡Oh policromo plato colorista
que antes que con el gusto se come con la vista!
Concentración de glorias donde nada se deja.
Compromiso de Caspe entre el pollo y la almeja.
¡Oh plato decisivo:*

*gremial y colectivo!
¡Oh plato delicioso
donde todo es hermoso
y todo se distingue, pero nada está roto!
¡Oh plato liberal donde un grano es un grano
como un hombre es un voto!*

And its translation into English:

Oh famous multi-coloured symphony!
Oh illustrious paella
on the outside a colourful blouse,
burning from within like a yearning maiden!
Oh polychromatic, colourful dish
that your eyes enjoy before your stomach!
Concentration of glories where everything counts.
Spain's compromise between chicken and clams.
Oh decisive and collaborative dish!
Oh delicious dish
where everything is beautiful
and everything stands out, but nothing is broken!
Oh generous dish where one grain of rice is one grain
just as one man is one vote!
<http://spanishlinguist.us/tag/oda-a-la-paella/>

Food is – an unobtainable meal.

I spent two very different but food-wise very similar study stays in Norwich, East Anglia, the U.K. in 1992 and in Moscow, Russia in 1993. To a certain extent they both directed my academic career to its present formula but, more significantly for this text, they were both marked by a shortage of food.

In Norwich the food stores and supermarkets were flooded with food but I could not afford to buy enough food with the money I had at

that time. So my 'Norwich' diet consisted of yogurt, bread, spaghetti, very cheap tomato ketchup, potatoes, eggs, Brussel sprouts, onions and the cheapest sunflower oil – all available in the cheapest food store and on the market. The only variety over this period of almost four months was the combination of these ingredients into individual meals. And not to forget, the traditional roast beef, Yorkshire pudding, green peas, and carrots, all well covered by gravy, generously prepared by the landlady as my Sunday lunch 'special,' and the notoriously repetitive breakfasts composed of cereals, corn flakes with milk, orange juice and tea, served even more generously by my landlord every morning. When I left home, my parents had equipped me with a traditional 'food package'; a substantial piece of bacon (so I could cut one thin slice every day to survive in the U.K. without buying anything other than bread) and 93 chocolate Christmas sweets (one for each of the days I expected to spend in the U.K. beginning on the 7th of January). I shared some of the bacon with Spooner, my landlords' dog, although I selfishly ate all of the chocolates myself...

In Moscow, the grant I received in US dollars propelled me into the category of Russian ruble millionaires, but the food stores were empty so the food supplies from home – spaghetti, dried soups, canned lunchmeat, and meat pates (and traditional Christmas chocolate sweets) which I had brought by the kilo came in handy. Twice a week bread, butter and cheese were delivered to the food stores, but fruit and vegetables were only available from women who sold them on the pavements in front of the empty food stores. Because the temperatures in January and February in Moscow usually dropped to 15-20 degrees below zero, the state of the fruit and vegetables laying on the pavements was rather 'interesting.' The only real meat available came in the form of the ungutted chickens hanging from the ceilings of trucks parked in front of the food stores. Because of the low temperatures the chickens had a blueish tinge so we called them 'sinhaya ptica' (blue bird) and we never plucked up the courage to buy them...

Food is – a meal served to my family.

Food is – a special treat for my guests.

Food is – a meal in my favourite restaurant.

Food is – ... and many other experiences and dreams I will keep for my future publications.

“I am not a glutton
– I am an explorer of food”

Erma Bombeck

To François...

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