

In chapter 7 the author shows how after the Revolution, the notion of *terroir* continued to be present in literary works and public discourse, and internal and regional differences acquired at this point a strategic importance in the definition of ‘Frenchness’. In the mapping processes of the new departments, Paris has been conceived as the head and the departments as different parts of the body: *terroir* became a way of living the nation, rearticulating in new ways the relationship between people and places theorized in previous centuries.

The author uses an impressive range of sources showing that French culinary culture is linked to the broader philosophical and aesthetic concerns of the time. The book is an important contribution to scholars of food and culture since it offers a remarkable literary overview over the centuries, complementing other historical and anthropological books that have focused on contemporary definitions of *terroir* as distinction, hierarchy, and the re-localization of identity in a global era. This book offers a philosophical journey into the past of this concept, showing the processes that led to the formation of this complex and layered term.

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Joan Morgan: *The Book of Pears: The Definitive History and Guide to over 500 Varieties*: paintings by Elisabeth Dowle: Ebury Press, 2015: 304 pp., hardback, £45.00.

They used to say ‘Pears for Heirs’, which derives from the seventeenth-century expression of optimism and altruism: ‘Walnuts and pears you plant for your heirs’, which is not only generous but very far sighted. Three hundred years ago pears were at the height of fashion and in Herefordshire it was common to plant whole avenues of them. And then make perry in the autumn. At Much Marcle in blossom time the drive leading to Hellen’s Manor is a wonder to behold. The avenue was planted in 1710 so it has lasted very well indeed. Pear trees are not only long lived, they can be very tall, up to sixty feet high and were often used as boundary markers and planted at crossroads which are more often than not, roundabouts these days. There’s one north of Oxford, now called Pear Tree Park and Ride. But closer to home in the Somerset just off the A303 and A 37 is the National Trust property, Lytes Cary, which once grew over forty different varieties of pear, including the Somerton Pear, Antick Pear, Ruddick Pear, Chesil or Pear Nought, Bishop’s censor and the Russett Sweatter.

But these days the word pear has different connotations. Not just *au pair* and ‘pear cider’. Self help or nanny state? Get planting. Maybe the future is pear shaped after all. But ‘pear shaped’ has several different meanings. It can mean a voluptuous shapely lady with large hips, a rich sonorous voice or ‘things going awry’ which is apparently derives from Second World War R.A.F. slang. But this may even be First War slang referring to round, observer balloons which were descending fast and became pear shaped when hit by enemy fire.

The main thing is that if you want to plant pear trees or to just identify them, you have to know what you are doing. Identification is never easy. You need a conference with yourself. And indeed *Conference* is very often the only English pear you will ever find in a supermarket. Raised in 1886 by Francis Rivers, *Conference* is ubiquitous, but there are hundreds of other varieties out there. So if you need to find out about all the other varieties of pear, do not despair, help is now at hand.

The pomologist and fruit historian, Dr Joan Morgan has, after thirty years of detailed research, produced a truly remarkable book describing the wonderful secret world of pears. I first met Joan fifteen years ago at Brogdale in Kent, home of the National Fruit Collection where they have over 550 varieties of pear. Her book is a labour of love and it is jam packed with fascinating details of pear history and brimming with illustrations and photographs, old and new. The true delights are the many wonderful and evocative paintings of pears by Elisabeth Dowle which remind me of the great 19th Century Herefordshire Pomona.

Here are Assyrian pears, Persian pears, Greek pears, Roman pears, medieval pears, the courtly love of the pear, pear manuscripts, walled gardens, French pears, Flemish pears, Royalist pears, espalier pears, cordon pears, cooking pears, pears as hard as rock and perry pears galore. Even in my own village in Somerset there is a *Catillac* a large French cooking variety first recorded in 1665. And last year I found another cooking pear called *Uvedales St Germain* in a community garden in Exeter. And this year I stumbled upon a tall perry pear, possibly a *Parsonage*, near Yeovil. There are still many old pear trees dotted around in the west country. Even Plymouth has its own rare pear, small, wild and gritty, which may have come across from Brittany. Pears: we just have to go out there and identify them, savour them and where possible replant them for the next generation.

The history of the pear is paramount and this new book gives a deep insight into the propagation and discovery of many interesting varieties. How rich is a pear when it is ripe, *au point*, perfection itself. Joan Morgan's wonderful book is a bible for pear lovers, a feast of rich stories which must be savoured with a ripe *Doyenne du Comice*, a fine glass of sparkling perry or pear brandy. Heartily recommended. The future is definitely voluptuous and pear-shaped in the best possible sense.

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