





some imaginary conversation taking place between humble fisherman and buyers. The waiters moved their arms with a sneering grace. Sparrow nodded in a knowing way. They waited a long while, engaged in an erratic group conversation. The wine was poured out, tasted, served. Nothing in particular seemed to be happening, but this seemed to be a part of the ceremony.

Everything to be slowed down, formalised, made almost absurd, as though something of vital importance was about to happen. The soup with the bread and the rouille was brought on and served out with care and precision. There was another long pause. Sparrow gazed again, sidewise at Sophia. Around them the restaurant seemed to be almost silent, in spite of the number of diners. Then came the fish, still whole, on their own plate, served by the waiters as a piece of distant theatre. The food was excellent but the environment so artificial that everything tasted faded, distant.

*If only*, said Sophia as she lay with Sparrow later in the bed of his hotel room, *if only the world of the original fishermen still existed, the rocks by the sea, the spray, the fire, the pan, the huts, the*

criminality, is naturally the Bouillabaisse Parisienne, a contradiction in terms, where butter is used instead of oil, and where even Pernod may be added.

The origin of the name has, appropriately enough for a dish of disputed origins, various explanations. It may come from the provençal *bouiabaissa* or *bolhabaisa*, meaning that the temperature of the liquid should be lowered. Or from the provençal *bouipeis*, combining boiling and fish (peis). Or again from the provençal, implying that the pot is *bout en bas* placed low down on a fire lit amongst some stones, cooking the fish which are not suitable to be sold. At any rate there is agreement that the source is provençal.

Amongst the fish found acceptable for a true bouillabaisse, according to the Marseille poet Henri Deluy, are racasse (angler fish) fielas (conga eel), vive (weever fish), loup (seabass), saint-pierre (john dory), grondin (gurnard), baudroie (angler), galinette (?), rouget (mullet), sar (silver bream), murene (moray eel), anguille (eel), labre (wrasse), garri (?), bavarelle (?), sole (sole), cavillon (gurnard), chapon (?), pajot (?), rouquier (red mullet?), (goldsinny wrasse)

Many of these fish from the calenques have now become rarer, and more expensive to catch. Ugly fish like angler fish, once frowned upon, have become more acceptable to diners. The poor of Marseille can certainly no longer afford 'authentic' bouillabaisse. Its place as a popular dish has long been taken by the couscous, the pizza and other convenience meals.

It might be said that real bouillabaisse actually no longer exists, because the culture which produced it has now vanished. Both fishing and families have changed.

*You need a group to eat bouillabaisse, you cannot eat it alone.*

It was evening time. Sparrow and some acquaintances, Sophia, Michele, Doria, Marcel, Robert and some others of uncertain names were sitting in a restaurant beside the Vieux Port. Sparrow hated to eat in a group and had only come because of Sophia, with whom his relationship held some promise of development. He glanced at her, but she seemed to ignore him. The table was dressed immaculately in white cloth. Smartly dressed waiters brought in the fish to be inspected for freshness. There seemed to be

particular waters is thus changing also.

In a recent addition of *La Pensee du Midi*, Henri Deluy gives the following 'lightly subversive' advice on the bouillabaisse made by his family in Gordes. He recommends that the bouillabaisse should be cooked in a garibaldi, a pot wider at the top than the base, to allow the flavour of the fish to be concentrated, and the stock to cook rapidly.

*A handful of favouilles (small crabs) give their flavour to a good quantity of hot olive oil. After several minutes of heat, take out the crabs. Add to the oil a large chopped onion, two chopped leeks, five or six cloves of garlic, some parsley, a bulb of fennel, zest of orange, some grains of pepper. Warm them up, without letting them go brown. Two or three pinches of saffron - for eight guests (minimum number of diners) and eight*