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Wynne Wright, Alexis Annes

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1 **Farm Women and Agritourism: Representing a New Rurality**

2 Wynne Wright* and Alexis Annes**

3
4 * Associate Professor
5 Depts. of Community Sustainability and Sociology
6 330 B Natural Resources Building
7 Michigan State University
8 East Lansing, MI 48824, USA
9 Tel: (517) 884-1372
10 Email: wrightwy@anr.msu.edu

11
12
13 **Enseignant Chercheur
14 UMR LISST-Dynamiques Rurales—Ecole d'Ingénieurs de Purpan
15 75 voie du TOEC
16 BP 57611
17 31076 Toulouse Cedex 3, France
18 Tel: (33) 5 61 15 30 86
19 Email: alexis.annes@purpan.fr
20

21 **Abstract**

22 This paper examines how farm women represent rurality and agriculture within the context of
23 farm tourism. We draw upon qualitative data analysis of a farm women's agritourism
24 network in southern France centred on sheep milk production for Roquefort cheese. Through
25 the use of choreography, staging, performances, and their bodies, we found that women
26 represent rurality and agriculture in multiple and seemingly contradictory ways. At times
27 they paint portraits of rural life that reproduce human-nature and masculine-feminine binaries
28 affiliated with tradition and cultural heritage. At other times, they choreograph, stage, and
29 perform modernity by accentuating materials, ideals, and roles more accurately articulated as
30 a product of contemporary society. The result is a complex amalgam of agriculture and rural
31 life representations constructed for tourist consumption. We conclude by discussing the
32 opportunities such representations hold for enabling farm women to access cultural influence
33 in agriculture.

34 **Keywords:** Agritourism, Cultural heritage, Farm women, France, Representation, Roquefort,
35 Rural, Tradition
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42 “Juliette threw open the doors to her 125 year old barn and invited us in. She had a big smile
43 and seemed warm. She lives on a 71 ha family farm and she was excited to show us her farm
44 tourism operation. The barn is where she welcomes guests for the tour and ‘farm snack’.
45 This beautiful old barn was erected with limestone harvested from the area. There was a
46 massive fireplace opposite the entryway. Antique scythes, wagon wheels, and ox yokes were
47 hung on the walls for art, not cultivation. It was very rustic, traditional ... old world France!
48 We admired it, asked questions about the setting, and complimented her. She is very proud of
49 the renovations and says she wants tourists to appreciate the cultural heritage of Roquefort
50 when they come here. Then we looked up above the fireplace and into the vaulted ceiling to
51 see a large Harley Davidson® Motorcycle flag hanging from the rafters. Oh, no!”
52 (Author’s field notes, 2012)
53

54 **Introduction**

55 For many, representations of rural France easily evoke picturesque images of a simpler
56 time where bucolic landscapes, dense familial and social bonds, and old world traditions
57 prevail. For the French, aspects of cultural *patrimoine* and *la vieille France* (old France) (p.
58 280) embody even a more poignant idealisation of rural spaces and livelihoods (Bourdieu
59 1984; Hervieu and Viard 1996; 2008). Waters (2010) argues that rural traditions –
60 characterised by belonging, rootedness, stability and national distinctiveness – along with
61 peasant agriculture, are revered because they offer an antidote from the alienating forces of
62 neo-liberal globalisation. The peasant farmer is frequently heralded as the *l’âme de la nation*
63 (the soul of the nation), “evoking deep-rooted cultural traditions and implantation in the
64 national territory which define France” (Rogers, 2000, p. 62). The strength of this collective
65 admiration compels Bessière (1998, p. 23) to contend that, in France, the symbolic
66 consumption of the landscape trumps its productive value; “stage-management comes before
67 the productive function in the general public’s eye.”

68 Yet, in our first foray into the world of French rural tourism we were met with a
69 Harley Davidson Motorcycle flag, hardly a symbol of *la vieille France*. Our initial reaction
70 was disappointment because our personal images of the rural idyll (Bunce 1994) were
71 shattered (Bell 2007). Little (1999, p. 440) argues that “the ‘rural idyll’ has too often “served
72 to detract from the recognition of variety and, indeed, alongside the concept of ‘otherness’, to

73 simplify our understanding of power relations within rural society and of the contestation of
74 the reality and representation of rural culture.” For Hinrichs (1996), idealised rural images
75 evoke tradition in ways that omit tension, diversity, and complexity. “Rather than
76 acknowledge conflict, benightedness, or squalor, notions of ‘rural tradition’ dwell selectively
77 on its most sanitized, beneficent possible features” (1996, p. 263). In this light, Juliette’s
78 Harley flag is an invitation to problematise representations of agriculture and rurality within
79 agritourism.¹ It is a reminder that representations of agriculture and rural life are less
80 homogeneous and more complex than documented, extending an opportunity to explore the
81 ways in which agritourism is organised to symbolically construct rurality in ways that depart
82 from stock idealised or mythical images.

83 Is it possible Juliette’s flag signals the presence of a new rurality? Could agritourism
84 possibly be used to animate roles and identities associated with values and lifestyles
85 emblematic of contemporary identities? Or perhaps farm tourism entrepreneurs interweave
86 tradition, custom and their contemporary multifaceted daily lives to represent to tourists an
87 intricate amalgam of twentieth-first century rurality. We explore these questions in the context
88 of a farm women’s agritourism network in southern France called, *Réseau de Visites de*
89 *Ferme* (RVF). Using interviews, participant observation, and document analysis, we explore
90 the representations embodied in agritourism as farm women choreograph, stage, and perform
91 agriculture and rurality for the tourist gaze.

92 Farm tourism packages, accentuates, and commoditises the social and cultural value in
93 farming activity for public consumption (Jackson 1999). The diversification of farms into
94 agritourism has grown considerably in recent years, rising six per cent annually in both
95 North America and Europe from 2002 to 2004 (Choo 2012). Advocates argue that it brings
96 ‘fun’ to the farm (George and Rilla 2011), yet most contend that the ascendancy of
97 agritourism to a position of political and practical relevancy stems from the limits of the

98 productionist agrifood model (Brandth and Haugen 2010; 2011; Che *et al.* 2005; Kneafsey
99 2000; Marsden and Sonnino 2008; Ploeg 2008; Sonnino 2004). A growing body of research
100 favours farm diversification into agritourism as a remedy for farm family financial stress and
101 risk management (Benjamin 1994; McGehee *et al.* 2007; Nickerson *et al.* 2001), rural
102 development (Butler *et al.* 1998; Hinrichs 1996; Marsden 2003; Neate 1987; Ploeg *et al.*
103 2000), nature conservation (Lane 1994), and cultural consumption (such as its amenity value,
104 production of typical products, or heritage protection) (Bessièrè 1998; Che *et al.* 2005; Burton
105 and Wilson 2006). Moreover, it is rooted in a contemporary theoretical turn that privileges
106 rural development processes valorising local resources, such as rural people, farmers, and
107 nature, to restore equilibrium to fragmented human and eco-systems (Ploeg *et al.* 2000). In
108 short, recent literature suggests that agritourism not only fosters economic development, it can
109 also contribute to the maintenance and reinforcement of the rural social fabric, as well as the
110 preservation of the environment. In other words, much of the enthusiasm for agritourism has
111 been justified on the premise that it is prescriptive for the ‘sustainable’ (economic, social and
112 environmental) development of the countryside (Brandth and Haugen 2011; Marsden and
113 Sonnino 2008; Ploeg and Renting 2004). Given the promise agritourism is claimed to
114 potentially hold for sustainability, we see the nexus of symbolic representation, farm tourism,
115 and gender as fertile terrain for embarking upon an explanatory investigation.

116 In this paper, we first look to the literature on representations to examine agritourism
117 as a symbolic vehicle of agriculture and rurality (Cloke 1997; 2006; Cloke and Milbourne
118 1992; Falk and Pinhey 1978; Halfacree 1993; 1995; 1997; 2007; Jones 1995; Mormount,
119 1990; Pratt 1996). Bessièrè (1998, p. 20) claims that representation, or “mental perception of
120 the countryside,” is often central to rural tourism as tourists reactivate “well-established
121 stereotypes about nature and purity” firmly embedded in their “collective consciousness.”
122 Our concern is with the ability of farm women to instrumentally use agritourism to shape

123 meaning and understanding of agriculture and rural life for tourists drawn from a generation
124 whose knowledge of these domains is limited. Indeed, Cloke (1997, p. 372) writes that “many
125 people are likely to ‘know’ rural areas more through watching popular television programmes
126 than through personal experience.” If accurate, agritourism may be one of the few
127 opportunities urban dwellers have throughout their lives to engage in the rural and to
128 experience agriculture, beyond the realm of eating, making it a pivotal arena for
129 understanding how agriculture and rural life are constructed and performed for uninitiated, yet
130 politically salient audiences.

131 Secondly, a small number of scholars have studied rural representation through a
132 gendered lens, inquiring as to how rural representations depict gender relations, practices, the
133 feminine and masculine body, and the heterosexual norm in rural spaces (Little 2006; Morris
134 and Evans 2013). Most of these studies take media representation as the unit of analysis (Agg
135 and Phillips 1998; Brandth 1995; Liepins 1996; Walter and Wilson 1996). Scholarship has
136 also explored the gendered dimensions of farm tourism, most frequently to explore
137 motivations and characteristics (Babriero and Mshenga 2008; Getz and Carlson 2000;
138 McGehee *et al.* 2007), the division of labour in farm tourism (Danes 1998; Dernois 1991), its
139 ability to increase women’s power within the family farm (Bouquet and Winter 1987; Brandth
140 and Haugen 2010; Nilsson 2002) and its impact on women’s identity formation (Brandth and
141 Haugen 2011). Yet, there is little empirical research examining how agritourism is used *by*
142 women to represent rurality to others. Brandth and Haugen (2011) are one exception; they
143 found Norwegian farm women integrating cultural heritage through storytelling, home-
144 cooked local foods, personal dress, and nature-based activities. In addition, food and
145 foodways often play a central role in agritourism representation. Bessi ere (1998, p. 30) argues
146 that “[h]ighly cultural, culinary heritage is right at the heart of France’s rural tourist market.”

147 Following Murdoch and Pratt (1993, p. 411), we see farm women agritourism
148 entrepreneurs as “actors [who] impose ‘their’ rurality on others” by choreographing, staging,
149 and performing educational and leisure farm activities. This platform to construct rurality and
150 commodify rural culture for tourists raises important questions that may challenge classical
151 assessments of rural gender dynamics. Is it possible that farm tourism might permit a new
152 form of cultural power farm women have historically been unable to access? The chance to
153 represent agriculture and rural life to tourists gives farm women an unprecedented opportunity
154 to emerge as agricultural authorities, challenging traditional roles held by farm women in
155 scholarship informed by political economics which often cast them as exploited ‘farm help’
156 tethered to the farm and a patriarchal system. Brandth *et al.* (2010) argue that farm women are
157 often able to infuse farm tourism with practical knowledge vital for success.

158 Our empirical investigation of RVF suggests that tradition is only one aspect of the
159 commoditised farm tourism package. By situating this investigation in the everyday (Harding
160 1991), we find farm women in southern France activating representations of agriculture and
161 rurality that construct a much more complex image of life on the farm. “Their rurality” is
162 one which selectively punctuates tradition interweaving it with social practices and relations
163 endemic of contemporary gender and family roles, while negotiating political-economic
164 realities/uncertainties. In this regard, this paper accentuates the “messiness of rural space” and
165 the inability of farm tourism to map smoothly onto idealised imagery (Cloke 1997, p. 371).

166

167 **Theoretical Overview**

168 Theories of social representation of the rural have become a growth industry over the
169 past two decades (Cloke 1997). The deconstructive turn advanced by post-modernism sparked
170 renewed interest in the rural through attention to the socially constructed process which makes
171 it possible (Halfacree 1993; Mormont 1990). The intellectual turn to culture and agency via

172 phenomenology and the sociology of knowledge (Cloke 1997; Woods 2005), extended to the
173 rural, accentuates the process by which people creatively shape reality through everyday
174 interaction and imaginaries (Bell 2007; Cloke and Milbourne 1992; Falk and Pinhey 1978;
175 Halfacree 1993; 1995; 1997; 2007; Jones, 1995; Pratt, 1996). From this intellectual tradition,
176 rurality arises from “the social production of a set of meanings” attributed to rural spaces,
177 peoples, and practices (Mormont 1990, p. 36).

178 Foregrounding rural social interaction over spatial or materialist dimensions sets the
179 stage for understanding rurality as a dynamic “social construct and ‘rural’ becomes a world of
180 social, moral, and cultural values in which rural dwellers participate” (Cloke and Milbourne
181 1992, p. 360). This approach to the study of rurality has allowed scholars to probe “how
182 practice, behaviour, decision-making and performance are contextualized and influenced by
183 the social and cultural meanings attached to rural places” (Cloke 2006, p. 21), thereby,
184 expanding our capacity to understand the realities of rural people.

185 Such work foregrounds the micro elements of social life, such as language and social
186 norms, the rural as imaginary or an ‘idyll’ (Bunce 1994), and the situatedness of everyday
187 experience (Cloke 2006; Frouws 1998; Murdoch and Pratt 1993). Everyday words, symbols
188 and actions become tools in a socialised arsenal to make meaning and represent rural selves to
189 others. Halfacree (1993, p. 29), for example, argues that the rural is best represented through
190 discourse - through the “words and concepts understood and used by people in everyday talk.”
191 Through discourse it becomes evident that meanings of rurality do not inhere in the material,
192 but are socio-psychological constructs (Cloke and Milbourne 1992; Frouws 1998; Jones 1995;
193 Pratt 1996; Zografos 2007).

194 Edensor (2001; 2006) centralises the role of action in rural representation with the
195 performance metaphor. He argues that rural dwellers ‘perform’ rurality – or behaviourally
196 manage an impression of themselves as rural people - with their bodies, discursive practices,

197 material artefacts, and social environments. In short, rural spaces become a theatre where
198 actors don costumes, stage the setting, and enact performances with culturally appropriate
199 props and scripts. In the tourism context, the goal is to “produce affective, sensual and
200 mediatized experience – within a format of ‘edutainment’” (Edensor 2006, p. 488). Success
201 depends upon boundary maintenance in which the tourist gaze is directed to discourse and
202 symbolic imagery aligned with the desired representation while being detracted from elements
203 which might undermine this vision. Such was our experience as we stood in Juliette’s 125
204 year old barn perplexed by the contradiction represented by the Harley Davidson flag in the
205 midst of what otherwise appeared as *la vieille France*.

206

207 *Gender and Agritourism*

208 The material and symbolic representations of rural women are less well understood.
209 Investigations into gender and rural representation have typically taken women to be the
210 object of representation, not empowered to represent (Little 2006; Morris and Evans 2013),
211 yet a growing body of scholarship has found that farm women often figure prominently in
212 agritourism initiatives (Barbieri and Mshenga 2008; Brandth and Haugen 2010; Jennings and
213 Stehlik 1999; O’Connor 1995; Oppermann 1995). Studies show that French farm women
214 make a sizeable contribution to farm work, carry a disproportionate share of the household
215 and child care burden, and are more likely than men to manage farm tourism activities
216 (Darque 1988; Giraud and Rémy 2013). For many, women are perceived to be particularly
217 well suited to agritourism given the importance of skills and competencies associated with
218 work women have traditionally performed. Cleaning, cooking, and care work are frequently
219 viewed as an extension of gendered norms into the commercial realm (Brandth and Haugen
220 2010; 2011; Jennings and Stehlik 1999; McGehee *et al.* 2007).

221 More recently, work has begun to explore the emancipatory potential within
222 agritourism. Brandth and Haugen (2010, p. 425) argue that “engaging in farm tourism implies
223 a change that not only demands new skills and competencies but may also influence the
224 conditions under which gender relationships, power, and identities are enacted.” Studies
225 reveal a range of consequences, from relatively static or no change in women’s position to
226 significant improvements (Brandth and Haugen 2010; Evans and Ilbery 1996; Cánoves *et al.*
227 2004). These studies have been primarily concerned with individual, household, or farm-level
228 changes such as those which increase women’s status, decision-making, or income within the
229 household or farm or studies that posit a change to individual identity (Brandth and Haugen
230 2010). Work is needed which considers the macro implications of women as cultural
231 authorities.

232 We see women’s entrepreneurship in agritourism as potentially empowering in its
233 ability to provide women with a platform for exercising cultural authority – for transgressing
234 normative gender boundaries and constructing a professional and contemporary identity
235 imbued with contradictions and complexities. Rather than confine women to the backstage of
236 cooking, cleaning, and caretaking, some forms of agritourism move women to the front stage
237 of the farm unit. Educational or pedagogical farm tourism, for example, may provide a venue
238 for recoding farm women as knowledgeable and authoritative. Farm tourism allows women
239 the chance to model professional expertise and transmit practical knowledge historically
240 associated with men. Farm women may disseminate complex biological, economic, political
241 and social processes and practices essential for daily agricultural functioning; demonstrate the
242 workings of sophisticated technology, unpack convoluted international agricultural policy and
243 economic formulas, explain conservation strategies and environmental policy, animate
244 cultural and geographic histories, and showcase technical exhibits. All this, while answering
245 an array of questions from “what do sheep eat?” to ‘why do farmers receive government

246 subsidies?’. Lest we forget, they demonstrate this knowledge and skill all the while cooking
247 for and feeding tourists.

248 We explore the ways farm tourism affords women visibility and how they use this role
249 to represent agriculture and rural life. Our focus is on the content of these representations,
250 with particular attention to the ways in which rural traditions and contemporary livelihoods
251 are symbolically constructed for tourists.

252

253 **Background**

254 *Réseau de Visites de Ferme* (RVF) is an agritourism network of farm women located
255 in Aveyron, France devoted to disseminating knowledge of sheep farming. Aveyron is one of
256 the 96 political departments of France and belongs to the southern Midi-Pyrenees region. It is
257 a landscape of breath-taking scenery and geological diversity composed of massive and
258 craggy mountains, deep gorges, serene meadows, and numerous waterways. The high
259 limestone plateau known as the Grands Causses is made up of a series of underground caves.
260 Part of the region is located in the Massif Central. Rural character has lingered much longer in
261 this area than in other regions of the country. It is commonly described as *la France profonde*
262 - the heartland – a region of unspoiled rural France. Some add the adjective “backward” to
263 depict the area and its people. Saugeres (2002, p. 376) contends that “the inhabitants of the
264 region have developed a strong sense of a distinct identity, a sense of nostalgia for the
265 traditional ways of life of the peasantry, alongside an inferiority complex of being
266 ‘backward’, and the desire to be as modern and developed as in most areas of France.”

267 Agriculture remains central to the economic portfolio of Aveyron, employing 15-20
268 per cent of the labour force (Frayssignes, 2011). Its origins lie in the small scale agro-pastoral
269 system where peasants largely produced cereals and herded sheep, but industrialisation and
270 concentration began to take hold in the early twentieth century. Modern transportation, along

271 with the development of a cash economy, made possible highly specialised sheep farming for
272 the purpose of supplying milk to the Roquefort cheese market. “Between 1960 and 1980, the
273 production system became much more intensive with the amalgamation and modernisation of
274 farms, intensive forage crop growing, animal breeding programmes and an increase in the
275 volume of milk produced” (Quétier *et al.* 2005, p. 173). By 2000, 95 per cent of all
276 agricultural income in the region was derived from sheep farming (Frayssignes 2011), with
277 sheep producers numbering 2,458.

278 Roquefort is a blue cheese made of raw sheep milk derived primarily from the
279 Lacaune breed of sheep which are fed a diet of 75 per cent pasture and regional fodder.
280 Roquefort production is an intensive and industrial process. Milk is stored on farm in bulk
281 tanks and trucks arrive daily to retrieve it and deliver it to a local cheese dairy for processing.
282 In 1960, there were 460 small cheese dairies across the region, but today there are seven. One
283 firm (*Société*) represents 70 per cent of the market.

284 Once the milk arrives at the dairy, the milk will be heated and rennet and *penicillium*
285 *roqueforti* will be added to ignite lactic fermentation. It is then cut to separate the curds and
286 whey, moulded into “loaves” or large wheels, and allowed to drain for two days. Next, the
287 cheese is salted and pricked to “enable the carbon dioxide generated during the fermentation
288 process to escape and thereby encourage the development of the *penicillium roqueforti*”
289 during the ripening process (*Confédération Générale de Roquefort* N.d. p. 47). Finally, the
290 cheese wheel is marked with information regarding herd origins and manufacturing date to
291 facilitate traceability and then sent for ripening to the limestone caves located beneath its
292 namesake village - Roquefort-sur-Soulzon. Natural ventilation in the cellars produces
293 constant humidity and temperature providing a conducive microclimate for activating the
294 *penicillium roqueforti* which creates the blue-green veins. Once ripe, women “cabin workers”

295 fold each wheel in tinfoil and prepare it for the market. In 2001, 3,000 tons of Roquefort was
296 exported to more than 90 countries (Frayssignes 2011).

297 The symbolic imagery evoked by the industry in advertising and branding is one of
298 bucolic landscapes and the preservation of longstanding cultural traditions, yet this brief
299 overview affirms that the production of Roquefort is a highly industrialised process. Cheese
300 is manufactured via a regulated process informed by “the strictest scientific conditions”
301 (*Confédération Générale de Roquefort* N.d., p. 49) and marketed to an international consumer
302 base who demand a standardised product. For many, quality cheese production conjures up
303 images of small scale artisanal production, but in the case of Roquefort the more accurate
304 representation is an industrial laboratory setting where white lab-coat-wearing workers inject
305 microscopic fungi into uniform cheese wheels to ignite a biological process.

306 It is hard to overstate the role of Roquefort cheese to the local economy. An old saying
307 holds, that “[i]f Roquefort sneezes, all the region catches a cold” (Frayssignes 2011, p. 5).
308 Today, it is protected by French legislation which endorses the use of a geographical name for
309 products originating from a distinctive provenance and produced with specific cultural
310 knowledge. Labelled products with a geographic indication, or *Appellation d’Origine*
311 *Contrôlée* (AOC),² are granted legal protection as a form of collective intellectual property.
312 Roquefort was the first cheese in France to receive this official status in 1925 and received
313 similar protective status from the European Union in 1996 when it was registered as a
314 Protected Designation of Origin (PDO). Since 1930, the red ewe label that graces each wheel
315 of cheese has guaranteed to the consumer authenticity and quality, but for producers, AOC
316 standards “strongly affect the way farms are managed” (Quetier *et al.* 2005, p. 172). AOC
317 standards can also influence the ways farm women represent rural life and agriculture through
318 agritourism.

319 Frayssignes (2011) argues that the link to rural development, although significant, is
320 not a priority of Roquefort supply chain actors, especially, the cheese processors. Although
321 the caves draw in approximately 200,000 visitors a year for tours, the only other tourism
322 presence is the RVF which was launched in 1993 by two of its current members. Its origins
323 are rooted in a request from the *Confédération Générale de Roquefort* – the regulatory
324 association made up of milk producers and processors - that milk producers open up their
325 farms to tourists to share the milk production process and its rich cultural heritage.

326 Members of the RVF welcome tourists to their family farms to provide a *goûters à la*
327 *ferme*, or ‘farm snack’. The farm snack is a popular form of farmstead hospitality in France
328 (Bessière 1998), and, in this case, is accompanied by a guided educational tour where the host
329 disseminates knowledge of milk production as well as sharing the cultural heritage of sheep
330 farming and the natural amenities of the area that make Roquefort distinctive and globally
331 recognized. Overall, each member of the RVF offers the same type of services: first the
332 guided educational tour, then the ‘farm snack’. Likewise, three types of farm snacks are
333 offered by all members, from a basic option including Roquefort cheese and local wine to a
334 more elaborate one including Roquefort cheese, local wine, and traditional deserts. In
335 addition, the general outline of the guided tour is similar from one member to another (they
336 share the same educational material). Offering a homogeneous package is essential to the
337 members of RVF—especially to the founding members, in order to be clearly identified.
338 However, some differences exist depending on the characteristics of each farm and on each
339 member’s personal interest and desire to develop one particular aspect of the business. The
340 RVF functions in some ways like a woman’s auxiliary that serves to support and bolster -
341 often via the realm of culture - the cheese industry. At the end of the farm tour, guests are
342 often directed to visit the caves in Roquefort-sur-Soulzon.

343 The leadership of RVF prefer to keep the Network small; at its largest there were six
344 members, but currently only four participate, ranging in ages from 45 to 62. Three of the four
345 members are also full-time farmers³ working with either their husband or son, while the fourth
346 member identified herself as a farm employee. Regardless of official status, their primary role
347 on the farm is to milk the sheep twice daily. Three are also responsible for the management of
348 the farm records, and some also engage in other farm activities, such as poultry and
349 gardening.

350

351 **Methods**

352 The research design consisted of three components: 1) semi-structured interviews; 2)
353 participant observation; and, 3) document analysis. We interviewed each of the four members
354 of the Network as well as one former member. Each of the five interviews were conducted at
355 their farm and ranged in length from 1 ½ - 4 hours. Interviews were conducted in French,
356 tape-recorded, and later partially transcribed and translated. Both authors were present for the
357 interviews as was a language interpreter. Interviews consisted of approximately 40 open and
358 closed-ended questions covering subjects such as farm history, farm and agritourism
359 organisation and interaction, motivations, gender dynamics, and future visions. In each case,
360 researchers were also given a guided tour of the farm and facilities.

361 Next, we proceeded to make participatory observations of the Network. Each author
362 assumed the role of tourist on two separate occasions and took part in an actual farm visit
363 along with other guests. The visit allowed us to observe first-hand the interaction of the host
364 with the guest, to hear the script, and to experience the visit as a tourist. Perhaps most
365 importantly, it allowed us to engage with other tourists, to watch their reactions and learn
366 what information appeared to resonate with them.

367 Lastly, we analysed a number of documents. These documents include the RVF
368 advertising brochure and their website. Network members were also able to provide us with a
369 number of newspaper articles profiling their work which turned out to be useful for
370 understanding the evolution of the group.

371 We have given each member a pseudonym in an effort to disassociate her comments
372 from her identity. Given the small sample size it is not possible to determine if these findings
373 represent all farm women agritourism entrepreneurs. We offer these data to ignite further
374 scrutiny of this phenomenon, providing evidence for theorising about the ways rural and
375 agriculture are represented by women as rural restructuring is performed in ways which blur
376 conventional production and consumption boundaries.

377

378 **Representing Rurality**

379 In this section, we analyse how Network members use their role as agritourism
380 entrepreneurs to represent agriculture and rural life. We examine women's agritourism work
381 in regards to the organisation of the initiative, its staging, performance, and the discourse they
382 use to animate rural life and agriculture. In this section we will show how RVF Network
383 members reproduce nostalgic imagery associated with an agrarian past along with traditional
384 social relations. Yet, tradition is not the only commodity on offer. Farm women also represent
385 agriculture and rural life in ways that animate modernity. First, we turn to a discussion of
386 traditional representation where we find women activating custom and convention in three
387 ways, through: 1) marketing, organising, and narrating the farm tour around AOC sanctioned
388 production practices; 2) designing and staging the farm tour; and, 3) their bodies via
389 performances as food provider and caretaker.

390

391 *Rurality as Tradition*

392 Understanding agriculture and rural representation by RVF members begins with the
393 process of organising the farm tour and delimiting the numerous possibilities farm tourism
394 could take. In this regard, the organisation of the tourism experience is prescribed, in part, by
395 Roquefort itself and the AOC certification process. Bowen and DeMaster (2011) argue that
396 the setting of quality assurance standards is an inherently political project whereby some
397 practices are included, and others omitted, from protection, thereby shaping and constraining
398 what is protected or permitted. In essence, such standards are an attempt to bound (Edensor
399 2001) history, place, and culture.

400 For agritourism, this means that the codification of quality assurance standards in the
401 AOC legal framework not only establishes the parameters of production practices, but it also
402 establishes the parameters of any activity which seeks to communicate the nature of
403 production processes, such as **farm tourism**. Any effort to transmit the production practices of
404 sheep farming will indirectly follow the production guidelines set by Roquefort AOC. This
405 enhances the likelihood of homogeneity of tourist experience among members in the
406 Network, but distinguishes it from other non-Roquefort agritourism initiatives.

407 The AOC quality assurance standards prescribe the basic protocol for the production
408 process, foregrounding tradition, cultural heritage, and the distinctive properties of the natural
409 landscape. We can see women reproduce these guidelines in the way they market the
410 Network, organise the farm tour, and narrate the milk production process. The advertising
411 brochure, for example, may be the first encounter guests have that begins the work of
412 representing tradition.

413 At the origin of Roquefort cheese, before the maturing of the cheese in the caves, there
414 is country, farms, sheep farmers, ewes and their milk... There is an entire world which

415 is quite often unknown. Animated by the desire to share their passion for their job,
416 four ‘agricultrices’ [farm women] invite you to discover their job in all its
417 richness/intensity. They welcome you to their place, in Roquefort country, in the heart
418 of the typical landscapes and the traditional architectural heritage of the Parc Naturel
419 Regional of the Grands Causses. They introduce you to the world of their farm, they
420 tell you its story and they speak about their lives shaped by the seasons (*author*
421 *transcription*, RVF brochure, 2012).

422 This representation constructs sheep producers as both traditional and distinctive.
423 Tradition is framed through the unassuming personal invitation which lowers the boundaries
424 of formality by evoking a down-home character associated with the hospitality and charm
425 ascribed to rural people. It accentuates social solidarity and the expressive forms of
426 rationality associated with “passion”, not the instrumentality of science and industrial food
427 production methods. It also calls on the rural idyll by situating farms within the natural
428 landscape, furthered by a nod to seasonality. Imagery such as “cheese”, “caves”, “Roquefort
429 country”, “traditional architectural heritage” and the “Grands Causses” also help to brand
430 them as unique. An aura of mystique is punctuated throughout when referencing the
431 “unknown” “world” of their region and work. Such framing segregates farm women and their
432 “world” of sheep farming from tourists, and, in this way, perpetuates their image as different
433 or “other” (Hall 1997; Little 1999). Weightman (1987, p. 230) contends that “the tour
434 brochure directs expectations, influences perceptions, and thereby provides a preconceived
435 landscape for the tourist to discover.” This suggests that what tourists may be primed to
436 witness is a cultural reproduction of the rural/urban binary at work. Hosts may foreground
437 that which differentiates rural and urban dwellers (nature, culture, heritage, *patrimoine*)
438 instead of that which bonds them (modernity, capitalism, etc.). Therefore, as suggested by
439 Holloway in examining the British context (2004), by emphasizing differences between rural

440 and urban dwellers, hosts may be underlining tourists' preconceived ideas of rural life and
441 reinforcing rural/urban cleavages where common values, identities, and aspirations are
442 otherwise masked.

443 The advertising brochure and the website illuminate tradition and distinctiveness and
444 when guests arrive they enter a scene designed and staged to reinforce this imagery. From the
445 script that farm women use to narrate the farm tour, to the architecture tourists observe, to the
446 final snack they consume, tradition and cultural heritage are enrolled to represent life on a
447 working sheep farm. Juliette describes how she begins to orient guests upon first arrival.

448 I tell people we are different. Our region is really rural, really agricultural, with people
449 with strong characters. They are proud people of their roots and their heritage.

450 Juliette's orientation is to follow the lead of the brochure and position her region and people
451 as distinctive, or "other", and, at the same time, illuminate the importance of cultural heritage.
452 Apolline uses her farm tour to achieve similar distinctive objectives.

453 When people arrive, first I speak about the region, its specificities. From there, we
454 speak about the park of the Grands Causses, then of the production area in which we
455 need to be located to produce milk to be used in the making of Roquefort. Next, I
456 focus on the farm with its specificities, how it works, how it's organised, where it's
457 located, its natural environment, its buildings, its architectural heritage.

458 Apolline's narrative punctuates the symbolic imagery associated with the unique features of
459 cultural heritage and tradition by enrolling AOC standards, the farm, nature, and architecture
460 as props to authenticate the representation. Perhaps the most significant prop is the barn.

461 One of the criteria for RVF membership is that each woman must have a suitable 'old'
462 barn in which to welcome tourists and provide the snack. Perhaps no image resurrects rurality

463 in the same way as agricultural barns constructed of materials typical of the nineteenth
464 century, such as honey-colored stone harvested from the local terrain, with massive hand-cut
465 tongue and groove wooden beams. These buildings began their life housing Lacaune sheep
466 around 150-200 years ago, but became obsolete in the 1960s-1970s when farmers adopted
467 mechanical milking machines. Today, preservation of these barns is perceived by the French
468 as part of their *patrimoine*, or cultural heritage.

469 Each of the women in the RVF reclaimed the stone barn on their property and
470 renovated it for their agritourism business. From a former place of production, the old sheep
471 barns are now repurposed spaces for urban consumption (Hinrichs 1996; Potter and Tilzey
472 2005). In reclaiming this traditional architecture and enrolling them as props in agritourism
473 staging, the women participate in cultural heritage protection and the transmission of
474 *patrimoine*. As Agathe said, “[b]arns like ours give authenticity, *terroir*, a sense of history,
475 everything. If cheese tasting takes place in a regular room, it’s not the same thing.”

476 The barn may be the clearest material nod to tradition, but, once inside, the interior
477 fortifies the image of *la vieille France*. Each barn is staged with several long roughly hewn
478 farm tables and benches or mismatched chairs. Old features were preserved where possible,
479 such as a fireplace or sheep milking stanchions. Antique farm implements line the stone walls
480 not to celebrate progress as Holloway (2004) found in his study of British agricultural shows.
481 The rustic motif transports tourists to an agrarian past, all be it, one sanitised of the animals,
482 with attendant smells and sounds emblematic of authentic animal housing.

483 Lastly, we found women constructing an image of rurality as tradition with their
484 bodies. The performances they play as food providers and caretakers are an extension of
485 typical roles associated with women in the home, into the realm of farm tourism (Pini 2004).
486 The women take it upon themselves to welcome the guests, guide the tour, write and deliver

487 the script, as well as cook and serve the snack. The wine and cheese are purchased locally, but
488 the desserts are prepared by each woman in her home kitchen. Foods are presented on
489 artisanal stoneware, both prepared and presented to further the yesteryear image through
490 home cooking and craft production. By assuming the role as cook, and presenting foods in a
491 traditional manner, the farm woman perform a traditional gendered division of labour - for
492 the purpose of commodification (Brandth and Haugen 2010), while at the same time
493 representing notions of food purity and wholesomeness (Ilbery and Kneafsey 2000).

494 This part of the paper has shown that tradition, cultural heritage, and distinctiveness
495 play key roles in the farm women's representations of rurality. They accomplish this in their
496 marketing, organisation, and narration of the farm tour, the designing and staging of the farm
497 tour, and through their bodies as they perform customary roles ascribed to rural women. This
498 supports previous research that has found farm tourism to be "inextricably intertwined with
499 historical, political, and cultural processes" (Pritchard and Morgan 2001, p. 168). Whether it
500 is the AOC certification standards that politically prescribe production parameters, or the
501 cultural artefacts that confer resource availability, farm women's representations reproduce a
502 binary division that may portray them and their livelihood as yesterday's people. This
503 "marking of difference" (Hall 1997, p. 232), or "othering", may, indeed, be the commodity
504 that tourist's demand, yet today's image, may be tomorrow's obstacle. Such images run the
505 risk of fostering stereotypes of complex sub-cultures and places as simple, hardy and self-
506 sufficient and not in need of responsive rural development policies. It may also further the
507 gulf between rural and urban populations if it is not replaced or buttressed with social and
508 cultural imagery that communicates authenticity of experience and contemporary realities.

509 Indeed, we discovered that traditional representations of rural life are not immutable.
510 Just as often as tradition was constructed, so too was the diversity and complexity of

511 contemporary life. We now turn to a discussion of how farm women use agritourism in ways
512 that confound tradition, heritage and distinctiveness.

513 *Recoding Roquefort*

514 Representations of agriculture and rurality by farm women accentuate classic imagery
515 associated with agrarian traditions, however, such representations were also buttressed by a
516 dynamism indicative of modernity. Beck (1992) tells us that under reflexive modernity,
517 individuals have more agency to construct their lives in a multiplicity of ways. Just as we saw
518 women instrumentally exploiting tradition for commodification, we also observed hosts
519 resisting convention, and infusing diversity and the prosaic elements of everyday farm and
520 family life into their agritourism operation to recode agriculture and rurality with a modern
521 orientation. In this section, we discuss how RVF members turn the tables on tradition in three
522 ways, through: 1) marketing, organising, and narrating the farm tour to accentuate knowledge
523 and professionalism; 2) performing everyday, lived experiences; and 3) with their bodies, via
524 identity management.

525 First, the very visibility of farm women is far from a minor addition to the rural story.
526 Women's place on the farm has historically been read as largely exploited and invisible
527 (Alston 1995; Brandth 1998; Sachs 1983; Shortall 1999), assigned to the backstage of family
528 farming where they play a secondary role as farm helper, but rarely viewed as a farmer in
529 their own right. Saugeres (2002) has argued in the case of France that women are rarely
530 viewed as 'farmers' because the occupation is constructed as a masculine endeavour. The role
531 as agritourism entrepreneur not only makes them visible, (Barbieri and Mshenga 2008;
532 Brandth and Haugen 2010; Jennings and Stehlik 1999; O'Connor 1995; Oppermann 1995),
533 but allows them to craft a professional image and demonstrate specialised knowledge and
534 authority. Farm tourism also permits women to cultivate both an interest and income

535 generating activity of their own and diversify their range of activities atypical of traditional
536 farm women's lives.

537 The representation of farm women as professionals begins once again in the marketing
538 domain as the brochure emphasizes farm tourism as not a way of life or hobby, but a "job".
539 "Animated by the desire to share their passion for their job, four *agricultrices*' [farm women]
540 invite you to discover their job in all its richness/intensity." Historically, farm women were
541 referred to as *paysan or fermière*. Around the mid-century – during rapid adoption of
542 industrial farming methods, the modern label of *agriculteur* began to be applied to farmers
543 who embraced production for commercial markets with intensive and scientific methods. At
544 the same time, a woman similarly engaged in commercial agriculture began to be referred to
545 as an *agricultrice*. By invoking the label *agricultrices*, members of the Network align
546 themselves with this professional status.

547 In the early days of the Network, members worked closely with the Grands Causses
548 Regional Park which trained them to host farm tourism activities. Jocelyne recalls being
549 excited by their insistence on professionalism. They warned, "be careful, your job is being a
550 farmer, people don't want to come to a museum. People want to come to your workplace."
551 She took this advice to heart and structured a well-organised tour along with a narrative that
552 recounted for guests the highly technical aspects of the production process along with
553 economic and political realities of modern day sheep farming.

554 The importance of professionalism was reinforced by each member, but more
555 noticeable among the younger members. Some made significant investments to construct a
556 professional agritourism business. Juliette left her husband, two sons, and the family farm for
557 four months to attend cheese school in the north of France. This was very unpopular with her
558 husband and in-laws, who feared neighbours might gossip about her absence from the home

559 for such a period. She insisted that proper training was crucial, in part, because her dream is to
560 expand the operation one day to produce her own cheese.

561 Professionalism is also accompanied by the assertion of independence and autonomy.
562 Women resisted traditional farm roles where they were ascribed to the role of ‘farm help’, and
563 advocated for having their own “activity.” “A little something of my own on the farm” was
564 the primary driver for entrepreneurialism among each woman. As Apolline put it, “when you
565 arrive on your in-laws farm, you need to create your own space.” For Jocelyne, once newly
566 married, her husband preferred she assume traditional mothering and homemaking roles.

567 When I arrived here we were three generations under one roof and my mother-in-law
568 was doing my husband’s wash...He would tell me, ‘for God’s sake, why can’t you
569 stay home?’ I told him no, I would be bored...It is important for me to have
570 relationships. I thought that starting this activity, welcoming people, would help me
571 recreate these relationships and give me something of my own.

572 Perhaps the most forceful in her demand for autonomy was Apolline who agreed to “work on
573 the farm and in agritourism only if [she] was in charge to the same degree as [her] husband
574 and brother-in-law...[They] took the decision to go into agritourism together.” In this way,
575 their desire for their own individual income-generating farm activity, is in line with other
576 research that has found autonomy to be a driving motivational factor in the decision to farm
577 more generally (see Mooney, 1986).

578 Each of the members saw themselves as the primary agritourism entrepreneur and the
579 husband as secondary. This relocates women in positions of authority and demotes men to the
580 role of helper. Even though Apolline claimed her husband was an equal partner and regularly
581 involved, she described his role as being primarily confined to the backstage where he was
582 responsible for maintenance and infrastructure. His regularly occurring visible role was to

583 provide entertainment for the guests; when she slips out to get the snack he performs a short
584 sheepdog demonstration. Such a division of labour situates women in positions of authority
585 and furthers the separation with tradition, and at the same time, it also recasts men in
586 agriculture.

587 According to Charlotte, she and her husband also embarked upon agritourism
588 primarily as a joint venture. They share in leading the tours even though there are strong rural
589 norms that go against such activity for men.

590 My husband likes leading the tours but he says that most farmers around here would
591 not, rural areas are patriarchal where men drive tractors and women milk. Other
592 farmers would make fun of him if they knew he hosted visitors on the farm...I don't
593 consider welcoming guests as feminine, my husband prepares flowers and jam, but
594 some do.

595 These cases suggest that women's professionalism in agritourism casts men in secondary
596 roles. Now men play the part of 'helper' and assist in uncompensated work that resides in the
597 sphere of cultural reproduction.

598 The dependence on science and technology is also seen to challenge the dominance of
599 tradition. Farm women choreograph and narrate the tour in ways that demonstrate a broad
600 knowledge base in a range of complicated social, biological, and technological processes. Just
601 as the barns can be enrolled to mimic tradition, tours are also choreographed to highlight
602 state-of-the-art buildings equipped with the latest technology, such as modern milking
603 machines and hay driers. Charlotte de-emphasizes tradition when she explains why the old
604 stone barn can no longer serve the needs of a modern sheep farm. Jocelyne incorporates
605 modernity when she recounts the long programme of selective breeding that has doubled milk
606 production over the last 20 years.

607 Women commonly reported that the guests were unprepared to see such ‘modern’
608 technology and production practices. Agathe said, “when they arrive they are surprised to see
609 the way we work, the buildings, the milking room. They see the milking room tiled and they
610 say ‘it’s a real lab that you have.’” Apolline’s overview shows how she disseminates modern
611 production practices.

612 I start it in the area where we dry hay where there is enough space and where I set up
613 explanatory posters. There, I explain how to manage a sheep herd. Everyone can ask
614 questions. I explain everything, births, lambs’ sales, why milk control, old ewe’s sales
615 - the entire production cycle. Then, I tell them about the principle of in-door hay
616 drying which takes place right behind them, the feeding of the sheep. Then we walk
617 across the sheep barn itself, I tell them why there are different areas, how it works. I
618 start the automatic feeder to show them how it works. After, I go into the milking
619 room where I start the milking machines so that they can see how it works and we take
620 advantage of this moment to speak about what happens with the milk and its process
621 into Roquefort cheese. We speak about the milk, its components, all the sanitary
622 controls, traceability, the arrival of the milk into the cheese factory then the Roquefort
623 caves. Then, we go to the water treatment area planted with reeds. Then we reach the last
624 hour when my husband gives them the sheepdog show so that I can prepare the snacks.

625 Each of the women reported showcasing production practices designed to impress the tourist
626 with state-of-the-art methods and the upmost regard for adherence to quality assurance
627 standards. As guests are led through the barns they are exposed to stainless steel bulk tanks
628 that store milk at precise temperatures, equipment used to test daily for pathogens in the milk,
629 and machines that can milk 500-600 sheep in an hour. They walk by posters that detail
630 complicated nutritional formulas that vary by the season; they are instructed on the
631 importance of lactation cycles, genetic improvements, and artificial insemination. Apolline

632 incorporates a PowerPoint presentation that explains the origins of AOC regulations and how
633 production standards assure cheese quality in partnership with numerous actors across the
634 Roquefort supply chain. Agathe adds fluency in international agricultural policy when she
635 informs tourists about the role of farm subsidies. “People ask about the subsidies a lot...so I
636 explain that subsidies are here to compensate farmers because consumer prices have not gone
637 up for many years. They think it is charity; they have no idea what a farmer earns and they
638 have a lot of misconceptions. I tell them the truth.”

639 The litany of skills necessary to make this performance credible is not insignificant.
640 Their comfort with chemistry, biology, and technology animates the know-how that gives
641 AOC products their distinctive shared practices, yet with a modern veneer. Quality assurance
642 standards may be time and space bound, but the traditional know-how required to produce
643 Roquefort is accomplished with contemporary skills, competencies, and science and
644 technology applications. Such fluency with cutting-edge knowledge and techniques helps to
645 recode women from disposable farm helpers to authorities with a wide range of skills and
646 professional acumen.

647 Some are disillusioned with this representation of modern sheep farming, according to
648 Charlotte. “All these people have a romantic vision of farm life. Their image of the farmer is
649 from the media and is old fashioned and not realistic. Some are disappointed to see it is not
650 rural enough. Some feel cheated when they see modern hygiene equipment.” The introduction
651 of the modern, through “hygiene equipment” or other technologies or practices suggests a
652 shattering of the rural idyll and reinforces the gulf that segregates rural producers from urban
653 tourists.

654 Network members also root their tourist activity in the present, making sure the tourist
655 leaves with an accurate understanding of life on a modern sheep farm. Women frequently

656 find, intentionally or unintentionally, that the exigencies of life are often on stage for tourists
657 view. Charlotte makes an effort to ensure guests have a “direct experience with everything. I
658 want them to touch, see, smell everything. I try to have them understand that we work
659 here...We clean up but it should not be too perfect...it is a working farm.” Jocelyne
660 punctuates the multiple demands modern women have on their shoulders by communicating
661 the multi-tasking she does. When they call for an appointment I tell them “that they cannot
662 come 30 minutes late because otherwise I would be late to complete my other chores like the
663 milking.”

664 Each of the women also reported having their tours interrupted by family members
665 from time to time. Children barge in with a question, husbands stop by to greet the guests,
666 neighbours pop in unexpected, phones ring, and oven timers buzz forcing women to briefly
667 excuse themselves to tend to lunch preparations. Such disruptions bring to light the numerous
668 activities that require women’s attention and, at the same time, communicate a blurring of
669 productive and reproductive spheres. An awareness of the difficulties women face in
670 balancing farm, tourism and household obligations begins to shatter images of traditional
671 divisions of labour where women and men are confined to prescribed roles.

672 Lastly, we found contemporary traces represented in the routine staging of women’s
673 bodies as they dress to look the part of a *real* farmer. Some agritourism operators find it
674 useful to wear culturally specific attire to evoke some desired sentiment (Brandth and Haugen
675 2010), but the women in the Network eschew traditional dress in **favour** of modelling a
676 twentieth-first century representation. Apolline is often told by guests that they did not expect
677 to “meet a farm woman looking like [her]. Maybe they were expecting someone older.
678 Usually they are also surprised to see a house with a lawn, a farm house well-ordered. They
679 tell me that they were not expecting a modern, dynamic woman like me.” For some members,
680 dress can be an important way to defensively manage an impression of themselves. Looking

681 the part of a modern farm woman can also be a tool to combat the negative stereotypes often
682 directed toward rural people. Juliette’s fashion choices seem to be aimed at both these ends.

683 Sometimes the kids tell me they want to see the *fermière* [farmwoman]. I tell them I
684 am the *fermière*. It is true that in kid’s books the *fermière* is more likely to appear with
685 a scarf holding a basket. I think there is a difference for some people between what
686 they expect and what they see...I am into traditional dancing, but I never dress up in a
687 traditional outfit to welcome guests. I don’t wear a dress and clogs. I wear a pair of
688 jeans and a t-shirt. If some people try to keep these traditions alive, why not? It’s our
689 roots, but personally I think we should show people that they are not arriving where
690 *bouseux* [nednecks] live.

691 In a similar defensive vein, Agathe adds that she wants them to know that she is not
692 “*bagnard*,” or a convict, that she is not chained to the farm toiling endlessly, but enjoys the
693 same activities as urban residents, including family vacations. “Before coming, they have a lot
694 of clichés in their mind...Parisians still see us with clogs and boots.”

695 Saugeres (2002) argues that Aveyron residents are typically believed to suffer from a
696 sense of inferiority in comparison with other French citizens and often strive to prove that
697 they are just as modern as others. Whether such forms of identity management described
698 above are enacted to counter the stereotype of themselves as ‘backward farmers’ specifically,
699 or the more general ‘Aveyron resident’, may be impossible to disentangle. They are,
700 however, evidence for how women use their bodies to transgress traditional symbolic
701 boundaries and plant the seeds for a new rural and agricultural imagery.

702 **Conclusion**

703 French agritourism entrepreneurs represent farm tourism in ways that interweave
704 tradition, cultural heritage, and distinctiveness with contemporary knowledge, expertise,

705 economic and political realities, and symbols. Imagery of an agrarian past is commonplace,
706 but an asymmetrical interpretation of the representations farm women create within
707 agritourism is also present. Performances, staging, and organisation, intentionally and
708 unintentionally, also construct agriculture and rural life as modern, dynamic, and
709 multifaceted. Custom and tradition collide with rationality and individuality creating a
710 paradox. The result is a representation for tourists that complicates the *la vieille France*
711 imagery of agriculture and rural life. As Juliet affirms, “[w]e show them that agriculture is
712 evolving, that it’s modern, but that at the same time, there is *patrimoine*, a gastronomical
713 heritage as well as an architectural one.”

714 Whereas Bowen and DeMaster (2011) see similar heritage-based initiatives which
715 become **institutionalised** through policy as freezing culture in time and place, we found in
716 agritourism - also prescribed by heritage-based regulations - a degree of dynamism. We found
717 the Network members showing and telling a story that aims to strike some semblance of a
718 balance to convey the complexity and totality of the rural experience, both intentionally and
719 unintentionally. Edensor (2006, p. 485) argues that rural performances are both self-
720 conscious or deliberate action and habitual at the same time, “an interweaving of conscious
721 and unaware modalities, part of the flow of ongoing existence.”

722 Representing this totality begins with an organisational frame somewhat prescribed by
723 AOC guidelines that accentuates tradition, cultural heritage and distinctiveness, yet
724 regulations have not frozen production practices in place. They may have been set by custom,
725 but they are increasingly accomplished with modern, industrial implements and techniques in
726 an effort to respond to changing local and global economies (Frayssignes 2011). This
727 orientation allows Network members to blur the boundaries of tradition and modernity as they
728 demonstrate their recasting of cultural heritage with contemporary tools, such as milking
729 equipment, industrial processors, EU subsidies, and international trade laws. As women are

730 the embodiment of authority in the tourist experience, they are also able to challenge
731 conventional **imagery of the farmer** (the embodied male farmer) and **make a feminised imprint**
732 on agriculture. In this way, AOC regulations become malleable, contouring agriculture or
733 rural representation, without concretising it.

734 In addition to animating AOC standards accomplished with modern means, Network
735 members also infuse the complexities of everyday life in the performance as they enact daily
736 life in view of tourists. Because their home is the setting, the lived experience of sheep
737 producers is often on view, allowing guests a front seat to the backstage of contemporary rural
738 life. Hard working, unassuming rural people bound together in dense kinships ties, so the
739 stock **idealised** image goes, become demanding, over-programmed, busy professionals with a
740 wide range of skills, knowledge, and responsibilities - a heterogeneous mix whose lifestyles
741 reverberate diversity. Bodies are used to further manage an impression of themselves as
742 modern, both to show how they adapt to socio-economic or political realities, as well as
743 creatively infusing a sense of self into the encounter. This desire of the farm women to
744 imprint on the tourist experience stands in stark contrast to the invisibility of their mothers
745 and grandmothers.

746 Through their participation in RVF, women challenge classical assessments of rural
747 gender dynamics by moving from a position of 'farm help' to one of 'agricultural authority'.
748 Literature suggests that for decades farm women had been confined to the backstage,
749 exploited and invisible, in charge of the household and required to contribute to male-defined
750 farm activities (Sachs, 1983; Saugeres, 2002). Agritourism may provide women an
751 opportunity to move to the front stage of the farm. In fact, hosting visitors on the farm might
752 afford women the opportunity to move from a position of societal invisibility (Sachs, 1983) to
753 assume roles that hold promise for significant influence.

754 Our study suggests that, through their participation in the Network, farm women
755 challenge dominant representations of women as “incomplete farmers” (Saugeres, 2002) by
756 preforming the role of ‘agricultural authority.’ This role might permit a new form of cultural
757 power farm women have historically been unable to access. In the context of this activity,
758 they are able to demonstrate to the public their agricultural knowledge and skills. Their power
759 to represent, stage and perform rurality allows them to build a bridge between rural and urban
760 populations that seem increasingly polarised. However, future research is needed to explore
761 how tourists interpret such imagery, as well as the long term implications of such
762 representations on urban values and political sensitivity to rural issues. In short, it is
763 questionable to what extent representations that fragment social relations and enlarge gulfs
764 between rural and urban populations enhance shared meaning and understanding.

765

766 Lastly, agritourism may also be fertile ground for women’s empowerment within the
767 context of the family farm. However, as previously suggested by the literature (Brandth and
768 Haugen, 2010), whether these new opportunities empower women or change on-farm power
769 relations remains unsettled. If our research participants appear as agricultural authorities in
770 the eyes of the public, the extent to which this role challenges a traditional distribution of
771 power between men and women requires further exploration. Further research should explore
772 how agritourism initiatives can empower farm women on the farm and within the household.

773

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784

785 **Endnotes**

786 ¹.In this paper, we use farm tourism and agritourism interchangeably

787 ².The officially defined AOC Roquefort region is not synonymous with Aveyron. Today milk is sourced from
788 two regions, the Midi-Pyrenees and Languedoc-Roussillon and six departments: Aude, Aveyron, Gard, Hérault,
789 Lozère, and Tarn.

790 ³.In 1962, the *Groupement Agricole d'Exploitation en Commun* (GAEC) agricultural framework was created to
791 allow two individuals to legally enter into a business partnership, sharing the work and the benefits. The two
792 contractees were considered as co-operators. GAEC contracts were seen as a path toward agricultural
793 modernisation, a mechanism for improving productivity by increasing farm size. The earliest GAEC contracts
794 could be entered only by parents and children (typically, father/sons). Modifications allowed spouses
795 (husband/wives) to enter a GAEC contract in 2004.

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