Dorota Koczanowicz

The Aesthetics of Taste: Eating within the Realm of Art

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By

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Introduction

> It is self-evident that nothing concerning art is self-evident anymore, not its inner life, not its relations to the world, not even its right to exist.
>
> THEODOR W. ADORNO[1]

• • •

> Cooking, like art, is both reactive and creative – it is about being in flux, navigating and trusting our senses and then connecting and transforming.
>
> OLAFUR ELIASSON[2]

• •
•

The French existentialist philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre harbored a particular dislike for shellfish, especially for their white bodies that resist being pulled out of their shells and cuirasses. He found prawns, mollusks, oysters, and lobsters thoroughly disgusting, and likened them to insects devoid of consciousness.[3] When Simone de Beauvoir quizzed him about the details of this aversion, Sartre replied: "When I eat a crustacean, I am eating something that belongs to another world."[4]

Erik Satie made the color white a key criterion in his dietary regime. Known for his utter eccentricity, the French composer set out exactly three minutes for lunch (always from 12.11 to 12.14) in his meticulously planned daily schedule, in which dinner, invariably starting at 19.16, took four minutes. Satie never talked during this time for fear of choking to death. His idiosyncrasies governed a range of practicalities in his life. His wardrobe was full of identical brown corduroy suits, which he would wear with a white vest and white tights. His menu selection was equally restrictive and precise. He wrote down in his notes: "I

1 Theodor Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, ed. and trans. Robert Hullot-Kenter (London and New York: Bloomsbury, 2013), 1.

2 https://www.jahic-roethlisberger.ch/artists-recipes-book-launch/ (Access 15 June 2021).

3 See Michel Onfray, *Appetites for Thought: Philosophers and Food*, trans. Donald Barry and Stephen Muecke (London: Reaktion Books, 2015), 90.

4 Simone de Beauvoir, *Adieux: A Farewell to Sartre*, trans. Patrick O'Brian (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984), 332.

eat only white victuals: eggs, sugar, grated bones; the fat of dead animals; veal, salt, coconuts, chicken cooked in white water, fruit mould; rice, turnips; camphorised sausage, pasta, cheese (cream), cotton salad and certain kinds of fish (without skin). I have my wine boiled, and drink it cold with fuchsia juice."[5] Even if this statement was a component of Satie's self-fashioning rather than a factual account of his preferences, it is certainly interesting for the choice of the aesthetic axis around which the account of his bill of fare revolved.

Cooking is distinctive to humans. The transformation of the raw into the cooked produced social bonds and culture. The sensation of hunger and the imperative to appease it bind us to other animals, but the manner in which this natural need is met emphatically liberates humans from a dependence on nature. *Food Is Culture*, as Massimo Montanari, an eminent food historian, proclaims in the title of his book. Montanari goes on to insist that "even nature is culture."[6] Cooking is the most human of activities. By cooking, we detach ourselves from the natural world and harness nature: "The chemical modifications induced by cooking, and the combination of ingredients, work together to bring to the mouth a food, that, if not completely 'artificial,' is surely 'created.'"[7] In this insight, Montanari points to a bridge between food and art, prompting the realization that the seeds of art germinate in the fundamental nutritional processes.

Sartre's and Sati's food preferences, in which color serves as the primary criterion of choice, are contrasting and paradoxically similar, speaking to the double entanglement of food in the cultural aspects of human existence. Firstly, food is associated with free choice; secondly, the whimsical pronouncements of connoisseurs bear out the fact that our decisions do not always result from focusing on nutritional values. People's menus are determined by culture and arranged in conformity with ethical, economic, identarian, and aesthetic norms.

While the aesthetic component of food as a rule receives only limited attention, it is becoming increasingly central to contemporary interpretations of broadly conceived culinary practices. That aesthetics, art, and cuisine are becoming aligned is powerfully borne out by our daily consumer choices (e.g., we only buy nice-looking, shapely vegetables, and we are ready to pay a lot in restaurants which put a premium on food presentation) and by the

5 Erik Satie, *A Mammal's Notebook: The Writings of Erik Satie*, ed. Ornella Volta, trans. Antony Melville (London: Atlas Press, 2017), 112.

6 Massimo Montanari, *Food Is Culture*, trans. Albert Sonnenfeld (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), 9.

7 Montanari, *Food Is Culture*, 29.

inclusion of foodstuffs and cooking techniques in artistic practices (Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, Gordon Matta-Clark, Daniel Spoerri, Peter Kubelka, Rirkrit Tiravanija, Elżbieta Jabłońska, Alison Knowles, Anna Królikiewicz, and others). The reduction of the distance between life and art found its most spectacular exemplification in the 2007 invitation for the chef Ferran Adrià to take part in Documenta Kassel, one of the leading art events in the world, on an equal footing with the other artists.[8]

In this book, I consider whether and, if so, on what terms food can be considered a form of art. The transformations in culture which fueled the tendencies mentioned above have by no means brought disputes around the aesthetic status of food to an end. The findings of Carolyn Korsmeyer, a distinguished contemporary theorist of taste, highlight the relevance of the sense of taste, which, she claims, can and should be philosophically explored. Korsmeyer recognizes the aesthetic qualities of culinary practices. Nonetheless, as she embraces the traditional approach to fine arts, which insists on the disinterestedness of art, she rules out the possibility of elevating food to the rank of art. Theodor Adorno explains that "[t]he definition of art is at every point indicated by what art once was, but it is legitimated only by what art became with regard to what it wants to, and perhaps can, become."[9] Adorno's idea of openness to what the future brings is shared by pragmatists, who – unlike Korsmeyer – do not seek to confront the aesthetic uniqueness of food with the classical definitions of art as detached beauty. Hence, pragmatism is the most promising framework within which to capture and describe the relationships between culinary and artistic practices. Within pragmatism itself, Richard Shusterman's somaesthetics proves the most suitable approach for the study of the intersections of food and art, since the new philosophical discipline founded by Shusterman draws on the original notion of aesthetics as defined by Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten in order to "redirect aesthetics back to the core issues of perception, consciousness, and feeling."[10] With the body at the center of its attention, somaesthetics "resists the traditional aesthetic attitude of distanced, disinterested contemplation by advocating an aesthetics of active, creative engagement."[11]

The pragmatist perspective entirely recasts the appraisal of relations between art and life. Pragmatism's Darwinian leanings result in conceiving

8 For Adrià's visit to Kassel, see *Food for Thought, Thought for Food*, ed. Richard Hamilton and Vicente Todoli (Barcelona and New York: Actar, 2009).

9 Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, 3.

10 Richard Shusterman, *Thinking through the Body: Essays in Somaesthetics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 3.

11 Shusterman, *Thinking through the Body*, 2.

culture as another mode of adaptation to the environment. As an effect, the question whether food is art takes on a different meaning. Pragmatists incorporate everyday experience into the realm of art, even though they insist that a strictly aesthetic experience is something exceptional. In this framework, art is comprehended as an outcome of efforts to transform nature:

> Experience is not different from nature; rather, it is nature – one of its multiple forms. [...] in the pulsating rhythm of life, harmony – between the energies of an organism and the energies of its environment – becomes the germ of the aesthetic quality of experience. When order is re-established, participation in this newly instituted order comes to figure as fulfillment, a state approximating aesthetic experiences. For this reason, every common everyday experience may morph into an aesthetic experience.[12]

Given this, pragmatism offers a suitable lens through which to scrutinize debates on the relationship between food and art. This lens effectively helps us inspect activities involving food for elements of experience which appear both in the processes of cooking and in artistic pursuits, and thus it warrants the comparison of culinary experience to aesthetic experience.

Briefly, the choice of pragmatism – and, in particular, of somaesthetics – as the primary theoretical framework for my book is driven by at least two important reasons. Essentially, somaesthetics grew from the subsoil of thinking opposed to the still influential philosophical positions proposed by Immanuel Kant and Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, in which food is marginalized. As Shusterman explains:

> As pragmatist aesthetics rejects the essential Kantian opposition of the aesthetic to the practical by insisting that art and aesthetic experience can serve life's interests without losing their status as worthy ends, so it also opposes Hegel's idealist scientism by celebrating the value of immediate enjoyment and of the body as a central locus where life's interests, pleasures, and practical purposes are realized.[13]

Hence, somaesthetics is a convenient analytical instrument for depicting and interpreting phenomena of everyday life, including culinary practices.

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12 Krystyna Wilkoszewska, "Estetyka pragmatyczna," in *Estetyki filozoficzne xx wieku*, ed. Krystyna Wilkoszewska (Kraków: Universitas, 2000), 118. Unless indicated otherwise, quotations from non-English texts are provided in the translation of the translator of this volume.

13 Shusterman, *Thinking through the Body*, 2.

The other reason why somaesthetics underpins my argument is that it is a handy tool for culturologically-driven explorations. Shusterman insists that the cultural context affects all forms of somatic consciousness.[14] Somaesthetics thus makes it possible to bring together three ostensibly detached domains: culture, aesthetics, and bodiliness. Food, which in facts belongs in each of these orders, is an obvious point of interest for somaesthetics. Pragmatist aesthetics holds that aesthetic experience forms part of general experience, whereby aesthetics is inextricable from life practice. Krystyna Wilkoszewska asserts that "aesthetics is supposed to start from life experiences, of which aesthetic experiences are both the most sublimated and the most heightened form. As the quintessence of any process of experiencing, these experiences are of exceptional relevance to philosophy."[15] Building on these insights, I combine theoretical considerations with explaining how the cultural environment has affected the conclusions of great thinkers who have discussed the aesthetics of food. In doing so, I rely on the pragmatist approach, which guides me beyond purely philosophical explorations and prompts me to engage in culturological investigations into the cultural status of taste and particular aesthetic manifestations of food in culture. The culturological perspective is especially pronounced in interpreting the enmeshment of culinary practices in evaluative processes. The specific compass of this perspective is often demarcated by the interests of the artists I study.

Food is complex enough to require the mobilization of a variety of disciplines and discourses; hence, my theoretical argument on taste is underpinned by philosophy, culturology, art sciences, history, sociology, and the anthropology of taste, while also drawing on the articulations of artists. Consequently, this book embraces the interdisciplinarity characteristic of food studies.

The chapter devoted to "The Antinomies of Taste" offers an account of the positions adopted by two great thinkers of the age of taste: Immanuel Kant and David Hume. Their ideas are juxtaposed with the views of Anthelme Brillat-Savarin, who can suitably be called a gastrosopher. In this chapter, I depict the dramatic tension between appetite and aesthetics, which was constitutive of and intrinsic to 18th-century debates on the essence of taste. I dwell on these concepts not only by way of historical introduction; in fact, the notions and assessments formulated back then have ever since formatively affected and organized the prevalent modes of thinking about the relationship between the sense of taste and the realm of its activity (i.e., eating and drinking) in

14 Shusterman, *Thinking through the Body*, 3.

15 Wilkoszewska, "Estetyka pragmatyczna," 120.

the context of art. If asked whether food was art, Kant, Hume, and Henry Home would answer in unison that it was not. The intellectual tradition of the West has quite eagerly included taste in philosophical discourses, but only as a metaphor for aesthetic sensitivity. Nevertheless, despite a clear dividing line between corporeal and intellectual pleasures, even Kant's restrictive philosophy carries the potential to abate the dissonance between aesthetic and gastronomical taste. The two are linked, as Rodolphe Gasché observes, by the subjectivity, immediacy, and sociality of experience.

Though essential to life and culture, food and eating have never really been esteemed by Western philosophers. While food and eating have been brought to bear in philosophical discussions, they have more often than not featured as emphatic examples to illustrate a position on another matter. For instance, when Hume examined the process of induction, he evoked bread to ask whether we could indeed be sure that the bread which fed us one day would do the same the following day as well. In his own take on induction, Bertrand Russell wondered what made us certain that the sun would rise the following morning. To undermine this certainty, he pictured a chicken killed one day by the same person who had fed it every previous day. These examples make Robert Nozick ask whether it is by coincidence that "the problem of induction expresses itself as a worry over loss, of nourishment, of light and warmth, of safety."[16]

In the chapter "The Value of Taste: Cultural Hierarchies," I ponder, among other things, why something as basic and essential as the need for food has so long been deemed unworthy of philosophical attention. This is in fact part of an altogether broader issue, which John Dewey addressed by asking:

> Why is the attempt to connect the higher and ideal things of experience with basic vital roots so often regarded as betrayal of their nature and denial of their value? Why is there repulsion when the high achievements of fine art are brought into connection with common life, the life that we share with all living creatures? Why is life thought of as an affair of low appetite, or at its best a thing of gross sensation, and ready to sink from its best to the level of lust and harsh cruelty?[17]

Dewey states that answering these questions comprehensively "would involve the writing of a history of morals that would set forth the conditions that have

16 Robert Nozick, *The Examined Life: Philosophical Meditations* (New York, London, Toronto, and Sydney: Simon & Schuster, 2006), 56.

17 John Dewey, *Art as Experience* (London: Perigee, 2005), 20.

brought about contempt for the body, fear of the senses, and the opposition of flesh to spirit."[18] This work is superbly done by Korsmeyer in *Making Sense of Taste*. Building on her insights, I reveal the unarticulated mechanisms of evaluation which lie behind the separation of various spheres of culture and behind the normative consequences of this separation. Based on binary oppositions, the intellectual tradition of the West has excluded the body and all things bodily from the sphere of cognition, while at the same time elevating cultural divisions into epistemological dogmas. Yet, as Dewey noticed, "[t]here is no limit to the capacity of immediate sensuous experience to absorb into itself meanings and values that in and of themselves – that is in the abstract – would be designated 'ideal' and 'spiritual.'"[19] Culture appoints a place in the hierarchy to food products, culinary techniques, and people who cook. It also institutes an order of the senses in which the bodily senses, among them taste, are less appreciated than the intellectual senses. Korsmeyer identifies an implicit, gender-based value-judgement system which breeds and sustains a male-dominated culture. By becoming aware of the culturally entrenched divisions which produce the stratification of culture and hinder the melioristic attitudes recommended by pragmatist philosophy, we take a step toward abolishing these division.

The chapter "Culinary Experience: A Pragmatist Perspective" is entirely devoted to Dewey. Although the founder of pragmatist aesthetics is not generally associated with food studies, reflections on the cooking and sharing of food and on gastronomical experience repeatedly surface in his writings. I believe Dewey is an important voice to heed when exploring the aesthetics of food because of the comprehensive and visionary quality of his theory, properties perfectly encapsulated in his statement that "[a] conception of fine art that sets out from its connection with discovered qualities of ordinary experience will be able to indicate the factors and forces that favor the normal development of common human activities into matters of artistic value."[20]

The interrelations of food, culture, and aesthetics in Dewey's writings can be investigated from two perspectives. One of them derives from Dewey's theory of education, which was developed and practiced by a school he set up in Chicago. Dewey was a believer in the utility of incorporating the eating and sharing of food into the educational process. The other analytical perspective arises from Dewey's aesthetic writings. The passages on culinary practices in

18 Dewey, *Art as Experience*, 20.
19 Dewey, *Art as Experience*, 29.
20 Dewey, *Art as Experience*, 10.

Art as Experience are particularly illuminating in this respect. Dewey's philosophical inquiries are often illustrated with examples borrowed from gastronomy, which serve as models of his central aesthetic concepts.

In order to capture gastronomical experience from a pragmatist perspective, I examine the contexts in which culinary examples appear and their implications for Dewey's concept of experience and for his perception of the status and function of food-related practices in culture. Dewey sets apart aesthetic experience and turns it into a model for all other experiences. Aesthetic qualities confer closure on experience and attest to its value. So even if Dewey did not classify food as, strictly speaking, art, he would certainly claim that it made sense to seek to convert eating into art in order to benefit from it as much as possible.

Discussions about the aesthetic value of food usually focus on dish presentation. Quite a different, ingenious, and surprising perspective is developed by Richard Shusterman, the protagonist of the next chapter, entitled "Somaesthetics and the Art of Eating." Shusterman proposes a somaesthetic study of the internal and external choreography of eating, which he explicitly identifies with art. He believes that the art of eating is a performative movement-based art rooted in the body of an eater and in the collaboration of people gathered at the table, whose bodies add up to a collective choreography. Movement and the ordering rhythm are also brought in by the sequencing of foods and drinks, such as within a meal (typical dinners consisting of starters, soups, mains, and desserts), over the day (breakfast, lunch, and dinner), and across the calendar with its seasons and festivities (e.g., birthday cakes, New Year's Eve champagne, or seasonal fruit and vegetables).

Shusterman is a rare philosopher who puts the body at the center of his investigations. He refers to his field as somaesthetics, and defines it as reflection on the acting, intelligent, perceptive, and sentient body. The aesthetic dimension of nutritional practices naturally forms a part of his philosophical project. Somaesthetics is a discipline which "is interested not merely in describing our culturally shaped forms of somatic consciousness and modes of somatic practice, but also in improving them."[21] This is precisely the goal that Shusterman set for himself in his paper on the art of eating. Since any carefully composed and properly consumed meal may become a component of creative self-fashioning, Shusterman attends to the pleasures of the table, as well as to the problems resulting from our lack of mindfulness and our failure to feed ourselves in harmony with the needs of our bodies.

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21 Shusterman, *Thinking through the Body*, 4.

In somaesthetics, the axial individual dimension intersects with the common good. Various people's compulsions and preferences meet at the table and must be taken into account by a sensitive diner. Shusterman deliberately does not delve into cooking as an artistic pursuit. The sole focus of his approach is on the art of eating as a practice of savoring, whereby how the meals actually come into being is irrelevant. As a result, his framework excludes the site where work goes on in order to enable eaters to concentrate on the pleasures of the mindful ingestion of foods. I believe, however, that it is important to have a glimpse behind the scenes of any sumptuous feast and any modest meal by peeking into the kitchen. The physical and symbolic facets of this territory are explored in the chapter "Kitchen: A World Next Door." More than just a point in time-space, the kitchen is crucially a "place" with its emotional, social, and cultural load and coloring.[22] The acuteness of being may always flare up in everyday activities performed in the kitchen; equally powerful may also be an impulse to run away from all the humble chores of peeling, chopping, mixing liquids which tend to stick, and the time-consuming frying of meat chunks for stews. The memory of these pleasures and vexations is a sturdy part of family stories told and retold time and again, but it is even more permanently stored in our bodies. They also showcase the potential for creativity actualized by homemakers.

This is comprehensively studied by the sociologist Luce Giard, who herself long resisted "feminine" tasks, among which cooking seemed particularly onerous to her. With time, however, she realized that the problem lay in the position accorded to cooking by culture, rather than in cooking as such, and she made it her job to expose the mechanisms of cultural differentiation and to cast a proper light on cooking. Giard effectively interrogates the ingrained patterns of value-judgment and shows that cooking – an alchemical transformation of simple ingredients into a new, complex whole – is an extremely important and complicated matter which requires the combining of skills from various spheres. We tend to take many everyday activities for granted and forget that we are culturally wired to consider them natural. The association of woman with the kitchen represents one such entrenched pattern of thought. I discuss the challenges and opportunities of opposing the verdicts of culture by resorting to art. I believe that Dewey had a point when he appreciated the epistemic potential of art, stating that "the work of art has a unique *quality*, but that it is that of clarifying and concentrating meanings contained in scattered and weakened ways in the material of other experiences."[23] Making my case,

22 Edward S. Casey, *Getting Back into Place: Toward a Renewed Understanding of the Place-World* (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 2009).

23 Dewey, *Art as Experience*, 87.

I build on the projects of four performance artists: Marina Abramović, Elżbieta Jabłońska, Martha Rosler, and Mierle Laderman Ukeles in order to depict the dual character of the kitchen, which is a "world apart" and, at the same time, "the heart of the home." This chapter also has a fifth protagonist, specifically, Margarete Schütte-Lihotzky, the designer of the Frankfurt Kitchen, standing for the synonym of a modern kitchen-as-a-laboratory, which revolutionized the space of women's work at the beginning of the 20th century.

Culture transforms bodily habits anchored in social values. Another goal of mine is to examine in-depth how food both establishes and alters communities and how culinary culture unites and separates people. These issues are the main thematic concerns of the chapter entitled "Community around the Table." Rirkrit Tiravanija is among the most celebrated contemporary artists who have made the collective cooking and eating of meals an element of their artistic practices. At the same time, he is capable of "giving form to thoughts and bringing forth novel exposition modes founded on relationships among people."[24]

Cooking is highly contextual. It ties in with local cultures, environments, products, seasons of the year, etc. At the same time, the sharing of food invariably has a universal dimension to it and, as such, may become a platform for understanding. Tiravanija relies on food and hospitality to remodel conventional ways of thinking, to unplug communication channels, and to encourage the establishment of new relations and sustaining existing ones. Similar standpoints are espoused by Anna Królikiewicz and Marije Vogelzang. The works of these three artists, which are the cornerstones of my argument in "Community around the Table," all avail themselves of ephemeral artistic practices which seek to build community through food-sharing. While such communities may prove incidental and contingent, the power of these artistic acts should not be ignored because, as Shusterman asserts, "even if experience [...] is only an elusive, ephemeral surface reality, it still exists as a real force that influences other realities deemed deeper and more permanent in shaping that experiential surface."[25]

The chapter "The Taste of Authenticity" continues to investigate the consequences of the cultural entanglements of taste. Unlike the preceding chapter, designed to depict the cultural, community-fostering embedment of culinary practices, this chapter interprets the situation, both singular and common in the globalized world, where a tourist wishes to enter the culture of her

24 Nicolas Bourriaud, "Nietrwałe zespolenia. Szlakiem teoretycznym od relacyjnego do 'wędrującego.' Wstęp do wydania polskiego," in *Estetyka relacyjna* (*Relational Aesthetics*), trans. Łukasz Białkowski (Kraków: Mocak, 2012), 20.

25 Richard Shusterman, "Pierre Bourdieu and Pragmatist Aesthetics: Between Practice and Experience," *New Literary History* 46, no. 3 (June 2015): 454.

destination though tasting the local foods. Is it possible to become part of the local community when on holiday? Drawing on theoretical studies and artworks, I examine the (im)possibilities of the tourist's authentic culinary experience. Transposing the aesthetic concept of "authenticity" onto tourism stirs a range of doubts. The notion of authentic taste, which is so highly prized in contemporary culture, harbors an obvious, irresolvable contradiction. The problem has two sources: 1) authenticity is invariably predicated on a confluence of historical factors and, as such, is subject to change; 2) in contemporary culture, authenticity is a commodity on sale. The stronger the imperative of authenticity, the more difficult it is to meet the requirement of uniqueness and the greater the risk of disappointment. This conundrum can be solved, in my view, through the conscious and active shaping of experience.

Entitled "Leftovers," the last chapter is special in many ways. It disturbs the coherent narrative of the preceding chapters, in which artistic practices serve as exemplifications of theoretical issues. The final pages of the book are exclusively devoted to Daniel Spoerri, a truly exceptional Swiss artist who initiated eat art in the 1960s. I portray his journey as an artist by recalling my own culinary experience of partaking in a dinner held as a homage to Spoerri in Stuttgart in 2010. Palatal taste rubs elbows with aesthetic taste in Spoerri's works and in the final part of this book's narrative. Following the sequential logic of the courses masterfully cooked by Vincent Klink, an excellent chef in Wielandshöhe, I explore the meanings of artistic practices which may be associated with these dishes. Cuisine from all corners of Europe reflected the complex and exceptionally creative biography of Spoerri, who was a restaurateur, a chef, and a gallery owner, among other things. Whatever position he has held and whatever job he has done, he has remained first and foremost an artist dedicated to transforming his surroundings into a space of art.

My argument in this book highlights the dual and often self-contradictory nature of culinary practices, in which the physiological need for food is interlocked with culturally conditioned desires. I seek to illuminate the complexity of activities involved in the cooking and sharing of food as a cultural phenomenon. As a matter of fact, I believe that we are witnessing the emergence of a new sensorium in which the bodily senses are assigned a novel and more distinguished position. At the same time, the robust processes of the aestheticization of taste are bringing culinary culture and art ever closer together. I examine these developments in more detail in the "Conclusion."

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This book includes revisions of papers (or parts of papers) which have been published in journals and collected volumes in English:

1. "Beyond Taste: Daniel Spoerri's Art of Feasting," *Performance Research* 7, no. 22 (2017): 92–99.
2. "Community at the Table," in *Democracy, Dialogue, Memory: Expressions and Affect Beyond Consensus,* ed. Idit Alaphandry and Leszek Koczanowicz (Oxford and New York: Routledge, 2019), 97–110.
3. "John Dewey: Culinary Perspective," *Pragmatism Today* 2, no. 7 (2016): 88–94.
4. "Somaesthetics and the Art of Eating," in *Practicing Pragmatist Aesthetics*, ed. Wojciech Małecki (Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2014), 185–203.

CHAPTER 1

The Antinomies of Taste

> The carpet embroidered with flowers has sprouted green,
> and Kant is like radishes, so fresh and fragrant,
> I bite into the flesh and feel the tangy
> taste of the argument on my tongue.
>
> HALINA POŚWIATOWSKA[1]

In *Eating the Enlightenment: Food and the Sciences in Paris*, Emma C. Spary discusses an array of intersections among the discourses of diet, taste, health, and science in France under the rule of two Louises: XIV and XV. Cuisine was then studied as a tool for consciously forming one's body and soul. At the opposite pole, food was abhorred as an enemy mighty enough to debilitate one's physique and one's morality alike.[2] Various foods were attributed the power of whetting or regulating appetite, and thus of molding both individual and collective bodies – of "affect[ing] the body, nerves, and mind."[3] The dispute around food was implicated in a broader conflict in which tradition and nature clashed with innovation and civilization. People began a new practice of looking for advice on what and how to eat in printed sources.

Spary identifies cultural, political, and economic factors which fueled interest in matters of the table. The Enlightenment witnessed transformations in modes of food production, as a result of which some foodstuffs which had been luxuries before, such as sugar, chocolate, and coffee, underwent democratization, and consumption styles changed.[4] As chefs perfected the culinary art, *nouvelle cuisine* came into being. In the 19th century, all these tendencies

1 Halina Poświatowska, "Zazielenił się chodnik …," in Halina Poświatowska, *Wszystkie wiersze* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 2000).

2 Emma C. Spary, *Eating the Enlightenment: Food and the Sciences in Paris, 1670–1760* (Chicago and London: University of Illinois Press, 2013), 18.

3 Spary, *Eating the Enlightenment*, 14.

4 Spary, *Eating the Enlightenment*, 5, 25.

were to spread and accelerate with the rise of restaurants.[5] In a parallel development, as Spary relates, "[d]iet became a metaphor for the problems of novelty and change afflicting France in the early stages of consumption and capitalism. New knowledge, similarly, could be interpreted as threat or as potential; discourses about cuisine, appetite, spices, and spirits made plain what enlightenment and innovation might mean for the future of society."[6]

Interest in nutrition resulted not only from an urge to improve culinary experiences, but first and foremost from the belief that the stomach was not just the place where food was digested, but also the locus of moral and political anxieties.[7] As Spary emphasizes, digestion was perceived in the 18th century as an act in which mind and matter converged.[8] Digestive processes, both good and bad, were viewed as a channel through which social institutions (such as culturally recognized culinary practices), political institutions (such as the organizations and offices involved in food supply), and natural factors (such as the climate) affected individuals.[9] In other words, digestion was a lens that focalized the relations between the external world and the individual. Consequently, it does not come as a surprise that this natural process attracted the attention of philosophers affiliated with various schools of thought. In the eyes of 18th-century thinkers, the scientific study of nutrition and digestion acquired an exceptionally important role in how people functioned in the world and society. As a result, these processes were easily relatable to the fundamental philosophical questions of the day. The opposition of body and mind is reflected in writings on cuisine, diet, and health produced at the time. After all, proper nutrition was deemed to be one of the manifestations of critical reason. It was then that questions such as what it meant to be a rational person in the kitchen and at the table, or how to make dietary choices more rational and thus improve the physical and moral condition of the nation as a whole, were asked for the first time.[10] It was not by accident then that philosophers' inquiries into nutrition came to ponder whether eating should seek to meet basic needs in conformity with the principles of living a healthy life or should train the refinement of taste. Such disputes are exemplified in the clash between Jean Jacques Rousseau and the Polish king Stanisław Leszczyński. Rousseau is

5 Rebecca L. Spang, *The Invention of the Restaurant: Paris and Modern Gastronomic Culture* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000).

6 Spary, *Eating the Enlightenment*, 14.

7 Spary, *Eating the Enlightenment*, 17.

8 Spary, *Eating the Enlightenment*, 50.

9 Spary, *Eating the Enlightenment*, 50.

10 Spary, *Eating the Enlightenment*, 5.

well known for having upheld the superiority of the natural state to civilization. Consequently, he contended that only essential needs should be catered to, because any excessive consumption bred moral and political degeneration. Leszczyński vocally disagreed, making a case for *délicatesse* – culinary sophistication – as a *sine qua non* of civilization. He insisted that a society in which the senses were not regulated would be more inclined to crime than one in which pleasure and reason were finely balanced.[11] This polemic is but one of multiple examples of the ambiguities surrounding the role of reason in consumption and hesitations about the extent to which people were capable of controlling their appetite and how far they were governed by it.

The Enlightenment tradition of "scientifying" food continued in a plethora of healthy eating manuals. The most popular writers on food included Grimod de La Reyniere[12] and Eugène Briffault,[13] who depicted culinary Paris with outstanding expertise, and Anthelme Brillat-Savarin, who combined sociocultural reflection on dietary practices with their medical and scientific examination. Written in 1825, that is, twenty-one years after Kant's death, his *The Physiology of Taste*[14] resounds with the Enlightenment's legacy, in which appetite was linked to reason and morals. The relationship between these three factors forms one of the major axes of my argument in this chapter.

As eating became one of the central preoccupations of Enlightenment philosophy, it naturally appeared in the writings of David Hume and Immanuel Kant. They both studied taste as a source of corporeal pleasures, and they were also fascinated by taste as a metaphor – as the sense responsible for assessing aesthetic values. While this approach to the notion of taste was as a matter of fact first proposed by Baltasar Gracián, a Spanish Jesuit from Saragossa,[15] Hume and Kant are the chief authorities on taste evoked in aesthetic debates today.[16]

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11 Spary, *Eating the Enlightenment*, 235.

12 Alexandre Balthazar Laurent Grimod de La Reyniere, *Almanach des gourmands* (Paris: Mercure de France, 2003).

13 Eugène Briffault, *Paris à Table: 1846*, ed. and trans. by Joe Weintraub (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018).

14 Anthelme Brillat-Savarin, *The Physiology of Taste: Or, Meditations on Transcendental Gastronomy*, trans. and ed. M[ary] F[rances] K[ennedy] Fisher (New York, London, and Toronto: Alfred A. Knopf, 2009).

15 Mirosław Żelazny, *Estetyka filozoficzna* (Toruń: Wydawnictwo Naukowe UMK, 2009), 66.

16 Debates on the sense of taste proliferated in the 18th century. The position of taste among the other senses and its relationship to aesthetic taste were explored by Anthony Ashley Cooper Shaftesbury, Johann Ulrich von König, Voltaire, Claude Adrien Helvétius, Jean-Baptiste Du Bos, and Charles Batteux. For an account and comparison of their views, see Żelazny, *Estetyka filozoficzna*, 40–90.

1 The Judgments of Taste: David Hume

In 1755, *The Edinburgh Review* was founded to spread information about all texts published in Scotland, as well as about foreign publications of the greatest interest to enlightened readers. The range of themes covered by the journal was fairly extensive. Its first issue contained reviews of *A System of Moral Philosophy* by Francis Hutcheson, of the history of Peter the Great authored by Alexander Gordon of Auchintoul, and of Elizabeth Cleland's *A New and Easy Method of Cookery*.[17] The latter was the first cookbook to be printed in Edinburgh, and Hume likely had it in his library (Fig. 1).

William Zachs, an eminent bibliophile and author of the catalogue of an exhibition celebrating the tri-centenary of Hume's birth, suggests that the philosopher had more cookbooks at home and certainly possessed a collection of French cookery books.[18] Admittedly, they are not included in the official inventory of his library, but they may have been kept in the kitchen and thus escaped the attention of archivists.

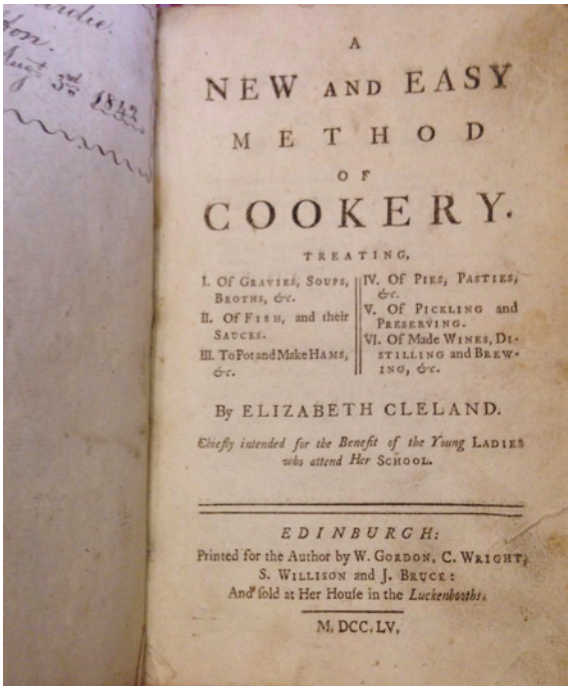
James Boswell called Hume the "northern Epicurus."[19] Hume did not shun the pleasures of the table – good wine, delicious food, and perfect conversation.[20] His numerous portraits show a benevolent, rounded face, which perfectly

17 James A. Harris, *Hume: An Intellectual Biography* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 357.

18 William Zachs, *David Hume. Man of Letters, Scientist of Man: An Exhibition at the Writers' Museum Commemorating the Three-Hundredth Anniversary of Hume's Birth* (Edinburgh: Arc, 2011), 46.

19 Zachs, *David Hume. Man of Letters, Scientist of Man*, 46.

20 Traces of this liking found their way into the exhibition held to celebrate the three-hundredth anniversary of Hume's birth. Among the items on display was Elizabeth Cleland's book, as well as letters in which Hume addressed culinary issues. The exhibition was put on by The Writers' Museum in Edinburgh between 26th April 2011and 17th September 2011. Hume's interest in food also shows across the volumes of the history of England he penned. The study registers, for example, typical diets of people from various social strata and lists the traditionally grown and newly imported fruit and vegetables. Hume marks 1660 as the year in which coffee, tea, and chocolate found their way to the British Isles, and claims that asparagus, artichokes, cauliflowers, and lettuce also arrived there at the time. Food appears in the context of economic developments as well, which is quite natural because food products cost money and they might be used as currency. Additionally, food is mentioned in anecdotes about monarchs, and the depictions of luxury meals consumed at monasteries form part of the criticism of the church. See Spencer K. Wertz, "Hume's Culinary Interests and the Historiography of Food," in Spencer K. Wertz, *Food and Philosophy: Selected Essays* (Fort Worth, TX: TCU Press, 2016), 72–92.



A
NEW AND EASY
METHOD
OF
COOKERY.

TREATING,

I. Of Gravies, Soups, Broths, &c.
II. Of Fish, and their Sauces.
III. To Pot and Make Hams, &c.
IV. Of Pies, Pasties, &c.
V. Of Pickling and Preserving.
VI. Of Made Wines, Distilling and Brewing, &c.

By ELIZABETH CLELAND.

Chiefly intended for the Benefit of the Young LADIES *who attend Her* SCHOOL.

EDINBURGH:
Printed for the Author by W. GORDON, C. WRIGHT, S. WILLISON and J. BRUCE:
And sold at Her House in the *Luckenbooths*.

M. DCC. LV.

FIGURE 1 Elizabeth Cleland, *A New and Easy Method of Cookery*, 1755 (from the collection of William Zachs)

matches depictions of gourmands outlined by Brillat-Savarin.[21] Hume's cellar was filled with bottles of French wine, and his escritoire brimmed full of recipes for French dishes he himself had noted down.[22] Hume believed that taste could be trained, and was dedicated to improving his own by eating and cooking.[23] He also took care of the palates of his friends, for whom he would regularly cook. He wrote to Gilbert Elliot: "I have now just lying on the Table before me a Receipt for making *Soupe a la Reine*, copy'd with my own hand. For Beef and Cabbage (a charming Dish), and old Mutton and old Claret, no body excels

21 Hume, however, claimed that he was not a gourmand, but a glutton. Cf. Ernest Campbell Mossner, *The Life of David Hume* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980), 560.

22 Mossner, *Life of David Hume*, 560.

23 For the benefits of cultivating "mental" taste, see David Hume, "Of the Delicacy of Taste and Passion," in David Hume, *Essays, Moral and Political* (Edinburgh: R. Fleming and A. Alison for A. Kincaid Bookseller, MDCCXLI), 1–8; https://quod.lib.umich.edu/e/ecco/004806352.0001.000/1:1?rgn=div1;view=fulltext (Access 28 June 2021).

me. I also make Sheep head Broth in a manner that Mr ['Ambassador'] Keith speaks of it for eight days after."[24] In brief, in his letter of 16th October 1769, Hume boasted about his great talent for culinary art, one that he proclaimed "the Science to which I intend to addict the remaining Years of my Life."[25] Of course, his friends supported him in this resolution. Henry Mackenzie sang the praises of Hume's exquisite *bouillé*, and James Boswell recalled a banquet crowned with three sorts of ice-cream.[26] When Hume served the ice-cream, it was a genuine rarity and an exclusive delicacy which could only be enjoyed at the pre-eminent homes of Edinburgh.[27] Hume had his financial ups and downs, but he would invite his friends to dine with him every now and then even in the times of hardship. On such occasions, he would treat his guests to roast chicken, a mince-meat stew, and a bottle of punch. What mattered more than the food at such moments, as Alexander Carlyle stressed, was that "he furnished the entertainment with the most instructive and pleasant conversation."[28]

2 Beauty: between the Subjective and the Universally Accepted

Though Hume's essays frequently addressed popular and topical themes, they reflected his philosophical ideas. In the introduction to the Polish edition of Hume's selected essays (1955), Władysław Tatarkiewicz avers that "in their position on truth [...] they subscribe to pluralism: there are many truths. And to relativism: all truths are relative. To subjectivism: good and evil are not properties of things, but products of the mind. And to practicism: the world is known in the practice of life, and philosophy will not come up with anything beyond what life has found out."[29] Other researchers share the notion that there is an affinity between Hume's essays and his *A Treatise of Human Nature*. Carolyn Korsmeyer opens her paper "Hume and the Foundations of Taste" with a claim that the gist of "Of The Standard of Taste" corresponds to Hume's views about

24 Mossner, *Life of David Hume*, 560. Spencer K. Wertz believes that this soup was made of chicken breast and almonds. Its royal and refined quality resulted from blending the ingredients into a smooth, dainty purée. See Wertz, "Hume's Culinary Interests," 74.

25 Mossner, *Life of David Hume*, 560.

26 Mossner, *Life of David Hume*, 560.

27 See Wertz, "Hume's Culinary Interests," 73.

28 Mossner, *Life of David Hume*, 245.

29 Władysław Tatarkiewicz, "Eseje Dawida Hume'a," in David Hume, *Eseje z dziedziny moralności i literatury* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, 1955), XXI.

the sources of knowledge as spelled out in *A Treatise of Human Nature*.[30] In all probability, taste would have been a major theme of the following part of the *Treatise*, had Hume written one.[31] But he never did, disaffected as he had grown with the insufficient amount of interest in his ideas and the belief that his writing was abstract and incomprehensible. This disappointment made Hume abandon philosophizing, and the book devoted to criticism never made it into the hands of readers. His insights into taste are nevertheless to be found in some of his essays, therein prominently in the celebrated "Of the Standard of Taste," published in 1757.

What made Hume revisit the theme of taste? In January 1755, the Edinburgh Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Sciences, Manufacturers and Agriculture committed to annually funding twenty awards in various disciplines, including "the best discovery in Sciences," fine writing, "the best printed and most correct book," an array of paper and textile products (including ruffles, bone-lace, and rags), the best drawing, whisky, strong ale, and "the best hogshead of porter."[32] Some winners received medals and others, money prizes. Among the numerous categories eligible for the awards was the best essay on taste. The prize was not awarded in the first year, and in the subsequent year it went to the *Essay on Taste* by Alexander Gerard, Professor at Marischal College in Aberdeen. Hume, an active member of the Society from its foundation, sat on the panel that conferred the award on Gerard in 1756. However, he did not agree with all of Gerard's ideas, and in response to him he wrote "Of the Standard of Taste," a polemic which has ever since been accused of inconsistency and the adulation of neoclassicism by some, and lauded for its insightfulness and critical sensitivity by others.[33] What Hume did not like in Gerard's argument was his interpretation of the views of Francis Hutcheson, which linked the discrimination between correct and incorrect judgments of taste to the skill of grasping the objective properties of the object under assessment.[34] In Hume's view, "to seek in the real beauty, or real deformity, is as fruitless an enquiry, as to

30 Carolyn Korsmeyer, "Hume and the Foundations of Taste," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 35, no. 2 (1976): 201–15.

31 Harris, *Hume*, 362.

32 Edinburgh Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Sciences, Manufacturers and Agriculture, *Rules and Orders of the Edinburgh Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Sciences, Manufacturers and Agriculture* (Edinburgh, 1755), 24–26; https://digital.nls.uk/learning/scottish-enlightenment/source/rules-and-orders-of-the-edinburgh-society-for-the-encouragement-of-arts-sciences-manufactures-and-agriculture/ (Access 28 June 2021).

33 Korsmeyer, "Hume and the Foundations of Taste," 201.

34 See Harris, *Hume*, 363.

pretend to ascertain the real sweet or real bitter."[35] The claim of pointlessness is informed by the notion that beauty does not reside in the invariable properties of the object. Rather, beauty is a sensation of special pleasure and is subjective, depending, among other things, on the condition of our sensory organs. "Beauty is no quality in things themselves: It exists merely in the mind which contemplates them; and each mind perceives a different beauty," as Hume insists.[36] Rather than focusing on the properties of objects which purportedly incited aesthetic emotion, one should make this very sensation the object of study. The diversity of taste thwarts ultimate judgments on art, but this does not deter Hume from searching for a standard of taste defined as a principle "by which the various sentiments of men may be reconciled; at least, a decision afforded, confirming one sentiment, and condemning another."[37] Although we fail to pinpoint this definitive principle to help us indisputably separate the beautiful from the ugly, and although this distinction is exclusively empirical, Hume exerts himself to scrutinize experience for hints shedding some light on the nature of our choices.

The lack of a universal principle of taste does not entail a complete randomness of appraisals of art. Agreement in this respect is founded on common sense, which dismisses absurd judgments, and is underpinned by "the original structure of the internal fabric" shared by all people.[38] This natural structure takes the better of all the historical, cultural, social, and psychological differences, and brings forth consensus on the general rules governing positive and negative evaluations. The capacity for appreciating beauty is not evenly distributed. Hume states that it depends on both inborn and experientially acquired features: "Though some objects, by the structure of the mind, be naturally calculated to give pleasure, it is not to be expected that in every individual the pleasure will be equally felt."[39] The intensity and the adequacy of experience hinge on a range of factors, therein on "sensitive imagination," which is a prerequisite for bringing qualities out of objects. Characteristically, to convey this particular sensory sensitivity, Hume refers to physiological taste. He cites a passage of Cervantes's *Don Quixote* in which Sancho Panza tells a

35 David Hume, "Of the Standard of Taste," in David Hume, *Essays and Treatises on Various Subjects, in Two Volumes: Vol. 1 Containing Essays, Moral, Political, and Literary* (London: Printed for A. Millar, in the Strand; and A. Kincaid and A. Donaldson, at Edinburgh, MDCCLXIV), 257.

36 Hume, "Of the Standard of Taste," 257.

37 Hume, "Of the Standard of Taste," 256.

38 Hume, "Of the Standard of Taste," 260.

39 Hume, "Of the Standard of Taste," 261.

story of his kinsmen – wine experts endowed with such a discerning taste that they were capable of identifying all minutiae of wine flavors with utmost accuracy:

> I have had in my family, by father's side, two of the rarest tasters that were ever known in La Mancha; and I will give you the proof of their skill. A certain hogshead was given to each of them to taste, and their opinion asked as to the condition, quality, goodness, or badness of the wine. One tried it with the tip of his tongue; the other only put it to his nose. The first said the wine savoured of iron; the second said it had rather a twang of goat's leather. The owner protested that the vessel was clean, and the wine neat, so that it could not taste either of iron or leather. Notwithstanding this, the two famous tasters stood positively to what they had said. Time went on; the wine was sold off, and, on cleaning the cask, a small key, hanging to a leathern thong, was found at the bottom.[40]

The anecdote serves two ends. Firstly, it illustrates the similarity between "mental" and "physical" tastes and, secondly, it emphasizes that both taste and beauty are founded on feelings.

Hume entertains no doubts that the same sensitivity governs culinary and aesthetic assessments. This sensitivity enables one to perceive beauty or ugliness, and to taste dishes so as to appreciate the delicate interplays of their components: "A good palate is not tried by strong flavours; but by a mixture of small ingredients, where we are still sensible of each part, notwithstanding its minuteness and its confusion with the rest."[41] Such a degree of astuteness is rarely encountered, and it takes a perfectly working sensory apparatus, mental incisiveness, and intensive work on self-improvement to achieve it. Insofar as making the judgments of taste is also helped by "the frequent survey or contemplation of a particular species of beauty,"[42] Hume recommends the practice of art as well. Comparable training based on collecting experiences and practical exertions goes into the making of a gourmand, too.

Experience resulting from contact with multiple instances of beauty guarantees the certainty of assessment since "[b]y comparison alone we fix the epithets of praise or blame, and learn how to assign the due degree to each."[43] If a

40 Miguel de Cervantes, *Don Quixote de La Mancha*, revised translation based on those of Motteux, Jarvis, and Smollett (New York: D. Appelton & Company, 1866), 294.

41 Hume, "Of the Standard of Taste," 263.

42 Hume, "Of the Standard of Taste," 264.

43 Hume, "Of the Standard of Taste," 266.

critic is predisposed to feel pleasure from encounters with canonical works of art, there is hope that his future opinions will be on the mark. Thus a perfect critic is a person possessed of well-working senses, endowed with common sense, and gifted with a subtle imagination; a person both educated and experienced. Yet this is not a complete list of what is required. In his essay, Hume also lists an open mind, contrasted with prejudices which may spawn confusion and distort the perception of beauty. To relinquish biases takes a multilayered process.[44] An expert who makes judgments on beauty must be able to leave behind his private idiosyncrasies and predilections. He must detach himself from his own culture and historical moment. All this is indispensable to transcend contingency, disregard the momentary whims of taste, and "judge of the catholic and universal beauty."[45]

The substance of art is exceptionally delicate and complex. The mind must be "tuned" to accomplish harmony between form and sensation and, consequently, to experience aesthetic pleasure. Such a "tuning" is premised on a careful arrangement, because

> [t]hose finer emotions of the mind are of a very tender and delicate nature, and require the concurrence of many favourable circumstances to make them play with facility and exactness, according to their general and established principles. The least exterior hindrance to such small springs, or the least internal disorder, disturbs their motion, and confounds the operation of the whole machine.[46]

Beauty may only be discerned when multiple conditions are met: "we must choose with care a proper time and place, and bring the fancy to a suitable situation and disposition. A perfect serenity of mind, a recollection of thought, a due attention to the object."[47] The ultimate standards of taste should be established by negotiating positions within a circle of experts boasting extraordinarily sensitive tastes.

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44 See Peter Kivy, "Remarks on the Varieties of Prejudice in Hume's Essay on Taste," *The Journal of Scottish Philosophy* 9, no. 1 (2011): 111–14.

45 Hume, "Of the Standard of Taste," 259.

46 Hume, "Of the Standard of Taste," 259.

47 Hume, "Of the Standard of Taste," 259.

3 Eat/Know: Kant and Brillat-Savarin

Kant credited Hume with waking him up from a "dogmatic slumber," yet he did not abide by the statements on taste advanced by his Scottish forerunner. Unlike Hume, who defined aesthetic taste by analogy to physiological taste, Kant put judgements on beauty in opposition to culinary preferences.

If we always condemn culinary art to exclusion from aesthetic discourse whenever we think of it from the perspective of aesthetic tradition, we have Kant to blame for this. This relegation ensues from the ambiguity captured by Martin Jay in his *Songs of Experience*. Changes in aesthetic discourse caused a separation of art from religion and morality, and undermined the belief in inherently beautiful things. Such developments could have bred appreciation for the bodily, sensory responses of the onlookers. This did not happen and, as Jay explains: "The subject who emerged from this discourse was not, however, permitted to follow his fleshly desires and interests, but was instead understood in the tradition that culminated in Kant's *Critique of Judgment* as inherently spectatorial, contemplative, and disinterested."[48] Is such a "subject" capable of deriving pleasure from a good meal? Admittedly, Kant himself does not answer this question directly, but his response can be gleaned from his biographers' accounts and from his own writings.

Stefan Kaczmarek, who penned the Polish biography of Kant, observes that the philosopher "liked good food and first-rate wines. He knew about cooking as well."[49] This is not enough, however, Kaczmarek feels, to consider Kant "a sophisticated gourmand." For his part, Rodolphe Gasché quotes in his "Figure or Form? The Viewpoint of the Stomach" Reinhold Bernhard Jachmann, who recalls that Kant had "extremely refined sensual tastes in general."[50] This difference of opinions may be caused by a discrepancy cited by Gasché: "But let us also note that although he appreciated well-chosen and well-prepared dishes,

48 Martin Jay, *Songs of Experience: Modern American and European Variations on a Universal Theme* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: California University Press, 2006), 168.

49 Stefan Kaczmarek, *Immanuel Kant. Portret filozofa* (Poznań: Wydawnictwo Naukowe UAM, 1995), 56.

50 Rodolphe Gasché, "Figura czy forma? Punkt widzenia żołądka," trans. Patrycja Poniatowska, *Prace Kulturoznawcze* 21, no. 2 (2017), 15. The quotations from Rodolphe Gasché's paper come from an unpublished English manuscript entitled "Figure or Form? The Viewpoint of the Stomach," which served as the basis of a Polish translation published as Rodolphe Gasché, "Figura czy forma? Punkt widzenia żołądka," trans. Patrycja Poniatowska, *Prace Kulturoznawcze* 21, no. 2 (2017), 15–30. The paper has also been published in German, but not in English. While the text comes from the manuscript, the page numbers provided in citations refer to the Polish translation used by the author.

those he himself served his guests were more modest than what he had the opportunity to savor as a guest."[51] Kant himself was actually doubtful about his gourmet competence, and "he often wondered how someone, who 'at his own table preferred plain fare without any delicacy,' could have come to be known as a man of exquisite taste."[52]

All in all, the philosopher's interest in things culinary was remarkable enough for his friend Theodor Gottlieb von Hippel "to openly joke that Kant would write a *Critique of the Art of Cooking* one day."[53] Meals at Kant's family home were simple, modest, and dull. The staples of the diet in Prussia, which was famed for good beer, included salted pork, fish, and brown bread.[54] Kant's culinary preferences and habits have been quite well researched. Fresh cod was his favorite dish,[55] but he would also eat meat, provided it was not tough. He was particularly careful about it when he himself and most of his guests had bad teeth due to old age: "He insisted that meat should be 'tenderized,' that is, left until it began to go off because its natural toughness disappeared then, and it could be eaten easily even without teeth."[56] He believed in the beneficial effects of eating carrots and drinking wine, but did not like beer, which he regarded as unhealthy.[57] Kant only ate one meal a day – dinner, which he always downed with half a bottle of wine. When young, he had a preference for red wines and liked light Medoc; later, he opted for white wines.[58] In the morning, before work, he settled for thin tea and a pipe. He got up at five every day. The regularity of his daily schedule became proverbial. The order of his day and his selection of foods and beverages were connected to his firm belief that "diet and proper lifestyle could bring relief and improve physical condition."[59] Kant was afflicted by all kinds of ailments throughout his life. He suffered from real and imagined health problems.[60]

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51 Gasché, "Figura czy forma?," 15.

52 Gasché, "Figura czy forma?," 15.

53 Kaczmarek, *Immanuel Kant*, 56.

54 Kaczmarek, *Immanuel Kant*, 30.

55 Michel Onfray, *Appetites for Thought: Philosophers and Food*, trans. Donald Barry and Stephen Muecke (London: Reaktion Books, 2015), 44.

56 Kaczmarek, *Immanuel Kant*, 128.

57 Allen W. Wood, "Kant's Life and Work," in *A Companion to Kant*, ed. Graham Bird (Malden, MA, and Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 17.

58 Manfred Kuehn, *Kant: A Biography* (New York and Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 222.

59 Kaczmarek, *Immanuel Kant*, 81.

60 Onfray, *Appetites for Thought*, 45–46. Cf. Kaczmarek, *Immanuel Kant*, 80.

Kant lunched at eateries or at his friends' and acquaintances'. Eating out was a typical daily practice of bachelors at the time. Ludwig Ernst Borowski, one of the philosopher's first students and then his friend and biographer, reports that Kant was born to a poor family and had to labor for a long time before he was able to buy a house of his own. Until he could afford it, he lived in rented rooms, changing his accommodation for a variety of reasons. On one occasion, the lodgings were not sufficiently heated, while on another a noisy cock proved an unbearable nuisance. As Borowski recalls: "He offered to buy the animal from the neighbor at any price to obtain peace from the loud animal. Yet he did not succeed to persuade the stubborn neighbor who could not at all comprehend how the cock could bother Kant."[61] Unfortunately, the bird unceremoniously disturbed the philosopher's meditations.

Eventually, Kant purchased a house in December 1783. It was centrally located, spacious, and comfortable. On the ground floor, there were the kitchen and the hall in which Kant gave his lectures. The first floor was occupied by a dining room, a living room, and a modest study decorated with a portrait of Rousseau, the only ornament in the entire house. The bedroom was located on the top floor.[62] Owning a house and having a female cook working for him, Kant could finally stop eating at restaurants and pubs, and thus was no longer at risk of awkward situations, such as that related by Borowski: "One day, he left the place because there was a man there who, though reasonable, spoke too slowly and with excessive pathos about trifles. Kant hated such talk, and would change eateries for a reason like this."[63] Another restaurant was dropped from the list of his go-to places when various people "tried to join in without being invited, expecting that he would lecture them at lunch and answer their objections. He wanted to … free himself from anything that exerted the mind and, as he used to say, 'give honor to the body.' But apart from those, anyone from any social class was welcome."[64]

The principle of keeping things of the mind and the body apart was later observed at Kant's house as well. A visitor to Königsberg in 1792 who met the philosopher and was invited to his house recalled:

> I was every day with Kant [three days in all], and once I was invited to dinner. He is the most cheerful and most entertaining old man, the best *compagnon*, a true *bon-vivant* in the most honorable sense. He digests the

61 Qtd. in Kuehn, *Kant*, 220.
62 Wood, "Kant's Life and Work," 16.
63 Kaczmarek, *Immanuel Kant*, 56.
64 Qtd. in Kuehn, *Kant*, 221.

> heaviest foods as well, while his readers get indigestion over his philosophy. But you can recognize the man of the world and taste by the fact that I did not hear a word of his philosophy even during the most intimate hours.[65]

At fifty-nine, Kant could repay the hospitality he had previously received, but his regular famous dinners did not commence until the spring of 1787. Initially, he invited his friend and former student Christian Jacob Kraus as company. With time, the group of diners increased. His frequent guests included the mayor of Königsberg Theodor Gottlieb von Hippel, the poet and secretary at the Ministry of War Johann Georg Scheffner, the chemist Karl Gottfried Hagen, doctor Rink, Professor Pörschke, Professor Gensichen, the bank director Ruffmann, Inspector Brahl, the pastor Sommer, the English merchant Robert Motherby, Kant's secretary Reinhold Bernhard Jachmann, and his older brother Johann Benjamin. Briefly, the elite of Königsberg met at Kant's table.[66] For some time, Kraus dined with Kant every day, but he was not really his guest, because he paid for his food.[67] Kant himself did not cook, but if he liked a dish, he was interested in how it was made and of what ingredients.[68] He was fond of talking about cooking with women, because he believed that "a woman belonged in the kitchen" and that every female should be versed in these matters. Kant was of the opinion that "all women should be educated so as to be able to fulfill their life's mission in marriage. He advised teaching daughters cooking rather than playing music, because when a future husband returned home tired from work what would be surer to win the wife his love – a good meal without music or music without food?"[69] Consequently, as Jachmann reports, every good mistress of the house dreaded Kant's apt criticism and left no stone unturned in attempting to please the palate of that gourmand.[70] Sometimes conversations about housekeeping and recipes occasioned socially awkward moments. Borowski recounts a situation in which an elegant lady rebuked Kant, stating that she resented being treated like a cook. Kant reportedly skillfully placated

65 Qtd. Kuehn, *Kant*, 355.
66 Kuehn, *Kant*, xi–xiii.
67 Kuehn, *Kant*, 325.
68 Kuehn, *Kant*, 222.
69 Kaczmarek, *Immanuel Kant*, 79–80.
70 Ludwig Ernst Borowski, Reinhold Bernhard Jachmann, and Andreas Christoph Wasianski, *Immanuel Kant. Sein Leben in Darstellungen von Zeitgenossen. Die Biographien von Borowski, Jachmann und Wasianski*, ed. Felix Gross (Berlin: Deutsche Bibliothek, 1912), 192.

her by extolling the importance of kitchen-related matters and the essential role of good household management.[71]

Although the fourth – gastronomical – *Critique* never came into being, let us outline Kant's standpoints on food and taste.

4 Aesthetic Taste and Physiological Taste

According to Kant, the experience of beauty is characterized by distance and disinterested necessity. The realm of taste is located at the opposite end of the spectrum – the pole of contingency, no commonly shared opinion, and randomness – with distance replaced by maximum union. In his *Critique of Judgment*, Kant analyzes various forms of our capacity for experiencing pleasure, and identifies three types of it. One of them, which he calls "the agreeable" (*das Angenehme*) comes from the body, which is stimulated by sensations conveyed by the excited senses. As Martin Jay explains: "Here the individual body with all its appetites and antipathies is the arbiter, not a cultural or universal norm."[72] This norm reigns supreme in pleasures of the second type, that is, "delight in the good" (*das Wohlgefallen am Guten*), where pleasure is bound up with the need to do good. It is guided by a utilitarian goal, as Jay argues: "In this case there is always a functional or utilitarian dimension to our pleasure which is not an end in itself."[73] The third form of pleasure may resemble the first insofar as the senses – and thus the body – matter in it. Beyond this similarity, however, there is little that links the two kinds of pleasure. Kant refers to this third species as "delight in the beautiful" (*das Wohlgefallen am Schönen*), and insists that this is the only form of aesthetic pleasure. Crucially, this pleasure rules out any bodily satisfaction, and stands for a manner of disinterested experience of beauty, irrespective of the real existence of the pleasing object. Aesthetic

71 See Kaczmarek, *Immanuel Kant*, 80. Hippel, a writer and a political and social activist, had a reputation for his bold views on the role and position of women in society. He advocated equal rights for women in all spheres of life and called for restoring their dignity by enfranchising them and enabling them to take part in public debates. For this, Hippel "was widely calumniated as an unprincipled sexual libertine" (Wood, "Kant's Life," 17). Although Kant never subscribed to Hippel's ideas, he did not officially join his detractors either, but his own writings professed entirely different, thoroughly conservative notions about the role of women in marriage and society, championing a clear distinction into the female and male domains. Cf. Grzegorz Supady, *Theodor Gottlieb von Hippel. Ekscentryczny literat z Królewca* (Warszawa: Semper, 2013).

72 Jay, *Songs of Experience*, 142.

73 Jay, *Songs of Experience*, 142–43.

delight is essentially non-conceptual, which results from the assumption that aesthetic experience consists in taking direct delight in the impression of a beautiful thing, and, therefore, "reflective judgment [the pure judgment of taste] is exclusively about the pure form of an object for which no determined concept is available."[74]

As Jay elucidates, according to Kant, a meal cannot be regarded as a work of art because "our sensation of the aesthetic object and its intrinsic properties or qualities need not coincide, as they must with an agreeable meal (food may look appetizing, but it must taste good to bring us genuine pleasure). Because of this distinction, we have no direct interest in the object, only in its representation or semblance."[75] Still, despite this division, the term "taste" is used both to denote the sense responsible for the sensation of pleasure from a meal (physiological taste) and to refer to the faculty of making judgments in the aesthetic realm (aesthetic taste). In Kant's view, the latter variety of taste concerns "making social judgments of external objects within the power of imagination";[76] in other words, it signifies aesthetic judgment which pertains exclusively to the beautiful form of an object, rather than to the entirety of this object. In this respect, aesthetic delight differs from bodily pleasure, because pleasure is here felt by the mind, which is capable of "ideal feelings," and not by the sensual body. Kant insists that for judgment to be triggered by something else or more than the sense impression of that which pleases, it is imperative that understanding should be involved as a faculty of representing the universal: "The judging of an object through taste is a judgment about the harmony or discord of freedom, in the play of the power of imagination and the lawfulness of understanding, and therefore it is a matter only of judging the form aesthetically (the compatibility of the sense representations), not the generation of products, in which the form is perceived."[77]

Kant dissociates aesthetics from epistemology and ethics. Effected in this way, the autonomy of art uncouples it from the necessity of rational and scientific logic and subordinates it to the principles of "the logic of the imagination."[78] In Kant's view, since aesthetic judgments are non-conceptual and disinterested, they are devoid of any purposiveness which might constrain the

74 Gasché, "Figura czy forma?" 19.

75 Jay, *Songs of Experience*, 142.

76 Immanuel Kant, *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, trans. Robert B. Loudon, ed. Manfred Kuehn (Cambridge UK: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 137.

77 Kant, *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, 138.

78 Cf. Ernst Cassirer, *Essay on Man: An Introduction to A Philosophy of Human Culture* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1972), 137.

free work of an artist's imagination. As non-conceptual, aesthetic judgments may make claims to universality. It is impossible to predict in advance which objects will please. Every object must be judged separately, observing the principle of subjective necessity and universality without a rule. The commonality of this kind of "rational feeling" is founded on the premise that if "human minds consist of the same faculties, an object that was liked by one can be expected to be liked by others as well."[79] The necessity of these judgments results from the fact that objects that engender this peculiar non-sensual feeling excite all the faculties of the mind; "aesthetic objects are thus objects which are built in conformity to the nature of the object."[80] Kant labels this necessity subjective because the judgment of taste requires direct sensory contemplation and, as such, cannot form the basis of science, which is fundamentally underpinned by pure logic understood as the knowledge "of *a priori* necessary facts and conditions of this necessity."[81]

5 The Nature of Physiological Taste

Kant calls taste and smell the "senses of pleasure" because of their "receptivity for certain objects of external sensation."[82] As a property of the palate, the tongue, and the throat, taste is intrinsically subjective, but it may also take social forms, as is the case with, for example, national cuisines.[83] The rules governing eating styles in respective cultures are, of course, of limited compass, and though they are binding for all people in a given culture, they "can make no claim to true universality or, consequently, to necessity either (the judgment of everyone else about taste that savors *must* agree with mine)."[84]

Taste "in its use […] is to be understood either as taste that merely *differentiates* or, at the same time, as taste that also *savors* [for example whether something is sweet or bitter, or whether what is tasted (sweet or bitter) is *pleasant*]."[85] While the former kind of taste may aspire to being universally recognized, the verdicts of the palate are definitively individual when it comes to pleasure or displeasure that arises from contact with one or another food

79 Władysław Tatarkiewicz, *Historia filozofii*, vol. 2 (Warszawa: PWN, 1990), 179.
80 Tatarkiewicz, *Historia filozofii*, 179.
81 Żelazny, *Estetyka filozoficzna*, 18.
82 Kant, *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, 52.
83 Kant, *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, 136–37.
84 Kant, *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, 136.
85 Kant, *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, 136.

product. As Kant explicates, "[t]he reason for this is clear: neither pleasure nor displeasure belongs to the cognitive faculty as regards objects; rather they are determinations of the subject, and so cannot be ascribed to external objects."[86] Something tastes good to me, rather than tasting good in general.

Some of Brillat-Savarin's views dovetailed with Kant's in a variety of ways. In *The Physiology of Taste*, he wonders whether marine or freshwater fish are superior, and ultimately leaves this question unanswered, without taking a conclusive stance on it: "Every man reacts differently to a thing: his fleeting sensations cannot be expressed in any known symbols, and there is no scale for determining whether a cod, or a sole, or a turbot is better than a salmon trout, a fine fat pike, or even a six- or seven-pound tench."[87] At another place, however, he authoritatively asserts that truffles and pheasant do not really go well together,[88] and insists with an equal emphasis that as for quail, "it is unfortunate to serve it any way but roasted or *en papillote*."[89] When discussing bouillons, Savarin mentions that "it is generally agreed" that the French cook the best soups.[90] Is Savarin's "it is generally agreed" not redolent of Kant's *sensus communis*? Surely authoritative opinions about the superiority of certain textures, products, and techniques over others belie the assertion that the claims of taste are merely private? We remember that Kant's biographers reiterate the philosopher's appreciation of good food. This presupposes the possibility of objective assessment and telling good food from bad food. Such assumptions suggest that it is viable to compare sensations and share opinions, despite the relative subjectivity of the sense of taste. Food bloggers and writers of culinary guidebooks, as well as their readers, believe that tolerably credible evaluations of a dish or a restaurant can indeed be provided. If we genuinely agreed that *de gustibus non est disputandum*, then rankings of the best restaurants – which insist that they represents something like "a universally valid choice" – would altogether lose their raison d'être. Taste is located between the rigor of gastronomic verdicts and the freedom of individual choices. Was Kant right then to contend that physiological taste and aesthetic taste are entirely different?

One of Kant's central tenets holds that art is essentially characterized by disinterestedness and a distance between the artwork and the audience. Do the utilitarian essence of meals and the maximum unity in the act of ingestion irrevocably remove a perfect soup from the sacred realm of art? A situation

86 Kant, *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, 136.
87 Brillat-Savarin, *Physiology of Taste*, 98.
88 Brillat-Savarin, *Physiology of Taste*, 97.
89 Brillat-Savarin, *Physiology of Taste*, 96.
90 Brillat-Savarin, *Physiology of Taste*, 85.

when eating to an extent abandons it utilitarian function of appeasing hunger may mark the difference between staving off starvation and food connoisseurship. Brillat-Savarin defines gourmandism in opposition to gluttony and voracity, and frames the former, which "is an impassioned, considerate, and habitual preference for whatever pleases the taste,"[91] as an enemy of excess. Among ladies, Brillat-Savarin rhapsodizes, gourmandism thrives as a "passion for light, elegant dishes of little real sustenance, such as jams, pastries, and so on."[92] How is a gourmand recognized as such? A gourmet is a human being who knows how to eat and derives as much pleasure as possible from eating, thereby also attending to his/her health and good looks. As Brillat-Savarin assures his readers, "[a] series of precise and exhaustive observations has proved beyond doubt that a tempting diet, dainty and well prepared, holds off for a long time the exterior signs of old age."[93] In this respect, gourmandism is particularly beneficial to females, who, if only they "know how to eat are comparatively ten years younger than those to whom this science is a stranger."[94] Gourmands abide by their appetite, "which sounds a warning the moment [the body's] resources are no longer in perfect balance with its needs."[95]

However, it is not always the case that we eat or drink because we are spurred on by appetite or thirst. Brillat-Savarin observes that humans enjoy the privilege of drinking without being thirsty.[96] While this privilege does not encompass water – "the only liquid that truly appeases thirst, and it is for this reason that only a small quantity of it is drunk"[97] – it covers other "liquors," among which alcohol reigns supreme and "carries to the nth degree the excitation of our palates."[98] Alcohol is elevated into a symbol of humanity, as Savarin emphasizes that humans differ from animals in caring about the future and in "the desire for fermented liquors."[99] Whereas we share the need to appease hunger with animals, the pleasures of the table are reserved solely for people. These pleasures are bound up with the transformation of nature into culture, as a natural impulse finds its fulfillment in and through a cultural form. By dissociating itself from the primeval impulse of hunger, culture comes to obtain primacy over nature. It is evident that in order to live, we must eat,

91 Brillat-Savarin, *Physiology of Taste*, 155.
92 Brillat-Savarin, *Physiology of Taste*, 155.
93 Brillat-Savarin, *Physiology of Taste*, 160.
94 Brillat-Savarin, *Physiology of Taste*, 160.
95 Brillat-Savarin, *Physiology of Taste*, 67.
96 Brillat-Savarin, *Physiology of Taste*, 148.
97 Brillat-Savarin, *Physiology of Taste*, 148.
98 Brillat-Savarin, *Physiology of Taste*, 150.
99 Brillat-Savarin, *Physiology of Taste*, 151.

but we often continue to eat and drink even though we are no longer hungry or thirsty. What is more, if "[t]he pleasure of eating demands appetite, if not actual hunger," in fact "the pleasures of the table are most often independent of either one or the other."[100] This "liberation" from the determinism of nature engenders gourmandism and makes it possible for food to approximate the disinterestedness of art. However, the body sometimes fails to handle this privilege well, and the art of eating, if one is oblivious to the dichotomy of nature, may entice one to sin against health and wellbeing.

Jay investigates the relationship between art and gastronomy in the context of Kantian ethics, concluding that the culinary stands some chance of entering the realm of the aesthetic:

> We enjoy an aesthetic meal, as it were, without having to taste or swallow the food, as in the case of certain variants of *nouvelle cuisine* in which visual more than gustatory pleasure, let alone actual nutrition, seems the main purpose of what is on the plate. It is the same disinterestedness that permits the transformation of the lust-arousing naked human form into the idealized marmoreal nude and allows us to distinguish between pornography and high art.[101]

But if we do not "swallow," does the situation still qualify as a meal, and can the act still be called eating? This question may be answered in the positive if culinary experience is acknowledged as extremely complicated and involving various sets of culturally processed sensory experiences. The consumption of pure taste is meaningfully embodied in wine-tasting, when the wine is spat out as soon as the senses are satiated.

Kant liked good food and banqueting, but he failed to recognize the emancipatory potential of dietary practices capable of forgoing practical ends. Such eating tendencies germinated in conjunction with *nouvelle cuisine* in France in the 18th century. The trend entailed cultivating a refinement which dissociated eating from its primary natural uses. In our times, this movement has culminated in conceptual cuisine. Feeding the guest is only one and, to boot, hardly the most essential of the considerations when it comes to orchestrating the most intense experience possible at molecular food restaurants. Besides the sensory element, this experience includes emotional and intellectual components, as well as engaging the sense of humor. Such utter "impracticality" was

100 Brillat-Savarin, *Physiology of Taste*, 190.
101 Jay, *Songs of Experience*, 142.

vividly encapsulated by a dish of smoke served at El Bulli. It was consumed by inhaling puffs that were rising from the plate. Kant's attitude to gastronomy may have been formed by geographical determinants, since, as Gasché observes, "Königsberg was certainly not the perfect location to experience the golden age of gastronomy, as it developed in France during the periods of the Empire and the Restauration, when the preparation of food became a distinct form of art."[102]

6 Eating as a Social Activity

Kant extolls feasting itself as a profoundly human phenomenon, indeed, as a requisite element of humanity: "The *cynic's purism* and the *anchorite's mortification of the flesh*, without social good living, are distorted forms of virtue which do not make virtue inviting; rather, being forsaken by the graces, they can make no claim to humanity."[103] He perceives an essential difference between eating as necessary to sustain vital functions and banqueting as a practice in which this life-sustaining function is only one among the many purposes that the banquet serves. In his *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View* of 1798, the last book to be published in his lifetime, Kant devotes several pages to investigating social get-togethers and to offering detailed advice on how to hold a rewarding banquet. The ideal number of the guests must fit between the number of the Graces and the number of the Muses, which means that there should be no fewer than three and no more than nine people at the table. With more diners present, it would be unfeasible to have one common discussion. Talking in groups, Kant warns, spoils the atmosphere, and has nothing in common with "a conversation of taste, which must always bring culture with it, where each always talks with all (not merely with his neighbor)."[104] He never entertained more than six people at a time at his house, and this rule was reinforced by the tableware he possessed and the size of his rooms. Three to five guests gathered at his table as a rule.

Eating alone only leads to corporeal satiation, whereas for eating to matter, it must be a social event.[105] This is, properly speaking, not even a

102 Gasché, "Figura czy forma?" 25. Still, Kant may not have liked French cuisine. Hegel's biographers, for example, describe his ambivalent attitudes to Parisian cuisine. Cf. Terry Pinkard, *Hegel: A Biography* (Cambridge, UK, and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 553.

103 Kant, *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, 182.

104 Kant, *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, 179.

105 Cf. "Community around the Table" in this book.

recommendation, but a moral injunction: "If the self wishes to survive the undiscriminating, predatorial instincts deep within its breast, it must remain socially responsive. [...] The self must abandon its most primal and self-destructive urges, and embrace the stern strictures of ethical life."[106] Solitary eating may put the essence of humanity in jeopardy, and it may pose a range of purely biological risks. Philosophers are particularly susceptible to the temptation of "obsessive contemplation."[107] Hence, Kant warns: "Eating alone (*solipsismus convictorii*) is unhealthy for a scholar who *philosophizes*; it is not restoration but exhaustion (especially if it becomes solitary *feasting*): fatiguing work rather than a stimulating play of thoughts. The *savoring* human being who weakens himself in thought during his solitary meal gradually loses his sprightliness."[108] The philosopher finds salutary succor in conversation, which gives him excitement. To prove that Kant deemed eating alone a serious dietary and ethical trespass, Michel Onfray cites an anecdote about Kant sending a servant to bring in a random passer-by from the street if no guests were expected for dinner. In the account of Kant's last days presented by Arsenij Gulyga, the philosopher, though no longer capable of eating, invited his friends over for meals.[109] Eating in solitude leads to self-destruction, but as a matter of fact the social context does not eliminate the cannibalistic aura of dining since, as Peter Melville observes, " [t]he main course of the good meal in good company is the company itself."[110]

Inner emotion stirred by witnessing affects during a theatre performance or a game of cards is beneficial to our mood and makes a good prelude to dinner. Kant argues: "Why is a game (especially for money) so attractive and, if it is not too selfish, the best distraction and relaxation after a long intellectual exertion [...]? Because a game is a state of incessant movement between fearing and hoping. After a game, the evening meal tastes better and is also digested better."[111] Kant values dining, but he does not equate its essence with sophisticated food: "There is no situation in which sensibility and understanding unite in one enjoyment that can be continued as long and repeated with satisfaction as

106 Peter Melville, "A 'Friendship of Taste': The Aesthetics of Eating Well in Kant's *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*," in *Cultures of Taste/Theories of Appetite: Eating Romanticism*, ed. Timothy Morton (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 206.

107 Melville, "Friendship of Taste," 205.

108 Kant, *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, 180–81.

109 Arsenij Gulyga, *Immanuel Kant: His Life and Thought*, trans. Marijan Despalatovic (Boston, Basel, and Stuttgart: Birkhäuser, 1987), 256.

110 Melville, "Friendship of Taste," 208.

111 Kant, *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, 127.

often as a good meal in good company. – But here the meal is regarded merely as the vehicle for supporting the company."[112] Therefore, it does not come as a surprise that while Kant cursorily states that the food must be reasonably good, he elaborates at length on the proper sequence of topics to be talked about. A conversation at the table should unfold from relating to reasoning, and conclude with joking. Relations concern recent events, news from correspondence, and press reports. Subsequently,

> [w]hen this first appetite has been satisfied, the party becomes even livelier, for in subtle reasoning it is difficult to avoid the diversity of judgment over one and the same object that has been brought up, and since no one has exactly the lowest opinion of his own judgment, a dispute arises which stirs up the appetite or food and drink and also makes the appetite wholesome in proportion to the liveliness of the dispute and the participation in it.[113]

Disputing or arguing is an exhausting pursuit; at the same time, the courses that appear one by one transport the diners into blissful languor. Consequently, as Kant observes, "the conversation sinks naturally to the mere play of wit, partly also to please the women present, against whom the small, deliberate, but not shameful attacks on their sex enable them to show their own wit to advantage. And so the meal ends with laughter."[114] Quipping is meant to endear the ladies and boost the spirits of the company, but jokes serve other purposes as well. Loud and good-natured laughter is supposed to buttress the digestion processes by invigorating the slackening body. Kant's guests embraced this style of dining.

What was Brillat-Savarin's opinion on the *sine qua nons* of a successful dinner? Inspired by the tenth Muse, Gasterea, he meticulously detailed the necessary and sufficient conditions of such a gathering, among which four must not be missing: "food at least passable, good wine, agreeable companions, and enough time."[115] A gratifying feast was, according to him, paradigmatically embodied in "the frugal meal that Horace planned for a neighbor whom he might have invited to dine with him or a traveler forced by bad weather to take shelter under his roof: a fine fowl, a kid (without doubt fat and good), and

112 Kant, *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, 139.
113 Kant, *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, 181.
114 Kant, *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, 181.
115 Brillat-Savarin, *Physiology of Taste*, 192.

for dessert, raisins, figs and nuts."[116] Brillat-Savarin confesses that it has always been his fond wish to take part in such a gathering. The delights of the table are guaranteed by the simple dishes supplemented with wine "pressed during the consulship of Manlius," and conversation with the "sweet singer" confers luster on the event. Even if more spectacular occasions offer themselves, the French gastronome advises against seating more than twelve guests around the table. Similarly to Kant, who, as we remember, recommends hosting nine banqueters at most, Brillat-Savarin highlights the importance of a conversation equally involving all the diners, something that too numerous a company precludes.[117] Again, like Kant, he counsels a thoughtful selection of the guests, preferably acquaintances, arguing that if they are strangers to each other, the atmosphere may be unbearably formal, and reasoning that it would be best if "their professions [were] varied, their tastes analogous."[118] In his manual, Brillat-Savarin does not forget to provide hints about lighting, temperature, the size of the hall, the sequence and quality of the courses and beverages, and finally the entertainments gracing the feast. Whether he defines perfect company or lectures on the proper number of courses, he preaches moderation, which allows abundance but forbids excess. Any success is always predicated on the sense of proportion: "Let the gentlemen be witty without pretension, and the ladies charming without too much coquetry; let the dishes be of exquisite quality, but limited in their number, and the wines of the first rank also, each according to its degree."[119]

Brillat-Savarin puts quality before quantity, though the latter also matters in satisfying the needs of gourmets, because "the most delicious rarity loses its influence when quantity is stingy; the first delightful emotion it arouses in the diner is rightly discouraged by their fear that they will receive but a thin share of the dish."[120] Importantly, his ideas about the proper amount of food for lunch or dinner considerably depart from our notions. The gap is vividly illustrated by a breakfast that Brillat-Savarin held for his relatives – a doctor aged seventy-eight and a captain aged seventy-six – with a specific purpose of treating them to his famed fondue of cheese and eggs. Arriving punctually at 10

116 Brillat-Savarin, *Physiology of Taste*, 192.

117 Similar instructions are put forward by Eugène Briffault in *Paris à Table*, which is mentioned along with Brillat-Savarin and Dumas as a compendium of 19th-century gastronomy. Cf. Joe Weintraub, "Dinner in the Current Age: A Translation from *Paris à Table*," *Gastronomica: The Journal of Critical Food Studies* 15, no. 2 (2015): 26–38.

118 Brillat-Savarin, *Physiology of Taste*, 194.

119 Brillat-Savarin, *Physiology of Taste*, 194.

120 Brillat-Savarin, *Physiology of Taste*, 85.

a.m., the guests saw a carefully laid table with two bottles of Sauterne, already uncorked. Before the eggs were served, each of the eaters had two dozen oysters, skewered kidneys, and truffled foie gras. The fondue was followed by seasonal fruit, sweetmeats, "a cup of real Mocha made a la Dubelloy," and "two kinds of liqueurs, one sharp for refreshing the palate and the other oily for soothing it."[121]

A closer glimpse at what Kant wrote about shared meals reveals that, like Brillat-Savarin, he found the meeting of people and their intercourse pivotal to them. He would certainly subscribe to the Frenchman's insistence that "no matter how studied the dinner plan nor how sumptuous its adjuncts, there can be no true pleasures of the table if the wine be bad, the guests assembled without discretion, the faces gloomy, and the meal consumed with haste."[122] Likewise, he would undoubtedly concur with Brillat-Savarin's maxim that "the most indispensable quality of a cook is promptness, and it should be that of the diner as well."[123]

What food was served at Kant's table has been reported by his guests. They assembled in the host's study a quarter to one. Late-comers were frowned upon by Kant, who was already very hungry around 1 p.m. On seeing Kant heartily down his food, a guest who clearly was not familiar with the host's habits commended his good appetite. The man was not aware that dinner, as we remember, was the first and in fact the last meal that Kant had during the day:

> The meal consisted of simple, but well-prepared dishes. Soup was served at the beginning, and then roast beef garnished with English sauce followed. [...] The soup was thickened with rice, groats, or pasta. Kant would add bread-roll crumbs to his plate to make the soup even thicker. Pureed beans or peas were his favorite dish. Other dishes included fish, butter, English cheeses, doubly baked crispy bread-rolls, fruit, pastries, desserts, and, obviously, good wine, usually light red wine. A small, quarter-liter bottle per person was the usual amount, though additional bottles were always at hand.[124]

The English sauce listed by Kaczmarek was in fact mustard, which the philosopher made himself and liked to have with almost all dishes. This detail is

121 Brillat-Savarin, *Physiology of Taste*, 195–96.
122 Brillat-Savarin, *Physiology of Taste*, 193.
123 Brillat-Savarin, *Physiology of Taste*, 16.
124 Kaczmarek, *Immanuel Kant*, 128.

reported by Hasse and Jachmann, who extensively and meticulously relate the typical customs of dining at Kant's.[125]

In his biography of Kant from 2001, Manfred Kuehn claims that these dinners served Kant as a way of coping with loneliness. He was eager to host both his friends and, later, also strangers who came to Königsberg and wished to see the distinguished philosopher. Kant made sure that meeting him was a satisfying experience that catered to their notions of what a real philosopher and his life were like. He often welcomed his guests from behind the desk at which he was working. Hasse reports that from the threshold, Kant's entire house left no doubt that it was a philosopher's abode.[126] Dinner, the highlight of Kant's day, would sometimes extend into the evening, finishing as late as seven or eight, if only some of his guests were willing to stay that long. Kraus was usually the last to leave.[127] Although Kant was eager to invite people over, he did not give up on calling on others. He would visit the palace of the Keyserlingks[128] on Tuesdays and spend Sunday afternoons at the house of Motherby.[129] He was considered a charming companion whose knowledge, erudition, and sense of humor never failed to enchant.

7 Appetite, Reason, and Health

In Kant's view, the fundamental goal of philosophy lay in consolidating certainty, that is, in finding *a priori* moments in knowledge. He dismissed Baumgarten's hope (a deceptive one, he believed) of "bringing critical judgment of the beautiful under rational principles, and to raise its rules to the rank of a science," and firmly asserted that "such endeavours are vain. For such rules or criteria are, according to their principal sources, merely empirical, and hence can never serve as determinate *a priori* laws to which our judgment

125 Johann Gottfried Hasse, *Merkwürdige Äusserungen Kants, von einem seiner Tischgenossen* (Königsberg: Hering, 1804), 6f, qtd. in Kuehn, *Kant*, 325; Reinhold Bernhard Jachmann, "*Emmanuel Kant* raconté *dans des lettres* à *un* ami," in Ludwig Ernst Borowski, Reinhold Bernhard Jachmann, and Andreas Christoph Wasianski, *Kant intime*, ed. and trans. Jean Mistler (Paris: Grasset, 1985), 45, qtd. in Onfray, *Appetites for Thought*, 44.

126 Kuehn, *Kant*, 271.

127 Kuehn, *Kant*, 325.

128 Kant held up Caroline Charlotte Amalie von Keyserlingk, wife to Count Heinrich Christian von Keyserlingk, as the paragon of womanhood. He was a close friend of the family and usually took the honorary seat at the countess's side during dinners.

129 Kuehn, *Kant*, 334.

of taste [*Geschmackurteil*] would have to conform."[130] To detach experience from its sensory foundation proved impossible both in the aesthetic and in the culinary art.[131] Nevertheless, Kant was a man of his times and espoused the Enlightenment's concept of nutrition as a branch of knowledge of essential relevance to human wellbeing. A telling testament to this commitment is provided by his meticulous investigations in *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*. Kant was his own medic, and considered proper nourishment to be a cornerstone of a healthy life.[132] Consequently, although he excluded the sense of taste from the domain of certain knowledge, Kant engaged with dietetics and developed gastrosophy in his writings.

For his part, Brillat-Savarin aspired to found a science of gastronomy. Setting the goals of his projected discipline, he explained: "Gastronomy considers taste in its pleasant as well as its unfortunate aspects; it has uncovered gradual excitation of which taste is capable; it has regulated this activity, and has set certain limits to it which any man who respects his own dignity will never pass."[133] Besides, gastronomy prescribes when various food products should best be eaten, evaluates the properties of victuals, and classifies various foodstuffs. It also determines which combinations are salutary and beneficial in terms of gustatory qualities.[134] In line with the tradition of the Enlightenment, Brillat-Savarin understands health in a very inclusive manner as encompassing intellectual qualities and moral attitudes. Hence, gastronomy examines "the action of foods on man's morale, on his imagination, his spirit, his judgment, his courage and perceptions, whether he be awake or asleep, active or resting."[135] The new discipline is expected to help one achieve the highest possible pleasure and, at the same time, avoid crossing the boundary beyond which pleasure morphs into abuse.

The limits of sensory effectiveness were also studied by Kant: "Given the same degree of influence taking place on them, the senses *teach* less the more strongly they feel themselves being *affected*. Inversely, if they are expected to

130 Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. Marcus Weigelt (London and New York: Penguin Books, 2007), 60.

131 A different position is adopted by Hume, who does not regard the subjective quality of cognition as thwarting the production of scientific knowledge. While the judgments of physiological taste are indeed empirical, aesthetic judgments, as well as those valid in physics, are no less empirical. In all these cases, knowledge is defective, because it is informed by a psychological belief.

132 Savarin considered himself somewhat of an amateur physician as well.

133 Brillat-Savarin, *Physiology of Taste*, 62.

134 See Brillat-Savarin, *Physiology of Taste*, 62–63.

135 Brillat-Savarin, *Physiology of Taste*, 62.

teach a great deal, they must be affected moderately."[136] Kant justified this claim by evoking the sense of sight dazzled by an excess of light. If too bright, light, which makes seeing possible in the first place, blinds our eyes for a while, preventing us from seeing anything whatsoever. A similar effect is observable for sound, which deafens us if too loud.[137] As Kant claims, in both cases, we "are unable to find a concept of the object because of the intensity of the sensations; [our] attention is fixed merely on the subjective representation, namely the change of the organ."[138] The question is whether equivalent rules govern the sense of taste.

Without a doubt, Kant would agree with Savarin that "[m]en who stuff themselves and grow tipsy know neither how to eat nor how to drink."[139] Gluttony and drunkenness both excessively impinge on the senses and the body. As stimuli multiply and proliferate, experience is degraded, rather than enhanced. In *The Metaphysics of Morals*, Kant harshly opines: "A human being who is drunk is like a mere animal, not to be treated as a human being. When stuffed with food he is in a condition in which he is incapacitated, for a time, for actions that would require him to use his powers with skill and deliberation."[140] Social gatherings and sumptuous banquets, which may spiral into excessive consumption of food and drink, are in Kant's view justified because "there is something in it [a banquet] that aims at a moral end, beyond mere physical wellbeing: it brings the number of people together for a long time to converse with one another."[141]

Immoderation breeds serious ramifications. While wine drunk in reasonable quantities "enlivens the company's conversation," Kant cautions against the treacherous power of alcohol and other narcotics, explaining that they "are seductive because, under their influence, people dream for a while that they are happy and free from care, and even imagine they are strong, but dejection and weakness follow and, worst of all, they create a need to use the narcotics again."[142] He is perhaps even harsher in condemning overindulgent eating: "Gluttony is even lower than that animal enjoyment of the senses, since it only lulls the senses into a passive condition and, unlike drunkenness, does not

136 Kant, *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, 50.
137 Kant, *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, 51.
138 Kant, *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, 49.
139 Brillat-Savarin, *Physiology of Taste*, 15.
140 Immanuel Kant, *The Metaphysics of Morals*, trans. and ed. Mary Gregor (Cambridge UK: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 180.
141 Kant, *Metaphysics of Morals*, 181.
142 Kant, *Metaphysics of Morals*, 180.

even arouse imagination to an *active* play of representations; so it approaches even more closely the enjoyment of cattle."[143] As can be seen, Kant envisions an antinomy of a banquet. If feasting is beneficial as it brings one in touch with reasonable and wise people, which promotes self-development, banquets also carry the risk of profligacy in using the pleasures of the table. The opulence of food and alcohol provokes dissipation and abounds with immoral temptations. The moral aspect of the encounter as unfolding in its social dimension clashes with an alluring prospect of transgressing the rules of abstinence. Given these risks, Kant ponders how far participation in such events can be morally authorized.[144]

He firmly exhorts against luxury and debauchery. The former, as redundant extravagance, impoverishes the community, and the latter "makes the community ill."[145] Kant has no intention of deciding whether legal restrictions should be introduced in these matters, but he does not shy away from instructing what life with taste is all about:

> *The art of good living* is the due proportion of living well to sociability (thus, to living with taste). One sees from this that luxury is detrimental to the art of good living, and the expression "he knows how to live," when used of a wealthy or distinguished man, signifies the skillfulness of his choice in social enjoyment, which includes moderation (sobriety) in making pleasure mutually beneficial, and is calculated to last.[146]

Aesthetic pleasure, as Kant insists, is achievable only by human beings. Access to it depends on abjuring all the obligations to the flesh, which humans share with animals. Sensations that arise from the gratification of bodily needs are driven by these same needs. This precludes choice and, consequently, rules out any free evaluation of the objects which satisfy a given need. Kant cites hunger as his prime example:

> Consider, first, the interest of inclination, [which occurs] with the agreeable. Here everyone says: Hunger is the best sauce; and to people with a healthy appetite anything is tasty provided it is edible. Hence if people have a liking of this sort, that does not prove that they are selecting [...]

143 Kant, *Metaphysics of Morals*, 181–82.
144 Kuehn, *Kant*, 334.
145 Kant, *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, 147.
146 Kant, *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, 148.

> by taste. Only when their need has been satisfied can we tell who in a multitude of people has taste and who does not.[147]

Hunger is the best sauce, as the German proverb has it,[148] but it is only partly true. If hunger, which prompts one to eat, is too strong, it makes palatal pleasure impossible. Paradoxically, starving people may be barred from the pleasure stemming from eating. By voraciously devouring the food, they give their senses no chance of receiving all the impressions which add up to taste, and they often eat too much because, absorbed in hastily downing one bite of food after another, they fail to register the signals of satiety.

Brillat-Savarin was certainly on the mark when he distinguished between gourmandism and gluttony. In a similar vein, Kant cautions that "luxury" and "indulgence" may pervert taste.[149] Brillat-Savarin and Kant consent that nature has not endowed all people equally generously. Kant observes that "the more susceptible [a human being] is toward the organic sense (sensitive) and the more inured to vital sense, the more fortunate he is."[150] For his part, Brillat-Savarin, though regarding the pleasures of the table as the most democratic of delights because they "are for every man, of every land, and no matter of what place in history or society,"[151] considers gastronomic savvy to be a privilege. Not everybody can be a gourmand, and Brillat-Savarin identifies two major obstacles to the vocation of gourmandism. To be a gourmet, one must boast a properly developed sensory apparatus and "organic delicacy." This disfavors the "wretches" whose tongues are "so sparsely provided with the sensitive taste buds meant to absorb and appreciate flavors that they can awaken but vague sensations: indeed such people are as blind to taste as true blind men are to light."[152] The other obstacle lies in deficient focus – lack of attention during the meal – which afflicts "the inattentive, the flighty, the overly ambitious and those who try to do two things at once, and eat only to fill their bellies."[153]

Besides the natural accoutrement of the sensitive palate, favorable material and socio-economic circumstances are also factors in the development of gourmandism. Brillat-Savarin makes a distinction between gourmands "by

147 Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgment. Including the First Introduction*, trans. Werner S. Pluhar (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1987), 52.

148 The literal meaning of the proverb is actually "Hunger is the best cook" (German: Hunger ist der beste Koch). (translator's note)

149 Kant, *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, 52.

150 Kant, *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, 50.

151 Brillat-Savarin, *Physiology of Taste*, 15.

152 Brillat-Savarin, *Physiology of Taste*, 167.

153 Brillat-Savarin, *Physiology of Taste*, 167.

predestination" and those he calls gourmands "by profession," among whom he counts bankers, doctors, writers, and men of faith. Bankers are, as it were, doomed to gourmandism because "anyone who can pile up a great deal of money easily is almost forced willy nilly to be a gourmand."[154] Doctors and writers are included in this group since they are eagerly fed by the rich, while the devout apply themselves to gourmand practices to submit to God's will, which purportedly manifests itself in the gift of appetite.

"Sensual predestination," or its lack for that matter, shows in people's very physiques:

> People predestined to gourmandism are in general of medium height; they have round or square faces, bright eyes, small foreheads, short noses, full lips, and rounded chins [...]. People to whom Nature has denied the capacity for such enjoyment, on the other hand, have long faces, noses and eyes; no matter what their height they seem to have a general air of elongation about them. They have flat black hair, and above all lack healthy weight; it is undoubtedly they who invented trousers to hide their thin shanks.[155]

By talking of predestination, Brillat-Savarin boldly draws on the Christian doctrine promulgated by St. Augustine. As people are predestined to salvation or damnation, they are also predestined to have or to lack good taste. The category of "gourmands by predestination" eludes any social classifications, but the full development and use of the aptitude with which these individuals are endowed is, of course, socially conditioned. At the same time, the fact that there are "gourmands by profession" suggests that deficits in the natural equipage may be compensated for by "persistent" training facilitated by unlimited access to refined dishes.

How sense impressions can be expanded and enhanced is discussed by Kant, who advises that they "are increased according to degree by means of (1) contrast, (2) novelty, (3) change, (4) intensification."[156] Quotidian life and familiarity "extinguish" sense representations, but they can be reactivated by newness.[157] In this respect, Kant's insights are reminiscent of Brillat-Savarin's observations concerning beverages. In one of his aphorisms, Brillat-Savarin claims: "It is heresy to insist that we must not mix wines: a man's palate can

154 Brillat-Savarin, *Physiology of Taste*, 171.
155 Brillat-Savarin, *Physiology of Taste*, 169.
156 Kant, *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, 54.
157 Kant, *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, 55.

grow numb and react dully to even the best bottle after the third glass from it."[158] As contrasting sense representations stimulate attention,[159] change refreshes sensory impressions in opposition to soporific monotony, which blunts them.[160] Essentially, "[i]f one wants to keep the faculty of sensing lively, then one must not begin with strong sensations (because they make us insensitive to those that follow); rather it is better to deny them to oneself at the beginning and apportion them sparingly to oneself, so that one can always climb higher."[161] Brillat-Savarin's maxims correspond to Kant's views in this respect, as well: "The proper progression of courses in a dinner is from the most substantial to the lightest. […] The proper progression of wines or spirits is from the mildest to the headiest and most aromatic."[162] As far as the sequence of dishes is concerned, the divergence is only ostensible. Kant dwells on increasing the intensity of impressions, and Brillat-Savarin teaches to begin with the most nourishing food, but this is merely a general remark which passes over the detailed arrangement of the menu. The principle of the gradation of sensations is not violated, if the entirety of the menu is considered, including soup as a preparation for the main course (since "it soothes the stomach and encourages it to receive and digest more nourishment"[163]), and minor dishes, whose succession culminates in the most filling course. The category of light dishes includes desserts, which punctuate the "monotony" of savory dishes and supply the senses with different stimuli. The principle of contrast is also at work when pairing foods and drinks. Brillat-Savarin recommends serving light desserts with strong alcohols, and hefty mains with wine.

8 Sociability

Mirosław Żelazny is indisputably right to conclude that, in Kant, "aesthetic judgment is a purely spiritual, disinterested, intellectual judgment, once and for all disjoined from the sense of physiological taste."[164] Indeed, Kant himself directly professes as much. However, the chasm between the two can be reduced upon closer scrutiny of his various statements. Such a project is

158 Brillat-Savarin, *Physiology of Taste*, 16.
159 Kant, *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, 53.
160 Kant, *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, 56.
161 Kant, *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, 57.
162 Brillat-Savarin, *Physiology of Taste*, 15.
163 Brillat-Savarin, *Physiology of Taste*, 85.
164 Żelazny, *Estetyka filozoficzna*, 90.

helpfully furthered by the insights of Gasché, who admittedly asserts that "[f]ood can have no form, no pure aesthetics of food is possible," but also observes that

> Kant's concern with food is not merely of the order of an art of eating, or a gastrosophy. Rather, food and its ingestion seem to play a much more fundamental philosophical role in his thought in that gustatory sense serves not only as a springboard for the higher senses, but also provides the model, if not even the schema, for the whole of thought.[165]

Gasché focuses on three aspects which judgments of sensory taste and judgments of reflective taste have in common:

> Just as gustatory sense is immediately pleased by what it finds agreeable, so the soul instantly agrees to what it recognizes as wholesome. If subjectivity and sociability are what the ever so different faculties of gustatory taste and aesthetic taste have in common, the immediacy characteristic of both represents the third reason for which a faculty that estimates without judging can come to the designate the faculty of judgment itself.[166]

Kant conferred subjectivism of the notion of taste, which had earlier been a moral rather than an aesthetic concept and a vehicle of socio-political meanings, denoting "an ideal of genuine humanity," as Hans-Georg Gadamer puts it.[167] Standing for the keen discernment of things right and good, taste had been a kind of *sensus communis*.[168] However, Kant equally emphatically argued that human beings were capable of making judgments of taste not because they were sensual creatures, but because they were moral beings. *Critique of Judgment* uniquely coalesces aesthetics and ethics. Of course, this coupling has no ontological underpinnings, but solely subjective ones. In brief, human beings may experience beauty, because they are beings who discover the "moral law" in themselves.

Gasché opens his discussion of Kant from the point of view of the stomach by evoking a moment during the meal when the old philosopher, no longer capable of fluent communication, arduously articulates a demand that the messy dish on his plate be arranged into a figure. At the end of his paper, Gasché concludes that

165 Gasché, "Figura czy forma?" 29.

166 Gasché, "Figura czy forma?" 29.

167 See Hans Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, trans. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall (London and New York: Bloomsbury, 2013), 32.

168 See Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 20–29.

> with this request that his food have figure, Kant is demanding that even something as undeterminable and incommunicable as the savory qualities of food should, and can yield to a "comparatively universal" judgment. Indeed, what is at stake, in Kant's reflections on food, is nothing less than the always pending threat that nature may not be in harmonious agreement with reason.[169]

No wonder that Kant found companionable dining so relevant. Individual and intimate gustatory experiences mutate into a social event at the common table. This sociability becomes a site where the rigors or reason and the imperatives of morality are articulated; it is a moment that asserts the essence of humanity.

169 Gasché, "Figura czy forma?" 29.

CHAPTER 2

Taste and Its Value: Cultural Hierarchies

Julia Child, once an extremely influential and now legendary personage of the culinary world, repeated that love was the most important and indispensable spice to use when cooking. Slightly pompous though it may sound, this insight is not unrelated to common sense. Emotional engagement is known to enhance one's commitment to what one is doing and to help one learn and overcome possible difficulties. John Dewey, who was equally emphatic about the importance of feelings,[1] understood emotion as a binding agent of experience that makes it integrated through the mechanisms of the selection and distribution of emphasis. He literally dubbed emotion "the moving and cementing force,"[2] explaining that it "selects what is congruous and dyes what is selected with its color, thereby giving qualitative unity to materials externally disparate and dissimilar. It thus provides unity in and through the varied parts of an experience."[3]

Food and feelings are interrelated at the very basic level of gustatory sensations. As a result, food is a vehicle of fundamental emotions, those intimately interwoven with bodiliness and capable of permeating all spheres of individual and social life. Dewey matter-of-factly observes that "[t]he dictionary will inform anyone who consults it that the early use of words like sweet and bitter was not to denote qualities of sense as such but to discriminate things as favorable or hostile. How could it be otherwise? Direct experience comes from nature and man interacting with each other."[4] Indeed, expressions such as a "bitter end/defeat" and "the sweet taste of victory" refer to remote, noncorporeal aspects of social life. The activities involved in the making and sharing of food bear a strong emotional charge. These correlations go very far back in time, and contemporary anthropologists insist that social bonds directly derive from culinary practices.[5]

1 Peter G. Whitehouse explains that there is no full-fledged theory of emotion in *Art as Experience*. Dewey relies in it on his prior psychological writings, in which he developed a theory of a unified act. Peter G. Whitehouse, "The Meaning of 'Emotion' in Dewey's *Art as Experience*," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 3, no. 2 (Winter 1978): 156.

2 John Dewey, *Art as Experience* (London: Perigee, 2005), 44.

3 Dewey, *Art as Experience*, 44.

4 Dewey, *Art as Experience*, 15.

5 This concept revises the earlier idea that social bonds were originally modeled upon sexual relations. Richard Wrangham, *Catching Fire: How Cooking Made Us Human* (New York: Basic

Child loved French cuisine, regarding it as the apex of culinary art, and she popularized it fervently. She was not the first American woman to be enraptured by the French style of nourishment. Among her eminent forerunners in this respect was Alice B. Toklas, a Paris-based American and Gertrude Stein's partner of many years. Toklas, herself a well-versed cook, was a fervent believer in the exceptionality of French gastronomic culture and in cooking as an art in its own right. In her view, extraordinary dishes engendered feelings comparable to those induced by art. In *The Alice B. Toklas Cookbook*, she poignantly wonders: "What more can one say? If one had the choice of again hearing Pachmann play the two Chopin sonatas or dining once more at the Café Anglais, which would one choose?"[6] When she herself cooked for the artistic elite of Paris, she not infrequently used her dishes as a tool to establish emotional hierarchies and communicate feelings. Her affective culinary gestures were not always reciprocated. This was notably the case with some fish that Alice cooked for Picasso. She poached a striped bass and decorated it with mayonnaise colored with tomato paste, embellishing the whole with a design of hard-boiled eggs, black truffles, and herbs. Proud of her tour-de-force, Toklas did not expect Picasso to spurn her tribute, in which he fancied he spotted color combinations typical of the work of Matisse, his rival.[7] Picasso was Stein's close friend, and Matisse, who was also a frequent guest at her home, was less well liked. *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* (authored by Gertrude Stein) contains a story of Hélène, an excellent, talented, and thrifty housekeeper, who held very clear views on various matters and did not hold back from making them known. For example, she was of the opinion that

> a frenchman [sic] should not stay unexpectedly to a meal particularly if he asked the servant beforehand what there was for dinner. […] So when Miss Stein said to her, Monsieur Matisse is staying for dinner this evening, she would say, in that case I will not make an omelette but fry the eggs. It takes the same number of eggs and the same amount of butter but it shows less respect, and he will understand.[8]

Books, 2009). I discuss this issue in more detail in "Community around the Table" in this volume.

6 Alice B. Toklas, *The Alice B. Toklas Cookbook* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2010), 100.

7 Toklas, *Cookbook*, 29–30.

8 Gertrude Stein, *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*, in *Selected Writings of Gertrude Stein*, ed. Carl van Echten (New York: Vintage, 1990), 7.

Further on, the author of the autobiography mentions that Hélène "was terribly interested in seeing Monsieur Picasso and his wife and child and cooked her very best dinner for him."[9] What Hélène served on the occasion is not reported, but it may have been a soufflé, her celebrated signature dish.

1 Foods and Cooking Techniques

According to Madeleine Ferrières, modernity has instituted three fundamental rules for hierarchizing food.[10] The first rule concerns setting apart meat dishes from Lenten fare, and has been dictated by religion and the church. As Maguelonne Toussaint-Samat spells out in *A History of Food*, "throughout the Middle Ages and up to the end of the seventeenth century a holy, meticulous and implacable evangelical influence pervaded European kitchens. The dinner bell was set by the church bell [...] Meat-eating was forbidden on almost 180 days a year."[11] How the strict ecclesiastical injunctions were interpreted was quite another matter, as evinced by perhaps the boldest maneuver of classifying a beaver as a fish on account of it living in water and having a scale-covered tail. Catholic hedonism, which was particularly rampant in southern Europe, carried away both clergy and laymen. Erasmus of Rotterdam, whose sentiments largely aligned with Protestantism, condemned those who serve both God and their own stomachs by fasting,[12] and offered advice to help believers take control of the power of appetite, which made them eat and drink even if not hungry.[13] From the Renaissance through to the 19th century,

9 Stein, *Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*, 8.

10 See Madeleine Ferrières, "Jedzenie," in *Codzienność dawnej Francji. Życie i rzeczy w czasach ancien régime'u* (*L'ancienne France au quotidien: la vie et les choses de la vie sous* l'*Ancien Régime*), ed. Michel Figeac, trans. Dorota Sieńko (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Pałacu Króla Jana III w Wilanowie, 2015), 186–88.

11 Maguelonne Toussaint-Samat, *A History of Food*, trans. Anthea Bell (Malden, MA, and Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publishing, 2003), 101.

12 Qtd. in Florent Quellier, *Łakomstwo: Historia grzechu głównego* (*Gourmandise: histoire d'un péché capital*), trans. Beata Spieralska (Warszawa: Bellona, 2013), 81.

13 Paul Connerton cites Erasmus's views from the widely read treatise *De civitate morum puerilium* (1530): "Some people, says Erasmus, devour food rather than eat it. They behave as if they were thieves wolfing their booty or as if they were about to be carried off to prison. They put their hands into the dishes when they are scarcely seated and push so much into their mouths at once that their cheeks bulge like bellows. They eat and drink without even pausing, not because they are hungry or thirsty but because they can control their movements in no other way." Paul Connerton, *How Societies Remember* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 82. Connerton associates the pressure on civilizing table manners with the development of societies which sought to increase

a movement combating gluttony and disseminating an austere lifestyle developed within the Catholic Church. It emerged in the wake of the Counter-Reformation. St. Ignatius Loyola, the founder of the Jesuit order, devised eight principles of proper nutrition in order to promote spiritual enlightenment.[14] In the 17th century, Leonard Léssius, a monk from Antwerp who continued the work of his eminent predecessor, provided very specific pieces of advice for those who wished to break free from the "bondage of their own mouths." He recommended avoiding any contact with particularly tempting foods and even envisaging them as already digested by the body.[15] Importantly, his exhortations targeted the elite.

All the estates were given some respite from the obligations of abstinence by carnival, during which the custom of parading a fat ox across towns was cultivated all over Western Europe from the 12th century to the 1930s. The animal was a symbol of satiety and, as such, was so precious and coveted that it was "embellished with ribbons, flowers, bows, and sometimes even gilt."[16] The ox – a carnivalesque victim – was eventually eaten.[17] Carnival was a feast of carnality, and its joyful facet harbored harbingers of degradation, which heralded a rebirth, as observed by Mikhail Bakhtin:

> To degrade [...] means to concern oneself with the lower stratum of the body, the life of the belly and the reproductive organs; it therefore relates to acts of defecation and copulation, conception, pregnancy and birth. Degradation digs a bodily grave for a new birth; it has not only a destructive, negative aspect, but also a regenerating one. To degrade an object does not imply merely hurling it into the void of nonexistence, into absolute destruction, but to hurl it down to the reproductive lower stratum, the zone in which conception and a new birth take place.[18]

No wonder that the tension between the fixed, permanent rules of the organization of social life in the Middle Ages and the boundless, cheerful play embodied in carnival was a rewarding and recurrent theme in art: "Lent always

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social control and appreciated those who perfected their self-control. See Connerton, *How Societies Remember*, 82–84.

14 Philip Shano, "Dining with St Ignatius of Loyola: Rules for Regulating One's Eating," *The Way* 52, no. 4 (October 2013): 9–22.

15 Quellier, *Łakomstwo*, 91.

16 Quellier, *Łakomstwo*, 105.

17 Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, trans. Helene Iswolsky (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), 202.

18 Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, 21.

won the battle, and Carnival, in the form of a puppet or animal, was captured, tried and condemned to death."[19] The time of license was followed by the time of purification, which terminated forty days later at Easter, and virtue again prevailed over vice after momentary turmoil.

The second principle behind food hierarchies is vertical and aligned with the "ladder of being," which rises to God, its bottom end resting on the earth. The metaphor of a ladder (or a chain) institutes a simple principle of evaluation according to which whatever abides far from the ground is superior to the plants and animals that directly touch it. Hence the humble position of root vegetables and pigs, which burrow in soft dirt. The abomination of impure ground also tainted occupations dealing with the cultivation of plants whose edible parts directly touched life-giving soil and the breeding of animals which trod the ground. At the same time, fowl and fruit were *nomen omen* highly valued.

Evaluative classifications were developed for fish as well. Heavy fish were believed to drop to the bottom, while light ones lived close to the surface; hence the sole and the turbot surpassed the tuna and the porpoise. The hierarchy of foodstuffs also corresponded to other divisions of rank that mirrored class inequalities: "This age-old principle of ordering the world persisted through the ages because it legitimized the tastes and preferences of the elite: the verdicts of Providence have placed the quail and the chicken, the turbot and the sole atop classic gastronomy, which dismisses common and mundane products such as garlic and potatoes."[20] The desire of the rich to keep away from the poor was also expressed in other ways which made gustatory pleasure part of the "social ideology of ostentatious extravagance."[21] Distinctions were marked, for example, by mealtimes. When the privileged classes had their breakfast, slaves in America and workers in Europe would already have toiled for hours.[22] In France, "dinner time shifted by eight hours from the late 16th century to the early 19th century," because the Parisian elite tended to wake up ever later.[23] The urban rich could afford increasingly better and more expensive meats carefully selected by butchers, while the poor "struggled to obtain the worst parts of carcasses, scrambled together by offal sellers."[24] Only when trade

19 Silvia Malaguzzi, *Food and Feasting in Art*, trans. Brian Phillips (Los Angeles: Getty Publications, 2008), 109.

20 Ferrières, "Jedzenie," 187.

21 Madeleine Ferrières, "Posiłki," in *Codzienność dawnej Francji*, 437.

22 See Barry W. Higman, *How Food Made History* (Chichester: Wiley Blackwell, 2012), 156.

23 Ferrières, "Posiłki," 436.

24 Reynald Abad, "Mięso," in *Codzienność dawnej Francji*, 293.

unions succeeded in securing the reduction of working time in the 20th century did industrial workers begin to enjoy their meals regularly and in peace.[25]

Truffles seem to have been the only food to have eluded the relentless evaluation mechanisms. These black mushrooms that grow underground have avoided the fate of roots and maintained their elevated position till the present day, even though hardly any rankings have stood the test of time. The mutability of culinary tastes is perhaps best illustrated by the history of the lobster. Now basking in the splendor of a luxury victual, the lobster suffered the ignominy of being nicknamed the cockroach of the sea in the 19th century. Bearing such a label, it could not but be deemed good solely for the tables of the poor, orphans, servants, and prisoners or, alternately, for being ground up and used as a fertilizer.[26] Nature was generous to the Americans at the time: "New York Harbor alone held half the world's oysters and yielded so much sturgeon that caviar was sat out as a bar snack. […] A popular American recipe book of 1853, *Home Cookery*, casually mentions adding a hundred oysters to a pot of gumbo to 'enhance' it."[27]

The third criterion for instituting hierarchies of food stemmed from dietary beliefs anchored in ancient philosophy. Eating choices were informed by the theory of the four humors developed by Galen, a Roman physician of the 2nd century AD, and largely endorsed until the 17th century (and beyond).[28] Drawing on the theories of Hippocrates and writings by Aristotle, Galen claimed that all life was based on the combination of four principles: dry, wet, hot, and cold, which corresponded to the four elements of air, water, fire, and earth, and to four vital fluids, that is, blood, phlegm, yellow bile, and black bile. The same logic explained the existence of the four seasons of the year, the four ages of man, the four winds, the four directions, and so on.

Aristotle averred that the universe strove for equilibrium: "[F]or when a thing has got what it desires it has arrived at its End, and does not strive to get its opposite, for example the hot the cold and the wet the dry."[29] It goes

25 Higman, *How Food Made History*, 156.

26 See Bill Bryson, *At Home: A Short History of Private Life* (London: Black Swan, 2016), 127.

27 Bryson, *At Home*, 127.

28 The unabating attractiveness of the theory of humors is evinced by, for example, a passage in "Steak and Chips," a chapter in Roland Barthes's *Mythologies*, which spells out the qualities of steak: "It is supposed to benefit all the temperaments, the sanguine because it is identical, the nervous and lymphatic because it is complementary to them." Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, trans. Annette Lavers (New York: The Noonday Press, 1991), 62.

29 Aristotle, *Eudemian Ethics*, trans. Harris Rackham (Cambridge, MA/London: Harvard University Press/William Heinemann Ltd., 1981), Book 7, 1239b. The Perseus Project; http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0050%3Abook%3D7%3Asection%3D1239b. (Access 15 June 2021).

without saying that balance is beneficial to all human beings, yet perfect harmony was forfeited with original sin, and since this woeful moment various temperaments have had the upper hand in various individuals. All people fall into the four temperamental types: the sanguine, where the dry predominates; the melancholic inclined to earth and thus to the cold; the choleric, in whom heat holds sway; and the phlegmatic, who are at the mercy of the wet element.

> Obviously the four humors or temperaments could not be considered as equally desirable. The sanguine temperament, associated with air, spring, morning and youth, was, and in some measure still is, regarded as the most auspicious one. Favored with a well-knit body and a ruddy complexion, the sanguine seemed to surpass all the other types in natural cheerfulness, sociability, generosity and talents of all description; even his faults, a certain weakness for wine, good food and love, were of the amiable and pardonable kind.[30]

as Erwin Panofsky explained in his famous essay about Albrecht Dürer's celebrated engraving *Melencolia*. A glaring surfeit of one of the humors presaged illness. What people feared most was the excessive activity of black bile, which could lead to insanity.

The proportions of the vital fluids in people's bodies were amenable to regulation through proper diets.[31] For example, an overabundance of humidity in the body was cured by administering substances deemed to be dry; and the other way round, the surplus of the dry element was supposed to be remedied by juicy fruit. A good cook was in a sense a physician. In Galen's framework, "[c]uisine is to be understood as the art of manipulation and skillful combination, given that perfectly balanced foods do not exist in nature."[32]

Healthy people were recommended balanced dishes. Some propitious combinations have stood the test of time and still enjoy popularity. The classic combos of ham and melon, or mozzarella and tomatoes reverberated with the wisdom behind the art of balancing the elements. The Italian historian of food Massimo Montanari stresses that such a concept of diet, informed by aspirations to equilibrium rather than any restrictive theory, did not separate pleasure from health. Well-composed menus served both ends.[33]

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30 Erwin Panofsky, *Albrecht Dürer* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1943), 158.

31 Cf. Ferrières, "Jedzenie," 187.

32 Massimo Montanari, *Food Is Culture*, trans. Albert Sonnenfeld (New York: Columbia University Pres, 2006), 52.

33 Montanari, *Food Is Culture*, 56.

Such appraisals extended not only over foodstuffs but over food processing techniques as well. In this framework, the prescripts of etiquette were taken into account alongside the salutary qualities of cuisine. For instance, in France under the *ancien régime*, almost everything that was not boiled, fried, or roasted was deemed harmful. It was a common belief that thermal processing helped intensify flavors and facilitate digestion. As a result, "eating raw 'greens' indicated utter poverty and, above all, was considered uncivilized."[34]

Since antiquity, roasting has been associated with barbarism, while the boiling of meat was lauded as the best method of cooking. In his *The Learned Banqueters*, Athenaeus censures Homer for his culinary habits: "Homer [...] never made broth when he sacrificed oxen, nor did he boil the flesh or the brains, but he roasted even the entrails. So very old-fashioned was he."[35] Montanari illuminates this rivalry of techniques through a classic reference to Claude Lévi-Strauss. Specifically, the clash of boiling and roasting ensues from a long-standing conflict between nature and culture, originating in the tension between the wild and the domestic and playing "an antithetical role on a symbolic level."[36] Given this, the selection of cooking techniques is not only a matter of taste, but also an ideologically dictated decision. If the point is to dissociate oneself from nature, cooking is a better technique because it intervenes in products more incisively than quick fire-roasting.[37] In *Food Is Culture*, Montanari explains that "boiling 'mediates' through water the relationship of fire and food and necessitates the use of a container-utensil – namely a manufactured object that typically represents 'culture' – thus tending to take on symbolic meanings more directly linked to the notion of 'domestication.'"[38] The dialectics of the boiled and the roasted breeds two further division, according to Montanari. One of them is the distinction between the cuisine of the poor and the cuisine of the rich, and the other, the gap between women's cooking and men's cooking. Boiling in a pot is more economical, which can be understood in two ways. Firstly, the technique is friendly to meats of humble quality (and virtually irreplaceable for salted meat), and secondly, it

34 Ferrières, "Jedzenie," 187.

35 Athenaeus, *Deipnosophistae*, trans. Charles Burton Gulick (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1927), Book 1, 12c, digitalized by E. Thayer; https://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/Athenaeus/1B*.html (Access 15 June 2021).

36 Montanari, *Food Is Culture*, 47.

37 Of course, this distinction is of rather limited validity. For example, there is no doubt that aesthetically and technically sophisticated dishes of Japanese cuisine are products of a highly developed gastronomic culture, even though they use raw ingredients and do not rely on the transformative interference of fire. See Montanari, *Food Is Culture*, 31.

38 Montanari, *Food Is Culture*, 48.

does not squander the nutritively precious juices, which remain in the water. As far as gender divisions are concerned, there is a recurrent cultural pattern which binds women with the enclosed space of the kitchen and associates men with making meals in the open air. While male activity in this context is most patently illustrated by hunting and feasting at a bonfire, this norm is reasserted by the conventions of barbecues, which hand the cooking over to men.[39] Even if regular cubes of charcoal and industrially produced firelighters are used to roast highly processed sausages from a discount supermarket round the corner, "still, in the outdoor fire we maintain the illusion of creating and reestablishing a strong bond with nature."[40]

Today, fresh and less processed foods tend to be extolled. Light salads, crispy barbecued vegetables, fish, and raw steaks represent a healthy diet in vogue with the middle class.[41] Roland Barthes's famed essay "Steak and Chips" eulogizes rare beef: "Steak is part of the same sanguine mythology as wine. It is the heart of meat, it is meat in its pure state; and whoever partakes of it assimilates a bull-like strength. The prestige of steak evidently derives from its quasi-rawness. In it, blood is visible, natural, dense, at once compact and sectile."[42] This now classic dish of French cuisine made its appearance in Paris in the wake of the battle of Waterloo, ousting boiled beef, which was relegated to the position of rural food.[43] In this way, to apply Montanari's insights and terminology, the electrolyte levels evened out in French cuisine, as urban civilization was offset by fresh blood, and the rhythms of nature dominating in the country found a counterpoint in long-lasting boiling in which meat became soft and its fibers fell apart. Barthes discerns a corresponding process: "And just as wine becomes for a good number of intellectuals a mediumistic substance which leads them towards the original strength of nature, steak is for them a redeeming food, thanks to which they bring their intellectualism to the level of prose and exorcize, through blood and soft pulp, the sterile dryness of which they are constantly accused."[44]

The city-country opposition echoes in the division between popular cuisine and erudite cuisine.

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39 Montanari, *Food Is Culture*, 49–50.

40 Montanari, *Food Is Culture*, 50.

41 Jean-François Revel notes that an aversion to blood is a common feature of peasant cooking. Jean-François Revel, *Culture and Cuisine: A Journey through the History of Food*, trans. Helen R. Lane (New York: Doubleday, 1982), 27.

42 Barthes, *Mythologies*, 62.

43 Toussaint-Samat, *History of Food*, 104.

44 Barthes, *Mythologies*, 62.

2 Popular and Erudite Cuisines

The President of France François Mitterrand had at his disposal a host of chefs working at the official kitchen of the Élysée Palace, but he hired a personal cook in 1988. The position was obtained by Danièle Mazet-Delpeuch, who had grown up in Périgord, a region famous for its truffles and foie gras, but who was an ordinary villager with no formal training, as Mitterrand expressly requested.[45] She was the first and the only woman to cook at the president's official residence. She was explicitly tasked with making traditional French dishes in the style that the seventy-seven-year-old Mitterrand remembered from his family home. For several months, Mazet-Delpeuch took care of the private meals eaten by Mitterrand and his friends, who were sometimes joined by heads of states.

She resigned, unable to cope with the tensions and unfriendliness which marred her work. This episode may be explored as a clash of two paradigms: amateur female cooking linked to private cuisine and professional male cooking bound up with official cuisine. Jean-François Revel's insights come in handy at this point to illumine the core of the conflict. His study *Culture and Cuisine: A Journey through the History of Food* revolves around a rift between two approaches to cooking; he refers to one of them as popular cuisine and to the other as erudite cuisine.[46] That the two were pitted against each other may have resulted from historical necessity, since, as Revel argues, "[t]he history of gastronomy is nothing more nor less than a succession of exchanges, conflicts, quarrels, and reconciliations between everyday cuisine and the high art of cuisine."[47]

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45 The story of Danièle Mazet-Delpeuch was made famous by *Les Saveurs du palais* (*Haute Cuisine*), a movie directed and co-written by Christian Vincent in 2012.

46 The division into erudite and popular cuisines overlaps with the split into the public and private spheres. It was no coincidence that restaurants came into being as the public sphere started to develop. Food stepped out of domestic recesses and entered the public domain. These transformations were powerfully precipitated by the French Revolution, which democratized access to the culinary art, previously the sole monopoly of the aristocracy. Today, the interpenetration of the two spheres is exemplified, for instance, by popular TV shows in which amateurs cook, documentary series about regional cuisines, and the burgeoning culinary tourism industry. The birth of the restaurant is informatively depicted by Stephen Mennell. Cf. Stephen Mennell, "Eating in the Public Sphere in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries," in *Eating out in Europe: Picnics, Gourmet Dining and Snacks since the Late Eighteenth Century*, ed. Marc Jacobs and Peter Scholliers (Oxford and New York: Berg, 2003), 249; Stephen Mennell, *All Manners of Food: Eating and Taste in England and France from the Middle Ages to the Present* (Oxford and New York: Basil Blackwell, 1987), 134–44.

47 Revel, *Culture and Cuisine*, 22.

Popular cuisine is the cuisine of grandmothers and mothers who pass down their know-how to their daughters. This encompasses home-based cooking, which uses tried-and-tested techniques and seasonal, local ingredients. It is underpinned by economy, repetition, and a certainty guaranteed by time. Revel succinctly lists its strengths:

> [popular cuisine] has the advantage of being linked to the soil, of being able to exploit the products of various regions and different seasons, in close accord with nature, of being based on age-old skills, transmitted unconsciously by way of imitation and habit, of applying methods of cooking patiently tested and associated with certain cooking utensils and recipients prescribed by a long tradition.[48]

Popular cuisine likes peaceful regularity. It embodies the spirit of the region, serves as a link that unites local communities, and its recipes and techniques form a cultural code which is intuitively deciphered by locals and opaque to outsiders.[49] Some dishes are so intimately fused with places that they either cannot be cooked or taste different, if not downright worse, elsewhere. This simple truth is amply borne out by Calabrian cuisine, which defies any geographical transfer, because its vegetable dishes and pasta sauces use an endemic species of onion. Oval-shaped, loosely structured, and mild-tasting, the onion, which Italians call *cipolla di Tropea* (Tropea onion), thrives in the fields of Vibo Valentia, which stretch along the coast of the Tyrrhenian Sea. This red onion variety is very fragile and travels badly, so to enjoy the unique flavors of Calabrian cuisine, one must venture far into the south of Italy.

Popular cuisine to a considerable degree hinges on what Luce Giard terms the action of the gesture, arranged in an

> orderly series of basic actions, coordinated in sequences of variable duration according to the intensity of the effort required, organized on a model learned from others through imitation (someone showed me how to do it), reconstituted from memory (I saw it done this way), or

48 Revel, *Culture and Cuisine,* 19.

49 Roch Sulima pithily encapsulates the role of culinary codes: "Like musical codes, culinary codes are among the most permanent determinants of collective, social, and national identity patterns." Roch Sulima, *Antropologia codzienności* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego, 2000), 152.

established though trial and error based on similar actions (I ended up figuring out how to do it).[50]

The effects of efforts involved in everyday cooking depend on how adeptly one matches gestures with tasks and one's proficiency in them. The fine-tuning of techniques is not a value in and of itself, since, unlike in erudite cuisine, innovation and originality matter far less than the preservation of the best flavors and the continuity of the tradition. The heritage is coupled with inventiveness, and history reinforces education in order to make the gesture effective and construct a sprawling network of culinary practices: "Doing-cooking thus rests atop a complex montage of circumstances and objective data, where necessities and liberties overlap, a confused and constantly changing mixture through which tactics are invented, trajectories carved out, and ways of operating individualized."[51]

Popular cuisine must have been on Roch Sulima's mind when he claimed in *Antropologia codzienności* [*An Anthropology of Everydayness*] that "boldness in the kitchen is far rarer than in the bedroom or in the wardrobe."[52] Popular cuisine is a stable basis for its refined sister – erudite cuisine. Trained in schools, erudite cuisine is aloof and looks toward the future, undaunted. Fearlessness is one of its signature features. However, the sense of power that erudite cuisine cherishes would be less pronounced if it were not for the backing it receives from popular cuisine. Revel warns chefs against excessive self-confidence: "I shall add that a chef who loses all contact with popular cuisine rarely succeeds in putting something really exquisite together,"[53] and reminds readers that "it is a striking fact that truly great erudite cuisine has arisen principally in places where a tasty and varied traditional cuisine already existed, serving it as a sort of basis."[54]

Erudite cuisine eagerly abdicates its responsibilities toward the community and is not adamantly committed to guarding tradition, which provides a rendezvous point whence chefs make forays into the unknown. Tradition takes a step back to make room for "invention, renewal, experimentation."[55] This type

50 Michel de Certeau, Luce Giard, and Pierre Mayol, *The Practice of Everyday Life, Volume 2: Living and Cooking*, trans. Timothy J. Tomasik (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998), 202.

51 Certeau, Giard, and Mayol, *Practice of Everyday Life 2*, 201.

52 Sulima, *Antropologia codzienności*, 152.

53 Revel, *Culture and Cuisine*, 20.

54 Revel, *Culture and Cuisine*, 20.

55 Revel, *Culture and Cuisine*, 19.

of cooking is practiced in the male-dominated kitchens of expensive restaurants. Revel emphasizes that erudite cuisine is intrinsically revolutionary, and coming up with new combinations and flavors is its birthright. Every experiment is inevitably enveloped in the penumbra of possible demise. Heroics may lead one astray into "pointless complication [...] and dangerous form of the Baroque."[56] At the same time, the blunt truth is that everyday cooking is by no means pure idyll and has its own potential for dramas and blunders. Popular cuisine is not always noble simplicity incarnate, as it "clings to its errors as to its qualities and can both drown in grease and boil to death things that ought to be grilled plain or barely poached."[57]

To sum up, (1) the logic of female cooking is founded on the local, the intuitive, and the emotional; it enjoys relative liberty, though it avails itself of handwritten recipe notebooks and familiar techniques; it revels in sizeable bites and hearty casseroles; and it aims to make one feel full, secure, and safely belonging. It is cultivated by poor people and in rural and urban kitchens, where mothers or humble family cooks work. (2) The logic of male cooking puts trust in the intellect and accuracy; it is inseparable from panache and a surplus of luxury; it is supported by modern technologies, pursues universality, and repudiates freedom and chance, which are only admissible at the onset of the experimental phase, whereas the final dish must be impeccable; it aspires to captivate and surprise.[58] The outcomes of this approach were once consumed at royal courts and the households of the mighty; today, they are to be savored at fashionable restaurants.[59]

Inadvertently rather than purposefully, the division proposed by Revel produces an image of a hierarchical system. Indeed, while *Culture and Cuisine* neither offers any direct appraisals nor puts either of these cuisines before the other, trying instead to appreciate them both, the very terminology it applies

56 Revel, *Culture and Cuisine*, 20.

57 Revel, *Culture and Cuisine*, 23.

58 An insight into the experimentation phase at the Spanish El Bulli, which was rated as the world's best restaurant for many years, is offered by Gereon Wetzel's documentary *El Bulli: Cooking in Progress* (2010). El Bulli was open for six months, while the rest of the year was devoted to developing a new menu of thirty dishes, with the team of chefs led by Ferran Adrià perfecting the details of their flavor, texture, and presentation.

59 Revel's division is still relevant despite the new fads in haute cuisine, which now tends to reappraise local produce and reembrace culinary traditions. The food served in Central, the best restaurant of South America, does not even remotely resemble anything that can be seen on the tables of the Andean folk, whom the chef Virgilio Martinez visits before launching a new menu. The processing of the ingredients, the refined cooking techniques, and the flamboyant interpretation of the tradition all make the purported inspiration barely recognizable on the plate.

conveys value judgements which mirror cultural hierarchies. Analogously to popular culture contrasted with superior high culture, popular cuisine is juxtaposed with erudite cuisine, whose very name has an intellectual component, so prized in our culture, inscribed in it. Popular cuisine, as well as – by analogy – the female cook, is compared to a strong and stocky workhorse whereas male chefs versed in erudite cuisine are pictured as thoroughbreds in Revel's metaphors.

In this framework, Mazet-Delpeuch would be ranked as "what breeders call a half-bred horse: it trots but it does not gallop,"[60] because she was indeed a family cook, albeit at a bourgeoisie home. Throughout the 19th century, the aspirations of the French middle class were steadily increasing, as a result of which the solidity of peasant cuisine merged with the refinement of aristocratic cuisine, bringing forth bourgeois cuisine. Mitterrand told Mazet-Delpeuch to cook simple but exquisite dishes. How his instructions translated into actual meals is evocatively illustrated by the menu of the private dinner the President and Madame Mitterrand held for the Russian President Mikhail Gorbachev and his wife Raisa. *Truffes en croûte* (the truffle season happened to be in progress) were served as the highlight of the menu, in the company of beef fillet with Madeira sauce, vegetables, and a souffle. No French dinner could possibly go without a selection of cheeses and a sweet finale, which on that occasion was provided by a "cocoa-grain-shaped sorbet with three different kinds of chocolate."[61]

3 The Senses

The senses are essential to the relationship between the self and the world. The way in which the sensual body interacts with its surroundings underlies the division into the distance senses, which are also called intellectual senses, and the contact senses, which tend to be referred to as the lower senses.[62] While sight and hearing promise objectivity due to their detachment from the object being contemplated, touch, smell, and taste are the subjective senses because they are not separated from the object they perceive. According to Carolyn

60 Revel, *Culture and Cuisine*, 20.

61 Łukasz Modelski, *Piąty smak. Rozmowy przy jedzeniu* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 2014), 254–55.

62 Importantly, the status of the senses is not universal, and it varies across time and space. My argument is limited to the dominant ideas that contributed to the formation of hierarchies in Western culture.

Korsmeyer, "[i]n virtually all analyses of the senses in Western philosophy the distance between object and perceiver has been seen as a cognitive, moral, and aesthetic advantage."[63] Korsmeyer is certainly right on the whole, but there are notable exceptions to the rule. In the atomist frameworks developed by Epicurus and Lucretius, all the senses are reduced to touch. Sensory impressions are produced by the movement of atoms which collide with each other. Lucretius asserts that a pleasant taste is caused by the round shape of atoms (as in honey), while disagreeable tastes are generated by hooked and angular atoms (as in wormwood).[64]

Vindications of touch were also propounded by later philosophers. Even though Descartes considered sight to be the noblest of the senses, he concluded that touch was "more certain and less vulnerable to error than vision";[65] George Berkeley found touch an indispensable prop for sight, as the latter failed to provide the sensation of "solidity, resistance, and protrusion";[66] Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel similarly appreciated touch, because it "senses the weight, resistance, and three-dimensional shape (*Gestalt*) of material bodies, and thus makes us aware that things extend from us in all directions."[67] Yet, we would indeed be hard pressed to find any advocate of the objectivity of the affiliated senses of smell and taste among venerated philosophical authorities. In both cases, experience takes place within the depths of the body and prompts an instantaneous response of satisfaction or disgust. All such responses are private and based "on bodily instinct without reference to shared ideals,"[68] The subjective quality of taste is also manifest in that we do not acquire an extensive knowledge of the world by tasting, or that is at least what most researches claim.[69] Worse still, as Korsmeyer elaborates: "Inward directedness further

63 Carolyn Korsmeyer, *Making Sense of Taste: Food and Philosophy* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2002), 12.

64 Lucretius, *De Rerum Natura*, ed. William Ellery Leonard (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1916), Book 2, ll. 398–408: "And note, besides, that liquor of honey or milk/Yields in the mouth agreeable taste to tongue,/Whilst nauseous wormwood, pungent centaury,/With their foul flavour set the lips awry;/Thus simple 'tis to see that whatsoever/Can touch the senses pleasingly are made/Of smooth and rounded elements, whilst those/Which seem the bitter and the sharp, are held/ Entwined by elements more crook'd, and so/Are wont to tear their ways into our senses/And rend our body as they enter in." The Perseus Project; http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.02.0131%3Abook%3D2%3Acard%3D398 (Access 15 June 2021).

65 Qtd. in Juhani Pallasmaa, *The Eyes of the Skin* (Chichester: John Wiley & Sons Ltd, 2012), 22.

66 Qtd. in Pallasmaa, *Eyes of the Skin*, 45.

67 Pallasmaa, *Eyes of the Skin*, 46.

68 Denise Gigante, *Taste: A Literary History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), 3.

69 Taste sometimes surprisingly becomes an element of tactile experience: "Many years ago when visiting the DL James House in Carmel, California, designed by Charles and Henry

reduces the cognitive value of a sense, as it diverts attention away from the diversities of the external world to the narrow focus of one's own being."[70] Taste is also accused of not conveying any deeper meanings, being tied to the utilitarian value of satiety, and catering to simple carnal pleasures, whose thoroughly subjective nature is forcefully posited by the well-known maxim that there is no disputing over taste.[71]

Henry Home, one of the host of 18th-century philosophers to investigate the senses, advised that art should not be mixed up with the inferior senses: "Of all feelings raised in us by external objects, those only of the eye or the ear are honoured with the name of *passion* or *emotion*: the most pleasing feelings of taste, or touch, or smell, aspire not to that honour."[72] In Home's view, the difference between the inferior and superior senses lay in the way they perceived external objects. Aesthetic pleasure, which is anchored in sight and hearing, originates in the sensible mind whereas the lowly senses of taste, smell, and touch condense experience in the parts of the body where tasting, smelling, and touching take place.[73] Home also denounced gustatory impressions as fleeting and thus incompatible with everlasting art: "Organic pleasures have naturally a short duration; when prolonged they lose their relish; when indulged to excess, they beget satiety and disgust; and, to restore a proper tone of mind, nothing can be more happily contrived than the exhilarating pleasures of the eye and ear."[74]

Probably the most familiar and intimate of the senses, taste has traditionally been considered by philosophers to be the lowest of them all. At the same time, Christianity exorcised the pleasures of taste as menaced by the worst of vices – gluttony. In the Middle Ages, gluttony was deplored as the original and thus gravest sin seeing that the eating of an apple marked the beginning of the fall of man.[75] Therefore, it does not come as a surprise that "[p]hysicality has often symbolized the limits imposed on human life by the fact that

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Greene, I felt compelled to kneel and touch the delicately shining white marble threshold of the front door with my tongue [...]. Deliciously coloured surfaces of *stucco lustro*, a highly polished colour of wood surfaces also present themselves to the appreciation of the tongue." Pallasmaa, *Eyes of the Skin*, 63–64.

70 Carolyn Korsmeyer, *Gender and Aesthetics: An Introduction* (London and New York: Routledge, 2004), 93.

71 See Korsmeyer, *Gender and Aesthetics*, 92–95.

72 Henry Home of Kames, *Elements of Criticism*, vol. 1 (Edinburgh: Bell & Bradfute, A. Constable & Company and J. Fairbairn [successor to Mr Creech], 1817), 29.

73 Home, *Elements of Criticism*, 3.

74 Home, *Elements of Criticism*, 3.

75 Cf. Malaguzzi, *Food and Feasting*, 44.

we are embodied and mortal."[76] No matter how illusory, hope of overcoming the imperfections of the body and relinquishing its particularities is offered by the disembodied mind. Hence, as Korsmeyer relates, "[p]hilosophy has traditionally privileged mind – abstract, nonmaterial, intellectual – over the body – concrete, material, sensuous."[77] This resulted in elevating the sense of sight to the top of the sensorial hierarchy as the one that does not receive sensations (body) but cognizes (mind).

The sense of taste fell victim to the dualist vision of culture in which body and mind, as well as in parallel matter and soul, were pitted against each other as mutual enemies. In this configuration, the mind was elevated over the body. This notion was disseminated by the greatest thinker of antiquity, Plato, who proposed that divine knowledge which we forgot at the moment of birth could only be retrieved by the labor of the rational soul, which he tasked with "conquering" the mortal body and managing the senses and affects. Knowledge and virtue were predicated on the taming of the flesh.[78] Less stringent in his judgments, Aristotle believed that, as form needed matter, the soul needed the body. "[T]he soul seems to be stretched out and stuck on to all the sensitive members of the body,"[79] he pictorially rendered the relationship of the two in the *Exhortation to Philosophy*. Still, in assessing the role of the senses and privileging the mind, Aristotle did not differ from Plato: "of the senses, the sight is by necessity the most valuable and honorable, and intelligence is more valuable than it and all the others, and more valuable than living, intelligence is more authoritative than truth; hence the main pursuit of all humans is to be intelligent."[80]

The notions traceable back to antiquity continue to enjoy considerable authority today. "For many persons an aura of mingled awe and unreality encompasses the 'spiritual' and the 'ideal' while 'matter' has become by contrast a term of depreciation, something to be explained away or apologized for,"[81] Dewey pointed out, and his observation is still relevant. This is evinced by the fact that parallel concepts surface, for example, in the vigorously

76 Korsmeyer, *Gender and Aesthetics*, 88.

77 Korsmeyer, *Gender and Aesthetics*, 9.

78 See Korsmeyer, *Making Sense of Taste*, 13.

79 Aristotle, *Protrepticus or Exhortation to Philosophy* (*Citations, Fragments, Paraphrases, and Other Evidence*), ed. and trans. D. S. Hutchinson and Monte Ransome Johnson (2017), 42; http://www.protrepticus.info/protr2017x20.pdf (Access 15 June 2021). For a thorough discussion of Plato's and Aristotle's views on the hierarchy of the senses, see Korsmeyer, *Making Sense of Taste*, 11–26.

80 Aristotle, *Protrepticus*, 37.

81 Dewey, *Art and Experience*, 5.

developing philosophy of new materialism, which seeks to step beyond dualist thinking by building on the frameworks propounded by Gilles Deleuze and in Richard Shusterman's somaesthetics.[82]

4 The Senses and Gender

In her exploration of sensory hierarchies, Korsmeyer aims to reveal their latent dynamic, which helps sustain the belief that culturally entrenched divisions are neutral. In an attempt to explain why neither food nor the act of tasting and ingesting has attracted interest from philosophers, Korsmeyer inscribes her considerations in gender discourse and brings the "gender" coloring of dualistic divisions into spotlight. This approach enables her not only to produce an account of the evaluative processes which have contributed to the hierarchical order, but also to clarify the mechanisms behind these processes. She agrees with the performance theorist Peggy Phelan that "gender has been, and continues to be a fundamental category for the organization of culture."[83] The category in fact underpins the binary oppositions which have organized and continue to organize philosophical thinking and social hierarchies. As Korsmeyer stresses, the endorsed system of divisions "has spawned a preference for reason over emotion, mind over body, abstraction over particularity, and so on, systematically linking the 'superior' term (mind, reason, abstraction) over its supposedly subordinate counterpart (body, emotional sensibility, particularity),"[84] and, consequently, contrasting the attributes of the male realm with those ascribed to the female domain.[85]

As a result of the dismissive attitude to the bodily senses, the study of them has tended to be cursory and superficial, often yielding misconceptions. Korsmeyer sets forth to redress some of the errors with which the appraisals of the sense of taste are infested. She questions the prevalent notion that taste is subjective, which drives the exclusion of taste from the realm of knowledge, morality, and also art. Korsmeyer professes that food may fulfil a range

82 See Rick Dolphijn and Iris van der Tuin, *New Materialism: Interviews and Cartographies* (Utrecht: Open Humanities Press, 2012), 86; Richard Shusterman, "Somaesthetics: A Disciplinary Proposal," in Richard Shusterman, *Pragmatist Aesthetics: Living Beauty, Rethinking Art*, 2nd edition (Lanham Boulder, New York, and Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2000), 262–83.

83 Qtd. in Korsmeyer, *Gender and Aesthetics*, 5.

84 Korsmeyer, *Gender and Aesthetics*, 84.

85 See Korsmeyer, *Gender and Aesthetics*, 94–5.

of representational and expressive functions. Plenty of foodstuffs strive to resemble something they are not, for example fruit which is arranged to resemble fish, animals, or flowers; animal-shaped candies and pastries; or Pavlova, whose white, light meringue layers bring to mind a tutu worn by the prima-ballerina in whose honor the dessert was put together. Pavlova was invented as a tribute to the famous dancer's exceptional talent, and food tends to serve as a medium of emotional expression in everyday life, as well; a common example of this is found in pralines, which are often given to love interests to manifest memory and affection.

For a lot of chefs, menus are multi-layered communications which eaters receive through the sense of taste, but also take in intellectually, engaging their knowledge and sense of humor. Meals at Central, the best restaurant in South America, and Osteria Francescana, the best European restaurant, are supposed to ensure exquisite gustatory sensations and, besides, teach geography and history.[86] The skills and competencies of chefs and the restaurants they manage are evaluated by their guests and reviewed by specialized food critics, whose opinions affect the popularity of the venues. The flourishing of the culinary criticism sector belies the belief that taste is a purely private matter.

The representational function of food is particularly conspicuous in rituals and ceremonies, when "what we eat and drink is put to use in our commerce with the world around us."[87] The severance of taste from the instinctual sphere is most emphatically demonstrated in the Eucharist. By putting the holy substance inside their bodies, believers underline their complete unity with Christ: "This bodily aspect imparts to taste a peculiar and profound intimacy that can lend to eating a depth of participatory meaning wherein one attains insight through the very act of tasting and eating."[88] Spiritual and symbolic dimensions are also pronounced in meals served during religious festivals. For instance, the Christmas Eve supper and the Easter breakfast hold a very special position in the Polish tradition, as the sensual pleasure of feasting is replete with religious, social and personal meanings. Some of the dishes are directly associated with religious symbolism; for example, the fish, which are the central course of the Christmas Eve supper, symbolize Christ, and the number of

86 The menu proposed by Virgilio Martinez (Central) reflects the diversity of ecosystems in Peru. Massimo Bottura (Osteria Francescana) develops innovative recipes based on traditional Italian ingredients. His most famous dish was "five ages of Parmigiano Reggiano in five different textures and temperatures," devoted to the best known cheese of the Emilia-Romagna.

87 Korsmeyer, *Gender and Aesthetics*, 96.

88 Korsmeyer, *Gender and Aesthetics*, 97.

the courses corresponds to the number of the apostles. The Easter breakfast centers around eggs, which are a metaphor for regeneration and rebirth, additionally preserved by the consecrated salt. The salt's culinary function of conserving food is extended onto the spiritual sphere, as the salt from the Easter basket of foods is supposed to safeguard against spiritual decay. Besides their explicit religious significance, these exceptional meals also sustain communal and family bonds.

Korsmeyer does not negate the subjective dimension of taste, but she highlights its cultural and social anchoring, which results in sharing the experience of tasting and making it "as communicable as more standard aesthetic judgments," and open to debate and assessment.[89]

5 Towards Integration

In the previous chapter, I discussed the fraught relation between aesthetic and gastronomic taste, a sometimes dramatic tension which cast a long shadow on the constitution of aesthetics in the 18th century. Is it at all possible to bridge the yawning gap between appetite and aesthetics? Can the distance between the two be reduced, or, perhaps more pertinently, should it be reduced?

Importantly, when Immanuel Kant made an absolute distinction between pleasure originating in the body and pleasure stemming from contact with beauty, the relationship between cuisine, aesthetics, and knowledge was not as strained in France. The connection between taste and scientific knowledge on the one hand and aesthetics on the other was not entirely disrupted in early French modernity.[90] Gastronomes enjoyed a position comparable with researchers in other disciplines: "The gourmet's tongue and palate were precision instruments, capable of generating the *connaissances*, or experiential knowledge, upon which *sçavoir*, or true knowledge, was founded. Then as now, the word 'taste' denoted both a physiological faculty and the power of discrimination."[91] The gourmet knew how to tell good wine from bad wine. Cultivated

89 Korsmeyer, *Gender and Aesthetics*, 98.

90 The relationship between and separation of *science* (science) and *sçavoir* (knowledge, know-how) are discussed by Amy Wygant, "La Mesnardiére and the Demon," in *Le Savoir au XVIIe Siecle: Actes du 34e congrès annuel de la North American Society for Seventeenth-Century French Literature*, ed. John D. Lyons and Cara Welch (Tübingen: Gunther Narr Verlag, 2003).

91 Emma C. Spary, *Eating the Enlightenment: Food and the Sciences in Paris, 1670–1760* (Chicago, IL, and London, UK: University of Illinois Press, 2013), 196.

taste was associated with other characteristics of cultured people, such as sensibility, high social standing, and education. The elevated status of cooking is borne out by cookbooks, many of which were prefaced with introductions penned by people of considerable learning, scholars, and authors: "Polite collaborators of this sort could confer legitimacy upon cooks' claims to capture taste, and thus elevate the status of cookery from its humble role among mechanical arts to a science or fine art, possessing rules and connoisseurs."[92]

Physiological taste, moral taste, and taste involved in judgments about art were highly appreciated in Paris in the 18th century. However, while the latter two were extensively studied, the taste responsible for culinary sensations remained underexamined.[93] Despite this disproportion, as Emma C. Spary argues, ideas about the proper ways of perfecting physiological taste were forged in the mid-18th century, in parallel to those pertaining to aesthetic taste. What the gustatory and the aesthetic had in common was the recommendation of "moderation." In *Théorie des sentiments agréables*, Louis-Jean Lévesque de Pouilly champions moderation as a desirable state both in morality and in physical existence. A rational hedonist was expected to possess a considerable knowledge of nutrition, promoting conscious choices and pleasures unalloyed with the risk of "overdosing." To attain the status of a competent culinary judge was anything but easy, just as it was not easy to keep the desirous body and the pronouncements of reason finely poised: "This corporeal balance or harmony was characteristic of the construction of the connoisseur as a person of taste in both the sensible and the aesthetic domains, as an individual in whom the exercise of reason over the passions, mind over body, was perfected to yield a lifestyle of calm philosophical pleasure."[94] This harmony was not conceived as a mere metaphor. For example, Spary cites theories of Étienne Laureault de Foncemagne, who claimed that flavors could be harmonized the way sounds and colors were harmonized. His views were shared by the monk Polycarpe Poncelet, who studied the art of distilling liquors to conclude that "flavors consist of the vibrations of varying strengths of salts which act on the sense of taste"; consequently, "there can be a Music for the tongue and the palate, just as there is one for the ears."[95] The overall aim was to concoct harmonious flavors and a balanced body, that is, to "produce agreeable sensation in the soul."[96]

92 Spary, *Eating the Enlightenment*, 199.
93 Spary, *Eating the Enlightenment*, 196.
94 Spary, *Eating the Enlightenment*, 223.
95 Qtd. in Spary, *Eating the Enlightenment*, 225.
96 Qtd. in Spary, *Eating the Enlightenment*, 225.

Opposite views were held by those who contended that the kinship of spiritual and bodily taste was rooted in the functions of the body.

One of them, François Marin wrote in 1750:

> Since corporeal and spiritual taste both depend on the conformation of the organs [which are] destined to operate their diverse sensations, the acuity of these two sorts of taste reliably proves the acuity of their respective organs. Could one not rise from the corporeal taste to a very delicate principle which it would, in some sense, have in common with purely spiritual taste?[97]

Foncemagne warned against individuals who never found anything to their liking. He claimed that as the tongues of such people were inflexible and worn out, they needed very strong stimuli to activate their senses. Such people were better avoided, because the symptoms of their bodily enfeeblement could have a graver origin, such as "moral shortcoming and weak reason."[98] Any overstimulation of these senses could have no other culmination than overindulgence and the hazards of inebriety, voraciousness, and lechery.[99]

The attempts to abolish divisions as outlined above were essentially flawed. Gourmets affiliated with artists and scholars were exclusively male. As Korsmeyer amply demonstrates, if culture is thoroughly organized and value-judged from the masculine perspective, it is inevitably desultory to the feminine sphere. The ramifications of this imbalance, however, stretch beyond that. For example, Juhani Pallasmaa argues that the ocularcentric "male" cultural orientation has engendered alienating tendencies in architecture, which have culminated in modernist design. Modernist design has for the most part "housed the intellect and the eye, but has left the body and the other senses, as well as our memories, imagination and dreams, homeless."[100] Almost a century earlier, John Dewey lamented the sterility of culture caused by the dread of the body: "The elevation of the ideal above and beyond the immediate sense has operated not only to make it pallid and bloodless, but it has acted, like a conspirator with the sensual mind, to impoverish and degrade all things of direct experience."[101] A culture that nurtures contempt for the body is powered by a fear of "what life may bring forth."[102] In a culture that is apprehensive of the

97 Qtd. in Spary, *Eating the Enlightenment*, 225.
98 Spary, *Eating the Enlightenment*, 226.
99 See Gigante, *Taste*, 3.
100 Pallasmaa, *Eyes of the Skin*, 22.
101 Dewey, *Art as Experience*, 32.
102 Dewey, *Art as Experience*, 23.

domination of the body and of humans losing their hegemonic position in the world of nature, experience is radically depleted.

6 Art and Life

Let us examine the division into art and life, the last of the distinctions suggested in this chapter. Can life and art meet? And, more specifically, can a meal be a work of art, and eating an aesthetic experience?

Korsmeyer's answer to this question is strictly negative. She states that the aesthetic value of food is bound up with the recognition of its representational and expressive roles, but the identification of these dimensions of meals (something she herself does) is a necessary but insufficient condition of equating a cook with an artist.

Korsmeyer offers a vindication of the aesthetic status of victuals, but this is not tantamount to asserting that the preparation and consumption of food should be counted among forms of art. In her view, food is not classifiable in the category of fine art. The reason is that the notion of fine art is inextricable from the idea of the autonomy of art, and as such does not correspond to the act of eating, in which complete unity is accomplished. Food may come in a visually attractive form, but it operates differently than works of art, since "[e]ating is an inescapably cyclic and repetitive process."[103]

Even the blatant fact that there are artistic projects which pivot on food and cooking does not make Korsmeyer change her mind. Female artists frequently rely on the language of cooking or dining to articulate their views on an array of social and political issues. When foodstuffs are incorporated into artworks, temporality and inevitable destruction in the process of ingestion are deliberately foregrounded as features of eating. Korsmeyer observes that female artists who evoke the sense of taste in their works aspire to undermine the artistic ideals of autonomy, genius, perfection, and enduring value. Taste is thus a convenient medium for pursuing a variety of goals, which nevertheless do not entail, as Korsmeyer underscores, an urge "to rescue taste from philosophical neglect nor to raise cooking to the standing of art."[104]

This observation does not foster any sense of failure or insufficiency, though. Unlike some researchers of taste who seek to include food and eating in the field of art, Korsmeyer refuses to settle for culinary art being a lesser form of

103 Korsmeyer, *Gender and Aesthetics*, 99.
104 Korsmeyer, *Gender and Aesthetics*, 101–102.

art.[105] No necessary change is introduced in culinary discourse by positioning foods as decorative or applied art:

> Nor does this approach provide a strong foothold from which to dispute all the mistakes summed up under the dismissal of taste as too subjective for philosophical attention. The symbolic, representational, expressive, cognitive roles for food do indeed have a parallel with the values manifest in fine art. [...] That is, food has aesthetic importance in its own right and need not borrow status from art.[106]

To sum up, Korsmeyer advocates the incorporation of the sense of taste into aesthetics, but she sees no point in encroaching upon the autonomy of art as a criterion for defining fine arts. Nonetheless, this conclusion does not strip eating and cooking from the prospect of being deemed meaningful and profound experiences within what we call art. For these prospects to materialize, we must abandon the notions minted in the 18th century and adopt a perspective that brings into relief the dynamic and processual quality of art as experience. This mission is embarked on by pragmatist aesthetics, which will serve as my major framework throughout this book.

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105 This strategy is epitomized by Elizabeth Telfer's widely read *Food for Thought: Philosophy and Food* (London: Routledge, 1996).

106 Korsmeyer, *Gender and Aesthetics*, 100.

CHAPTER 3

Culinary Experience: a Pragmatist Perspective

> What could I tell you, my lady, of the secrets of nature that I have discovered while cooking? I observed that an egg unifies and fries in butter or oil, but to the contrary dissolves in syrup; that in order to keep sugar liquid, it suffices to throw on it a very little bit of water flavored with quince or another bitter fruit; that the yolk and white of the same egg when separated and combined with sugar have an opposite effect, and one different from when they are both used together. I do not mean to tire you with such foolishness, which I only recount to give you a complete picture of my nature and because I think it will amuse you. But, my lady, what can women know except philosophy of the kitchen? Lupercio Leonardo has said it well: it is possible to philosophize while preparing dinner. As I often say on observing these little things, if Aristotle had cooked, he would have written much more.
>
> JUANA INÉS DE LA CRUZ[1]

Having moved to Chicago in 1894, thirty-five-year-old John Dewey soon had an opportunity to test his theoretical insights in practice. If this experiment needed a laboratory, one was provided by a school he founded at the University of Chicago to implement the ideas developed by scholars affiliated with the Faculty of Philosophy, Psychology and Education, which was headed by Dewey. The school was in operation from 1896 to 1903, and suitably embodied a merger of theory and practice, an ideal championed across Dewey's writings.

> Because of the idea that human intelligence developed in connection with the needs and opportunities of action, the core of school activity was to be found in occupations, rather than in what are conventionally

1 Juana Inés de la Cruz, "Response to the Very Illustrious 'Sor Philotea,'" in Pamela Kirk Rappaport, *Sor Juana Inez de la Cruz: Selected Writings* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2005), 274.

> termed studies. Study in the sense of inquiry and its outcome in gathering and retention of information was to be an outgrowth of the pursuit of certain continuing or consecutive occupational activities.[2]

The new institution prioritized teaching by doing. This approach logically stemmed from the concept of the unity and intrinsic sociality of knowledge. Louis Menand clarifies the idea that, according to Dewey, the unity of knowledge was not synonymous with its being an integrated conglomerate, but implied that it was inseparable from action: "Education at the Dewey School was based on the idea that knowledge is a by-product of activity: people do things in the world, and the doing results in something that, if deemed useful, gets carried along into the next activity."[3] If knowledge is disjoined from action the way it is in the traditional schooling system, it is stripped of the embodied relevance that life bestows on it. In such circumstances, knowledge devolves into an abstraction which is barely related to people's needs. Dewey believed that life itself with its elementary manifestations and modes of meeting the main human needs should form the basis for the education of children.[4] For example, when working in the garden, children learned about geography, geology, and climate. In Dewey's view, the freedom of expression through action was the prerequisite for children's development, but "guidance of such expression is an equally necessary condition, especially of childhood's freedom."[5] Dewey's school was an educational experiment in which the traditional hierarchical institution was transformed into a cooperative of parents, teachers, and educators, whereby teaching was conceived of as "a creative social art,"[6] and the teachers were accorded the role of guides and caregivers.

1 Teaching by Cooking

Cooking enjoyed a prominent position in the curriculum of Dewey's school, one reason for this being that it effectively helped integrate diverse disciplines of knowledge. When preparing meals together, children could easily

2 Katherine Camp Mayhew and Anna Camp Edwards, *The Dewey School* (New York: Atherton Press, 1966), 5.

3 Louis Menand, *The Metaphysical Club: A Story of Ideas in America* (New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, 2001), 322.

4 Mayhew and Edwards, *Dewey School*, vii.

5 Mayhew and Edwards, *Dewey School*, viii.

6 Mayhew and Edwards, *Dewey School*, vi.

learn chemistry, history, botany, physics, and the arts. With the kitchen as a classroom, the students were directly taught research methods, since cooking abounded with opportunities for experimentation of various kinds. For example, "[t]he making of jelly from cranberries and apples gave occasion for emphasizing or introducing many physical processes, such as the effect of boiling water in disintegrating solid matter and in hastening the process of evaporation."[7] When cooking, youngsters not only chanced upon the notions of but also found out hands-on about proteins, starch, fats, carbohydrates, and gluten. Children were able to witness reactions involved in thermal processing, fermentation, and freezing, as well as those taking place inside bodies when ingesting and digesting food. In this way, they acquired chemical, physical, and biological knowledge. They developed a command of arithmetic by weighing and measuring products, and picked up geography by becoming acquainted with the habitats of plants and animals.

Children of all age groups worked in the kitchen, and as they grew up and developed new needs, the curriculum changed accordingly. The youngest groups contributed to luncheons every week (Fig. 2). This afforded them ample opportunities for working independently, displaying initiative, and cultivating self-reliance. At the same time, it "called for group work and encouraged a spirit of helpfulness and nice adjustment of personalities to the work of the group as a whole."[8] Older children were keen to continue cooking together. Tasks were distributed: while one team laid the table and another made cocoa, other children would write stories for reading out at the table. The children were also responsible for serving the food and tidying up after the meal. On one occasion, a group of ten-year-olds prepared luncheon for twenty-two people.[9] The students were carefully instructed and watched over by the teachers. Both girls and boys were equally involved in all the chores (Fig. 3).

The experience amassed over the early period was then enhanced and honed. Initially, the students were encouraged to focus on food products and to perform simple tasks, which – as fondly remembered by their teachers, Katherine Camp Mayhew and Anna Camp Edwards – proved immensely attractive to them: "It is difficult for one who has not shared such an experiment to appreciate how great is a child's interest in the simplest processes in the preparation of food and how keen is his observation of them."[10] Preschoolers were taught how to serve fruit and prepare cereals for breakfast. This

7 Mayhew and Edwards, *Dewey School*, 50.
8 Mayhew and Edwards, *Dewey School*, 301.
9 Mayhew and Edwards, *Dewey School*, 51.
10 Mayhew and Edwards, *Dewey School*, 299.

education was essentially designed to foster respect for food, planning skills, and habits of careful, mindful labor.[11] At the same time, eating together naturally occasioned opportunities for sharing and hospitality.

The school's curriculum was adjusted to the needs and capacities of respective developmental stages. For older children, emphasis was put on learning about processes and techniques, making conscious choices, and grasping the underlying mechanisms:

> Somewhere between the ages of eight and ten a change in the interest takes place, and the thing is done with more conscious reference to technique and to what may be termed the intellectual side. The child comes to see that if he understands the reasons for what he is doing, he can carry on a number of other operations of the same general class.[12]

As the authors of *The Dewey School* stress, children were invited and encouraged to freely express themselves in various media. Writing, speaking, drawing, making cut-outs, and other such methods were used to channel children's expression of their gustatory experiences and to prompt them to remember and report their impressions of, for example, grocery shopping.[13]

Cooking fostered the children's creativity, and provided good training in planning ahead and team work. This is splendidly exemplified in a picture in which the kids stand behind each other in a row and tie each other's aprons (Fig. 4). Responsibility for one's appointed task, the proper execution of which contributed to the success of the whole enterprise, turned into responsibility for the whole group. In this way, team activity led to the achievement of the immediate aim, that is, the meal.[14] To begin with, the children learned about and prepared grains and fruit, and with time they tried their hand at eggs, meat, and fish. When experimenting with heating up proteins, they watched substances transform in the process, which prepared them for making omelets and steaks (Fig. 5). Mayhew and Edwards argue that the children developed expertise in making certain dishes and were eager to put these skills on display at home as well. Consequently, cooking connected the public sphere (school) and the private sphere (home). It was a site where the two – usually separate – orders could merge into one, which was Dewey's fond preoccupation. If Dewey's famous

11 Mayhew and Edwards, *Dewey School*, 300.
12 Mayhew and Edwards, *Dewey School*, 299.
13 Mayhew and Edwards, *Dewey School*, 51.
14 See Mayhew and Edwards, *Dewey School*, 299.

FIGURE 2 The Dewey School, a cooking lesson

statement that democracy is "the idea of community life itself,"[15] is endorsed, the division into the private and public spheres proves only relative, and any artificially erected barriers between the two are revealed to thwart the progression of democratic processes. The same activities may be undertaken in either of the two spheres, and ascribing them to one solely is not a natural course of things, but the effect of the totality of circumstances in which they are embedded. Regarded by Dewey as a laboratory of democracy, school education should furnish students with opportunities for crossing the line between the private and the public. Notably, Dewey deemed cooking to be a prototypical activity in which the two realms could be naturally fused (Fig. 6).[16]

15 John Dewey, *The Public and Its Problems: An Essay in Political Inquiry* (Chicago: Gateway Books, 1946), 148.

16 Luis Menand lists Dewey's educational experiments among the practices that have permanently changed the U.S. See Menand, *Metaphysical Club*, 285–337.

FIGURE 3 The Dewey School, a cooking lesson

The theme of food and nutrition repeatedly surfaces across Dewey's varied body of writing and, though it usually remains in the background, it may usefully illuminate his key philosophical ideas. Below, I analyze the interrelation between aesthetic experience and culinary experience as gleaned from Dewey's texts.

2 The Rhythms of Life and Art

When pondering the genesis of philosophical thinking, Dewey insists that life is the fundamental source of inspiration: "Shall philosophy start with the common materials near at hand or with the more abstract, intellectual results of thinking? I think that philosophy should start with common experiences."[17]

17 John Dewey, *A Resume of Four Lectures on Common Sense, Science, and Philosophy*, qtd. in Lisa Heldke, "How Practical Was John Dewey?" in *Feminist Interpretations of John Dewey*,

FIGURE 4 The Dewey School, a cooking lesson

In Dewey's view, art likewise arises from life. Even the most refined forms of art originate in interactions between a living organism and its environment. Emerging from the processes of perfecting and sublimating simple experiences, art is their most consummate form. Pragmatism holds that, as all other living entities, the human being must function in and adapt to the constantly changing environment. Given this, the animal and human worlds form a continuum wherein humans are endowed with cognitive mechanisms unavailable to animals, such as consciousness.[18] In his commentary on Dewey's claims, Richard Shusterman highlights the fact that somatic naturalism is one of the cornerstones of Dewey's aesthetic theory: "art's sole role is not to deny

ed. Charlene Haddock Seigfried (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2002), 239.

18 In this respect, Dewey follows William James, who presented a functionalist concept of consciousness in his famous paper "Does Consciousness Exist?" (*Journal of Philosophy, Psychology and Scientific Methods* 1, no. 18: [1904]).

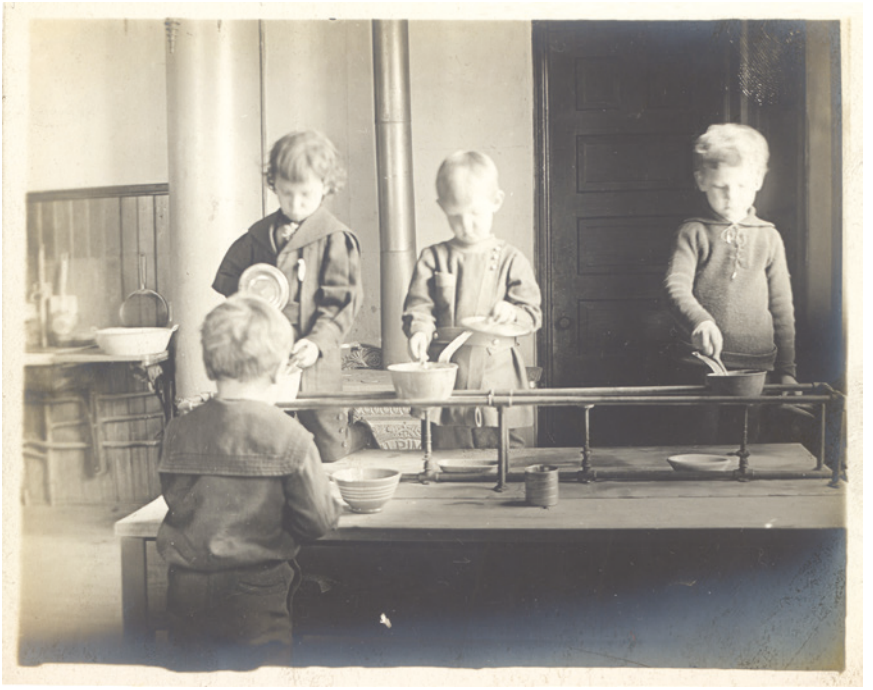

FIGURE 5 The Dewey School, a cooking lesson

the natural and organic roots and wants of man so as to achieve some pure ethereal experience, but instead to give a satisfyingly integrated expression to both our bodily and intellectual dimensions, which Dewey thinks we have been painfully wrong to separate."[19] Indeed, Dewey defined the goal of art as serving "the whole creature in his unified vitality."[20] Somatic naturalism is founded on the belief that there is no qualitative difference between common vital activities, which humans share with all other living beings,[21] and art as a more intense and refined form of these activities.[22]

According to Dewey, since aesthetic experience involves the entirety of individuals – their cognitive faculties, feelings, value systems, imagination, sign

19 Richard Shusterman, *Pragmatist Aesthetics: Living Beauty, Rethinking Art*, 2nd ed. (Laham, Boulder, New York, and Oxford: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2000), 7.
20 John Dewey, *Art as Experience* (London: Perigee, 2005), 122.
21 See Dewey, *Art as Experience*, 11.
22 See Shusterman, *Pragmatist Aesthetics*, 10.

FIGURE 6 The Dewey School, a cooking lesson

codes, and physiological mechanisms[23] – such experience goes beyond what is traditionally referred to as "aesthetic."[24] In an equally unorthodox fashion, Dewey appoints non-aesthetic responsibilities to art. As a result, naturalism is intertwined with instrumentalism, which is fueled by the conviction that art is highly relevant to our lives. The appreciation of the immanent value of art, which is "a satisfying end in itself,"[25] does not contradict the utility of art in accomplishing other ends.

At the very beginning of *Art as Experience*, Dewey proclaims that "the actual work of art is what the [art] product does with and in experience."[26] In this way, the emphasis is transferred from an external physical object (a painting,

23 Dewey, *Art as Experience*, 285–86.
24 Shusterman, *Pragmatist Aesthetics*, 45–47; and Richard Shusterman, *Practicing Philosophy: Pragmatism and Philosophical Life* (New York and London: Routledge, 1997), 116–17.
25 Shusterman, *Pragmatist Aesthetics*, 9.
26 Dewey, *Art as Experience*, 1.

a book, a sculpture, etc.) onto the process of the development of experience. Aesthetic experience is at the same time a process in which art takes its final, proper shape. Crucially, Dewey does not equate art with a material exhibit, but defines it as an outcome of an interaction between an "expressive object" and the audience. As such, art is not an isolated, transcendental realm, and it does not unfold in disjunction from life. Moreover, it does not take precedence over everyday life; or, at least, this is not what should happen. No wonder that, in Dewey's view, the promotion of what he dubbed "museum art" and deemed a manifestation of the fetishization of art posed a considerable threat to both life and art.[27]

In the age of the Enlightenment, Baumgarten and Kant propelled the rise of aesthetic discourse in its own right. In *Songs of Experience*, Martin Jay observes that this was the moment when "broadly speaking [...] the objects that had once functioned as ornaments of social and political power or were revered as sacred implements of religious worship were redescribed and newly legitimated in terms of artistic merit alone."[28] However, this "lay" orientation of art proved illusory, of which Jay reminds us by citing Hegel's lectures on aesthetics: "the corpses of dead cults could now be revivified in the guise of aesthetic objects."[29] With time, public exhibitions and museums became new temples.

In contemporary culture, as soon as an artistic product comes to be recognized as a classic specimen of art, it undergoes progressive alienation and dissociation from the setting in which it appeared. This is a detrimental process because it disrupts communication between the work and the audience: "When artistic objects are separated from both conditions of origin and operation in experience, a wall is built around them that renders almost opaque their general significance."[30] As art is elevated above other spheres of human activity, a live and expressive object morphs into a fetish, more suitably consigned to a glass-case in a museum than included in authentic social life. As a result of this "splendid isolation," art is either intimidating or "anemic" to an average viewer, and is consequently evacuated from the goings-on of an organized community and emptied of its function of expressing the feelings and values of this community. Dewey's theory was designed to re-incorporate art into the rhythm of life – to "restore continuity between the refined and intensified forms

27 See Dewey, *Art as Experience*, 4–8.

28 Martin Jay, *Songs of Experience: Modern American and European Variations on a Universal Theme* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2005), 133.

29 Jay, *Songs of Experience*, 133.

30 Dewey, *Art as Experience*, 2.

of experience that are works of art and the everyday events, doings, and sufferings that are universally recognized to constitute experience."[31]

3 The Experience of Art

The idea behind *Art as Experience* was to illuminate "the emergence of works of art out of ordinary experiences";[32] in other words, Dewey sought to develop a theory which could explain "the way in which these works idealize qualities found in common experience."[33] A propitious climate for experience arose in the Enlightenment since, as Jay observes, "[n]o longer able to understand beauty as a function of the intelligibility of an order created by a beneficent – and very artistically talented – divinity, modern aesthetics had to rely instead on the subjective or intersubjective judgment of its human beneficiaries, whose sensual responses were intrinsic to the process."[34] Jay asserts that the audience invited interest from 18th-century aesthetics, and the place previously occupied by objective values was taken over by subjective sensations. The very term *aesthetica*, which was introduced by Baumgarten, connoted sensual pleasure and corporeal sentience. When the notion of the divine source of art "lost its plausibility, as it did with the disenchantment of the world abetted by philosophical nominalism and the scientific revolution, the door was open for the relocation of aesthetic value in the bodily responses – and judgments of taste – of those who experienced the work of art."[35]

Dewey did not find these processes sufficient. Jay dwells upon Dewey's disappointment with the severance of "the aesthetic" from "the artistic," which he believed posed a risk of depriving experience of its creative dimension. Dewey called for something more than a framework in which experience did receive some appreciation, but the subject was posited as passive, uncreative, and merely perceiving and evaluating.[36] His own concept of experience eschews the vision of contemplative experience, where there is a chasm between the onlooker and the object. In his model, the artwork-audience relationship is a bilateral one. It is intrinsically an interaction between two parties on an equal footing: while a work of art affects its audience, it is itself subject to influence

31 Dewey, *Art as Experience*, 2.
32 Dewey, *Art as Experience*, 10.
33 Dewey, *Art as Experience*, 10.
34 Jay, *Songs of Experience*, 136.
35 Jay, *Songs of Experience*, 132.
36 See Jay, *Songs of Experience*, 140.

and is shaped in the process of reception. This precludes both detached contemplation and disinterestedness, qualities which Kant so emphatically foregrounded.[37]

Experience does not simply arise in contact with art; rather, it co-creates art. Furthermore, what Dewey refers to as a work of art is an outcome of this interplay, rather than the starting point for the process, that is, the physical presence of an "expressive object."[38] In order to vividly convey his view, Dewey evokes culinary experiences: "As with cooking, overt, skillful action is on the side of the cook who prepares, while taste is on the side of the consumer. […] The cook prepares food for the consumer and the measure of the value of what is prepared is found in consumption."[39] Art understood as experience comes into being through interactions and is an effect of the interdependence of action and sensation. In proper experience, these two components are balanced; if one of them comes to prevail, distorted experiences "with scant or false meaning" are generated.[40]

Our lives unfold in ongoing metamorphoses of our relations with the environment. These transactions are dynamic, and both parties – the human and the environment – contribute to them as active agents: "All interactions that effect stability and order in the whirling flux of change are rhythms. There is ebb and flow, systole and diastole: ordered change."[41] Order and stabilization are, however, only momentary. As life brings forth new challenges and new problems to solve, there can be no enduring stability in experience. Dewey depicts our lives as repeated cycles in which we lose and recover unity with the environment: "There are rhythmic beats of want and fulfillment, pulses of doing and being withheld from doing."[42] The profuse tensions sparked in these processes can be alleviated by development-fostering activity rather than by passive acceptance. However, the reinstatement of unity never entails restoring the situation from before the loss: "[I]n a growing life, the recovery is never mere return to a prior state, for it is enriched by the state of disparity and resistance through which it has successfully passed."[43] The rhythms of life usher us into successive phases of existence, with reversion being prevented,

37 A concept of art and aesthetic experience based on engagement and participation, and as such oppositional to Kant's doctrine, has been put forward by Arnold Berleant in *Re-Thinking Aesthetics: Rogue Essays on Aesthetics and the Arts* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 2005).

38 Dewey, *Art as Experience*, 91.

39 Dewey, *Art as Experience*, 49.

40 Dewey, *Art as Experience*, 46.

41 Dewey, *Art as Experience*, 15.

42 Dewey, *Art as Experience*, 15.

43 Dewey, *Art as Experience*, 13.

because "[c]hanges interlock and sustain one another."[44] Nature finds itself in constant motion, permanently confronting a threat of potentially lethal chaos, since "living creatures can go on living only by taking advantage of whatever order exists about them, incorporating it into themselves."[45]

In his examination of humans grappling with the environment, Dewey pays particular attention to the attitudes of artists. Although artists seek to harmonize experience, they cannot avoid tensions, which are a necessary stage in striving to restore union with the environment.[46] Artists, Dewey asserts, are inclined to "cultivate them, not for their own sake, but because of their potentialities, bringing to living consciousness an experience that is unified and total."[47] Frictions and struggles are a springboard to further goals. As artists are exceptionally responsive to the qualities of things, they are better equipped to discern the potential of art in the rhythms of life. Given this, the supreme responsibility of artists is to shape and channel experience so that it rises to the highest possible level.

4 Educating Taste

> The kitchen is not just the place where survival and pleasure are planned. It is also an ideal place for training the mind.
>
> MASSIMO MONTANARI[48]

The painter, the architect, and the cook all undertake action with the perceiving recipient in mind, and aesthetic experience is "inherently connected with the experience of making."[49] An inherently creative activity, perception is understood by Dewey as "a process consisting of a series of responsive acts that accumulate toward objective fulfillment,"[50] which bridges the gap between appreciation and making: "The artist selected, simplified, clarified, abridged and condensed according to his interest. The beholder must go through these operations according to his point of view and interest."[51] A work of art comes

44 Dewey, *Art as Experience*, 13.
45 Dewey, *Art as Experience*, 13.
46 Dewey, *Art as Experience*, 14.
47 Dewey, *Art as Experience*, 14.
48 Massimo Montanari, *Let the Meatballs Rest, and Other Stories about Food and Culture*, trans. Beth Archer Brombert (New York: Columbia University Press), 2012.
49 Dewey, *Art as Experience*, 50.
50 Dewey, *Art as Experience*, 54.
51 Dewey, *Art as Experience*, 56.

into being according to a certain intent. As the artist performs subsequent actions, s/he is constantly focused on his/her plan of accomplishing a particular end, which mirrors the pattern of a complete experience.[52] Given this, sensory satisfaction may only be complete if it follows the artist's intent to a degree, for "it does not stand by itself but is linked to the activity of which it is the consequence."[53] The same is true for the relationship between the cook and the eater. That much is absolutely clear to Dewey:

> Even the pleasures of the palate are different in quality to an epicure than in one who merely "likes" his food as he eats it. The difference is not of mere intensity. The epicure is conscious of much more than the taste of the food. Rather, there enter into the taste, as directly experienced, qualities that depend upon reference to its source and its manner of production in connection with criteria of excellence.[54]

With this, Dewey asserts that, first, to be complete, experience requires following the maker's intent and, second, the capacity and pleasure of joining the maker's world are premised on prior effort and learning, both of which are requisite in complementing a purely sensory sensation and exploring, in this case, gustatory excellence.

Few people realize that aesthetic perception is predicated on practice, and probably even fewer would not be surprised by the demand that taste be educated. It is common opinion that we simply like what we like, end of story. Nevertheless, Dewey asserts that looking at a work of art is not really enough to see it, and, likewise, eating a meal is not really enough to appreciate gustatory perfection: "seeing, hearing, tasting, become esthetic when relation to a distinct manner of activity qualifies what is perceived."[55] Contemporary chefs often experiment with classic cuisine to offer new and innovative versions of its signature dishes. The mastery of interpretation cannot be properly recognized and valued without a sound knowledge of tradition. The deciphering of the riddle certainly contributes to the final experience. To illustrate this, let us steal a glimpse into Spain's famed El Bulli, where gazpacho was served in a special manner in 1989. Emblematic of Catalan cuisine, the dish was remodeled by Ferran Adrià to initially look like a lobster salad, into which liquid was only later poured by waiters. The chef's reworking of the dish could only be

52 Dewey, *Art as Experience*, 54.
53 Dewey, *Art as Experience*, 50.
54 Dewey, *Art as Experience*, 50.
55 Dewey, *Art as Experience*, 50.

fathomed by those who knew that gazpacho is a cold tomato soup and not a salad.

Dewey's notions reverberate in what the Italian journalist Carlo Petrini, the initiator of the slow food movement, says about gustatory experiences:

> Taste is much more than it may seem to be. It is pleasure; it is knowledge. Or rather, it is balance, harmony between the two. Each and every one of us develops a capacity to experience pleasure, but also develops intellectually, goes through some kind of training. Things taste differently when we are children and when we are adults. Taste is an exercise of the mind.[56]

Taste can be acquired by practice in which one learns to identify components of flavors and to name one's sensations. Sometimes quite surprising, the outcomes of sensory skill training may include an entirely new perception not only of what one eats or drinks but also of one's surroundings as a whole. Charles MacLean, perhaps the most prominent whisky expert today, recalls his own education: "In the early 1990s, I did training in this field, and I must say, though it may sound pompous, that these few days changed my life. I felt as if I'd grown a third nostril."[57] Of course, we are not all equally endowed by nature. Despite his fervent praise of taste training, MacLean points out that "we are all able to taste, we all have the sense of smell, and most of us are capable of combining the two, but true taste awareness is a rarity."[58]

Brilliant culinary talents are equally rare. Cooking is common enough, but to perfectly harmonize flavors is an exceptional competency, even a gift. For Danièle Mazet-Delpeuch, a gift as an inborn predisposition is not synonymous with talent, which requires patient honing. In cooking, she says, "two things are important: gift and talent. Gift lies beyond our control, just like the color of our eyes or hair. Talent is different; it needs developing. You must keep training; talent simply requires sustained practice. Slowly, step by step, you can attain excellence."[59] What resurfaces here is the time it takes for experience to grow into fullness. Mazet-Delpeuch herself learned to cook by watching women from her family, and then relied on imitation as an instruction method in the cooking courses she ran. All mechanisms at work in the entire universe can be taught by teaching cooking, as Dewey's School vividly demonstrates.

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56 Łukasz Modelski, *Piąty smak. Rozmowy przy jedzeniu* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 2014), 42.

57 Modelski, *Piąty smak*, 213.

58 Modelski, *Piąty smak*, 213.

59 Modelski, *Piąty smak*, 251.

5 *An* Experience

In art, life becomes unexpectedly vivid and colorful, while to transform the ordinary into the extraordinary in life proves a serious challenge. "Pleasures may come about through chance contact and stimulation; such pleasures are not to be despised in a world full of pain,"[60] observes Dewey only to quickly clarify: "But happiness and delight are a different sort of thing. They come to be through a fulfillment that reaches to the depths of our being – one that is an adjustment of our whole being with the conditions of existence."[61] While this adjustment does not represent subordination, it is an effect of a momentary order, of the mutual attunement of the human and the environment in the process of "active and alert commerce with the world."[62]

Experience is a continuous process, but, Dewey explains, its composition and intensity vary: "Because experience is the fulfillment of an organism in its struggles and achievements in the world of things, it is art in germ. Even in its rudimentary forms, it contains the promise of that delightful perception which is esthetic experience."[63] The instant when a new order is forged, when the culmination and amalgamation of all elements of experience is effected, is the most intense moment of existence. It is in such moments that the aesthetic may emerge: "the esthetic is no intruder in experience from without, whether by way of idle luxury or transcendent ideality, but that it is the clarified and intensified development of traits that belong to every normally complete experience."[64]

In Dewey's framework, aesthetic experience is a model for all other experiences. It is pure experience, "freed from the forces that impede and confuse its development as experience."[65] What brings everyday experience closer to aesthetic experience is the aesthetic – aesthetic properties which perform the unifying function of "closure." Experience which attains the highest status in life, which has an aesthetic closure, and which effects harmonious integration is called *an experience*[66] or "integral experience." This species of experience

60 Dewey, *Art as Experience*, 16.
61 Dewey, *Art as Experience*, 16.
62 Dewey, *Art as Experience*, 18.
63 Dewey, *Art as Experience*, 18–19.
64 Dewey, *Art as Experience*, 48.
65 Dewey, *Art as Experience*, 286.
66 See e.g., Dewey, *Art as Experience*, 37–38. Cf. Krystyna Wilkoszewska, *Sztuka jako rytm życia. Rekonstrukcja filozofii sztuki Johna Deweya* (Kraków: Universitas, 1992), especially Chapter 3; and Jack Kaminsky, "Dewey's Concept of an Experience," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 17, no. 3 (March 1957): 316–30.

coalesces multiple dimensions of experience – its sensory, intellectual, volitional, and emotional elements. It comes to pass when "the closure of a circuit of energy" happens.[67] Dewey makes sure to specify that this occurrence does not imply pause, stagnation, or latency, because "this closure of a circuit of energy is the opposite of arrest, of stasis."[68] When experience burgeons into maturity, when it is harmoniously rounded off, it opens the door to the subsequent waves of experience, which come forth in an uninterrupted process just like life itself: "Because of continuous merging, there are no holes, mechanical junctions, and dead centers when we have an experience. There are pauses, places of rest, but they punctuate and define the quality of movement."[69] The movement that leads toward consummation is organized and orderly; it imbues experience with inner cohesion. Elsewhere, Dewey adds that despite the merging of the subsequent stages of experience, which proceed one from another, these parts never lose their distinctiveness: "As one part leads into another and as one part carries on what went before, each gains distinctness in itself."[70]

In Dewey's view, this principle holds in all spheres of life. For example, the difference between a correct mathematical formula and a brilliant one lies in that the latter has an aesthetic component, such as the elegance of equations and/or the neatness and beauty of reasoning. As can be seen, aesthetic experience, which continues, improves, and intensifies "common" experiences, is by no means exclusively bound to the so-called fine arts, since it can emerge in any human pursuit, from mathematics, to angling, sports, politics, and sex,[71] to cooking and sharing a meal. When discussing this issue, Hans Joas observes: "the contrast is not between art and everyday life but between rounded versus fragmented experience. Every kind of practical action can have the aesthetic quality of being 'rounded out.' 'Roundness' is not meant to be a formal quality, but rather implies that each partial action is comprehensively laden with meaning for the actor."[72] Joas claims that the core idea in Dewey's concept of action is that all action has a creative component to it. Given this, action does not involve adjusting means to goals; rather, means and ends

67 Dewey, *Art as Experience*, 42.
68 Dewey, *Art as Experience*, 42.
69 Dewey, *Art as Experience*, 38.
70 Dewey, *Art as Experience*, 38.
71 See Dewey, *Art as Experience*, 37. For the last example, see, e.g., Richard Shusterman, "Aesthetic Experience: From Analysis to Eros," *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 64, no. 2 (Spring 2006): 217–29.
72 Hans Joas, *The Creativity of Action*, trans. Jeremy Gaines and Paul Keast (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 140.

mutually imply each other in action. Joas's interpretation brings into relief the pivotal role of embodiment in creative pursuits: "No creative action would be possible without the bedrock of pre-reflective aspirations towards which the reflection on the concretization of values is oriented. Thus corporeality shows itself to be the constitutive precondition for creativity not only in perception but also in action itself."[73] This concept accords centrality to the aesthetic component as the avenue through which the subject can grasp the creative essence of his/her own action.

Dewey stresses that *an* experience is only possible if sensory impressions, cognition, will, and feelings are completely blended. This extraordinary state is accomplished with the greatest difficulty. It requires mobilizing special attention and solicitude for all components of experience, feelings, actions and meanings. It is unique in its intensity and tends to be well remembered. Yet most of our experiences remain "incomplete," as we undertake various actions only to abandon them unfinished as a result of distractions, forgetfulness or indolence: "what we observe and what we think, what we desire and what we get, are at odds with each other."[74] The chaos of life swarms with interrupted histories, gaps, and errors. Because sundry flawed experiences outnumber the successful ones, we become accustomed to defective standards of experience and accept them as the norm. At the same time, "[t]here is no interest that controls attentive rejection or selection of what shall be organized into the developing experience. Things happen, but they are neither definitely included nor decisively excluded; we drift."[75] Consequently, the popular notion that there is a rift between faulty quotidian experiences and perfect art only becomes entrenched and reinforced, as a result of which experience remains paltry and shallow.

6 A Culinary Experience

Experience attains closure when its material is perfectly integrated and, in becoming *an* experience, it provides exceptional gratification, which leads one to grasp the essence of certain phenomena or relationships. Therefore, *an* experience may radically redirect one's life trajectory. While the integration of experiential material may be effected by dedicated, sustained work on experience or by attentive striving for consummation, it may also paradoxically unfold

73 Joas, *Creativity of Action*, 163.
74 Dewey, *Art as Experience*, 36.
75 Dewey, *Art as Experience*, 42.

all of a sudden, and burst in on one, as it were.[76] Among the examples Dewey marshals to illustrate such an experience is an extraordinary meal: "There is that meal in a Paris restaurant of which one says 'that was an experience.' It stands out as enduring memorial of what food may be."[77] Having gone through this kind of experience, one will never perceive things in the same way, because a new perspective on this particular portion of reality has been opened up. Dewey's depiction of *an* experience in many ways corresponds to William James's reflections on religious conversion, which James conceptualizes as a shift in which notions once marginal in a person's consciousness become axial to it.[78] If the idea that conversion entails a total mental change does not cause much doubt, to picture eating-related experiences as equally comprehensive and transformative may raise some eyebrows. However, there are testimonies asserting that a splendid meal may indeed be life-transforming. Julia Child, a famous American chef who worked to instill the love of French cuisine in her compatriots, had the good luck to enjoy this extraordinary quality during her first meal after arriving in France in 1948. At a restaurant in La Couronne, she had *sole meunière*, a dish which she referred to as an epiphany. Besides giving her exquisite gustatory satisfaction, the perfectly cooked fish, pan-fried in butter, also sparked her interest in and, later, fascination with French cuisine. It was only the beginning of a domino effect. Having had no passion for cooking before, Child enrolled at the famous gastronomy school Le Cordon Bleu, and then began to give lessons to Paris-based American women. She co-authored the bestselling *Mastering the Art of French Cooking*, wrote culinary columns, and penned subsequent books. She also exhibited great foresight in being one of the first people to use television to teach cooking. That *sole meunière* eaten in La Couronne transfigured Child into a reformer of American culinary tradition and an icon of popular culture.

76 Sometimes things designed to be exceptional may be eclipsed by experiences which do not seem spectacular at first glance. Such an unexpected shift of importance is recounted by Elizabeth Gilbert, the author of bestselling *Eat, Pray, Love*. To kill time while waiting for a table at a famous Parisian restaurant mentioned in Marcel Proust's *In the Shadow of Young Girls in Flower*, Gilbert and her husband popped into a bar: "I must confess that I liked that hour in this bar next door to a tobacconist's far better than the dinner at La Tour d'Argent later. It was such a normal life, locals dropping by, sitting down with a paper and a cup of coffee, smoking cigarettes. I watched them. […] It was perfect." Modelski, *Piąty smak*, 134.

77 Dewey, *Art as Experience*, 37.

78 William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature* (New York and London: Routledge, 2008), Chapter 9.

Eating is an indispensable daily routine, but it may be performed in a variety of forms and ways. Sometimes eating is approached as an utterly banal activity with next to no meaning attributed to it. If we treat eating merely as a stage in the metabolic chain of reactions going on in our bodies, we certainly deny cooking a chance to rise to the elevated heights of culinary art. Such an achievement requires effort and thoughtfulness in selecting the ingredients, cooking the dish, and then serving it stylishly. For a meal to become an extraordinary, intensified experience, knowledge about products and processing techniques must be skillfully combined with dedicated work and emotions invested in cooking. The difference that this thoughtful commitment makes is movingly captured in the Oscar-winning *Babette's Feast.* Eating that transcends the level of biological needs is addressed by Child in her reminiscences from France:

> In Paris in the 1950s, I had the supreme good fortune to study with a remarkably able group of chefs. From them I learned why good French food is an art, and why it makes such sublime eating: nothing is too much trouble if it turns out the way it should. Good results require that one take *time* and *care*. If one doesn't use the freshest ingredients or read the whole recipe before starting, and if one rushes through the cooking, the result will be an inferior taste and texture – a gummy beef Wellington, say. But a careful approach will result in a magnificent burst of flavor, a thoroughly satisfying meal, perhaps even a life-changing experience.[79]

What else is this passage but a perfect exemplification of the Deweyan notion of *an* experience?

7 Characteristics of Experience

Listed by Child as a *sine qua non* of good cooking, time and care are also advocated by Dewey as essential to *an* experience: "Zeal for doing, lust for action, leaves many a person, especially in this hurried and impatient human environment in which we live, with experience of an almost incredible paucity, all on the surface."[80] Our problem lies in that, living in a hurry, we are susceptible to distractions, which precludes any closure of experience. Before it fully

79 Julia Child with Alex Prud'homme, *My Life in France* (New York: Anchor Books, 2007), 332–33 (italics original).

80 Dewey, *Art as Experience*, 46.

crystallizes, we abandon it for something new. Dewey warns against the temptation to accumulate as many impressions as possible, since they are often hardly "more than a flitting and a sipping,"[81] passing and vanishing before any sense is made of them. In *an* experience, impressions must be linked to facts; and this calls for engagement, which helps one make conscious, informed choices. Otherwise, "[t]here are beginnings and cessations, but no genuine initiations and concludings. One thing replaces another, but does not absorb it and carry it on. There is experience, but so slack and discursive that it is not *an* experience."[82] Such failings result from an imbalance between action and perception, the interaction of which fosters experience.

Besides haste and an urge to do as much as possible in as short a time as possible, mechanical action is another threat to experience pointed out by Dewey. Automatism forestalls emotion and eliminates any personal investment in the tasks, activities, and objects associated with them. When "[o]bstacles are overcome by shrewd skill, but they do not feed experience,"[83] conscious and meaningful engagement is lacking, which is also the case with actions embarked upon without belief or certainty. This is counterbalanced by activities that proceed toward an end in a sequence of steps, whereby they nurture a sense of increasing relevance, which culminates in the moment of fulfillment. In his study on emotion in *Art as Experience*, Peter G. Whitehouse observes that the artist is guided and advised first and foremost by emotion, rather than by reason or a practical aim.[84] Arguably, although this attitude is characteristic of artistic activity, it is not irrelevant to other kinds of practice. Dewey claims that: "Craftsmanship to be artistic in the final sense must be 'loving'; it must care deeply for the subject matter upon which skill is exercised."[85] There is nothing to disagree with in this observation. It is precisely because the "loving" factor is missing from industrially produced foodstuffs that they are no match for hand-made meals; nor do they ever enter the orbit of discussions on culinary art. Art arises from the touch of the hand which cooperates with the eye, "instruments through which the entire live creature, moved and active throughout, operates."[86]

81 Dewey, *Art as Experience*, 46.
82 Dewey, *Art as Experience*, 42.
83 Dewey, *Art as Experience*, 40.
84 Peter G. Whitehouse, "The Meaning of 'Emotion' in Dewey's *Art as Experience*," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 2, no. 37 (1978): 154.
85 Dewey, *Art as Experience*, 49.
86 Dewey, *Art as Experience*, 51.

The contrast between the ideas of *fast food* and *slow food* naturally comes to mind in this context – the chasm yawning between standardized burgers off the production line, which all look and taste the same whatever the season and the geographical coordinates in which they are served, and cuisine that reflects the local character of the place where it was cooked and the personality of the person who devoted his/her time and talent to crafting the meal. Petrini began campaigning in defense of regional food traditions in 1986, when the first MacDonald's outlet opened in Rome. Initially, his outrage was purely aesthetic. He loathed the sight of the yellow M sign at the bottom of the Spanish Steps. This was followed by reflection on the quality of food and the ideology of uniformization embraced and disseminated by the fast food chain. The protests expanded into the international slow food movement, which now has more than one hundred thousand members in 170 countries. The movement sprouted from the Arcigola association, whose major slogan protected "the right to enjoyably experience a meal."[87] The small organization soon grew into the influential Movement in Defence of the Right to Pleasure. Petrini still continues to labor for the re-establishment of the severed relations between producers and consumers, and for the restoration of respect for food and *terroir* (land, region).[88] These are the cornerstones of regional cuisine, which finds itself jeopardized by the global economy and capital, while "all cultures have crucially their own respective gastronomies, often ancient and venerable. The cuisine of a given country or region is connected to its history, people, and memory, and adds to the landscape of the country."[89] In demanding "the right to enjoyably experience a meal," Petrini simply called for slowing down the pace of life in order to make enjoyment – a more complete experience – possible. Traditional food preparation techniques, such as fermentation, maturing, drying, and smoking, take time. Abiding by the local traditions and following the natural crop calendar also take time and patient waiting for asparagus in May, strawberries in June, and apples in September, when their taste is at its ripest. The culture of haste leaves no time for companionable meetings around the table. Psychological research has found that the ability to focus on tiny experiences is one of key factors promoting self-perceived happiness.[90]

87 Modelski, *Piąty smak*, 36.

88 Carlo Petrini, *Slow Food: The Case for Taste*, trans. William McCuaig (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004).

89 Modelski, *Piąty smak*, 37.

90 See, e.g., Jonathan Haidt, *The Happiness Hypothesis: Finding Modern Truth in Ancient Wisdom* (New York: Basic Books, 2006).

8 Food as Art

Developed in the 1930s, Dewey's aesthetic theory boasts an openness which makes it a useful interpretive tool even today, despite the mutability of artistic tendencies. In her paper "John Dewey and 20th-Century Art," Krystyna Wilkoszewska examines the utility of Dewey's thought in contemporary reflection on art, which "constantly and persistently confronts us with new forms, which challenge our habits."[91] Wilkoszewska's argument begins from impressionism, which paved the way for avant-garde, the only art movement to which Dewey directly refers in *Art as Experience*, where it serves him as a starting point for a critique of mimetically underpinned and expressively oriented arts.[92] Other developments in art discussed by Wilkoszewska are not mentioned in Dewey's writings. Some of them appeared after his death. Wilkoszewska identifies key elements in Dewey's aesthetics which link it to the ideas of neo-avantgarde movements, such as ready-made, minimal art, happening, and performance.[93] The factors which she lists as determining the correspondence between these art tendencies and the theory which equates art with experience include the rejection of the notion that art means an artistic object, the stress on the processual aspect of art with both parties involved – the artist and the audience – playing equal roles in it, the dismissal of the artist-as-a-genius concept, the view of art as a form of life, and the criticism of isolating art from everyday life in soulless museums, leading to the fetishization of art.[94] Dewey insists that art, including its most abstract varieties, is basically founded on the mutual relations of a living body and its environment. This naturalistic mindset aligns Dewey with environmental art and eco art. His theory is capacious enough to encompass popular art. Less evidently perhaps, it may also help understand new media art, which is essentially premised on participation and interaction, qualities which Dewey recognizes as important as well. Wilkoszewska convincingly argues that Dewey's aesthetics effectively helps understand the species of art which puzzle other aesthetic frameworks, including formalism.[95]

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91 Krystyna Wilkoszewska, "John Dewey and 20th-Century Art," in *Practicing Pragmatist Aesthetics: Critical Perspectives on the Arts*, ed. Wojciech Małecki (Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2015), 84.

92 Wilkoszewska, "John Dewey," 83.

93 Wilkoszewska, "John Dewey," 86.

94 Wilkoszewska, "John Dewey," 87. See also, Krystyna Wilkoszewska, *Sztuka jako rytm życia*, 35–50, 151–76.

95 Wilkoszewska, "John Dewey," 87.

As already shown, Dewey's aesthetic theory is helpful in the aesthetic assessment of culinary practices. Wilkoszewska's insights may encourage scrutinizing it for its potential to classify cooking as one of the arts. As a reminder, Dewey's framework was fueled by his urge to restore continuity between aesthetic experience and everyday life, which is articulated in his study:

> The sources of art in human experience will be learned by him who sees how the tense grace of the ball-player infects the onlooking crowd; who notes the delight of the housewife in tending her plants, and the intent interest of her goodman in tending the patch of green in front of the house; the zest of the spectator in poking the wood burning on the hearth and in watching the darting flames and crumbling coals.[96]

The naturalist and non-dualist concept of art which identifies "the very process of life" as the blueprint of art kindles some hope for incorporating cooking and dining into the domain of art. It is no wonder that multiple authors have evoked Dewey's authority to posit that the preparation and sharing of food have an aesthetic quality to them. The host of such authors includes Glenn Kuehn, Russell Pryba, Nicola Perullo, Barbara Formis, Lisa Heldke, Raymond Boisvert, and Richard Shusterman.[97]

Food communicates values, comprises intellectual, emotional, and sensory elements, and may have an aesthetic aspect. Does it make food an art? Dewey's

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96 Dewey, *Art as Experience*, 3.

97 Glenn Kuehn, "How Can Food Be Art?," in *The Aesthetics of Everyday Life*, ed. Andrew Light and Jonathan M. Smith (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 194–212; Glenn Kuehn, "Tasting the World: Environmental Aesthetics and Food as Art," *Contemporary Pragmatism* 1, no. 9 (2012): 85–98; Glenn Kuehn, "Food Fetishes and Sin-Aesthetics: Professor Dewey, Please Save Me from Myself," in *Food and Philosophy: Eat, Think, and Be Merry*, ed. Fritz Allhoff and Dave Monroe (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2007), 162–75; Russell Pryba, "Dewey, Somaesthetics, and the Cultivation of (Gustatory) Taste," *Pragmatism Today* 2, no. 3 (2012): 40–50; Nicola Perullo, *Taste as Experience: The Philosophy and Aesthetics of Food* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2016); Nicola Perullo, *La cucina e arte? Filosofia della passione culinaria* (Rome: Carocci editore, 2013); Barbara Formis, "Eating as an Aesthetic Experience," in *Practicing Pragmatist Aesthetics*, ed. Wojciech Małecki (Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2014), 169–85; Raymond D. Boisvert and Lisa Heldke, "Food as/and Art," in *Philosophers at Table: On Food and Being Human*, ed. Raymond D. Boisvert and Lisa Heldke (London: Reaktion Books, 2016), 66–99. Richard Shusterman can also be counted among this group. Although in his paper on the aesthetics of eating he does not directly refer to Dewey, his project of somaesthetics is heavily indebted to Dewey's aesthetic theory. See Richard Shusterman, "Somaesthetics and the Fine Art of Eating," in *Body Aesthetics*, ed. Sherri Irvin (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 261–80.

writings do not offer an unambiguous answer. Wilkoszewska rightly observes that when Dewey talks of art, he means one of two things. He either broadly identifies art with every instance of what he refers to as *an experience* or more restrictively links art to strictly aesthetic experiences.[98]

Art as Experience highlights an affinity between culinary experience (any experience in fact) and art. As already stated in this chapter, Dewey often relies on culinary examples to depict aesthetic experience, but this does not necessarily mean that he equates culinary art with art as such. In making everyday food choices, we undoubtedly take into account what foods look like, as well as a range of other aspects which tie in with the experience of art, but they are rarely the exclusive criteria behind our choices and sometimes matter very little indeed. For example, when a dieting person plans his/her meals, does shopping, or selects dishes from a restaurant menu, s/he is not guided by aesthetic factors, but by the far more relevant nutritional values, calorie intake, or the digestibility of the meal. As opposed to this, art is a realm where solely aesthetic values are realized. Aesthetic experience is experience pure and undivided;[99] "it is experience freed from [...] factors that subordinate an experience as it is directly had to something beyond itself."[100] This freedom from external obligations amplifies the properties which channel aesthetic qualities into an experience.[101] In its narrower meaning, art is "first and foremost primary and autotelic experience (fulfillment means consummation, and means prove to be an end)."[102]

Dewey's aesthetics can accommodate philosophical interpretations of gastronomic taste and the activity of cooking. Culinary experiences may rise to the status of art in instances of *an* experience, which indispensably bear aesthetic qualities, but their appearance dos not make even the most splendid meal into a work of art. Nonetheless, such conclusions should not discourage anyone from pursuing perfection, which is synonymous with art, in the culinary domain as well. Our everyday language practice proves that a delicious meal certainly deserves notice and special appreciation. We refer to situations in which food affords extraordinary satisfaction as culinary art, and we call the most gifted chefs artists. If gourmets agree that such phrasing is absolutely

98 Wilkoszewska, *Sztuka jako rytm życia*, 137.

99 Dewey, *Art as Experience*, 285.

100 Dewey, *Art as Experience*, 285.

101 Krystyna Wilkoszewska, "Estetyka pragmatyczna," in *Estetyki filozoficzne xx wieku*, ed. Krystyna Wilkoszewska (Kraków: Universitas, 2000), 121.

102 Wilkoszewska, *Sztuka jako rytm życia*, 137.

on the mark, theorists are still in dispute over this terminology.[103] In the subsequent chapters of this book, I discuss the work of artists who engage in the preparation and sharing of food, making these activities part of their artistic practice. With time, the proliferation of such projects may dent the rigorous stance now adopted by most theorists, in keeping with Dewey's view that "[t]he function of art has always been to break through the crust of conventionalized and routine consciousness. Common things, a flower, a gleam of moonlight, the song of a bird, not things rare and remote, are means with which the deeper levels of life are touched so that they spring up as desire and thought. This process is art."[104]

To see a work of art in a bowl of delicious soup and in a beautifully served delectable pastry is, admittedly, not easy. It requires straying from a well-trodden path and veering off the tradition-sanctioned trajectories of aesthetic thinking. It requires a capacity to creatively redefine reality the way artists do: "Artists have always been real purveyors of news, for it is not the outward happening in itself which is new, but the kindling by it of emotion, perception and appreciation."[105] In Kuehn's view, the exclusion of cuisine from the realm of art is a social construct which may be undermined by an appropriate theory. Like Kuehn, a range of scholars, including Pryba, Perullo, Formis, Heldke, Boisvert, and Shusterman, have harnessed Dewey's concept to interrogate and question the obviousness of conventional notions and divisions so as to examine culinary practices as part of the aesthetics of everydayness. If we follow Dewey and comprehend art as an enhancement of life, not only artists and theorists but also all those ready to take the risk of treating food as something extraordinary – as a work of art – will be able to enjoy additional benefits as they will have their everyday experience augmented by aesthetic values, which are potentially present in any bit of life and, when called into existence, make

103 The publication of Elizabeth Telfer's *Food for Thought: Philosophy and Food* in 1996 gave momentum to the still continuing debate on the position of the cooking and eating of food vis-à-vis art. Telfer's overall conclusion is that food does not have enough potential to be recognized as art. In her view, cuisine cannot be as impactful as high art because, unlike art, it is time-bound, does not represent anything beyond the chef's skills, and does not evoke emotion. As a cultural phenomenon, cuisine as comprised of cooking styles and methods along with the products and dishes typical of a region or a country, may be regarded as art, but only as a lower-order art in Telfer's view. See Elizabeth Telfer, *Food for Thought: Philosophy and Food* (London: Routledge, 1996), 41–61. Korsmeyer rules out including food within the fine arts, and does not believe that it makes sense to consider it a lower-order art, a position which I discuss in more detail in "Taste and Its Value: Cultural Hierarchies" in this volume.

104 Dewey, *Public and Its Problems*, 182–83.

105 Dewey, *Public and Its Problems*, 183.

our own lives more complete, richer, and better.[106] This is the path to being an artist.

106 The role of aesthetics in improving people's lives is also emphasized by, for example, Arnold Berleant in *The Aesthetics of Environment* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1992) and Yuriko Saito ("The Role of Aesthetics in World-Making," *Contemporary Aesthetics. Special Volume* 9 [2021]; https://contempaesthetics.org/2021/01/05/the-role-of-aesthetics-in-world-making).

CHAPTER 4

Somaesthetics and the Art of Eating

Gordon Shepherd explains in his compelling *Neurogastronomy: How the Brain Creates Flavor and Why It Matters*[1] how complicated a construct taste actually is. There are five basic flavors: sweet, sour, salty, bitter, and *umami*, that is, a savory, meaty taste. While children are born with a predilection for sweet flavor and a pronounced aversion to sour and bitter tastes, people's gustatory preferences are also culturally conditioned. The human biological apparatus and the neurological mechanisms behind the generation of flavor are substantially complemented by social factors. Our tastes are not permanently fixed. We can learn to appreciate new flavors, and come to relish the bitterness of strong coffee, to give one familiar example.

That we associate certain flavors with certain foods results from an interplay of multiple stimuli and complicated processes which all add up to taste sensations. Shepherd cites numerous experiments in order to argue that the perception of flavors hinges not only on the taste buds but also – indeed, to a large extent – on smell, with touch, sight, and even hearing considerably involved in the enterprise. When zigzagging among stands at a produce market, we select fruit by touching it to check whether it is ripe for eating. But touch denotes more activities than simply the movement of the fingers feeling a pear or an apple. When ingesting food, we touch it with our teeth, tongue, inner cheeks, and palate. They shower us with knowledge about the texture of foodstuffs, and channel the pleasure of them crunching or melting in the mouth. Surprisingly few people realize how much of the gustatory sensation depends on the smells foods exude. A simple experiment will make us understand that the sweetness of a candy will be lost on us if we hold our breath. We will be able to feel its size, weight, and crunchiness or, alternatively, glutinousness, but not its flavor. How food looks and what shape it has also affects our sensation of taste, with colors exerting the greatest influence in this respect. Brightly colored substances give an impression of smelling more intensely, and white wine will taste like red wine to us if tinted with a tasteless red dye. Hearing also makes its own considerable contribution to the process. Pondering what food sounds like, Shepherd

1 Gordon Shepherd, *Neurogastronomy: How the Brain Creates Flavor and Why It Matters* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013).

observes that, predictably, various victuals have specific sound fields of their own, and that, for us, crunching is the most appetizing of them all.

Shepherd relies on neurological explanations to account for how gustatory sensations are produced. Relevant and convincing though these findings are, taste should be explored as a manifestation of the body's integrated activity in its socio-cultural context.[2] The neurogastronomer himself gestures at such a context when discussing the production of olfactory sensations. Feelings and memory hold a profound sway over our perception of smells and, consequently, over our experience of the flavors of foods. Paradoxically, taste does not come from food alone. While it originates in a holistic, sense-channeled experience, the intensity and character of taste results from the joint work of memory, emotions, associations, and social impacts.

Neurogastronomy intriguingly shows how taste came into being as an effect of adaptive evolutionary processes, but the fact that we sometimes resist evolutionary processes in an attempt to meet cultural demands is too patent to be overlooked. Lord Byron insisted that women should not be seen while eating.[3] The only exception he allowed was a meal of lobster salad and champagne.[4] This ludicrous injunction was evidently misogynistic, but Byron's redeeming grace may be that he visited equally restrictive measures on himself. He did not abide by the lobster-cum-champagne diet, but nutrition was one of his central preoccupations. Byron was prone to weight gain, and his predicament was that Romanticism envisaged poets as slender and pale, with soulful and melancholy-ridden faces. Eating huge quantities of white rice was supposed

2 That neurological findings should be interpreted in this context is Antonio Damasio's conclusion in *Descartes' Error: Emotion, Reason, and the Human Brain* (New York: Putnam, 1994).

3 This ostensibly absurd principle is in fact still quite vibrant in contemporary culture, as psychological research indicates (cf. Marrie H. Bekker and Kirsten Boselie, "Gender and Stress: Is Gender Role Stress? A Re-examination of the Relationship between Feminine Gender Role Stress and Eating Disorders," *Stress and Health* 18, no. 3 [2002]: 141–49). Opposite tendencies are in place as well. For example, the American artist Alison Knowles converted public eating into a work of art. She would have a tuna fish sandwich for lunch every day, because, as she claimed, it was the best cheap lunch available in her neighborhood. The invariable order of "a tuna fish sandwich on wheat toast with lettuce and butter, no mayo, and a large glass of buttermilk or a cup of soup" transformed a daily meal into a performance to be called *Identical Lunch*. Associated with the Fluxus, Knowles first spotted a potential for art in her eccentric habit of ordering the same dish every day in 1967. For many years to follow, she would daily repeat it at the same venue (Riss, a now non-existent restaurant on New York's 8th Avenue) at more or less the same time. With time, she was joined by other artists, whose experiences and impressions were recorded and published in *Journal of the Identical Lunch.* Alice Knowles, *Journal of the Identical Lunch* (San Francisco: Nova Broadcast Press, 1971), 1.

4 See Louise Foxcroft, *Calories and Corsets: A History of Dieting over Two Thousand Years* (London: Profile Books, 2013), 53.

to ensure a fair complexion. At a certain point in his life, Byron nearly halved his weight (from 100 to 54 kilos) by observing a strict diet of mashed potatoes with vinegar, a fashionable method for losing weight at the time. As related by Louise Foxcroft in *Calories and Corsets: A History of Dieting over Two Thousand Years*, this harsh dietary regime was not the most prohibitive one in Byron's go-to repertoire, as "in his thirties, while travelling in Italy," he "kept mainly to diet of claret and soda water."[5] The willowy silhouette was coveted by Byron not only for aesthetic reasons. In fact, the reports of his acquaintances "record his horror of fat, which he believed led to lethargy, dullness and stupidity, and his anxiety that his creativity would be lost."[6] While Byron's example brings evident tensions between culture and nature into the spotlight, evolution and culture are also known to interpenetrate and reinforce each other. After all, it was the inclusion of food in culture that bred the revolutionary metamorphoses of the human species. Studies in evolutionary anthropology have amply shown that the cooking and sharing of food laid the foundation for humanity as we know it.[7] Richard Wrangham argues that eating cooked food is what sets humans apart from other creatures. Still, we sometimes use our cultural and evolutionary achievements in quite wrong ways.

1 Ambitions and Temptations

Our societies are harmed by the expansion of the so-called Western dietary style, which involves the excessive consumption of industrially processed foods, where calorie intake overshadows other nutritional values. Such eating habits lie at the root of the increasing incidence of obesity and a range of other civilization diseases from allergies to cancers. However, weight-related problems are by no means our contemporary monopoly. Foxcroft cites stories of several historical personages who struggled with their weight (usually being overweight), and faced the dilemma of gastronomical pleasure vs. abstinent discomfort. This alternative is well exemplified in the culinary preferences of Friedrich Nietzsche, who reportedly loved sausages. Unfortunately, he was also obese as a result of his sedentary work. Nietzsche seriously considered going on diet, and consulted Luigi Cornaro's *The Art of Living Long*, a very popular

5 Foxcroft, *Calories and Corsets*, 52–53.

6 Foxcroft, *Calories and Corsets*, 52.

7 Cf. Richard Wrangham, *Catching Fire: How Cooking Made Us Human* (New York: Basic Books, 2009); Massimo Montanari, *Food Is Culture*, trans. by Albert Sonnenfeld (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006).

handbook first printed in 1558 and published last in 1903. Cornaro, an affluent Venetian, was only thirty-five when his doctors told him in 1502 that he was on the verge of death and could survive only if he drastically cut down on his food intake. It was recommended that he practice a regular, moderate lifestyle and master self-control in order to keep his temptations in check. Cornaro developed very restrictive dietary rules, which essentially came down to eating as little as possible. He ate 400 gram of solid food a day, and drank half a liter of wine. At the end of his life, he reduced his daily sustenance to one egg.

Nietzsche became particularly interested in Cornaro's exceptionally slow metabolism, which he believed was similar to his own. In *Ecce Homo*, Nietzsche refers to this, remarking "My blood flows slowly."[8] On second thoughts, however, he concluded that the gastronomical minimalism advertised by Cornaro would not do because "[s]cholars in *this* day and age, with their rapid consumption of nervous energy, would be destroyed by a regimen like Cornaro's."[9] This belief stemmed from the general notions of Nietzsche's philosophy of life, in which intellectualism and asceticism stood for a depletion of life. While there is a long philosophical tradition which recommends integrating theory and practice, Nietzsche's philosophical choices and life practice did not go hand in hand.[10] Today, nutrition is increasingly frequently addressed in public debates and made part of social policy agendas as a result of the problems it may and does cause. Nourishment is explored by neurologists, dieticians, historians, anthropologists, aesthetics researchers, and artists, to name but a few interested groups. Though food is admittedly attracting more and more attention from social scientists and humanities scholars, the interrelated cultural, social, and biological dimensions of the cooking and eating of food call

8 Friedrich Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo: How to Become What You Are*, in Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Anti-Christ, Ecce Homo, Twilight of the Idols, and Other Writings*, trans. Judith Norman, ed. Aaron Ridley and Judith Norman (Cambridge, UK, and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 75.

9 Friedrich Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols, or How to Philosophize with a Hammer*, in Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Anti-Christ, Ecce Homo, Twilight of the Idols, and Other Writings*, trans. Judith Norman, ed. Aaron Ridley and Judith Norman (Cambridge, UK, and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 176 (italics original).

10 This dissonance is poetically contemplated in "A Supple Wreath of Myrtle," a poem in which Robert Hass portrays Nietzsche as an individual torn between his pessimism about the future of culture and civilization and small pleasures of life. Prophesying the end of man, Nietzsche can enjoy a delicious sausage and Bizet's light music even in the face of impending doom: "Poor Nietzsche in Turin, eating sausage his mother/Mails to him from Basel. […] /Dying of syphilis. Trimming a luxuriant mustache./In love with the opera of Bizet Alexandre-César-Léopold." Robert Hass, "A Supple Wreath of Myrtle," in Robert Hass, *Time and Materials: Poems, 1997–2005* (New York: Ecco, 2007), 4.

for a more thorough examination. As a matter of fact, discourse on diet makes its appearance as early as in ancient writings. The recognition that what we eat profoundly affects our conduct, mental capacity, overall social relationships, and even the condition of the state can be traced back to Plato's times. Despite long-standing disputes on the preparation and consumption of meals, we still feel that something is missing in the rich legacy of nourishment scholarship. The point is that there is no approach which would help us investigate food from the point of view of bodily practices and integrate dispersed discourses of diet and healthy living. Bringing together beliefs about the optimal lifestyle and actual life practice is another, perhaps even more daunting challenge.[11]

Cooking has become a veritable media craze, and chefs belong among celebrities today. Cooking shows are watched by millions of viewers, and mass social movements preoccupied with nutrition arise, as illustrated by the slow food movement in the previous chapter. In spite of this, we still do not fully realize what a complex activity eating is and how destructive Western nutritional modes may be. While absolutely fundamental to our biological existence, eating is far more than just the ingestion of food. It is a complicated cultural and social process whose multiple dimensions call for interdisciplinary studies. We need a debate on the best diet for us because, as civilization develops, our lifestyle changes. While it is a sheer impossibility to come up with a detailed "recipe" for a diet catering to everybody's needs, it is possible to formulate general principles of eating aligned with melioristic philosophical investigations.

2 Somaesthetics as an Art of Living

Contemporary culture is obsessed with the body. We spend a lot of time and money on improving and shaping our appearance, for example, by combating the signs of aging. Given this, Richard Shusterman, the author of *Pragmatist Aesthetics* and *Body Consciousness*, may sound preposterous when he bemoans the fact that we still do not devote enough attention to our bodies. However, what Shusterman is concerned with is the dearth of in-depth reflection which should lead to a melioristic reinforcement of life practice. This failing is to be redressed by somaesthetics,[12] which builds on "the pragmatist insistence on

11 Knowledge about proper nutrition is key to healthy living. However, putting this knowledge into practice in one's own life and the consistent observance of dietetic recommendations may be a serious challenge. People with eating dysfunctions may need help from both dieticians and psychologists specialized in psychodietetics.

12 For a detailed depiction of the tenets, goals, and development plans of somaesthetics, see "Somaesthetics: A Disciplinary Proposal," a chapter added to the second edition of

the body's central role in artistic creation and appreciation" to foreground and study "the soma – the living, sentient, purposive body – as the indispensable medium for all perception."[13]

Shusterman is one of the few thinkers who delve into the philosophical significance of everyday routines.[14] Interested in aesthetics as a discipline which focuses on perception, awareness, and sensing,[15] he primarily attends to the kinetic aspect of human functioning, but the somaesthetics perspective may naturally be fruitful in theoretical investigations of food, as exemplified in Shusterman's "Somaesthetics and the Fine Art of Eating" (2016).[16] Before going into the details of his meticulous and thorough argument in this paper, let us examine how Shusterman's pragmatist theory helps incorporate reflections on gastronomical practices into aesthetics and, furthermore, how it recognizes these practices as art.

Shusterman's books time and again dwell upon the idea of an integral human experience in which the aesthetic, the ethical, the political, the practical, the cognitive, and the somatic interpenetrate and condition each other. His *Practicing Philosophy* revisits the ancient ideal of philosophy as an art of living[17] in order to produce a holistic account of human existence. Shusterman believes that the best effects are achieved by combining philosophy as theory with philosophy as an artistic life practice. In this way, he surmounts Western philosophy's entrenched reluctance to ponder the body. When tackling one of the perennial philosophical questions, namely, "How to live better?" he

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Richard Shusterman's *Pragmatist Aesthetics: Living Beauty, Rethinking Art* (Lanham, Boulder, New York, and Oxford: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2000), 262–83. Somaesthetics is discussed at length in Richard Shusterman, *Body Consciousness: A Philosophy of Mindfulness and Somaesthetics* (Cambridge, UK, and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008); Richard Shusterman, *Thinking through the Body: Essays in Somaesthetics* (Cambridge, UK, and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

13 Shusterman, *Thinking through the Body*, 3.

14 This theme is extensively studied by Yuriko Saito, who suggests following the philosophical traditions of the East so as to merge the "what" with the "how." See Yuriko Saito, *Aesthetics of the Familiar: Everyday Life and World-Making* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017). A philosophical investigation of everydayness is also proposed in Jolanta Brach-Czaina, *Szczeliny istnienia* (Warszawa: PIW, 1992). This strategy is widely adopted by philosophers working with the concept of somaesthetics. See, e.g., Robert Dobrowolski, "Somaesthetic Encounter with Oneself and the Other," in *Beauty, Responsibility and Power*, ed. Leszek Koczanowicz and Katarzyna Liszka (Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2014).

15 Shusterman, *Thinking through the Body*, 3.

16 Richard Shusterman, "Somaesthetics and the Fine Art of Eating," in *Body Aesthetics*, ed. Sherri Irvin (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 261–280.

17 Richard Shusterman, *Practicing Philosophy: Pragmatism and the Philosophical Life* (London and New York: Routledge, 1997), 1–16.

considers ethical, political, and aesthetic issues, but he finds proper body posture, a healthy diet, and skillful breath control equally important. Hence his philosophy is not only an attempt to reappraise the "body" vis-à-vis the "mind," but also a descriptive and normative project for the holistic functioning of the "sentient soma." Importantly, the field of somaesthetics, as Shusterman repeatedly emphasizes, comprises not only theoretical inquiry but also "practical bodily disciplines to enhance our experience and performance while increasing our tools for self-fashioning."[18]

Shusterman shares John Dewey's belief that the mental elements cannot be separated from physical action. Shusterman approvingly quotes Dewey's essay "Body and Mind," in which the act of eating is taken to exemplify an integral action: "Eating is also a social act and the emotional temper of the festal board enters into the alleged merely physical function of digestion. Eating of bread and drinking of wine have indeed become so integrated with the mental attitudes of multitudes of persons that they have assumed a sacramental spiritual aspect."[19] Our moods are influenced by what we eat and drink and by how our digestion works; at the same time, out bodily fitness, which depends on what we drink and eat, determines our mental states. Attempts to sever these two orders may lead to problems: "When behavior is reduced to a purely physical level and a person becomes like a part of the machine he operates, there is proof of social maladjustment. This is reflected in the disordered and defective habits of the persons who act on the merely physical plane."[20]

Dewey's words could suitably depict the situation of the protagonist of Charlie Chaplin's *Modern Times*. Chaplin's movie features a factory worker who loses his sanity in endeavors to handle the demands of specialized assembly-line labor, which prioritizes economical action and seeks to maximize profit. After a day of work, he is unable to stop performing mechanically repeated operations. Chaplin's images are indeed hilarious, but they also tell a painfully insightful story of alienation that afflicts eating. Namely, practically-minded scholars use the protagonist in trials of a machine designed to spoon food directly into workers' mouths. In the experiments (and the future they herald), eating is stripped of its entire social and cultural aura, and reduced to energy-supplying feeding alone. Devised as effective and hygienic, the machinery falls to pieces in its ultimate demise. The only thing that the "streamlined" dining for modern times accomplishes is exacerbating the worker's torment.

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18 Richard Shusterman, "Somaesthetic Awakening and the Art of Living," in Richard Shusterman, *Thinking through the Body*, 289.

19 John Dewey, "Body and Mind," in John Dewey, *The Later Works, 1925–1953, Volume 3: 1927–1928*, ed. Jo Ann Boydston (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1989), 28.

20 Dewey, "Body and Mind," 29.

In his reflection on the essence of philosophical life, which is as a rule identified with mental life, Shusterman ponders in what ways and to what extent it is formed by corporeal practices. In doing this, he considers somatic consciousness, fitness exercises, and proper nutrition. This does not come as a surprise, given that philosophy aspires to improve the lives of individuals by critically reflecting on the human condition, and that it is a discipline which ideally combines theoretical inquiry and life practice. Moreover, in this respect Shusterman shares the notion espoused by Dewey, Wittgenstein, and Foucault that "philosophy was a life-practice where theory derived its real meaning and value only in terms of the life in which it functioned."[21] The belief that philosophy is rooted in life, which has its somatic aspect as well, makes it expedient for philosophical inquiries to deal with proper diet as an element of the "care of the self." In this context, "diet" is not meant in its truncated, albeit currently popular, sense of limiting both the variety and the quantity of food, a regime which often has a crippling effect on the body. Instead, "diet" is understood in conformity with the etymology of the word: "The Greek word *diaita*, from which our word 'diet' derives, described a whole way of life rather than referring to a narrow weight-loss regimen. It provided an all-round mental and physical way to health, basic to one's very existence and success."[22]

A philosopher should study our situation in the world in its entirety, without privileging one aspect of our existence at the cost, if not the exclusion, of others. Our wellbeing is premised on competently balancing the needs of both the mind and the body. Can the two actually be separated? Such aspirations, which add up to the pursuit of a good life, were on Shusterman's mind when he set out to illumine the components of the art of eating.

3 The Art of Eating

> Animals feed themselves; men eat; but only intelligent men know the art of eating.
>
> ANTHELME BRILLAT-SAVARIN

"In Aristotelian terminology," Shusterman writes, "cooking is *poiesis*, the making of an object with skill," and "eating resembles *praxis*, the performing of an

21 Shusterman, *Practicing Philosophy*, 21.

22 Foxcroft, *Calories and Corsets*, 15.

action."[23] Aristotle equated art with *poiesis*, and Shusterman's goal is to demonstrate the potential for art in the somatic skill of food assimilation. Shusterman draws a line between the act of eating and the art of eating, and wonders what conditions must be met for the former to cross this line and become the latter. In doing this, he identifies a series of degrees of engagement and competence in the somatic art of nourishment. As his starting point, he takes the simple need to appease hunger, one that we share with animals. As already stated, even if the human act of eating is reduced to an automatic, incognizant, and primitively insensitive response to hunger, it is always already inscribed in a cultural context. This context encompasses, among other things, both cooking techniques and the skill of naming, that is, of talking about food products and the sensations they provide: "Human culture, through its use of language, enables us to name or identify what we eat and thus better select, communicate, acquire, and critically evaluate our food choices. We can thus organize our ingestion of them in an orderly form or sequence that adds meaning to the act of eating."[24] Shusterman grants the top position in his ranking of gourmands to those who have mastered what he calls the art of dining. These are individuals who not only boast having well-trained taste, the know-how of composing meals, and the skill of savoring them, but also can comprehensively examine the complex process of eating and "know how to eat aesthetically."[25]

The art of eating rests on three pillars: the art of cuisine, the art of food appreciation and criticism, and the art of eating proper. In Shusterman's classification, the art of cuisine covers the processes of the preparation and presentation of dishes.[26] The second component of the somaesthetic art of eating, which Shusterman proposes calling the art of food appreciation and criticism, revolves around choosing foods and selecting ingredients. Competent decision-making in this respect is predicated on one's knowledge of the quality of food, its gustatory properties, its nutritional values, and its health-related effects. Expertise in composing meals also requires knowledge about the socio-cultural position and connotations of foods, and thus depends on cultural competency.[27]

The careful selection of foodstuffs and the essential relationship between a product and its place of origin were eloquently emphasized by Anthelme Brillat-Savarin:

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23 Shusterman, "Somaesthetics and the Fine Art of Eating," 265.
24 Shusterman, "Somaesthetics and the Fine Art of Eating," 263.
25 Shusterman, "Somaesthetics and the Fine Art of Eating," 263.
26 Shusterman, "Somaesthetics and the Fine Art of Eating," 261–62.
27 Shusterman, "Somaesthetics and the Fine Art of Eating," 262.

> Game also draws a great deal of its value from the nature of the country where it has matured: the flavor of a red partridge from Périgord is not that of one from Sologne; and while a hare killed on the plains outside of Paris makes but an insipid dish, a young one born on the sunburned slopes of Valromey or the upper Dauphiné is perhaps the tastiest of all four-legged game.[28]

Shusterman often refers to Savarin's ideas when underscoring the importance of gastronomical art and the ways of cultivating it. He agrees with Savarin's insistence that to account for the pleasures of the table one must not stop at explaining the olfactory and gustatory qualities involved; one must also consider "the visual beauties of food-presentation and the auditory harmonies of music that often accompany our dining to enhance its overall satisfaction."[29] In spelling out the conditions for harmonious and intense pleasures of the table, Shusterman both explores the conventionally listed senses (of taste, smell, sight, and hearing) and interprets the impact of touch and proprioceptive sensations on the final form of culinary experiences. In this way, the American pragmatist rounds off the investigations of the famous French gastronome. Shusterman foregrounds the importance of tactile pleasures, which derive from touching various surfaces and textures of both the victuals and the implements we employ in the act of eating. We touch things with our hands, lips, teeth, and tongues. Delight can be occasioned by warmth spreading through our bodies or by refreshing chilliness caused by cold drinks, cooled fruit, ice-cream, and cold dishes and desserts. Tactile stimuli are provided by the chopsticks we lift between our fingers, by the weight, shape, and surface of the cutlery we hold in our hands, by the texture of a napkin with which we wipe our palms and mouths, etc. When we break off a piece of a baguette, we know, even before it lands in our mouths, whether it is crispy, whether its crust is crunchy, and whether it is fluffy or solid inside.

Cooking sections in bookstores teem with publications on cooking techniques, recipes, the history of cuisine (including the history of cookbooks, kitchen utensils, restaurants, chefs, food migrations, etc.), and the description and evaluation of food products. The originality of the methodology underlying Shusterman's project lies in adopting another, most unconventional lens

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28 Anthelme Brillat-Savarin, *The Physiology of Taste: Or, Meditations on Transcendental Gastronomy*, trans. and ed. M[ary] F[rances] K[ennedy] Fisher (New York, London, and Toronto: Alfred A. Knopf, 2009), 95.

29 Shusterman, "Somaesthetics and the Fine Art of Eating," 267.

through which to approach the art of eating. Specifically, in his illuminating paper "Somaesthetics and the Fine Art of Eating," Shusterman passes over the creative aspects of cooking and chooses a less obvious field of exploration by focusing on the aesthetic dimensions of food ingestion. He goes beyond the bodily surface and probes into the recesses of mouths, throats, stomachs, and bowels. In this way, he investigates what he calls the art of eating proper, a term which he reserves for what are strictly the "modes and manners of ingestion."[30]

He identifies five major defining elements of the thus-conceived art of eating. These are one's posture at the table, the dynamic of eating, the accessories involved in eating, the kinds and serving sequence of courses, and the modes of appreciating foods, beverages, and the pleasures offered both by festive banqueting and by ordinary everyday meals. Shusterman also stresses how important it is to know when to stop eating and drinking.

To commence his discussion of the somaesthetic art of eating, Shusterman ponders what body posture optimizes the experience of eating and maximizes its aesthetic quality. He scrutinizes the advantages and discomforts of the various positions our bodies take while eating, wherein he goes back to a range of their historical variants and looks over their contemporary forms specific to various cultures. His examination brings into relief the deeply contextual nature of the art of eating, which depends on culturally determined styles and norms, with disparate versions of the same behavior often being accepted within one culture. For example, the European tradition prioritizes eating in the sitting position, but prefers standing in some particular circumstances, such as buffet receptions and cocktail parties. At Italian and French cafes, visitors can choose between two styles of having their coffee and/or breakfast: they may either sit at a table and be served by a waiter or stand at the counter and directly order their drinks and snacks from a bartender. The latter is Shusterman's favorite. His preference for having his morning coffee in this particular way is not dictated by time pressure or economic reasons; he opts for it, because

> this position offers the multisensory pleasure of hearing, seeing, and smelling how your espresso is made and delivered at close range; further there is a sense of dynamic mobility, of stretching one's legs before one's long day of work at a desk; there is also an agreeably special sense of momentary, noncommittal solidarity with other diners at the bar, most often strangers, an option of sociality that one can take or leave, depending on one's mood.[31]

30 Shusterman, "Somaesthetics and the Fine Art of Eating," 262.

31 Shusterman, "Somaesthetics and the Fine Art of Eating," 275–76.

In his depiction of movements involved in the activity of eating, Shusterman pays equal attention to the two kinds he identifies: external and internal motions. We move our arms, hands, and fingers to bring food to the mouth, to manipulate various table utensils, and to offer help to our companions at the table by passing them plates with food and salt-and-pepper pots. Obviously, hand movements are connected to the motions of the entire body when we bend or turn. Shusterman explains that: "In somaesthetically artful eating, movements are done with grace that provides both the proprioceptive pleasure to the diner herself and some degree of pleasure to an attentive observer who can appreciate the fine qualities of movement."[32] Volitional movements that take place inside our bodies, such as biting, chewing, swallowing, drinking, sniffing, etc., are no less essential, because those who develop a consciousness of them can regulate the rhythm of their actions and synchronize it with the rhythm of their bodies and the needs of other people at the table. Shusterman's discussion of internal movements does not leave out breathing, the respiratory motions of which are coupled with food ingestion processes: "One can adjust the speed and rhythm of one's chewing and swallowing (or even one's breathing) in order to make these movements more harmonious (not only in terms of the diner's own eating but in tune with the rhythms of others); one can also intentionally vary these rhythms to add proprioceptive interest of novelty."[33]

Shusterman marshals a panoply of examples from various cultural contexts to illustrate how the selection of cutlery and various accessories depends on the circumstances in which we eat and on the dishes that are served. The choice of the physical properties – materials, sizes, shapes – of the utensils affects our tactile and proprioceptive pleasure. For instance, as Shusterman rightly notices, quite different experiences are produced by drinking coffee from a Styrofoam mug and from a china cup. He regards the soft wood of Japanese chopsticks as better attuned to bringing rice into the mouth than the cold metal of a fork or metal chopsticks, which he finds more suitable for hot Korean dishes. The sensory is interlaced with the cultural at this level as well: "Besides these sensory aesthetic differences there are aesthetic differences of cultural symbolism in one's choice of implements: using a fork for some kinds of noodles and chopsticks for others."[34]

The selection of victuals and the sequence of serving courses add up to another important dimension of the art of eating. In this respect, our decisions are again determined by the culture in which we are brought up, as every

32 Shusterman, "Somaesthetics and the Fine Art of Eating," 270.
33 Shusterman, "Somaesthetics and the Fine Art of Eating," 270.
34 Shusterman, "Somaesthetics and the Fine Art of Eating," 271.

culture cherishes its own forms of table manners. Shusterman discusses differences in serving styles between the East and the West, as well as between Europe and the U.S. Salad and its place on dinner menus offer a simple, but telling, example. In Poland, a salad of raw vegetables is usually a side-dish accompanying a main of meat. In France and the U.S., it is a separate course, with which the Americans begin their dinner but which the French prefer to enjoy towards the end of the meal. Additionally, mealtimes are differently distributed across the day. For instance, Poles have their main meal in the afternoon, but the French and Americans have their most sumptuous meals later in the evening. Consequently, artful eating is premised on one's capacity to adjust to the context: the time of the day, the season of the year, one's health condition, the occasion, etc. When choosing what to eat, one also decides to exclude some ingredients and/or foods from one's menu for "aesthetic reasons other than mere taste."[35] During the heat of summer, a mindful eater will go for light cold soups instead of rich stews suitable for chilly days; similarly, "[o]ne may love chomping on crabs with friends or family, but avoid them in a refined dining situation because they make for messy eating."[36]

The fifth defining element of the art of eating, which Shusterman refers to as "perceptions," is partly implicated in the other four. Perceptions are generated through operations of the "complex sensorimotor systems" in our bodies. These systems perform multiple roles, ranging from the coordination of limb movements to the reception of gustatory, olfactory, tactile, and proprioceptive stimuli so as to enable "appropriate recognition and handling of eating accessories; and they govern our selection and sequencing of foods by identifying them and their qualities through diverse sensory perceptions."[37] To sort this tangled abundance of operations into more ordered categories, Shusterman proposes a simple division into external and internal perceptions. In his framework, the former result from our engagement in relations with the world outside, and the latter encompass sensations coming from inside our bodies. Shusterman recommends "cultivating and sharpening perceptions of inner bodily space, especially those within the mouth, nose, and throat where biting, tasting, chewing, smelling, and swallowing take place,"[38] which he believes will promote the optimization of culinary experiences, making them more intense, more complex, and more rewarding. Attention to proprioceptive experiences stemming from body posture and physical contact with food will enhance the

35 Shusterman, "Somaesthetics and the Fine Art of Eating," 272.
36 Shusterman, "Somaesthetics and the Fine Art of Eating," 272.
37 Shusterman, "Somaesthetics and the Fine Art of Eating," 273.
38 Shusterman, "Somaesthetics and the Fine Art of Eating," 273.

pleasure of eating and help one correctly decipher the bodily signals of satiety and conclude the meal at the right moment.

Art, and therein the somaesthetic art of eating, presupposes the intentionality of action. Nonetheless, Shusterman does not insist that we should invariably mobilize our awareness to focus on each and every crumb we put into our mouths. The point is that art also presupposes improvisation, free play, and intuitive acts. Therefore, "[t]hat many selection and sequencing choices are made spontaneously by habit (rather than through reflective deliberation) does not entail their being unaesthetic choices. Habits can be intelligent and aesthetically creative if they are the sedimented product of intelligent aesthetic training in how to eat."[39] The results of this training will persist in our bodies, which know and remember.

4 Body Memory

> My body is truly the navel of my world.
>
> JUHANI PALLASMAA

When asked how she had learned to cook, Danièle Mazet-Delpeuch answered: "I never took any lessons. I learned the most from my mother. I went to her, watched what she was doing, and then started to do just the same. Finally, it turned out all of a sudden that I could cook this or that myself."[40] Łukasz Modelski quizzed her: "But surely it wasn't that your mother or grandmother took you to the kitchen, saying: Look, this is how you make duck, and this is how you make ratatouille?"[41] She replied: "No. Not really. Rather, I watched them cook and then tasted the food; after all, I ate at home every day … I don't know how to put it, but all this sat in me, somewhere deep inside. This sense of taste and cooking savvy."[42]

"Know how" very obviously has a dual meaning in the kitchen. Intellectual knowledge is interlaced with manual knowledge in cuisine. Even the most meticulous, step-by-step description of making *pierogis* will not surpass showing how the fingers actually move when folding them and pinching their edges together, and even this will not give a beginner any guarantee of success.

39 Shusterman, "Somaesthetics and the Fine Art of Eating," 272.

40 Łukasz Modelski, *Piąty smak. Rozmowy przy jedzeniu* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 2014), 251.

41 Modelski, *Piąty smak*, 252.

42 Modelski, *Piąty smak*, 252.

Proficiency comes with time and practice, and one day we find ourselves able to perform all the activities involved in making shapely and delicious *pierogis* without monitoring them at all. This bifold quality of cooking, which includes both "movements of the body as well as those of the mind" is highlighted by the French sociologist Luce Giard: " [I]n cooking the activity is just as *mental* as it is manual; all the resources of the intelligence and memory are thus mobilized. One has to organize, decide, and anticipate. One must memorize, adapt, modify, invent, combine, and take into consideration."[43]

Many routine daily activities involve habitual actions inscribed in our bodies. In his essay on "Muscle Memory and the Somaesthetic Pathologies of Everyday Life," Shusterman explains that:

> "Muscle memory" is a term commonly used in everyday discourse for the sort of embodied implicit memory that unconsciously helps us perform various motor tasks we have somehow learned through habituation, either through explicit, intentional training or simply as the result of informal, unintentional, or even unconscious learning from repeated prior experience.[44]

Shusterman identifies six species of latent muscle memory, which is sometimes called "procedural memory" or "motor memory" in scientific discourse. Memory linked to the sense of the continuity of one's self is called "the memory of the self" by Shusterman. Related to it is the second memory type, which is responsible for remembering place. Owing to this, we know how we got to a given venue and how we can leave it. The third variety of body-recorded, implicit memory is described by Shusterman as "interpersonal, or more broadly as intersomatic, so as to include non-human companions like animals."[45] The remaining memory types listed by Shusterman are memory of social role, performative memory, and the memory of the vestiges of traumatic events. Importantly, memory of the social role and performative memory are activated both while cooking and while eating. Below, I briefly examine these two forms of memory.

Body memory concerning social role is filled and updated from childhood on. Starting in our earliest years, we are trained for a range of culturally

43 Michel de Certeau, Luce Giard, and Pierre Mayol, *The Practice of Everyday Life. Volume 2: Living and Cooking*, trans. Timothy J. Tomasik (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998), 200.

44 Shusterman, *Thinking through the Body*, 91.

45 Shusterman, *Thinking through the Body*, 95.

endorsed social roles. First they are gender-related, and then we have the standard behavior of a good student, a caring mother, and/or an effective lawyer instilled in us. Culture as a rule offers women and men quite different "packages" of values and appended desired practices. In her "The Nourishing Arts," Giard recalls her rebellion against her mother's suggestion that she should learn kitchen chores. She has no doubts that "I refused this women's work because no one ever offered it to my brother."[46] Giard would not learn to cook, because she associated it with a specific privilege which was in fact an instance of exclusion. The English writer Julian Barnes also blamed his parents for unequal treatment regarding cooking. His collection of essays *The Pedant in the Kitchen* opens with a complaint that he was never given any cooking lesson, which he claims is the reason why, even though he took to cooking with time, he has never acquired enough confidence to feel at ease and be imaginative in the kitchen.[47] The kitchen, as he playfully avers, was kept secret from middle-class boys: "Meals and my mother emerged from it – meals often based on my father's garden produce – but neither he, my brother, nor I enquired, or were encouraged to enquire, about the transformational process."[48] He started cooking himself when he was studying for his degree, and, as he recollects, "[t]he key factors governing my 'cooking' at this time were poverty, lack of skill, and gastronomic conservatism."[49] As time went by, Barnes perfected his cooking technique and mastered increasingly complicated dishes. While his mother rejoiced in this development in the hope of having her now-cooking son more appreciative of her own culinary efforts, his father watched it "with the mild, liberal suspicion."[50]

A late cooking debut took place in similar circumstances in Giard's life as well. When she went away to study and was condemned to dining in student eateries and cafeterias, she realized how well she had been fed at home. She decided to cook something all by herself at the ripe age of twenty, when living in an apartment of her own. Her rebellion against the culturally entrenched gender roles did not subside, and prevented her from consulting her mother for advice as that, she thought, would have been tantamount to condoning the "feminine model" she had rejected. If family tradition could not be her recourse, Giard believed that a cookbook was the best solution. She deliberately picked an unillustrated, grey-covered booklet which defied the norms

46 De Certeau, Giard, and Mayol, *Practice of Everyday Life* 2, 151–52.
47 Julian Barnes, *The Pedant in the Kitchen* (London: Atlantic Books, 2003), 4.
48 Barnes, *Pedant in the Kitchen*, 1.
49 Barnes, *Pedant in the Kitchen*, 3.
50 Barnes, *Pedant in the Kitchen*, 3.

of feminine aesthetics. The key words advertising its recipes were: "simple," "quick," "modern," and "inexpensive."[51] If the book's grey cover and the lack of plates made for neutral aesthetics, the absence of visual tips was not the most fortunate of choices for a debutante. Be that as it may, Giard was in for a surprising turn of events, as she discovered, to her astonishment, that her body had registered the necessary knowledge:

> From the groping experience of my initial gestures, my trials and errors, there remains this one surprise: I thought that I had never learned or observed anything, having obstinately wanted to escape from the contagion of a young girl's education and because I had always preferred my room, my books, and my silent games to the kitchen where my mother busied herself. Yet, my childhood gaze had seen and memorized certain gestures, and my sense of memory had kept track of certain tastes, smells, and colors. I already knew all the sounds: the gentle hiss of simmering water, the sputtering of melting meat drippings, and the dull thud of the kneading hand. A recipe or an inductive word sufficed to arouse a strange anamnesis whereby ancient knowledge and primitive experiences were reactivated in fragments of which I was the heiress and guardian without wanting to be. I had to admit that I too had been provided with a woman's knowledge and that it had crept into me, slipping past my mind's surveillance. It was something that came to me from my body and that integrated me into the great corps of women of my lineage, incorporating me into their anonymous ranks.[52]

This passage perfectly illustrates both the memory of social role and performative (or procedural) memory, capturing the interdependence of the various kinds of muscle memory, which condition and reinforce each other. Our bodies brim with encoded procedures for doing things, which are spontaneously implemented while performing customary, quotidian activities, such as putting a jumper on or tying our shoes. It is due to the effect of performative memory that we can act without taking time to think on the consecutive component-actions we need to undertake to complete the task.

Such an automatic approach is obviously useful in daily life, because it imbues our movements with smoothness and enables us to invest "always-limited resources of explicit consciousness"[53] in more challenging tasks. The

51 De Certeau, Giard, and Mayol, *Practice of Everyday Life 2*, 152.

52 De Certeau, Giard, and Mayol, *Practice of Everyday Life 2*, 152–53.

53 Shusterman, *Thinking through the Body*, 99.

activities which Shusterman enumerates as paradigmatic for this type of body memory include walking, swimming, playing the piano, and driving a car. His list can easily be extended to cover kitchen chores. All homemakers have mastered kitchen economy with the know-how of proper uses, proper applications, and proper dosages. Our body memory streamlines our actions in familiar spaces. Without needless thinking, we open exactly the drawer we need, take just the box we need out of the cupboard, and put objects back precisely where they belong. Our domesticated and memorized space affords us a sense of comfort. Giard aptly observes that the everydayness of the kitchen does not mean pure routine, because it abounds with novel things to do as a result of some temporary wishes of our families or our guests' preferences. Economic, temporal, and sentimental factors form a complicated nexus, which must be taken into consideration: "With all these details quickly reviewed, the game of exclusion, impossibilities (from lack of time, money, or supplies), and preferences must end in the proposal of a solution to be quickly realized because one has to come up with a menu for tonight, for example, roast beef with oven-baked potatoes."[54]

The insights compiled in this chapter imply that culinary art is both an expression of submission to the demands of the body, tradition, and routine as well as a creative manner of transforming the world; culinary art is as much a site of coercion as a space of pleasure. Ancient Greeks regarded proper nutrition as inextricable from strivings to attain harmony with the universe. This notion was embodied in a *symposion* – a banquet where eating was an important part of the conversation in which the interlocutors sought to attain self-knowledge and comprehend the world. Notably, as Shusterman claims, the very act of eating leads to self-examination and to the acquisition of "somatic self-knowledge."[55] Consequently, it may be highly relevant to philosophical considerations, which have always defined self-knowledge as their goal. Self-knowledge is a prerequisite for self-improvement, in which more conscious and thoughtful responses to the needs of the body are developed along with the competent use of one's sensory apparatus.

Dietary practices impart meaning and profundity to existence, enhancing its authenticity. Yet the aesthetics of eating should not be reductively confined to special occasions and sumptuous feasts. Every common meal may have an aesthetic dimension. Ultimately, any culinary experience may contribute to creative self-fashioning: "Through such artful dining, even a simple meal becomes an artwork of improvised group choreography whose silent yet

54 De Certeau, Giard, and Mayol, *Practice of Everyday Life* 2, 200–201.

55 Shusterman, *Thinking through the Body*, 113.

communicative harmonies not only serve as a means for efficiently coordinating food ingestion, but can provide powerful pleasure in their own right."[56]

56 Shusterman, "Somaesthetics and the Fine Art of Eating," 267.

CHAPTER 5

The Kitchen: a World Next Door

> I believe that the history of cuisine has mostly been propelled not by grand chefs, but by women. By millions of homemakers across the world, who have been creating everyday cuisine without any remuneration.
>
> CARLO PETRINI[1]

The kitchen is next door. Next door to official rooms, but often removed from them far enough to prevent the unpleasant smells of cooking from reaching them and to keep disgusting leftovers out of sight. In hotels and restaurants, the kitchen tends to be located in the basement. At the same time, however, the kitchen is also the very center of family life. Everybody eagerly flocks to the kitchen, even in cramped apartments where all too tiny kitchens cannot hold a table big enough to seat the whole family. On festive occasions, the peculiar dynamics of attraction and repulsion are fully on display, as the kitchen is the busy back-shop of the banquet, but more often than not it teems with guests seeking respite from the stiff formality of the elegantly laid table. Roch Sulima emphatically claims that "the most satisfying and most meaningful conversations take place in the kitchen, which offers refuge from the dominance and decorum of the salon."[2] Conversations in the kitchen may even contribute to the toppling of the world's political order. In *The Politics of Small Things,* Jeffrey C. Goldfarb argues that meetings around kitchen tables were among the crucial factors in kindling the process that culminated in Poland's democratic transition in 1989,[3] because they were pockets of freedom amidst the politically

1 Łukasz Modelski, *Piąty smak. Rozmowy przy jedzeniu* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 2014), 44.

2 Roch Sulima, *Antropologia codzienności* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego, 2000), 158.

3 Jeffrey C. Goldfarb, *The Politics of Small Things: The Power of the Powerless in Dark Times* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), especially chapter "Theorizing the Kitchen Table and Other Small Things," 9–22.

controlled social landscape. The kitchen offered asylum and was the mainstay of security; it was in the kitchen that ideas which were later to remodel society sprouted and were discussed until they reached fruition. Yet Goldfarb's point is not exactly that the kitchen was an "incubator of ideas"; rather, he explains that its major function was to show what society could look like if it were not for the constraints imposed by the totalitarian regime.[4]

Connoting the everyday with its chores and the toilsome hustle and bustle of things, the kitchen is perched on the opposite end of the spectrum to art, which is associated with the disinterestedness and distance of aloof beauty.[5] Nevertheless, against the rulings of mainstream aesthetic tradition, the kitchen has proved an attractive site for a host of contemporary artists. Anna Królikiewicz remembers her rite of passage:

> Finally I decided to stand up, to heave myself up and I walked from the studio, through a corridor and over a carpet, to the kitchen. I decided to resign from producing works that are lasting and durable in favour of objects that are self-deteriorating or objects that disappear since they are edible; also in favour of constructions composed of leftovers, waste, words, writing, creating social bonds in relational art. In that way, I entangled life and artistic work even tighter.[6]

By stepping into the kitchen, artists undermine the time-honored division into art and life, transgress conventions, and symbolically exit the stage to disappear behind the scenes.

In most cases, the kitchen they enter is not one at home, but a piece of space carved out of gallery halls and wired for cooking. Artists cook for a variety of reasons. They resort to food because they are looking for a convenient binder to cement a community, because they are searching for new loci for beauty, or because they are contesting conventional aesthetic values. Works of art also spin the narratives of food as a universal language which may provide common ground for intercultural understanding, and they tell stories about transience, the fragility of human existence, about everydayness morphing into art, or about the position of women as inextricable from the kitchen space. Women are inscribed in this space by tradition, and even if, as one of Luce

4 Goldfarb, *The Politics of Small Things*, 9–22.

5 Cf. "The Antinomies of Taste" in this volume.

6 Anna Królikiewicz, "Międzyjęzyk/Interlanguage," trans. Soran Gaugar, Katarzyna Pastuszak, and Katarzyna Podpora, in *Międzyjęzyk*, ed. Anna Królikiewicz (Gdańsk: Akademia Sztuk Pięknych w Gdańsku, 2019), 84.

Giard's interlocutors confesses, "When it comes down to it, cooking worries me,"[7] a replacement is hard to come by.

The history of art abounds with eminent personages and memorable events. It can spare very little room, next to none, for the routines of the kitchen. Even if genre and still-life paintings were deemed worthy of inducting into the temples of art, their presence still needed additional justification and grounding. These were helpfully furnished by symbolic references designed to enhance the attractiveness of lowly themes. This revolutionary gesture enabled the peripheral back-room to claim the central place, for a while at least. Yet, this shift may have been less radical than it seemed to be. A more thorough repositioning occurs when (if) foodstuffs are employed not only as objects to be painted, but also as the very pigments to paint with. Anna Królikiewicz insists that nothing surpasses drawing with

> lemon tree coal and caviar's vivid shades of black, sepia ink, arabesques made of cream and ricotta, fluid crimsons of old porto, crushed figs' impasto. The range of painting qualities referring to colours, their temperatures and composition can be broadened with such features as three-dimensionality, and senses other than sight: smell, taste, sound and a touch of texture.[8]

Artists who choose the kitchen as the scene of their artistic practices often emphasize its duality. The kitchen is the heart of the home and connotes security and love. However, it may easily mutate into a place of oppression, where one's vital powers are gradually sapped in the repetitive, wearisome, and tedious activities of peeling, chopping, mashing, or stewing. Jolanta Brach-Czaina highlights the fact that everyday life, especially its kitchen-bound variety, "keeps us constantly busy, and drains us of strength incrementally and imperceptibly."[9]

1 The Female Cook

In one of her columns, Królikiewicz admits that she likes washing up. She likes restoring plates, mugs, glasses, and cutlery to their initial state, and when

7 Michel de Certeau, Luce Giard, and Pierre Mayol, *The Practice of Everyday Life. Volume 2: Living and Cooking*, trans. Timothy J. Tomasik (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998), 225.

8 Anna Królikiewicz, "Międzyjęzyk/Interlanguage," 81–82.

9 Jolanta Brach-Czaina, *Szczeliny istnienia* (Warszawa: PIW, 1992), 81.

cleaning them of leftovers, she meticulously inspects the objects. Such examinations tend to spark reminiscences of their stories and the circumstances in which they found themselves in her home. Królikiewicz seems to be one of the lucky women about whom Giard writes: "Good cooks are never sad or idle – they work at fashioning the world, at giving birth to the joy of the ephemeral; they are never finished celebrating festivals of the adults and the kids, the wise and the foolish, the marvelous reunions of men and women who share room (in the world) and board (around the table)."[10] Giard believes that cooks make earth a habitable place.

Famous paintings offer a strikingly different image of a cooking woman. Gloomy cooks stare at us from the canvasses of, for example, Frans Snyders (*Cook with Food,* 1630, and *Kitchen Still Life*, 1605–1610) and Vincenzo Campi (*Kitchen*, *Christ in the House of Mary and Martha*, 1580). Kenneth Bendiner, who explores paintings from the Renaissance period to our times in his *Food in Painting*, concludes that the preparation of food is an onerous and serious task. Cooks satisfied with their works are few and far between in painting. A woman cleaning vegetables in Jean-Baptiste-Siméon Chardin's *Girl Peeling Vegetables* (1738) looks resigned and fatigued. A similar scene, captured by Gerard Dou, features a young female peeling a bunch of giant carrots (*Woman Peeling Carrot*, 1646), who seems overwhelmed by the roots and dead fowl.[11] Martha in Diego Velázquez's painting *Christ in the Home of Martha and Mary* (1618) cuts a particularly sullen figure.

Why are all these cooks so despondent? Hustling Martha[12] must be furious[13] about being deserted by her sister to handle the kitchen chores alone, and she may already know that all her efforts around the table, all her cares for the mundane practicalities matter less than the spiritual development chosen by Mary, who is sketched in the background of the painting. Even if a strong female appears, such as a commanding woman in Pieter Aertsen's *La Cuisiniere* (1559), who sports muscles reminiscent of Michelangelo's sculptures and wields power over her kingdom, her reign and triumph are only possible if

10 Certeau, Giard, and Mayol, *The Practice of Everyday Life* 2, 222.

11 Kenneth Bendiner, *Food in Painting: From the Renaissance to the Present* (London: Reaktion Books, 2004), 81.

12 The biblical story of Martha and Mary is interpreted in an illuminating way by Zbigniew Benedyktowicz in "Marta i Maria – uwagi o 'Uczcie Babette,'" *Polska Sztuka Ludowa – Konteksty* 46, nos. 3/4 (1992): 81–84.

13 This sentiment is suggested by the chili pepper, which Silvia Malaguzzi states symbolizes aggressiveness. Silvia Malaguzzi, *Food and Feasting in Art*, trans. Brian Phillip (Los Angeles: Getty Publications, 2008), 277.

she manages the kitchen of a wealthy employer. The canvas does not show the cook's home. In her own modest kitchen, she would not have to flex her muscles. Nobody would like to take over power there. Males, in particular, would not waste their time on things which "seem inevitable only to prove insignificant after a while."[14]

Doing a woman's chores was a punishment for Hercules. Fortunately enough, he only had to suffer it for one year. As the Delphic Oracle commanded, Hercules was sold into slavery for killing Iphitus. He spent the period of his penance in the kingdom of Lydia ruled by Omphale, who forced him to do traditional women's work. Hans Cranach's painting *Hercules at the Court of Omphale* (1537) shows Hercules busy spinning. He is wearing a woman's garments, which is by no means an instance of mythology's feminist leanings; on the contrary, the feminine clothing makes it clear that to execute such tasks one cannot possibly be a man, but must turn into a woman, be it even a false one. This conveys the tension between the back-room where women work, and the main stage with males at the center. Women's chores are occupations of a lower rank.

Female cooks have had their position undercut by the culturally entrenched pejorative appraisal of kitchen work since antiquity. Aristotle's *Politics* portrayed cooking as a typically servile sphere of life and a skill suitable for slaves.[15] A similarly inferior position was accorded to cooking in Plato's writings. While he did mention butchers and pastry-makers in several places, he never esteemed their efforts. Many Western philosophers have since adopted the same attitude, pitting intellectual work against manual labor.[16] Products of the mind have had timeless and universal value ascribed to them, while objects made by hand have been deemed impermanent and relegated to the position of meniality. Practical activities take place in the space of change. Lisa Heldke explains that: "making and eating food are processes that take minutes, hours, or days. And these same processes must be repeated every day; unlike

14 Brach-Czaina, *Szczeliny istnienia*, 86.

15 Cf. Aristotle, *Politics*, trans. Benjamin Jowett (Kitchener: Batoche Books, 1999), 11. https://socialsciences.mcmaster.ca/econ/ugcm/3ll3/aristotle/Politics.pdf (Access 13 July 2021). For a commentary on this passage of the *Politics*, see Aristotle, *The Politics and the Constitution of Athens*, ed. Stephen Everson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 19. Cf. also Paul Freedman, "Introduction," in *Food: The History of Taste*, ed. Paul Freedman (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2007), 19.

16 See Lisa Heldke, "Foodmaking as a Thoughtful Practice," in *Cooking, Eating, Thinking: Transformative Philosophy of Food*, ed. Deane W. Curtin and Lisa Heldke (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1992), 203–30.

coming to know the Form of the Good, eating lunch doesn't produce anything that will stay with a person for good."[17] To make matters worse, the better the outcomes of cooks' work – that is to say, meals – are, the faster they disappear from the plates, and another Sisyphean task begins.

Brach-Czaina believes that everydayness "keeps us believing that it is not only ungraspable but also not worth grasping. Imperceptibility is the form of its presence."[18] Minor chores that need to be done, but which go generally unnoticed, only crawl into visibility when they fail to be done on time. Peeling potatoes, washing up, cooking everyday broth, and putting together a shopping list, all represent activities which, like the stock which is the basis of more complicated dishes, make other people's potentially more spectacular achievements possible and contribute to their wellbeing. They are essential and unimportant at the same time.

2 Martha Rosler: the Kitchen as the Prison of the Soul

Life would be so much easier if Giard's insight about cooks' satisfaction with their work was universal. Regrettably, not everybody is gratified with cooking and then washing up. Women who can afford to cook solely when they feel like cooking are still an overwhelming minority. Content or discontented, women are unable to abandon the kitchen, because, as sociological research in Poland has shown, "males cook sporadically in families; fathers and fathers-in-law have been reported to prepare the main meal by merely 1.2% of respondents, and sons and sons-in-law by just 0.5%."[19] Yet somebody must do the cooking. This compulsion breeds frustration.

This lack of liberty and reluctance to submit to the verdicts of a culture which binds women to the space of the kitchen were addressed by Martha Rosler in her now-classic *Semiotics of the Kitchen*, a performance staged in 1975, which paradigmatically exemplified the second wave of feminism.[20] One of the major slogans of the day was "the personal is political," and it questioned the

17 Heldke, "Foodmaking as a Thoughtful Practice," 207.

18 Brach-Czaina, *Szczeliny istnienia*, 79.

19 Henryk Domański, Zbigniew Karpiński, Dariusz Przybysz, and Justyna Straczuk, *Wzory jedzenia a struktura społeczna* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Scholar, 2015), 206.

20 Judy Chicago's installation *The Dinner Party* was proclaimed the icon of the feminist art of the 1970s. The installation consisted of a bulky table laid for thirty-nine people. Each place setting commemorated an influential woman. The work included embroidered runners, gold goblets and utensils, and painted china tableware embellished with vaginal motifs and butterfly-shaped patterns. The work aimed to bestow a proper rank on

division into public and private spheres. The feminists called for recognition that the "personal" always had its socio-political dimension, as the private/public distinction resulted in excluding women from social life. The division was informed by the representation of woman as naturally "destined" for marriage, childbirth, and nurture. The feminist art of the 1970s was committed to unveiling these ideological structures and to examining the ways in which the visual sphere contributed to the construction of gender differences. Rosler's choice of semiotics for the title of her performance was not random. It referred to the then-fashionable idea of deciphering the order of meanings in culture, and alluded to the "gender-based stereotyped division into knowledge (semiotics) and the everyday (kitchen)."[21]

Rosler's performance was a parody of Julia Child's TV shows, which enjoyed immense popularity in the 1960s.[22] From the first episode of *The French Chef* onwards, Child sought to persuade her audience to embrace French-style cuisine and to invest some effort into learning new flavors and new techniques. The promised rewards of such exertions included exceptional gustatory sensations, worlds apart from the standard American experiences occasioned by overcooked vegetables, gray meat, and half-products. Though adored by many, Child had her detractors as well. Feminists never forgave her for saying in an interview she gave to the *New York Times* at the top of her career in 1966 that a woman's role was to marry a nice guy and relish domestic life.[23] With her very characteristic voice, very tall physique, and offbeat manner, Child was an easy target for satirists. The vision of the social world disseminated by her show was polemically referenced and questioned in various artistic projects.[24]

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important women, who tended to be pushed outside the dominant, male-centric historical narrative. As opposed to this focus, Rosler stood up for anonymous homemakers. On *The Dinner Party*, see Maria Poprzęcka, "Judy Chicago. Uczta bogiń," in Maria Poprzęcka, *Uczta bogiń. Kobiety, sztuka i życie* (Warszawa: Agora, 2012), 194–216.

21 Heike Eipeldauer, "Table/Tableau und der weiblich codierte Raum des Stilllebens," in *Augenschmaus vom Essen im Stillleben*, ed. Ingried Brugger and Heike Eipeldauer (München, Berlin, London, and New York: Prestel, 2010), 157.

22 Eipeldauer, "Table/Tableau und der weiblich codierte Raum des Stilllebens," 157. Rosler was certainly inspired by Julia Child and probably by Hitchcock as well. When the furious homemaker demonstrates how to use the kitchen knife, she performs a sweeping stabbing gesture at the level of the heart. The same movement is seen in *Psycho* when a woman is killed behind the shower curtain.

23 Katarzyna Bosacka, "Tu Julia Child. Bon appétit!," *Wysokie Obcasy*, 6 October 2009; http://www.wysokieobcasy.pl/wysokie-obcasy/1,96856,7103518,Tu_Julia_Child__Bon_appetit_.html (Access 18 January 2017).

24 Besides *Semiotics of the Kitchen,* such projects include, for example, Suzanne Lacy's video *Learn Where the Meat Comes from* (1976) and Nora Ephron's feature film *Julie & Julia* (2009).

The croissant-focused episode of *The French Chef* opens with the demonstration of a few less familiar kitchen implements: a potato ricer, a mandolin slicer, which cuts vegetables into equal, thin slices, a chafing dish, and a bizarre tool from sponge steel. Like Child in her culinary show, Rosler also appears in front of the camera to present the functions of cooking utensils. The young woman in the performance is versed in the uses of the kitchen equipment, and knows perfectly how an icepick, a hamburger press, or a slotted spoon are to be manipulated. However, her presentation does not proceed as smoothly as in the TV show. *Semiotics of the Kitchen* looks into the fate of an average female homemaker. The artist employs humble everyday utility objects which appear in a predetermined order. All her gestures are nervous because although she is well acquainted with the devices she demonstrates, there is no love lost between them. By appearing before the camera, she steps onto the frontline of the fight for survival in the kitchen or for liberation from the daily duties of a mother, wife, and woman. The action she launches also includes a critique of the culture which subjugates and orders the world by the principles of reason. *Semiotics of the Kitchen* resonates with the insights of Theodor W. Adorno, who traced signs of enslavement by instrumental reason in inconspicuous daily activities: "Technology is making gestures precise and brutal, and with them men. It expels from movements all hesitation, deliberation, civility. It subjects them to the implacable, as it were ahistorical demands of objects."[25] Adorno attributed the crisis of modern culture to cold, scientific-technical rationalism stemming from the logic of the Enlightenment. This logic envisioned a lucid model of a society founded on domination. In modern society, nature is subordinated, just as people are, and serves merely as a material from which things are produced to cater to human needs.

The same happens to the woman in the modern, functional kitchen, as she is reduced to a machine that efficiently operates kitchen instruments, and is ideally expected to be economic, impassive, quick, and hygienic. Rosler wages an unequal war on things and the culture that legitimizes these things, in this way visually rendering the critique of culture advanced by Adorno, who deplores in *Minima Moralia* that:

> The movements machines demand of their users already have the violent, hard-hitting, unresting jerkiness of Fascist maltreatment. Not least to blame for the withering of experience is the fact that things, under the

25 Theodor W. Adorno, *Minima Moralia: Reflections from Damaged Life*, trans. Edmund F.N. Jephcott (London: Verso, 1974), 40.

FIGURE 7 Martha Rosler, *Semiotics of the Kitchen*, letter "K" (knife), 1975

> law of pure functionality, assume a form that limits contact with them to mere operation, and tolerates no surplus, either in freedom of contact or in autonomy of things, which would survive as the core of experience, because it is not consumed by the moment of action.[26]

As a female artist, Rosler attempts to find a code on which to rely in interpreting her own position in the system of meanings, and has recourse to the most elementary order of the alphabet (Fig. 7). This device makes the universe of everyday activities appear regulated by an objectively existing principle which promises to put the world of chaotic experiences in order once and for all. This enterprise, however, ends in dismal failure. Instead of calming down, the performer unravels more and more in irritation, which Heike Eipeldauer relates: "As the survey of the semiotic inventory proceeds, gestures become increasingly aggressive; kitchen utensils mutate into dangerous weaponry, which [the artist] discovers to be an instrument of domestic oppression."[27]

26 Adorno, *Minima Moralia*, 40.

27 Eipeldauer, "Table/Tableau und der weiblich codierte Raum des Stilllebens," 157.

Though objects are pedantically matched with sounds and actions, nothing is in fact explained. That the entire venture has miscarried is pointedly revealed, when Rosler arrives at letter Y. With her arms raised over her head, her body turns into this very letter and, simultaneously, she utters the sound of it, which is the question "why" at the same time. The freely swinging movement of the knife held by Rosler draws the last letter – Z – in imitation of Zorro's gesture, which Charlotte Brunsdon interprets as indicating that the semiotics of the kitchen have nothing to do with cooking, but communicate "containment, fury, aggression, resentment, and potential revenge."[28] In spite of this eruption, the ending is passive. The artist folds her hands and shrugs her shoulders, unable to answer why. She does not know why she has been reduced to a sign in the cultural order which inscribes her, as a woman, in the space of the kitchen.

Rosler cannot figure out why – why this happens to her, why she cannot be an autonomous individual, and why she must be an element in an imposed cultural order. Although the situation is highly dramatic, she does not attempt the "ultimate" solution of removing the obstacle, destroying the kitchen, escaping. More than thirty years later, this will be accomplished by Elżbieta Jabłońska.

3 Elżbieta Jabłońska: the Impossible Kitchen

Elżbieta Jabłońska's performance *Kuchnia – kolekcja niemożliwa* [*Kitchen: The Impossible Collection*] features a woman who tries to lay the table. She visibly struggles to arrange the tablecloth evenly. She nervously puts mugs and plates, all clattering, on the table. She fails to reach the table with a tray of glasses, as they fall crushing down. She makes another attempt. This marks the critical moment which triggers snowballing aggression. With her second attempt failing, the protagonist deliberately smashes one plate after another, and then wrecks the table, the cupboards, and the entire kitchen. She breaks free.[29]

The performance *Kuchnia – kolekcja niemożliwa* took place in Gdańsk in 2007. It was staged in a purpose-made oversized kitchen filled with scaled-up furniture, which had earlier been used by Jabłońska in similar projects in Berlin (2003), Kraków (2004), and Tallin (2004). Their point was invariably to bring into the spotlight the oppressive quality of the kitchen (Fig. 9). The

28 Charlotte Brunsdon, "Feminism, Postfeminism, Martha, Martha, and Nigella," *Cinema Journal* 44, no. 2 (2005): 111.

29 I discussed these two respective works by Jabłońska and Rosler in more detail in "Trzy artystki w kuchni. Performance i krytyka społeczna," in *Zwrot performatywny w estetyce*, ed. Lilianna Bieszczad (Kraków: Libron, 2013).

Berlin performance had an additional social subtext as the artist's idea was to employ Polish female immigrants illegally working in the German capital to cook in her impractical kitchen:[30]

> The kitchen blown out of proportion was supposed to symbolize the discomfort felt by Polish women who had to leave their families and homes to work abroad. This is an extremely paradoxical situation as they must leave their families in order to provide for them. You take care of another home for your own one to function better, in theory at least, but without you. There is something as absurd to it as cooking in an awkward kitchen, which is too big and hence not functional, where every movement you make takes double effort.[31]

The oversized kitchen also had a more general symbolism to it, figuratively conveying the insight that any activity, even if one likes it, may become a burden (Fig. 8). The kitchen may as readily be a site of experimentation and a source of satisfaction drawn from doing inventive things as it may be a place of anguish if it becomes synonymous with the repeatability and monotony of everyday duties. Our familiar space and well-tested ways of doing things stop being "habitual" and user-friendly; they resist us. Given this, we must reflectively consider the everyday, which as a rule goes unnoticed. Our everydayness is brought into question, becomes an object of conscious reflection, and consequently ceases to be everydayness, turning into a problem to be solved.

Jabłońska makes a statement on behalf of a host of anonymous women, whom she regards as heroic figures. This heroism is also on Giard's mind, when she points out that:

> In cooking, one always has to *calculate*, both time and money, not go beyond the budget, not overestimate one's work speed, not make the schoolboy late. One has to *evaluate* in the twinkling of an eye what will be the most cost-effective in terms of price, preparation, and flavor. One has to know how to *improvise* with panache, know what to do when fresh milk "turns" on the stove, when meat, taken out of the package and trimmed of fat, reveals itself to be not enough to feed four guests.[32]

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30 Cf. Dorota Koczanowicz, "Ciało jako wehikuł krytyki społecznej w perspektywie somaestetyki Richarda Shustermana," in *Powrót modernizmu?*, ed. Teresa Pękala (Lublin: Wydawnictwo UMCS, 2013).

31 An unpublished interview with Elżbieta Jabłońska I conducted in September 2011.

32 Certeau, Giard, and Mayol, *The Practice of Everyday Life* 2, 200.

FIGURE 8 Elżbieta Jabłońska, *Kuchnia – kolekcja niemożliwa* [*Kitchen: The Impossible Collection*], *Translate: The Impossible Collection* exhibition, Wyspa Art Institute, Gdańsk 2008; photo: M. Szlaga

Everydayness turned problem afflicts Jabłońska herself. How can one be a devoted mother and not cave in to the barrage of small issues which drive artistic work away? Can one possibly bring together the roles of the mother and the artist in harmony? These questions sparked a project that won Jabłońska recognition. In 2002, she produced a series of large-format photos which she named *Supermatka* [*Supermother*]. The *Supermatka* pictures were taken in the kitchen, the hall, and the living room of the 38-square meter apartment in which the young artist lived at that time. Jabłońska dressed up as Superman, Spiderman, and Batman, the favorite superheroes of her son, Antek, who invariably accompanied her in the images (Fig. 10). Besides Antek's partiality, another reason behind Jabłońska's choice of these pop-cultural characters was that they had special powers which were not directly visible in regular life, with each of the protagonists seeming to be an entirely different person than they in fact were. Endowed with capacities unavailable to an average person, they lived in two worlds, and would abruptly step out of the ordinary one to perform heroic deeds, rushing to the rescue whenever the circumstances called for such an intervention. Being a mother is a series of exceptional situations, and entails endlessly waiting in the wings to "rescue" the child. The child

FIGURE 9 Elżbieta Jabłońska, *Kuchnia* [*The Kitchen*], *Under the White and Red Flag: New Art from Poland* exhibition, Estonian Art Museum, Tallinn 2004
© E. JABŁOŃSKA

calls for help when hungry, tired, or simply bored. Jabłońska had to transform into Supermother to win some room for her artistic practice amid a relentless barrage of everyday duties. Besides popular culture, she also found inspiration for her project in the Christian iconography. In her photos, the mother and the son adopt postures emulating well-known representations of the Virgin and the Infant Christ. The mother feeds her son, and he snuggles up his mother's caring body in scenes which exude the special and intimate quality of their relationship.

Let us revisit Jabłońska's *Kitchen*. In the Gdańsk-based Wyspa Art Institute, all the kitchen paraphernalia, including the furniture and the utensils, were wrapped up in paper and sealed with tape. Jabłońska unpacked all the items one by one and placed them on the table one after another. From the very beginning, she looked annoyed by the way she tore the paper apart and arranged the plates, glasses, and pitchers. The objects refused to yield to her will. They resisted. Jabłońska worked faster and faster in an attempt to complete her task, but – increasingly nervous and distraught, as she was – her gestures were ever clumsier. Bringing the chore to an end proved surprisingly

FIGURE 10 Elżbieta Jabłońska, *Supermatka* [*Supermother*], Zachęta National Art Gallery, Warszawa 2002
© E. JABŁOŃSKA

difficult. The resistance put up by matter threw the woman off balance. Finally, she started knocking the objects off the table only to smash the furniture to pieces with a huge hammer. When the kitchen changed into a heap of rubble, the performance finished.

Not without reason, the performance was held as part of an international project on intercultural translation. The kitchen, which had been constructed for the *Biały Mazur* [*White Mazurka*] exhibition in Berlin and in Kraków, was premeditatedly and thoughtfully destroyed in Gdańsk, transferring the specific experiences of Polish female migrants into a new context. In Jabłońska's projects, the kitchen acquires a new meaning to serve less as a metaphor for the socio-cultural subordination of women and more as a sign of the existence of a female community of being. This experience is particularly pronounced in the lives of Polish immigrant women, who build their community in a foreign and often unwelcoming setting (Fig. 11).

Two radically divergent notions of community vie against each other in contemporary debates. The "classic" concept, founded by Johann Gottfried

FIGURE 11 Elżbieta Jabłońska, *Kuchnia* [*The Kitchen*], *Biały Mazur* [*White Mazurka*] exhibition, Bunkier Sztuki, Kraków 2004
© E. JABŁOŃSKA

Herder and currently most vividly exemplified by Charles Taylor, binds community to language understood as the expression of the values of a given culture. Feminist thinkers have been deeply critical of this position, and have insisted that the mechanisms of community-formation may be informed not by language and values, but by common experiences shared by a given group. For example, women's experiences account for a non-linguistic factor that forges the unity of females from various cultures. The same is true about sexual minorities or, for that matter, heroic men. Rather than universalizing, such experiences are very concrete, but despite that – or perhaps just because of that – they may weld the community together. If interpreted in these terms, Jabłońska's performance speaks the language of bodily experience, which is familiar to women from various cultures, who make up a community despite their different backgrounds.[33]

33 The critical potential of Jabłońska's performance *Kuchnia – kolekcja niemożliwa* also refers to the relations between the artist, the work, and the institution. In staging an

Everydayness, Brach-Czaina warns, sets a trap for us, as "our existence is sucked in by the everyday and thus, as it were, equated, identified with it, so that we should even be grateful because we owe our existence to everydayness; but everydayness destroys as well. It looks as if we admittedly can breathe but only on condition that we consent to be choked."[34] I believe we all know this feeling of frustration that made Jabłońska endeavor to radically dispose of the "adversary" – everyday chores and monotony. The artist conjures up a moment in which ordinary objects seem to be tightly enveloped in our helplessness, acquire hostile personalities, resist, and begin to put up a fight against us. The liberation may be momentary, perhaps even illusory, because we are entirely steeped in the everyday. It is impossible to battle your way out of it. A brief respite is offered by festive occasions, carnivals, and extraordinary events. At such moments, a brief "abrupt flash cuts through and recasts the whole of our existential space for a while, suspending the quotidian as if it were nothing else or more than a darkness driven away by the light of the extraordinary."[35] Nevertheless, the everyday swiftly reinstates its rules. The invariably stubborn dust settles on the furniture, and tablecloths unremittingly come out in stains.

4 Mierle Laderman Ukeles: the Art of Everyday Maintenance

> After every war
> someone has to clean up.
> Things won't
> straighten themselves up, after all.
>
> WISŁAWA SZYMBORSKA, "The End and the Beginning"[36]

Jabłońska persistently wonders whether it is possible to be a good mother and a fulfilled artist at the same time.[37] In the late 1960s, similar queries haunted another young mother, Mierle Laderman Ukeles. In a magazine published

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artwork, Jabłońska destroys a museum exhibit. In this way, she disrupts the convention of the museum as a location where artistic objects are collected and put on display.

34 Brach-Czaina, *Szczeliny istnienia*, 76.

35 Brach-Czaina, *Szczeliny istnienia*, 78.

36 Wisława Szymborska, "The End and the Beginning," in *Miracle Fair: Selected Poems of Wisława Szymborska*, trans. Joanna Trzeciak (New York and London: W.W. Norton and Company, Inc., 2001), 48.

37 For a more detailed discussion of Jabłońska's work as a whole, see Dorota Koczanowicz, "In the Gallery and in the Kitchen: Somaesthetics and Social Critique in Elżbieta Jabłońska's Works," in *Philosophy as Lived Experience: Navigating the Dichotomies between Thought*

by the Queens Museum for the retrospective exhibition *Mierle Laderman Ukeles: Maintenance Art*, which opened in September 2016, Ukeles revealed what she had felt when embarking on her path as an artist:

> Art is freedom expressed. I became an artist to be free: free to use the gifts given to me by my artist-heroes. Uncle Jackson Pollock gave me the gift of the body active within the art-making process; Grandfather Marcel Duchamp, the gift of naming anew; Uncle Mark Rothko, the gift of moving from one dimension into another. I worked for years to become a free artist. Then in 1968, we were blessed to have a child. We fell madly in love with her. I became a maintenance worker, not only to do the work necessary to keep her alive but to do the work to help her thrive! I learned that Jackson, Marcel and Mark didn't change diapers; I fell out of their picture.[38]

Faced with a crisis, Ukeles resolved to merge the two people who inhabited her body: the free artist and the mother-cum-homemaker with her multiple obligations and chores. Unable to reconcile her domestic work with her art practice, she decided to make them one thing. In the autumn of 1969, she wrote: "I am an artist. I am a woman. I am a wife. I am a mother. (Random order). I do a hell of a lot of washing, cleaning, cooking, renewing, supporting, preserving, etc. Also, up to now separately I 'do' Art."[39] Further on, in her *Maintenance Art Manifesto 1969! Proposal for an exhibition "CARE,"* she proclaimed that whatever activity she – an artist – performed was a work of art. This artistic device removed the dichotomy; the duties did not vanish, though. However, from that moment on, cooking, laundry, cleaning, hair-washing, shopping, paying bills, etc. – the quintessence of everydayness – boasted the status of artistic practices, and their photographic documentation provided their physical manifestation. In the subsequent stage, Ukeles transferred her project over into a museum, where the floor needed to be washed and the paintings needed to be dusted as well.

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and Action, ed. Marianna Papastephanou, Torill Strand, and Anne Pirrie (Berlin: LIT Verlag, 2014), 77–91.

38 "Mierle Laderman Ukeles: Maintenance Art"; http://www.queensmuseum.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/Mierle%20Laderman%20Ukeles_Maintenance%20Art_Brochure.pdf (Access 9 June 2021).

39 Mierle Laderman Ukeles, *Manifesto for Maintenance Art, 1969!* https://www.artpractical.com/uploads/docs/5.4-Ukeles_MANIFESTO.pdf (Access 9 June 2021).

Ukeles's *Manifesto* takes barely four typed pages. The message is deeply emotional; fittingly so, as the text was written at a moment of desperation and "in a cold fury." Ukeles does not mince her words: "Maintenance is a drag; it takes all the fucking time (lit.)."[40] Manifestos are by default all about protesting and demanding change. Karl Marx knew what he was saying when he referred to the manifesto as revolutionary poetry, whereby he built on the etymological, Greek meaning of *poiesis*, which denoted an act of creating something.[41] Manifestoes naturally call for attention. Demands are shouted out at the top of one's voice, exclamation marks galore are used, and sharp words follow upon each other's heels. The task of the manifesto is to bring "the [political] unconscious in the open" and "articulat[e] what has been hitherto unarticulated."[42] Consistently with this generic convention, Ukeles's *Manifesto* mobilizes accusations, grand words, and capital letters to highlight the magnitude of the problem. This problem lies in the unequal position of two cultural systems: development and maintenance: "Development: pure individual creation; the new; change; progress; advance; excitement; flight or fleeing. Maintenance: keep the dust off the pure individual creation; preserve the new; sustain the change; protect progress; defend and prolong the advance; renew the excitement; repeat the flight."[43]

The former – more valued – system is represented by avant-garde art with its constant pursuit of change. The latter, which provides an indispensable base but is less spectacular, is treated as less important. It is beleaguered by stagnation and boredom, as it offers no room for novelty and variation. Nevertheless, this is exactly where hope for survival comes from in the face of the question asked on the first page of Ukeles's *Manifesto*: "after the revolution, who's going to pick up the garbage on Monday morning?"[44] Her exhibitions and performances aimed to throw into relief everyday servicing activities, such as maintenance, cleaning, etc., without which homes and cities cannot effectively function, but which are pushed down the ladder of cultural status and, consequently, insufficiently rewarded, if at all: "jobs = minimum wages, housewives = no pay."[45] As time and again demonstrated in feminist critiques, the woman is strongly ascribed to the sphere of the everyday. In social realities, women are usually responsible for making meals for their families, keeping the

40 Laderman Ukeles, *Manifesto*.
41 See Martin Puchner, *Poetry of the Revolution: Marx, Manifestos, and the Avant-Gardes* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2006), 1.
42 Puchner, *Poetry of the Revolution*, 2.
43 Laderman Ukeles, *Manifesto*.
44 Laderman Ukeles, *Manifesto*.
45 Laderman Ukeles, *Manifesto*.

home in order, and catering to the needs of the entire household. Laborious though all these efforts may be, they are not defined as work. Feminist sociologists undertook to change such perceptions of household chores by documenting how hard women worked at homes and insisting that their labor could and should have a price set on it. Philosophical endeavors took two different routes.[46] In one of them, energies were invested in developing a women's language, one more aligned with women's experiences, and in reassessing ethical notions to fashion a new ethics centered around traditionally feminine values, such as care and nurture.[47]

The point was to eliminate the dissonance which Ukeles addressed in her interview for *Art in America* in 2009: "Half of my week I was the mother, and the other half the artist. But, I thought to myself, 'this is ridiculous, I am the one.'"[48] While this moment involved clashing head-on with life and disappointments, it also heralded intensive creative pursuits. Ukeles sought a way out of the deadlock by contriving a *Care* exhibition, in which the two systems – of change and of maintenance – were to be brought together and unite forces. The idea was as simple as it was revolutionary in proposing that "maintenance" should be elevated to the rank of art. Ukeles transplanted everyday life into gallery space, and declared: "I will sweep and wax the floors, dust everything, wash the walls (i.e. 'floor paintings, dust works, soap-sculpture, wall-paintings'), cook, invite people to eat, make agglomerations and dispositions of all functional refuse."[49] Gallery events were envisaged as accompanied by interviews about people's attitudes to cleaning and an exhibition featuring waste recycled through and into art.

Ukeles's *Manifesto* was not limited to the private sphere. It also pondered how one could carry on at home and in town and save the planet, having only limited resources at one's disposal. This concerned not only finite natural resources and time constraints, but also linguistic barriers: "At that time, there

46 Cf. Ewa Majewska, "Histeryczka w rodzinnej ekonomii Sigmunda Freuda," in *Freud i nowoczesność*, ed. Zofia Rosińska, Joanna Michalik and Przemysław Bursztyka (Kraków: Universitas, 2008), 191–205.

47 Ukeles's actions in many senses paralleled the recommendations of the ethics of care, whose principles were formulated in Carol Gilligan's *In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1982), where ethics is redirected from observance of a universal norm or rule to individual actions aimed at protecting/promoting/fostering positive relations with others.

48 Bartholomew Ryan, "Manifesto for Maintenance: A Conversation with Mierle Laderman Ukeles," *Art in America*, 20 March 2009; http://www.artinamericamagazine.com/news-features/interviews/draft-mierle-interview/ (Access 7 July 2017).

49 Laderman Ukeles, *Manifesto*.

was no language, no culture, no recognition, and very little honor for service work and service workers: those at home and those who work outside. So I set out to make this visible, i.e. to make a revolution with everyone in the picture."[50] She started all by herself, but then included a handful of workers and subsequently three hundred of the city's maintenance staff. In the following step, she started a collaboration with 10,000 New York sanitation workers.[51] Ukeles has woven together two discourses (feminist and environmental) and the practice of participatory art. Her projects have been powered by the belief that reality must be re-named. By exercising the freedom of naming in the spirit of Duchamp, the artist has altered the status of everyday activities. Her practices have contributed to a reappraisal both of life, which basks in the light of art to take a new position in culture, and of art, which Ukeles's projects haul from avant-garde alienation and harness to articulate the anxieties and hopes of everydayness.

Ukeles's *Manifesto* has been heard and has opened many a door to her. In 1973, Lucy Lippard invited her to take part in the prestigious *c.7500* exhibition of female conceptual artists. In 1977, Ukeles welcomed an invitation to collaborate with the NYC Sanitation Department and has enjoyed the status of its resident artist till the present day. This success notwithstanding, Ukeles has no doubt that today, more than fifty years after the *Manifesto*, work is still needed on the equality of the two systems – the system of development, which promotes individualism, and the system of maintenance, which sides with the social value of care.[52]

5 Marina Abramović: the Holy Cook

In the Christian tradition, the body, which is deemed susceptible to the seduction of the senses, tends to be accused of impeding spiritual development. Consequently, the flesh must be exorcised. For example, St. Simeon took refuge from temptations by spending years atop a pillar, and St. Anthony sought shelter from unwholesome excitements in the Libyan Desert, though, as we know, fighting them was a steep challenge even there. While the body is often blamed for imprisoning the soul, the soul sometimes stands in the body's way

50 http://www.queensmuseum.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/Mierle%20Laderman%20Ukeles_Maintenance%20Art_Brochure.pdf (Access 9 June 2021).

51 See Patricia C. Philips, *Mierle Laderman Ukeles: Maintenance Art* (New York and London, Prestel, 2016).

52 Cf. footnote 48.

and paradoxically hinders its good offices. One such story inspired a series of photographs by Marina Abramović. *The Kitchen: Homage to Saint Therese* is a set of nine large-format pictures and a video which records performative actions in Gijón. Wearing a black dress, Abramović enacts the saint: she cooks, levitates, and meditates on transience among kitchen utensils.

In the collective imagination, St. Teresa of Ávila is associated with ecstatic suspension, vividly imaged in the celebrated sculpture by Bernini, whom Ernst Hans Gombrich called the master of "fervid exultation and mystic transport at which the artists of the Baroque were aiming."[53] In choosing to represent an instance of the grace of pure love through the piercing of the heart, Bernini "deliberately cast aside all restraint, and carried us to a pitch of emotion."[54] This was the only adequate way to give form to the paroxysm of love and pain – "the mortal passion" – which engendered delight beyond human imagination.

Where is it that Abramović carries us? In 2009, she photographed herself in an abandoned convent kitchen, where nuns used to cook for 8,000 orphans, victims of General Franco's destructive politics. This architecturally extraordinary venue seemed to her a suitable site for both cooking and meditation. Abramović dismisses the Christian iconography which governs the modes of picturing ecstatic states. Her St. Teresa neither swoons nor dwells in some remote realm; instead, she fixes her very sober eyes right on the viewer. The artist hovers over the metal worktop which features an arrangement of aluminum pots and a set of slotted spoons and ladles. She is fully in control of the situation. Her body is not torn by mystical spasms; instead, with her legs and arms firmly outstretched in the semblance of Leonardo's encircled *Vitruvian Man*, she triumphantly floats mid-air with a dignity redolent of Ascension scenes. The photos have none of the Baroque flamboyance, turmoil, or restlessness, and their monochromatic temperance bespeaks harmony, calm, and grandeur (Fig. 12).

When reading St. Teresa's writings, Abramović came across an episode in which the hungry and levitation-weary nun decided to take some rest and make some food. Alas, she was unable to control the spiritual energy, which again carried her away – this time hoisting her above the stove. She was hungry, and the meal was getting burned. Teresa did not conceal her displeasure at the operations of supernatural forces. Abramović was captivated and amused by this vision. She is likely to understand moments when an extraordinary

53 Ernst Hans Gombrich, *The Story of Art with 370 Illustrations* (New York: Phaidon Press, 1951), 328.

54 Gombrich, *Story of Art*, 328.

FIGURE 12
Marina Abramović, *The Kitchen*, 2009

gift proves a disturbance to everyday life. For many artists, male and female alike, their talent may similarly prove to be both a privilege and a curse, which while bearing out their special sensitivity often sends them on a collision course with everyday life. Abramović's photos suggest that everydayness and heroism tend to share the same space. A similar thought must have occurred to St. Teresa of Ávila, when she assured her nuns that "the Lord walks among the pots and pans,"[55] and in this way reconciled the biblical Martha and Mary.[56]

Whereas the works in *The Kitchen* series were certainly inspired by the life of St. Teresa and Renaissance and Baroque painting,[57] they have a profound

55 Saint Teresa of Avila, *The Book of Her Foundations*, in *Collected Works of St. Teresa of Avila, Volume 3*, trans. Kieran Kavanaugh, O.C.D., and Otilio Rodrigues, O.C.D. (Washington, D.C.: ICS Publications, 1985), 120.

56 Cf. Cristina Mazzoni, *The Women in God's Kitchen: Cooking, Eating, and Spiritual Writing* (New York: Continuum, 2005), 128–30.

57 Mateo Feijóo discerns the beauty of Bellini's Madonnas in Marina's eyes, and traces back the relationship between architecture and the human figure to Giotto's style. Other influences include Caravaggio and Zurbarán.

autobiographical facet to them as well. One of Abramović's earliest memories goes back to a moment early in her childhood when she decided to try and take a step towards sanctity: "One day, I was waiting for my grandmother. She was praying in the church, and I saw this thing in the font where you have to dip your finger to cross yourself. I was thinking that if I drank all this water then I would get holy. I was six years old and I stood up on a chair and drank the water. I just got sick. I didn't get holy."[58]

Teresa was only one year older when, aged seven, she was so excited by reading the lives of saints that she felt an irresistible desire for martyrdom. She wanted to follow in the footsteps of those who, it seemed to her, paid but a "very cheap" price "for going to enjoy God."[59] Furnished with food for the journey, she set off with her younger brother Rodrigo "to the land of the Moors" in order to "beg them, out of love of God, to cut off our heads there."[60] The expedition came to an untimely end when the children bumped into their uncle Francisco de Cepeda, who took them back home. With the failure of this venture, the youngsters decided to become hermits in the garden of their house.[61]

Some of Abramović's performances have made use of food. Among other victuals, she employed onions, wine, and honey as her favorite "own-brand products."[62] In an interview, she once said that it had only been a matter of time until her practice as an artist moved to the kitchen; she had been toying with this idea for a long time, seeing that the kitchen evoked powerful emotions. Indeed, the kitchen is where children take their first lesson in sensory and motor skills. The kitchen nurtures a sense of security:

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58 Stephen Lucas, "Marina Abramović's Kitchen: The Legendary Performance Artist Talks to Dazed," *Dazed*, 12 November 2009; http://www.dazeddigital.com/artsandculture/article/5849/1/marina-abramovics-kitchen (Access 15 July 2021).

59 Teresa of Avila, *The Book of Her Life*, trans. Kieran Kavanaugh, O.C.D., and Otilio Rodrigues, O.C.D. (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing Company, 2008), 3.

60 Teresa of Avila, *The Book of Her Life*, 3.

61 Teresa of Avila, *The Book of Her Life*, 3.

62 In 2011, Abramović designed a dessert called *Volcano Flambé* for the New York restaurant Park Avenue Winter. Food also appears in her performance *Communist Body/Fascist Body* of 1979, where it conveys the cultural and economic differences between East- and West-European countries at the time. In 2017, Abramović began a collaboration with Ladurée, a famous producer of macarons. Her macarons were designed as a memory capsule, and tasting them revealed the artist's identity. They were embellished with her family's coat of arms showing a wolf eating a sheep. The military Prussian blue of the macarons combined the memory of the ocean with an emotional remembrance of her militant parents. For its part, the coffee filling again evoked the recollections of her grandmother's kitchen, which was suffused in the aroma of freshly made coffee every morning.

> The child looks, observing the mother's movements, admiring the strength of kneading hands; the mystery of the sourdough ball that rises in its glass container is fascinating; he or she silently appreciates the cleverness of the small knife that nimbly slices off the extra pie dough from the rim of the pie pan; he or she learns to accomplish simple tasks (cracking open nuts without smashing them, pitting apricots, peeling apples); he or she learns the names of dishes and utensils, to appreciate action verbs or degrees of doneness.[63]

As St. Teresa, Abramović goes on an imaginary journey to her childhood home. Most of her pieces involve fashioning a mental-physical space in front of the audience and working with her body. A great number of them can be labelled as the art of suffering. *The Kitchen* is an exception in this respect. Rather than a place of vexation and arduous, tedious toiling, it is an idealized space of memories and nostalgia.

"I receive so much pleasure going into the kitchen. Every time, I feel like I'm going back to my childhood,"[64] the protagonist of Fanny Deschamps's novel exults. Abramović had the good luck to grow up in the kitchen. For her, going back there did not mean returning to the kitchen of her mother, with whom she had a fraught relationship, but revisiting her grandmother's kitchen, which was special to her. As she recalls:

> my entire childhood was about going around the kitchen. The kitchen was the center of my world. The kitchen was the place where I would tell my grandmother my dreams. The kitchen was the place where she would tell me stories, and the kitchen was the place where all the secrets were told. It was a kind of place where the spiritual world and the daily world met and mixed.[65]

The attachment to the kitchen as the center of the domestic universe (and that not only of a child) is what Abramović shares with Jabłońska, who cherishes a fondness for the kitchen, despite all her reservations. Jabłońska is vocal about how difficult it is to avoid frustration and boredom when duly fulfilling domestic duties, but the kitchen is a "small paradise" for her as well. Asked about her associations with the word "kitchen," she replied:

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63 Certeau, Giard, and Mayol, *The Practice of Everyday Life 2*, 191.

64 Fanny Deschamps, *Croque-en-bouche* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1976), 236; qtd. in Certeau, Giard, and Mayol, *The Practice of Everyday Life 2*, 191.

65 Lucas, "Marina Abramović's Kitchen."

> The kitchen is a patch of our tiny apartment, which is always very busy; there's always somebody in it, drinking or eating, or simply hanging around the fridge in search of a gastronomical wonder. Plenty of things happen in the kitchen. Kitchens have always been places of meetings and conversations; oh, kitchens have always been the most interesting and merriest places; yes, basically, the kitchen is a small paradise. Far removed from formal rooms and studies.[66]

The flavors of childhood for which one longs are more often than not the flavors of one's grandmother's cuisine. They become firmly fixed in our memories, and, as a result of idealization processes, easily become a source of nostalgia. Carlo Petrini, an advocate of the "right to taste," has no doubts that

> we always remember what our grandmothers cooked. Most people in the world remember their grandmothers' work and love. Their cuisine. *La cucina della nonna* – the grandma's cuisine – is basically a distinct notion. My grandma would spend most of the day in the kitchen, and her cooking was masterful. Very simple and very good. Fish with butter and herbs, meat stews.[67]

The kitchen represents the paradise of the childhood world and an oasis of security. Depriving a child of the kitchen essentially means depriving him/her of childhood. "To keep a child out of the kitchen," Gaston Bachelard remonstrates, "is to condemn him to an exile that distances him from dreams he will never know. The dreamlike qualities of foods are activated by observing their preparation. [...] Happy is the man who, as a young child, 'hung around' the woman of the house."[68]

As a result of emigration and a nomadic life, the loss of this world in Abramović's adult life triggered her nostalgia for the mythical past. Her *The Kitchen* is an artwork of recollection, but it does not directly concern the flavors of childhood, which have been irretrievably lost. Although they mean so much to her, Abramović does not endeavor to reproduce her grandmother's recipes and dishes. Instead, she inscribes herself in the family's culinary history in her

66 Qtd. in Sebastian Cichocki, "Trzech herosów w kuchni, nie licząc Antka. O sztuce Elżbiety Jabłońskiej," *Artmix* 6 (2003); http://free.art.pl/galeria.artmix/ela/ej/teksty/tekst5.htm (Access 31 January 2012).

67 Modelski, *Piąty smak*, 40.

68 Gaston Bachelard, *La Terre et les Reves de la volonté* (Paris: Librairie José Corti, 1948), 86; qtd. in Certeau, Giard, and Mayol, *The Practice of Everyday Life* 2, 191.

own, unique way. The exhibition catalogue includes a series of the artist's own spiritual recipes, which will be of no use in the kitchen, because they are guidelines for inedible dishes: "a series of haikus, prayers and mantras to liberate the mind from the confused flow of thinking."[69]

The kitchen which served as the setting of Abramović's photographs has its other, bleak facet, as it witnessed oppression and was the stage on which the drama of a lonely childhood deprived of familial affection unfolded. Holiness, which unexpectedly emanates there, also reverberates in recipes which will help one regain the sense of belonging and security, and reclaim childhood. In his introduction to the catalogue accompanying *The Kitchen: Homage to Saint Therese* exhibition at Madrid's La Fábrice in 2012, where Abramović's photograph series was first put on display, Mateo Feijóo suggests that the magic of these recipes is the only cure for "*meteorite* children, children of *pain*, children of *sperm*, children of *language* and of *dreams*";[70] relief is afforded by "breakfast with a glass of liquid gold. Lunch with fresh fig; dinner with a glass of liquid silver."[71] Feijóo cites spiritual recipes originally featured in *Spirit Cooking with Essential Aphrodisiac Recipes*, which Abramović released in 1996, for example:

> With a sharp knife,
> cut deeply into the middle finger
> of your left hand.
> Eat the pain.[72]
>
> Sprinkle fresh morning urine
> over nightmare dreams.[73]

6 The Women's Place

In her struggle to make room for art in everyday life, Abramović adopted a different strategy than Martha Rosler, Elżbieta Jabłońska, and Mierle Laderman Ukeles. She stripped the ordinary kitchen of its materiality and focused on its symbolic dimension and spiritual recipes. The title of one of Katarzyna

69 Mateo Feijóo, "Moments of Certitude," in Marina Abramović, *The Kitchen: Homage to Saint Therese* (Madrid: La Fábrica, 2012), 13.
70 Feijóo, "Moments of Certitude," 11 (italics original).
71 Qtd. in Feijóo, "Moments of Certitude," 11.
72 Feijóo, "Moments of Certitude," 24–25.
73 Feijóo, "Moments of Certitude," 20–21.

Kozyra's projects proclaims that *W sztuce marzenia stają się rzeczywistością* [*In Art, Dreams Come True*, literally: *In Art, Dreams Become Reality*]. Art is a domain of unlimited freedom. Abramović uses this freedom to commit herself to spiritual cuisine. Being able to choose is a privilege and a condition of satisfaction. Regrettably, for most women the physical kitchen is an inexorable fate, and the range of their options is limited to choosing between tomato soup and borscht for dinner. The dilemma of whether I cook today or not is precluded. The evident answer was determined by the order of culture very long ago.

Women who struggled with their culture-appointed duties, equally unable to derive any satisfaction from them or to abandon them, were supposed to have their lot alleviated by household guides and inventions facilitating kitchen work. Industrialization brought forth a range of amenities that made household chores easier. However, there was a downside to these improvements, since, as Barry Higman points out in *How Food Made History*, "[t]he greater the range of technologies available – from piped water to electricity and gas, toaster to microwave – the more common it became to expect the women of the house to carry the full load of food preparation."[74]

Home-making manuals, big and small, cooking sections in glossy magazines, and TV shows such as *The Perfect Housewife* enjoy undying popularity. At the end of the 19th century, Isabella Beeton's *Book of Household Management* proved an absolute bestseller. Bill Bryson observes that the writer "made clear from the first line that running a household was a grave and cheerless business."[75] Interestingly, Beeton apparently had not spent a lot of time in the kitchen before producing her compendious treatise on domestic management. The nine hundred pages of recipes she offered were not backed by any actual cooking expertise. Bryson comments on her competencies with his trademark irony: "Despite this bias towards the kitchen, Mrs Beeton didn't actually like cooking and didn't go near her own kitchen if she could possibly help it. You don't have to read far into the recipes to begin to suspect as much – when she suggests, for instance, boiling pasta for an hour and three-quarters before serving."[76]

Margarete Schütte-Lihotzky's kitchen experience was as meager as Beeton's when, at the age of thirty, she embarked on designing the kitchen for housing estates in Frankfurt am Mein.[77] This paucity of cooking know-how did not

74 Barry W. Higman, *How Food Made History* (Chichester: Wiley Blackwell, 2012), 28.

75 Bill Bryson, *At Home: A Short History of Private Life* (London: Black Swan, 2016), 122.

76 Bryson, *At Home*, 122–23.

77 Małgorzata Czyńska, "Polityka kuchenna," *Wysokie Obcasy*, 14 March 2013; http://www.wysokieobcasy.pl/wysokie-obcasy/1,96856,9238916,Polityka_kuchenna.html (Access 16 March 2014).

prevent her design from winding up among the icons of modernism. In the wake of World War One, women massively started to enter the paid labor force. They worked in their jobs as hard as men, but this did not exempt them from their traditional household chores. In Germany, an idea arose to help women reconcile their old and new roles, with modern architectural arrangements, in particular a modern kitchen, being one of the proposed solutions.

The kitchen as a separate room in bourgeois houses appeared in early modernity. In 17th-century France, the place where meals were eaten (*salle*) tended to be separated from the place where they were cooked. Witold Rybczyński relates that "[c]ooking was no longer done on the central hearth but in a separate room reserved for that purpose. Since kitchen smells were considered unpleasant by that otherwise malodorous society, the kitchen was not adjacent to the *salle*, but was usually located some distance away, on the other side of the courtyard."[78] In his account of private life in the 19th century, Roger-Henri Guerrand depicts the kitchen in bourgeois homes in the section on "Foul Odors," and reports that "architects, at once representatives of and shaped by the class from which they sprang, turned their backs on the kitchen. That indispensable room was relegated to the depths of the apartment, to that rear portion filled with acrid fumes and odors, where the heat of the oven was bad for the complexion and where decent people most assuredly did not set foot."[79]

Relocated to its own, detached interior, the kitchen lost its connection with the main rooms not only in France: "In English terrace houses the kitchen, adjacent to the servant quarters, continued to be located in the basement until the nineteenth century."[80] The kitchen was not part of the sphere of comfort the way it was understood by the English in the 18th century. The people of the Victorian age were extremely sensitive to smells. They found kitchen vapors so repulsive that "there are some large Victorian country houses in which the

78 Witold Rybczyński, *Home: A Short History of an Idea* (New York: Penguin Books, 1987), 38. In fact, the onerousness of the kitchen could only be lamented by the well-off residents of French cities. The less-monied townfolk did not cook at home, but ate something in town during the day and supped on "leftovers from the tables of the great bought from common peddlers." *Codzienność dawnej Francji. Życie i rzeczy w czasach ancien régime'u* [*L'Ancienne France au quotidien: La vie et les choses de la vie sous l'Ancien Régime*], ed. Michel Figeac, trans. Dorota Sieńko (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Pałacu Króla Jana III w Wilanowie, 2015), 228.

79 Roger-Henri Guerrand, "Private Spaces," in *History of Private Life: From the Fires of Revolution to the Great War*, ed. Michelle Perrot, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Cambridge, MA, and London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1990), 370.

80 Rybczyński, *Home*, 72.

kitchen is more than 500 feet from the dining room!"[81] Other cultures ranked the kitchen equally low. The 17th-century Dutch kitchen is a notable exception. In the Low Countries, the kitchen was "promoted to a position of fantastic dignity and became something between a temple and a museum."[82] The venerated status of the kitchen as the main room of the house was also a testament to the high position held by women in Dutch households. Unlike in other countries, kitchen work in the Netherlands was handled not only by servants but also by the mistress of the house, which contributed to the unprecedented standing of the kitchen and kitchen-related matters in Dutch culture and society.[83]

In the early 20th century, poor urban populations in Europe still had at their disposal, like their medieval counterparts, merely one room which had to serve the diverse needs of entire, often numerous families.[84] Lihotzky's design, which was concocted with the fast-growing working class in mind, deliberately divided the "dirty" kitchen from the "clean" living room.

7 The Laboratory

Count Kessler, a German diplomat and writer, depicted the society of the Weimar Republic as having a new consciousness of life and a new attitude to life.[85] A witness of changes that were sweeping through society in the 1930s, he concluded that "people really want to *live*. They want light, sunshine, happiness, to take pleasure in one's own body."[86] The popularity of sports gained momentum as it offered pleasure and liberated bodies; the same aspirations were shared by architecture. Erna Meyer wrote that "[p]ractical living includes, among other things, the sum total of conditions which enable us to plan the events of our daily lives smoothly, which concentrate the execution of everyday tasks using a minimum of effort and time."[87] The principle of simplifying indispensable matters applied to spheres as disparate as production planning,

81 Rybczyński, *Home*, 193.
82 Paul Zumthor, *Daily Life in Rembrandt's Holland*, trans. Simon Watson Tylor (New York: Macmillan, 1963), 41, qtd. in Rybczyński, *Home*, 73.
83 See Rybczyński, *Home*, 74.
84 Rybczyński, *House*, 28.
85 Wolfgang Pehnt, "The New Man and the Old Adam: On the Image of Man and the New Building," in *Ernst May 1886–1970*, ed. Claudia Quiring et al. (Munich, London, and New York: Prestel 2011), 99.
86 Pehnt, "The New Man and the Old Adam," 99.
87 Qtd. in Pehnt, "The New Man and the Old Adam," 104.

traffic, and household chores. The Austrian architect Margarete Schütte-Lihotzky was appointed to design a modern kitchen. Completed in 1926–1927, her design introduced new standards into the lives of homemakers. She was inspired by Taylorism, which was the fad of the day then: "Following the time-motion studies of Frederick Winslow Taylor, she positioned the gas range, industrial-style metal sink, and fitted glass-fronted cabinets in optimal relation to each other, arranging them to coincide with the general order of tasks through which meals are made and cleaned up after."[88]

Lihotzky's design envisaged a kitchen arranged in modules over a bit more than six square meters and equipped with all the necessary appliances. Tableware was sheltered in glass-front cupboards not to gather dust. Freshly washed-up plates could be put on a draining board to dry just above a double metal sink. The main worktop was situated by the window, just like the ironing board fastened flat to the wall in expectation of being used. The kitchen was furnished with an electric cooker, a movable ceiling light, and light aluminum dry-goods containers, all of them carefully labelled.[89]

The optimal spatial arrangement was geared toward achieving maximum cost-effectiveness. It helped both economize on electric energy and spare housewives' vital strength, as well as, interestingly, their mental powers. Modern, cheap, and durable materials were used, and decorative details were eliminated altogether. Susan Henderson emphasizes that "Lihotzky's points of reference were far removed from the woman's sphere: ship galleys, the railroad dining car kitchen, and the lunch wagon. [...] Thus, with Lihotzky, the kitchen came to full maturity as a piece of highly specialized equipment – a work station where all the implements were a simple extension of the operator's hand."[90]

88 Martin Filler, *Makers of Modern Architecture, Volume 2: From Le Corbusier to Rem Koolhaas* (New York: New York Review of Books, 2013), 30.

89 Similar notions were espoused by the Polish architect Barbara Brukalska, whose kitchen design of 1927 was inspired by Lihotzky's ideas. Brukalska's kitchen has also been depicted as a laboratory, though in this case the term denotes a prototyping site of the role of a modern, emancipated woman dedicated to her job and performing "her tasks in the kitchen quickly, easily and rationally." See Magdalena Matysek-Imielińska, *Warsaw Housing Cooperative: City in Action*, trans. Monika Fryszkowska and Marcin Starnawski (New York: Springer, 2020), 84–90.

90 Susan R. Henderson, "A Revolution in the Woman's Sphere: Grete Lihotzky and the Frankfurt Kitchen," in *Architecture and Feminism*, ed. Debra Coleman, Elizabeth Danze, and Carol Henderson (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1996), 235.

Lihotzky duly relied on the measuring tape and the timer in her work.[91] Her design was supposed to stamp out all the previous illogicalities of kitchen architecture and, consequently, put an end to redundant exertion enforced by the old solutions. However, the low-budget design, which sought to ensure the effectiveness, efficiency, and productiveness of kitchen performance, did not appeal equally to all users. The economization of the kitchen space produced a cramped laboratory, suggesting that collective work was an expendable luxury. The modern upgrading embodied in standardization took its toll by obliterating individuality.

If Lihotzky aimed to craft an optimum setting for women's work, her kitchen came under criticism from feminists, who accused the designer of entrapping women in a sealed-off compartment, and was disliked by homemakers themselves, who decried its dispiriting functionality. Lihotzky's design undercut the entrenched order as she squeezed popular cuisine into the bounds of erudite cuisine.[92] The masculine "logic" of action was not really a good match for feminine space. Home cooks felt confused in a world that somebody had meticulously ordered for them. The kitchen which came to be celebrated as a milestone of domestic architecture paradoxically proved not to be very serviceable to its first users. Their bodies had difficulty adjusting to a "better," more functional space arrangement and ergonomic work organization. The ideology of new architecture for the new man, which informed Lihotzky's efforts, aspired to set people's bodies free, but the perfectly streamlined, ergonomic space of the new kitchen ultimately caused discomfort to its female users, accustomed as they were to the old ways. Their bodies would not erase the old habits recorded in their muscles, and refused to adapt to the functional, economical, and hygienic solutions. The new arrangements were at odds with the women's body memory. They felt baffled and lost their bearings amid ultra-accurate labels and instructions. The idea of minimalism and aesthetic austerity failed to catch on as well. Housewives would hang old-fashioned curtains in the windows, and violated all the rules laid down by the architect. Lihotzky was reportedly dismayed to find out that mothers breached the logic of division into the

91 For details of the time-study method used by Lihotzky in which space is planned for specific activities, see Katarzyna Uchowicz, "WSM. Mieszkanie jako algorytm," in *Robotnik. Performanse pamięci*, ed. Agata Adamiecka-Sitek, Dorota Sajewska, and Dorota Sosnowska (Warszawa: Instytut Wydawniczy Książka i Prasa, 2017), 327–28. On the Frankfurt Kitchen, cf. also Marta Leśniakowska, "Modernistka w kuchni," *Konteksty. Polska Sztuka Ludowa* 58, nos. 1/2 (2004): 189–202.

92 The popular/erudite cuisine distinction is discussed in "Taste and Its Value: Cultural Hierarchies" in this volume.

dirty kitchen and the clean dining room, and continued to feed their children in the kitchen the way they had done before, even though instead of tables they only had worktops. Anarchic gestures also went in the opposite direction as homemakers abandoned the modern, but cramped, laboratories designed for them in order to seat themselves in the living room with a bowl of green beans to de-string them there. When Lihotzky, thirty years old at the time, was commissioned to design the kitchen, her own experience with kitchen work – or, rather, lack thereof – was not taken into account.

Cooking was not among Lihotzky's passions, and she may not have realized that experienced cooks had their own distinctive ways of going about the kitchen. This individual quality is obvious to Giard:

> By following the same recipe, two experienced cooks will obtain different results because other elements intervene in preparation: a personal touch, the knowledge or ignorance of tiny secret practices (flouring a pie pan before greasing it so that the bottom of the crust will remain crispy after baking), and entire *relationship to things* that the recipe does not codify and hardly clarifies, and whose manner differs from one individual to another because it is often rooted in a family or regional oral tradition.[93]

In these terms, Lihotzky's kitchen was a precise and complete recipe for kitchen life. She was disappointed with how her design was received, a consternation which may have stemmed from her excessively ambitious project of bestowing regularity on life, which is by nature replete with small randomnesses and imperfections. Lihotzky entirely ignored the emanation of "a *lifestyle*" and the fashioning of "one's *own space*," which Giard deems to be the essence of kitchen work. Instead, the architect proposed a universal space, stifling one's breath and precluding the intrusion of individuality. Her kitchen was generally praised by fellow architects, but they were far from unanimous, and critical voices were heard as well. Erna Meyer pointed out that the weakness of the design lay in leaving no room for chance and thus also eliminating any prospect of innovation. Similarly, the sociologist Ludwig Neundörfer referred to the assessments of the users to express his unease at the rigidity of the Frankfurt Kitchen and its inherent overbearing automatism: "[A]ll you have to do is use it properly."[94]

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93 Certeau, Giard, and Mayol, *The Practice of Everyday Life* 2, 201.

94 Henderson, "Revolution," 328.

Many years later, in 1994, Giard observed in her study of kitchen gesture sequences that "[i]ndustrialization (of products, tools, and transforming operations) has come along to destroy within domestic space – as it had done first in the working-class space – the regime of this labor. It introduced there the same schema of parceling, of standardization, and of the repetition of tasks."[95] New technologies undeniably save time and effort, but, as Giard regretfully states, in doing so they "give rise to gray, homogeneous, empty time, the time of effortless and joyless boredom."[96] It is a fine thing to have an electric cooker, hot running water, and other now-standard amenities, but the point is that they only support one's work in the kitchen. Appliances still need the intuition of an experienced cook who will switch off the food processor right in time to prevent whipped cream from curdling into butter, or will fold exactly as much liquid into flour as it needs to transform into deliciously spongy cake upon baking. Giard is uncommonly straightforward on this point:

> But I do not believe in the happiness of a humanity deprived of all physical activity, of all manual labor, subject to the seizure of power by industrial machinery. There is a profound pleasure in achieving by oneself what one offers to one's guests, in practicing a modest inventiveness, in ephemeral results, but whose subtle combination silently defines a *life-style*, circumscribes one's *own space*.[97]

Oh, yes, cooking is a pleasure too.

8 From Oppression to Terror: the Gastronomical Mother

On 8th May 1941, Virginia Woolf noted down in her diary: "Occupation is essential. And now with some pleasure I find that its [sic] seven; & must cook dinner. Haddock & sausage meat. I think it is true that one gains a certain hold on sausage & haddock by writing them down."[98] When beset by the feeling of hopeless emptiness, one may fall back on simple activities, such as eating and cooking, as a cord that helps one stay connected to reality, which threatens to

95 Certeau, Giard, and Mayol, *The Practice of Everyday Life 2*, 212.
96 Certeau, Giard, and Mayol, *The Practice of Everyday Life 2*, 212.
97 Certeau, Giard, and Mayol, *The Practice of Everyday Life 2*, 212–13.
98 Virginia Woolf, *The Diary of Virginia Woolf*, ed. Anne Olivier Bell with Andrew McNeillie (San Diego, New York, and London: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1984), 358; qtd. in Certeau, Giard, and Mayol, *The Practice of Everyday Life 2*, 222.

slip through one's fingers. For Woolf, this support was not enough; she wrote these words a mere three weeks before she took her own life. The kitchen as the last stronghold of security also appears in a poem by Osip Mandelstam.[99] Terror robes people of their homes, and life under threat is imaged as being forced to leave one's familiar kitchen, where one can normally spend one's time in peace and quiet for hours on end.

The kitchen is often framed as a shelter, and associated with security and comfort. Having a meal in a private space is synonymous with cultivating close relationships and enjoying the sense of belonging. Kitchen chores may bring a considerable gratification. Contentment flows from the haptic pleasure of contact with products, from kneading dough that is rising under your fingers, from touching different surfaces and textures. Aromas of various kinds exuded by things being roasted and boiled are another source of delight; even sounds, such as sizzling and simmering, which herald transformation, stir exhilaration. Careful final touches to dish presentation please the eye.

The kitchen is a locus of alchemical transmutations. Substances lose their original properties, and transfigure into entirely new matter as a result of processing and mixing with other ingredients. The kitchen is the center of the domestic universe and its mainstay. However, it may also reveal its other facet. The kitchen is where silent dramas rage over a pot of steaming soup. What actually happens when a housewife confesses "When it comes down to it, cooking worries me"?! When she can no longer muster the strength to complete rituals and see to "the hundreds of small touches that determine whether a dish is more or less pretty to look at: the way in which a vegetable is julienned, how a brunoise is arranged on a plate. In a word, care."[100]

At the end of her performance *Semiotics of the Kitchen*, Rosler throws up her hands in the air and shrugs her shoulders in a gesture of doubt. Ascribing daily chores exclusively to women is ungrounded, but the fact is that they must be done, "for we are faced with the fate meted out by tiny things."[101] If there is no way out of the everyday, perhaps coming to terms with ubiquitous everydayness makes more sense than fighting it. This is what Jabłońska attempted to do in *Laundry* and *Drainers*, pieces in her *Accidental Pleasure* series. The former project consists of 137 color photographs of laundry meticulously arranged into neat stacks, which she took between January and September 2006 (Fig. 13). She

99 See Osip Mandelstam, "We Shall Sit in the Kitchen for a While," in *Osip Mandelstam: Selected Poems*, trans. David McDuff (Writers and Readers, 1983), 113.

100 Hervé This and Pierre Gagnaire, *Cooking: The Quintessential Art*, trans. M. B. DeBevoise (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 2008), 2.

101 Brach-Czaina, *Szczeliny istnienia*, 81.

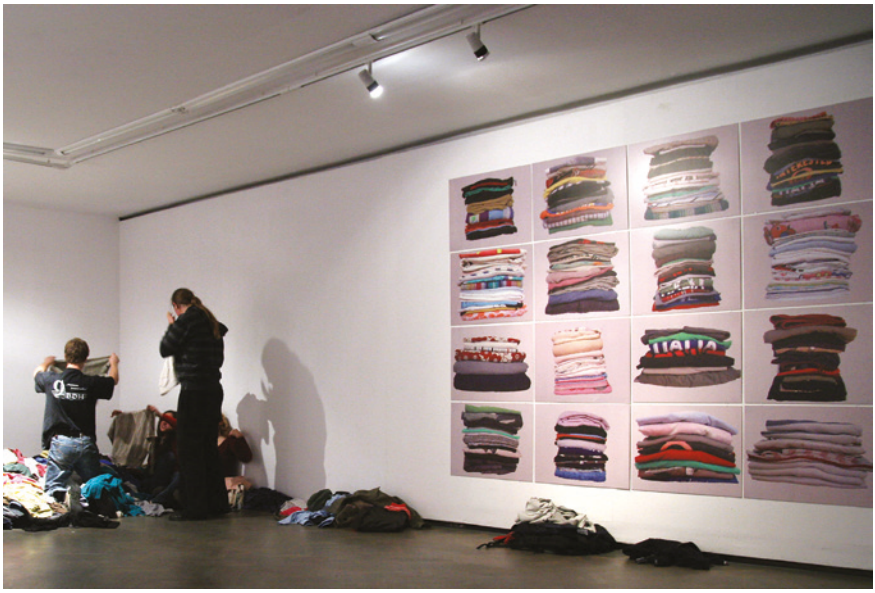

FIGURE 13 Elżbieta Jabłońska, *Przypadkowa przyjemność. Pranie* [*Accidental Pleasure: Laundry*], Galeria Arsenał, Białystok 2007; photo: M. Strokowski © E. JABŁOŃSKA

discovered the incidental pleasure of washing up in inspecting the leftovers sedimented in the drainer of her sink. She documented them in 365 photos taken over several months in 2005 and 2006.

In Jabłońska's art, everydayness is revealed as essentially dual. Quotidian routine is contrasted with the extraordinariness that the artist discovers in the repeated activities. To survive as a homemaker, Jabłońska needs the gloss of art. She is capable of detecting beauty in a pile of washed-out T-shirts and towels, and she even manages to discern it in food remains collecting in her plughole, which though disgusting, may fall into an aesthetically attractive pattern. Was Dostoevsky right to claim that beauty would save the world? This raises two doubts. The bits of food in the sink and the discolored towels and tops form interesting configurations. Everydayness reflected in the mirror of art takes on unusual tints. However, the question is whether this transgression originates in everydayness as such, or whether it comes from the artist's capacity to transform whatever she does into a work of art. In other words, the key problem is whether laundry may prove an "accidental pleasure" for every homemaker or only for those gifted with special sensitivity as artists? Besides,

such an aestheticization of the everyday is perhaps risky, as it may take one off one's guard, smother the emancipatory potential, and legitimize the existing order.[102]

The status quo does not put either of the parties at ease. Beeton compared a housewife to "the commander of an Army, or the leader of any enterprise,"[103] and Lihotzky modeled her kitchen on mess rooms and dining car kitchens. The goal was to win the battle for time, maximum economy, and optimal functionality. For her part, Rosler aligned her *Semotics of the Kitchen* with military convention and waged a war against hostile kitchen utensils. Elżbieta Jabłońska also employs military terminology to describe family life as a battlefield and calls household chores heroic.

At the same time, some women who can see no way out of their oppression convert it into terror, which is embodied in the gastronomical mother depicted by Sławomira Walczewska. In Walczewska's view, the kitchen is the last bulwark of a frustrated and overfatigued homemaker who sacrifices herself for her family, but is painfully exhausted by and unhappy about her sacrifice: "The kitchen is not where a victorious and commanding mother erects her fortress. […] The gastronomical mother is deeply in the defensive. She feels that she has been comprehensively ousted, that so little in the world depends on her, and this prompts her to entrench herself all the more in the kitchen."[104] She longs to be noticed and properly appraised, that is, more appreciated. Sacrifice is her only weapon in the battle for recognition. However, all battles fought by the gastronomical mother end in Pyrrhic victories. The warriors and victims on the battlefield of the kitchen are still primarily women.

9 Coda

The works of artists discussed in this chapter fall into the category of social critique, which describes and interprets reality in ways that undermine the alleged obviousness of everyday behavior. Social critique is dedicated to revealing the sources of domination which permeates even the tiniest particles of social life.

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102 Similar objections have been raised against the feminists' idea to price household chores. The argument has been that the pricing of women's domestic labor may put value on this work, but it also perpetuates the traditional order and reinforces stereotypes which chain women to the home. Cf. Zoe Fairbairns, "Wages for Housework," *New Internationalist* 181 (5 March 1988); https://newint.org/features/1988/03/05/wages (Access 20 June 2021).

103 Bryson, *Home*, 122.

104 Sławomira Walczewska, *Damy, rycerze, feministki. Kobiecy dyskurs emancypacyjny* (Kraków: eFKa, 2012), 311.

By interrogating the "neutral" language of social description, it sparks reflection which leads to a search for alternative models of human relations. The critical movement in philosophy and social theory boasts a vast tradition which goes back to Immanuel Kant and Karl Marx. Because of this richly layered legacy, the term "critical theory" today encompasses as disparate philosophical and social concepts as those developed by the Frankfurt School, Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, and Judith Butler. Whatever their exact theoretical tenets and backgrounds, all thinkers involved in critical theory share a dedication to questioning what is unreflectingly taken for granted in social life. Similar work is also done by numerous contemporary artists who follow in the footsteps of the "masters of suspicion" and inquisitively scrutinize reality to identify strata of social injustice and domination in its ostensible transparence.

Artistic explorations parallel the research undertaken by critical sociology, which demonstrates how the patterns of the social order of things are reproduced. Pierre Bourdieu explains in *Masculine Domination* that symbolic violence, which legitimizes the subjection of women, is channeled, among others, by the strict division of space, where the woman's space is situated inside and the man's outside the front door of the house.[105]

For all their variety, the performances discussed here indicate that this distinction is anything but unambiguous. The social order, though schematic and wielding reproductive power, is never entirely unequivocal. Human intentions and actions are capable of modifying and even radically re-casting it by capitalizing on the possibilities of resistance and emancipation present in all systems.[106] The kitchen-centered artistic projects I have cited delve into its various aspects and operations, but what they all share is their defiance of the social order in which the kitchen, though indispensable, is tucked away as an embarrassment. Of course, one may try and escape from the kitchen, but one may test another way out and re-appraise the manners of emancipation. Instead of marching to the barricades, one may protest precisely by staying in the kitchen. This attitude has been conceptualized, perhaps most compellingly, by Julia Kristeva, who embraces feminist existential emancipation and, instead of revolution, envisages spiritual transformation in opposition to the social conditions of being.

105 Pierre Bourdieu, *Masculine Domination*, trans. Richard Nice (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001), 9–10.

106 Cf. e.g., Leszek Koczanowicz, *Wspólnota i emancypacje. Spór o społeczeństwo postkonwencjonalne* (Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Dolnośląskiej Szkoły Wyższej Edukacji, 2005), 68–77, 85–90.

Kristeva believes that all people possess a certain psychic potential which enables them to overcome the constraints of the status quo. This potential can be used to spur revolt, which Kristeva understands as creative dissent against the existential situation. Such a dissent is expressed in the transformation of an individual's psychic structures and his/her disapproval of the existing forms of social relations. Contemporary culture is not friendly to rebels, as Kristeva's portrayal of our everydayness makes clear:

> I think that in the automated modern world the depth of psychic life, the liberation of psychic life, the search for truth in the interrogation and the questioning are all aspects that are overlooked. We are expected to be performing entities. At best, we are asked to work well and to shop as much as possible. This whole problematic of interrogation, of the return to the self, the questioning and the conflicts that are sources of human freedom have become obliterated, rejected, and even destroyed parameters. The culture that arises from this situation is a culture of entertainment rather than of interrogation and revolt. I would say that it is an essential kind of resistance in a technocratic society to rehabilitate memory along with the questioning and to allow the conflicts of the individual to take place, thus creating a culture that would satisfy these needs.[107]

Art may be an impulse initiating intimate transformations in the audience, remodeling their inner structures, and encouraging them to look at the world from a different angle. Briefly, it may incite revolt. In Kristeva's framework, revolt is not an act of political negation. As she has often repeated, her own experience of the totalitarian regime makes her believe that what matters most is an inner transformation, a rebuilding of psychic structures. In her view, it is the role of art to stimulate such an internal metamorphosis. This is what the engagement of art should consist in as, from this perspective, whether artists stand up for one or another ideology is irrelevant. What is relevant is, first and foremost, the discovery of inner conflicts – the *jouissance* of negation. Art stimulates the imagination and furnishes it with resources, thereby helping it effect its own transformation. Everything that we consider obvious may acquire a new dimension through and in art. By unsettling the ostensibly coherent psyche, the work of the imagination may be activated. The notion of

107 Julia Kristeva, *Revolt, She Said*, trans. Brian O'Keeffe, ed. Sylvère Lotringer (New York: Semiotext[e], 2002), 100–101.

revolt is where the principles of psychic life and the rules of creative practice meet. Revolt

> means unveiling, returning, discovering, starting over. This is permanent questioning which characterizes psychic life and, in the best cases, art. [...] This act of questioning is also present in artistic experience, in the rejection and renewal of old codes of representation staged in painting, music, or poetry.[108]

Enacted even in a half-whispered "no" to the order of the world, revolt may not have instantaneous effects, but in the long run it will bring about radical social change.

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108 Kristeva, *Revolt, She Said*, 120–21.

CHAPTER 6

Community around the Table

> [...] when eaten together, food does not taste different. But it tastes better.
>
> CARLO PETRINI[1]

• • •

> [...] a shared meal is a better meal.
>
> MASSIMO BOTTURA[2]

• •
•

The first banquet of which we have evidence took place about 12,000 years ago.[3] Those gathered feasted on seventy-one roasted tortoises. Remnants of their smoke-blackened shells were discovered by archeologists in the Hilazon Tachtit cave in Israel. Natalie D. Munro and Leore Grosman estimate that the tortoise-meat was enough to feed about thirty-five people. The remains of the body of an old woman, possibly a shaman, were found in the same cave. The tortoises were probably the main course served at her funeral feast. A nearby cave, where leftovers of three wild cattle and a man's bones were excavated, was also a scene of banqueting. That people dined there is clearly indicated by the signs of cutting and roasting, similar to those on the tortoise shells. Apparently, as early as 2,000 years ago, a shared, highly ritualized meal replete with symbolic meanings was considered a suitable farewell to, commemoration of, and tribute to the community's prominent individuals. Sumptuous repasts also provided a helpful tool that "served important roles in the negotiation and solidification of social relationships."[4]

1 In Łukasz Modelski, *Piąty smak. Rozmowy przy jedzeniu* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie), 42.

2 Massimo Bottura and Cynthia Davidson, "Three-Star Soup," *Log* 34 (Spring/Summer 2015): 94.

3 Natalie D. Munro and Leore Grosman, "Early Evidence (ca. 12,000 B.P.) for Feasting at a Burial Cave in Israel," *PNAS* 107, no. 35 (31 August, 2010): 15362–66.

4 Munro and Grosman, "Early Evidence," 15362.

We know today that human evolution was not a linear process. It afforded chances for various species. Against Claude Lévi-Strauss's famous notion that society was initiated by the exchange of women in marriage, Richard Wrangham posits that we were made human and society was produced by cooking.[5] The invention of the thermal processing of meat proved a revolutionary breakthrough, and ultimate reproductive success was reaped by tribes of cooks, whose veritable civilizational leap was propelled by a new diet, one rich in energy and flavors. Social bonds were founded on the preparation and sharing of food,[6] since cooking necessitated cooperation and the division of duties, which generated a complex network of mutual dependencies. Responsibility for tending the fire, fixed mealtimes, and the distribution of tasks, all went into the making of social relations and prompted the forming of communities. Felipe Fernández-Armesto takes a similar position in *Near a Thousand Tables: A History of Food*, where he claims that the domestic harnessing of fire and the invention of cooking marked a turning point not only in culinary culture, but first and foremost in social transformations: "Culture begins when the raw gets cooked. The campfire becomes a place of communion when people eat around it. Cooking is not just a way or preparing food but of organizing society around communal meals and predictable mealtimes."[7]

All crucial events in people's lives take place at the table. What we eat and what we exclude from our diet are strongly differentiating factors. The food on our plates tells the story of the religions we worship, the topographies we inhabit, and the classes to which we belong. Eating customs contribute to the formation of our individual and collective identities.[8] As Robert Nozick explains, "Eating food with someone can be a deep mode of sociability [...] a way of sharing together nurturance and the incorporation within ourselves of the world, as well as sharing textures, tastes, conversation, and time."[9]

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5 Richard Wrangham, *Catching Fire: How Cooking Made Us Human* (New York: Basic Books, 2009).

6 Cf. Glynn L. Isaac, "Food Sharing and Human Evolution: Archaeological Evidence from the Plio-Pleistocene of East Africa," *Journal of Anthropological Research* 34, no. 3 (1978): 311–25.

7 Felipe Fernández-Armesto, *Near a Thousand Tables: A History of Food* (New York, London, Toronto, and Sydney: Simon and Schuster, 2002), 4–5.

8 For example, Polish people traditionally have carp for their Christmas Eve supper. On this evening, the carp is not just food. Crucially, it is a symbol of Christmas and an expression of the nation's cultural bonds.

9 Robert Nozick, *The Examined Life: Philosophical Meditations* (New York, London, Toronto, and Sydney: Simon & Schuster, 2006), 56.

1 Conversations at the Table

Talking during eating and about eating is explored by Priscilla Parkhurst Ferguson, who poses her essential question in the very subtitle of her book *Word of Mouth*: *What We Talk about When We Talk about Food*, and hastens to answer it, writing that: "Sometimes we talk about food simply to talk about food. Yet as often as not we talk *through* food to speak of love and desire, devotion and disgust, aspirations and anxieties, ideas and ideologies, joys and judgments."[10] As mentioned in "The Antinomies of Taste," Immanuel Kant dreaded eating alone. He believed that solitary eating could paradoxically exhaust the body, rather than nourishing it, and that it contradicted the idea of humanity, which was actualized in and through conversation.[11]

Conversation at the table ultimately masks the biological nature of eating, because, as argued by Luis Fernández-Galiano in his commentary on Ferguson, "food talk turns the private act of eating into a public event and makes sense of the world around us by placing food into a social context."[12] Talking about food is the only way for us to obtain a glimpse into what our fellow-diners are experiencing, since "[t]alk anchors this food world by making it possible for us to share the unshareable – that is, our sensual, powerfully private experience of eating."[13] Our memories of a satisfying meal often do not revolve around specific courses or flavors, but encompass the whole complex experience of food sharing. When Łukasz Modelski interviewed Danièle Mazet-Delpeuch, President Mitterrand's personal chef, for his volume of conversations entitled *Piąty smak* [*The Fifth Flavor*] and asked her about her favorite childhood dish, she replied:

> There isn't one such dish. My mother made wonderful souffles, perhaps one of those … But more than anything, I remember the atmosphere, the comings and goings around the table at my home, the entire social dimension of eating, the family facet of it. This was the most important thing, I guess. If there was anything I wanted to reproduce later, it was this social, companionable, family-like ambience enveloping the meals. And,

10 Priscilla Parkhurst Ferguson, *Word of Mouth: What We Talk about When We Talk about Food* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 2014), xiii–xiv.

11 Immanuel Kant, *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, trans. Robert B. Loudon, ed. Manfred Kuehn (Cambridge UK: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 180–81.

12 Luis Fernández-Galiano, "How Did Food Get So Big? Ten Sketches," *Log*, no. 34 (Spring/Summer, 2015): 14.

13 Ferguson, *Word of Mouth*, xxi.

> anyway, this is itself part of a bigger whole – you remember the taste, but you also remember the pleasure, the sense of security, the bonding.[14]

Feasting was appreciated in antiquity as the most potent unifying factor. One of ancient Sparta's most rigorously observed rules concerned warriors' mandatory attendance at shared meals. Nothing could exempt one from the obligation of dining together with others. Those who fought shoulder to shoulder were also supposed to eat shoulder to shoulder at *syssitia* or *pheiditia*, that is, obligatory daily banquets, instituted by king Lycurgus. The soldier-eaters were also expected to supply certain foodstuffs to the common kitchen.[15] Aristotle, too, praised feasts "to which all the guests contribute" as superior to those "furnished by a single man."[16] This dovetailed with and buttressed democracy, which promoted bringing disparate points of view together and thus fostered unity in variety.

These two examples illustrate the central importance that the ancients attributed to sharing meals with other citizens, a practice that both provided nourishment and engendered social bonds. Banqueting was also discussed by Cicero:

> our ancestors fitly called the festive meeting of friends at table, as implying union in life, a convivial meeting [*convivium*] – a much better name than that of the Greeks, who call such an occasion sometimes a compotation [*σνμπόσιον/συμπόσιον*], sometimes a social supper [*σύνδειπνον*], evidently attaching the chief importance to that which is of the least moment in an entertainment.[17]

Although Cicero preferred *convivium* as the term most accurately capturing the community of feasting, the wording he rejected – *symposion* and *syndeipnon* – conveys the notion of community forming around the table as well.

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14 Łukasz Modelski, *Piąty smak. Rozmowy przy jedzeniu* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 2014), 253.

15 Ryszard Kulesza, *Starożytna Sparta* (Poznań: Wydawnictwo Poznańskiego Towarzystwa Przyjaciół Nauk, 2003), 76–77.

16 Aristotle, *Politics*, trans. Benjamin Jowett (Kitchener: Batoche Books, 1999), Book 3.XV, 75 https://socialsciences.mcmaster.ca/econ/ugcm/3ll3/aristotle/Politics.pdf. (Access 13 June 2021).

17 Cicero, *De Senectute* (*On Old Age*), trans. Andrew P. Peabody (Boston: Brown and Company, 1884), 3; https://archive.org/stream/cicerodesenectut00cice_0/cicerodesenectut00cice_0_djvu.txt (Access 15 June 2021).

Marek Węcowski clarifies the fact that the prefix "syn" expresses a tendency to forge communal bonds.[18]

While Cicero did not disdain the sensory pleasure of eating, which he considered natural as long as it was kept in moderation, he declared himself grateful to his "advanced years for increasing [his] appetency for conversation, and diminishing [his] craving for food and drink."[19] Cicero viewed old age as a stage in life when important existential values were attained, and as years went by, meetings at the table more and more distinctively represented "union in life" rather than "union in banqueting." "I [...] daily fill my table with my neighbors, prolonging our varied talk to the latest possible hour,"[20] relates Cato the Elder, Cicero's *porte-parole* and the protagonist of his treatise. Mealtimes offer the opportunity to put into practice one of the ideals of Stoic philosophy, that is, conversing in a friendly fashion on the most important issues of existence, which helps one remain detached from current events and erect an "inner fortress."

2 Taste and Difference

In *Critique of Judgment*, Kant defines the sphere of taste as emphatically subjective, because the experience of it, he contends, cannot be shared. *De gustibus non est disputandum* – there is no arguing about taste. However, as the previous chapters have amply shown, while taste is the most "private" and intimate of the senses, our individual tastes are not simple effects of free choices, but result from the cultural training we undergo from birth onwards.[21] A multitude of social factors leave very scarce room for the whims of individual predilections. Our tastes mirror our social status and cultural background. We are what we eat, but appetite is hardly an indisputable zone of freedom. Our menus are determined by knowledge about the properties of various foods as much as by emotional, social, and economic considerations, with transcendence occasionally interfering with our choices as well. Consequently, the activity that unites all people at the same time performs a strongly differentiating function.

18 Cf. Marek Węcowski, *The Rise of the Greek Aristocratic Banquet* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 70.

19 Cicero, *On Old Age*, 35.

20 Cicero, *On Old Age*, 36.

21 Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste*, trans. Richard Nice (London and New York: Routledge, 1984).

Truly human cuisine stems from the transformation of the world brought about by the domestication of nature. In his analysis of bread as a criterion of civilization, Massimo Montanari reminds us that

> [i]n the language of Homer and the ancient Greeks, "bread eaters" is synonymous with "men." Already in the *Poem of Gilgamesh*, a Sumerian text of the second millennium B.C., primitive man becomes civilized when he is no longer limited to consuming foods and drinks available in nature, such as wild herbs, water or milk, but begins to eat bread and drink wine, "artificial" products [...].[22]

The baking of bread sets civilized humans apart from nature and also from barbarians, who feed on game and sheep.[23] Bread perfectly illustrates the process in which food works as a socially, culturally, and religiously differentiating mechanism. As an integral element of the miracle of the Eucharist, which "refers to the Gospel account of the Last Supper, bread assumed an even greater significance as sacred food, capable of putting man in contact with God."[24] The moment of situating bread at the center of the Christian tradition marked a radical break from the Jewish tradition, which bars fermented foods from religious rituals.[25]

Bread also exemplifies how the differences in what is served at the table overlap with class divisions. The medieval rural diet was based on simple soups. Bread was eaten very rarely, and if it was, it was brown bread. White wheat bread became a symbol of social superiority,[26] as it was eaten in towns and was a staple on the tables of patricians and monks.[27]

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22 Massimo Montanari, *Let the Meatballs Rest, and Other Stories about Food and Culture*, trans. Beth Archer Brombert (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012), 2–3.

23 Montanari, *Let the Meatballs Rest*, 6.

24 Montanari, *Let the Meatballs Rest*, 3.

25 Montanari, *Let the Meatballs Rest*, 7.

26 The foods once typical of peasant diet are becoming symbols of luxury and healthy nutrition today. Whereas wheat is common and cheap, spelt is healthy, fashionable, and expensive.

27 Montanari, *Let the Meatballs Rest*, 21–22. An equally eloquent, if much later, example of social differentiation through food is provided by coffee-drinking in 18th-century France, a custom which separated rational people from the plebs. Coffee "was seen by many contemporaries as a key source for the production of mind, superseding older foods and drinks such as wine and facilitating new forms of sociability centered on polite conduct, which distinguished the rational eater from the rabble." Emma C. Spary, *Eating the Enlightenment: Food and the Sciences in Paris, 1670–1760* (Chicago and London: University of Illinois Press, 2013), 15.

The cooking and sharing of meals is part of the specific dialectics of inclusion, hospitality, and rejection. This dynamic is vividly captured in two examples, one of them literary and the other cultural. When Thomas Mann wanted to bring into relief the symbolic chasm between "barbarians" and cultured people in *The Magic Mountain*, he had them seated at two separate tables.[28] When Hans complained about the uncouth manners of his neighbors, his brother Joachim calmed him down by saying: "But in any case, you needn't worry, they sit a good distance away, at the Bad Russian table – because there's also a Good Russian table, where the more refined Russians sit."[29] Importantly, Joachim also stressed that moving between these two physical and, crucially, symbolic spaces was impossible: "there's hardly any possibility you'd meet them even if you wanted to."[30] For the sake of contrast, the other example is provided by the traditional Polish Christmas Eve supper. Its unique character is underscored by the dishes which are served only on this festive occasion, characteristic rituals, and the special custom of placing a supernumerary plate on the table for any lonely person who may chance to knock on the door on this night. What may come across as evidence of cultural openness in fact exemplifies a brief suspension of the regular differentiating principles for the duration of just one magical night. As soon as the miracle of Christmas is over, the rules are reinstated.

Food is entangled in the mechanisms of differentiation and, consequently, of exclusion. The difference between our own folk and strangers is also demonstrated by what "we" eat and "they" do not. "We" differ from "them" because we do not consume insects, pork, snails, or beef. Hunger is exclusionary, as is poverty, which makes people eat excessive amounts of cheap, high-calorie, processed foods. In our culture, the poor are fat and the rich are slender for the first time in history.

These economic, cultural, and political differences were compellingly explored by Marina Abramović and Ulay, who arranged two differently laid tables as part of their performance *Communist Body/Fascist Body*, which was attended by a small group of their friends. The performance was staged in the artists' small apartment in Amsterdam on the eve of their birthdays in 1979. The invited guest came just before midnight to find the hosts asleep and two tables waiting. One of them was elegant, covered with a damask tablecloth,

28 See Rodney Symington, *The Magic Mountain: A Reader's Guide* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2011), 67.

29 Thomas Mann, *The Magic Mountain*, trans. John Edwin Woods (New York: Vintage International, 1996), 40.

30 Mann, *Magic Mountain*, 40.

and glittering with crystal glasses and silverware, which contained white bread, caviar, and German champagne. The other table was far more modest. Sheets of *Pravda*, a propagandist Soviet daily, were spread on it and under aluminum mess kits filled with Russian caviar and sparkling wine. Marina and Ulay were born on the same day: 30th November 1946 and 1943, respectively. He was born in Germany, and his birth certificate bears a swastika. She was born in communist Yugoslavia, and her birth certificate features a five-pointed red star. The tables were supposed to symbolize Abramović's and Ulay's far-removed identities associated with the two mutually hostile ideological, national, and economic regimes.

3 Community in the Making

Food and eating have a differentiating function. However, dining is at the same time a universal language, and given this, sharing a meal may effectively help one become familiar with otherness and develop an awareness of diversity. This idea has long inspired Rirkrit Tiravanija, who has made shared meals a pivotal component of his practice as an artist. He cooks because he believes that eating and savoring are universally accessible experiences, and that consuming food in the company of others makes people receptive to their co-diners.[31] In Tiravanija's view, art has already achieved everything it possibly could as far as the production of objects is concerned. Consequently, its task today is

> to create though interactions, exchanges or references. This may be a good way to show the diversity and difference of experiences. When one wants to experience something beyond oneself, objects prove too distant. Cooperation and exchange are human attitudes – they bring people closely together. […] It's astonishing how open and desirous of sensations people become through food. The world we live in is becoming more and more open. Things interpenetrate each other.[32]

Thai curry, a typical dish of his parents' homeland, has become emblematic of Tiravanija's art. Born in Argentina, the son to a Thai diplomat, Tiravanija studied in Canada and the U.S., and now he lives between Berlin and New York. He

31 Rirkrit Tiravanija, "Zapowiedź projektu Zielony Jazdów," *Tranzystor CSWZU* 7, no. 4 (2012): 1.

32 Tiravanija, "Zapowiedź projektu," 1.

FIGURE 14 Rirkrit Tiravanija, *Untitled 1992 (Free)*, 1992
© RIRKRIT TIRAVANIJA. COURTESY OF THE ARTIST AND GLADSTONE GALLERY

relies on food and hospitality in his efforts to change the way of thinking about the Other, to kindle interest, to encourage collaboration, and to initiate intercultural dialogue. His pursuits are also driven by personal reasons because his art prominently involves a quest for identity, which is perhaps inevitable as he "was almost always away from home,"[33] and has struggled to develop a sense of belonging since childhood.

In Tiravanija's projects, the cooking and sharing of food time and again morphed into artistic events. He was made famous by a performance staged during his solo show *Untitled 1992* (*Free*) in New York's 303 Gallery in 1992.[34] Red and green curries were served to the visitors throughout the exhibition. Curry, Tiravanija says in an interview with Daniel Birnbaum, is a quick and

33 *Rirkrit Tiravanija. Cook Book: Just Smile and Don't Talk*, ed. Thomas Kellein (London: Edition Hansjörg Mayer, 2010), 11.

34 Tiravanija first made curry part of his show at New York's Scott Hanson Gallery in 1989, but at that time the audience could only smell the dish without tasting it.

simple dish, just like scrambled eggs in Western culture.[35] The difference is that curry is never made in small quantities. A huge pot of curry is usually cooked, and it serves as a starting point for dining together. In the 1992 performance, Tiravanija incisively rearranged the gallery's space to adjust it to the purposes of his performance. He emptied all the rooms, including the offices, and took out all the doors, not sparing those that led to storage spaces and facilities. The offices, previously inaccessible to the audience, were converted into a public meeting space, where two pots of filling curries were placed, along with a third one with rice (Fig. 14); helpings of food were distributed at lunch time. Tiravanija is fully aware of the tensions and frictions that arise in contact zones between cultures, and realizes that cuisine may be a vehicle for political meanings.[36] He keenly studies interpenetrations of gastronomic cultures and adaptations of exotic recipes to local conditions; hence, in cooking the curries, he used original Thai vegetables and spices for one pot, and put the produce available in regular SoHo stores at that time – peppers, cauliflowers, and broccoli – into the other. His performance reflected on the authenticity of cuisine and the mechanisms of assimilating foreign traditions to local conditions. Thomas Kellein observes that "Tiravanija's artistic power definitely consists of having a 'feel' for the situation and a 'sense of the style of the people or place.' He respects the 'ethos' of a group; he tries to 'understand' their issues or concerns."[37] Even though Tiravanija believed that the "Thai" pot of curry was superior in terms of texture and taste, he found the other one interesting because it embodied an authenticity resulting from negotiations with the local situation.[38] The meal metamorphosed into a deliberate artistic gesture and a message of openness.

The amalgamation of authenticity and local conditions patently rivets Tiravanija, who is straightforward about his fascination with James Clifford's *The Predicament of Culture*,[39] which argues that there is not one form of

35 Daniel Birnbaum and Rirkrit Tiravanija, "Rirkrit Tiravanija: Meaning Is Use," *Log* 34 (Spring/Summer 2015): 164.

36 The idea of producing an original Thai noodle dish resulted in the invention of pad thai as part of a national identity building strategy in the aftermath of World War Two. The dish differs from its Chinese models in the sauce, which combines sour and sweet flavors with a distinctive nutty note. The now-iconic dish was at the center of Tiravanija's performance *Untitled 1990* (*Pad Thai*).

37 Thomas Kellein, "Essay," in *Rirkrit Tiravanija: Cook Book*, 150.

38 Thomas Kellein, "Interview," in *Rirkrit Tiravanija: Cook Book,* 16.

39 See James Clifford, *The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth-Century Ethnography, Literature, and Art* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988).

speech, but a multitude of them, and similarly, that there is not one form of culture, but a rhizomatic cluster of interacting subcultures.[40]

Democratic dialogue is predicated on the acknowledgement of the equality of all the parties involved, which is invariably an ethical decision. Multicultural societies face the challenge of overcoming the past, in which the dominant culture imposed its norms and interpretive principles, precluding genuine dialogue. Tiravanija cooks because he believes that eating together may engender relationships and genuine dialogue, which though not necessarily leading to agreement, sparks the hope of mutual understanding, a *sine qua non* of democratic community.[41]

Tiravanija grew up in Bangkok, hanging around the kitchen of his grandmother, who was professionally involved in gastronomy, teaching future chefs proper principles of nutrition and running her own restaurant. As a child, Tiravanija eagerly watched the hustle and bustle of both the domestic and the restaurant kitchens, though he himself did not begin to cook until he was a student in Toronto, where he made meals for himself and his friends, as well as working in an Indonesian restaurant.

The idea of cooking in a gallery germinated as the young artist's postcolonial awareness increased and along with his criticism of the alienating tendencies of "collecting and naming"[42] embraced by museums. Tiravanija studied at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, where he could see multiple objects put on display as purely aesthetic pieces, wrenched out of their original substratum of values, and severed from the culture which had produced them – things "permanently removed from context."[43] The collection contained a range of Asian, predominantly Thai, objects. Tiravanija recalls:

> I thought that what was happening was that the life around the objects was missing. So I tried to do projects of cultural retrieval. The idea was to take the pots and Buddhas and the objects that had been encased and entombed, to take them out of the case, and to use them – to create life around the objects again and point to this life in a way that shows it is more interesting than the object itself.[44]

40 *Rirkrit Tiravanija. Cook Book*, 150.

41 Leszek Koczanowicz, *Politics of Dialogue: Non-Consensual Democracy and Critical Community* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014), 160–64.

42 Birnbaum and Tiravanija, "Meaning Is Use," 163.

43 Birnbaum and Tiravanija, "Meaning Is Use," 165.

44 Birnbaum and Tiravanija, "Meaning Is Use," 164.

FIGURE 15 Rirkrit Tiravanija, *Untitled 1992* (*Free*), 1992

Apparently, his pursuits were driven by his repudiation of the West's obsessive attachment to an object, its notion of art as elitist, and its conferral of authority on cultural institutions. As Tiravanija emphasizes, "It was a critique of the Western idea of the esthetic object and how everything lively is reduced and excluded. It seems that life has to be taken out of the equation."[45] This critical urge was to induce Tiravanija's search for a place of his own.

Tiravanija states that his work as an artist seeks to restore art to culture. He is concerned about elitist tendencies which sever art from its roots and cause its commodification. The title of Tiravanija's 1992 performance crucially included the word "free." Its polysemous meanings are clarified by the artist himself: "(*Free*) in this particular situation could signify the emptying of context/content: from exhibition to non-exhibition, from place to non-place. (*Free*) could also be read as open, or simply as no charge for the situation, the

45 Birnbaum and Tiravanija, "Meaning Is Use," 164.

food."[46] This striving to liberate art from the chains of museum fetishism and to transfigure it into a living experience is axial to Tiravanija's practice as a whole (Fig. 15).[47] His works are modest, as he neither contrives to dazzle the audience with a spectacle, nor seeks conspicuous visual or gustatory effects. He cherishes common life and is dedicated to bringing forth an experience which matters even though it is "low and close to the ground."[48] The openings of Tiravanija's exhibitions are not banquets graced with sophisticated cuisine, because "[i]t is not what you see that is important but what takes place between people."[49] Hence, pivotal to the openings are encounters and change facilitated by partaking in a familiar, everyday ritual of having a meal with other people.

Intimately anchored in everydayness, eating and cooking have become a fitting form of expression for Tiravanija, an artist who defines his mission as reincorporating art into the rhythm of life and stirring up life in objects of art. Another reason for his choice of food is that cooking and eating are interwoven with the "idea of being active, of participation, and then idea of relationship to architecture and to the art institution."[50] What Tiravanija also achieves in and through cooking is to give an artistic expression to his daily existence: "I thought I should just do a simple thing I normally do and that was cooking."[51]

4 Impossible Community

On 15th November 2012, a table was put up on a lawn in Czopowa St. in Gdańsk. Anna Królikiewicz draped it with a white tablecloth, and threw a multicolored rug over it at one end. On top, she arranged china, heavy cutlery, and wineglasses made of thick glass.

Visually and symbolically, the *Stół* [*Table*] installation explicitly evoked the venerated conventions of Baroque still-life paintings, which showed artfully patterned configurations of dead game, expensive tableware, and assorted

46 Rirkrit Tiravanija and Hans Ulbicht Obrist, *Rirkrit Tiravanija: The Conversation Series 20* (Köln: Walther König, 2010), 10.

47 Tiravanija's words reverberate with pragmatist echoes. His views correspond to John Dewey's ideas about the place and role of art in culture. They both are also equally critical of what Dewey terms "museum art." Cf. "Culinary Experience: A Pragmatist Perspective" in this volume.

48 Birnbaum and Tiravanija, "Meaning Is Use," 168.

49 Tiravanija and Obrist, *The Conversation Series 20*, 7.

50 Birnbaum and Tiravanija, "Meaning Is Use," 168.

51 Tiravanija and Obrist, *The Conversation Series 20*, 116.

victuals. The beauty of these compositions was supposed, on the one hand, to arouse sensory pleasure and, on the other, to admonish against focusing on things bodily, alluring but mortal as they were. Indeed, eating nourishes and builds the body, but at the same time every bite anticipates digestion and decomposition, bringing the body closer to death. This may be one reason why artists who address the theme of transience are so eager to employ food motifs in their works. Still, the counterpoint of *vanitas* does not spoil the sensual joy of looking at the splendid and wonderfully "real" foodstuffs in the old masters' paintings. Not infrequently, many of the paintings by Northern masters allude to some violent events which must have interrupted the meal. Glasses and trays have been knocked over, and the food has been chewed upon but left unfinished. This communicates a warning that our lives are as brittle as the thin bowl of a shattered wineglass. In Królikiewicz's piece, leisurely and relaxed dining was out of the question as well. Piles of dead fish, fish bones, and fish heads were stacked up on the table. There was some leftover red wine in the glasses. The plates were dirty, smeared with smudges of sauces or soups. The tablecloths were stained. Królikiewicz distributed loaves of bread and impressive challahs on the table, interspersing them with embellishments, such as big shells and half-peeled lemons with their skin coiling up in picturesque spirals (Fig. 16). This image is well-known from the paintings of Willem Claesz Heda and Willem Kalf. Drawing on Jan Fyt and Frans Snyders, Królikiewicz deliberately conjured up a stark contrast between the dead and the living (Fig. 17). With a twist, though, as she put a spherical aquarium with goldfish inside on the table, instead of including a cat or a hunting dog, which represented domestic order as opposed to natural order in 17th-century still-life classics.

Królikiewicz resorted to Baroque trappings to evoke the complicated history of Gdańsk, which was once a rich Hanseatic city and enjoyed considerable liberties, but was constrained by its location on the border between two cultural and political powers of the period: the Commonwealth of Poland and Lithuania and the Kingdom of Prussia. Inspired by the collection of Baroque paintings at one of Gdańsk's museums, the installation aimed to reproduce the spirit of the city from its times of glory, when it became wealthy from trade with the East, attracted hosts of artists, and invested in art. Its affluent burghers could afford Persian carpets, spices, saffron, and sugar. Do the illustrious times of the free and proud city which carefully cultivated its multiculturality hold any significance for contemporary residents of Gdańsk? This question is certainly related to Królikiewicz's *Stół*.

FIGURE 16 Anna Królikiewicz, *Stół* [*Table*], *Narracje* [*Narratives*] Festival, Gdańsk 2012; photo: M. Andrysiak

FIGURE 17 Anna Królikiewicz, Stół [*Table*], *Narracje* [*Narratives*] Festival, Gdańsk 2012; photo: M. Andrysiak

Paul Connerton develops the concept of embodied memory in his *How Societies Remember*,[52] where he argues that a society's memory is to a large extent inscribed in the habits of the body (wherein he builds on John Dewey's notion of habit). Bodily practices help update the past and combine it with the present. Connerton cites table manners as one of his prime examples. He follows Norbert Elias to state that etiquettes and manners of eating epitomize the styles of body use which produce intergenerational bonds, but also work as tools for separation. Such distinction-fabricating corporeal practices are epitomized by the rules of conduct embraced by the 17th-century French aristocracy, who fell back on elaborate savoir-vivre protocols to demonstrate their privileged position. As Connerton concludes, "[t]hese ceremonial privileges were a mnemonics of the body, a constant reminder of the order of estates."[53]

"The body knows and remembers."[54] The social norms imposed by and uniting community are encoded in the body. The cultivation of old prescripts and principles of table behavior is geared toward sustaining the thin thread that links the present to the past. Królikiewicz's gesture of installing her table in the city's port area aimed to establish contact with the Gdańsk of yore. Nevertheless, she ultimately questioned the topos of the table as a site that brings people together, unites them, and facilitates communication. Her installation was in fact a "non-invitation" to the table. A cold November night, knocked-over chairs, and a lavish table strewn with piles of fish and food scraps left by no-one knows whom – all this served Królikiewicz to foreground aporias inherent in community building. As a resident of the Tri-City,[55] she is implicated in the narratives of the local community, by which she is formed and of which she is a part.[56] Therefore, in order to fully constitute her own identity, she must refer to the past, though – as the installation vividly suggests – this is a fraught relationship. The actors of those events have already left the stage. What we still have access to are the vanishing traces of their lives.

In the introduction to *Culture and Cuisine: A Journey through the History of Food*, Jean-François Revel addresses inconveniences and problems involved in the study of the history of food: "Habit is everything," he states, "and what

52 Paul Connerton, *How Societies Remember* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

53 Connerton, *How Societies Remember*, 87.

54 Juhani Pallasmaa, *The Eyes of the Skin: Architecture and the Senses* (Chichester: John Wiley and Sons, 2012), 64.

55 Tri-City (Polish: Trójmiasto) is a collective term for the three adjacent cities of Gdańsk, Gdynia, and Sopot on coast of the Baltic Sea in Poland. (translator's note)

56 Charles Taylor, *The Ethics of Authenticity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991).

is habitual is never precisely defined for those to whom it is so familiar as to be self-explanatory, for those who take it completely for granted, so that it is almost impossible to reconstruct it once it is lost."[57] It is difficult, next to impossible perhaps, to re-instate old culinary fascinations, such as savoring wine diluted with seawater, which was practiced in some regions of ancient Greece, or relishing the taste of oysters washed down with sweet wine, which was the culinary standard in France at the turn of the 19th century.[58] In Connerton's terms, the spectral banquet orchestrated by Królikiewicz qualified as a ritual that reinforced remembering, but it was at the same time an exercise in the impossibility of repeating an experience. While re-imagining the history of 17th-century Poland, Królikiewicz did not serve any of the dishes described in the *Compendium ferculorum* of 1682,[59] the first Polish cookery book, because she realized that echoes of the past transmitted distorted messages, and the present screened us off from the past.[60] The flavors of those times – stodgy, sweet, richly spicy, and at odds with modern tastes – would not have been appreciated as refined; rather, they would have come across as strange and bizarre. Królikiewicz arranged images which resonated with the past, but she by no means encouraged the belief that bygone experiences could possibly be reproduced. Indeed, we have no access to them.

Królikiewicz's *Table* was not welcoming. It exuded a sad beauty of past grandeur, but it repelled as well. The beauty of decay, the deliberately ugly splendor of putrefying fish bodies, the Oriental opulence of the tableware were all compelling, yet at the same time produced the impression of distance, aloofness, and alienation.

The participants in the performance were late. The banquet was long over (Fig. 18).

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57 Jean-François Revel, *Culture and Cuisine: A Journey through the History of Food*, trans. Helen R. Lane (New York: Doubleday, 1982), 5.

58 Cf. Revel, *Culture and Cuisine*, 5. Julian Barnes would in all likelihood subscribe to Revel's insights. The seventh piece of advice to beginner collectors of cookery books listed in his *The Pedant in the Kitchen* reads: "Avoid books of famous recipes from the past, especially if reproduced in facsimile editions with period woodcuts." Julian Barnes, *The Pedant in the Kitchen* (London: Atlantic Books, 2003), 29.

59 Stanisław Czerniecki, *Compendium ferculorum albo zebranie potraw*, ed. Jarosław Dumanowski and Magdalena Spychaj (Warszawa: Muzeum Pałac w Wilanowie, 2009).

60 On the often insurmountable challenges of parsing the present from the past, see Connerton, *How Societies Remember*, 7.

FIGURE 18
Anna Królikiewicz, *Stół* [*Table*], *Narracje* [*Narratives*] Festival, Gdańsk 2012; photo: M. Andrysiak

5 Designing Community

Recounting his experience of the U.S., Jean Baudrillard resorts to quite dramatic vocabulary to convey his horror at American habits of eating: "You see that all the time here. It is the saddest sight in the world. Sadder than destitution, sadder than the beggar is the man who eats alone in public. Nothing more contradicts the laws of man or beast, for animals always do each other the honour of sharing or disputing each other's food."[61]

The world-famous Dutch designer Marije Vogelzang agrees with the French postmodernist and considers solitary meals symptoms of the "chronic loneliness" haunting the inhabitants of modern metropolises.

Vogelzang has developed a special interest in food and food-related rituals since 1999. Besides designing, she also cooks and theorizes food and food

61 Jean Baudrillard, *America*, trans. Chris Turner (London and New York: Verso, 1989), 15.

design. Although she is primarily associated with food designing, Vogelzang herself does not like to label her activity as food design and chooses to talk about designing situations in which people eat, preferably together. Her major tenet is that one should not interfere with food in any special ways, because food is a perfect product of nature itself. What calls for some improvement are activities involved in appeasing hunger. She is thus mainly interested in the performative aspect of eating, and calls her work eating design, as contrasted with food design. Her intent is to fashion complex experiences centrally involving human relationships. As Ilse Crawford observes, "Food inevitably affects the taste buds. But Marije's food projects affect your whole being, even on a subliminal level. She creates total experience."[62] Vogelzang believes that eating goes beyond its obvious function of satisfying basic biological needs, and ties in with culture, emotions, memories, relations with other people, sharing, and care for the self, others and the environment; briefly, eating is bound up with nurture and love. She accommodates all these ideas and practices in her projects (Fig. 19).

Sharing is Vogelzang's favorite among the long list of components of the meal. Sitting around the table together, we obviously share food, but we also share, less obviously perhaps, time, space, and conversations. Vogelzang designed a plate consisting of two separate halves and used it to serve well-known combos, such as mozzarella and tomatoes, or herring and potatoes (Fig. 20). As some people were given, for example, only herring and others only potatoes, they were encouraged to interact with a stranger next to them. Without swapping with a neighbor, nobody could partake of the entire course. Living in big cities increasingly often means living alone. Vogelzang's manner of serving the starter helped the diners begin conversations and, perhaps, make friends with strangers encountered around the common table at Proef, a restaurant Vogelzang has run in Amsterdam since 2005.

Vogelzang, like Królikiewicz, often looks back into history. Her attachment to the past surfaces in her ambition to reintroduce forgotten varieties of root vegetables and in *Black Confetti* (2004), a lunch project she developed to commemorate the deadly bombing of Rotterdam in 1940. The wartime trauma was evoked through simple, modest dishes based on the surviving recipes and wartime memories. Food as the repository of memory and a means of mediation also lay at the core of Vogelzang's *Taste of Beirut: Khobz w Meleh on the Green*

62 Marije Vogelzang, *Eat Love: Food Concepts by Eating-Designer* (Amsterdam: BIS Publishers, 2008), 73.

FIGURE 19 Marije Vogelzang, *Sharing Dinner*, Tokyo 2008

Line.[63] The event, which was held at one of Beirut's bazaars, included a workshop during which bowls were crafted from bread dough dyed green with parsley juice (Fig. 21); they were later arranged into a row symbolically mirroring the line which had cut the city into two and divided it for years. By collectively eating up the bread bowls, the participants ate away the Green Line, a symbol of division (Fig. 22).[64] Budapest was another city where Vogelzang tried

63 The title literally means "Bread and Salt on the Green Line."

64 During the Lebanese civil war (1975–1999), the so-called Green Line was demarcated to divide the western, chiefly Muslim part of Beirut from its eastern, mainly Christian part. Cf. Vogelzang, *Eat Love*, 146.

FIGURE 20 Marije Vogelzang, *Sharing Dinner*, Tokyo 2008
© M. VOGELZANG

to foster friendly human interactions through food (Fig. 23). She had Roma women tell personal stories to other female residents of Budapest, at the same time feeding their interlocutors from behind the cotton curtain that separated them (Fig. 24).

To transform the context of experience was the aim of Vogelzang's *Colour Food* project (2002), which she developed for a hospital for obese children in New York. The point was to erase the stifling division into the healthy/dietetic and the unhealthy/fattening, which is known to overlap with the distinction into the boring and the tempting but forbidden. Vogelzang's idea was to arrange snacks into a rainbow and encourage associating colors with certain properties. For example red foods were supposed to express self-confidence, green to connote health, black to express discipline, and yellow to betoken friendship. In this way, food was freed from its negative aura, and the unfriendly miraculously transmuted into the friendly.[65]

65 For more information about Vogelzang's later projects and her philosophy of uniting people through food, see her website https://www.marijevogelzang.nl (Access 18 July 2021).

FIGURE 21
Marije Vogelzang, *The Taste of Beirut*, Beirut 2008
© M. VOGELZANG

6 Bridging the Gaps

As Zygmunt Bauman argues, culture orders social reality without itself being ordered, as it has lost its previous quality of a system in which values and norms were rigorously positioned vis-à-vis each other.[66] Culture represents a pool of values which are actualized in human relationships at particular places and moments, but do not last permanently. Once called into being, they do not endure forever, and configurations of values fall apart only to re-assemble in new patterns, depending on the needs of people who wish to act together.

Culture is a process which only now and then unfolds harmoniously. Social transformations stumble upon bumps, such as conflicts of interests, money

66 Zygmunt Bauman, "Culture as Consumer Co-operative" in *Postmodernity and Its Discontents* (Cambridge, MA, and Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 1998), 127–40.

FIGURE 22 Marije Vogelzang, *The Taste of Beirut*, Beirut 2008

shortages, or insufficient will to engage. What role can art, specifically art which involves the sense of taste, play in these struggles?

Nicolas Bourriaud, a French curator and art theorist, believes that art has an essential social function since "through minor gestures, artists provide the missing links in the chain of social bonds."[67] Bourriaud's *Relational Aesthetics* offers a canonical interpretation of Tiravanija's work. The artists whom Bourriaud counts among the practitioners of relational aesthetics all share the

67 Nicolas Bourriaud, *Relational Aesthetics*, trans. Simon Pleasance and Fronza Woods, with Mathieu Copeland (Paris: Les presses du réel, 2002), 18.

FIGURE 23 Marije Vogelzang, *Eat Love Budapest*, Budapest 2011
© M. VOGELZANG

FIGURE 24 Marije Vogelzang, *Eat Love Budapest*, Budapest 2011
© M. VOGELZANG

fundamental aspiration to "patiently darn the fabric of social relations."[68] In all cultures, meals form part of all crucial rituals, from birth to death. Art that uses taste and smell relies on the universal language of care, with which everybody is familiar, and appeals to the sense of security afforded by satiety. With encounter at stake, we may take eating together as a perfect starting point for establishing relationships, although we differ widely and the common horizon of values disintegrated with the onset of late modernity. Accepting another person's gift of food requires that we at least tentatively accept the person him/herself.

Art is capable of "construct[ing] navigation tools"[69] and transforming individual and social experiences, but this process is indispensably premised on participation. If artists do not want to don the mantle of a sermonizing teacher, their projects must be integrated with the rhythms of everyday life, rather than indulging in sublime flights. Dewey and Bourriaud would both support the demand to stop the severance of art from life, which would benefit both art and life. Dewey claims that: "Works of art that are not remote from common life, that are widely enjoyed in a community, are signs of a unified collective life. But they are also marvelous aids in the creation of such a life. [...] In the degree in which art exercises its office, it is also a remaking of the experience of the community in the direction of greater order and unity."[70]

Aesthetic experience which involves sharing a meal perfectly exemplifies the complete engagement of the audience. Without discursive mediation, the artist's intentions are directly comprehensible and become embodied. Tiravanija releases "artistic energy," but this does not always visibly mark off his works of art from the rhythm of life. At a group exhibition, the audience mistook Tiravanija's performance for a banquet accompanying another artist's show. In Królikiewicz's project, the everyday is profoundly transformed and aestheticized. For all the differences between them, Tiravanija's and Królikiewicz's practices have certain aspects in common. Firstly, they dismiss the equation of an artwork with its materiality while foregrounding the temporal dimension of an encounter. Secondly, they expand the palette of aesthetic experiences by stimulating the senses of smell and taste. Thirdly, they believe that food and eating may be transformative. Fourthly, they build on and explore tradition and memory, whereby their actions aim to elicit audience engagement, not merely in the sense of simple participation, bust as a dialogic complementation of works of art.

68 Bourriaud, *Relational Aesthetics*, 18.

69 Bourriaud, *Relational Aesthetics*, 28.

70 John Dewey, *Art as Experience* (London: Perigee, 2005), 81.

In Dewey's view, a work of art is a lens that concentrates meanings, making them easier to grasp.[71] The artistic projects discussed in this chapter fundamentally seek to help express the feelings and values of community. Królikiewicz's *Stół* was conceived as a tool for telling local history. The piece promoted the realization that even though the past community of experience could not be recreated, it was worthwhile at least narrating it. Such a narrative could consolidate existing bonds by conferring a mythical dimension on them and ritually legitimizing them as a continuation of bygone glory. Tiravanija works with food, because it helps him build a platform of understanding for people from various cultures who meet in the space of a multicultural city. Vogelzang strives to kindle the weak and fading flame of communal relations by inviting her audiences to share the sensory experience of tasting.

Having a meal together engenders a social and cultural relationship which, rudimentary though it may be, constitutes a community. Such a community is fragile and temporary, but it heralds a possibility of founding something more durable and consequential. In any case, in our times of individualism enforced by the neoliberal economy and ideology, even the shortest of communal experiences are indeed invaluable.

71 John Dewey, *Art as Experience*, 84.

CHAPTER 7

The Taste of Authenticity

Travelers tend to be driven by two opposite impulses: on the one hand, they miss the flavors to which they are habitually accustomed, and on the other, they long to find out about and enjoy the local culinary customs. An encounter with a foreign culture may spark enchantment, which was the case for Gertrude Stein, Alice B. Toklas, Julia Child, and Alice Waters. While lovers of French cuisine make up quite a numerous club, French cooking is also known to have caused problems and incited dislike, as it did for George Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel. Hegel's biographers report the culinary disaster the philosopher experienced in Paris, the gastronomical capital of the world as it were. The French delicacies he ate triggered a severe bout of indigestion.[1] Even though Hegel was a sworn Francophile, captivated by the beauty, flair, and opulence of Paris, he was unable to really embrace the Parisian lifestyle. To have the main meal of the day at 5 p.m. was too late for him. Another thing with which he struggled was finding his way through restaurant menus. His French was good enough to read Montesquieu and Rousseau, but it left him bewildered when faced with the elaborate bills of fare he saw at Parisian eateries. Eventually, he acknowledged himself defeated by French cuisine, and found a venue that served German food to dine at.[2] Mark Twain was another notable man to be exasperated by foreign cuisine. His voyage to Europe in 1878 proved a huge culinary disappointment. Twain's longing for American foodstuffs prompted him to draft a list of splendid dishes to which he planned to treat himself upon return. The list included: "Virginia bacon, soft-shell crabs, Philadelphia terrapin soup, canvas-back duck from Baltimore, Connecticut shad, green corn on the ear, butter beans, asparagus, string beans, American butter (he complained that European butter had no salt); predictably, apple pie, and curiously, frogs."[3]

There is an amusing parallel in the complaints of two writers hailing from culturally remote backgrounds. Roland Barthes, who was born five years after Twain's death, vividly evokes the nostalgia for beef steak and French fries, a French "basic element" (a "French possession," indeed), which starts to gnaw

1 Terry Pinkard, *Hegel: A Biography* (Cambridge, UK, and New York: Cambridge University Pres, 2001), 553.

2 Pinkard, *Hegel*, 551–53.

3 Leslie Brenner, *American Appetite: The Coming of Age of a Cuisine* (New York: Avon Books, 1999), 15–16.

all the French people as soon as they set their foot across the border.[4] Twain expresses a similar despondency on finding that, in Europe, he could not dine on real steaks with "authentic" (i.e., salted) American butter. Twain rhapsodically pictures his – American – culinary paradise as:

> a mighty porterhouse steak an inch and a half thick, hot and sputtering from the griddle; dusted with fragrant pepper; enriched with little melting bits of butter of the most unimpeachable freshness and genuineness; the precious juices of the meat trickling out and joining the gravy, archipelagoed with mushrooms; a township or two of tender, yellow fat gracing an outlying district of this ample county of beefsteak; the long white bone [...] still in place.[5]

1 Out of the Comfort Zone

Bronisław Malinowski proudly professed that he had completely steeped himself in the indigenous culture of the Trobriand Islands. Apparently, however, his immersion did not extend to the cuisine. Malinowski had arrived at his ethnographic site furnished with a massive supply of canned foods, and he neither cooked nor let others cook for him.[6]

Pondering the perils of venturing into foreign territories, Lisa Heldke observes: "It feels much more risky to taste the food of an unfamiliar culture than to listen to its music, look at its art, or read its literature, and indeed it is

4 Roland Barthes, "Steak and Chips," in Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, trans. Anette Lavers (New York: The Noonday Press, 1991), 63. Such an attachment to one's vernacular cuisine is rather common. For one, Michel Serres admits to not comprehending foreign culinary traditions. Cf. Michel Serres, *The Five Senses: A Philosophy of Mingled Bodies*, trans. Margaret Sankey and Peter Cowley (London: Bloomsbury, 2009), 166. Michel Foucault, who preferred American staples to French food, stands out as a notable exception to this rule. In a conversation with Stephen Riggins, Foucault laughingly admitted to the pleasure of eating a club sandwich and drinking Coke; he also had words of appreciation for American ice cream. See Michel Foucault, "The Minimalist Self," trans. Alan Sheridan et al., in Michel Foucault, *Politics, Philosophy, Culture: Interviews and Other Writings: 1977–1984*, ed. Lawrence D. Kritzman (New York and London: Routledge, 1988), 12.

5 Mark Twain, *A Trump Abroad*, qtd. in Reay Tannahill, *Food in History* (New York: Stein and Day, 1973), 365.

6 Michael W. Young, "What Did Malinowski Eat in Papua?," *Anthropology Now*, 30 October 2015; http://anthronow.com/print/what-did-malinowski-eat-in-papua-2 (Access 9 September 2017).

more risky."[7] The food may taste disgusting, or, worse still, it may be poisonous. Incorporating a particle of the external world into one's own body means that it becomes an integral part of oneself. Such a gesture takes some bravado; it takes considerable trust as well.[8] In doing this, "the traveler may make contact with the 'not-me,' and can hone the edges of her identity through the contact, either by absorbing the flavors of the Other into her own identity or by rejecting them as 'what-I-am-not.'"[9]

Stepping beyond the familiar and safe zone of one's own ethnic and cultural group is tempting and, at the same time, hazardous. Potential pleasures and trouble abound in a holiday trip abroad, dinner at an exotic restaurant, and a visit to a foreigner who has invited us to a meal or to a friend who has chosen to cook regional dishes for us. Be that as it may, the number of affluent Westerners willing to brave these risks and learn about foreign countries from the perspective of the plate is growing exponentially. No wonder that food tourism is boldly carving out a distinct place of its own within cultural tourism.

2 Food Tourism

The famous Michelin guide, which confers its coveted stars on the world's best restaurants, unambiguously and assuredly states that the food served in those which have been awarded three stars deserves a dedicated, purpose-planned trip. Many citizens of rich, highly developed countries are more than ready to spend a lot of money to dine at a famous restaurant. Every season, as many as two million contenders raced to book one of the 8,000 seats available at the tables of the cult restaurant El Bulli. All the seats would usually sell out within one day.[10]

All tourism is partly culinary, even though there are travelers who avail themselves of cans or staples brought from home when navigating foreign lands. Research shows that more and more tourists take the appeal of local cuisine into account as an increasingly important criterion in planning their

7 Lisa Heldke, "But Is It Authentic? Culinary Travel and the Search for the 'Genuine Article,'" in *The Taste Culture Reader: Experiencing Food and Drink*, ed. Carolyn Korsmeyer (Oxford and New York: Berg, 2005), 387.

8 Carolyn Korsmeyer, *Making Sense of Taste: Food and Philosophy* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2002), 101.

9 Heldke, "But Is It Authentic?," 387.

10 Lisa Abden, *The Sorcerer's Apprentices: A Season in the Kitchen at Ferran Adrià's elBulli* (New York, London, Toronto, and Sydney: Free Press, 2001), 4.

holidays.[11] Culinary tourism, which pivots on learning about other cultures through the experience of tasting, is a robustly developing industry.[12] A visit to a perfect restaurant to savor dishes cooked by a celebrated chef is only one of the varied array of activities comprising culinary tourism. Other options include, for example, attending smaller or larger culinary festivals, events which promote local produce, food fairs, and cooking workshops. Tourists travel along gastronomic routes, and visit museums dedicated to cuisine. Food tourism germinated from the trips British aristocrats made to the vineyards of France and Italy between the 17th and 19th centuries.[13] Today, it is vigorously thriving both in rural areas famed for their regional specialties and in metropolises reputed for their local cuisine or, like New York, valued for their cosmopolitan ambience and versatile range of international foods.[14]

A culinary tourist steers clear of typically tourist locations. These are to be avoided like the plague, since the food to be had there is expensive and as a rule under par. Restaurant owners do not have to exert themselves, because tourists will anyway flock to a picturesque piazza or a much-publicized building. Restaurants cut out for tourists do not need to woo a regular clientele, as their target customers by definition come and go by the hour. They are not likely to return, and new arrivals are certain to appear. Instead, home restaurants are one of the options tailor-made for culinary tourists.

The restaurant was founded as an institution by transferring the previously domestic activity of consuming meals into the public sphere.[15] It offers the advantages of selecting dishes one fancies, individually convenient mealtimes, and professional service. Dinner clubs and home restaurants, new developments in gastronomy as they are, operate in the opposite manner. Strangers are invited into the domestic space to partake of a meal cooked by an amateur. Special websites are founded to mediate between home cooks and visitors. The

11 An opposite trend is developing concomitantly, as some tourists tend to seal themselves off within their own national enclaves abroad. Tour operators cater to the preferences of holiday-makers who are prepared to travel only on condition of taking their home with them; they are offered the Greek sunshine and beaches combined with, for example, Polish pork chops, films, TV shows, and disco polo music. See, e.g., Grzegorz Szymanik, "Greckie wakacje Polaków z disco polo, wódką i kiełbasą," *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 3 July 2017.

12 Małgorzata Durydiwka, "Turystyka kulinarna – nowy (?) trend w turystyce kulturowej," *Prace i Studia Geograficzne* 52 (2013): 9–30.

13 Durydiwka, "Turystyka kulinarna," 14–15.

14 Andrzej Kowalczyk, "From Street Food to Food Districts – Gastronomy Services and Culinary Tourism in an Urban Space," *Turystyka Kulturowa* 9 (2014): 141; http://turystykakulturowa.org/ojs/index.php/tk/article/view/493/525 (Access 21 June 2021).

15 For a more detailed discussion of this issue, see Dorota Koczanowicz, "Przewodnik smaku," *Prace Kulturoznawcze* 17 (2015): *Przewodniki w kulturze*, 209–18.

most popular of them is Gnammo.com, which posts information about the menus, the prices, and the number of guests a host is capable of welcoming. The food is advertised by photos of the dishes, table arrangements, and sometimes the chefs themselves. The guests are invited to use a special tab and evaluate their dinner experience on the website as well.

Home restaurants are designed to expand the gastronomical options both for tourists and for residents. They are mainly run by women, which overthrows the traditional distinction between the domestic cooking of women and the "restaurant-based" cooking of men. In this way, "erudite" cuisine crosses paths with "popular cuisine," and a new space opens up for women who cook for their families on a daily basis.[16] Now, they can earn money without ceasing to be home cooks.

According to Jean-François Revel, restaurateurs seek to meet their customers' expectations and alter classic recipes, which often results in disrupting the traditional harmony of flavors, some of which may have been centuries in the making. Revel laments: "Unfortunately, an immense majority of the clientele of restaurants around the world confuse gastronomy with exoticism."[17] In his view, local ingredients and recipes tried and tested by and across generations are irreplaceable. Home restaurants apparently grapple with a similar problem, and, consequently, the meals they serve do not really resemble typical home food. This is vividly illustrated by two menus cited as examples in "'Airbnbs for dining' give Italian female chefs chance to shine," published in *The Guardian*. The dinners offered by Gnammo's highest-scoring cooks, Claudia Projetti of Rome and Benedetta Oggero of Turin, were anything but what one could possibly imagine as everyday home staples.[18] Inspired by carnival and the colors of nature, Claudia's banquet began with smooth orange pumpkin soup with ricotta crostini and concluded with a chocolate semifreddo with ginger and a green pistachio sauce. Benedetta treated her guests to a chocolate-themed dinner with the highlights of prawns glazed in whisky, sugar, and cocoa and pork roast with peppers in a chocolate sauce. At such feasts, the urge to experience something authentic meets with the need to participate in a refined event. This avowedly domestic cooking abandons the safe ground of "popular" cuisine,

16 Jean-François Revel, *Culture and Cuisine: A Journey through the History of Food*, trans. Helen R. Lane (New York: Doubleday, 1982), 13–24.

17 Revel, *Culture and Cuisine*, 18.

18 Stephanie Kirchgaessner, "'Airbnbs for Dining' Give Italian Female Chefs Chance to Shine," *The Guardian*, 22 January 2006; https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2016/jan/22/social-eating-networks-italian-female-cooks (Access 7 August 2016).

and attempts to maneuver its way into the salons of "erudite" cuisine.[19] When embarking on their journeys, tourists want to leave their daily lives behind and experience something extraordinary, new, or even bizarre. The same attitude is exhibited by the cooks who plan their menus for "strangers," without giving a thought to everyday, simple, quick-fix dishes hastily thrown together when back home after a busy day's work. Surely this is because they are inviting visitors to dinner at a home restaurant, rather than at home?

When hosting foreign visitors, we are usually inclined to share the quintessence of our native cuisine with them, even if its canonical dishes do not really feature in our everyday diets. The first meal depicted in Doris Lessing's novel *The Summer before the Dark* was quite untypical, and consisted of a Turkish cold cucumber soup, shish kebab roasted "over the fire," and an apricot sherbet. These courses were served in the garden of the protagonist Kate Brown's London house at a Sunday lunch attended by her husband's American friend. If it had not been for power cuts, Kate "would have provided the traditional British Sunday meal, not for their own benefit, since they no longer used old patterns, but for their guest's: the family had often enough joked that when they entertained their many foreign friends, they served traditional dishes like peasants dependent on the tourist trade."[20] Tourists tend to fall into the traps which are set by the locals out of pure kindness or for profit. In contemporary culture, authenticity is slowly turning into a commodity like any other one.

3 Authenticity as a Commodity

In his seminal study *The New Spirit of Capitalism*, co-authored with Ève Chiapello, Luc Boltanski, an astute analyst of modern capitalist society, explores the paradoxes inherent in the notion of authenticity in contemporary capitalism. Central to Boltanski's theory of capitalism is the observation that modern capitalism has managed to co-opt a considerable part of the critique of capitalism developed in the 1960s and 70s; more than that, capitalism has managed to instrumentalize this co-optation to multiply its own profits. Boltanski meticulously analyzes the various ways in which experience has been commodified.[21] The fundamental mechanism which precludes our certainty

19 Revel's division into erudite and popular cuisines is presented in more detail in "Taste and Its Value: Cultural Hierarchies" in this volume.

20 Doris Lessing, *The Summer before the Dark* (New York: Vintage, 2009), 13-14.

21 Luc Boltanski and Ève Chiapello, *The New Spirit of Capitalism*, trans. Gregory Elliott (London and New York: Verso, 2005), 443–47.

as to the authenticity of the goods we are offered is underpinned by the following contradiction: the authentic must always evade commodification and mass production. If "authenticity" is offered as a commodity (a material object and a service alike), its actual uniqueness is by default put in question. *The New Spirit of Capitalism* persuasively explains: "We can see a typical illustration of this phenomenon in the transition from mass tourism to so-called 'adventure' holidays, requiring a constant renewal of destinations as and when they become tourist attractions in their turn, losing the authenticity (of which an absence of tourists was precisely the sign) that made them so precious."[22] The contradiction that surfaces here is unsolvable: the goods sold on the market as authentic and advertised as such in mass marketing must paradoxically pretend to be exempt from the rules of mass commodification in order to justify their price. They must make an impression of being associated with the earlier stages of the market organization, when "the purchaser was face to face with an artisan, at once manufacturer and tradesman, in a marketplace"[23] Tourists want to, for a moment, become part of the life of people inhabiting the country they visit, or at least to be able to witness this life the way it really is. But how is "the spontaneity of existence" to be distinguished from a well-designed, customized product? How can one ascertain that a native's gesture of friendship speaks to pure kindness, rather than being contrived as an element of a marketing strategy geared to the agenda of financial targets? How can one make sure that the traveler's space of experience is included in the experience of the local population, rather than being circumscribed by purpose-staged decorations?[24]

Boltanski and Chiapello observe that "[t]he effect of capitalism's assimilation of the demand for authenticity, by means of a commodification [...] has been to introduce into people's relationship to goods and persons *rapid cycles of infatuation and disappointment*."[25] Authenticity is premised on disinterested personal engagement and must not be just an element of commercial relations. However, as soon as a thing garners popularity, a tendency appears to institutionalize it. Spontaneity, uniqueness, and originality evaporate. Consequently, authenticity must be looked for in ever new places. As long as we strive to constantly live authentic lives, our lives are inevitably suffused in fear. Whether a function is performed well or badly is not the point. Disappointment arises

22 Boltanski and Chiapello, *New Spirit of Capitalism*, 446.

23 Boltanski and Chiapello, *New Spirit of Capitalism*, 446.

24 Cf. Dean MacCannell, *The Tourist: A New Theory of the Leisure Class* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: California University Press, 1999), 98–104.

25 Boltanski and Chiapello, *New Spirit of Capitalism*, 445 (italics original).

from discovering that an "aura" is lacking. In the case of tourists, they themselves are the threat. In their chase to experience something authentic, tourists avoid tourist attractions. They look for restaurants frequented by locals and not by tourists. They forget that by simply showing up as tourists at a venue, they irreparably spoil this venue, for it no longer fits the description of a tourist-free place. Tourists do not like their kind; nor are they liked by locals, who look down on them, convinced of their own moral superiority: it must have been a stranger; no one who lives here would have done something like that, would have put this or that on, would have eaten this or that. Tourists are not welcome in non-touristic restaurants.

4 Immersion

> We didn't know what to expect the first time we arrived at Yves Camdeborde's Le Comptoir on the Left Bank of Paris. Would it be like La Regalade with dozens of guidebook toting foreigners lined up impatiently at the door and with hurried staff trying to cope with the increasing lines and full tables? It was not to be. Most of the tables were occupied by locals seeking the 'vrai' cuisine that Yves Camdeborde is famous for.[26]

This is how Sue Dyson and Roger McShane began their review of Le Comptoir for an Internet portal on food tourism in November 2006. They returned to the restaurant in 2007 and then every year until 2012. They repeatedly sang the praises of the gorgeous food and organic wines they had enjoyed. They were also enthusiastic about the staff, lauding their professional approach and tolerance of their poor French.

I do not know when exactly all this changed, but when I arrived at Le Comptoir in 2014, I had to wait in a long line of Asian and American tourists who had learned, perhaps like me, from *The New York Times* that the restaurant was a must-go eatery. The place swarmed with people, and the staff did not even try to conceal their impatience at the pressing queue. The waitresses were fatigued with serving the throng of customers, and their manner would qualify as assertive, if not, to resort to more traditional vocabulary, impertinent. They neither showed consideration for the guests' limited French nor deigned to explain what was on the menu to anyone. They neither recommended any

26 Sue Dyson and Roger McShane, "Le Comptoir. Review," *Food Tourism*, November 2006; http://www.foodtourist.com/ftguide/Content/I2277.htm (Access 7 September 2016).

dishes nor smiled, but efficiently put on the tables the dishes which had been ordered with a lot of uncertainty (what on earth may these enigmatic names mean?).

Not always appreciated, tourists' desperate hunt for authenticity is invariably doomed to failure. Word about splendid venues travels fast and far. A crowd queueing for the *vrai* food described in a guide kills locality. Le Comptoir, a local bistro, ceases to be local, because locals do not have as much time and resolve as tourists to interminably wait for a table. But is a real experience indeed impossible at a restaurant bustling with tourists?

In "But Is It Authentic? Culinary Travel and the Search for the 'Genuine Article,'" Heldke ponders the possibility of an authentic culinary experience, and asks a series of related questions: Having eaten a local dish, are we really any closer to the way of life of the local population? Is taste enough to submerge oneself in local culture? How can the authenticity of a dish or a recipe be established? Is it enough to use genuine ingredients and apply the cooking techniques and utensils "they" would employ to obtain an authentic dish?[27] Rather than attempting any straightforward answers, Heldke multiplies the problems: "Even if we could agree that a dish was *prepared* authentically, there is no guarantee whatsoever that the eater will be equipped to *experience* it as authentic (where authentic is taken to mean 'the way it would taste for an insider to the cuisine')."[28] To explain her doubts, Heldke evokes Korsmeyer's definition of taste as a complex "cognitive activity," which is affected by sensory, emotional, cultural, social, and other factors. To further complicate the matter, authenticity is enmeshed in historical contingencies and, consequently, inextricable from change. The Polish bigos (sauerkraut stew), the Greek moussaka, the French cassoulet, and other innumerable classics have transformed over the centuries to finally achieve their current form, which counts as "authentic." However, as all dishes are known to be modified in daily cooking practice, "the authentic form" is actually a rather fluid form. As a matter of fact, the entire cultural complex called cuisine is constantly undergoing changes, and is subject to the comings and goings of fads.[29]

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27 Heldke, "But Is it Authentic?," 387–89.

28 Heldke, "But Is it Authentic?," 388.

29 Changes in the sphere of taste and in the notions of what it meant to eat well in Poland between the 17th and 18th centuries are superbly depicted by Jarosław Dumanowski; see Jarosław Dumanowski, "Kucharz doskonały Wojciecha Wincentego Wielądki," in *Kucharz doskonały pożyteczny dla zatrudniających się gospodarstwem z francuskiego przetłumaczony i wielą przydatkami pomnożony przez Wojciecha Wielądka*, ed. Jarosław Dumanowski (Warszawa: Muzeum Pałacu Króla Jana III w Wilanowie, 2012), 15–23.

Unwilling to abandon the idea of an authentic experience and at the same time seeking to solve the impasse, Heldke proposes a strategy of her own in which the examination of the "environmental" conditions of authenticity shifts towards pondering the very process of experiencing. She pits singularity, locality, and authenticity against a new quality stemming from a clash of various traditions. Experience is always somebody's experience and, as such, it cannot possibly be dissociated from this individual's history. This is what Anna Wieczorkiewicz highlights when asserting that: "You can try various things, learn the flavors of local cuisine, but the gustatory grid formed of the tastes typical of the traveler's culture will anyway remain the point of reference."[30] The quest for authenticity through removing the traveler's individualness from the experience cannot but end in failure and disappointment. In order to preserve some possibility of an authentic experience in gastronomy, Heldke builds on John Dewey's concept of experience to define it as an outcome of a clash or a conversation between two subjects: the eater and the dish, which represents the cook.[31] In this way, she brings together two notions of authenticity: one that is comprehended as being true to oneself and the other that requires renouncing the self and accommodating to the local specificities.

It is quite another matter whether an authentic experience as theorized by Heldke is indeed identical with Dewey's idea of "an experience," which hinges on the harmonious fusion of aesthetic qualities. Such exceptional, integral experiences, as Dewey insists, make up complete, rounded, and expressive wholes: "There is inception, development, fulfillment."[32] For its part, an authentic culinary experience is not always harmonious or smooth, which does not mean that it is not etched in the memory as extraordinary. Travelers tend to be exposed to flavors that take time to become accustomed to and to give pure pleasure; however, time is exactly what travelers as a rule do not have at their disposal. When selecting courses for their meals, tourists push aside their own culinary preferences for the sake of local favorites. Inconveniences and surprises are thus intrinsic to any expedition into the territory of the Other.

I would count my visit at Le Comptoir as an authentic touristic experience. The gorgeous food – a chicken terrine with *foie gras*, Roman lettuce with vinaigrette and shallots, crispy toasted bread, and chilled white wine – were as much a part of it as were the waiting in the long queue and the staff's perfectly

30 Anna Wieczorkiewicz, *Apetyt turysty. O doświadczaniu świata w podróży* (Kraków: Universitas, 2008), 282.

31 Heldke refers to Dewey's concept of aesthetic experience as formulated in his *Art as Experience* from 1934 (John Dewey, *Art as Experience* [London and New York: Perigee, 2005]).

32 Dewey, *Art as Experience*, 57.

mastered strategies of ignoring customers' needs. At the end of the day, Parisian bistros are known to be teeming places, and Parisian waiters are notorious for their insolence. What is no longer as indubitable is the status of French cuisine as the world's best.[33]

5 Returning Home

Small food manufacturers view their produce as a reason for pride and a means of promoting their region. As early as in the 18th century, which witnessed an improvement in food preservation methods, "the nobles of Périgord sent their relatives and friends truffle-stuffed turkeys and pâtés, small gifts that helped cultivate family bonds and, at the same time, contributed to the fame of local products; in this way, an unobtrusive but powerful engine of the promotion of regional gastronomy was set in motion."[34] This shows that a belief in the uniqueness of locally produced goods (which today fuels applications for registered trademarks) boasts a long and venerable tradition. The contemporary tourism industry not only invites travelers to enjoy the gifts of the region when on holiday, but also cajoles them into taking the culinary pieces of the culture they have visited back home as treasured keepsakes. Before they board their planes, duty-free zones at airports regale them with typical alcohols, spices, and delicacies vacuum-sealed for long transportation. As already shown, even if travelers taste foods in their original settings, the authenticity of their experience is questionable, to put it mildly. Back home, it is even more uncertain.

A tourist's fridge is stocked with jars of exotic preserves, her cupboards are brim-full with strange spices, and her drinks cabinet stores bottle upon bottle of alcohols she greatly enjoyed when away. All this is supposed to sustain the contact. One glimpse is enough to guess the potential problems this breeds. Foods are intimately connected to the *genius loci* of their area of origin.[35] Flavors travel badly, bound up, as they are, with the region and the season.[36] Recreating a recipe in another, remote place inevitably generates a different

33 Michael Steinberger, *Au Revoir to All That: Food, Wine, and the End of France* (New York, Berlin, and London; Bloomsbury, 2010).

34 Madeleine Ferrières, "Konserwacja żywności," in *Codzienność dawnej Francji. Życie i rzeczy w czasach ancien régime'u* (*L'ancienne France au quotidien*: *la vie et les choses de la vie sous l'Ancien Régime*), ed. Michel Figeac, trans. Dorota Sieńko (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Muzeum Pałacu Króla Jana III w Wilanowie, 2015), 207.

35 Revel, *Culture and Cuisine*, 18–19.

36 Revel, *Culture and Cuisine*, 5.

experience. Tasting is not only the matter of pure palatal pleasure, but is also affected by the – not merely culinary – history of a given community. In *The Pedant in the Kitchen*, Julian Barnes counsels caution vis-à-vis the temptation to transplant a part of a foreign country to one's home. His sixth piece of advice for beginner collectors of cookery books reads: "Resist, if possible, attractive anthologies of local recipes, which you are tempted to buy as souvenirs of foreign holidays."[37] The warning is grounded in a simple observation that "Cantal food tastes best in the Cantal."[38]

6 Appropriation

For all the tongue-in-cheek overtones of Barnes's preaching, the matter is actually quite serious. The fixated search for authenticity is a whim that only the wealthy can actually afford. A typical foodie has the white face of a member of the Western middle class, which "systematically scavenges the earth for new experiences to be woven into a collective, touristic version of other peoples and other places."[39] This white privileged Westerner is addressed by the protagonist of Shing Yin Khor's comic *Just Eat It*: "'But is it authentic?' you ask, wanting my stamp of approval, so my authentically asian [sic] self can help you gain your authentic asian [sic] food expert points. Whose authenticity you're dipping into? What pre-colonial fantasy have you conjured up in your head – all spices and exotic flavour?"[40] The comic's following drawings convey the artist's proliferating doubts. She understands neither the obsession with authenticity nor the criteria by which authenticity is judged, and suspects that the concept of authentic food is informed by just another iteration of Orientalism. Westerners demand that what they consider exotic cuisines should clearly define their essence. They treat eating customs as a form of a heritage theme-park, and refuse to recognize that foreign cuisines are living and changing organisms. Their Orientalist vision precludes acknowledging that distant countries have gone through modernization processes, which have "contaminated" local cuisines with Western inclusions.

Dean MacCannell notes in *The Tourist* that "[t]ouristic consciousness is motivated by its desire for authentic experiences, and the tourist may believe

37 Julian Barnes, *The Pedant in the Kitchen* (London: Atlantic Books, 2003), 29.
38 Barnes, *Pedant in the Kitchen*, 29.
39 MacCannell, *Tourist*, 13.
40 Shing Yin Khor, *Just Eat It*; https://www.bitchmedia.org/post/a-comic-about-food-and-cultural-appropriation (Access 16 July 2017).

that he is moving in this direction, but often it is very difficult to know for sure if the experience is in fact authentic."[41] Hence, tourists need an expert to guide and/or reassure them, which paradoxically engenders further woes. Namely, Khor fears that, as her ancestors' food is meticulously scrutinized, she will also be subjected to assessment through procedures designed to establish whether – as an American of Malaysian descent – she is authentic enough to pronounce judgements on Asian cuisine and products. Worried and irritated, she concludes her comic by appealing:

> Stop thinking. Just slurp the noodles into your mouth. I don't need you to tell me about your spiritual awakening, or your surprise at how modernized our cities are, or how charmed you were that English is widely spoken. […] Eat, but don't ask for a gold star for your gastronomical bravery. Eat, but don't pretend that the food lends you cultural insight into our "exotic" ways. Eat, but recognize that we've been eating too, and what is our sustenance isn't your adventurous story. Just – eat.[42]

A preoccupation with the authenticity of food may result in trivializing the culture that has produced it and in ignoring this culture's most essential component, that is, people with their daily lives, which, as mutable and varied experiences, defy any hierarchizing doctrine of authenticity.

7 Avoiding Authenticity

Formulated since the 1930s and still persisting in art, the idea of authenticity as a liberating force has not been able to withstand the force of capitalism, which has assimilated it as part of its market strategies. Moreover, as Boltanski avers, art conceived in terms of authenticity has fashioned possibilities of crafting novel forms of control and novel "authentic" consumption models, where uniqueness vanishes in confrontation with exorbitant revenue from selling personalized products. A way out of this dead end may be offered by critically-minded art. Boltanski wonders: "[P]erhaps the artistic critique should, to a greater extent than is currently the case, take the time to reformulate the issues of liberation and authenticity, starting from the new forms of oppression it unwittingly helped to make possible."[43]

41 MacCannell, *Tourist*, 101.
42 Shing Yin Khor, *Just Eat It*.
43 Boltanski and Chiapello, *New Spirit of Capitalism*, 468.

FIGURE 25 Rirkrit Tiravanija, *Untitled 1993* (*Flädlesuppe*), 1993

Such an engaged attitude is embodied in the art of Rirkrit Tiravanija, whose works often explore intercultural dialogue, the colonial past, and contemporary hegemonies of global markets.[44] These issues were central to his installation *Untitled 1993* (*Flädlesuppe*), displayed at the *Backstage* exhibition in Hamburg's Kunstverein. The installation included: instant meat-and-vegetable broth with pancakes made from ready-made mix, kitchen utensils, spices, hot plates, a typical German beer-drinking bench, and a monitor screening *Drachenfutter* (*Dragon's Food*) (1987) directed by Jan Schütte (Fig. 25). The film features an Afghan dishwasher and an African assistant to a German chef. The team is joined by a Pakistani youth.[45] The crucial point is that the action takes place at a Chinese restaurant in Germany. The illusion of authentic Chinese cuisine is achieved by having customers see a Chinese waiter and the Chinese owner as the only staff, while in the kitchen at the back nobody has the slightest idea

44 Rirkrit Tiravanija and Hans Ulbricht Obrist. *Rirkrit Tiravanija: The Conversation Series 20* (Köln: Walther König, 2010).

45 As an adolescent, Tiravanija himself worked as a chef's assistant at an Indonesian restaurant in Canada.

FIGURE 26 Rirkrit Tiravanija, *Untitled 1993* (*Flädlesuppe*), 1993

about the Chinese ways of cooking. Anyway, this is not what is on the immigrants' minds. They talk about the possibilities and ways to assimilate, concluding that one is an authentic German if one can cook *Flädlesuppe* (Fig. 26).

In Tiravanija's interpretation, the narrative is first and foremost about "survival": "First, it is about going to some strange place and trying to survive, to assimilate, trying to get yourself into the culture. To get acceptance, so you can stay. It is about survival."[46] At Tiravanija's Hamburg show, *Flädlesuppe* was served with a tiny twist. Tiravanija added some Cayenne pepper to the traditional German recipe for a broth with rolled and sliced savory pancakes, and in this way mixed the German flavor with an exotic element. This composition of ingredients from two different cultures was significant not only in terms of altering the taste, but also as making the symbolic structures of these

46 *Rirkrit Tiravanija. Cook Book: Just Smile and Don't Talk*, ed. Thomas Kellein (London: Edition Hansjörg Mayer, 2010), 11.

cultures intermingle in one dish.[47] Nevertheless, the project did not envisage any easy coalescence of cultures. Thomas Kellein observes that, on the whole, "in Tiravanija's works, cultures are not reconciled but collide with each other. However, his work never involves war. It presents co-existence."[48] Tiravanija's art foregrounds the polyphonic nature of contemporary culture and, consequently, the tensions integral to it. The promise of co-existence ensues from the "capacity to recognize and accept *otherness* as radically other."[49] Such an attitude heralds "the possibility of recognizing and attempting to enter into a dialogue, on an equal footing, with forms of intelligence absolutely different from my own"[50] As a result, one is no longer compelled to look for the criteria of authenticity and, thus, for satisfaction beyond one's own experience.

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47 The mixing of flavors and symbols in the now-fashionable trend of fusion cuisine is discussed in Richard Shusterman, "Somaesthetics and the Fine Art of Eating," in *Body Aesthetics*, ed. Sherri Irvin (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 274.

48 Thomas Kellein, "Essay," in *Rirkrit Tiravanija. Cook Book*, 152.

49 MacCannell, *Tourist*, xxi (italics original).

50 MacCannell, *Tourist*, xxi.

CHAPTER 8

Leftovers

On 10th January 2011, I boarded a coach from Wrocław (Poland) to Stuttgart (Germany). I made this overnight journey to sup with Daniel Spoerri the following night. Spoerri, an artist whose work flouts the verdicts of 18th-century aesthetics, develops projects which, besides appealing to the distance senses, also engage taste, the most intimate of the senses. As a restaurateur, a chef, and a gallery owner, Spoerri has made food the axis of his artistic practices, including both banquets that have made it to the chronicles of art history and *tableaux pièges*, compositions of petrified meal leftovers referred to as snare-pictures or trap-pictures.

The dinner in Stuttgart marked the *finissage* of *Eat Art*, a group show of contemporary artists who work with food as a medium of art. The event, which took place shortly after Spoerri's eightieth birthday, was held at Wielandshöhe, whose chef Vincent Klink is known as a man of many talents – an author, a jazz musician, and a television personality rolled into one. The apparently innocuous meal proved to be an essentially perverse enterprise as it developed into a cannibalistic banquet where the diners consumed – bit(e) by delicious bit(e) – Spoerri's own biography.

The first course – *tocaná*, a traditional Romanian pork stew with hominy – transported us back to the childhood of a Jewish-Romanian boy. Born in Galati in 1930 as Daniel Isaac Feinstein, Spoerri grew up in Switzerland, where his family took refuge from anti-Semitic persecution. This Swiss period in Spoerri's life was evoked by crawdads with spinach on Klink's menu. The following courses and accompanying wines conjured up Spoerri's itinerary life of relocations and journeys, some of which were not prompted by the common enough urge to have a change of scene and air. Spoerri moved home several times, and lived, as an adult, in France, Greece, Germany, Italy, and the U.S. It is for good reason, indeed, that Arturo Schwarz, Spoerri's good friend, has called him a "pathological nomad."[1]

The dinner in Wielandshöhe featured a sequence of Romanian, French, Swiss, Italian, German, and Austrian dishes (Fig. 27). Greek cuisine was a missing element, although Spoerri's stay on the Aegean island of Simi was highly

1 Arturo Schwarz, "The Eternal Youth of Daniel Spoerri," in *Daniel Spoerri: From Trap-Pictures to Prillwitz Idols*, ed. Thomas Levy, Barbara Raderscheidt, and Sandra Solimano (Milano: Silvana, 2010), 27.


MENÜ ZU EHREN VON
DANIEL SPOERRI
11. JANUAR 2011

2008 KREATION RIESLING
SEKTKELLEREI KESSLER, ESSLINGEN

*

2005 FETEASCĂ NEAGRA
CRAMELE RECAŞ„ RUMÄNIEN

*

2008 BOURGOGNE BLANC
DOMAINE MARECHAL, BURGUND

*

2008 PINOT GRIS
STAATSKELLEREI ZÜRICH

*

2008 SPÄTBURGUNDER TROCKEN
WINZERVEREIN AHRWEILER, AHR

*

2009 SAUVIGNON BLANC TROCKEN
WEINGUT BERNHARD ELLWANGER
WEINSTADT-GROSSHEPPACH

*

2006 RIESLING
TROCKENBEERENAUSLESE
WEINGUT LEITNER

TOCANÁ VON SCHWEINHAXE
AUF MAMAGLIA
RUMÄNIEN

*

BOUILLABAISSE
VON ROTBARBE UND SEETEUFEL
FRANKREICH

*

SPINATKNÖPFLI MIT FLUSSKREBSEN
SCHWEIZ

*

INSALATA CEDRI
ITALIEN

*

SAUERBRATEN
VOM HERMANNSDORFER OCHSENFILET
WIRSINGKÖPFCHEN
DEUTSCHLAND RHEINLAND

*

GRATINIERTER ZIEGENKÄSE
AUS DEM SCHÖNBUCH
DEUTSCHLAND SCHWABEN

*SCHOKOLADENPUDDING / GOODIE !

MILLIRAHMSTRUDEL
VANILLEGLAÇE, GAISSHIRTLESBIRNE
ÖSTERREICH

FIGURE 27 The menu of the dinner in honor of Daniel Spoerri with a handwritten note about the *entremet*

fruitful and crucial to the development of his career as an artist. It was there that Spoerri realized that "the preparation and consumption of food are two of the most defining acts of human existence."[2] He found the purely physical process of the nourishment of the body compelling in and of itself, yet the cultural context of these acts absorbed him as well.

1 *Débris* of the Meal

Served as the second course, a monkfish and mullet *bouillabaisse* alluded to Spoerri's Parisian period.[3] At the time, the artist was living in room 13 of the Carcassonne hotel at 24 Rue Mouffetard. The small room quickly filled up with his first snare-pictures. This was where Spoerri was born as an artist

2 John G. Hatch, "On the Various Trappings of Daniel Spoerri," *ARTMargins*, 29 March 2003; http://www.artmargins.com/index.php/featured-articles/259-on-the-various--trappings-of-daniel-spoerri (Access 25 September 2017).

3 Spoerri lived in Paris from 1960 to 1966.

with a distinctive poetics of his own which resulted from entrusting himself to chance, as captured in the notion of an "aesthetics of surprise."[4]

Since then, entrapping daily life in the "snares" of art and immortalizing chance incidents have been the cornerstones of Spoerri's method. As he explains, "[t]he '*tableau piège*' (snare picture) is a fragment cut out of reality, of everyday events, a breakfast, perhaps, or a dinner. The remains and the movement in these little dramas are fixed forever, as found, in the space where the action took place."[5] He glues whatever has remained on the table – plates, cups, glasses, bits of food, etc. – to its top, verticalizes the horizontal form, and displays it as a three-dimensional trap-picture (Fig. 28).[6]

Spoerri's first eating performances were also staged in Paris, where he opened a restaurant called Galerie J in 1963. The venue operated from 2nd to 13th March, and hosted over those ten days ten original meal events, which at the same time provided the material for new snare-pictures. They were later exhibited as part of the *723 Kitchen Utensils* show.[7] Art, which is understood as experience in the pragmatist tradition, results from the interplays and interdependences of action and reception. Spoerri's restaurant was designed with the same idea in mind, as a metaphor for the contemporaneous artistic scene. Art critics (Alain Jouffroy, Jean-Jacques Lévêque, Pierre Restany, John Ashbery, and others) served as waiters who mediated between the artist-and-chef (Spoerri) and the audience.[8] The tensions arising at the intersection of the various components of and participants in the performance were commented on by John G. Hatch: "The success or failure depends on the consumption of the meal, on the preferences of 'taste' of its consumers, and the word of mouth that follows."[9]

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4 France was also important because Spoerri joined Yves Klein and Jean Tinguely as a signatory of the manifesto of the Nouveaux Réalistes. "Cuisine art" was Spoerri's original contribution to the idea of anti-art.

5 Daniel Spoerri, *Daniel Spoerri: Coincidence as Master*, ed. Thomas Levy (Bielefeld: Kerber, 2003), 62.

6 *Tableaux pièges*, the French moniker of Spoerri's pieces, is a play on words. The phrase is usually translated as "snare-pictures" (or "trap-pictures"), which fails to convey the ambiguity of the term. Namely, *tableau* also denotes "a table," which multiplies the layers of meaning, as a table becomes a trap for the objects glued to it, while the resulting whole is ensnared in the trap of art, which captures and transforms life.

7 The names and venues of performances are listed in Sabine Kaufmann, "Daniel Spoerri i jego performansy," in *Daniel Spoerri. Sztuka wyjęta z codzienności*, ed. Tomasz Macios and Mariusz Sobczyński (Kraków: Mocak, 2016), 22.

8 Renate Buschmann, "Evocation of Pleasure and Disgust: Daniel Spoerri and the Establishment of Eat Art," in *Eating the Universe: Vom Essen in der Kunst*, ed. Sylvette Babi (Köln: Dumont, 2009), 236.

9 Hatch, "On the Various Trappings of Daniel Spoerri."

FIGURE 28 Daniel Spoerri, *Tableau piège*, (28th November) 1972

In the following years, Spoerri put up subsequent iterations of the Eat Art project. Culinary performances were held across European urban hubs and in New York,[10] where an eating performance imitating the Parisian event took place. On that occasion, Spoerri invited twenty-nine artists to join him at the table. After each dinner, he glued the remnants to table tops, which were then put on display in Allan Stone Gallery 31. The meal cooked for Arman was doubly preserved, as Spoerri made *tableaux pièges*, and Andy Warhol filmed the event in his *Dinner at Daley's*.[11]

One of Spoerri's most recognizable snare-pictures shows the remainders of the meal consumed by the most famous Dada artist, Marcel Duchamp. A white cup with some coffee dregs and a white plate with unfinished food on it stand

10 Klink's menu did not include any American special, but the oysters served before the dinner can be construed as a culinary nod to New York.

11 See Kaufmann, "Daniel Spoerri i jego performansy," 22.

out sharply against the fiery red of the tablecloth. Other items fixed to the table include glasses, wineglasses, a jug, cutlery, and a metal ashtray with a cigarette butt in it. The composition forms a bleak testimony to transitoriness, "the metaphor of the cycle of life and death, of decomposition and rebirth."[12] It also offers a memento mori to the "mechanized," "aseptic," and "rationalized" consumer society, which unreflectingly uses objects, people, and experiences, and is quick to dump some things in its rush to enjoy others.

To evoke Duchamp in this context is not just gratuitous name-dropping. His concepts clearly inform Spoerri's projects. "The seeds of the absurd, irony, and destruction, with a pinch of provocation,"[13] which Bożena Kowalska discerns in Duchamp's art, are profuse in Spoerri's works as well. In 1961, Spoerri put up a food stand with such products as baking powder and canned foods in Arthur (Addie) Kopacki's gallery in Copenhagen. All the items bore a stamp reading *Attention oeuvre d'art* ("Attention, a work of art"). The change from the utilitarian function to the artistic one did not entail an increase in expense, as the objects were sold at their original retail price.[14]

2 Tensions

Decay is an indispensable element and a harbinger of new life. This is most visibly embodied in fermentation, a process akin to putrefaction. For a long time, the one was not distinguished from the other, and they were feared, because fermentation was perceived as both a miracle and a threat, with fermented things spawning anxiety since rotting could destroy the vital fluids. The obscure processes of annihilation, the metamorphosis of putrefaction and revivification are central to the production of cheese and wine.[15]

When decomposing, food remains impart their energy into plants and animals. The energy of death and disintegration morphs into the energy of life. Even a rotten apple may be a cradle of new life, as its pits will give rise to new trees. Balance is constituted by the dynamic of tensions between building and falling apart. The myth of Persephone, for one, implies that birth and death

12 Sandra Solimano, "If Chance Meets Art to Narrate Life," in *Daniel Spoerri: From Trap--Pictures to Prillwitz Idols*, 19.

13 Bożena Kowalska, *Od impresjonizmu do konceptualizmu. Odkrycia sztuki* (Warszawa: Arkady, 1989), 77.

14 See Kaufmann, "Daniel Spoerri i jego performansy," 30.

15 Piero Camporesi, *The Anatomy of the Senses: Natural Symbols in Medieval and Early Modern Italy*, trans. Allan Cameron (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1994), 37–63.

have been locked in a dialectical relationship from time immemorial; the gloom and sadness of death and decay are allied with the optimism and joy of renewal. This ambivalence underlies both living and dead nature.

Nature is not a petrified entity. Nature is mutability, pulsation, incessant movement, happening, cyclical changes, imperceptible transformations and sudden metamorphoses, the circulation of juices and energies, and flows of mesmeric fluids. Hence, the notion of "still life" stirs anxiety: "In a sense, every still life manifests, more or less directly, the idea of the finitude and insignificance of (one's own) life – 'Vanitas.'"[16] When talking about his trap-pictures for the first time in 1961, Spoerri confessed to feeling discomfort when working on them, since movement, rather than stagnation, was his element.

Snare-pictures are founded on doubly unpleasant sensations. Firstly, they immobilize life by boxing it in as a work of art (a snare-picture). Secondly, the artist confronts the audience with an object which seems to suspend the force of gravity, while at the same time looking like it is about to drop smashing on the floor.[17] This is a deliberate device aimed at multiplying the symbolic meanings of Spoerri's pieces. The viewers have the dialectic of life and death held up to them, which Spoerri explicitly admits: "I am fond of oppositions and contradictions because they create tension, and a whole can spring only from opposites. Movement unleashes staticity; staticity, fixation, death should provoke movement, transformation and life."[18]

3 *Zoe en Stasei*

Dinner is a performance in its pure form, since it only lasts as long as eating takes place, and it cannot be repeated in the same shape. Remnants are what is traditionally discarded – both after dinner and after a performance – but they are also the only vestiges representing nostalgia and a desire to conserve what is essentially unpreservable. Powered by his obsession to preserve leftovers, Spoerri explores the possibilities of archiving fleeting performance, whereby

16 Heike Eipeldauer, "Vanitas – Allegorien von Leben und Tod," in *Augenschmaus vom Essen im Stillleben*, ed. Ingried Brugger and Heike Eipeldauer (München, Berlin, London, and New York: Prestel, 2010), 97.

17 Spoerri made the vision of collapse very tangible in Basel in 1978. He deliberately fixed only half of the tableware to nine table tops. The other items crashed down with a thud while being put on the walls to the dismay of the surprised gallery owner. See Kaufmann, "Daniel Spoerri i jego performansy," 36.

18 Qtd. in Solimano, "If Chance Meets Art to Narrate Life," 19.

he probes the limits of taste, the chances of retaining it, and the boundaries of art.

Spoerri's work is inscribed in contemporary avant-garde art in a double manner. First, it blurs the line between art and life, and second, it gives up on parading beauty in order to reveal concealed meanings and to look behind the scenes of culture. His actions have a dual structure, as in one gesture they bring everydayness to the forefront, and in the other they foreground the "backroom" of this everydayness.

Spoerri offers up utility as a sacrifice. In his hands, pitchers, cups, glasses, plates, cutlery, and other tableware items are stripped of their regular functions and utilitarian value. Put on display, they generate "value, of a different and higher type than economic value, capable of conferring prestige during one's life and permanence after death."[19] Common objects and unfinished foods become monumentalized and obtain a new existence as "miniatures of eternity." Remo Bodei draws on Jeanne Hersch's insights to highlight the permanence of still-life paintings, which "open 'a gap in time' toward the absolute, which is touched fleetingly at the point of contact between becoming and eternity, thus hinting at what remains in what passes away."[20] This way of conceptualizing the still life genre highlights duration and is consistent with "the idea of something living and natural" reverberating in the corresponding terms in some other languages, for example, Dutch *stilleven* and German *Stillleben*, which suggest "static" or "silent," but not "inert," life.[21]

In a way, Spoerri's art anticipates what will later be referred to as the abject, where what is discarded and jettisoned from memory forces itself into the very middle of things. Spoerri employs everyday objects and useless leftovers, which meander their way to a gallery instead of winding up in a garbage bin. What results from his work is "a fragment eternally fixed in the immovable time of art."[22] This gesture radicalizes some tendencies which have been regularly re-surfacing in modern art. Radicalization in this case does not entail a complete break with tradition. Tensions between the beautiful and the coveted on the one hand and the rejected and the distressing on the other have haunted humanity of old. Among countless exhibits on display in the Vatican

19 Remo Bodei, *The Life of Things, The Love of Things*, trans. Murtha Baca (New York: Fordham University Press, 2015), 72.

20 Bodei, *The Life of Things,* 99.

21 Bodei, *The Life of Things,* 129n1. In other languages, for example Italian and Polish, the equivalent terms of, respectively, *natura morta* and *martwa natura*, which literally mean "dead nature," have somewhat different connotations.

22 Solimano, "If Chance Meets Art to Narrate Life," 19.

Museums is an extraordinary mosaic that portrays remnants of a banquet with enormous accuracy and realism.[23] Fish-skeletons, chicken bones, pieces of grapes, nuts, an empty sea-shell, lobster-claws, and other bits thrown down on the floor while feasting are vividly set off by the white background. They may have been left there for the poor or animals to feed on.[24]

The temptation to steal a glimpse at and reveal goings-on in the wings, which prompted ancient artists to laboriously put mosaic pieces together and reproduce fish bones and other inconspicuous traces of reality, is, if anything, only gathering a momentum today. While rooted in the tradition of ancient art, Spoerri's artistic practices are at the same time founded on pushing further the tendencies of modern and contemporary art. Leftovers, as the underside of a feast representing that which is consigned to nothingness and reluctantly acknowledged, if at all, are brought into relief. Artists who use food and refer to nutrition processes as a rule do not seek to afford easy pleasures to their audiences: "[I]n contemporary art, food is predominantly imaged in the state of destruction and decay. These art projects turn familiar victuals into the source of horror."[25] Multiple pieces explore forbidden zones, where beauty is ousted by a variety of aversive values. These prevail when the material for artworks is provided by such objects as orange skins overgrown with hairy, gray mold (Michel Blazy), gastroscopy images (Mona Hatoum), a hare carcass rotting at an accelerated pace (Sam Taylor-Wood), a raw chicken serving to test human relations, including maternal love and erotic attraction (Nina Sobell), a piece of sausage floating in formalin and resembling a part of the digestive system (Damien Hirst), or – the most repulsive of all meats – human flesh (Dieter Roth). In such cases, beauty is dethroned, and the warning feeling of disgust creeps in instead: "Everything seems at risk in the experience of disgust. It is a state of alarm and emergency, an acute crisis of self-preservation in the face of an unassimilable otherness, a convulsive struggle, in which what is in question is, quite literally, whether 'to be or not to be.'"[26]

23 Katherine M. D. Dunbabin, *Mosaics of the Greek and Roman World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 26.

24 Cf. Silvia Malaguzzi, *Food and Feasting in Art*, trans. Brian Philips (Los Angeles: Getty Publications, 2008).

25 Eipeldauer, "Vanitas," 98.

26 Winfried Menninghaus, *Disgust: The Theory and History of a Strong Sensation*, trans. Howard Eiland (New York: State University of New York Press, 2003), 1.

4 Commentary on Life

The perturbing beauty of Baroque still-life paintings often relies on the motif of decomposition as moral guidance for viewers. Paradoxically, these utterly sensual representations aim to divert onlookers' attention from corporeal temptations and to channel human feelings and desires towards the eternal, the immutable, and the incorruptible, towards things exempt from worldly decay. Spoerri's works likewise tell the story of the pleasures of life, but devote equal attention to eschatology. As Spoerri emphasizes, the moment when existence is captured marks its death. In the semblance of a photographer,[27] Spoerri focuses on freezing the instant of time and perpetuity, but in order to do so, he conserves reality itself rather than eternalizing its image. Hatch observes that "in preserving a moment from life Spoerri kills it, rips it away from the flow of existence, to make it into a useless, lifeless object."[28] Nevertheless, it is not Spoerri's intent to confront his audience with the pure horror of decomposition, and his abolition of the everyday has a productive facet to it as well. In the regular order of things, the inexorable course of events dooms common objects, and all the more so food scraps, to being an imperceptible element of existence. Snare-pictures help banal everyday things and food remains escape their destiny. Moreover, "the 'corpses' of meals" bring to mind the live experiences of the eaters who once sat at the tables now converted into "altars."[29]

Spoerri's trap-pictures are also bound up with his life and experiences. Like many other people of his generation, Spoerri went through the trauma of war. His family had to flee from their native Romania, and his Jewish father was probably killed by the Nazis. In an interview, Spoerri explains:

> I think that actually this is the question of territory. Because I had lost my territory since childhood, and even during childhood. I never had a territory. I was a Romanian Jew, evangelical in an orthodox country, whose father was dead, without being certain that he was really dead. I swear to you, the first things I glued down were all that, that feeling.[30]

27 Cf. Martin Jay, "Photography and the Event," in *Discussing Modernity: A Dialogue with Martin Jay*, ed. Dorota Koczanowicz, Leszek Koczanowicz, and David Schauffler (Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi: 2013), 9–29.

28 Hatch, "On the Various Trappings of Daniel Spoerri."

29 Maria Anna Potocka, "Estetyka praktyczna," in *Daniel Spoerri. Sztuka wyjęta z codzienności*, 10.

30 Giancarlo Politi, "Daniel Spoerri," *Flash Art*, no. 154 (1990): 119.

It would make little sense to dismiss Spoerri's insight that snare-pictures express his inability to find a territory of his own, a predicament that stems not only from historical contingencies but also from the essential relation between the human being and the world. If Jean-Paul Sartre was right to claim that our lives are open-ended projects, all ostensibly completed sequences of action are, in principle, failures – traces of our striving to bring them to a closure. By defining a territory, we essentially chain ourselves to the remnants of the living and lived process that has brought us where we are at the moment. Spoerri realizes that to preserve a moment means to annihilate it; what remain of it are only traces, and those must be painstakingly decoded.

Sandra Solimano states that Spoerri uses art as "a way of interpreting life, of making sense of what happens and has happened in his existence."[31] Spoerri relocates life – remnants, used tableware, waste, old *bric-à-brac*, and other inconspicuous objects and situations – into the domain of art, thereby turning them into discursive tools. For art is a commentary on life. Pictures, maps, and notes add up to a coherent image of the artist's life – his travels, his social life, and his creative pursuits. At the same time, art is an interpretation of life, setting the standards of experience for it. The perfection of life can thus be measured by the quantity of aesthetic qualities that harmonize and round off every experience.[32]

5 The Restaurant

The Wielandshöhe dinner included two German dishes. Rhineland was represented by a beef roast with savoy cabbage and mashed potatoes (*Sauerbraten vom Herrmannsdorfer Ochsenfilet*, *Wirsingköpfchen*), and Swabia by fried goat cheese. Two years after opening a restaurant in Düsseldorf in June 1968, Spoerri started the Eat Art Gallery in the same building at Burgplatz. The two were neighbors not only in the spatial sense, as both institutions were grounded in the same idea of the affinity of art and food. When the gallery began to operate, Spoerri felt drawn back to the kitchen and all the stages of cooking. As he recollects: "I even wanted personally to kill the chickens I ate and so I realized that the moment fixed on the table was but an instant, the blink of an eye inside a cycle we call life and death, decomposition and rebirth. The theme we call

31 Solimano, "If Chance Meets Art to Narrate Life," 15.

32 I refer to the pragmatist notions of art which are discussed in more detail in "Culinary Experience: A Pragmatist Perspective" in this volume.

Eat Art is so vast that it can include decadence, but also the creative acting of being reborn."[33]

In Düsseldorf, whoever wished to be a member of the artistic community but could not afford to pay for a meal could wait tables or help in the kitchen. Spoerri made sure that the project, which was designed to foster human relationships through the preparation and sharing of food, should not mutate into an elitist enterprise. The last thing he wanted was to make his restaurant one of the fashionable venues serving *nouvelle cuisine*. The menu included Mediterranean and German cuisine, ranging between traditional top-quality steaks and the extravaganza of omelet with ants, python chops, snake ragout, and bear paws.[34] The walls of the restaurant were lined with his private correspondence. Spoerri's prior theatrical experience helped him comprehensively arrange culinary experiences – he was certainly capable of stage-managing dinners.

A very special project was in progress throughout 1972. Spoerri made one trap-picture daily. The whole year's work resulted in a show featuring 365 art objects. The Eat Art Gallery put on display the snare-pictures alongside other pieces which used foodstuffs, such as female legs molded from pink marzipan and placed in Arman's plexiglass coffins, and Spoerri's famed inedible bread sculptures.[35] It was there that Richard Lindner exhibited *The Blue Bosom Angel*, a gingerbread woman figure. Gingerbread was also used by Roy Lichtenstein for a piece in his *Brushstroke Paintings* series, using black and yellow icing instead of paints. For his part, the sculptor Bernhard Luginbühl swapped his favorite material, iron, for chocolate then.[36]

6 Consummation

The dinner in honor of Spoerri was crowned with an Austrian classic – *Apfelstrudel* with vanilla ice-cream and pear (Fig. 29). This was meant as an allusion to another big Eat Art & Ab Art project, which was carried out in a small Austrian town in 2008. Like once in Düsseldorf, an art gallery in Hadersdorf shares the building with a restaurant. While the former Baroque monastery is a

33 Qtd. in Solimano, "If Chance Meets Art to Narrate Life," 19.

34 Buschmann, "Evocation of Pleasure and Disgust," 238.

35 See Belinda Grace Gardner, "Capturing the Ephemeral and Then the Trap Snaps Shut: Daniel Spoerri's Compositions of Chance and of the Essentials of Life," in *Daniel Spoerri: From Trap-Pictures to Prillwitz Idols*, 43.

36 Buschmann, "Evocation of Pleasure and Disgust," 238–39.

venue of art exhibitions, an ex-cinema serves meals which fondly and carefully mirror the local culinary tradition.[37]

Cooking was always a challenge to Spoerri, who set the bar high for himself by staging numerous artistic banquets recorded in the archives of art history. His *Menu travesti* (1970) confounded reason, the senses, and taste, as its courses repeatedly turned the expectations triggered by their appearance upside down. For example, the dinner opened with what the guests at first thought was coffee but proved to be a *consommé*, and further surprises followed suit as "ice-cream" of mashed potatoes and meat pralines were served next. The best known of Spoerri-staged feasts include *L'Ultima Cena* (*The Last Supper*) of 19th November 1970, *Küche der Armen der Welt* (*The Cuisine of the Poor of the World*) of 4th June 1972, and *Hommage à Karl Marx* (*Homage to Karl Marx*) of 14th April 1978. Palindromic dinners were perhaps the most ingenious of the meals concocted by Spoerri. Their menus were inspired by the work of his friend, fellow-artist, and palindrome-inventor André Thomkins.[38] Belinda Grace Gardner recalls a palindromic dinner held to celebrate Thomkins's seventy-fifth birthday as an unforgettable feat of inventiveness. The reversed meal traditionally started with a dessert of *petits fours*, which in fact had a savory stuffing, and finished with what looked like spaghetti with tomato sauce, but was actually vanilla ice-cream with fruit topping.[39]

Although pragmatists insist that life and art are very close to each other, and although the line between them is very fragile, artistic practices are a site where a transformation of "the ordinary into the extraordinary," of life into art, which is profound but difficult to conceptualize, takes place. John Dewey believes that similar processes unfold within all experiences which must have closure if they are to be exceptional and real, whereby the integrative function is performed by aesthetic qualities.

The dinner in Stuttgart aspired not only to be a sumptuous, festive repast, but also to be worthy of Spoerri, and for this ambition to be fulfilled, it had to be, at least partly, an artistic project. The banquet in Wielandshöhe was unusual in terms of the intensity of the experience it offered. It was certainly a meticulously designed "death of disorder and monotonous routine," and its

37 Another art venue founded by Spoerri was Il Giardino, a garden of sculptures. Lettuce with lemon dressing was an Italian hallmark during the Stuttgart dinner. Milan was where Spoerri held his eating performances *L'Ultima Cena* (*The Last Supper*) 1970 and *Cucina Astro Gastro – 12 Stelle* (*Astro Gastro Cuisine – 12 Stars*) 1975.

38 The *Palindrome Banquet* was restaged several times in Graz, Bremen, and Paris between 1988 and 2002.

39 Gardner, "Capturing the Ephemeral," 43.

FIGURE 29 *Apfelstrudel* with vanilla ice-cream and pear. Wielandshöhe 2011; photo: D. Koczanowicz

"sparkling career" – the execution of the chef's idea and the diners' experiences – heralded its termination.[40] The resultant experience was intensified and unified by the narrative emerging from the perfect courses, which re-enacted the trajectory of Spoerri's versatile life, and by emotions sparked by the special status of the dinner and Spoerri's biography as rendered in the succession of evocative dishes. These devices augmented the purely sensory pleasure of eating with social and cultural components. In cooking the dinner in Spoerri's spirit, Klink engaged in intentional actions and deliberately designed the event to channel the guests' sensations in a pre-conceived direction. The harmonious combination of flavors, symbolic meanings, emotions, communal values, and aesthetic qualities produced *an* experience, an extraordinary flash amidst everydayness.

40 I refer at this point to Richard Shusterman's depiction of aesthetic experience: "Aesthetic experience shines as living beauty, not only because it is surrounded by the death of disorder and monotonous routine, but because its own sparkling career projects the process of its dying as it lives." Richard Shusterman, *Pragmatist Aesthetics: Living Beauty, Rethinking Art*, 2nd edition (Lanham, Boulder, New York, and Oxford: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2000), 33.

Conclusion

> I taste, therefore a fragment of my body exists: mouth, head, mask.
>
> MICHEL SERRES[1]

⁘

René Magritte's surrealist *The Portrait* (1935) shows a table laid for one person. It pictures a plate with a hearty slice of ham on it, a bottle of wine, and a glass waiting to be filled. The details are rendered with great accuracy – the shine of the polished cutlery, the streaks of fat in the meat. Yet the formidable realism of the painting is disrupted by an eye which is staring from the very middle of the plate. As the intimacy of the act of eating is enveloped in multiple layers of social conventions, the intrusive eye lends itself to a range interpretations, including as the symbol of the presence of the Other and/or a metaphorical rendering of society. This table setting, as any other one in fact, is underlain by culture with its principles of serving and consuming food. Culture not only orchestrates the very act of having a meal but also encloses the entire configuration of culinary behavior within a hierarchical symbolic system.

Such a depiction of Magritte's painting brings to mind the ensemble of issues that contributed to the founding of food studies as a new, transdisciplinary field devoted to the study of the complex interrelations between food, culture, and society. Engaged in these explorations, scholars from various fields of the humanities and the social sciences share the belief that food is enmeshed in a network of meanings, values, and symbols. In this sense, every meal is a crystallization of culturally organized experience, with individual preferences and idiosyncrasies superimposed on it.[2]

Food studies reveals the profusion of factors behind and information to be gleaned from people's dietary choices. Eating customs and habits are affected by group beliefs, scientifically produced knowledge and premises, private emotions, and individual personalities. As explained by Mary Douglas, food

1 Michel Serres, *The Five Senses: A Philosophy of Mingled Bodies*, trans. Margaret Sankey and Peter Cowley (London and New York: Continuum, 2009), 225.

2 I refer to the movements in cultural studies in which experience has been made the central concept in research on culture. Cf. Dorota Wolska, *Odzyskać doświadczenie* (Kraków: Universitas, 2012).

is a code, the deciphering of which unveils "different degrees of hierarchy, inclusion and exclusion, boundaries and transactions across the boundaries. Like sex, the taking of food has a social component, as well as a biological one. Food categories therefore encode social events."[3] Annie Hauck-Lawson, who subscribes to the view of her famous predecessor, has coined the notion of the "food voice" in order to highlight the communicative power of nutritional practices.[4] When doing ethnographic research on the construction of identity in a Polish-American family, Hauck-Lawson realized that everyday meals carried a wealth of information. When her interlocutors talked about the role and significance of food in their family, they in fact addressed various aspects of their transcultural identity. Hauck-Lawson concluded that one's emotions were better communicated and dilemmas of identity more effectively tackled through what one chose to eat or, for that matter, not to eat, than by verbal expressions: "Food helped them to forge cooperative links, extend hospitality and assert power of obligation. Expressing their worldviews on community, economics, gender, nutrition, ethnic identity and tradition, their foodways essentially translated into a language."[5] Rituals, habits, and conventions of meals register the interplay of tradition and inexorable change, tell the story of family relationships, spin the narrative of migration, and record the assimilation of natural and cultural phenomena, resistance, idiosyncrasies, and food community. For example, being fat or slender is a marker of social position, and has "links to cultural images of masculinity and femininity."[6]

The complex texture of culinary practices is probed not only by researchers. The "food voice" is becoming audible in the arts as well. In this book, I discuss the projects of artists who have discovered that the cooking and serving of food is replete with artistic potential. My interpretation of their work delves into the motives behind their choice to use the language of cuisine. Nourishment practices are a perfect vehicle for food-related values. For example, they help investigate "how men and women define themselves differently through their foodways, and how women across cultures often speak through food and appetite."[7] As shown in my analysis, reflection on the position of women has driven and served as the fabric of the projects of Martha Rosler, Elżbieta Jabłońska,

3 Mary Douglas, "Deciphering a Meal," *Daedalus* 101, no. 1 (Winter 1972): 61.

4 Annie Hauck-Lawson, "Introduction to Special Issue on the Food Voice," *Food, Culture, and Society* 7, no. 1 (2004): 24–25.

5 Hauck-Lawson, "Introduction," 24.

6 Carole Counihan and Penny van Esterik, "Introduction," in *Food and Culture: A Reader*, ed. Carole Counihan and Penny van Esterik (New York and London: Routledge, 1997), 1.

7 Counihan and Van Esterik, "Introduction," 1.

Mierle Laderman Ukeles, and Marina Abramović. For their part, Anna Królikiewicz, Daniel Spoerri, and Rirkrit Tiravanija consummately use foodstuffs and meetings around the table to investigate the impermanence of life, the frailty of memory, identities determined by culinary choices, and the relevance of food communities.

1 The Diffusion of Beauty

Like other food studies scholars, I navigate in the chapters of this book between the natural human need to eat and the social contract that stipulates how this need is to be met. Essentially, the aestheticization of the meal is predicated on this social residue, as Georg Simmel argues. A community possesses resources which are unavailable to individuals and can be deployed to indulge in the luxury of keeping the animal part of human nature at bay[8] and to ennoble sensual pleasure.

As a reminder, Simmel observes in "The Sociology of the Meal" that "[w]hereas the beauty of an artwork has as its essence its untouchability, which keeps us at a distance, it is the refinement of the dining table that its beauty should still invite us to disturb it."[9] In this way, Simmel gives expression to the traditional vision of the relationship between art and food, which tend to be located at opposite sides of the symbolic world. The mechanisms and biases behind this split are discussed by Arnold Berleant, who evokes the distinction into the sensuous and the sensual, where the sensuous is associated with the activity of sight and hearing, which – as the distance senses – do not impinge upon "the isolation of the contemplative mind," while the sensual "refers to the experience of the senses centering on bodily pleasures in contrast with intellectual satisfaction, and where appeal is to the 'grosser' bodily sensations, particularly the sexual."[10] Reinforced by "the restraining hand of the moral censor, gloved in a metaphysical doctrine,"[11] this division underpins the demarcation of art. Aesthetic experience is circumspect with the sensual and expressly abjures the sensuous.

8 Georg Simmel, "The Sociology of the Meal," trans. Michael Symons, in Michael Symons, "Simmel's Gastronomical Sociology: An Overlooked Essay," *Food and* Foodways 5, no. 4 (1994): 347–48.

9 Simmel, "The Sociology of the Meal," 349.

10 Arnold Berleant, *Re-Thinking Aesthetics: Rogue Essays on Aesthetics and the Arts* (London and New York: Routledge, 2004), 73.

11 Berleant, *Re-Thinking Aesthetics*, 73.

Quite a different idea is implied by Gertrude Stein's remark, cited by Alice B. Toklas: "Miss Stein wrote and talked, Miss Toklas cooked and talked."[12] Stein positions her activity of writing side by side with her partner Alice's activity of cooking, thereby ignoring the culturally entrenched hierarchy in which creative pursuits are given preeminence over those considered routine, the intellect is pitted against the body, and theory is severed from practice. Berleant traces this mindset back to the aristocratic attitudes of classical Greek culture, which "has been preserved in the conviction that the passive aloofness of the meditative spirit is superior to the practical and manipulative."[13]

Throughout this book, I explore the tension between aesthetic taste and palatal taste. This tension does not vanish in contemporary culture even though changes on both sides of the line occasion new insights and prompt redefinitions. Art is coming closer to life, which is particularly pronounced in performative practices, and at the same time the culinary sphere is a site of increasing aestheticization, with its various elements – cooking, serving, and eating – coming to be perceived in terms of art and aesthetic experience.

Claude Lévi-Strauss counts cooking and speech as two major determinants of the special position humans take among other animals.[14] Nevertheless, although savoring and talking are so close to each other both symbolically and physically and although "the body is [...] a reservoir of potential speech,"[15] the pleasure of internal organs is very difficult to exteriorize in language. The tongue – "this strange muscle," as a character in *Babette's Feast* (dir. Gabriel Axel) calls it – takes part both in verbal articulation and in the generation of gustatory sensations. Despite being involved in these two actions, it is very reluctant to mediate between expression and tasting. Having pondered this issue, Immanuel Kant concludes that it is so because taste is a simple sensation, and language lacks terms subtle enough to convey the appended differences. Additionally, no persuasion can actually convince anyone that one dish or another is good, because, as Kant explains, "even if someone lists all the ingredients of a dish, pointing out that I have always found each of them agreeable, and goes on to praise this food – and rightly so – as wholesome, I shall

12 Alice B. Toklas, *Aromas and Flavours of Past and Present* (New York: The Lyons Press, 1996), vii.

13 Berleant, *Re-Thinking Aesthetics*, 75.

14 See Claude Lévi-Strauss, "The Culinary Triangle," trans. Peter Brooks, in *Food and Culture. A Reader*, ed. Carole Counihan and Penny van Esterik (New York and London: Routledge, 1997), 36.

15 Michał P. Markowski, "Barthes: przygoda lektury," in Roland Barthes, *Lektury*, trans. Krzysztof Kłosiński, Michał P. Markowski, and Ewa Wieleżyńska (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo KR, 2001), 240.

be deaf to all these reasons: I shall try the dish on *my* tongue and palate, and thereby (and not by universal principles) make my judgment."[16] Given this, it is all the more astonishing that the capacity to make judgments on beauty – that is, the aesthetic power of judgment – is referred to as the judgment of taste in multiple Romance and Germanic languages, as well as in Polish.

Kant laid down a clear-cut boundary between aesthetic taste and corporeal taste. In his view, the fundamental difference between the pleasure of pure form and the pleasure of the table lies firstly in the utterly private, non-discursive quality of sensory taste and, secondly, in the self-centeredness of and distance enforced by beauty, both manifest in the fact that beauty does not allow any other end except itself.

However, as Rodolphe Gasché observes, Kant himself tempers the radicalism of this division when insisting that it is imperative for human beings to move beyond their subjectivity and reach out towards "universally communicable" feelings:

> Only in society does it occur to him to be, not merely a human being, but one who is also refined in his own way (this is the beginning of civilization). For we judge somebody refined if he has the inclination and the skill to communicate his pleasure to others, and if he is not satisfied with any object unless he can feel his liking for it in community with others.[17]

In the case of eating, such an interaction is possible for "a good meal in good company," as "there is no situation in which sensibility and understanding unite in one enjoyment that can be continued as long and with repeated satisfaction as often."[18] Kant's elated image of "a good meal in good company" is what Gasché takes as a potential prefiguration of a work of art.[19]

A chance to bring art and gastronomy closer together and free meals from the stigma of utilitarianism is spotted by Roland Barthes in Brillat-Savarin's thought. Barthes believes that art may burgeon at the intersection of eating and perversion: "an enigmatic, useless supplement, the desired food – the kind

16 Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, trans. Werner S. Pluhar (Indianapolis and Cambridge: Hackett, 1987), 148 (italics original).

17 Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, 168.

18 Immanuel Kant, *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, ed. and trans. Robert B. Louden (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 139.

19 Rodolphe Gasché, "Figura czy forma? Punkt widzenia żołądka" ("Figure or Form? The Viewpoint of the Stomach"), trans. Patrycja Poniatowska, *Prace Kulturoznawcze* 21, no. 2 (2017): 25.

that B.S. describes – is an unconditional waste or loss, a kind of ethnographic ceremony by which man celebrates his power, his freedom to consume his energy 'for nothing.'"[20] The key factor at play here is the freedom of disinterested action – perversion – "like the exercise of the body which gives itself up to love with no intention of procreation."[21] For eating, what corresponds to procreation as an abandoned, irrelevant value is the appeasement of huger. By dispensing with the duty toward the body, which Barthes refers to as need, room for pure desire is created, with "on one side, *natural appetite*, which is of the order of need; and on the other, *appetite for luxury*, which is one of the order of desire."[22] The order of desire, impractical and wasteful as it is, is also distinctive to humanity, because needs are met while desires are articulated. Brillat-Savarin's treatise is a beautiful statement on desire.[23]

"A good meal in good company" may not be what happens every day, but, as pragmatism preaches, we should exert ourselves to give our existence an aesthetic orientation. Less-than-spectacular events of daily life are not so obvious and are more difficult to conceptualize. It takes refined analyses of minute components of everydayness to discern the kinship of artistic practices and cooking, and to recognize the affinity of aesthetic experience and gustatory experience. Cooking is without doubt a creative pursuit, as perfectly balanced flavors and the impeccable presentation of dishes in smart restaurants evince. Ingenuity also comes in handy in the everyday toil of home cooks, especially in times of shortage and austerity. One needs to be imaginative to re-invent chocolate cake to which one has forgotten to add baking soda as an entirely new dessert, which was exactly how the celebrated *Bangor* brownie came into being.[24]

I have rooted my argument in the theoretical framework combining John Dewey's pragmatism and Richard Shusterman's somaesthetics. I chose these aesthetic models because they do not aspire to capture the boundary conditions of beauty, which translates into separating an art object from its cultural environment, but instead focus on the processual nature of art as emerging in the processes of experience. This approach is helpful in discussing the aesthetic potential of all experiences, and leaves the ultimate assessment of the

20 Roland Barthes, "Reading Brillat-Savarin," in Roland Barthes, *The Rustle of the Language*, trans. Richard Howard (Berkeley and Los Angeles: California University Press, 1989), 251.

21 Barthes, "Reading Brillat-Savarin," 251.

22 Barthes, "Reading Brillat-Savarin," 251.

23 Barthes, "Reading Brillat-Savarin," 251–52.

24 See *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Food and Drink in America*. *Volume 2*, 2nd edition, ed. Andrew F. Smith (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 220–21.

rank of experience with the experiencing subject, who is free to discern the germ of art in any complex, rounded, and relevant experience. Additionally, since somaesthetics upholds the "classic idea of philosophy as an embodied way of life,"[25] it steps beyond pure philosophical theory, which makes it a precious ally of critically- and normatively-minded food studies.

I have also found powerful support in feminist thinkers who dismantle stereotypical notions about woman's work. I build on the theoretical findings of Luce Giard, Lisa Heldke, and Carolyn Korsmeyer and on artists' statements to capture the axiological ambiguity of kitchen chores beyond reiterating the somewhat reductive assessment of cooking as an act of patriarchal oppression. Therein, I side with scholars who seek to explore the preparation and sharing of food as a valuable component of women's experience – "a source of sensual pleasure, an opportunity for resistance."[26]

The attribution of aesthetic qualities to experience may also breed problems. Market mechanisms intercept the dreams of authentic experience and make them come true as paid services. With ambitions soaring, prices sky-rocket, and authenticity as a commodity cannot possibly offer complete satisfaction. In my investigation of the conditions of authentic culinary experience, I have drawn on compelling studies by Heldke, who exposes the paradox inherent in the hunt for entirely unalloyed, pristine experiences which, against appearances and intentions, may lead to reviving the colonizer's sense of entitlement rather than to appreciating the countries visited by the tourist. In this context, food studies functions as a tool of cultural critique that helps reveal mechanisms of oppression and domination behind ostensibly neutral situations.

The critical potential of food studies is also utilized by Shusterman's somaesthetics to diagnose dietary pathologies. Some health problems that plague societies today, such as the epidemic of obesity, are associated with people losing their bodily self-awareness. Somaesthetics "refuses to exteriorize the body as an alienated thing distinct from the active spirit of human experience,"[27] and thus repudiates the instrumentalization of the body, which inheres in

25 Richard Shusterman, *Pragmatist Aesthetics: Living Beauty, Rethinking Art*, 2nd edition (Lanham, Boulder, New York, and London: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2000), 282.

26 Alice McLean, "The Intersection of Gender and Food Studies," in *Routledge International Handbook of Food Studies*, ed. Ken Albala (London and New York: Routledge, 2013), 252. In this book, the group of theorists championing the appreciation of kitchen-related activities marshalled by McLean (Arlene Voski Avakian, Meredith Abarca, and María Claudia André) is joined by Julia Kristeva with her notion or revolt, Luce Giard, who stands up for valorizing cooking, and Carolyn Korsmeyer calling for a thorough philosophical exploration of the sense of taste.

27 Shusterman, *Pragmatist Aesthetics*, 274.

"capitalist, advertising and political repression."[28] In his identification of the body as a locus of oppression in consumer society, Shusterman picks up and elaborates on the ideas of Michel Foucault, whose critique of modernity is founded on capturing the ways in which the microphysics of power fashions "docile bodies."[29] Unlike Foucault, however, Shusterman believes that the body is more than just a site where domination is enacted, since it is also furnished with emancipatory potential. Somaesthetics is an egalitarian project of expanding and enhancing the range of sensory experience.

2 The New Sensorium

> The senses construct our body bit by bit, as we use them.
>
> MICHEL SERRES[30]

A sensorium denotes the sum total of the body's perceptions and the space where impressions are received, where the environment is experienced and interpreted. The dispute over the role and position of the senses in knowledge is known to have defined the beginnings of modern philosophy by splitting philosophers into two huge camps of rationalists and empiricists, fiercely vying against each other. The former do not view the senses as in any way instrumental in constructing reliable knowledge, while the latter insist that the mind does not hold anything that was not first grasped by the senses. John Locke, the founder of modern empiricism, cites the taste of a pineapple as an example to convince his readers that sensory knowledge is prior to any other form of knowledge. In *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* from 1690, Locke proposes: "He that thinks otherwise, let him try if any words can give him the taste of a pine-apple, and make him have a true idea of the relish of that celebrated delicious fruit."[31] This is an adroitly selected argument, because the flavor of pineapples is so vivid and unique that it eludes comparison to the flavors of other fruit, and thus cannot be rendered by any parallel or analogy.

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28 Shusterman, *Pragmatist Aesthetics*, 274.

29 For the Foucault-underpinned discussion of the ethical and aesthetic senses of culinary choices, see Leda Cooks, "You Are What You (Don't) Eat? Food, Identity, and Resistance," *Text and Performance Quarterly* 28, no. 1 (2009): 94–110; and John Coveney, *Food, Morals and Meaning: The Pleasure and Anxiety of Eating*, 2nd edition (London and New York: Routledge, 2006).

30 Serres, *Five Senses*, 226.

31 John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (London: Printed for T. Tegg and Son, 73, Cheapside; R. Griffin and Co., Glasgow; and Tegg, Wise, and Co., Dublin, 1836), 309.

More than that, the very attempt to find a gustatory analogy makes it clear that reliance on daily practice, rather than on linguistic abstraction, is the sole avenue to knowing simple ideas, because they "are only to be got by those impressions objects themselves make on our minds by the proper inlets appointed to each sort."[32] However, Locke was aware that the image of the world as mirrored in the senses was neither straightforward nor unproblematic. Hence, his distinction between primary and secondary qualities, that is, respectively, those that exist objectively and those that, like taste, are subjective in being combinations of our cognition and properties which objectively exist in the world. George Berkeley took Locke's thesis a step further to claim that all sensory categories are subjective, a notion reinforced by his research into optical illusion. This prompted him to boldly posit that the world did not exist objectively, and that "being perceived" was the only form of existence available to things. Berkeley's famous maxim, that *esse est percipi*, positions the senses not as recipients but as constructors of the world.

Of course, the consequences of this observation could not be grasped in the epistemological context of the day, and, as later noted by Karl Marx in *Theses on Feuerbach*, materialist empiricism only developed the passive component of knowledge, leaving the active component to idealism, which almost entirely ignored sensory cognition. It took a long trajectory of philosophical development, as well as the self-reflective study of culture, to realize that the senses were entangled in culture-determined human relations, and that the knowledge they provided largely depended on the culture and society in which it was produced. To revisit Locke's pineapple example, a pineapple obviously has a set of physical properties that determine its flavor, but the final impression it makes on a person is shaped by the context of experience. The fruit will taste different when defined as an exotic luxury commodity and when regarded as a common local crop. This is merely one aspect of the relationship between impression, sensation, and knowledge. Experience precedes conceptualization, but the traffic is bidirectional here, because if taste is a socio-cultural construct, conceptualizations affect experience. Importantly, nature is not equally generous to all people. While the senses can be honed, there are limits to such improvements.

The situation is complex, and that is not only because the senses are the source of subjective experience, and at the same time these private sensations are subject to social and cultural factors, but also because the senses themselves are anything but a neutral channel, since their position and potential are culturally defined. If philosophers have been at loggerheads over how the body

32 Locke, *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, 309.

exactly relates to the world, equally heated controversies have been stirred up by how many senses there are in the first place. Democritus claimed that all the senses were varieties of touch. Aristotle integrated knowledge about the senses with the theory of the four elements, as a result forging the pairs of sight and water, hearing and air, smell and fire, and touch and earth. To get his arithmetic right, he considered taste to be a species of touch. "But Aristotle also suggested the necessity for a kind of sixth, quasi-sense, the *sensus communis*, the function of which was to mediate between the other five senses,"[33] as Steven Connor points out in his introduction to Michel Serres's *The Five Senses: A Philosophy of Mingled Bodies*, and for a good reason, too, as Serres's own standpoint is somewhat akin to Aristotle's.

Specifically, Serres attributes an integrative and commonality-fostering function to the skin, which is both the locus of identity formation and a vehicle of unity with the world:

> The skin hangs from the wall as if it were a flayed man: turn over the remains, you will touch the nerve threads and knots, a whole uprooted hanging jungle, like the inside wiring of an automaton. The five or six senses are entwined and attached, above and below the fabric that they form by weaving or splicing, plaits, balls, joins, planes, loops and bindings, slip or fixed knots.[34]

In this way, Serres opposes the sensory framework in which, as Connor puts it, the senses are imaged as five gates in the wall of the body-city with the citadel at its center. Serres's view is that the senses are nothing other than "the principal means whereby the body mingles with the world and with itself, overflows its borders."[35] Serres's vision of a receptive, responsive, and attentive body makes one think of Shusterman, who considers the soma to be a sentient, sensitive, expressive, and thinking subject. For both philosophers, cuisine is one of the channels through which the body asserts its identity, and at the same time engages in an intimate exchange with the environment. Both, too, are similarly wary of language, whereby they do not seek to champion sense perception as the only form of knowledge. Rather, they call for a reappraisal of sensory experience by showing that it is essentially involved in cognitive practices, to which

33 Steven Connor, "Introduction," in Michel Serres, *The Five Senses: A Philosophy of Mingled Bodies*, trans. Margaret Sankey and Peter Cowley (London and New York: Continuum, 2009), 2.

34 Serres, *Five Senses*, 60.

35 Connor, "Introduction," 3.

all the senses make their varied contributions. As Shusterman emphasizes, our embodied selves need corporeal practice as much as they need theory: "Even the joys and stimulations of so-called pure thought are (for us embodied humans) influenced by somatic conditioning and require muscular contractions. They can therefore be intensified or better savored through improved somatic awareness and discipline."[36]

In the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, Ludwig Wittgenstein famously stated: "*The limits of my language* mean the limits of my world."[37] Nonetheless, Serres confesses that even though he is unable to prove it, he deeply believes that there is a world beyond language, and that the ceaseless infusion of things with meanings is like a poison to the soul:[38]

> Drugged by knowledge? I love that knowledge gives us life, cultivates us; I love making my home in it, that it helps me to eat and drink, to stroll, to love, to die, sometimes to be reborn; I love sleeping between its sheets and I love the fact that it is not something outside me. Yet it has lost this vital quality, so much so that we need to be cured of knowledge.[39]

Language-framed knowledge is a trap room whose walls separate us from the world. Instead of engaging with real things, we deal with labels, abstractions, and concepts. Liberation may be achieved through freeing the senses so as to make things and the senses one. The taste of bread and the flavor of wine must extricate themselves from the rule of the logos and start talking in their own idiom. Similarly, albeit in a different theoretical language, Shusterman repudiates the typical Western prioritization of language over body. He explicitly defines his position in a polemic with Richard Rorty, who proposed that creation was inseparable from linguistic articulation and insisted that ultimate humanity required developing a unique form of speech: "To create one's mind is to create one's own language, rather than to let the length of one's mind be set by the language other human beings have left behind."[40] Such a project of the aesthetics of existence is repudiated by Shusterman as the fallout of a

36 Shusterman, *Pragmatist Aesthetics*, 270.

37 Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, trans. C. K. Ogden (London: Kegan Paul, 1922), 74 (5.6).

38 Serres, *Five Senses*, 102.

39 Serres, *Five Senses*, 103.

40 Richard Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity* (Cambridge, New York, and Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 27.

neurotic pursuit of authenticity. Instead, he appreciates the body and ranks it as an equally potent and valid source of self-fashioning.[41]

Shusterman and Serres urge the re-assessment of the function of the senses and their role in the relationship between humans and the world. Consequently, their concepts form part of a thought movement that clusters around the idea of a new aesthetic sensorium where the integrated senses are granted an autonomous position. This promotes re-casting the modes of generating the picture of the world, including the social world, in which the senses are ranked equally with discursive language. With the sensorium re-imagined in this way, it becomes possible to shuffle off the old prejudices and fears that have powered the hierarchization of the senses to the detriment of the corporeal senses in general and taste in particular. This new phenomenon is largely defined in aesthetic terms and accompanied by self-reflection and enhanced aesthetic awareness.

My book was sparked by and further kindles this intellectual tendency. It demonstrates the cultural mechanisms of the emancipation of taste, which dovetail with the negotiations of the boundaries of art aimed at accommodating cooking and eating. It offers arguments, narratives, and depictions of practices which make it clear that it is not only possible, but also imperative to establish new frameworks of reference and re-evaluate relations between aesthetic and culinary experiences, and thus to shorten the distance pointed out by Simmel. In this way, the explorations of food and the limits of art compiled in this volume demarcate the field in which the sense of taste can be inventively re-configured, and what Serres refers to as the second mouth – the second communion – can emerge.

41 For a more comprehensive discussion, see Dorota Koczanowicz, *Doświadczenie sztuki, sztuka życia. Wymiary estetyki pragmatycznej* (Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Dolnośląskiej Szkoły Wyższej, 2008).

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