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Somaesthetics and Food

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Contents

Introduction to Volume 2, Numbers 1 and 2: Somaesthetics and Food	5
Dialogues:	
Discussing Taste: A Conversation between Carolyn Korsmeyer and Russell Pryba	6
Crossmodal Cooking: An Interview with Charles Michel	13
Towards an Aesthetic of the Innards: An Introduction to Marius Presterud's Pearl Diving Project Stahl Stenslie	28
Pearl Diving for the Fabled Artist: An Interview with Marius Presterud Oslo Apiary's EcoPhilosophical Radio	30
Articles:	
Sexual Politics of Milk Barbara Formis	36
Eating Out as Eating in: The Intimate Call of the Contemporary Restaurant Scene Laura T. Di Summa-Knoop	49
The 0 KM Movement: Everyday Eaters Enjoying Edible Environments Jean-François Paquay and Sue Spaid	59
Overeating, Edible Commodities and the Global Industrial Diet: How Somaesthetics Can Help Psychology and Nutrition Kima Cargill	72
Art, Food, and the Social and Meliorist Goals of Somaesthetics Else Marie Bukdahl	85
Regimes of Taste and Somaesthetics Dorota Koczanowicz	102
Fiat Vinum- Salvum Mundus Joshua Karant	113
Notes on Contributors	124

Introduction to Volume 2, Nubers 1 and 2: Somaesthetics and Food

Food and drink, perhaps of all the objects to which we direct our aesthetic energies, fall most naturally within somaesthetic inquiry. As food and drink are literally consumed and incorporated into the body, our attention to these processes likewise works to break down the false dichotomies of inner/outer, body/mind, and self/world. It may be surprising then, that in the more than 15 years since somaesthetics was first proposed as a new discipline by Richard Shusterman, there has been little sustained attention devoted to food and drink within the emerging literature on somaesthetics. In the past few years however, as somaesthetics has matured into both a unique philosophical approach to aesthetics and an interdisciplinary methodology, work has begun to appear on food and eating from a somaesthetical perspective. In keeping with this direction, the *Journal of Somaesthetics* is proud to present this volume devoted entirely to exploring the implications of somaesthetics for questions concerning the cultivation, preparation, consumption and enjoyment of food.

Taken collectively, the contributions to this double issue exhibit the diverse array of food related topics that are pertinent to somaesthetics. From visual art, performance art and film, to experimental psychology and nutrition, urban farming, restaurant culture, wine, and Crossmodalism, the papers collected here illustrate the impressive range of topics, and disciplinary approaches, that comprise a gustatory somaesthetics. This special issue can also be seen as providing an important counterbalance to the literature in the philosophy of food that has to date been dominated by the questions of the art-status of food and the cognitive, expressive, and representational elements of eating. As a result, the living soma has all too frequently dropped out of these discussions. In narrowly attempting to establish the similarities between food and art, some approaches to the philosophy of food tend to lose sight of the unique insights that the aesthetics of food can provide for our understanding of all of the interrelated modes of embodied human experience. As the living soma is the irreducible site of gustatory and aesthetic experience, it is our hope that this special double issue of the *Journal of Somaesthetics* will contribute to forging a new direction in research into the myriad ways that human beings relate to food.

Russell Pryba

Discussing Taste: A Conversation with Carolyn Korsmeyer

Carolyn Korsmeyer's 1999 book "Making Sense of Taste" is a recent watershed in the philosophy of food and necessary reading for anyone interested in the rehabilitation of food and taste as subjects for philosophical inquiry. Unlike previous writers who engaged with food philosophically, Korsmeyer takes the representational power of food seriously. Although she was not influenced by somaesthetics at the time, her work shares many central themes with somaesthetics. As an early proponent of the "bodily turn" in philosophy, Korsmeyer's work helped to prepare the ground for the recent explosion of academic interest in the aesthetic dimensions of eating. The following interview, conducted via Skype and email in September 2015, explores her interest in food as a philosophical topic, the relation of her work to somaesthetics, and her more recent writings on disgust.

Russell Pryba (RP): Although there were sporadic forays into the philosophy of food prior to your book *Making Sense of Taste* (hereafter *MST*), I think it is fair to say that your book is foundational for the subsequent explosion of interest in food-related topics by philosophers, particularly for those whose primary focus is the aesthetics of food, rather than ethical issues. Since food was not traditionally an object of philosophical reflection, how did you come to be interested in food as a philosophical topic? Did your earlier work on Hume and taste, and/or your work in feminist philosophy contribute to your interest in food?

Carolyn Korsmeyer (CK): Both did in fact. My interest in eighteenth century aesthetic theory and the rise of the philosophical examination of taste was longstanding, though it took years for me to begin to question the assumption that gustatory taste stood outside the realm of what was designated 'aesthetic.' Hume, of course, opens a window to permit literal taste an aesthetic standing with his famous example of the wine-tasters and the key in the barrel; other theorists are far more exclusionary and explicitly limit aesthetic attention to objects of vision and hearing. Anyhow, *Making Sense of Taste* began with the idea that a reexamination of the gustatory sense of taste would provide the thin edge of a critical wedge that could be inserted into the foundational discourse of modern aesthetics.

Feminist perspectives were provocative in another way, because second wave academic feminism opened up all sorts of critiques of traditional disciplines. In philosophy, areas of interest that hitherto were considered simply 'unphilosophical' began to be incorporated into theoretical approaches. Bodily experience and identity figure here, and since the sense of taste is traditionally considered a 'bodily' sense, attention to the experience of eating and drinking gains an entry from this approach as well.

RP: *Making Sense of Taste* and Richard Shusterman's disciplinary proposal for somaesthetics both appeared in 1999. Presumably then, you developed your theory of food independently of somaesthetics. Were you aware of somaesthetics at the time you were writing *MST* and did it play any role in your thinking about food at that time?

CK: No, I didn't become aware of it until later. Remember that it takes years to write a book, and also a fair amount of time to put an article together. So I think the fact that these works were published in the same year was just a coincidence of timing, although I suppose you could hypothesize that the time was right to start thinking about bodily experiences philosophically. I was aware of Richard's work in pragmatism, but I was more concerned with critiquing the traditions of the field that influenced my own education.

RP: Given that you weren't aware of somaesthetics when you wrote *MST*, if you were to revisit *MST* now, how might somaesthetics feature in your thinking about the philosophy of food, if at all?

CK: Well, I would certainly include references to it. I'm not sure if I would adopt the practical implications that Richard attends to in his work, not because I disagree with them but because that is less my own orientation. I think that Richard and I have much in common in the direction of our interests. But his work includes a sort of program of advice for how to live that is part of somaesthetics. My approach focuses more on reflective criticism and speculation, less engaged with practice. Less melioristic, one could say.

One of the points that Richard likes to stress with somaesthetics is being present to your own senses, not just being inattentive and letting habit take over. The pertinence to food is a recommendation not just to chew and swallow but to take time truly to experience what one is doing. This is one thing that might make eating 'somaesthetic.' But I'll leave advice about mindful eating to him.

RP: So one way to amplify your response might be to say that somaesthetics helps to conceptualize the difference between the merely gustatory and the aesthetic. You have to mark off the distinction between gustatory aesthetics and mere gustation in some way, and one approach might be to focus on the added attention to the body incorporated into the practical elements of somaesthetics.

Having said that, how do you understand what somaesthetics *is*? Is it a subfield of aesthetics that focuses on the body, or do you see it as an interdisciplinary field or methodology? Does it represent or codify disparate theorizing about the body into a single discipline?

CK: I'm not sure I can address that question confidently, so let me say a few things about my impressions of somaesthetics that are generally related. Although 'aesthetics' is embedded in the term, somaesthetics is really a philosophy of living. I like the fact that the 'aesthetic' part isn't separated from everything else, because as you know aesthetics is often overlooked within the discipline of philosophy. This is a persistent aggravation to those of us in the field. The somaesthetic approach seems to avoid fragmentation both in theory and in practice. And of course, somaesthetics aims at a practical dimension that most philosophical theory does not possess.

There is a great deal of theorizing about the body these days in multiple disciplines, so I doubt that any one approach can "codify disparate theorizing about the body into a single discipline," as you put it. I'm thinking, for example, of the social critiques of gender, sexuality, race, etc. Or of analyses of disability and medical practice, and many other phenomena that are now grouped under theories of 'the body.' Feminists, critical race theorists, queer theorists, and other frameworks that have developed from those starting points all have had something to say about the body in one way or another. Those approaches fall outside somaesthetics, and how

could they not? Life is too complex and messy for one perspective to address all questions.

RP: I think that as Shusterman conceives of it, somaesthetics does incorporate some of the types of theorizing about the body you mention—especially questions about the body and health, ageing and disability. One avenue of growth for somaesthetics is bringing the practical dimension you point out to bear on some of these areas of theorizing about the body. That is to say that somaesthetics doesn't have an exclusively academic target audience but seeks to offer a framework where the sort of theorizing we are discussing can be unified with the practical project of improving bodily awareness and health for the sake of living well.

CK: Some aspects maybe, though it is important to notice what any single approach might overlook. At any rate, it is good to see that a number of people outside of academic philosophy read this sort of work—on the body, on food and drink. This wide readership indicates not only an increased interest in the senses, but a tremendous rise in interest in everything that has to do with the culinary world. For a good two years after I published *MST* the people who told me they had read it were waiters and people who worked in kitchens, chefs. They were not philosophers and I took that to be really interesting.

RP: So do you think that the waiter or chef got something from reading a philosophical approach to their craft?

CK: I hope so. I was very flattered. It pleases me when people who are not in my small niche can read something that I have written and like it. Much academic prose can be rather off-putting. A lot of people who write excellent, even brilliant scholarship clog up what they are doing by not being good self-editors. So if my work reaches a general audience, I find it especially gratifying.

RP: I think that it is great that *MST* is read outside of academia as well, but suppose you were starting your career as a professional philosopher now, would you still write about food and taste?

CK: I think it is very difficult to retrofit your own history to a different time. I myself could not have written *MST* coming out of graduate school because I think I had to digest the tradition for a very long time before I had the tools to challenge it, and to challenge it in ways that were intelligent and appreciative of what it offered and not just rejection. Perhaps insofar as work on food represents an innovative way to think philosophically, it had to begin among people who were already swimming in the right pond, so to speak; that is, who understood the tradition. A critique can be so superficial unless you've got your teeth into something that you know more thoroughly and that has very deep roots.

I expect that Richard Shusterman would say this about somaesthetics too. He didn't dream up somaesthetics out of graduate school, he did a lot of other work first. I think people can rush into critiquing something without understanding it. The thinkers of the past who have influenced our own thinking, of course, have gotten many things wrong. And often they betray a social perspective that now appears quite obnoxious, which is certainly the case with issues of race, for example. But if they weren't insightful about certain things we wouldn't still be reading them. My worry about wholesale critiques of tradition is that they are not always appreciative of what the tradition itself affords in terms of the tools used in critique.

RP: To shift focus a bit, I did have another question that I have been curious about for a long time, about the relationship of your work to somaesthetics. I am wondering if you might think that this formulation is fair. Insofar as you follow Goodman, a lot of your thinking about food is cognitivist, irreducibly so I think. Shusterman, at least in the debates about various types of pragmatism, especially his disagreements with Rorty about concepts and language, has advocated for non-linguistic experience. So I am wondering if the cognitivist element of your work and the emphasis of somaesthetics on non-cognitive, bodily experience is a key difference between your two approaches. Is it fair to say that you don't allow as much room for non-cognitivist elements in your approach to thinking about food as perhaps somaesthetics would?

CK: That is an interesting set of questions. I think that you raise some very important and elusive points about types of cognition and experience that are rather difficult to address. Let me talk about two things.

First of all, Goodman. If I rewrote *MST*, I would probably downplay the references to Goodman. I used him so heavily in making my case for the aesthetic standing of food because I was looking for a solid foundation from which to combat the idea that the aesthetic dimension of food resides mainly in taste sensations and the pleasures they afford. My goal in emphasizing the cognitive aspect of experience was because I find the pleasure/displeasure continuum to be inadequate to characterize what is aesthetically significant about almost anything, including works of art. (I make a similar point in the later book on disgust, that you can't use a pleasure criterion to understand those times when audiences are drawn to disgusting aspects of art.) Goodman's writing about symbol systems has a deceptively bloodless tone. I don't think he was that way personally, but his theory sounds that way when you just examine his different classes of symbols. Nonetheless, I thought it had a heuristic value insofar as one could examine the aesthetic without recourse to talk about pleasure, without falling into what he whimsically refers to as the "tingle-immersion theory of aesthetics." So, that is a reason why I stressed cognition in the aesthetic dimensions of food and drink.

Now with regard to second question about somaesthetics and the sort of bodily, non-conceptual experience (maybe we could use the word acquaintance) that it advances—whether that distinguishes somaesthetics from what it was I did. Maybe it does. But let me try this out. What I might say instead is that what seems to me to be distinctively aesthetic about an encounter (which I prefer to the word 'experience') is that it often has the characteristic of being quite singular and unique but at the same time being embedded in a more general insight. When I talk about cognition I don't mean you can paraphrase some lesson from art, can necessarily put it into words or attach a clear concept to it. That would be like saying you could paraphrase a poem, which you can't. By referring to the cognitive element of aesthetic encounters I mean a sort of flash of understanding, a moment of insight or acquaintance that can often escape precise language. But I don't think it is necessarily non-conceptual. Maybe that view is closer to a somaesthetic approach, or maybe not. I am just not sure because it is very difficult to theorize about that kind of a thing, since by putting it in conceptual terms and theorizing about it you kind of empty it of what one is trying to capture. So I like to use a lot of examples and say "It is this." But that relies on the reader sharing that "thisness" and seeing the point. I wish I could be more articulate about this matter, because I have thought about it in relation to many different subjects, not just food, and I think it is quite hard to pin down. Of course, I am only describing one particular type of aesthetic encounter. There are others that don't face that moment of inarticulateness. There is usually a way of putting something into words.

RP: This is related to something you said a moment ago—the pleasure criterion. You might say the same thing about food. Would it be fair to say that the delicious/disgusting dichotomy prevents one from really trying to capture what is aesthetic about gustatory experiences?

CK: No, no, far from it. I would say rather that if you start with “delicious” it seems like you are talking about “yummy,” pleasure, whose opposite would be a simple “yuck” of rejection. But if you consider what seems at first disgusting with foods that challenge your sensibilities, then you may learn to like them, or you may learn to understand them in a new way, or you may learn that they have a certain role in a cuisine or a ritual. The result is that disgusting is not just “yuck.” It actually becomes something very complex beyond simple distaste. There is, I think, usually a covert understanding that goes into our experience of food. It is often so underground and tacit that we lose sight of it and it just comes to the surface as “yum” or “yuck.”

I try to make that point in the essay “Delightful, Delicious, Disgusting” which came out after *MST* and was incorporated into the book that followed. Although I have to admit that now I think I was a bit guilty of overstating that case. Most of the time appreciating food really does involve enjoying the food, though it doesn’t have to be superficial enjoyment. It can be very thoughtful, perhaps even overcoming a moment of not being quite sure that you are eating something you should. So, I think that it would be incorrect to take pleasure off the table, as it were. But, to make it equal to aesthetic gustatory experience is to reduce that experience to something more trivial than is adequate to the encounter. And it also reduces the kinds of food that you pay attention to, because I don’t want gustatory aesthetics to become focused only on gourmet dishes that aim at extraordinary taste sensations.

RP: But we could also say that the “yummy” or delicious response often fails to become aesthetic because of the way that people conceptualize what deliciousness is, or fail to understand its complexity.

CK: Yes, right.

RP: One way to think about your work on disgust is a roundabout way to rehabilitate the covertness of deliciousness as well.

CK: Could be.

RP: Since *MST* your work has focused on disgust as we’ve touched upon, and more recently on artifacts and historical authenticity. How do you understand the relationship between this work and *MST*? Do you have any plans to revisit or expand your work on the aesthetics of food?

CK: The relation of disgust to the work on taste is pretty direct, since in one sense a disgust reaction is the opposite of a pleasurable taste reaction, though in this context ‘distaste’ is really the more apt turn. But I became interested in differences of taste preferences, which in their extreme form become a gustatory liking vs. gustatory disgust—as for example with foods like snails, to which some people have a ‘yum’ response and others a ‘yuck.’ Once I started to think about the complexities of disgust regarding aspects of cuisine, my interest expanded to considering other aesthetic responses that employ disgust, including many, many works of art. This eventuated in the book *Savoring Disgust: The Foul and the Fair in Aesthetics* (2011).

The connection with artifacts and authenticity is more remote. The main point of connection

is with another so-called bodily sense: touch. As you know, I make a case for taste being a peculiarly intimate sense in *MST*, and that point of view can be extended to touch— either in the role of this sense in actual bodily contact or in mere proximity to objects. In this recent work, I try to make a case for the aesthetic aspect of encounters with old things—real things, authentic things, genuine things—when one is within touching distance. In this kind of case, touch does not deliver a sensible experience per se, because there is no sensation of genuineness, which is itself a nonperceptible property. Therefore, I have to spend time speculating about an implicit role for touch in the experience of ancient or historically special artifacts.

RP: On a different note, as a philosopher who works on food, do you find that there is an expectation amongst your peers that you are some sort of gourmand, or an excellent cook, with a particularly sophisticated sense of taste? Has this resulted in any interesting or humorous exchanges at conferences?

CK: Sometimes. People might turn to me with a wine list as if I know some secret. And while I do like to cook some things and some kinds of dinners (such as those for holidays) I am not much of a foodie myself. I'm not sure what accounts for this apparent disconnection between philosophical interest and practical life, though I occasionally joke about theory over practice.

RP: How do you see the current place of the philosophy of food in relation to the profession as a whole? Is the philosophical profession at large still skeptical of this kind of theorizing?

CK: I would not have anticipated it, but it seems to me that philosophical work on eating and drinking has more or less achieved a foothold in the profession, or at least a toehold. It has also spurred the trend towards interdisciplinary work, as of course there is lots of research about food outside of philosophy as well. It seems to me that scholars writing on this subject are pretty attentive to research in fields other than their own. This includes practical culinary fields. I learned that a cross-disciplinary anthology I edited, *The Taste Culture Reader: Experiencing Food and Drink*, is sometimes assigned in culinary programs. I think this is great. Insights about complex topics like cuisines come from many directions, both theoretical and practical, and need to be shared.

RP: A lot of the interest in food stems from ethical rather than aesthetic concerns. Was your work on the aesthetics of food criticized for not addressing the ethical issues surrounding food and eating? More generally, how do you understand the relationship between the ethical issues concerning food and aesthetic enjoyment?

CK: I have not received that sort of criticism, and maybe that's because of my stress on the cognitive elements of the aesthetics of eating and drinking. That is to say, awareness not only of taste sensations but of what those sensations are *of*. I believe there is a strong connection between ethical responses to what we eat and drink and aesthetic responses, and when those are broken we simply are not paying attention. I wrote an essay about this that I rather like called "Ethical Gourmandism," which is in David Kaplan's collection, *The Philosophy of Food*.

This subject gives me an opening to mention something about food that is seldom called to attention: there is something horrifying about eating, no matter what the substance ingested. There is a section in *Making Sense of Taste* where I discuss the theme of eating in Melville's novel *Moby Dick*. One can read that book as a disquisition on a terrible and unavoidable paradox:

to sustain life one must destroy other life. Some substances are less disturbing than others to eat, but if you think about it, there is something rather awful about the way that nature is put together, and there is little we can do about it other than be mindful about what we eat and how it comes to be on our plates. Once one thinks of this aspect of eating, there are, inevitably, ethical echoes that resonate alongside the aesthetic aspects of food and drink.

Crossmodal Cooking: An Interview with Charles Michel

Charles Michel is a classically trained French-Colombian Cook and scientist who has worked in Michelin starred restaurants in France and Italy. In addition to this experience, Michel worked as a private chef in his native Colombia where he advocated for the use indigenous ingredients and experimented with creating immersive dining experiences with a group of artists and musicians. He is currently the Chef-in-Residence at the Crossmodal Research Laboratory at Oxford University where he works with the Experimental Psychologist Charles Spence, exploring the relationship between plating, visual aesthetics, and multisensory flavor perception.

Russell Pryba (RP): It might be useful to start with some background about yourself and your culinary training. Where did you go to culinary school?

Charles Michel (CM): I started in 2005 at the Institut Paul Bocuse in Lyon, France, certainly a capital of gastronomy in France, and a definitely a very traditional school. There the culinary philosophy was building upon Nouvelle Cuisine, which was really focused on rigor and respect for traditions but also had a touch of modernity in terms of thinking about the wellness of the client and the pleasure elicited by food. For instance, not cooking with too much fat, or too much sugar. That is something that the chefs of the Nouvelle Cuisine in the 60's and 70's started to think about. But, now that I think back to it, there was also an important component of novelty and creativity at the *Institut*.

After that background in learning culinary skills, which was more focused on techniques than on sensibility, I went to Italy. There, the approach to cooking and the organization of the kitchen was completely different, which was what I wanted. I went to work with Nadia Santini, who has had three Michelin stars for about 20 years, at a very traditional restaurant that has been around for about 80 years now and is really one of the pinnacles of the high end Italian culinary tradition. This is in the North of Italy and we had the Nonna (Granny) Bruna cooking with us in the kitchen. No one would be able to touch the risotto apart from her, she would show you how to do it, tell you all the secrets and even let you try it, but you would not be able to touch it. It was the same with the pasta; only the family members could touch the pasta. The craft, the seasoning, the cooking, everything had to be approved by one of the family members. Nadia [Santini] is very sensible and she really wants people to be happy. She is not only about the technical performance; not only about making it beautiful, making it delicious. At 'Dal Pescatore' it is really about reading the customer to enhance their enjoyment, knowing where the guests came from for instance, trying to please them with surprises that were basically not in the book. For example, if someone was from Verona, Nadia would turn the kitchen upside down to prepare this small amuse-bouche that none of us knew how to prepare, because she wanted that particular guest to have a very specific flavor that she knew they would recognize ("Madeleine de Proust" effect), and that they would be flattered by her preparing this specific morsel of food. It was beautiful. She used to say that we didn't have 5 senses but that we had 7

senses. A sixth sense she would define as psychological well-being, and a seventh one of physical or digestive wellness; that was really important for her. That triggered my curiosity as a cook to think about cooking for *more than five senses*. This led me to be curious about the senses and psychology and to think about the philosophy behind cooking, not only the performance of cooking. Sometimes chefs get drawn into thinking that it is only about the performance, that it is only about making it beautiful and complex and unique without thinking that maybe it is just about getting to people's hearts.

RP: How did you get involved with Charles Spence and the Crossmodal Research Lab?

CM: I met Charles Spence in 2010, and that changed a lot of things. I was in London and a friend of mine introduced me to him. We were having lunch at Somerville College at Oxford and for about an hour I went on about my passion for food, and my passion for the potential of South American and Colombian ingredients, and how unpleased I was that no one wanted the local ingredients, everyone wanted French or Italian cuisine. What now is evident is that the most beautiful South American potential is about the local ingredients. We see Peruvian cuisine flowering, we see that Colombian cuisine is now becoming something. But at that time no one wanted Colombian ingredients. It would be very hard for me as a cook to put a tropical fruit into one of my menus, or a wild herb, because clients would completely distrust those ingredients. So I told him [Spence] all about this and he understood the problem and my frustration because he is married to a Colombian, and he had been to Colombia several times, he understood the Colombian potential, and knew what I was talking about.

Then it was Spence's turn to talk, and he told me about the potential of using sensory and psychological science to infuse culinary thinking, to enhance culinary experience. He told me about his experience with Heston Blumenthal when he created the "Sounds of the Sea" dish, and made me understand the potential of doing research with a blend of culinary knowledge and psychological science, and I was really inspired by that. For about a year after that encounter he would send me papers on the emerging science of crossmodal food perception, and I started using some of those ideas in the events that I was doing. So my friends and I began creating immersive experiences where we would, for instance, change the light and the sound and make the flavor of the food congruent to the sourness of the music. It was very fun and we realized that there was something there. Now you see everybody doing multisensory events, it has become kind of mainstream. I think that Charles Spence's work has played an important role in bringing this about. Back in 2012, we ended up doing an experiential talk, Spence, two friends working in *Neuromarketing*, and myself, about innovation through understanding our senses. We created a tasting menu where each dish was designed with a focus on only one sensory modality. For the visual dish I decided to create a visual art-inspired presentation of food. I was inspired by a painting by Kandinsky that I had seen a couple of months before, and that was where Charles Spence told me he had never come across something like that (a Kandinsky-inspired dish), and invited me to do research at the Crossmodal Lab in Oxford. Six months later I was in Oxford doing research with Spence on this Kandinsky salad idea, an experiment to assess the impact of the visual aesthetic presentation of food on flavor perception. Now I have been there for three years, Spence has been a mentor and patron, helping me to get into scientific research.



Figure 1 Plating a Salad on Canvas

RP: It is interesting how you speak about the shift away from people wanting to eat French or Italian food because that was seen as the high water mark of gastronomic culture to now wanting the more traditional or indigenous cuisines of South America. It seems fair to say that food culture has been more instrumental in bringing about this change than say the visual arts.

CM: I like the perspective that you are taking: that cuisine may be a more direct way to communicate cultural identity, or the history of a region, and ultimately effecting some kind of knowledge in people's minds. One of the best things about culinary arts right now is that they are evolving, but I am not sure how much the guys serving ceviche in New York actually communicate the real story behind ceviche, the fact that the coastal indigenous cultures of South America were preparing it several thousand years ago. Ceviche is not new. It is actually an old preserving technique for fish, in the same way that cooking in a plantain leaf is a form of preservation. There is a microbiology that makes it work and taste amazing naturally, without

artifices. I am really fascinated at the moment by ancestral cooking. Recently, I was preparing a clambake with some friends in Mayo, Northern Ireland, using seaweed and hot stones to cook seafood, meats and sausages. I had never tried such a juicy chicken in my whole life. Even though I have cooked with ovens that can tell you the exact temperature at the center of the flesh, sous vide techniques, the ‘best’ technology, both very energy consuming and expensive that in theory can give you the perfect texture, the perfect aesthetic in textural and olfactory components, better preservation, yet nothing compared to this [chicken] in terms of the juiciness, of the flavor, of the deliciousness. I am not sure what part of it is purely technical, happening at the molecular and physical level, of having the stones slowly releasing temperature and creating a vapor of seawater that somehow maintains the juiciness in the flesh, and what part of it is purely psychological. But everything was perfectly cooked. The chicken was perfectly cooked, and the lobsters that were just on top were also perfectly cooked. That goes against everything that I had been taught at school. The clambake just erased all that. We have been living, cooking for a few thousand years this way, it is easy, and it is delicious. Peruvians also have a way of doing this cooking into the earth; they call it Pachamanca. This is tradition in Ecuador as well, in Colombia, in Hawaii, in New Zealand, and many more places. It is a *universal* cooking technique in a way (much more effective and real than a \$10,000 combi-steamer oven), universal since we see this technique in cultures across the globe even nowadays, and it works. It is about cooking with the elements. In the end, we evolved to like this kind of cooking: it means proximity to resources of water, of plants, to food, to home. To me, thinking about this as the future of cooking is the most exciting perspective.

RP: I suspect that even if you were to scientifically determine the exact salinity of the salt water and recreate it in a professional kitchen that you wouldn’t have had the same phenomenological experience of the deliciousness of that chicken.

CM: Right. As I said before – the psychological implications of the context that is required to cook a clambake, lighting a fire, the people around, the *ritual*, all play an essential role in creating a memorable experience. The term *clambake* does not define a cooking technique; it’s a social gathering.

Deliciousness is clearly a drive of evolution (all life forms seek the pleasure of energy absorption), and it’s clearly not only determined by the content of the white plate – what happens around the plate (the meal, the place, the time, the social context) might matter even more. I am not sure if contemporary chefs all agree with this, but it seems to be true, and it’s one of the core ideas in the research we do on food at the Crossmodal Lab in Oxford, and what we explore by integrating different artistic disciplines with Crossmodalism.

RP: It seems to me that in the experimental work that you are doing that there is perhaps a clash between the necessities of the experimental setup and the immersive nature of the cooking environment that you just described, in that it might not yield to scientific analysis. We might not be able to pin down experimentally why that experience is so much more meaningful because in order to do the science you lose the immersive experience of “being there.” So, I am trying to get at the limits of the scientific or experimental approach for understanding the meaning, or even the gustatory values--the deliciousness, of those types of experiences.

CM: I completely agree with you. The scientific method can point us to the right direction, give us precious hints, but *everything* cannot be measured. It’s the dichotomy of controlled tests

and ‘naturalistic’ experiments. But it’s not only about understanding how things happen, but why, and what for. Science and art inspire philosophy, hence wisdom (we sometimes forget that philosophy means “the love of wisdom”). I think a big part of the enjoyment [of the clambake] is the ritual. We were all surrounding the fire and when I took out the first lobster claw and broke it and it was perfectly cooked everybody went “wow, that is going to be delicious. This is a great moment.” It was a memorable communion; a unique shared memory.

Right now I am working with Rodrigo Pacheco, a friend in Ecuador who studied with me at the Institut Paul Bocuse. He is directing a hospitality project on the Pacific Coast called “Las Tanusas.” More than a restaurant; he has a unique hospitality concept. He is kind of like the Ecuadorian Rene Redzepi, in the way that he is applying the philosophy of the New Nordic Cuisine Manifesto (2004), to cook in tune with everything that the surrounding nature provides. I am not saying he is inspired by the Nordics, but there is a parallel because he is getting inspired by the indigenous and the ancestral ways of cooking here in South America, finding better ways to ‘use’ the flavors of a certain natural landscape. So, of course, there is a lot of hand picking, there is a lot of fishing in his cuisine. We’ve been creating unique experiences for the guests at the hotel; one of the most meaningful experiences takes place on a reef about 5 km away from the hotel. When they arrive at the reef it is a surprise, using the idea of “positive disconfirmation of expectations” (Spence & Piqueras-Fiszman, 2014): they see that there are a few tables set up on the reef and a small kitchen with the cooks waiting for them. All the cooks are local fishermen that were trained from scratch. They greet the guests and teach them how to spot oysters on the reef, pick them and open them - which is easier said than done, it requires a lot of skill. Guests are often barefoot, walking on the reef at low tide, in a landscape of incredible beauty, a tip of land in the sea. After each guest has picked one or two oysters, cracked them open, and had a first taste of the sea... we ask them to sit down at the table and we serve them a chilled Chilean white wine, and an oyster ceviche. Now that the guests are aware of the effort required to find and open one oyster, it is a luxury to be served 15 in one go. A mouthful of sea flavor. Each table gets served by one of the cooks/fisherman - this is not only taking the ‘chef’ out of the kitchen, it is taking him out of the restaurant.



Figure 2 Las Tanusas

If you think about it, we have evolved to enjoy multi-sensory experiences by nature. Nature itself has given us that kind of liking for congruent sensory stimulations. That means having the sights being connected to the sounds, being connected with the flavors, being connected to the tactile experience. It is as if our bodies, our sensorium, are designed to tell us when all the elements are there for all the senses. That is when the food is fresh, when it is good for you. Eating 'at the source' is more enjoyable partly because we intuit it is safe. Nowadays we have become disconnected from the nature of food harvesting, living in artificial abundance. Nowadays there seems to be a trend in designing multisensory experiences, tapping into more senses, to more blunt effect, to surprise and sell more... but it should come as no surprise if I say that it *should* be about reconnecting with nature. I think we will come back to *natural* cooking, out of the restaurant, maybe.

RP: As you were describing this wonderful experience, and I have to admit I am a little jealous of those who have had the good fortune to experience this event, I was thinking that this type of immersive experience obliterates the front-of-the-house/back-of-the-house distinction of the restaurant. That the institution of the restaurant itself evolved in such a way, perhaps unintentionally, to divorce the diner from these types of crossmodal experiences of eating. It is curious in a way then that it is culinary professionals who are leading the way in reviving a lost human inheritance---the pleasures of eating in these immersive ways. Yet, these experiences are still cost prohibitive for the majority of people. For instance, you couldn't have that same experience you described at the reefs with twenty covers--it has to be small to be meaningful. So I am wondering if you see a connection between these sorts of crossmodal culinary experiments, if you will, and how an average person eats. Do you think there will be a sort of trickle down effect for diners who don't have the means, or perhaps even the interest, to have these sorts of very beautiful experiences that you just described? In some sense many of us are either socially, economically or culturally precluded from having the sorts of experiences you are creating.

CM: That is a very interesting point. I don't know where to start. The first thing that comes to my mind is that the restaurant concept is a very young institution. If you think about the scale of human evolution or human culture, and if you think about the importance that the restaurant has in modern life--most of us eat at least once of week in a restaurant and some of us eat 90% of their meals, let's not even say in a restaurant but just someone else cooking for you--it has become ubiquitous. You really need someone else cooking for you otherwise you don't have time for your busy, computerized, digital activities. You know, it is that "let's get this done quickly, food is fuel" mentality, neglecting the pleasures and meanings of food. So, food in general and the food system have become so big and centralized around the commodification of ingredients (nature), the supermarket, and the restaurant. It has only been 200 years, more or less, that the restaurant has existed, it still has to evolve, and especially, adapt to new human needs.

I'm not sure why the best human experiences should be expensive. If you think about it, 'luxury' could be defined as uniqueness, and awareness. It should not only depend on purchasing power. If you have money you certainly have a shortcut to very expensive food, but maybe you don't have the knowledge to really enjoy it to its full potential. Perhaps you don't know what it takes to produce a kilo of caviar, or you don't know what it takes to cultivate and harvest that particular spice, make it travel overseas, to 'garnish' the top of your lunch. So if you don't know that, you are not appreciating it to its full potential. I think the restaurant concept has to evolve, and my intuition tells me that the true culinary art will not only happen in restaurants. Restaurants are a place where you go to get your fix of energy and that is one thing (from *restaurare*, in Latin). Now, high-end restaurants, the 'pinnacle' of gastronomy, are different because the food is aimed at making you think. If you go to eat at Redzepi's, or Humm's, or Bottura's restaurants, you are going to be challenged, you will be surprised and you'll come out changed if you really understand their creative universe. It is storytelling in a way. You are going to hear stories about how they sourced and prepared these incredible things for you, and some poetry. Yes, of course it is expensive. It is also rarely sustainable (both in economic and ecological terms). Even the most expensive restaurants do not make money.

RP: Right, I think in the first decade of the 21st century we saw the high water mark Modernist cuisine, and its decline has shown that that kind of cooking is unsustainable as a movement. But that has no impact whatsoever on the aesthetic value of what was or is happening in those sorts of restaurants and how it opened up avenues of exploration for other chefs to think about

food as narrative. Narrative was one of the things that traditional aesthetic theory has always precluded from pertaining to eating because food was always seen to be a minor art, if an art at all, because it lacked the complexity to engage in narrative. I think we would both agree that this is just false. That narrative is what is important, and that having the ability to understand that narrative has nothing to do with one's economic status.

CM: Yes, exactly. One other thing that came to mind while you were asking the last question was Charles Spence's book *The Perfect Meal*, which is an incredibly complete review of everything that has been done on food perception and psychology. There are a large amount of factors that go into making an experience pleasurable. There is a lot of thought that goes into the experience's architecture, every single detail counts. Now, if you ask Charles Spence about his best food experience, he will tell you about a surprising experience, to say the least. His best memory of a food experience would be a ceviche that he bought in the streets of Cartagena on the Caribbean coast of Colombia - served in a plastic container, with a plastic spoon. No table, no expensive decoration, no waiters, no storytelling apart from the present moment. While waiting, you sit on a plastic chair, and you might be given a cold beer. The weather is warm and humid, heavy traffic streams by, and when that ceviche finally arrives, it is an incredible flavor experience. He once mentioned in a talk that this ceviche was his most memorable flavor experience, his most delicious memory. Eating out of plastic containers with a plastic spoon is exactly the opposite of what the science of deliciousness advocates. In theory you have to think about the weight of the cutlery, the shape of the plate, its color, the atmosphere, etc. Of course, both from an experimental and experiential standpoint, context is everything (think restaurant vs. street food, vs., say, an art gallery), but expectations play a larger role than we might think. A street food experience can be *perfect*. So what makes the perfect meal? I think there is a huge element of surprise (positive disconfirmation of expectations), and through surprise also uniqueness, the feeling that something cannot be repeated.

Some of the most important experiences in life come together with food, and importantly, sharing with people you love most. Again, the ritual and the relational aesthetics might matter more than the molecular or physical properties of the food – what seems to be the main focus of most 'food designers'.

RP: I was hoping we might go back a little and discuss the Kandinsky salad again as a way to address your research. You had mentioned that the origin of that salad was the idea of preparing a dish for each sense modality, and I was wondering if that might be in some sense in tension with the Crossmodalism that you advocate. When one looks at the presentation of the Kandinsky salad alongside a traditional presentation, there might be a gustatory reason to prefer the traditional plating of that salad rather than the Kandinsky inspired artistic presentation. I wonder if as a chef, thinking about how to plate things, if one overplays the visual element to present something beautiful--even if that corroborated by the psychological research about increase in willingness to pay, and increased enjoyment and liking that is attended by more artistic presentations--that this in some ways might be undermining the idea of developing a language of gustatory aesthetics except through analogy with the visual. So, as a chef would there be a compelling culinary reason to prefer the non-artistic plating? Perhaps plating might be a cue for how one should eat something that might be lost in the artistic plating. It becomes more difficult to approach how one should eat it.



Figure 3 The Kandinsky Salad

CM: There are quite a few things to go over here. First, in regards to the relation between plating and the liking of food, I think that there is no pure conclusion but something that all chefs know intuitively: we eat with our eyes first. That is kind of an easy aphorism. I am particularly inspired by the philosopher Denis Dutton and how he argues that “the value of an artwork is rooted in the assumptions of the effort underlying its creation.” I find it fascinating that we can perceive effort and skill in implicit cues of an experience. Experimental aesthetics have put forward the importance of visual balance for instance. Thinking about the Kandinsky salad experiment, there are several reasons why people may have enjoyed the art-inspired presentation of the salad more. One is that we perceive the effort of the cook, neatness is an indicator of skill, and the complexity of color might indicate to our primal brains that a broader array of nutrients are going to be consumed, hence the enhanced liking. When complexity meets visual balance and neatness, there is both skill and effort. Another way of seeing the enhanced perceived flavor of a visually pleasing dish of food might not only be visual. Indeed, the change in display might lead us to have a different approach to the eating experience. In the traditional plating, you might eat everything in two mouthfuls. You get an intense, complex flavor sensation, but it doesn't last very long. It is very difficult to capture the nuance of all the different culinary elements. If the salad has an intricate, detailed presentation, there is a change in eating dynamics, we pay more attention to the diversity of ingredients and their complexity: “what's that red sauce?... and then the black sauce, that's something I've never tried, ... oh, what is this red cube? It's different from the red sauce...” And then you might pay attention to the crunchiness... the quality of the olive oil, the quality of seasoning... We end up being able to discriminate the complexity of the food better, if it is visually presented in a complex but neat manner. Also, something that I think is very important is the surface area that is covered on the plate. I think it has an effect on how much you want to eat, so on perceived or expected satiety that changes how much you end up eating. One thing we were discussing with the Fat Duck experimental kitchen is how do we drive, through visual cues, people to try a certain bite, and then to go to the second, and then to go to the third. So that we can kind of implicitly guide the experience of eating. That is something that is really interesting because you can create a flavor journey instead of just a flavor sensation. Coming back to your point – here we study the impact of vision, but really it's not only 'vision' – food is always a crossmodal experience...

RP: Right, and that is how you can create a narrative.

CM: Exactly.

RP: You can have self-referential cues within the sequence of the flavors that you have developed and that you are leading diners to experience in the sequence that is intended by the chef. I think you explained the point quite well that the traditional plating of the salad undermines the complexity of the dish. I think there are 17 components of that dish and to not have that complexity visually represented leaves all that work to the tongue and you won't actually slow down enough to experience that complexity.

CM: Exactly.

RP: But also with some of the more artistically inspired plating or avant-garde plating, it seems like it leaves the possibility open to the diner to complete the intention in a way that a chef might not want to give this level of control over to the diner. So it could work out that the visual cues

lead to a certain flavor sequence that is intended because the chef wants the diner to have an experience that makes some conceptual point, or aesthetic point, or to construct a narrative-- but it also leaves the diner open to close the work off if you will. It is common theme in the philosophy of interpretation, following Arthur Danto, that works are completed if and only if they are interpreted. A work becomes an open system of interpretation. I wonder if that strikes you as chef, or the chefs that you know, as a level of control that chefs worry about giving up or if they are excited about that possibility. That eating might become a more communicative experience between a chef and a diner where a dish might taste completely different based on the way that a diner ends up eating it than the chef intend it to be, or even than a different diner might experience the same dish. That, in turn, could end up creating something interesting or surprising.

CM: Sometimes Chefs are too focused on the ego side of creation-- that I want the guest to taste my palate, to taste what I like, my ‘flavor inventions,’ my ‘cuisine.’ I really like what you said. Duchamp said that the artwork is not completed if the viewer is not there. I would say when you are cooking something for someone, you cannot be 100% sure that the person is going to like it, because you don’t know that person’s past or cultural background, etc. More than that, we all have different amounts of taste buds on our tongues, which changes how we perceive taste, and we might even experience things differently according to how hungry we are. The dish is completed by the palate that is experiencing the food. Now, the narrative is something important and it is not only about telling the story, but it is about a story that each person will go and discover, gastronomy can be an imaginative experience. It is like drawing a landscape and letting the viewer run in the direction that they want to run, to enjoy the landscape in their favorite manner. Some will jump on a tree, some will dive into the lake, some will go and gaze at the animals that are there. Experiencing art is completely free, completely free for interpretation. That said, it seems that the modern ‘table manners’ and the ‘restaurant box’ might be taking us away from the imaginary power of culinary creation. We need to break certain rules. The paper *The Taste of Kandinsky* was only focused on the visual aspects of the dish, but the inspiration behind this dish really was born watching the painting at MoMA in New York, where I was struck not only by the visual balance and beauty of this artwork, but by the label text, that quoted Kandinsky’s “Concerning the Spiritual in Art.” Inspired by what he wrote, I had the epiphany that food was an incredible matter with which to play with sound, with visuals, with taste, with olfaction and with tactile components – sensory complexity and narrative can touch someone’s deep emotions. It’s not easy to get there though. It might be even more complex than creating a beautiful painting. It is not about passive contemplation.

The first time that I had the courage to try the Kandinsky-salad idea was with Spence at the innovation talk I mentioned before. Then I started reproducing it and going a bit further and refining the visual presentation. Because I wanted the Kandinsky inspiration to be explicit, I tried to replicate the painting as much as possible. But the concept of the “Kandinsky Salad” is to be served after a plating performance, where Wagner - inspiration for Kandinsky’s paintings, given that the latter was a synaesthete and also fascinated by the ideal of *Gesamtkunstwerk* - would be playing in the background, and people would have to eat with hands, or with a paintbrush...

The salad is served during a multisensory performance. So I would establish a context for the imagination to wander around those flavors. Some people would not recognize any of the ingredients that were there. They could see salad, they could see mushroom, and then the rest was like “what was that?” Carrots, beetroots, peppers, cauliflower, only very common ingredients.

I know that just studying visuals is only one element of the food experience (and maybe

not a 'substantial' one) but there is a visual primacy, in science, arts, and in everyday human behavior. 100 years ago, William James, the father of modern psychology, said there is little to be learned by studying the proximal senses (taste, olfaction, and touch). And actually, it's not easy to study them. Touch might be very closely related to sound, and the chemical senses are extremely complex, taste is not only about 5 'basic tastants', and olfaction is. Light and sound are measurable, there is a 'spectrum' that is easy to refer to, but take the chemical and physical complexity of food and smells... and how about the gut? Does it taste? What do we 'sense' in our bellies?

RP: It is interesting to me that you bring up James here because my training is in American Pragmatism, starting with James, but especially the work of John Dewey. Dewey certainly undermines James's original and earlier dualistic thinking as say, *The Principles of Psychology*. Later, this becomes one motivation for thinkers like Richard Shusterman to think about the body as an integrated site where aesthetic enjoyment takes place. Aesthetic experience is both in and of the body in some sense but it is of a total body, not a body that is divided into distinct, compartmentalized sense modalities. That is not how lived experience happens. We don't experience things discretely as either visual, or auditory, or olfactory, or gustatory. So, somaesthetics is trying to rehabilitate some of these themes about the body that are obvious to practitioners like yourself who work with the senses in a different way than philosophers who try to conceptualize them. So, would you consider the work that you are doing as both a researcher and a chef convergent with or congenial to a somaesthetical approach to philosophical thinking as opposed to traditional philosophical views about the senses or bodily experience which were more often pejorative? How might you locate your various activities within a philosophical landscape?

CM: I am really into thinking about the unity of the senses, rather than looking at how to separate them from one another. There has to be a unity between body and mind when we think about designing human experiences. Having a *somaesthetic approach* is the mindset in which we should think. When I got into research I realized that it is hard looking at a very, very narrow aspects of the human experience. Sometimes when looking so closely you can forget about the big picture -- in science, or art, or anything. Why do choose to investigate one thing over the other? Is it for human well being? How is it going to increase people's happiness? This is one of the things we should all strive for. When I think about designing experiences in the broadest sense, I think we should always be thinking about the *wholeness* of the experience, designing for all the senses not about just one or two. That is at the heart of the *Crossmodalist* approach. It may sound very abstract at the moment, but there is certitude that in thinking about the unity of the senses and human experience, that we can get somewhere meaningful.



Figure 4 A Crossmodal Event

RP: Is that the intention of your Crossmodalist group? To have a platform where you can experiment across a broad spectrum of human experience without having to be confined to one discipline?

CM: Exactly, that is the whole point. It really is about having a science-inspired approach as much as an artistic, sensible approach. Thinking about all the inspiration that is out there, from Objectivism, to Gesamtkunstwerk, to Dada, Surrealism, Futurism-- all created out of extremely interesting points. In the same way, the science of the senses is telling us how much all the senses are interconnected and how one perception in one sensory modality can affect the perception in another sense, that our brains are wired somehow to perceive things as one whole and not to discriminate between sensory modalities.

Food is where all the senses come together, and research on food aesthetics is a great tool to understand how our mind perceives pleasure, and how we define our preferences. Today, it

seems essential to study how we perceive 'beauty' on all senses, given the impact that what we consider beautiful and rightful has on how we consume, and given the impact our consumptions have on the natural environment, touching on some of the biggest challenges facing our species, how we relate to nature, and the impact our species, as a collective, is having on the planet.

RP: In general, what place do you think philosophy has in your work?

CM: Essential. Philosophy is about loving wisdom, right? I really want to be involved in thinking through why we do the things we do. If you think about some of the pressing issues of our time, we might need more philosophers to inspire action, from the President of a country to the guy who sees waste as a resource. With food, there is a huge opportunity to act on some of the biggest challenges, for instance, Climate Change is directly related to the way we cultivate, gather, transport and transform our most essential energy source: food. If, on a daily basis, we can change something very small about our food consumption behaviors, we can contribute to make a wider change. We are currently eating the planet with our mouths, and we sometimes disregard the fact that every time we consume food, we vote for a certain organization of the food system.

I'm currently collaborating with Andreas Fabian, designer, on how to create eating tools (cutlery) designing utensils that can change your eating manners, affecting the way you enjoy food, and change how much you end up eating. The key is to design foods and food experiences that are pleasurable, healthy, and sustainable - both economically and ecologically. Some of the healthiest people that I know almost have a very precise style of eating, and it is an informed, clever style of eating. Feeding yourself can also be an art. It is definitely important for well-being.

RP: It is interesting that you said that feeding yourself well could be an art because that is very consistent with somaesthetics and recovering the original Greek conception of philosophy as an art of living and of living well. There is an art of living that is to live philosophically, or to eat philosophically and when you say that eating can be an art it is exactly in line with what a somaesthetics of food is trying to achieve. There is an ameliorative aspect to philosophy as a way of life that suggests that we can improve ourselves and our world through deeper reflection and engagement. Eating mindfully, or eating artistically is perhaps the first step to solving larger problems that are tied into the way that we, as a society, eat mindlessly. There is an idea that what philosophers interested in food are developing is really a "gastrosophy," or the wisdom of the stomach, and this seems to be exactly what you pointing to here. I was hoping you might reflect on what you think a gastrosophy might amount to.

CM: I think it is absolutely essential to think "philosophically" in order to design better foods and better food interfaces of the future. I have been pondering about how to make the best of the opportunities that I have at the moment, and together with Spence and several collaborators we have come up with two fields of action that embody the knowledge we're working on - which are in tune with what you call gastrosophy. One is the art of designing experiences, which would be Crossmodalism. We are currently writing a manifesto with some artists and the idea is about bridging experience design and crossmodal science. On the other hand we have been really inspired, together with other scientists and chefs, to think about Gastrophysics which would be in a way going a bit further into understanding the physical and molecular properties of foods, but crucially, to think about how perception is essential to our understanding of the physical and chemical world. It is also about a holistic science and art approach to sensory education,

and food education. Gastrosophy would be between these two in a way--it would be within each of those things. And I think it is exactly what I want to be doing. To get people to develop their wisdom of eating, making them more intelligent consumers.

Towards an Aesthetic of the Innards:
An Introduction to Marius Presterud's Pearl Diving Project
Stahl Stenslie

Elements of beauty and pleasure in food are usually associated with and recognized through visual appearance, smell and taste. Once our food is swallowed it is as if it has disappeared from our aesthetic horizon. How to aesthetically relate to the autonomous, hidden world of the innards? How to practically make art within the complex mechanisms of our digestive system? Can we construct viscerally noticeable pleasures and sense beauty on the inside of our bodies? The chemical components of food affects us in various ways, but our food processing is normally not somatically pronounced, rarely mapped in everyday situations or much noticed throughout the food digestive process that last the better part of our day.

In the following contribution, the Norwegian artist and clinical psychologist Marius Presterud turns this around, describing a fascinating exploration of the sensory appreciation and aesthetics of our innards. In some ways it could even be described as a living portrait of the beauty in our innards. His food is both natural, ecological, and in-edible: by swallowing freshwater pearls from oysters, he firstly repeats the process of how they are created; in the innards of an oyster, where an un-edible particle of sand over time is capsulated with layers of nacre until it acquires the iridescent visual effect attributed to precious pearls. Secondly he eats them as a food of splendor, devouring the pearls, making them a part of his body, beautifying his inner body.

From a somaesthetical perspective, how does eating pearls contribute to a sensory-aesthetic appreciation? Or a corporeal, sensual, somatic sense of beauty? Viscerally speaking, once the pearls are eaten and from the perspective of the innards, the body will hardly notice these small, round objects that simply follow the digestive system in an unharmful way until they –again hardly noticeable- leave the alimentary canal. Here Marius introduces a somaesthetical twist, or perhaps even somaesthetic sacrifice: in the attempt to explore this innermost aesthetics inside his own body, he uses gastroscopy as an instrument of discovery, revealing, tracking, exploring how the pearls are processed and even beautifying his intestines. Gastroscopy is a rather unpleasant procedure, and not without dangers. As Marius dryly comments, intestines have been ruptured before... This search for beauty is therefore neither without expense nor violence. In a melioristic perspective this raises interesting issues: how –and when- can an agonizing somatic experience turn into an interesting, rewarding somatic work of art?

Through gastroscopy, Marius uncovers an inner, somaesthetic splendor when finding 'the pearl with its radiant beauty, perfection and circular integrity.' The inner pearl caught on video as he is in uttermost discomfort exemplifies the whole procedure as a unique sensory appreciation. This is an interesting and innovative approach in itself, but as we already know, Marius goes beyond the surface. Swallowing pearls turns his innards into a 'gem-filled horn of plenty.' Although intensively his personal somatic experience, the inedible gems simultaneously comments on disturbing phenomena such as eating disorders. This furthermore concerns the mundane, every day search for *our* self, a search relevant for different academic disciplines.

Marius uses the resulting imagery (see video link) as fodder for reflections on the profession of health clinicians. This is a clear reference to the field of embedded practice.

A central part of Marius's text is his practical approach to Somaesthetics. He is actively using Shusterman's concept of Somaesthetics as his point of departure both for the production of art as well as in his analysis of his own work. It is his own live body at work, turned into a living gallery where he actively performs both as a viewer of and vessel for art.

The pearls are not unaffected by the process. The chemical reactions inside the body affect their colors. Marius's intestinal labour gives birth to new, human-colored pearls, making him 'Pater Perlum': a father of pearls.

The Video:

The work is documented on video. A preview is downloadable from:

<https://vimeo.com/123148524>

Pearl diving - Part 1 of a interdisciplinary work series by Marius Presterud.

Short Description: We find a treasure inside the artist. What's it like to have a thing of value inside of you? The idea of the minable individual - that we have this inner, unlocked potential to turn to - is in its pure form, a critique worthy internalization. Viewers are invited to ponder what ideological purpose this inward looking serves.

In this film though, we actually find "it," in contrast to everyday life spent searching. The film is a happy-ending spin-off on theories on anorexia, which claim that a lack of abstraction leads to attempts at controlling inner turmoil through the concrete/the body.

The soundtrack consists of the artist wheezing after a quick self-enhancing jog.

Material: Freshwater pearls, stomach sack (artist's own)

Technique: Gastrological examination video after swallowing pearls

Length: Approximately 2 min

When: November, 2014

Where: Ullevål Hospital, Oslo

Photo by Margit Selsjord

Short version: <https://vimeo.com/123147757>

Teaser: <https://vimeo.com/123148524>

**Pearl Diving for the Fabled Artist:
An Interview with Marius Presterud**
by Oslo Apiary's Eco-philosophical Radio Station

Abstract: *In this interview with Oslo Apiary eco-philosophical radio channel, Marius Presterud (artist, poet, Cand. Psychol.) describes the process of making the first part of the work series Pearl Diving. In Pearl Diving, swallowed pearls are located and extracted from the artist's body. Presterud describes the production procedure, how the work was inspired by his interdisciplinary background, and offers his reflections on Somaesthetics. Interview took place in Oslo, 11.09.2015*

Keywords: *Pearl Diving, somaesthetics, embodied art, immersed articulation, cross-disciplinary art, video-art, health, psychology, gastroscopy, Oslo Apiary*

This interview took place via chat between Marius Presterud (artist, poet, Cand. Psychol.) and Mikkel Dagestad, September 2015. It was construed as a pilot for Oslo Apiary's eco-philosophical radio channel, a social oriented art practice run by the duo. In the interview, Presterud describes his experience from the process of making part one of the work series *Pearl Diving*, where swallowed pearls are located and extracted from the artist's body. Presterud describes the procedure, how the work was inspired by his interdisciplinary background, and offers his reflections on Somaesthetics from the perspective of a clinical psychologist.

Oslo Apiary (OA): Welcome new listeners. Today we will be talking about pearls. Presterud: "Culture pearls!" That is to say, they are freshwater pearls from oysters that have been cultivated to develop pearls by having small grains of sand force-fed into their shell. Traditionally, pearls were harvested from oyster banks, but for the last hundred years, culture pearls have flooded the market, making it hard to economically justify harvesting them patiently from the sea. They're still surprisingly expensive though.

OA: You've told me the first question everyone asks, is how did you get this done?

Marius Presterud (MP): I had the procedure done at the gastrolab at Oslo University Hospital, Ullevål.

OA: Did you just ask them?

MP: Basically. I sent them an e-mail. But of course, that they knew I was a health professional doing an art project and that must've given me some good-will.

OA: Were you scared?

MP: Oh, I was worried. There is always a risk of complications; stomachs have been punctured

by cam sticks in the past. And that the gastrolab answered “yes” without much hassle, also made me contemplative. But the doctor and his assistant nurse gave off a good presence and you could tell they had obviously done similar procedures on drug smugglers an innumerable amount of times, so that kept me calm. I had a photographer with me as well, Margit Selsjord, who had worked as an assistant at a gastrolab during her studies, so I had a chance to talk through the whole séance with her before arriving. She brought a simple looking analogue camera so as to not stress the doctor and nurse. I'd say it was well prepared. What I wasn't prepared for though, was how unpleasant it would be. It's not as much a tube, as a cane, that you are asked to swallow. A cane with a bulbous fish lens at the end that goes down your throat, and once it's in, you're supposed to keep breathing, which you can, because nothing's blocking your windpipe, only your stomach tract. It was surprisingly disturbing.

OA: So this is your stomach. Did it need to be a human stomach? Could it have been a pig's stomach or someone else's for it to work conceptually?

MP: My dad owns a swine. And no, not for me. As both viewer and participator, my own experience of the procedure was an inseparable part of the work for me. I was being presented live images of my own insides and you don't get to experience that that often in depth and in lengthy dosages. There is a lot going on in there. An engulfment in me, bubbling with activity, with pulsating muscles, writhing tubes, bile filled, acid filled, violent, dark, ever churning. And literally - through my outer appearance - contained. We have little control of what's going on inside of us most of the time, and since we place high value on self-control and self-containment, we spend time covering these things up. We hide our sweat-stains, wipe away our tears and feel ashamed when our stomach growls. The body humbles us. And with our intestines especially, we are confronted with our pitiful interdependence on the world and its messiness. So let's dive inside, you know?

I attempted to make room for some of that vulnerability as I let parts of myself that was beyond my control and projected identity be filmed. I had no idea if it would go well, how it would look down there, where the pearls had landed. I had given the doctor next to no narrative to work with, knew little about the equipment or quality of the film, and was unable to instruct during filming, making the authorship of the raw material somewhat open-ended.¹

OA: What was it like seeing yourself from the inside?

MP: In appearance, my stomach has an aspect of the abject² to it. It has shapelessness and disorder as its form language. It's something I have a hard time recognizing as myself, but that I am forced to recognize. My insides are both subject and object at the same time, and I'm still not quite sure if anyone else should see it or not? It feels private, even though it's just a continuation of my mouth, maybe because I can't control the look of the parts that are being exposed. I'm still kind of shameful every time the camera passes my pyloric valve. And I take an illogical amount of pride in how healthy pink my stomach lining looks. I automatically take responsibility for things that are contextual in origin. These introspections supplemented my understanding and further analysis of the imagery produced. And there, lying in my rampaging midst, the pearl with its radiant beauty, perfection and circular integrity. Mirroring me mockingly.

OA: It is both extremely disgusting and fascinating at the same time.

1 Note, the video has been edited for presentation and sound has been added.

2 Kristeva J., (1982). Powers of horrors: An essay on abjection. New York, Columbia University Press.
Descriptive link: <https://www.sunypress.edu/pdf/61009.pdf>

MP: Don't you think I'm beautiful?

OA: I've seen you describe Pearl Diving, part 1 as a Somaesthetic exploration of a contemporary, Western model of selfhood. What is Somaesthetics, and how is your work a Somaesthetic exploration?

MP: Yeah. I may have appropriated the term somewhat haphazardly at this point, but why be so academic about it. I adopted it from a lecture held by Richard Shusterman at Kunstneres Hus this spring,³ seeing it as a fitting term for describing strivings at moving past verbal language and signs as a way of understanding and appreciating art's irreducibility, relying on the inseparability of our cerebral and bodily register in an attempt to match this irreducibility. Was that coherent? I found the term snug for describing PD#1 after reading *Journal of Somaesthetics* (Vol:1, Nbr:1, 2015). Which, to my delight, also introduced me to Stelarc's "Stomach Sculpture" from 1993.

OA: I think it would help if you were a bit more concrete.

MP: For me, Somaesthetics's most interesting and useful contribution comes through Shusterman's distinction between representational foregrounding and experimental foregrounding. As I've understood it, the latter becomes relevant to the degree that an artwork requires the self-directed perception on the part of the recipient for aesthetic appreciation. This suggests that experimental foregrounding may be mediated in at least two ways: One, by the degree that a work evokes or relies upon engagement on the part of the perceptive recipient. Two, by the recipient's personal receptivity. Which raises the topic of how different people can be differently receptive to experience art, depending on their relationship to their own body and ability to be present. I was certainly a perceptive soma during the making of PD#1. But it can also be argued that you are as a viewer too, because of our bodily commonality and your empathic response - many people hold their breath as the camera goes down my throat. While the act of making yoghurt using one's own vaginal bacteria culture,⁴ on the other hand, would be an example of an art experience that may not be available to you and me, 'because we are not in possession of the corporal starting point for the self-directed perception to begin with. We can sympathize, but not empathize.

OA: That's a pity.

MP: But by the commonality of our embodied selves, analytical Somaesthetics should also offer vocabulary, and thereby, legitimacy to certain social oriented practices.⁵

OA: Which is our kind of thing, so that sounds good. At the same time something makes you sceptical of Eastern influences being put to work in a Western, neoliberalist context?

MP: Shusterman unquestionably deserves credit for his work at revitalizing the epistemological status of the body, through his proposed field of analytical Somaesthetics. When it comes to Somaesthetics' pragmatic and practical side though, I predict growing scepticism from my contemporaries⁶. If the suggestion is that solitary exercises and mind-body practices will service the world by giving people the means to mesh art, life and philosophy, I would argue that at this

3 Richard Shusterman: Pragmatism, Somaesthetics, and Contemporary Art, Kunstneres Hus, (20.04.2015).

4 Vaghurt, (27-29.06.2015). <http://fugt.org/>

5 See f.ex. Flatbread Society's Bakehouse project at Bjørvika, Oslo, where the physical presence, labour and eating, seems to be at the center of the project. <http://www.FBS.com>

6 See f.ex. Madsen, O., J., (2014). Det er innover vi må gå - En kulturpsykologisk studio av selvhjelp. Universitetsforlaget.

point in time, in this part of the world, self-cultivation isn't something that seems to be lacking in our lives. There is already considerable mythology surrounding the use, health and training of our body and mind, how our individual potential can be grown, harvested, directed, how to find solutions to life's challenges within ourselves. And as a clinician, I'm certainly invested in things like inner processes - thoughts, feelings, pleasures, traumas, fantasies, embodied habits and schematas - and in empowering people through self-awareness and self-leadership. But what is helpful to an individual in a clinical setting, isn't necessary good for society as an imperative trend. In our current context, I have the impression that more often than not, self-knowledge and self-creation with the aim of improved living, becomes a lonely project. A project of autonomy and self-care suspiciously fitting contemporary demands of adaptability and personal agency (and personal responsibility) of Western man. People like Shusterman and health professionals like myself, may unintentionally be sustaining this development through our respective practices. Shusterman is familiar with criticism along similar lines.⁷

So at first glance, I have a hard time locating the social oriented practice that goes with Somaesthetics. Research into the lives of people we perceive as privileged, reports that being self-sustained, self-indulged, non-dependent and unobligated to the everyday operations of society around you, can lead to very unsatisfying, pacifying and estranged lives.^{8,9,10,11} Through examples from the art world, I'd like to see the link made between practical Somaesthetics, art production and the deepening of commitment to friends, loved ones, family or community. Given the bodily commonalities that bind us together, this should be a productive topic for Somaesthetics to delve into. I hope to see later editions of JOS be devoted to the subject.

OA: So putting you to the same challenge, what does the work, PD#1, have to offer me?

MP: As a viewer, right. Well, I have to leave that partially to you. But we do share figures of speech and I think there is an obvious metaphor in plain sight; we find a treasure inside the artist. What's it like to have a thing of value inside of you? What is this popular idea that "we all harbour beautiful things in our depths" that only needs to be fished out? Shouldn't it then be fished out? What are you supposed to feel if you can't find it? How long should you keep looking? Should you seek help to find it? Here we are at the heart of the questions that inspired the imagery of PD#1. The idea of the minable individual - that we have this inner, unlocked potential to turn to - is in its pure form, a critique worthy internalization. It can lead to a neglect of the lifelong relational aspect of human development. It can lead to an idealization of the potential of the individual and an underestimating of the resistance in the system. Individualizing that, which might be contextual, is a deeply moralizing discourse. The belief in the unlocked potential of the individual goes hand in hand with the mythologization of the lone, genius artist, too. A very cherished fable.

Contemplating instead how bound we are to our body, this earthly, self-determined mess, how dependent we are on other human and non-human entities for our sense of separateness, relatedness and even physicality at a cellular level, can birth a whole bunch of everyday ethical, political and practical reconsiderations that could potentially force forth a new/old humility concerning our position in this world.

7 Shusterman, R., (1999). Somaesthetics: A disciplinary Proposal. *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, Vol 57, No.3, 299-313.

8 Blouin, B., Gibson, K., & Kierstad M. (1995). *The legacy of inherited welt - Interview with heirs.* Trio Press.

9 O'Neill, J., H. (1997). *The golden ghetto - The psychology of affluence.* Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data.

10 Schervish, P., G., Coutsoukis, P., E., & Lewis, E. (1994). *Gospels of wealth - How the rich portray their lives.* Praeger Publishers.

11 Willis, T., C., (2003). *Navigating the dark side of wealth - A life guide for inheritors.* New Concord Press.

No need to worry about that though, because in contrast to everyday life spent searching, in this film, we actually find "it!" Hurray! Or, actually, we find a placeholder, I couldn't locate "it." But good enough for a pedagogical study. We knew that it was in there somewhere!

OA: Bliss.

MP: But the climax also gives way to an inversion, as our eyes stray from the prize and on to other things. What is the clam doing? What's that like? Who cultivates these pearls? What do we do when it's out? What else have we been swallowing? Who sent us here to look for it? What ideological purpose does this inward-looking and searching serve? How's the water?

OA: Does being a clinician automatically make the work interdisciplinary?

MP: I have a multidisciplinary background, which among other things includes working as a clinician with people struggling with eating, one-to-one and in art-therapy groups. It can be called interdisciplinary in the sense that the film was originally inspired by this work and envisioned as a happy-ending, spin-off on theories on eating disorders.

In medical conditions where people have trouble eating, one lead understanding is that what causes problems is an inability to verbalize feelings and sensations at the level of thought - abstractly. In lack of language, we attempt to control inner turmoil through the concrete - the body. By not taking in food, sensations stemming from inside are dampened, and so are interconnected feelings. People who wilfully don't eat, can in a very non-abstract way be saying "no" to what the world has to offer them. Or, at the other end of the pool, strong bodily sensations, like hunger pains, self-mutilation or eating until your stomach hurts, can be used to drown out or change the state of feeling. We all do these things to a some degree of course - the slap on the cheek to wake up - without it becoming a problem for our everyday functioning.

OA: Speaking of eating, I haven't had breakfast today.

MP: What people who eat too little or too much often have in common though, is that when bodily sensations are numbed down or jacked-up instrumentally, inward-looking becomes an unreliable source of information about oneself. Without the means to look inward for reference, the need to look to others grows. This can lead to becoming over-invested in others people's impressions, competing and comparing oneself to others. Conversely, in the video my insides are presented as a gem-filled horn of plenty, which is then explored and harvested. Quite a foreign imagery to many people who struggle on a daily basis, I wager.

OA: In this transition from having a private practice to mainly doing art, you still seem oriented towards the relational. Alas, I can't say your video helped me build an appetite.

MP: No, of course not. It is disturbing on several levels. What I have done, is that I have taken this hope, this belief we have, that if we only chisel away at ourselves long enough, our potential and this inner beauty will finally appear - I've taken that belief, that is so dominant in our culture, but also the cornerstone in the attitude of someone who uses eating instrumentally - I've taken that, and I have played it out for its improbable finality to blossom and flower before our eyes. And I haven't done this through language - my preferred tool - but by using my concrete body. It is an attempted empathic reach-out to the languagelessness in us all. Which reminds me of a passage in the book *Papillion*¹², where pearls are chewed and swallowed as a sign of matrimony. But I digress. Yes, I put my trust in human relationships, rather than the

¹² Henri Charrière (1969). *Papillion*. J. W. Cappellens Forlag AS.

isolated individual.

OA: How did you finally get the pearls out?

MP: Uhm... With patience. One was netted, the others came out through traditional methods.

OA: How many did you swallow?

P: Three. Two white, one metallic black. Fished one up, let two pass. It took one day for the white pearl to pass and three days for the black one, strangely enough. It's really fascinating to see how they've taken color from the process, taken color from the labour of my body, unbeknownst to me. The white one has turned slightly pink, the metallic black one looks slightly rusty now. They were temporarily a part of me, and were transformed by this. I've become their "pater perlum" - father of pearl, of sorts.

OA: This is a work series, so there will be other works?

MP: Yes. Pearl Diving will be a set of works that revolve around the longing for personal cohesiveness and uniqueness, and fumbling attempts at reaching this state. Related terms are separateness, boundaries, perforation, dissolution, embodied meetings, interrelatedness, belonging, inclusivity, exclusivity, love, loneliness, success, failure and translucency. Next in the series will be a jewellery set, a dinner, a book of poetry, private performances, a set of sculptures and installations, and some wall writing, in no particular order.

OA: Is the sound on the video the original sound?

MP: No, then you would have heard me heaving. The breathing on the vid is the sound of me wheezing after a self-enhancing jog.

Notes

Title: The production of Pearl diving, part 1 - A work series by Marius Presterud.

Material: Freshwater pearls, stomach sack

Technique: Gastrological examination video

Length: Approximately 2 min 30 sec min

When: November, 2014

Where: Ullevål Hospital, Oslo

Filming: Ullevål Hospital Gastrolab, Oslo

Cutting and editing: Marius Presterud

More information

www.facebook.com/osloapiary

www.facebook.com/Mariuspres

www.osloapiary.com

Photo credits

Gastrolab - Margit Selsjord. Selfie - Marius Presterud

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Sexual Politics of Milk

Barbara Formis

Abstract: *In this paper, I set out on a feminist philosophical investigation of the Ancient Greek approach to food and its contemporary avatars. Focusing on milk, the aim of the investigation is to unsettle and overcome the classical dualisms and cultural stereotypes that frame European thinking about food. Using a methodology inspired by somaesthetics, two qualities of eating food and drinking milk immediately emerge: non-visual embodiment and performativity. The first section of the paper develops the idea of non-visual embodiment through an analysis of food as animating energy rather than inert matter. In the second part of the paper, called “Milk as a performative and sexual metaphor for knowledge,” the analysis is orientated towards breast-feeding as a dual relation between two vulnerable beings. The sexual and political aspects of breast-feeding are examined via Aristotle’s and Plato’s writings as well as Socrates’ idea of knowledge as maieutics. The third and final section of the paper, entitled “The self, virility and cannibalism,” focuses on the links between meat-eating and masculine power. This link is anchored to ancient cannibalistic figures and mythological stories that identify meat-eating with ritual sacrifices. The phallogocentric aspect of meat-eating has recently been analysed by Derrida through his idea of “eating well” which addresses the question of the indiscernability of activity and passivity in the process of eating.*

Keywords: *feminism, performativity, knowledge, breast-feeding, cannibalism*

Food for thought. A philosophical investigation that takes “food for thought,” food as thought, can be characterized by its drive to reach a plane of immanence that disrupts some of the most persistent dualisms of the western philosophical tradition: contemplation versus action, theory versus practice, facts versus values, mind versus body, art versus life. To take “food for thought” is to go back to the reality of bodily impressions and needs. Coming back to the philosophical analysis of the basic activity of alimentation allows us to build a philosophy of necessity, an ethics of needs and a materialistic aesthetics. To begin with we can define the experience of eating as non-visual embodiment. This definition allows us to grasp the continuity between art and life in that eating involves a complex ritual of gestures and behaviours that discloses the aesthetic qualities of everyday activity.

One aliment that enjoys a special place in the continuities between everyday life, art and thinking is milk. Within the interweaving of eating and thinking, milk is the primary food of the newborn, the element that nourishes and quenches thirst before any other type of food assimilated by the body. Milk is a symbol of pleasure and ecstasy yet, precisely because of its primary function, it has remained unmarked as both a political and performative tool.

Eating as somaesthetics

Pragmatist aesthetics in general, and somaesthetics in particular, are methods for empowering body consciousness by means of the disruption of classical dualisms (body and mind, image and object, facts and values, theory and practice...). If such an empowering disruption is possible, one may ask if it could be obtained by food. When we think about food something strange can happen. Food easily appears before our eyes, it materializes itself as an image. We immediately visualize a plate of risotto, or an ice-cream, or a slice of bread – often depending on our physical state, and whether we are hungry or not. In contrast to other kinds of object, food appears with much more organic and tasty details. If I say the word “pen,” “window” or “statue,” those words do not call up an entire experience of smell and vivid colour, as the word “bread” or “chocolate” might. As the perceptual impression of food arises from our imagination and memory it reveals a series of experiences of cooking and eating that carry with them a complex revivification of the senses.

The reason for this difference is that food is an *animated* element. We can think of it as an object, which of course it is, but – as a memorable series of Dutch Paintings and Still Life paintings have expressed magnificently – food is not only an inert materiality, it is a vibrant and lively element that exceeds the constraints of materiality. One could claim that food is for somaesthetics what the body in general is for pragmatist aesthetics and phenomenology: a pivotal point that articulates a series of entangled relationships between living beings. Food exemplifies the body by exposing the vital energy of materiality.

This is particularly true of the experience of eating rather than the activity of cooking. Even if the culinary experience of preparing food is evidently interdependent with the act of eating, it is possible to separate these two practices in a simple manner: if cooking deals with the appropriation, the arrangement and the transformation of food, eating deals with the actual experience of the relationship with it, and such an experience is only possible if food as an object is destroyed in order to become an *aliment*. Cooking relates to food as matter, eating relates to food as energy.

Another way to understand this difference is through a comparison with the art world: cooking is like creating a work of art, eating is like experiencing that same work. As a matter of fact, the process of art creation shares several steps with the preparation of a dish. We must first think about the project or recipe, then procure the ingredients (whether real or ideal). We must dispose of an adequate amount of time and possess the necessary equipment; but above all, we must pay attention to what we are doing. Gastronomy, like art in general and literature in particular, is a meticulous practice that requires devotion and patience. The ability to invent is thus related to knowledge: a recipe is an existing path you may decide to follow as a simple act of prudence, though sometimes one might want to take a risk and follow a new route, venturing onto unknown roads to conceive new formulas. In cooking, as in the exercise of producing art, one can invent new recipes or reheat previously prepared dishes.

By way of consequence, if experiencing a work of art is like eating and cooking is like creating that work of art, then the cook is to the guest as the author is to the spectator: the instigator of an experience, a magician who sometimes surprises and other times turns out disappointing. Between the two actors of these trans-actions, there is a test, a dialogue and an address: no work of art without spectator, no meal without eater. The spectator and the guest are not passive subjects, receptacles who consume and swallow everything without blinking: they taste, feel and judge. Thus the spectator like the eater is the real actor of her experience; she chooses her speed, her manner of apprehension and may even suddenly put an end to her aesthetic experience. The

refusal is a real rejection because the destiny of an unfinished novel, for example, or a half left plate is sad: it leads to forgetfulness, waste, dust on the top of a shelf or maceration in a trashcan. Sometimes the remains of the work or the meal may have a less tragic fate, for example recycling: the painting is given away or sold and the meal reheated the next day in a microwave oven.

This comparison reveals a major point for pragmatist aesthetics in general and somaesthetics in particular: like a meal a work of art is not a mere object but rather the site of an experience. Its materiality evolves as a form of energy and as a living practice because a work of art is a sort of an *aliment*: it allows us to nourish our experience and it shapes our knowledge. As aliment, the work of art is very easily assimilated, almost without effort; it is an experience far more instructive than that of learning theory. Aesthetic experience is above all sensuous: we understand without knowing, we know without understanding.

Eating is certainly a way of providing physical sustainment to the body: we need a certain amount of calories, carbohydrates, proteins and vitamins in order to move, act and simply live. Food is then the first and most fundamental element of our life, the primary *power* that our body needs on both a biological level and a cultural and ideological one. But unfortunately this type of power appears to be far too rudimentary to be considered legitimate from a theoretical perspective. It's precisely because of its primacy that food is often forgotten, underestimated and unnoticed as a field of knowledge. Its materiality does not seem to be valuable enough within the field of philosophy as an academic discipline.

Indeed it is strange that we have been able to reason endlessly concerning the relationship between body and mind, dictate laws, establish hierarchies and cite examples in favour of one or the other theory, without ever trying to explain the structures contained in the very idea of food. Undeniably, if there were a direct link between body and mind, between a physical practice and theoretical knowledge, that link would lie in the activity of eating. Food is the primary link between physical matter and spiritual energy. The term "food" would then not only define edible material, but also the entirely impalpable element that is needed for living and thinking.

With regard to the principle of identity, one could talk about the relationship between the self and food in the terms of the chicken and egg paradox. Does my body come *before* or *after* food? If eating is the condition *sine qua non* for the existence of a body and the body thus comes after food, how, on the other hand, could there be food without a body ingesting and absorbing this food, or without a body searching for it? This paradox is also reflected in the relationship between the act of "eating" and the act of "thinking." Which of the two actions comes first? Do we need to eat in order to think or the inverse? If we suppose that eating comes first, then the first immediate objection would be that eating also requires a very basic and elementary form of thought. This type of thought is identifiable with *life* as an unreflective awareness of the self. And also, how would one then consider the case in which the act of thinking is directed towards the act of eating, as in cooking for example? If we need to eat in order to think, we often need thinking in order to eat.

Eating would then appear not only as an aesthetic experience, subject to the rules of judgement and appreciation, but more profoundly as the unreflective experience at the origin of any other type of experience. The experience of eating would testify to the possibility of constructing a background to life, the *condition sine qua non* for thinking, perceiving and judging. Eating is a way to go back to the real. Philosophy has always preferred to extract the subject from the concrete *continuum* of life, in order to familiarize us with abstractions, flights of fancy and theoretical investigations. In contrast to the dualist tradition, the real investigation, the one that sows the threads of our existence, happens often unmarked under our eyes, or hidden in our stomachs.

Milk as a performative and sexual metaphor for knowledge

The reality of food brings us back to the unreflective experience of eating, and more specifically to the very first encounter with food: *breastfeeding*. Within the interwoven relation of eating and thinking, milk has a very special place. Milk is the primary food, the element that nourishes and quenches thirst before any other type of food can be assimilated by the body. Milk is a symbol of pleasure and ecstasy. In its maternal substance, milk is simply miraculous: it comes already sterilized, at the perfect temperature, it is ingested through the process of sucking and consists of carbohydrates, lactose, water, minerals, vitamins, proteins and lipids. In addition, during feeding, the composition of milk magically varies: lighter and sweet in the beginning, it will be more bold towards the end. Its transformation is the exact mirror image of the traditional meal: breastfeeding starts with dessert. For its part, colostrum (the adaptation milk produced by the breasts the first two days after birth), brings in all the food the child needs in just a few grams: a concentrate of proteins, immunoglobulin, enzymes and hormones. This type of soft and sliding food is comparable to that of the astronauts: sucked and squeezed out of a food bag cum tube it turns into a puree through the process of salivation. Like an astronaut, the newborn must adapt to a hostile environment.

Milk incarnates the potentiality of a nutritional facility that would not be synonymous with naivety and ignorance, but rather the key to a clairvoyant and absolute knowledge. Milk is the symbol of the fountain of life, of the uninterrupted flow of wisdom. To ingest science as the newborn swallows milk, with the same deep reflective consciousness and apparent lack of physical effort, would be the dream of any poet, philosopher or writer. To produce words with the same ease as a mother produces milk would be sheer delight for an author. Words would flow like a stream of milk without constraint; sentences would arise from the breast milk of knowledge, a kind of universal nutriment of thought. Milk is a metaphor for the world as described by Esperanto, a language without ties that dissolves in the mouth; this language would be entirely soluble.

Paul Claudel speaks of the solubility of words in the following terms:

Et si la parole est une nourriture, c'est ainsi que divers aliments nous ont été donnés. Car il en est que l'homme fabrique lui-même, comme le pain, de crus et d'autres qu'il faut cuire; il en est que l'on broie et mâche, d'autres où la langue seule fait son œuvre; et d'autres, comme le lait, qui fondent d'eux-mêmes dans la bouche comme le beurre et le sucre. Et moi, pressé par le bruit intérieur, je voulais proposer au monde un mot soluble et délectable, afin de repâître comme un profond estomac la mémoire et l'intelligence comme une bouche bordée de lèvres avec ses dents¹.

In this passage Claudel subverts the order of the mother tongue. If words were like food, some needing to be cooked and others to be ingested raw, we would grind and chew some of them, but others like milk, as well as butter and sugar, simply dissolve in the mouth. The writer's desire is to find a "delectable and soluble word" in order to nourish memory and intelligence as if they were a stomach. Claudel grasps the idea of milk as a metaphor for a sublime language that appears like a flowing river, a natural human capacity. If communications are swallowed, the formal aspect of words disappears and the meaning becomes absolute, no mediation is possible. Would

¹ Paul Claudel, *La Ville*, 1901, vol. I, Paris : Gallimard, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, *Théâtre*, 1956, p. 434. "And if speech is food, then this is how various aliments have been given to us. For there are some that are manmade such as bread, some that are raw, and some that must be cooked; some that are chewed, others where the tongue alone does its work, and others, like milk, that dissolve in the mouth like butter or sugar. And I, pressured from within by noise, I would like to propose to the world a delectable and soluble word, so as to feed memory and intelligence like a vast stomach with a mouth lined with lips and teeth." (My translation).

this be a mystical experience? Perhaps. An erotic experience? Certainly. For this soluble food of milk or butter or sugar, this first food that melts in the mouth without effort, is an ecstasy of the lips and body, like a kiss. Milk is considered *pure* because of its whiteness without spots or shades, without thickness. Milk is innocence. It is considered virgin since it is the foundation of life, when all is extremely fragile and one drop is vital. There at the very dawn of life, milk is salvation.

In within a certain form of patriarchy, milk is a mother and milk is woman: the identification between milk and motherhood is founded in breastfeeding as a corporeal act and as a symbolic value. Milk is a mother also because milk is “the mother” of any other type of food, it is a sort of proto-food, the one that we experience before any other; milk is a mother because a mother nourishes her new born baby through the milk produced by her breasts; and milk is a mother because a mother is supposed to provide food and nourish her child throughout growth. The second identification, between milk and womanhood, is less evident but nonetheless persistent and strong: milk is a woman insofar as it contains feminine qualities such as purity, whiteness and virginity; milk is a woman because it is delicate and soft.

From a philosophical point of view, milk has a privileged position. Rousseau sees it as the *natural* element par excellence, which relates to its assimilation to womanhood insofar as women are considered to be closer to nature than men. From a metaphysical perspective, milk is indeed unique, since it relieves both hunger and thirst and is placed beyond all categories. Moreover, milk acts like the supportive substratum of different types of aliments, it is a foundation for establishing the multiple categories of edible matter. It is the white and untouchable background on which are drawn all the other colours; the primitive smell from which various scents are formed; the flavour that precedes any flavourings; the stuff before any texture; the liquid that runs before viscosity. Milk is the archetype of any type of food. It is this element without qualities which alone allows the determination of all possible forms of food. In Kantian terms, milk would be a transcendental form of food, the *a priori* schema of any diet; in less Kantian terms it is the mysterious element that originates and determines the differences and hierarchies arising in the entire food cosmology.

Yet such a privileged position is far from absolute and unanimous. If a dairy diet is often recommended for health reasons, this is in large part due to the fact that the dairy industry has managed to make a marginal and poorly considered food a key pillar of modern diet. Presented as essential to the health of the skeletal system, thanks to collusion between nutritionists and the dairy industry, the dairy diet hides a less glorious reality. Portrayed as a miraculous food by some, milk becomes a diabolical drink for others and is accused of contributing to the development of cancer, diabetes and cardiovascular diseases. If we go back in time the opponents of a purist vision of milk multiply; amongst them the Ancient Greeks for whom milk is a barbaric, unclean and disgusting element. Aristotle tells us that the Persians considered milk as an immaculate element (and by saying this he implies that milk is appreciated by Barbarians). He also recalls that Empedocles describes it as “whitish pus.”²

So the Greeks are not milk drinkers. For them, before being a drink, milk is a soothing liquid, an emollient for massage and a medical product used for its laxative proprieties. The Greeks dug an unbridgeable gap between their habits and those of other (supposedly inferior) populations, reserving for themselves the consumption of wine, olives and bread, leaving to others all the impure substances like beer, animal fats and milk, as well as the incapacity to bake

2 Aristotle, in *Generation of Animals*, 777 a 7.

bread.³ For Aristotle, milk is “soft;”⁴ for Plato it is “tender.”⁵ Milk is for uncultivated and weak peoples. Although Zeus was fed goat milk when he was born, the Ancient Greeks consider milk as a dirty substance. The simple fact that it is a natural element originating from the body of an animal is *per se* the sign of its impurity and its obscenity. Within the culture of Classical Greece purity is synonymous with culture and manhood, and consequently the opposite of nature and animality.

In a passage in *The Republic*, where Plato explains the fundamental characteristics of human virtue and specifically the tasks related to the guardians,⁶ he regulates breastfeeding for the guardians’ wives. If the new mothers do not have enough milk they will procure other women’s milk. They must breastfeed infants with measure, and childminders will be made responsible for any tiresome labour and night duties. Plato asserts that a well-designed city-state has to make motherhood easier by diminishing the time and energy dedicated to breastfeeding and childcare.⁷ The Republic can function, according to Plato, only when the child is not recognised by her parents, and especially her mother. Because education is a duty of the City, the affective relationship between a mother and her newborn has to be diminished, and sometimes even eradicated. One effective method is to limit the time dedicated by a mother to breastfeeding her child. By doing so the people of the Republic will be freed from familiar ties and the idea of individual possession.

Aristotle, in a very different context, defines milk as an element that is fundamentally related to sexual procreation. In *History of Animals* he associates milk with another white fluid bodily product: sperm.⁸ In *Book III*, Aristotle begins his analyses with the study of blood, the liquid element that is “the most universal and the most indispensable”⁹ in animals. “Blood in a healthy condition is naturally sweet to taste”¹⁰ is one of the first ‘gastronomic’ qualities that Aristotle mentions in his description, before describing its colours and varieties, for example, that “the blood in the female is thicker and blacker than in the male; and [...] of all female animals the female in man is the most richly supplied with blood, and of all animals the menstuous discharges are the most copious in woman.”¹¹ Womanhood is thus characterized, according to Aristotle, not only by a great quantity of blood but also by a great dispersion of this very important liquid. Then, after a brief passage on marrow, Aristotle dedicates a longer passage to milk by associating it again with sperm.

What do milk and sperm have in common for Aristotle besides their similar colour and texture? Firstly, they are made by the same substance, which is blood, and it is on the basis of the definition of blood that they can be classified. Secondly, and maybe more importantly, they belong to the same cycle of life. Aristotle explains that if all other liquids are “nearly always congenital in animals, milk and sperm come at a later time.”¹² If Aristotle does not go into details

3 See Janick Auberger, *Manger en Grèce classique La Nourriture, ses plaisirs et ses contraintes*, Presses Universitaires de Laval, ch. 4, p. 218 and sq., 2010.

4 Aristotle, *History of Animals*, 516 a.

5 Plato, *Timaeus*, 81c.

6 Plato, *The Republic*, V, 460 a.

7 *Ibid.*, V 461 b-c.

8 Aristotle *History of Animals*, III, 523 b, 15 ; in *The Complete Works of Aristotle. The Revised Oxford Translation*, ed. Jonathan Barnes, Vol. I, Princeton, Bolligen Series LXXI, 2 : Princeton University Press, 1984, p. 826.

9 Aristotle, *ibid.* 520 b, 19, p. 826.

10 *Ibid.*

11 *Ibid.* 521 a, 20, p. 827.

12 *Ibid.*, 521 b, 15, p. 828.

about what “later time” actually means, it is easy to deduce that both milk and sperm appear during adulthood and are directly related to sexual reproduction and the procreation of the species.

Sperm plays an important role in Ancient Greek concepts of education, and it would be interesting to explore how this role had an input on the symbolic value of milk. It is common to find the idea of sperm as a metaphor of knowledge, transposed from one body to another via the sexual encounters that were the basis for male education. From this perspective the sexual activity between the master (an adult male called the *erastes*) and the student (a younger male usually in his teens called the *eromenos*) is symbolized by the adult’s pleasure and the transmission of a liquid from the master’s body into the student’s body. The Greeks called this phenomenon *paiderastia*, based on the root *pais* which literally means “young beardless boy.” The term is often clumsily translated as “pederasty” and associated with homosexuality or worse with abuse of minors. Contrary to this vulgar opinion, the Greek practice of pederasty was a collectively acknowledged erotic relationship that symbolized social hierarchy. The practice was so pervasive that it became the principal cultural model for free relationships between citizens. Within the homo-social culture of Classical Greek, sperm is the perfect incarnation of knowledge.

So how in such a context could the association between milk and sperm be instructive? It is by going back to Aristotle’s master, Plato, and then to Plato’s master, Socrates, that we can understand the deep critical potential of the association between milk and sperm in the Greek philosophical context.¹³ Socrates’ definition of philosophical investigation is maieutics; that is to say, the art of the midwife. It is in his *Symposium* that Plato portrays Socrates giving a speech about love; to be more precise, Socrates, the man who knows nothing, cannot properly speak and pronounces his speech as a ventriloquist by recalling somebody else’s speech. The person who speaks through Socrates’ mouth (and under Plato’s quill) is a woman, her name is Diotima. There, in the midst of male speech, in the ardour of pederasty, where homosexual love is the source of knowledge, Socrates introduces a female voice: sacrilege. It was strictly forbidden for women to attend banquets. Women could participate in a symposium as dancers or musicians, and they could also have to submit to sexual intercourse, but they were not allowed to eat, drink or speak.

Who was Diotima, exactly? A prophetess and priestess of Mantinea, a description which unites three characteristics each of which would have excluded her from participating in that symposium: being a woman, a religious figure and a foreigner. Other sources say that she was a famous courtesan. Potentially excluded from the symposium in three different ways, she is present via Socrates’ lips. But why a woman and not a man? This seemingly innocuous question is nevertheless essential, as pointed out by David Halperin in a very important study.¹⁴ As Halperin shows, Diotima has the advantage of not being personally involved in practices of pederasty and so her teaching is neutral. Diotima has a woman’s body and replaces a male conception of knowledge as possession with a female conception of knowledge as reproduction; or, to put it another way, she replaces the idea of love as desire of the other with the idea of love as desire for a child. In this passage, Plato advances a completely novel image of a “male pregnancy” which is actually very consistent with the Socratic method, defined as “the art of giving birth to rhetoric.”

¹³ See Francis Wolff, *Socrate*, Paris, Presses universitaires de France, coll. « Philosophies », 2010 (1st ed. 1985) and Sarah Kofman, *Socrate(s)*, Paris : Galilée, coll. « La philosophie en effet », 1989.

¹⁴ David Halperin, “Why is Diotima a Woman?” in *One Hundred Years of Homosexuality and other essays on Greek Love*, 113–151, 190–211. New York: Routledge, 1990.

In Socrates' language, men also fall pregnant, suffer the pains of childbirth, feed their young.¹⁵ This new definition of sexual desire as fully oriented to procreation illuminates the issues related to the vital need to feed.

If Diotima teaches Socrates an ethic of "correct pederasty" (*to orthoson paiderastein*) it is because only a female body can give rise to the universality of desire as procreation. In classical Greek culture female desire is related to the shape of the body, the physiological economy, and to personal needs rather than desires of the mind. The body is identified with its generative function, since in classical Greece women were not considered as having an active role in procreation, being the mere venue of the male germ. In classical Greece, sexual practices were a mirror of society, they did not belong to the private sphere but to the social sphere. Sexual practices generally reflected the social relation between a dominant subject (exclusively male) and a dominated body (young boys, women, slaves). In this context, no reciprocal relationship (nor desire) was possible, but only sexual acts performed by one person on another person. From this perspective, penetration and ejaculation, where no reciprocity is admissible, are symbols of the social hierarchy.

That is why in this context, desire is not mutual but only unilateral: the master loves the young boy, but the latter cannot reciprocate, being only the receptacle of the master's desire and knowledge. Many decorations on vases illustrate paederastic encounters where the young beloved has a passive and neutral expression on his face, showing neither pleasure nor satisfaction, but rather a sort of sufferance. Socrates disrupts the social hierarchy of paederastic education by inflaming desire in the young. His erotic appeal provokes an inversion of the social order, which brought him criticism and eventually condemnation to death. The relation between this new erotic method and philosophical knowledge has been widely studied, but what remains to be explored are the consequences for feminist theory.

A very specific entrance point for this enquiry goes back to the symbolical relation between sperm and milk. If sperm is the element that is emblematic of knowledge (going from one body to another body), this is because in traditional Greek culture knowledge is a material entity that passes from one receptacle to another, a sort of an object that could be ceded and purchased; this is why, for example, the Sophists asked for money for their teaching. In this framework knowledge is a merchandise. Socrates' critique of this equation, and consequently Plato's, was particularly virulent: knowledge is not an object of possession, but rather a quality of human beings that can be awakened by philosophical enquiry. From a Socratic standpoint, sperm is not a matter conveyed from one body to another body, as if the body of the receiver were a simple receptacle, but rather an energy that arouses and develops the body of the receiver (the young boy), who is the real author of his own desire and knowledge. Sperm is not a material object, but an energy; something that is unique but universally shared, something that cannot be purchased because it is already possessed.

Through this redefinition of knowledge (and sperm), Socrates empowers the dominated subject, which is the young boy. Yet, we could add that the dominated subject also included the category of woman, and her capacity to give birth, which is the operative symbol of Socratic philosophy. Furthermore, the association of sperm with energy allows us to understand its transformation into the nourishing liquid of breast milk. Already, in the practices of pederasty, fellatio was associated with breastfeeding insofar as the master was nourishing the young through

¹⁵ *Ibid.* p. 117: "Diotima introduces and develops the unprecedented imagery of male pregnancy, insisting on it despite what might seem to be the wild incongruousness of procreative metaphors in a paederastic context. In Diotima's formulation, men become pregnant (*kyein*), suffer birth pangs (*ôdis*), bear (*gennan*) and bring forth (*tiktein*) offspring, and nourish their young (*trephein*). Indeed, the authentic aim of erotic desire, according to Diotima, is procreation (3206e)."

their mouths.¹⁶ But another aspect is that milk corresponds to sperm in so far as milk emerges at the birth of the child, which, according to maieutics, is the initial object of desire. Sperm is present immediately before conception, milk arises immediately after birth: these two products of the body are both necessary steps in the maieutic process of desire and maintenance of the child, where the child is knowledge. Milk and sperm are both nourishing liquids, they provide spiritual nutriment to the body and act as symbols of society and education.

The self, virility and cannibalism

If milk is the flow of knowledge and the fountain of life, its identification with sperm and the consequent transformation of its meaning entails a sexual politics with potentially feminist overtones. The classical Greek model of pederasty is characterized by unilateral desire. Maieutics is a procedure that disrupts that model and as such it provides a political counterpoint for women's emancipation. Of course, one can only speak hypothetically about a feminist theory within Socrates' philosophy, but if there are some sparkling fragments of such a theory, they would be found in a supposedly hidden link between alimentation and education, with such a link passing through sexuality. Given that education in Classical Greece was deeply entangled with sexual practice and social domination, the redefinition of sexual practice through maieutics necessarily redefines education. Knowledge is consequently seen not as a sexual act which implies domination and possession of somebody else's body, but rather as childbirth. The act of delivery is the Socratic metaphor for education.

A feminist reading of this moment in Socrates' thinking is profoundly related to the project of somaesthetics in so far as somaesthetics is rooted in the indissoluble relation of thought and action, body and mind, pleasure and knowledge. In a similar way to maieutics, somaesthetics also deals with the interaction between bodies, the energetic qualities of matter and engages in a critique of any limitation of the human body to the status of an object.

This novel understanding of sexual practice and knowledge in Socrates has profound implications for both the forms of life that are related to food in general, and for the feminist theory of food in particular. The identification of milk (as the feminine element) and sperm (as the masculine element) contrasts with their evaluation in Greek society. If sperm is highly considered because of its relation to knowledge, then milk, as we have seen above, is denigrated because it is considered dirty and weak. One explanation for this devaluation of milk would be the low consideration of women in Greek society, wherein womanhood strangely assembles all those characteristics that are considered as faults in men: weakness, emotionality, lack of will, irascibility, dishonesty, weirdness. Femininity is the default, the negative side, of virility.

But there is certainly a second and more profound reason that is due to the connection between milk drinking and cannibalism. Already in Homer, milk is mentioned as being appreciated by Orientals¹⁷ and the Cyclops are portrayed as beings who eat human flesh and drink milk excessively as if it were wine, in order to wallow about drunk and bellowing, in the midst of the sheep. According to the Greeks, not only is milk repulsive because it originates in the mammary glands, but it is also associated with cannibals and big meat eaters. To drink milk means to accomplish a double act of cannibalism: firstly, because we ingest an animal liquid; secondly, because populations that drink milk are themselves considered to be cannibals. Herodotus in his *Histories* speaks of the Scythians saying that "their drink is milk"¹⁸ and notes

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 142.

¹⁷ *Odyssey*, IV, 89

¹⁸ I, 216.

that to improve the process of milk production they used to introduce bone tubes into the sexual parts of the mares and blow into them believing that “air inflates the veins of the animals and push[es] milk down into the breasts.”¹⁹ In the imagery of the Greeks eating meat and drinking milk were related as activities that were synonymous with primitive and uncivil behaviour: barbarians are carnivorous and “galactophageous” which literally means “those who are fed on milk.” Homer mentions them only once, and he describes them as a people of horsemen and armed pastoralists transporting arrows on large carriages.

This is the key difference with the Greeks who were sedentary people and farmers. The Barbarians did not possess the art of agriculture; they were nomadic shepherds who had to rely on a carnivorous diet. The shepherd who does not sow and depends on whatever his current environment provides loses his identity and is subject to natural events. The specificity of the civilized diet is based on agricultural products, the baking of bread and the cultivation of wine. Consequently milk does not form part of such a culture. For the Greeks eating meat is related to the cookery of sacrifice.²⁰ Since eating meat is already a sort of cannibalism, men had to ritualize the act of cooking and make offerings to the Gods in order to avoid their anger. Thus, perhaps it is precisely because eating meat was so strongly criticized, that milk in general and breastfeeding in particular, were so massively denigrated in Greek culture. As psychoanalysis also teaches us, breastfeeding is a vivid metaphor for cannibalism, and the nursing mother can be portrayed as a devouring mouth.

We have identified two major causes that could explain the Greeks’ deprecation of milk: firstly, its connection to womanhood (a gender that is classified as physically and morally inferior), and secondly, its association with cannibalism and barbarism. Yet there is most probably a third cause that can be highlighted: the devaluation of passivity in contrast to activity and its consequent implication in the construction of the idea of the subject. More specifically, this factor in the Greek deprecation of milk lies in the devaluation of sucking and drinking, and the inverse enhancement of biting and eating. The difference between these two modes of ingestion is related to the emergence of teeth. Sucking is the first and primal mode of feeding, and it is only with the appearance of the first teeth (often called “baby teeth” or also “milk teeth”) that biting becomes conceivable. Teething is not a simple phenomenon: it corresponds to a period of suffering that determines an anatomically fit state for food diversification. Dentition is an empowering step that allows the individual to switch from simple suction to real biting. The newborn can only ingest food by drinking or, later on, by swallowing puree, but with the growth of the first incisors, she can begin to chew, bite and lacerate matter with her teeth. At the other end of the life cycle, the loss of teeth can be experienced as a return to suction and a symbol of regression. For newborns it is during the same period of acquiring the capacity to bite that they affirm their identities and begin to construct themselves as subjects.

We can identify here a gender difference between the activities of sucking and biting that can be criticized, as we will see later. Teething thus seems to symbolize the passage from a passive state to an active state. On the one hand, if sucking is an act of submission and dependence, by swallowing without chewing the subject acts like an object, as if she were a receptacle. On the other hand, in biting and chewing, the subject seems more emancipated and alive, because these acts imply a voluntary movement, they involve a decision, a commitment to take full ownership of the food. And if we wanted to gender these acts, we would associate sucking with womanhood and biting with manhood. If suction evokes innocence – a stage of full confidence

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ See Marcel Detienne and Jean-Pierre Vernant, *La Cuisine du sacrifice en pays grec*, Paris : NRF Gallimard, 1979.

– chewing evidences a state of mistrust and conflictuality with regard to food and its origin. It is not surprising that in some animals teeth are not only used to chew but to inject poison. During the process of sucking the subject acts like a plant, she absorbs the liquid and enjoys in an almost motionless state the energy received by ingestion. Sucking is a vegetable modality of living. Conversely, during the process of mastication, the subject is fully an animal, he is animated by an inner force, he dominates the surrounding world by modifying it, transforming and destroying in order to absorb it. If suction swallows sensually without destroying food, biting sets up a mediated relationship to the world. Hegel would say that such a mediated relationship is the necessary condition for the emergence of a true consciousness. The voracious animal bite would be synonymous with a realized subjectivity.

Here again in Greek culture we encounter, not surprisingly, some familiar dualisms: on one hand, biting is related to the fact of eating meat, manhood and subjectivity; on the other hand, sucking is related to milk drinking (and particularly breastfeeding), womanhood and passivity. A sexual politics of milk would thus begin by following somaesthetic's guidance for overcoming these dualisms.

Some traces of just such a project can be originally found in feminist theory. *Sexual Politics* is, of course, the title of one of the first books of the second wave of feminism written by Kate Millet in 1969 and reedited three times since.²¹ In this controversial book Millet analyses the political impact of the role played by patriarchy and sexism in literature (i.e. in Henry Miller and D.H. Lawrence). During the third wave of feminism, Carol J. Adams wrote *The Sexual Politics of Meat: A Feminist-Vegetarian Critical Theory* where the author demonstrates the profound ideological connection between a carnivorous diet and male domination in society and invokes veganism as a form of feminism and political activism.²² Furthermore, apart from feminist theory, we can also find traces of a philosophical inquiry into food as a pivotal field of social and political conflict in Derrida's theory of *differance*, and more specifically in an interview called 'Eating Well', or the Calculation of the Subject with Jean-Luc Nancy published in 1991.²³ In this text Derrida explains that Heidegger's idea of "*Dasein* is not unrelated to what I am calling here a "sacrificial structure." For Derrida this "sacrificial structure" is related to what he calls "phallogocentric structure."

One day I hope to demonstrate that this *schema* implies carnivorous virility. I would want to explain *camo-phallogocentrism*, even if this comes down to a sort of tautology or rather hetero-tautology as an *a priori* synthesis, which you could translate as "speculative idealism" "becoming-subject of substance," "absolute knowledge" passing through the "speculative Good Friday:" it suffices to take seriously the idealizing interiorization of the phallus and the necessity of its passage through the mouth, whether it's a matter of words or of things, of sentences, of daily bread or wine, of the tongue, the lips, or the breast of the other. (...) Authority and autonomy (for even if autonomy is subject to the law, this subjugation is freedom) are, through this schema, attributed to the man (*homo* and *vir*) rather than to the woman, and to the woman rather than to the animal. (...) The subject does not want just to master and possess nature actively. In our cultures, he accepts sacrifice and eats flesh.²⁴

21 Kate Millet, *Sexual Politics* Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1969; London: Rupert Hart-Davis Ltd., 1971; London: Virago, 1977; Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2000.

22 Bloomsbury Academic, 1990, new édition 2010.

23 Jacques Derrida, " 'Eating Well', or the Calculation of the Subject: An interview with Jacques Derrida' in E. Cadava, P. Connor and J.-L. Nancy (eds) *Who Comes After the Subject?* New York and London, chap. 8, p. 96 and sq., Routledge, 1991.

24 *Ibid.*

The “idealizing interiorization of the phallus” passes through the body (“the mouth,” “the tongue,” “the lips” or “the breast of the other”), and this passage is a sacrifice comparable to the one that the Greeks organize in the ritual banquets for eating meat. Virility is profoundly linked to a carnivorous diet and to sacrifice, and this *schema* is the proper structure for subjectivity. Later, in the interview, Derrida suggests that vegetarianism is not the answer insofar as the vegetarian also has to be subjected to the sacrifice, which in this context is entirely linked to the “self.” Sacrifice is identified with “need, desire, authorization, the justification of putting to death, putting to death as denegation of murder,” and within this scheme the vegetarian also accepts denegation as sacrifice. A better solution, according to Derrida is that “eating well” should become a collective practice:

The infinitely metonymical question on the subject of ‘one must eat well’ must be nourishing not only for me, for a ‘self’ which, given its limits, would thus eat badly, it must be *shared*, as you might put it, and not only in language. (...) This evokes a law of need *or* desire, *orexis*, hunger, and thirst (...) respect for the other at the very moment when, in experience (...), one must begin to identify with the other, who is to be assimilated, interiorized, understood ideally (...), speak to him in words that also pass through the mouth, the ear, and sight, and respect the law that is at once a voice and a court.²⁵

What if this shared experience evoked by Derrida – driven by desire and appetite (the Greek *orexis*), this experience in which the subject (“self”) vanishes – was the primary experience of food which is breastfeeding? Such a hypothesis – which is fully driven by somaesthetics – would imply two fundamental changes: firstly, the rehabilitation of the supposedly negative and passive state of suction and secondly the establishment of a schema of subjectivity no longer grounded in virility, but in womanhood in general, and motherhood in particular.

In terms of actual bodily and somaesthetical experience breastfeeding indicates a direction, at least, for the first change. During suction, the subject is not entirely passive. Its mode of existence cannot be reduced to simply vegetating. During breastfeeding, the child is mobilizing such a large amount of energy that (s)he can get tired and fall asleep during suckling, exhausted before even being satiated. Suction is a powerful movement, the baby sucks without stopping, without slowing down the pace, pauses are very rare and brief. By suckling the baby actively causes the ejection of milk through her vigorous aspiration. It has been found that, in some cases, the amount of calories ingested by infants may be less than the amount of calories burned during the exercise of suckling, with a resulting lack of weight gain for newborns.

Breastfeeding is indeed an “activity” in the full sense of the term, accomplished by a phenomenon of extreme concentration that allows a deep sense of pleasure in the baby. Far from the image that we have of vegetable existence as that of a passive and helpless object, breastfeeding may even be said to attain an alternative ideal of a vegetative life as a way of fully absorbing the surrounding world. To breastfeed is to engage in a form of life beyond the active-passive dichotomy, a form of life characterized by outgoing activity and ingoing absorption, by fragility and voracity. Furthermore, if breastfeeding causes pleasure in the newborn, it is the same for the nursing woman. Hormonal changes due to the production of milk affects the mental and sensory status of the mother, prolactin changes her sleep cycles, and the mother spends more time in deep sleep, high levels of oxytocin lead to soft drowsiness, a quiet euphoria, a kind of calming the body. It is said that breastfeeding mother should “eat for two,” chemically, it is true in fact that high levels of prolactin enhance cell multiplication of the gastrointestinal tract (the

²⁵ *Ibid.*

stomach and the intestines), their surface of absorption increases, the liver also becomes more efficient. This means that the digested nutrients are more abundant and faster.

This dance for two between the mother and the child contradicts the conventional idea that suckling is a passive state. This hormonal transaction provides a feeling of hunger and mutual euphoria. The body and the sensations are processed by a continuous dialogue between two persons as dependent on one another and whose common material is milk. A sexual politics of milk could well lead to a different theory of the subject in which the subject is not identifiable with the “self” but rather with a shared experience. Can the subject be defined as a human relationship where passivity and activity no longer in opposition are reunited in a more complex form of life?

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Eating Out as Eating In: The Intimate Call of the Contemporary Restaurant Scene

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Abstract: *Anthropology, sociology, and more recently philosophy have produced a number of accounts of food and eating based on the idea that food is essentially, and fundamentally, a cognitive and experiential activity. Mindful of the body and the mind, while aware of social and economic environments, these accounts range from the emotional experience of food, to the many and multifaceted contrasts intrinsic to the nature of food (life and death, raw and cooked, exotic and familiar), and can also incorporate the social and economic dichotomies associated with the selection and consumption of food. This paper stems from the same analytical tradition, but aims at a target that, at least in the academia, is still not sufficiently explored: the experience of fine dining. Specifically, I am interested in the attention that renowned chefs and exclusive restaurant environments are paying to the cognitive, perceptual, and social features of food and eating that are traditionally associated with more modest, familiar, and affordable eating practices. I begin with an analysis of the practical, but also emotional and experiential differences between “eating in” and “eating out.” I then consider three concepts: Terroir, Home, and Kitchen and how they have been appropriated and shaped by the contemporary restaurant scene. It is largely incorrect, I conclude, to regard fine restaurants and cuisine as exclusive, exceptional, or eccentric experiences. One of the current and leading goals of high scale dining is to recall the intimate and familiar dimensions of food and its consumption. Furthermore, I maintain that in addition to recalling the experience of intimacy and familiarity, fine dining is able to “re-invent” it.*

Keywords: *philosophy of food, Haute cuisine, social aesthetics, terroir, aesthetic experience*

Despite food and eating practices being two central arguments of discussion in disciplines such as anthropology and sociology, philosophical studies of food, albeit not sparse, have often been dismissed, or at least looked at with a certain hesitation. With the exception of ethicists, who have long been concerned with questions such as the status of animals and environmental sustainability, almost every philosopher seems to feel the urge to begin a paper on food with some sort of a justification. These justifications tend to involve a brief history of the reasons why food, an essential part of our lives, has not been a central topic of philosophical analysis, and a discussion of why these reasons are either invalid or not valid anymore.

When we narrow the discussion from the philosophy of food to the aesthetics of food, one of the guiding threads of this paper, there are at least three main obstacles to consider. First, the belief that food is an inferior subject because of its relation to the body rather than the mind; second, the predilection for vision and hearing and the dismissal of smell and taste; and, lastly, the “interested” and practical dimension of food which radically separates it from the

imaginative and disinterested activity that, according to Kant and Kantian¹ followers, should characterize aesthetic experience. As a response, philosophers contend that a Kantian notion of aesthetic experience is too limiting and at odds with the aesthetic practices we encounter in everyday life; that, as studies in proprioception and somaesthetics tell us, the mind and the body are not only related, but also inform each other, and that, as Emily Brady, among others, eloquently shows, smell and taste are neither as primitive as philosophers have often thought, nor are they significantly dissimilar from their “nobler” cousins, vision and hearing.²

In joining the ranks of those who believe in the philosophical analysis of food, I am going to bypass most of the aforementioned discussion, and accept its fundamental conclusion. Food is worthy of philosophical study; in fact, with David Kaplan,³ I also believe that food is conquering its own philosophical niche, and that philosophy of food might be on the cusp of becoming a prominent philosophical branch.

In this essay, I will consider a number of issues related to the aesthetics of food and, more broadly, to social aesthetics and environmental aesthetics. Specifically, I am interested in the analysis of haute cuisine and fine dining, and of the experience thereby provided. Contrary to the commonly held beliefs associating fine dining with luxury, elite practices, and with the idea of foreign, unique, or special occasions, I propose an interpretation of fine dining based on intimacy. To explain what I imply by intimacy, I will analyze contemporary culinary movements, restaurants, and renowned chefs under the conceptual triad of “Terroir,” “Home,” and “Kitchen.” Despite not exhausting the many nuances of fine dining, these three terms evoke the sense of familiarity and closeness that characterizes both the duo of home and traditional cuisine and, as I will attempt to demonstrate, haute cuisine. More provocatively, I maintain that haute cuisine has not only adopted these concepts, it has “re-created” and empowered them.

From Food as Art to its Experience: A Few Approaches to the Aesthetics of Food

It is possible to distinguish two branches in the aesthetic analysis of food. On the one hand, we find discussions of whether food can acquire the status of art and be regarded on par, or at least similarly, to higher arts. Elisabeth Telfer,⁴ to mention only one of the authors concerned with this question, analyzes some of the limits hindering the recognition of food as art, and responds that such limits are less motivated than we might think and that food and dishes should be regarded as art. However, her verdict does not truly settle the debate. Despite defending food as art, Telfer regards it as a minor art, and is careful to add a series of cautionary remarks on treating food on par with other arts.

Telfer’s hesitation is neither her fault, nor is it entirely objectionable. Food evades many of the issues we tend to relate to art and art criticism, and adjusting a given definition of artworks as to include food might not be the most pressing issue. In this respect, I agree with Aaron Meskin

1 In Kant, food fails to be an object of aesthetic contemplation in at least three ways. First, our physiological need of food is a mark of interest, and interest in the object of contemplation, rather than a pure contemplation of its presentation, is banned by Kantian aesthetics. Second, food tastes are, according to him, exclusively subjective: food can only be regarded as “agreeable,” and our food preferences, it follows, can never act as an indicator of the beautiful. Lastly, food triggers immediate, hedonic reactions that hinder the reflective contemplation that characterizes the Kantian notion of imaginative experience.

2 Brady, Emily. “Smells, Tastes, and Everyday Aesthetics” in *The Philosophy of Food*, David M. Kaplan (ed.) 2012. Berkeley: University of California Press: 69-86.

3 Kaplan, David M. “The Philosophy of Food” in *The Philosophy of Food*, David M. Kaplan (ed.) 2012. Berkeley: University of California Press: 1-23.

4 Telfer, Elisabeth. “Food as Art” in *Arguing About Art: Contemporary Philosophical Debates*. 2nd Edition. Alex Neill & Aaron Ridley (eds.) 2002. London : Routledge: 9-27.

who, despite believing in food as art,⁵ invites philosophers, foodies, and the like, to “make the case for the value of food as food and not worry so much about its aesthetic and artistic status.”⁶

On the other hand, as an alternative to the definition, or justification, of food as art, the literature counts several contributions that analyze food in a Deweyan fashion, namely by looking at the experience of food and eating. The main pillar sustaining the edifice of ‘everyday aesthetics,’ Dewey’s thought is central to the understanding of food and eating practices. Framing the analysis of food within the concepts expressed by Dewey, from experience, to emotional significance, to the idea of “transaction” – the latter evoking the exchange, dialogue, and discovery that food implies – is likely to lead to constructive and cognitively interesting results, results that might shed a light on the complexity of the aesthetic (as opposed to the more ambitious “artistic”) experience that food and eating practices afford.

Connotations of food as an aesthetic experience cover a large spectrum of sensorial and cultural stimuli and intuitions, too many and too nuanced in their nature to be listed here. Yet, looking ahead to the direction this essay will take, it won’t be mistaken, I believe, to see food as simultaneously the embodiment and the symbol of something not only capable, but also directly engaged in the shaping of subjectivity. Deborah Lupton,⁷ who abides to this view, points to how the emotions generated by the encounter with food function as an indicator of who we are as persons within culture, while simultaneously putting us in sync with our own body tasting food and reacting to such tastes. It is, she argues, this “embodied” sense of cultural recognition that further leads to the somewhat Proustian transformation of the food-related physical stimuli into memories.

Memory, the loyal companion of subjectivity, is in turn a leading topic of discussion in the philosophy of food. In “Synesthesia, Memory, and the Taste of Home,”⁸ David E. Sutton considers the experience and reactions of Greek students studying at Oxford when they received food from home. The experience is characterized as “returning to the whole,” as a physical and mental restoration of “integrity.” Individual integrity is restored because, Sutton explains: “... the food event evokes a whole world of family, agricultural associations, place names and other ‘local knowledge’” that was, up to the encounter with, in this case, local Greek food, too distant to be fully embraced.

Not necessarily at odds with the kind of food philosophy focusing on subjectivity and memory I briefly hinted at, but nevertheless methodologically, and often conceptually, distinct is the analysis of the dichotomies and contrasts that characterize the experience of food. This approach, to which I subscribe, finds immediate justification in the nature of food and eating practices, a nature that, arguably, has as its essence the art of contrast and combination. Cooking, table arrangements, the order of courses, the presentation of dishes, etc. are guided by the recognition of the complex alchemy underlying the quality and variety of food and possible preparations. Explaining the cognitive effects and unfolding the emotions, but also concepts and ideas that are generated and triggered by such contrasts and combinations is, I believe, one of the most promising ways to approach food from a philosophical standpoint.

Carolyn Korsmeyer immensely acute works in the aesthetics of food is a case in point. In

5 Specifically, Meskin believes in the classification of certain dishes and a certain kinds of cuisine (most prominently Ferru Adria’s molecular and deconstructed cuisine) as forms of “hybrid arts.”

6 Meskin, Aaron. “The Art and Aesthetics of Food” in *The Philosopher’s Magazine* Issue 61, 2nd Quarter 2013. Fake Barn Country: Pages 81-86.

7 Lupton, Deborah. “Food and Emotion” in *The Taste Culture Reader. Experiencing Food and Drink*. Carolyn Korsmeyer (ed.) 2005. Oxford: Berg: 317-324.

8 Sutton, David E. “Synesthesia, Memory, and the Taste of Home” in *The Taste Culture Reader. Experiencing Food and Drink*. Carolyn Korsmeyer (ed.) 2005. Oxford: Berg: 304-316.

her essay “Delightful, Delicious, Disgusting,”⁹ and in her book *Savoring Disgust: The Foul and the Fair in Aesthetics*,¹⁰ Korsmeyer analyzes the “compressed symbolic recognition” that is involved in our cognitive responses to food and eating – whether pleasurable or disgusting. The contrast and combination of revolting and delicious is at the core of cuisine, but it is also the “compressed” symbolization of something else. Certain cooking practices and certain foods remind us, she highlights, of the alternation of life and death; they pressure us to reflect on it, and to realize that we belong to the very same cycle.

A further dichotomy often associated with food, and one on which I will, if only tangentially, return is the one between “authentic” and “inauthentic.” Interestingly, as Lisa Heldke¹¹ points out, the question here is whether the contrast exists at all. The authenticity of food, she observes, is a matter of transaction and contamination of traditions. It is also, prominently, a transaction between the dish and the eater. When approaching new cuisines – when we travel, or when we simply have the desire to try a restaurant serving “authentic” food from a region we are not familiar with – we inevitably add our own status of “foreigners” to the dishes we try, an interaction that might be thought to “corrupt” the authenticity of a meal. And yet, no meal would be authentic without the very presence of eaters, local and knowledgeable of the dishes, or foreign, and in search of a new culinary adventure. The concept of authentic food is an evolving concept, a concept in which eaters are to be regarded as active participants.

Lastly, it is impossible not to highlight how contrasts in food and eating practices are often the vehicle for analyses of sociological and economic nature. A prime example here is Pierre Bourdieu’s distinction between “taste of luxury” as representative of the bourgeois freedom, and “taste of necessity” which instead characterizes the working class. Food choices and eating practices embody the separation, social and economic, of classes; they represent a conflict that goes much beyond the savoring of a given food item. In fact, Bourdieu goes as far as claiming that food practices, and especially the “formality” of bourgeois eating, are symbolizations of the “invisible censorship of living,” and “a way of denying the meaning and primary function of consumption, which are essentially common, by making the meal a social ceremony, an affirmation of ethical tone and aesthetic refinement.”¹²

Of all the arguments I listed in this short and, admittedly, very incomplete survey, Bourdieu’s is the one I am least sympathetic to. This is not to say that I deny the relation between classes and food, rather, I disagree with the idea that social practices, whether bourgeois or of other nature, strip food off the “primary function of consumption.” Bourdieu, I believe, is guilty of looking at the consumption of food as a separate biological and physiological act, an act that is being (unfortunately, he implies) adulterated by social practices. Differently put, his mistake resides, I contend, in the framing of food as a “two-steps” process that inevitably separates fulfilling hunger from social aspects of consumption. Such practices can instead be seen relationally, as interwoven experiences contributing together to the hedonic experience of food.

My hesitance in accepting Bourdieu’s argument, together with the objection mentioned above, can also be seen as the standpoint from which to develop an analysis of haute cuisine and fine dining. As some of the authors listed in this section, I am also interested in the contrasts,

9 Korsmeyer, Carolyn. “Delightful, Delicious, Disgusting” in *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, Vol. 60 No. 3 (Summer, 2002): 217-225.

10 Korsmeyer, Carolyn. (2011). *Savoring Disgust: The Foul and the Fair in Aesthetics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

11 Heldke, Lisa. “But is it Authentic? Culinary Travel and the Search for the ‘Genuine Article’” in *The Taste Culture Reader. Experiencing Food and Drink*. Carolyn Korsmeyer (ed.) 2005. Oxford: Berg: 385-394.

12 Bourdieu, Pierre. “Taste of Luxury, Taste of Necessity” in *The Taste Culture Reader. Experiencing Food and Drink*. Carolyn Korsmeyer (ed.) 2005. Oxford: Berg: 77.

dichotomies, and combinations that belong to food and eating. Specifically, the conflict I aim to consider is the one between “eating in” and “eating out.” These two terms, which taken by themselves are rather vague and hard to define, encompass a set of associated concepts that I will divide into the three aforementioned headings of “Terroir,” “Home,” and “Kitchen.” What I find interesting about these terms is that they are often associated with eating experiences that are radically different from the highly sophisticated and glamorous descriptions characterizing haute cuisine. And yet, I hope to show, the sense of familiarity, intimacy, and comfort evoked by these terms might be precisely what is at stake in contemporary haute cuisine.

Terroir

Terroir is a complex term; a term one might want to dedicate to more than a short section in an article. Yet, for my purposes, the concept of *terroir* is probably the easiest to analyze. Traditionally associated with the French culinary tradition, *terroir*'s meaning is related to both a specific geographical location and to how such a location is felt, recognized, and remembered by the people inhabiting it. The relationship between the land and the local population is, in this sense, the starting point for the creation of the sensual and practical connotations characterizing the products of *terroir*.

In her analysis of *terroir*, Amy Trubek traces the origin of the “*goût du terroir*,” the specific combination of taste and tradition (or of tasting the tradition) described above, to two sources. On the one hand, *terroir* is directly and somewhat literally linked to the roots of someone's history and to the very soil of a region. In this sense, the *goût* is interpreted as the taste that the soil can give to a product. On the other hand, the concept of *terroir* and the idea of a *goût du terroir* are instead seen as largely cultural, if not economic, constructions. As Trubek writes:

...beginning in the early 1900s, a group of *people* began to organize around this naturalized connection of taste and place, for they say the potential benefits of a foodview celebrating the agrarian and rural way of life. French *taste-makers* – journalists, cookbook writers, chefs – and *taste producers* –cheese-makers, wine-makers, bakers, cooks – have long been allied in an effort to shape taste perceptions. Taste producers and taste makers intervened in an everyday occurrence, eating and drinking, and these advocates guided the French toward a certain relationship between the soil and taste, *le goût du terroir*.¹³ [emphasis in the text]

These two sides, one linked to nature, location, and a sense of origin, the other to the inventiveness of culture and following enterprises (commercial and not) seamlessly cooperate, in the best of cases, in channeling the attention to the protection and preservation of the lands, techniques, and traditions that risk to be forgotten or wiped out by the mass and low quality production that often impinges upon the food industry.

Furthermore, and most importantly for our purposes, *terroir* has been able to connect the respect for a specific environment and its products to a sense of identity. The products of *terroir* are not only local, they are also “authentic” in their ability to signal and enforce identity. The *goût du terroir* is thus better understood as the synesthetic feeling that connects a product to the cultural and social history surrounding it. While defining a culinary tradition, *terroir* becomes a way of characterizing the identity of the people inhabiting a specific place.

It is precisely this latter, more complex feeling combining taste, identity, and authenticity

¹³ Trubek, Amy. “Place Matters” in *The Taste Culture Reader. Experiencing Food and Drink*. Carolyn Korsmeyer (ed.) 2005. Oxford: Berg: 263.

that has been embraced by haute cuisine. As mentioned at the beginning of this section, the concept of *terroir* is one of the easiest to observe within fine dining. *Terroir* relies on localism, on simple, authentic flavors, and on the sense of being familiar with a region or land, tied to it, belonging to it. These concepts are essential to the contemporary food scene. An obvious example is the restaurant *Noma* in Copenhagen. René Redzepi, chef and owner, engineers his nine course menu around ingredients from the immediate surroundings of the restaurant. Redzepi's creative power is borne out of the recognition of the potential of *terroir*, and it is propelled by the difficulty of limiting the menu to what is locally available. Since 2010, *Noma* has been voted three times number one in the *World's 50 Best Restaurants List*; it is featured in a number of cooking show (including David Chang's *The Mind of a Chef*), and, after being at the center of several documentaries, is now the main topic of *Noma, The Perfect Storm*, which recently premiered at Berlin Film Festival.

Less grandiose, but nonetheless significant, is the number of chefs leaving buzzing urban centers and food capitals such as New York to open "farm to table" restaurants in rural towns. In "An Upriver Current"¹⁴ published in the *New York Times* in the summer of 2013, Julia Moskin chronicles the journey of renowned city chefs to the Hudson Valley, which is, one may say, becoming to New Yorkers what Napa and Sonoma are to San Franciscans. New Yorkers are, in other words, starting to enjoy and to identify themselves with products of New York, from the immense success of Brooklyn-Made products and markets like Smorgasburg,¹⁵ to the farms of the Hudson Valley.

These and other forms of localism, whether in the form of markets, restaurants, or through the initiative of both communities and farmers are, because of their connection to notion such as *terroir*, creating a new sense of intimacy, identity, and familiarity. Historically, New Yorkers have long emphasized and preserved their respective "terroirs;" a city composed largely of immigrants, New York is a mecca of local, authentic products, and it comes to no surprise that "Eataly," the enormously successful store selling fine Italian food, has opened its American branch here, a block from the Flatiron Building. Yet, with the exception of the products immigrants have historically brought with them and added to the culinary landscape of the city, New York relies on a much less sophisticated list of local foods: hot dogs, New York pizza, and bagels. This is, I believe, changing. The haute cuisine of New York is creating new gustatory experiences by combining the local reality of present New York with neighborhood traditions. New American restaurants such as Cesar Ramirez's *Chef's Table at Brooklyn Fare* (on which I will soon return), have inaugurated a new phase that, while superb in its attention to technique, quality, and presentation, is largely focused on the recreation of a sense of intimacy and familiarity with food and its "terroir." The grocery store located above the restaurant claims:

Our goal is to be a centerpiece of the Brooklyn community and your 21st Century Neighborhood Grocer. A place you and your family will come back to again and again for gourmet groceries, delicious prepared meals and more. A place where you'll find the prices and processes of a modern day supermarket, with the perks and service of an old-school neighborhood grocer.¹⁶

As a term, *terroir* has been associated with a specific past and its related traditions. Haute cuisine, as in Ramirez and Redzepi's case, has proven how the idea of *terroir* can be introduced through

14 Moskin, Julia. "An Upriver Current" *New York Times*, accessed January 27, 2015, <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/08/14/dining/city-chefs-head-to-the-hudson-valley-lured-by-fresh-ingredients.html?pagewanted=all>

15 <http://www.smorgasburg.com/> accessed January 27, 2015

16 <http://www.brooklynfare.com/pages/about> accessed January 27, 2015

the discovery of “potential terroirs” such as Copenhagen or Brooklyn. *Noma* and *Chef’s Table at Brooklyn Fare* are incredible restaurants because they have re-interpreted the concept of *terroir* and brought it to different centers and locations. They have donated an intimate gustatory past to the people of Copenhagen and Brooklyn.

Home

The second concept we find associated with the notion of food and eating as familiar and intimate practices is what I simply summarized with the term “Home.” By “Home” I mean, of course, the dinner table, but also the idea of entering a specific environment, a home, as either its owner or guest.

Home dinners, and the food served at such dinners, have been *topoi* of the literary tradition since Antiquity. Take, for instance, Petronius’ *Satyricon*. Petronius’ Book XV, “Dinner at Trimalchio,” is a satirical, immensely character oriented, rendition of a fabulous feast held by the vulgar and boisterous Trimalchio at his home. Petronius alternates three descriptions: the house, the dinner, and a portrait of Trimalchio; the descriptions overlap, they complete each other, and they highlight how a home and a dinner can be indicators of the person who is hosting it. Trimalchio’s home *is* Trimalchio, as his dinner is a manifestation of his personality: both aspects that, needless to say, advance the readings and interpretations offered by the *Satyricon*.

Dinners set at home are also widely present in film. *La Grande Bouffe* (Ferreri, 1973) features a group of friends, and foodies, who retire in a villa with the goal of indulging in a vast array of sexual and culinary pleasures (of hardly hidden morbid nature) until their eventual death. Sardonic and grotesque, the film is a stellar example of the relation (some may say conflict) between transgression and desire in the consumption of food “at home.” The highly elaborate dinners cooked, and the “excess of delicacies” are a reflection of the persons they are, or have become: persons whose narrative arc, in its peculiar aesthetic and moral qualities, can only unfold in a confined environment where excesses, but also weaknesses and wickedness can fully develop.

At the opposite end of the moral spectrum we find films such as *Eat, Drink, Man and Woman* (Ang Lee, 1994), a touching portrait of the life of an aging chef and his three daughters. The four of them sit together around the table where, while eating the father’s dinners (a famous chef), they bring up novelties and secrets in their lives. The dinner table is here the channel through which all what happens in the house is revealed. In *Eat, Drink, Man and Woman*, food is seen in its most delicate and suiting light, as a vehicle for family conversations and as the means through which families express a feeling of intimacy and community. Dining at home is in this sense related to the disclosure of who we are as persons, of our secrets, habits, and character features, together with the presentation of the conflicts and difficulties that surround us.

Lastly, when focusing on the symbolic value of dining at home, it is impossible not to mention the function of home dinners as one of the leading aspects of hospitality. Being invited to dinner is very different from eating out. To start with, an invitation implies some kind of acquaintance with the host; acquaintance might in turn be related to close friendship or, as it often happens at dinner parties, to a certain curiosity – the desire, to put it simply, to know someone. Home dinners can be formal, a display of fine china, crystal glasses, and polished silver cutlery, but they also allow for the exact opposite. After all, guests are typically asked to “make themselves at home,” to relax, and to close an eye on a service that, like any service in any family, is unlikely to be perfect. Finally, home dinners rarely have a menu and they rely instead on what the cook (and frequently also the host) decides to make.

This series of combinations and the intertwined dynamics of families, persons, and the codes – formal and not – of hospitality are also, to a large extent, at the core of Craig Thornton’s work.

Thornton is a young, successful chef working in Los Angeles. In the past years he has become famous for an underground event, *Wolvesmouth*, held at *Wolvesden* – his loft in downtown Los Angeles. Dining at *Wolvesden* is not easy; you are asked to sign up to a list and “when it happens” you might be contacted via email and invited to one of the dinners. A dinner at *Wolvesmouth* puts together sixteen strangers – picked (sometimes) according to their affinities and (sometimes) according to their diversity. A menu features nine to twelve elaborate courses, courses that are *forever* experimental – Thornton never adopts the same recipe twice, and he hardly tastes his creations.

Thornton’s dishes, presented quite crudely through a list of their ingredients, follow a specific aesthetic. Meat is hand-torn and sauces and reductions in bright colors cut through the dishes unevenly. There is something savage about them, but also the impression of a newfound balance. Differently from the harmonious compositions of formal dining, his dishes come alive on the plate, they invite reflection, if not the very need of reconstruction. Diners are able to trace back the origin of a dish to its ingredients, and to gaze at Thornton’s intervention. A skinny young cook with a cascade of long hair tucked up in a makeshift chignon, Thornton chooses his home to let the food disclose his personality.

Dining at *Wolvesden* is an experiment in aesthetics and ethics. The hypersensitive quality of his food and of the apartment in which the courses are served suggest a new dimension of dining and of what it means to dine at home. In a world that constantly dines out, *Wolvesmouth* is an intrusion. You go out to walk back in and, by doing it, you become conscious of the implications of having to share food with other persons and personalities, a food that, in its unique quality and presentation, is meant to interrogate all the diners. They will talk about it as a group, or, perhaps, as a new family.

Kitchen

The last component of our triad, Kitchen, brings our reflection to an end, or closure, by narrowing the focus to what can be metaphorically understood as an intimacy of food itself: the moment and stage in which food, before becoming a meal, “gets dressed.”

Kitchens are deeply experiential and highly synesthetic environments. The smell, look, and sound of a kitchen are often tied to vivid memories belonging to intimate and familiar aspects of our daily life. Before kitchen islands took over, most of us ate in the kitchen, right next to boiling pots, knives, and to the uncooked food that was to become our meal. We cleared the table and remained there, using the kitchen as a little, cozier living room reserved for family members and close friends: imperfection and comfort underlining the familiar aspects of kitchens while highlighting their uniqueness.

Cooks, professionals and not, recognize the importance of kitchens in their culinary education. Yotam Ottolenghi, who is largely responsible, with his column in the *Guardian*, for changing the way English people think of food and approach food at home,¹⁷ fondly remembers the small kitchen in Amsterdam where, as a young student of philosophy, he cooked for a steady group of friends.¹⁸ Massimo Bottura, the chef and creator of the Three Stars Michelin Restaurant *Osteria Francescana*, which revolutionized the culinary tradition of Emilia Romagna and most

¹⁷ <http://www.theguardian.com/profile/yotamottolenghi> accessed January 22, 2015

¹⁸ Kramer, Jane. “The Philosopher Chef” in *The New Yorker*, December 3, 2012.

of Italy's Northern regions, spent his childhood under the kitchen table.¹⁹ The seeds of Bottura's culinary sophistication, and of dishes that are capable of flirting with eccentric flavors as well as avant garde art – as the dishes offered in his menu “Sensations” – were planted in a kitchen that loved traditional ingredients, laborious, but simple preparations, and the occasional 3 a.m. pasta “*aglio, olio e peperoncino*.”

In the case of Ottolenghi and Bottura, kitchens have become fragments of memory; they embody a sense of origin and intimacy, an origin that symbolizes their initiation, more or less conscious, to the world of fine cuisine. But kitchens are not just the training camp of master chefs. We are today beginning to observe a reconfiguration of the dynamics related to kitchens and to a re-conceptualization of the role of kitchens in the overall process of a meal.

Restaurants such as the aforementioned *Chef's Table at Brooklyn Fare*, or *Blanca*, opened in 2012 by chef Carlo Mirarchi in Brooklyn's last rediscovered neighborhood, Bushwick, are aesthetically, as well as practically, functioning kitchens. A stainless steel counter is, it seems, good enough to be a table, and no guest is truly supposed to be bothered by the presence of a severed pig's head – as long as it is part of the menu. The vicinity to ingredients, stoves, and plates “in composition” provides the guests with a more complete dining experience. Diners at *Chef's Table at Brooklyn Fare* sit close together, they share their opinions on food; they actively participate in each step of the preparation. This is, fundamentally, a twofold activity. On the one hand, they are learning to see food for what it is, and they are, with the chef, allowing for its transformation. On the other hand, they become conscious of a process, eating, that involves, as active performers, chefs and eaters alike.

One might have the feeling, while dining at *Chef's Table*, of doing more than eating; and yet, eating is exactly what everyone is doing. What changes is the recognition that eating is never passive and that we are, as diners, working and experiencing a kitchen with the chef – and with all those memories and feelings that kitchens personally inspire in each of us.

Conclusions and Assessment

In this essay, I proposed an interpretation of contemporary haute cuisine based not on its high-end and elite features, but on its ability to evoke, shape, and re-invent the sense of intimacy and familiarity given by traditional or home cuisine. To prove my point, I relied on how a number of chefs and restaurants have embraced the ideas of familiarity and intimacy through the concepts of *Terroir*, Home, and Kitchen.

While showing how wide and nuanced the world of contemporary cuisine is, the examples provided invite us to consider, with constantly renewed attention, the cognitive, experiential, and philosophical questions that fine cuisine is proposing to a growing public. Haute cuisine should not solely be regarded as an aesthetic spectacle for the few, but as a way of changing the very nature of culinary experience. The changes I highlighted in this paper are based on haute cuisine's ability to reinterpret and appropriate concepts that are typically associated with much more traditional eating practices and milieus, concepts that are in turn challenged in such a compelling variety of ways that calls, I believe, for the attention of philosophers.

In the case of *Terroir*, haute cuisine has shown how authenticity can be created anew through the investigation of undiscovered, potential *terroirs* that include urban environments, such as Brooklyn and Copenhagen, as well as new regions, such as the Hudson Valley, that are effectively claiming the status of *terroirs*. Haute cuisine is, in this sense, a first step into the creation of what

¹⁹ Kramer, Jane. “Post-Modena. Italy's food is bound by tradition. Its most famous chef isn't” in *The New Yorker*, Nov. 4, 2013.

are bound to become gustatory traditions.

The notion of “Home” brought us from the creation of traditions to their reinterpretation. A meal at *Wolvesden* is indeed a meal served at home, but it compels its guests with a savage presentation of ingredients, with the encounter of other, non-familiar patrons that are, however, asked to dine together. Craig Thornton plays with the notion of a familiar environment only to carefully dismantle it. As a result, we are left with the task of reconfiguring notions, the notion of home and dining at home, but also the very emotions that we had previously associated with them. The change is sociological and cognitive at once, it acts on a personal and on a collective level; a dinner at *Wolvesden* can alter the security of homes and of the home food we have been trained to rely on.

But dissonance and challenge are not the only ways in which haute cuisine plays with more traditional concepts. Serving a meal where the meal is prepared and allowing the patrons to watch each step of its preparation is likely to empower them. From passive consumers, the guests are given an active role, the one of participants and observers. As in the case of performance art, the audience is engaged to a higher degree, thus becoming more profoundly aware of the experience of food, an experience that goes beyond savoring a dish. A further observation emphasizes the importance of the experience described. “Chef’s Tables” are becoming increasingly popular in urban centers where a large portion of the population ignores, or hardly remembers what it means to eat in the kitchen. They do not know, in other words, what it truly means to “eat in.” In cities where the adopted practice is to *eat out* and *order in*, dining out while dining at a kitchen table is a way of, somewhat oxymoronicly, re-enacting a “forgotten” experience in a contemporary key.

In my introduction, I specified how, rather than making the question of whether food is an art our priority, we should be concerned with its experiential value. I am now willing to admit that, when it comes to the examples provided in this paper, the equation of food with art might not be mistaken. Great art explores and challenges the way we perceive; it allows for the discovery of what perception is capable of while elaborating on ideas and concepts that are crucial for us as human beings. Haute cuisine is, I believe, very close to this goal.

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The 0 km Movement: Everyday Eaters Enjoying Edible Environments

Jean-François Paquay and Sue Spaid

Abstract: *Despite somaesthetics' primary focus on producers' roles, we've notice that when it comes to food, somaesthetics tends to jump sides, shifting its loyalties to consumers, as they discuss eaters, while neglecting farmers. Since most of the world's citizens, as well as its philosophers, inhabit cities, we thus propose urban farming as a somaesthetics case study. To analyze whether urban farming suits somaesthetics, we begin with a discussion of urban farming's absence from Aesthetics, even as food remains de rigeur. We next demonstrate how aesthetic experiences associated with urban farming collapse artistic and esthetic distinctions. After debating whether somaesthetics should be considered a subset of everyday aesthetic practice, we finish by analyzing whether urban farming's capacity for well-being makes it a potential somaesthetic enterprise. One explanation for urban farming's absence from somaesthetics is that its success is due more to luck than the disciplined will that guides successful somaesthetic practices. For urban farming to work as a somaesthetic practice, we believe it would require raising the "foodies' bar"! That is, for fields like farming, which are largely unpredictable, yet are no less somaesthetically dynamic, somaesthetic practitioners must adopt unconventional ways to reward their penchant for hedonic highs, so that they can continue to push themselves higher and higher.*

Keywords: *urban farming, well-being, foodies, producers, consumers, everyday aesthetics, insouciance, 0 km movement, somaesthetic practices, organic farming*

I. Introducing Philosophy's Food Dilemma¹

In this essay, we offer several explanations for the lack of attention given to food within the field of somaesthetics. Despite somaesthetics' primary focus on producers' roles, we've notice that when it comes to food, somaesthetics tends to jump sides, shifting its loyalties to consumers, as they discuss eaters, while neglecting farmers. Everybody eats, yet hardly anyone produces food, so focusing on the role of eaters is not entirely surprising. Were farming not so unmanageable, one imagines the achievement-oriented field of somaesthetics being better suited to production than consumption. When it comes to somaesthetic practices, however, one easily recognizes the potential for food consumption to boost somatic efficacy, which we describe in greater detail below. If one does a little digging through the philosophical literature, one soon realizes that food production remains a relatively uncultivated aspect of philosophical inquiry, so it's hardly alarming that somaesthetics has yet to make inroads in this field. Not one of philosophy's three food tomes (*Food for Thought: Philosophy and Food* (1996), *Making Sense of Taste: Philosophy of Food* (2002) or *Les Nourritures: Philosophie du corps politique* (2015)) addresses food production

¹ Michael Pollan first used "food dilemma" in his October 17, 2004 editorial to the *New York Times*, where he introduced the now famous "omnivore's dilemma." We use "food dilemma" to describe the false dilemma posed by philosophy's obsession with eating. Divorced as it is from farming makes it seem as though food consumption can be discussed independently of its production. But, as they say, "You are what you eat!"

in any substantial way.

Philosophers seem more focused on whether food counts as a major or minor art, arguing for a duty (or not) to feed the whole planet, reappraising the gustatory sense of taste; or explaining how food, unlike most activities, connects human beings around the world (what Corine Pelluchon terms *vivre de* (or living from)). Since most of the world's citizens, as well as its philosophers, inhabit cities, we thus propose urban farming as a somaesthetics case study. To analyze whether urban farming suits somaesthetics, we begin with a discussion of urban farming's absence from Aesthetics, where food remains *de rigueur*. We next demonstrate how aesthetic experiences associated with urban farming collapse artistic and esthetic distinctions. After debating whether somaesthetics should be considered a subset of everyday aesthetic practice, we finish by analyzing whether urban farming's capacity for well-being makes it a potential somaesthetic enterprise. One explanation for urban farming's absence from somaesthetics is that its success is due more to luck than a disciplined will, which guides somaesthetic practices. We thus conclude that urban farming could work as a somaesthetic practice, but it would require raising the "foodies' bar"! For fields like farming, which are entirely unpredictable, yet are no less somaesthetically pleasurable, somaesthetic practitioners must find alternative ways to reward their penchant for striving to push themselves higher and higher.

II. Urban Farming's Absence from Aesthetics

Over the past few years, there has been a burgeoning "0 km" food movement, first in Spain and more recently in Italy, focused on the significance of truly local food that originates less than one kilometer from where it is sold or served. It might seem that such an opportunity, however positive its contribution towards reduced transportation costs, self-sufficiency, food security, and vitamin-rich food remains out of reach for most of the world's inhabitants. Not only does half of the world's population inhabit cities, but few climates support food production required to meet community needs year round. Moreover, the percentage of the world's population inhabiting cities is expected to reach 70% by 2050, making the "0 km movement" seem an even more distant prospect. With this paper, we explain why the "0 km" movement is not just for elite eaters keen to splurge on rarities like antique varieties or artisanal charcuterie. In fact, cities like Rosario, Argentina, which has had a booming urban farm movement since its economy collapsed in 2001, prove that supportive city policies can grow 800 farms in just two years, while engaging 1800 people in meaningful work, however part-time. Rosario's urban farms have secured enough food to feed 40,000 people, lifting 250 urban farmers' families out of poverty.² Of course, cities with populations of 4 million or 40 million would require locating space for 80,000 and 800,000 similarly-sized plots, respectively, numbers that numb the senses with every new census.

In addition to the many practical benefits already mentioned, edible environments tender aesthetic experiences that philosophers of food, aestheticians, and agricultural ethicists have overlooked. We can say this with some degree of confidence since urban farming is nowhere discussed on the remarkable website *The Philosophy of Food Project*.³ Of 237 food-related papers chosen for Springer's massive (1860 pp.) 2014 *Encyclopedia of Food and Agricultural Ethics*, the single entry addressing urban agriculture was co-written by a geographer and environmental scientist.⁴ To be clear, most people employ "farm" to convey scale, but we use

² <http://www.fao.org/ag/agp/greenercities/en/GGCLAC/rosario.html>

³ <http://www.food.unt.edu/>

⁴ M. Njenga and C. Gallaher (2014).

it to convey the cultivation of comestibles, reserving the practice of gardening for inedible plants.⁵ More specifically, we mean organic farming practices, whether biodynamic, biointensive or permaculture, since these approaches connect farmers to their environment in ways that commercial schemes that require purchasing equipment, soil, fertilizer, pesticides, etc. avoid. Aestheticians have only recently begun to work on gardens, so perhaps the philosophy of farming is coming down the pike.⁶ Since philosophy of garden books tend to totally ignore food, our tying gardening to inedible plants is consistent with the philosophical practice to date.

Still, philosophers prefer *hard* problems. Everybody eats, so what's the problem? Of course, everybody doesn't eat, which has given rise to food and agricultural ethics, as a subset of Bioethics. One obvious explanation for philosophers' perpetual oversight is that some still consider urban farming more a renegade activity, if not sheer fantasy, than a viable model worth defending or in need of critique. Urban farming just isn't ripe for philosophical debate the way nature, taste, disgust, authenticity, and co-authorship are. Yet, these routine aesthetic topics are also urban farming issues, if one recognizes farms as nature, preferences as taste, soil as disgusting, organic farming as more authentic and farming as co-authored activities. That said, so long as philosophers of food and food ethicists rank taste, food safety, and food insecurity over food production, esthetes and foodies will merit greater philosophical ink than community gardeners, horticulturalists and farmers who labor to sustain our interests, as well as our plates.

In our opinion, urban farming offers aesthetic experiences on par with those discussed by philosophers contributing to the fields of everyday aesthetic practices and somaesthetics. Although urban farming's primary goal is practical (growing food to be eaten), its success as an aesthetic experience is independent of food yields. Urban farming provides numerous aesthetic opportunities as participants: heighten their awareness of their environment, attune themselves to seasonal changes and intra-species variation, and gain an appreciation of chronological time, as seeds develop and plants evolve into harvestable comestibles. One could compare an urban farm to an opera with its unidentifiable background sounds, desperate protagonists, costume changes, striking sets, erratic tempos, and peaks of excitement. Finally, urban farming is one of the rare forms of cultivation that requires producers to combine approaches typically considered at odds (practical/aesthetic, order/chaos, artistic/esthetic, convivial/tedious, impulse/discipline) in indeterminate combinations. Unlike ordinary self-improvement schemes, one's having a strong will, good eye, and systematic approach prove insufficient to guarantee an abundant harvest down the road. And in fact, the plethora of indeterminate, external factors (climate, weather, soil, pests, water, eaters' demanding preferences) lends urban farming its dramatic edge over most kinds of aesthetic activities.

That said, it is even more surprising that somaesthetics, which arose to affirm aesthetic attention to the body and admittedly cherishes fitness and exercise, has overlooked the basic nourishment that energizes those very same bodies undergoing training and grounds what Richard Shusterman terms "somatic efficacy."⁷ Somaesthetic primers like Shusterman's *Pragmatist Aesthetics* and *Performing Live* implicate, though never specify nourishment, despite his remarking that "the senses surely belong to the body and are deeply influenced by its *condition* [emphasis ours]. Our sensory perception thus depends on how the body feels and functions; what it desires, does, and suffers."⁸ From the get-go, Shusterman predicted that the

5 S. Spaid (2012), p. 42.

6 Recent philosophy of garden books include Stephanie Ross's *What Gardens Mean* (1998) and David E. Cooper's *A Philosophy of Gardens* (2006).

7 R. Shusterman (2000a), p. 269.

8 R. Shusterman (2000a), p. 265.

plurality of tastes would be one of somaesthetics' greatest challenges.⁹ Philosophical discussions regarding fitting diets pose an even steeper hurdle, since diet, with its vast array of divergent opinions, contrary beliefs, and localized customs; is probably the world's most pluralistic and divisive topic, despite the mountains of hard evidence concerning nutrition. A potentially fatal medical ailment is more likely to persuade eaters to adopt diets that maximize somatic efficacy than sound philosophical argument. Even so, nourishment requires the freshest food possible, originally inspiring the "0 km" movement.

III. Collapsing the Artistic ↔ Esthetic Distinction

Nearly eighty years ago, John Dewey employed the term "esthetic" to denote "the consumer's rather than the producer's [artistic] standpoint. It is gusto, taste; and, as with cooking, overt skillful action is on the side of the cook who prepares, while taste is on the side of the consumer, as in gardening there is a distinction between the gardener who plants and tills and the householder who enjoys the finished product."¹⁰ Rather than separating production and consumption, he sought to show how these roles flip flop. One day we farm, then we cook, and a few days later, someone else serves us something to eat. Even if only a small fraction of eaters (5% in Rosario) are involved in the food production (artistic), most people regularly prepare food, and nearly everyone is a food appreciator (esthetic); and especially when they've had a hand in its production. Urban farming thus collapses the artistic/esthetic divide, since it compels public engagement and outside involvement in ways that activities tied to cultural production rarely do. Even if the delight or appreciation associated with gardening non-edible plants or decorating one's bodies with tattoos is generally magnified when shared with others, the producer's satisfaction doesn't depend on consumers. The tango genius or sartorial whiz enjoys his/her own efforts, even when no one else notices. Absent eager eaters, the ingénue farmer's heirloom wonders are wasted. In contrast to gardening, farming for one makes little or no sense. Whether a single household or a neighborhood plot, the community of eaters influences what's to be grown, just as what's ready to be harvested determines what to expect for dinner! With urban farming, artistic production and esthetic appreciation go hand in hand.

Because urban farming connects eaters to food production, it poses an interesting activity for philosophers interested in heightened aesthetic experiences, as well as those seeking a greater awareness of our world. In this paper, we articulate the philosophical relevance of urban farming in light of everyday aesthetic practices and somaesthetics. Our findings shed a little light on urban farming's role for environmental aesthetics and food and agricultural ethics, which we discuss in the conclusion. While city inhabitants routinely use a city's roads, sewer and water-management systems, one imagines a smaller proportion engaging its parks, public space, public transportation, or schools, yet all have equal access to these public resources should they want them. In light of the potential for urban farming to enhance well-being, citizenship, connectedness, and feelings of ownership, as discussed below, it's difficult to grasp why communities, especially cities, remain reluctant to integrate urban farming into their topologies. Urban farms not only heighten well-being among participants, but they offer public goods on par with roads, public transit, public space, sewers, water management, and schools; and aesthetic experiences on par with public monuments, green space, and commercial centers.¹¹

9 R. Shusterman (2000a), p. 263 and 282-283.

10 J. Dewey (2005), p. 49.

11 Artist-farmers frequently cite well-being as a reason for taking up farming. S. Spaid (2012), pp. 34, 121, 181 and 227.

One explanation for city planners' reluctance to incorporate urban farms is that urban farming has typically been initiated at the grass roots level, leaving agriculture experts to focus on large-scale rural farming. Others worry that farm-runoff and wastes pollute, rendering urban farms, however small, more blight than delight. We suspect that there are not (yet) enough experts to guide city planners in the arena of urban farm design, the way consultants steer the implementation of new public works. Alternatively, urban farms modeled on systems like Jean-François Paquay's *Portager*[®] could find easy implementation without requiring city planners to become urban farming experts or to bulldoze buildings to make more space. *Portagers* (portable *potager* (French for kitchen garden)) present numerous advantages for people, whether city dwellers or apartment renters, who lack access to land for subsistence-farming purposes. *Portagers* (each container is 30cm x 30cm) can be sited anywhere one finds small pockets of well-lighted empty space -- alongside railroad tracks, creeping up sidewalks, edging buildings, populating gardens, outlining driveways, trailing freeways, bridging parks, enlivening seventies-era concrete parks, encircling aughties-era skate parks, or on roofs, terraces, and balconies.

Like ordinary farm rows, *Portagers* require plant rotations, yet their portability reduces land insecurity, since farmers can readily move and store them, as new sites become available or old ones change hands. Moreover, each container can easily be repositioned to reflect weather changes (too much sun, not enough shade, too much wind, not enough water...) or quickly replanted should some plants die off, while others fail to take root. *Portagers* offer especially low maintenance solutions for urban farmers forced to make quick decisions or lacking in long-term contingency plans. Finally, *Portagers* offer park-like dining arenas, situating everyday eaters amidst edible environments that encourage conviviality, while granting endless opportunities for creative self-styling, socializing, and dwelling modification. Although this paper addresses urban farming in general, we offer Paquay's *Portagers* as a viable model, thus grounding this paper's theoretical content in an actual solution.

IV. Everyday Aesthetic Practice vs. Somaesthetic Enterprises

Those who worry that somaesthetic discourse has overlooked food and drink may be relieved to know that aestheticians focused on everyday aesthetic practices (everyday practices for short) routinely debate the merits and philosophical relevance of home-cooked meals, dining rituals, peeling oranges, packaging leftovers, packing picnics, gardens, homemade beer, and Japanese Tea Ceremonies.¹² Like most somaestheticians, everyday aestheticians find inspiration in Dewey's seminal text *Art as Experience* (1934) and focus more on actively-engaged doers than appreciative consumers. Citing Dewey's "doctrine of meliorism," somaestheticians privilege popular activities that cultivate beauty, require mindfulness, and encourage practitioners to push through to ever higher distinctions and fulfillment levels. It's important to remember that Shusterman's move to defend popular pastimes like T'ai Chi, Akido, Feldenkrais Method, and myriad other body-fitness activities actually arose as an argument to counter Richard Rorty's valorization of the "aesthetic life," whereby free individuals who have escaped inherited self-descriptions reconstitute themselves in "a 'new' language the past never knew." Shusterman responded, "But why can't our autonomy be expressed in the freedom to define ourselves through an already existing life-style or language?"¹³ Thus was born somaesthetics' focus on accredited

¹² Japanese-born philosopher Yuriko Saito brings to life the way Japanese culture gives place (and time) to tea ceremonies, orange peeling, gift wrapping, and trash packing, thus elevating routine endeavors to creative activities (Saito, 2013, p. 172). Carolyn Korsmeyer discusses similar activities in *Making Sense of Taste: Philosophy of Food* (2002)

¹³ R. Shusterman (2000a), p. 254.

enterprises that foster self-transformation as a progressive plan and place physique secondary to enhanced awareness of felt experiences, while eschewing Herculean strength. In restating his alternative to Rorty's "aesthete," Shusterman poses: "[B]y addressing enterprises not typically taken as aesthetic –not only martial arts, sports, meditative practices, and psychosomatic therapies, but the core philosophical tasks of self-knowledge and self-mastery, somaesthetics threatens to burst the bounds of a narrowly aesthetic discipline."¹⁴

In rereading somaesthetics texts some ten years after having first studied them, this field seems particularly accomplishment or achievement-driven, which is a good, since being goal-oriented serves to distinguish its aims from those of everyday practices. To be sure, somaesthetics values self-improvement over sheer competition, as in beating competitors for the sake of winning. By contrast, everyday practices seem, well, fundamentally *ordinary*, primarily focused on ongoing, common activities, even those that are not particularly aesthetic. One imagines somaestheticians appreciating chef-wizards, or even cooks appearing on TV contests that reward some combination of innovation and classic skills, while everyday aestheticians applaud a memorable homemade, chicken-noodle soup. Somaesthetics seems to have found inspiration in classically Greek notions of *arête* (excellence) and *agathos* (goodness), which guides its identification of the beauty inherent in nonart practices. Having distinguished somaesthetics as primarily focused on achievement-oriented enterprises that facilitate personal growth, we next analyze urban farming, however seasonal (as opposed to everyday), in light of everyday aesthetics, before discussing how urban farming suits somaesthetics.

V. Urban Farming and Well-Being

According to Kevin Melchionne, being an ordinary object or having the everyday as an artwork's content does not make it part of everyday life. "It is the regular morning coffee, the acknowledgement of the evening sunset, or the mere raising of a blind after waking that imparts everyday aesthetic value to the window."¹⁵ He restricts "everyday aesthetics to the aspects of our lives marked by widely shared daily routines or patterns to which we tend to impart an aesthetic character." He identifies five particular areas where the dual features of everyday pervasiveness and *aesthetic* character coincide –food, dwelling, conviviality, going out, and wardrobe. One can imagine urban farming intersecting all five daily spheres. Donned in their outdoor get-ups and specialized gear, urban farmers connect with others in particular locales, where food is grown and eventually harvested for shared meals. Melchionne notes that it "is the ongoing nature of the practice, not the genre of the object, say, folk or mass-produced, that makes for the everyday." Echoing Dewey's appraisal of food's *esthetic* significance, he remarks that "[we] prepare meals and appreciate the meals made for us with respect to aesthetic features." Melchionne remarks that everyday aesthetic practices include common, ongoing activities that don't necessarily have aesthetic components, thus qualifying edible environments as everyday aesthetic practices. For those who counter that urban farming is too uncommon to count as an everyday aesthetic practice, we would argue that its rarity reflects its unavailability. Were it available, parents might opt to organize farming outings for kids, the way suburbanites encounter corn mazes.¹⁶ Fortunately, his characterization avoids polarizing debates –aesthetic vs. nonaesthetic, art vs. nonart, or practical vs. useless– that might otherwise disqualify urban farming as exemplary of

14 R. Shusterman (2000a), p. 278.

15 K. Melchionne (2013).

16 It sounds crazy that corn mazes arose as a money-making scheme to generate profits from cornfields. Kim Severson, "Farmers Find Path out of Hardship with Corn Mazes,," *New York Times*, October 29, 2012. http://www.nytimes.com/2012/10/30/us/corn-mazes-help-farmers-make-ends-meet.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0

everyday aesthetic practices.

As already noted, urban farming collapses the gap between producers and consumers, since these roles are interchangeable. Even if very few people readily admit to having green thumbs, the activity of growing food, however seasonal, in portable farms like *Portagers*, can hardly be considered esoteric or overly rare. With a little supervision and encouragement, most people would at least try to grow some food for home consumption, whether enough salad for one or two summer meals, or a massive quantity once one gets the knack. One can easily imagine the sense of accomplishment felt by hosts who announce that their salad was grown on the premises. One anticipates them feeling an overwhelming sense of pride in not only growing, but selecting, picking, sorting, washing, preparing, and serving locally-grown lettuce leaves. One also envisions hosts feeling a sense of self-sufficiency, camaraderie with fellow farmers, and connection to place, even though their vegetables were not grown directly in the ground. *Portagers* trailing along train tracks, winding along sidewalks or skirting the bases of buildings, proffer a sense of place, no differently than seeds planted in one's backyard.

This sense of place reflects neither one's ownership of one's edible environment nor mastery over its domain, but attention to and kinship with an overall environment that includes birds, rodents, insects, micro-organisms, and adjacent plants. In fact, *Portagers* work best when they are densely planted, giving users and observers special awareness of the efficacy of soil, biodiversity, and companion plants. As time goes on, and urban farmers gain confidence using their *Portagers* to grow food *in situ*, one imagines producers continuously replanting *Portagers* all year long (using makeshift greenhouses), owing to their capacity for continuous food production. *Portagers* help to attune human beings to kinship, since one's food supply and meal plans are "hitched" to events with unpredictable cycles and inexplicable time spans, far beyond the cook's control. One might even be inspired to exchange one's bounty or expertise with other urban farmers, gardeners, and cooks, thus reviving ever more classical kinship models, based on mutual interdependencies.

Melchionne especially appreciates everyday practices' distinctive capacity to promote well-being. Urban farming fosters three features that he identifies as especially conducive to well-being –autonomy, flexibility, and insouciance. Although somaesthetics shares everyday aesthetics' twin goals to ameliorate ordinary activities and facilitate well-being, it's difficult to imagine somaestheticians praising insouciance (indifference) with such elan, as they simultaneously strive for excellence. He considers "everyday life [as] marked by an economy of effort, a minimum of planning, and the easy integration of the aesthetic into routines with amendments and variations along the way." His focusing on ongoing activities excludes holiday feasts and home decoration, while his focus on common activities prohibits the pianist's finger exercises and the Japanese Tea Ceremony, though he acknowledges tea ceremonies' role in elevating "the everyday to a ceremonial occasion," even if it is not part of everyday life. In his attempt to grasp the value of everyday aesthetic life, Melchionne wonders whether "everyday aesthetic practices are too ephemeral or superficial to have an impact," even worse, so common that they prove inconsequential in the long run. Alternatively, fine art objects "merit our attention because they reflect skill and insight," while their complexity and richness sustains critics and audiences. Moreover, everyday aesthetic practices tend to be "pursued in private and, when there is public conversation, it is largely consumerist."¹⁷ He thus worries that everyday practices merit our attention only when they occur in the context of fine arts, where public access engenders reflective judgments.

¹⁷ K. Melchionne (2014).

Melchionne considers subjective well-being to arise when individuals: 1) enjoy positive feelings, 2) have few negative ones, 3) are satisfied in their main pursuits, and 4) give their lives positive evaluations. Because positive emotions tend to engender ever more positive emotions, he views well-being as occupying a dynamic equilibrium (range varies over time, but doesn't stay long at extremes), whose factors typically correlate with happiness, as positive emotions compound into an upward spiral.¹⁸ To make an impact, "positive emotions must be ongoing, generating further positive emotions, lifting us consistently to the higher end of our hedonic range." "Negative states, on the other hand, like anxiety and depression, tend to narrow attention, decrease effectiveness and lower subjective well-being."¹⁹

Melchionne's description of the hedonic treadmill (what humans do to maintain their highs) seems better suited to somaesthetics than everyday aesthetics, whose insouciance, economy of effort, and a minimum of planning afford easy integration of the aesthetic into daily routines. For him, "[h]edonic regulation can involve, for instance, selecting the situations we put ourselves in, modifying them, determining the strength and nature of our attention, controlling responses, and determining our attitudes."²⁰ All of this "hedonic talk" recalls Shusterman's earliest account of a body undergoing aesthetic functioning as a "beautiful experience of one's own body from within –the endorphin-enhanced glow of high-level cardiovascular functioning, the slow savory awareness of improved, deeper breathing, the tingling thrill of feeling into new parts of one's spine."²¹ Similarly, Melchionne's linking emotional intelligence to one's ability to self-regulate moods befits somaesthetic practitioners exercising their willpower, though not necessarily everyday aesthetic practitioners, whose notably low-key attitudes both reflect and ensure their continued well-being.

Urban farmers who employ *Portagers*, or similarly flexible systems, routinely encounter indeterminate factors (climate, infestation, pests, disease) that lie beyond their control, making it a less than an ideal activity for those seeking to achieve, let alone boost or sustain hedonic highs. Several related activities, like operating a food stand or writing a food blog, seem better suited for achieving desired outcomes. Psychologists have observed that well-being increases in response to work, relationships, living arrangements, and finances. Sustaining hedonic upticks is not so easy. What *remains* (post-hedonic high) is "what we do on an everyday basis." Melchionne recognizes that those who regularly modify their everyday practices, so as to avoid routine, nurture both their personal identity and life's meaning. Even "[t]he distressed benefit from the positive emotions generated from self-controlled and self-concordant activity. Although the activities themselves may not solve problems, they reduce anxiety and depression while increasing focus and efficacy."²² If by "self-controlled and self-concordant" activities, he means intended, purposeful, or desired actions, then we can imagine everyday aesthetic practices, such as urban farming, reducing anxiety and depression. We doubt, however, that those who exercise self-control by attempting to outsmart external factors like food yields, consumer satisfaction, or efficiency of time spent coursing the hedonic treadmill, will alleviate their distress. Fortunately, most of urban farming's rewards are not tied to the success of food production.

Melchionne rightly views self-generating activities like varying one's practices as "stand[ing] a much better chance of influencing well-being than the occasional encounter of high or popular

18 Barbara Fredrickson and Thomas Joiner, "Positive Emotions," *Psy Science*, March (2002).

19 K. Melchionne (2014).

20 K. Melchionne (2014).

21 R. Shusterman (2000a), p. 262.

22 K. Melchionne (2014).

art, such as attending museums or concerts from time to time,” since fine art activities are rather intermittent, and are entirely consumerist. He remarks, “When well-being is brought to the foreground, everyday aesthetic practices turn out to be rich in possibilities while the fine arts seem challenged as a framework for human flourishing, except perhaps for the artists themselves.” Still, “practices that challenge yet still permit mastery are more likely to generate well-being than practices that are too easy to engage us or are so difficult they lead only to frustration.”²³ For Melchionne, aesthetic competence requires knowing which activities sustain one’s hedonic highs. From the standpoint of subjective well-being, one’s traversing the hedonic range adds aesthetic value. There thus seems to be a fine balance between everyday practices that challenge individuals and offer growth opportunities, and fine-art practices like painting that require decades to master and remain out of reach. So long as the goal is neither perfection nor all-out mastery, everyday aesthetics suggests that urban farmers could enhance their well-being without having to win blue ribbons at the “urban-farm fair”. Creative acts deeply and positively influence makers’ well-being, which is why everyone involved in urban farming benefits, even those who lack the knack or are really not interested to secure food for their tables.

Although Melchionne worries that some might view his position as advocating “art therapy” or privileging “happiness over social injustice” (the latter led some feminists to reject the Riot Grrrls’ overtly non-political strategy), it seems a fitting outcome of everyday aesthetics. As soon as social scientists recognized that participation trumps political change, the academic field of “happiness studies” arose to explain why neither greater income, nor higher living standards significantly improved well-being. “Research shifted from external to internal factors or, in other words, how dispositions, inner resources, and coping tendencies support, *well-being* [emphasis ours].”²⁴ If non-political factors do reliably improve people’s lives, as the case of the mid-nineties Riot Grrrls movement proved, one can imagine urban farming making a huge difference, especially since nothing sustains “inner resources” like locally-produced vegetables. It should be noted that well-being enhancers like autonomy (“I will”) and self-sufficiency (“I can”) recall political philosopher Hannah Arendt’s definition of freedom as being where the “I can” and “I will” intersect. Freedom is yet another source of happiness that stems from inner resources.

Pinpointing exactly how everyday aesthetic activities engender well-being is hard, yet one easily imagines urban farming eliciting positive feelings. So long as one finds ways to keep the activity low-key, flexible, autonomous, interesting, and enjoyable as an activity in itself, and freed from external factors such as harvest yields, outside competitors, economic reward, public recognition, attention, and especially sustained hedonic highs, urban farming stands to enhance the well-being of producers and consumers alike. What we’ve thus far discussed hints at one possible reason why somaesthetic discourse has overlooked food production, whether urban farming, gardening, or exquisite cuisine. Despite their practical aims and necessity for daily life, such activities are largely unpredictable, are willpower-independent, and don’t necessarily engender progressive results. After years of successful tomato and potato harvests, they sometimes inexplicably don’t arrive, despite the farmer’s expertise and historic luck.

23 K. Melchionne (2013).

24 K. Melchionne (2013).

VI. Raising the Foodies' Bar

Unlike gardening or home-cooking, urban farming *is* mostly a group endeavor whose success can be *assessed* (e.g. in terms of annual tonnage), though it is rarely so competitive, save the occasional farm fair. By contrast, we imagine somaesthetic practitioners jogging along the hedonic treadmill, mastering Karate belt after Karate belt, a string of Alexander Technique positions, yoga's increasingly difficult poses, and more. Somaesthetics primarily concerns producers, yet as we shall see, when somaestheticians discuss food, they strangely adopt the foodies' consumerist standpoint. Absent an ascending bar for appreciative foodies to leap over, while demonstrating and testing their mastery of discriminating taste, it's no wonder somaesthetics has failed to accommodate this crucial aspect of the "art of living." Urban farming might provide foodies just the *bar* they need to become food producers, pushing themselves to ever greater hedonic heights. Given everyday aesthetics' fairly general account, it might seem tempting to categorize somaesthetics as a subset of everyday aesthetic practices. Were somaesthetic practitioners not so darn achievement-oriented, we'd be inclined to recommend doing this. Achievement, self-improvement, and the hedonic treadmill (their primary path toward well-being) play such important roles for somaesthetics that these features rather distinguish somaesthetic enterprises from everyday aesthetic practices, whose path to well-being alternatively traverses insouciance, flexibility, economy of effort, and minimal planning. As already mentioned, neither somaesthetic enterprises nor everyday aesthetic practices necessarily requires consumers. In the absence of appreciative audiences, practitioners over-achieve (break records) or under-achieve (go unnoticed) all by their lonesome, yet they still come out on top (they're sufficiently satisfied to enhance well-being). Our introducing urban-farming as potentially exemplary of both approaches forces two otherwise distinctive approaches to overlap, requiring everyday aesthetic practices to be more *group-oriented* (rather than individualistic), while inviting somaesthetic practitioners to reward themselves with a rather *capricious bar*, in lieu of belts, certificates, and plaques that ordinarily compel progress. Even though urban farming actively challenges participants' skills, no one receives special credit for particular outcomes. Urban farmers rather regard any success, whether improved yields, beneficial solutions, or production efficiencies, as gifts from the sky.

As already discussed, the somaesthetic pursuit of hedonic highs unwittingly enhances well-being. Early on, Shusterman defined somaesthetics as the "critical, meliorative study of one's experience and use of one's body as the locus of sensory-aesthetic appreciations (*aisthesis*) and self-fashioning. It is therefore devoted to the knowledge, discourses, practices, and bodily disciplines that structure such somatic care or can improve it."²⁵ Unlikely Melchionne, Shusterman seems untroubled by those who consider somaesthetics a form of therapy. In fact, he remarks that ameliorative therapies "improve acuity, health and control of our mind and sense by cultivating heightened attention and mastery of their somatic functioning, while also freeing us from bodily habits and defects that tend to impair cognitive performance."²⁶ For those who consider the urban farmer's body's primary function to be labor in the service of routine tasks, it is little wonder that somaesthetics skips food production and climbs the hedonic ladder to greet esthetes eating tasty bites. But of course, the urban farmer's body does more than labor, since he/she must also be methodically attuned to his/her edible environment, recording every nuanced change (dryness, over-watering, wilting, predators, color changes, too much sunlight, not enough shade, etc). Moreover, urban farms offer both farmers and non-farmers myriad

²⁵ Shusterman (2000b), p. 138.

²⁶ Shusterman (2000b), p. 139.

opportunities for enhanced felt experiences.

In *Thinking Through the Body* (2012), Shusterman expresses his worry that those whose experiences go unsavored must eat or drink more in order to achieve satisfaction. He blames a lack of satisfaction, unfulfilled hope, and inattentive eating habits on our fast-food and rapid-consumption societies. We rather blame eaters' dissatisfactions on their total disconnect from food production. Those engaged in food production most likely experience more during food consumption. For Shusterman, the "failure of gustatory and hedonic appreciation constitutes in itself a regrettable somaesthetic pathology of everyday life."²⁷ We worry that any obsession with gustatory and hedonic appreciation that is disconnected from food's production remains a somaesthetic pathology of everyday life!

In addition to lived experiences offering: self-knowledge, an improved awareness of our feelings, and insight into moods and attitudes, Shusterman claims that somaesthetics fosters discipline. He thus recommends that we explore and refine our bodily experience, in order to gain a practical grasp of the actual workings of effective volition, a better mastery of the will's concrete application in behavior. He adds, "Knowing and desiring the right action will not avail if we cannot *will our bodies* [emphasis ours] to perform it; and our surprising inability to perform the most simple bodily tasks is matched only by our astounding blindness to this ability, these failures arising from inadequate somaesthetic awareness."²⁸ Despite their not being the outcomes of effective volition, both urban farming and eating in edible environments enhance somaesthetic awareness. Shusterman, who describes "everyday dining [as a] challenging dramatic performance of mindful grace in movement of aesthetics," seems to agree here.²⁹

Somaesthetic practitioners, especially foodies searching for ever new bars to mount, so as to reach new hedonic highs, might be persuaded to engage activities that improve skills and foster refinement, even though their outcomes are indeterminate. In contrast to most somaesthetic enterprises, urban farming affords everyone, even those lacking in willpower, an opportunity to achieve intensified awareness within the first twenty minutes of their arrival.³⁰ Urban farming's possibilities reflect food producer's inquisitive passions, which is why foodies seeking hedonic highs might especially appreciate an opportunity to grow otherwise unavailable, antique varieties. Somaesthetics may claim to cultivate the "proper attitude of mindfulness (rather than blind desire), allow[ing] us to sustain our purity while nourishing the body and inspiring the soul," but proper attitude, sustained purity and nourished bodies begin with locally-sourced produce.

VII. Conclusion

Everyday dining, especially as performed by urban farmers planting and harvesting food for their community's enjoyment is nothing but mindful. What urban farmers experience, let alone achieve, is likely beyond their control and gains nothing from sheer discipline, let alone pursuing hedonic highs. Still, no one is more aware than urban farmers of the efforts that have been expended to ensure that dining experiences can be savored as mindfully as possible. Moreover, everyday eating amidst edible environments reminds everyone of what is available to be eaten at that particular moment in time. Urban farmers have the additional benefit of knowing that their efforts save: energy, packaging materials, import duties and transportation costs; create jobs;

²⁷ Shusterman (2012), p. 110.

²⁸ Shusterman (2000a), p. 269.

²⁹ Shusterman (2012), p. 311.

³⁰ Shusterman (2012), p. 301.

and maximize eaters' nutritional intake since food is most nutritious when served soon after it's been harvested. Urban farmers thus experience additional pleasures as a result of their doing the right thing, a pleasure that typically exceeds the pleasures of homegrown tastes. Most important, urban farmers revitalize lost agricultural land, which completely fed city dwellers until rural farming took over. As recently as the 19th Century, Parisian farmers were so good at intensive farming that they managed to fill the local markets and export excess crops to England. Imagine how convenient it once was to transform transportation waste into vital fertilizer. The arrival of the car, which reduced the manure supply, and the post WWI chemical industry, which availed chemical fertilizers, conspired to purge cities of their urban farms.³¹

Inexplicably, urban farming has escaped Environmental Aesthetics, whose biggest philosophical problem concerns how to get people to respect, cherish, and care for natural environments as they do man-made treasures. The primary strategy thus far has been to persuade people to recognize the value of natural environments from which they have become so disconnected, due partly to modern technology's capacity to displace nature from our daily lives. Environmental aestheticians have thus attempted various tacks, including arguing for: the beauty of nature, human beings' connection to place, a duty to protect nature, as well as the link between nature's conservation and the survival of our own species. In spite of philosophers' herculean efforts, none has focused on urban farming.

It thus seems that urban farming is the elephant in the room. This is not to say that cities are full of abandoned lots that could easily be converted into community farms. In fact, most cities are over-crowded and lack sufficient resources to run schools, let alone feed people. Still, inserting cities with urban farming projects, however small, would go miles to connect city dwellers with nature, forging vital links that were severed more than a century ago. Moreover, society already recognizes the capacity for urban farms to connect citizens to nature, otherwise elementary schools would not be such likely urban farm hosts. In the absence of philosophical defenses of urban farming, which stand to reduce food imports, air pollution, roof runoff, and food waste that produce methane in landfills; discussions by food ethicists who are particularly concerned by food security seem particularly disingenuous. As we've tried to stress, urban farming offers a practical way to engage people in nature. Not only do edible environments invite participants to respect nature (even if a rainstorm carries off their crops), but they also encourage people to develop observational skills that foster greater appreciation. To make a distinctive contribution to eating, somaesthetics must remain on the producer's side, where it has always flourished. We thus recommend raising the foodies' bar higher, to join the "0 km" movement as food producers, otherwise it will fail to inspire truly mindful eaters.

31 <http://grist.org/article/food-the-history-of-urban-agriculture-should-inspire-its-future/full/>

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Overeating, Edible Commodities and the Global Industrial Diet: How Somaesthetics Can Help Psychology and Nutrition

Kima Cargill

Abstract: *The clinical disciplines of psychology and nutrition have both arguably failed to prevent or curtail widespread obesity and overeating. One reason for that may be that the bifurcation of the two disciplines as part of a broader Cartesian tradition, discouraging body consciousness and ultimately undermining personal well-being and public health. Somaesthetics has much to offer in reconciling the two disciplines into a unified philosophy and practice of body-mind awareness, in that it speaks to the biological, cognitive, and health sciences as fluently as it does to the humanities. Somaesthetics as a translational bridge between these two applied disciplines promises an approach in which body, mind, and culture are thoroughly integrated.*

Keywords: *psychology, nutrition, overeating, public health*

Psychology and nutrition have both arguably failed to prevent or curtail widespread obesity and overeating. How can this be when both disciplines have devoted vast resources and intellect to the understanding and promotion of well-being? I argue here that it is the bifurcation of the two disciplines as part of a broader Cartesian tradition that has discouraged body consciousness and ultimately undermined personal well-being and public health. Somaesthetics has much to offer in reconciling the two disciplines into a unified philosophy and practice of body-mind awareness.

From its beginnings, psychology has danced and twirled around mind-body dualism, culminating in a contemporary discipline and applied practice which elevates both brain and mind above body. Applied clinical psychology in particular has followed the Platonic tradition of devaluing the body as a negative presence and has effectively relegated somatic experience to the trash heap of psychopathology. This configuration of the self comes at a heavy price. It is both an agent and beneficiary of consumer culture, leading to a fraught and disconnected experience of the body which has ultimately invited in the Trojan horse of industrial foods or “edible commodities” (Winson, 2013), leading to widespread overeating and a vast and troubling public health crisis.

Consumption of such industrial foods creates a cycle of consumerism that reinforces mind-body dualism because the ills of overeating and overweight are then “treated” through other consumer products such as pills and diets, serving to even further distance us from an integrated mind-body experience. Big Food, Big Pharma, and the so-called “fitness industrial complex” (New Body Ethic, 2014) are all bedfellows with psychology in the disavowal of meaningful somatic experience, perpetuating both mindless consumption and the desire to control the body as an object to be viewed and tamed. Much as somaesthetics has offered philosophy an integrated model of self in which the body is a locus of sensory-aesthetic appreciation and creative self-

fashioning, it stands to offer the disciplines of psychology and nutrition a means to bridge the phenomenological disconnect between subjective mental life and the lived body.

Richard Schusterman has argued that the term body-mind ought not to speak to two different entities, but should more aptly express “their essential union, which still leaves room for pragmatically distinguishing between mental and physical aspects of behavior and also for the project of increasing their experiential unity” (2006, p. 2). Yet the fragmenting of psychology and nutrition into separate disciplines has arguably prevented such an essential union, particularly because of the widespread practice of talk therapy we see today, in which the central focus is on cultivating the introspective, highly verbalized cognitive self. Not only does somaesthetics offer a compelling paradigm in which to unify psychology and nutrition, but it is also in the spirit of the somaesthetics movement to advance an interdisciplinary, integrative research and practice which recognizes that mind, body and culture are deeply codependent.

Of course the challenge in advancing such a unified model of psychology and nutrition is that the dominant paradigms which have split mind and body are now deeply entrenched into the collective unconscious and reinforced culturally and commercially. I shall argue that psychology’s complicated relationship with somatic experience has ultimately conspired with consumer culture to detach us from the body by elevating mind and brain, pathologizing somatic experience, promoting consumerism, and creating a terrain in which Big Food and edible commodities have become ubiquitous. Allow me to illustrate with a clinical case study:

For the past several years I’ve worked with a patient whom I’ll call Sarah. Formerly a competitive athlete, Sarah slowly put on about fifty pounds after getting married, then suffered a serious bout of clinical depression, and finally discovered a treacherous infidelity that resulted in her husband leaving her for one of her friends. When Sarah first came to me she described herself as someone suffering from a serotonin imbalance. She perceives this imbalance as the cause for her depression and views her weight gain as a symptom or secondary effect of depression. In addition to meeting with me for psychotherapy, she meets with a dietitian and personal trainer weekly and she sees a psychiatrist monthly for prescription anti-depressants. Although I have made her aware that I specialize in nutrition and overeating, Sarah consistently rejects any help I offer in the domain of diet. In these rejections she usually states that it is the dietitian’s role to help her with food and that she wants to allocate our time toward “understanding herself.” This notion that a psychologist ought not to meddle in the domain of the body is a belief I’ve repeatedly encountered among my clinical patients.

A second, but related challenge is that many of the nutritional interventions I have to offer Sarah are nothing more than old-fashioned wisdoms like “eat less food”, which fall flat in the consumer marketplace of flashy diets with prices and packaging that promise magic to those seeking consumer seduction. Sarah purchases countless nutritional supplements in the form of pills, drinks, bars, gummies, powdered shakes and elixirs. When she talks about these products she describes them as able to speed up her metabolism, burn fat, increase muscle mass, suppress appetite, increase energy, improve skin and even increase pheromone production (in spite of the fact that scientists have never proven that humans even have pheromones (Wysocki & Preti, 2004)). It seems that the more expensive these products are, the more likely Sarah is to buy them — likely because the price tag enhances the fantasy of change through magic. These products tell beautiful lies, but lies they are. Unsurprisingly, Sarah has not lost weight, nor has she become less depressed, nor improved her well-being. To the contrary, she is more miserable than ever. Looking at this clinical picture, we can see the problematic way in which she has assigned the body to the domain of dietitian and personal trainer and assigned mind to the domain of psychiatry and psychology, further bifurcating lived experience and neurochemistry

into mind and brain. These multiple bifurcations not only prevent her from improving, but I believe that it is this very fragmentation of her corporeal and conscious selves that has been a cause for her depression and overeating. Further reinforcing her thinking is the surrounding economic and cultural framework that has turned the practices of nutrition and psychotherapy into marketplace enterprises with regulation favoring consumerism over well-being.

I. Psychology and the Body

While a history of psychology's relationship to the body is outside the scope of this article, it is safe to say that it has been a fraught one. With the exception of the existential-phenomenological tradition influenced by Husserl, American psychology has largely promoted a highly cognitive form of introspection and treatment. This originated in Freud's model of the self characterized by unconscious pre-verbal instinctual drives in conflict with the conscious control and adaptations of the verbal ego. Freud's model was also likely influenced by what Shusterman refers to as the hypochondriacal Kantian-Jamesian rejection of somatic introspection in which somatic reflection was thought to harm both mind and body with the conclusion that it was better to ignore the physical sensations of the body (2008).

Taken together, these forces have shaped the research and practice of clinical psychology and in particular the historic relegation of hysteria and neurasthenia into lower-order "primitive" disorders, compared to the higher order ruminative disorders of the educated worried well. This split persists today in the current psychiatric diagnostic manual in which conditions like depression are defined principally as cognitive and affective experiences characterized by subjective feelings of sadness and thoughts of worthlessness and guilt; whereas accompanying somatic experiences such as sleeplessness and lack of appetite are viewed as secondary symptoms (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). In contrast to Westerners; however, many cultures in the world experience depression more saliently through the body rather than through the verbalized subjectivities of the mind (Tseng & Streltzer, 1997; Watters, 2010).

It was during the rise of American psychology in the post-WWII period that the highly individualized, bounded masterful self became the focus of attention and treatment. In his article *Why the Self is Empty* (1990), Phillip Cushman argued that Westerners have what is a historically unprecedented notion of ourselves as individuals. It was "during the beginnings of the modern era in the 16th Century, the Western world began to shift from a religious to a scientific frame of production, from a rural to an urban setting, and from a communal to an individual subject" (p. 600). He noted that we have come to view ourselves as self-contained and highly individualized beings, characterized by free will and mastery over the environment, rather than as a small part of a collective entity with perhaps a predetermined destiny. It is quite difficult for us to see that our notion of ourselves – of what it means to be human – is so culturally and historically specific.

Our very proximity to ourselves creates a blind spot. It *feels* as though people might have always thought of themselves as having free will, as being highly individualized and unique, but this is a relatively new development in the course of human history. In just the past century or less, "...Americans have slowly changed from a Victorian people who had a deeply felt need to save money and restrict their sexual and aggressive impulses...to a people who have a deeply felt need to spend money and indulge their impulses" (p. 600). Social theorist Zygmunt Bauman further argues that the protestant work ethic which gave rise to industrialism has now been displaced by a 'consumer ethic' in which "consumption, not only expands to fill the identity vacuum left by the decline of the work ethic, but it assumes the same structural significance that

work enjoyed at the high noon of modernity” (Gabriel & Lang, 2006, p.84). We can think of the empty self then as embedded in and caused by a capitalist, consumer-driven society which encourages impulsivity and indulgence, while at the same time discouraging self-regulation, discipline, and thrift.

The emergence of the empty self coincided with two other phenomena: the rise of cognitive psychology and the emergence of the culture of narcissism (Lasch, 1980), both further elevating a highly verbalized, cognitive self characterized by consumerism, self-interest, and detachment from somatic experience. Contrary to the reigning biological explanations for overeating and obesity, if we begin with this philosophical approach in understanding the configuration of selves and how we imagine our own selves in this specific place and time, we then have a more nuanced tableau to understand our relationship with food, material culture, nature, technology, and other living beings. In other words, this historic shift in the Western self-concept to that of maximizing one’s individual needs and desires was a key element in paving the way for the heightened consumption of food and material goods that typifies the age of affluence. “The post-World War II self thus yearns to acquire and consume as an unconscious way of compensating for what has been lost: It is empty” (p. 600). That we can experience these cultural ills, such as loss of community or shared meaning, as individual deficiencies, such as anxiety or depression, is one of the prerequisites for widespread overconsumption. As we increasingly have come to believe that our problems, ranging from clinical disorders to more diffuse feelings of emptiness, are housed within our bounded selves, we have turned toward the individual consumption of pills, consumer goods, and food to “treat” those ills.

This is in essence the Western, industrialized, urbanized self which is held up today as an ideal by American psychology and is increasingly becoming a globalized self exported far and wide. On the one hand, the practice of psychotherapy emerged to treat this empty self, but we could also argue that it had just as much a hand in creating it. As the empty self became the culturally codified self of the American consumer middle class, it was inevitable that several industries would emerge in response (Cushman, 1990), including the diet business, cosmetic industry, self-help gurus, and the enterprises of psychology and nutrition. In particular, it is the widespread practice and sale of psychotherapy that has further constructed a highly verbalized, disembodied self in which mental preoccupation and introspection is exalted as cathartic, therapeutic, and self-actualized.

As various forms of cognitive and cognitive-behavioral psychotherapies have elevated the verbalized self, they have meanwhile relegated so called “mind-body treatments” to the fringe, largely because they do not have a large body of supporting empirical validation and are therefore not “evidence-based” treatments reimbursable by insurance companies. While there are many good reasons to advance (and reimburse) empirically validated treatments, validation itself begets its own momentum through the system of research funding and academic tenure and promotion, such that cognitive talk therapy is now nearly the only game in town. The danger; however, in allowing cognitive psychology to prevail unchallenged as the dominant therapeutic model is that the logical corollary is that the true self must be the mind alone. As Shusterman argues, “once we accept that the true self must be the mind or soul alone, consequently that self-knowledge and self-cultivation have nothing to do with cultivating bodily knowledge and consciousness” (Shusterman, 2008). Anecdotally I can say that the vast majority of my psychotherapy patients over the years possess limited body consciousness. Most attention to the body is often organized through commercial and cosmetic messages focused on slenderness and muscularity as performative outcomes.

More recently, neuropsychology, the other reigning dogma of the discipline has further elevated

brain above mind. Disavowing its humanistic roots, the American Psychological Association for example, launched a campaign promoting psychology as a science and declaring the 2000's as the decade of the brain (Fowler, 2000). Psychiatry too has jumped on this bandwagon and sought to neurologize all human suffering in its diagnostic manual. This has served to not only further disembodify brain and mind, but has created the terrain for the pharmaceutical industry to promote the myth of the chemical imbalance — an explanatory model for psychopathology which places the locus of emotional regulation in neurotransmitters, leading the general public to believe that pills are the only mechanism for neurochemical alteration. Allowing Big Pharma an intellectual monopoly over neurotransmitter regulation has obscured the fact that we ourselves are incredible agents of control over our own neurotransmitter activity, through exercise, sunlight, sex, and aesthetic experience.

When Cushman first hypothesized the empty self in 1990 he surely could not have imagined the boundless emptiness awaiting us in the form of social media and technology. I might describe this “new empty self” model as one characterized by the ruminative, discursive mind engaged in speculative self-consciousness mediated by technology and digital interactions. What I mean by this is that as people increasingly define and experience themselves online and through social media, this two-dimensionalized digital self serves as a further means to disembodify lived experience and create a highly ruminative inner world. In fact, over the past fifteen plus years of practicing clinical psychotherapy with a wide variety of folks presenting an equally wide variety of complaints, a single word emerges with striking frequency: rumination.

I've come to think of rumination as the ultimate prison of the mind. It is an experience that most people describe as a low grade, inescapable torment and I believe that it is the inevitable consequence of mind-body dualism and the disavowal of the body. While a tendency toward rumination is probably part of the human condition, I have a hunch that that the forces of our culture and the configuration of the self I have described have together exacerbated our tendency toward rumination. Of course the irony here is that philosophy's disavowal of the body was largely rooted in the belief that corporeality was a prison or distraction, or at the very least an unpleasant reminder of one's finitude. Yet in its disavowal of corporeality, philosophy was complicit in creating this prison of mind we now know as rumination. The ruminative mind as we currently know it is then an inevitable consequence of the self created by Western philosophy, further sustained by American psychology, and compounded by media and technology. In clinical parlance, it is rumination that fuels the highly verbalized pathologies of the DSM, namely the widely diagnosed Mood and Anxiety Disorders. Contrary to the Jamesian belief that somatic self-consciousness causes depression; however, contemporary research has shown the opposite: that cognitive rumination is a cause of anxiety and depression (Nolen-Hoeksema, 2000).

It is this configuration of the ruminative empty self residing in the culture of consumerism, knowledge work, technology, and urbanization which taken together, disconnect us from food sources, the use of tools, nature, and the use of the body for transit, aesthetic experience, and self-awareness. With that in mind, let us now turn to food.

II. Mindless Eating as Failure of Body Consciousness

The elevation of the verbalized, cognitive self and the devaluation of the body as an object to be managed and tamed together created the perfect conditions for the Trojan horse of industrial foods or “edible commodities”. In fact, the rise of consumer culture and the emergence of the empty self were part of the same cultural forces that also resulted in developments in food science

which profoundly changed the composition of the American diet. Just as psychology began to promote an increasingly verbalized self focused on introspection, pleasure and happiness; food scientists began offering delicious convenience foods which divorced the labor of cooking from the enjoyment of eating.

Early food science and marketing began in earnest in the post-Second World War era. It was just after the war that the food industry began developing convenience foods, and in 1954 Swanson TV dinners fulfilled two post-war trends: the lure of time-saving modern appliances and the fascination with a growing innovation: the television. More than 10 million TV dinners were sold during the first year of Swanson's national distribution (Smith, 2009). Looking at TV dinners and then later at fast food, it is clear that these new food habits expressed a changing sense of self that prioritized mobility, efficiency and increased individualism. While these culinary developments reflected cultural and economic changes, they also became antecedents for decreased body consciousness, further distance from food sources, depersonalization of food preparation, and ultimately: overeating, overweight and obesity.

As the American consumer responded enthusiastically to convenience foods, the food scientists who invented them quickly realized that they were sitting on a goldmine. Initially these scientists were focused more on food preservation, food safety, and the development of time-saving options such as instant pudding and frozen dinners, but there was a later shift toward improving favor quality and palatability. This eventually evolved into a highly competitive industry chasing the newest flavor discoveries for the hungry and wealthy American public. Today many food scientists are locked in a fierce battle, referred to as The Great Flavor Rush (Khatchadourian, 2009) in which they are trying to predict and create the next big flavor. While certainly there were branded foods dating back to the better part of the 19th century, there was not the extensive library of manufactured flavors on grocery store shelves as there is today. Nowadays much of our food is created in laboratories such as Givaudan, where food scientists carefully develop and test flavors, colors, and brand names. This highly processed industrial food is such a dominant part of the food landscape that it is virtually impossible to disentangle it from the culture of consumerism.

While certainly the enjoyment of food can and should be part of healthy body consciousness, these foods of the global industrial diet arguably undermine body consciousness. In fact, it is safe to say that much of food science is devoting to disabling body consciousness. These edible commodities distance us from an authentic somatic experience of food because they are engineered to be essentially pre-digested. Not only that, but by offering cheap and rapid hedonic reward they make us want more. Consumer culture and technology then conspire against body consciousness in that these foods keep us from feeling satisfied and therefore ultimately serve to increase consumption. By design they create a disturbed overstimulation which we can see most clearly in conditions like the life-threatening metabolic dysregulation of diabetes.

Yet the food industry must constantly convince people to eat more in order to satisfy its stockholders (Nestle, 2002), but unlike other industries which enjoy the benefits of unlimited consumer desire, the food industry has always faced the problem of finite desire due to the bodily limitations of satiety. To overcome this limitation, they invest enormous resources into manufacturing irresistible foods that never fill us up. They disable body consciousness in order to sell more. Specifically, they do this by increasing palatability, undermining satiety, and providing a staggering array of variety and convenience. A thorough discussion of all of these techniques is outside the scope of this article, but a brief overview is important for providing the context and mechanisms which have lead to a culture-wide failure in body consciousness, and

consequently overweight and obesity.

Palatability. Palatability refers to the pleasure or “hedonic reward” provided by foods or fluids and it is the strongest predictor of food choice (Aikman, Min, & Graham, 2006; Drichoutis, Lazaridis, & Nayga Jr, 2006). Related to the concept of palatability is “bliss point”, a construct developed by experimental psychologist Howard Moskowitz. Moskowitz optimizes the flavors of foods through sophisticated taste tests and mathematical modeling and has discovered that desirable tastes like sugar have a threshold or tipping point for most people, after which point continuing to add more of that ingredient diminishes the food’s palatability (1981). With his market research and modeling techniques, Moskowitz is able to determine the exact point at which sugar, salt, and fat reach the ideal convergence of hedonic reward, which he has termed “bliss point”.

Using the incredibly sophisticated science of bliss point, food scientists now devote their professional lives to creating the irresistible flavors and mouthfeel of chips, ice creams, chicken nuggets, and energy drinks. This is of course why so many food commercials use slogans such as “I can’t believe I ate the whole thing!” Usually when we can’t believe we ate the whole thing it’s because we saw a portion size that looked too big, but once we started eating the bliss point was activated and we consumed more than imaginable. Eating the whole thing also usually means that we never willingly stopped eating — we stopped because the food was gone, suggesting that it never made us feel full or that it tasted so good we didn’t care that we were full.

Historically nearly all tasty foods were delivered with high fiber thereby slowing down gastric absorption of sugar. Today; however, industrial foods and beverages like cookies and fruit juice are processed by removing the fiber, making them more fattening since the body is unable to use the highly concentrated load of fructose for immediate energy needs and therefore stores the rapidly absorbed excess energy as fat. Sweets, fast food, and refined breads are rapidly digested and absorbed causing spikes in blood glucose with levels falling to below what they were before eating shortly after digestion, thereby causing increased hunger (Lennerz et al., 2013). In other words, these finely designed foods that activate bliss point are nearly always foods that lead to overeating, not only because they taste so good, but because we never feel full on them. Even after eating, we think we are still hungry so we keep eating. More recently, the newer term hyperpalatability has been used to refer to the high sugar, high fat, and often high salt foods manufactured by the food industry (Graham, 2013) which inevitably makes us eat more foods high in sugar, fat, and salt (Kessler, 2009).

Variety. Not only do these manufactured foods taste really good, but there are so many to choose from. Choice is one of the key contextual factors in overeating. People eat less when they have fewer food choices due to ‘sensory specific satiety’, that is when our senses become numbed after continuous exposure to the same stimuli (Inman, 2001). To put it in the parlance of somaesthetics, sensory specific satiety is a critical experience of body awareness that is in fact a bridge between somatic and cognitive subjectivities, i.e., the sensory perception of taste creates the thought, “I don’t want any more of that.”

Not only do we eat more when we have more choices, but we do that even when those choices differ only visually and not in actual flavor. For example, Dr. Barbara Rolls’ team at Penn State showed that if people are offered an assortment of yogurt with three different flavors, they’re likely to consume an average of 23 percent more than if offered only one flavor (Rolls et al., 1981). Similarly, Brian Wansink and his colleagues found that when people have more M&M colors to choose from they will eat more, even though all M&M’s are the same flavor (Kahn

& Wansink, 2004). Needless to say, the proliferation of packaged foods provides a staggering variety of choices, colors, and flavors, with the average grocery store now carrying over 43,000 items (Food Marketing Institute, 2012). In other words, grocers, advertisers, and food scientists increase consumption by undermining the power of sensory-specific satiety in their offering of so much variety.

Convenience. Another factor that makes us eat more is our sense of time scarcity. Along with reconfiguring our sense of selves, modernization and industrialization have resulted in powerful changes in our concept of time. Shusterman argues that “too many of our ordinary somatic pleasures are taken hurriedly, distractedly, and almost as unconsciously as the pleasures of sleep. If this dearth of somaesthetic sensitivity helps explain our culture’s growing dependence on increasing stimulation through the sensationalism of mass-media entertainments and far more radical means of thrill taking, then such a diet of artificial excitements can conversely explain how our habits of perception (and even our sensorimotor nervous system) are transformed in ways that elevate the stimulus threshold for perceptibility and satisfaction while diminishing our capacities for tranquil, steady, and sustained attention” (Shusterman, 2008). Of course buffets, fast food, and packaged convenience foods respond to and sustain the myth that there is no time.

Researchers in the recent *Life at Home in the 21st Century* project found that in spite of minimal time dining together American families’ buying habits strongly reflect an urge to save time (Arnold, 2012). Families stockpiled food, often in huge packages of drinks, soups, snacks, and ice cream from warehouse stores such as Costco and Sam’s Club, often requiring second refrigerators to store. Contrary to the families’ belief that these foods saved time, on average they reduced evening meal preparation time by only five minutes, a statistically insignificant savings. In other words, families’ anxiety that they had no time was expressed through buying more things and needing more storage (consuming), yet those behaviors did not have the intended consequence of saving time. In a self-defeating cycle, the families turned toward increased consumerism, i.e. buying convenience foods as a solution to a problem that is caused by consumerism, i.e. the sense of having no time.

In his essay on American cuisine, anthropologist Sidney Mintz argues that Americans do not, and likely will not, have a cuisine of our own in the traditional sense of the term, largely because of our notion of time (1996). He argues that Americans are repeatedly told (and strongly believe) that they are so busy that they have little or no time to spare. In turn, this serves to increase aggregate consumption with the astonishing variety of time-saving products and foods. “Most convenience food,” he writes “is successful because of prior conceptions about time. But most such food would not succeed if Americans cared more about how and what they ate” (p. 121). Today the average American spends only 27 minutes a day on food preparation (Pollan, 2009, p. 3) and Harvard economist and Obama Health Adviser David Cutler found that we eat more when we don’t cook the food ourselves. “As the amount of time Americans spend cooking has dropped by about half, the number of meals Americans eat in a day has climbed; since 1977, we’ve added approximately half a meal to our daily intake” (Pollan, 2009, p. 7). Interestingly, Cutler and his colleagues surveyed cooking patterns across several cultures and found that obesity rates are inversely correlated with the amount of time spent on food preparation (Cutler, Glaeser, & Shapiro, 2003). Although it might seem like more time in the kitchen would yield a higher caloric intake, home-cooked food seems to mediate caloric intake, probably because of the simple fact that cooking at home is unlikely to produce hyperpalatable foods or the increased variety implicated in overeating.

III. Overeating and the Culture of Consumerism

Even putting effort into good nutrition as a means of better health and body awareness provides no guarantees. While it's easy to think that shopping at natural food stores and buying organic foods are straightforward strategies toward better health, we are easily tricked by the branding, marketing, and advertising that goes into these products as well. One such area of confusion is with products labeled 'natural' — a term that is largely unregulated such that food manufacturers can use it freely to mean whatever they want (Food and Drug Law Institute, 2014). Consumer research has found that consumers mistakenly believe that products labeled as natural have no artificial ingredients, pesticides, or genetically modified ingredients and are willing to pay more for such foods (Batte, Hooker, Haab, & Beaverson, 2007; Silverglade & Heller, 2010; Thompson, 1998). In fact, there has paradoxically been a tremendous increase in the number of claims made on food labels as rates of obesity have increased in the United States, likely because consumers who want to lose weight are seeking healthier foods (Urala & Lähteenmäki, 2007). It is this desire to simultaneously consume more and consume less that makes such nutrition claims highly profitable.

The health philosophy on the website for Whole Foods Market states that they “provide food and nutritional products that support health and well-being”, that they are “committed to foods that are fresh, wholesome and safe to eat”, and that they “define quality by evaluating the ingredients, freshness, safety, taste, nutritive value and appearance” of all of the products they carry. However, a visit to any Whole Foods Market reveals extraordinary amounts of luxury junk food such as candy coated nuts, kettle chips, and chocolate covered pretzels. In fact, I would argue that the very name Whole Foods has become a misnomer, given the large quantities of processed and refined foods they now sell. The sales of many of the foods at places like Whole Foods Market often invoke an explicit health claim on their label, or simply mention a trendy ingredient perceived to be healthy, such as acai berry, green tea, or quinoa. Yet Whole Foods Market was recently accused of falsely advertising baked goods such as banana muffins, chocolate chip cookies and apple pie as “all natural,” when the products actually contained synthetic chemical ingredients such as sodium acid pyrophosphate and maltodextrin (Garrison v. Whole Foods Market Inc., 2013).

While certainly Whole Foods does sell many healthy items, and very importantly they screen their products for unsafe ingredients, they are just as guilty as any other grocer of promoting the hyperpalatable foods that make us fat. By contrast, encouraging people to eat actual whole foods would serve to decrease overall consumption, something no store wants, simply because by eating whole foods we feel full sooner and have fewer cravings. In fact, stores that only sold fresh fish, meats, produce, dairy, and few packaged foods would have trouble competing with these luxury “natural food” stores. That is essentially what farmers' markets are and they certainly come nowhere near the level of profitability that the luxury supermarkets do. Instead, Whole Foods Market along with most of the food industry, uses sophisticated and clever packaging, marketing, language, and advertising to manipulate people into consuming more discouraging body awareness.

Any food in a package is the product of consumer culture and with the exception of few foods such as legumes, nuts, and canned or frozen fruits and vegetables, most packaged foods will never be as healthy as the whole foods that do not require packages. In other words, they operate within the paradigm of consumer culture, perpetuating the “eat more” and “consume more” message, just through a different type of marketing message. Pro-health marketing is marketing nonetheless, and it reinforces our trust and reliance on labels, slogans, and advertising.

A label describing a food as “healthy” is inherently misleading because the food is only healthy relative to other packaged foods, if at all.

The ills of overeating and overweight are usually “treated” through other consumer products, such as pills and diets, serving to further distance us from an integrated mind-body experience. In many cases, the pills of Western medicine are incredibly similar to the packaged, branded foods of the global industrial diet. Consumption of these chimeras always involves fantasy, longing and distortion in which we feel like we are doing something healthy, but the science points otherwise. Not only do the food and pharmaceutical industries use many of the same techniques to market their products and generate demand, but they also enjoy a symbiotic relationship in which they supply each other with demand. For example, many medications are used to treat the effects of overeating, overweight and obesity, but such use may actually perpetuate overeating in the promise to undo or counteract overconsumption.

Ultimately, nearly everyone struggling with overeating becomes a potential consumer for diets, diet foods, personal trainers, dietitians, commercial weight loss products, books, exercise videos, and gym memberships. The food industry itself is one of the biggest beneficiaries of overweight and obesity because of the enormous market for new foods which promise weight loss and better health. Brands such as Skinny Cow, FiberOne, WhoKnew, Glutino, PopChips, and Skinny Girl Cocktails are all highly profitable brands responding to consumers’ desperate attempts to avoid the ill-effects of overeating. Many food companies are now also in the weight loss business through their subsidiaries. Nestlé for example, reaps huge profits in its sales of the Jenny Craig weight-loss program. The simplest diet of eating less food is lost in the fray; however, perhaps because it is obvious and free, and therefore an unsatisfying “product” in the culture of consumerism in which high-dollar promises have more psychological currency than low-cost common sense.

Consuming pills and food represents complex wish fulfillment, desire and identity, mediating both who we are and who we want to become. If we think about increased consumption as a defense mechanism used to respond to the loss of body consciousness, feelings of alienation, malaise, and loss of community; then it follows that both pills and food would serve as a means of self-medication. Yet addressing these existential ills with products of consumer culture amounts to treating the disease with the same pathogen that infected us in the first place. The current configuration of the self as empty; however, points us toward these pseudo-solutions because we experience distress of the body and mind as separate. This experience is then reinforced by the prevailing biological and neurochemical models promoted by psychiatry and the pharmaceutical industry, which locate disorder and distress inside the brain.

IV. Somaesthetics, Nutrition and Psychology

Like our entire culture, Sarah is at a crossroads. She overeats and is at war with herself. Her separation of mind, brain, and body fuel this conflict and lead to the empty pursuit of consumer products and services to treat her distress. Over time these foods, drinks, pills, and consumer products have come to populate her internal world, yet they fail to deliver purpose or meaning. Because the failure is experienced as a failure of the self, she turns to other forms of consumption to solve the ensuing hopelessness and dysphoria. This is the modern hedonism of desire which ultimately creates a self bloated by sugar, fat, salt and toxins; in which the body is seen as a mysterious machine which must be decoded in order to effectively tame and control it. Shusterman posed the question: “If philosophy is likewise committed to the goal of self-improvement and self-care, could enhanced skills of somatic awareness enable better ways of

monitoring and directing our behavior, managing or diminishing our pain, and more fruitfully multiplying our pleasures?” (2008). This is the question we must pose of psychology and nutrition too. Certainly many individual researchers have been successful in their understanding and treatment of overeating, but have arguably been lost in the inchoate mass of disconnected empiricism that is contemporary psychological science, or what Lowe characterized as the bourgeois perception of objectifying and quantifying everything (1982). There is no doubt that psychological and nutritional sciences have made enormous strides in understanding the mechanisms and desires of hunger, consumption, and satiety. The failure; however, is in meaningfully unifying these results into a cohesive philosophy and practice. Here is where somaesthetics stands to advance a meaningful answer to the question: How shall we care for ourselves and experience our bodies in this hailstorm of edible poison?

If too many of our ordinary somatic pleasures are taken hurriedly and distractedly through a diet of artificial excitements then how do we create and encourage a “refined, intelligent habit” (Shusterman, 2008) of nutritional well-being? The mindful eating movement for example, has produced a modest literature on just such a tranquil and reflective practice of eating whole foods (Albers, 2009; Bays, 2009; Loring, 2010; Somov, 2010; Thich Nhat Hanh & Cheung, 2011). Yet I have recommended many books from this literature to patients and friends and can anecdotally say that this approach does not resonate for those who are not familiar with the Buddhist or meditative tradition from which it emerges. Somaesthetics by contrast, offers a more secular and theoretically-rooted approach to developing increased somatic and nutritional awareness.

More importantly, it is not just mindfulness or awareness that is the aim of somaesthetics, but aesthetic self-stylization too. Rejecting these industrial foods and edible commodities as a means of cultivation stands to offer us a different standard of ethical and aesthetic beauty. That is, the sensual and virtuous body is one that is liberated from engineered foods and is instead plentiful by foods that are pure or real, insofar as they are experienced as such by the eater/inhabitant. We should expect that this feeling of authenticity - however that is defined or experienced phenomenologically - would lead to more experiential unity between mind and body, “greater perceptual sensitivity and powers of action” (Shusterman, 2006), or in more psychological terms: improved subjective well-being.

In addition to such practical somaesthetics as a meliorative individual practice of nutrition, I should like to see somaesthetics advance further into psychology and nutrition, unifying them at the disciplinary level. This in my view is the great promise of the somaesthetics movement -- that it speaks to the biological, cognitive, and health sciences as fluently as it does to the humanities. Just as Schusterman has plead for the body to be recognized as a crucial topic of humanistic study and experiential learning (2006), perhaps we should now plea for the biological, social, and health sciences to embrace a similar approach in which body, mind, and culture are thoroughly integrated.

Notes

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Art, Food, and the Social and Meliorist Goals of Somaesthetics

Else Marie Bukdahl

Abstract: *In his somaesthetics, Richard Shusterman emphasizes, to a much greater degree than other contemporary pragmatists, the importance of corporality for all aspects of human existence. He focuses particularly on “the critical study and cultivation of how the living body (or soma) is used as the site of sensory appreciation (aesthesis) and creative self-stylization.”*¹

*Somaesthetics is grounded as an interdisciplinary project of theory and practice. Many in the academic field have asked Richard Shusterman why he has not included “the art of eating” in his somaesthetics. He recently decided to do this and he has held lectures on this subject in Italy with the title *The Art of Eating. L’Art di mangiare* at the conference *Food, Philosophy and Art - CIBO, Filosofia e Arte, Convergence Pollenzo*, April 4-5, 2013 in collaboration with students from the University of Gastronomic Sciences. He has opened a new field, which is discussed in this article.*

The main subject of this article on visual art and eating will be a presentation of the internationally renowned Thai artist Rirkrit Tiravanija, who has created many surprising installations in Thailand, other countries in the east, Europe and particularly the US, where he resides and is professor at Columbia University. His installations often take the form of stages or rooms for sharing meals, cooking, reading and playing music. The architecture or other structures he uses always form the framework for different social events. His work is fundamentally about bringing people together. Also a project Rirkrit Tiravanija created with his Danish friends in the group SUPERFLEX will be described.

I will also analyse the projects of other artists who have worked with the relationship between art and the art of eating or food, such as the Korean artist Yeonju Sung, the Chinese artist Song Dongand, the English artist Prudence Emma Staite and the Swiss-German artist Dieter Roth.

Keywords: *somaesthetics, interdisciplinary, corporality, the art of eating, meliorist goal, performing art, relational orientation, community, Fluxus*

In his somaesthetics, Richard Shusterman highlights - far more than other contemporary pragmatists - the importance of corporality for all aspects of human existence. In both philosophy and art, he aims for the realization of “the aesthetic experience of collaborative creation, and even the cognitive gains from exploring new practices that provoke new sensations, spur new energies and attitudes, and thus probe one’s current limits and perhaps transcend them to transform the self.”²

The notion of holism is central to his aesthetics. It is “an orientation toward seeing things in terms of continuities rather than dualisms. We have already noted continuities between body

1 Richard Shusterman, *Performing Live: Aesthetic Alternatives for the Ends of Art*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2000, p. 144.

2 See the catalogue for the exhibition *Aesthetic Transactions. Pragmatist Philosophy through Art and Life*, curated by Richard Shusterman, Galerie Michel Journiac. Paris, May 24 to June 6, 2012, p. 29.

and mind, nature and culture, theory and practice. But the continuities of common sense and scientific inquiry, science and art, thought and feeling, ethics and aesthetics are also salient in pragmatism.”³

Shusterman has always focused on social practice and political experimentation, emphasizing that truth must be relative to specific social contexts and practices. He is also convinced that philosophy can and must solve practical and social problems. Realizing this goal has always been a leitmotif in the development of his pragmatist aesthetics.⁴

Somaesthetics is not just a particular field of study, it is also a methodical physical exercise grounded in an ever-expanding interdisciplinary project of theory and praxis. Shusterman never neglects to work with new challenges and engage with trans-disciplinary projects.

The notion of transactional experience is particularly central for him, because “it connotes the idea of experiments in transcending disciplinary boundaries, transgressing entrenched dichotomies and transforming established concepts or topics, together with the idea that these transactions can succeed in advancing both theory and practice through the experiences and lessons that experiments induce.”⁵

In recent years, the visual arts have achieved increasing importance in his somaesthetic optic and this has been one of the new challenges he has accepted. Growing numbers of our most prominent artists have been inspired by aspects of his aesthetics and incorporated them into their artistic practices. They have been stimulated to immerse themselves further in his theoretical and practical practice in the art world by reading his works. This has resulted in an increase in requests from artists to contribute to their exhibition catalogues or to them contacting him in other contexts.

Richard Shusterman has also encountered new challenges. Many in the academic field have asked him why he has not included “the art of eating” in his somaesthetics. He recently decided to do this and held a lecture on the subject in Italy with the title, *The Art of Eating. L'Arte di mangiare* at the Food, Philosophy and Art conference - CIBO, Filosofia e Arte, Convergence Pollenzo, April 4-5, 2013 in collaboration with students from the University of Gastronomic Sciences. The conference leader described the general aims of the conference as follows:

“The complex relationship between food and art is a topic that has been explored by philosophers since the time of Plato. This discussion is more relevant than ever with the rising interest in gastronomy and cuisine, as well as new perspectives on the artistic capacity of chefs, the significance of art in the context of rapid technological advancement, and the strong influence of imagery and aesthetics on our daily lives. (..) How do ethics and aesthetics interact in gastronomy? What is the relationship between image, sound, and taste? Is a somaesthetics of food possible? For the first time, such questions will be explored in depth at an international convergence of chefs, philosophers, semiologists, students, artists, researchers, and passionate individuals from all walks of life.”

3 Richard Shusterman, “What Pragmatism Means to Me: Ten Principles”, *Revue française d'études américaines*, no 124, 2e trimestre 2010, p. 64.

4 Richard Shusterman, “Pragmatist Aesthetics: Living Beauty”, *Rethinking Art*, 2. Ed., New York 2000, p. 45.

5 See Richard Shusterman's catalogue essay to the exhibition, *Aesthetic Transactions. Pragmatist Philosophy through Art and Life*, Galleries Michel Journal, May 24 through June 6, 2012, pp. 10-11.



1. Rirkrit Tiravanija. *Untitled (Free/Still)*. Shown in 1992, 1995, 2007/2011. Part of the MoMA collection, New York.

Fluxus, with roots in experimental music, emerged in the United States and Europe in the early 1960s. Fluxus artists, with their emphasis on performance and play, wanted to bring art and life together. They severed the traditional divisions between the different art forms and placed collaboration and audience participation at the center of the art world. They used food in a variety of imaginative ways in their performances and creative activities. In the years that followed, this development continued, but it has only really found a prominent niche in the art of this century.

The prominent Thai artist Rirkrit Tiravanija has created meals as exhibitions for over 20 years and presented wonderful Thai food in surprising installations in Thailand, Europe and in the USA, his country of residence. He has subsequently repeated his cooking- as-art sculpture all over the world. For him, “art is what you eat.” He is particularly known for creating projects that are to be used, are socially grounded and in which the viewer is always a very active participant. The participatory and performance aspects of Tiravanija’s art echo elements seen in work by Joseph Beuys in the 1970s, which defined ‘social sculpture’ as an art form in which dialogue and ideas are an artist’s primary tools.

Tiravanija’s installations often take the form of stages or rooms for sharing meals, cooking, reading and playing music. The architecture or other structures he uses always form the framework for a variety of social events, such as in the installation *Untitled (Free)* (1992) (fig. 1), which was also shown in 1995, 2007 and 2011. Tiravanija originally created this at 303 Gallery in New York and it now belongs to MoMA. Glenn Lowry, the director of MoMA points out that Tiravanija was “interested in exploring the possibility of creating congenial social spaces in places usually reserved for the quiet contemplation of art.” He “transferred everything from the gallery’s back office - even the dealer and her staff - to the exhibition space. He then converted

the empty office space into a kind of restaurant, where he cooked curry and rice, serving it to visitors free of charge.”⁶

Tiravanija’s artistic goal is also realized in a very impressive way in the project he developed for *Secession in Vienna* (2002) in which he took Rudolf Schindler’s Kings Road House in Los Angeles as his conceptual starting point. Rirkrit Tiravanija’s project is based on Rudolf Schindler’s House and the visions behind it, which are significant not only for architecture, but also for art and the destruction of the false barrier between art and action, that often – as Richard Shusterman remarks – “trivializes art and robs its power of positive praxis. For art’s highest aim is not to make a few admirable objects in a world filled with misery, but to create a better world through the work such objects can generate.”⁷

Rirkrit Tiravanija created a reconstruction of the studio tract of the so-called Schindler House in the main room of the *Secession* and used this as a stage for a variety of activities that provided visitors to the exhibition with new inspiration and revealed new layers of meaning in our daily lives. Thus: “Tiravanija’s interest focuses less on a faithful architectural facsimile than on ‘animating’ Rudolf Schindler’s world of ideas, his concept of inside and outside in relation to the conditions of private and public spaces. To this Tiravanija adds his own ideas on relationships and communities, his characteristic conception of art as an investigation and implementation of “living well” where the art of eating has a central place. Throughout the duration of the exhibition, the installation was used as a venue for a multimedia program offered by Tiravanija and various guests, with features such as film screenings, concerts, presentations and lectures.”⁸ Time to eat wonderful Thai meals is also part of the activities in the rebuilt Schindler House (fig. 2).

Another example of this sort of installation, where eating is in focus, is *Fear Eats the Soul* at Gavin Brown’s Enterprise in which his assistant served bowls of soup every Thursday, Friday, and Saturday from 5 March - 16 April 2011 (fig. 3). The title is taken from Fassbinder’s film of the same name. Tiravanija “set up areas for communal eating and opened the gallery to the street, thereby collapsing public and private space.” This is another example of “his (ongoing) effort to create and widen channels of communications.”⁹

6 http://www.moma.org/collection/object.php?object_id=147206

7 Richard Shusterman, *A House divided*, From the Documenta X (1997) catalogue on the work of Rosemarie Trockel and Carsten Höller.

8 See Rirkrit Tiravanija, *Secession in Vienna*. July 5-Sept. 1, 2002. www.secession.at/art/2002_tiravanija_e.html

9 Nicole J. Caruth “Gastro-Vision on soup” <http://bit.ly/bukdahl4>



2. Rirkrit Tiravanija. *Time to eat meals* in "Schindler House." Exhibition View. Secession, Vienna 2002.



3. Rirkrit Tiravanija. *Fear Eats the Soul (Soup Kitchen)*. Gavin Brown's Enterprise. New York, April 2011.



4. Rirkrit Tiravanija. *Cooking and drawing event*. Art 42 Basel. June 17, 2011.

He describes his interactive artistic intentions with focus on food's ability to build community as follows:

“The situation is not about looking at art. It is about being in the space, participating in an activity. The nature of the visit has shifted to emphasize the gallery as a space for social interaction. The transfer of such activities as cooking, eating or sleeping into the realm of the exhibition space puts visitors into very intimate if unexpected contact; the displacement creates an acute awareness of the notion of public and private, the installations function like scientific experiments: the displacement becomes a tool and exposes the way scientific thought processes are constructed. The visitor becomes a participant in that experiment.”¹⁰

In Shusterman's aforementioned lecture in Pollenzo, he emphasized that “human eating is a social event” and that “eating is a performing art” - the precise characteristics that Tiravanija visualizes in his installations. And this is why, as Shusterman stresses, “a meal” can be regarded as “an artwork.”

In *Cooking and drawing event*, Art 42 Basel (June 17, 2011) (fig. 4) Tiravanija appealed to viewers in a very immediate and sensuous way, not only because they ate together, but also because warm new relationships were created between them. In the gallery you encountered a booth full of cooking pots and all the implements of curry making. And you saw Tiravanija working at cooking a wonderful Thai meal. His gallerist told visitors that “anyone who wanted to could pick up a piece of charcoal and make drawings on the booth's wall about the recent protests in that region. Behind the artist was a drawing of Egyptian protesters carrying a sign that read ‘Mubarak you are retired.’”¹¹ In this work he again uses strategies of hospitality and

10 John Perreault, Rirkrit Tiravanija: “Fear Eats the Soul”, see http://www.artsjournal.com/artopia/2011/04/rirkrit_tiravanija_fear_eats_t_1.html

11 <http://observer.com/2011/06/hold-the-fish-sauce-rirkrit-tiravan>

dialogue to transform galleries and museums into social spaces for cooking and eating and often combined with comments on national and international political issues.

In his installations, where meals are integrated, Tiravanija always creates new relationships between people and breaks down barriers between societal groups and conventional ways of thinking. It is precisely this liberating process that is one of the main themes in Shusterman's somaesthetics and which Tiravanija interprets in many surprising and artistic ways in his installations where meals play a central role.

Richard Shusterman remarked in an interview with Aude Launay on Biological Aesthetics that he admires some European artists of "relational orientation" such as Rirkrit Tiravanija.

He met Tiravanija at an Art and Experience event organized by the Italian art critic Maurizio Bartolotti in Venice in 2004. Tiravanija works in the same interactive manner as Carsten Höller and the other artists that Shusterman has worked with or presented in different contexts.¹²



5. SUPERFLEX, Rirkrit Tiravanija and Tobias Rehberger, *Superportagasfloorkitchen without building*, shown in the exhibition "More works about buildings & food" in Oeiras, Portugal, 10. November 2000.

The three Danish visual artists Bjørnstjerne Christiansen, Jakob Fenger and Rasmus Nielsen formed a project group in 1993 that they called SUPERFLEX. They have already gained international recognition for their projects, which are based on new technology but also use networking and social processes such as making food as their working material.

They define their goals as follows:

"We are interested in using our position as artists to explore the contribution that the field of art can make to social, political and economic change."

¹² "Biological Aesthetics. Richard Shusterman", an interview by Aude Launay in 02. *Revue d'art contemporain trimestrielle et gratuite* 2008, no 48 with English texts.

To achieve this goal they have worked together with Tiravanija on several occasions and included cooking as a part of their attempts to create new communities and help impoverished populations that cannot afford to buy oil and electricity such as those in Thailand. They worked with engineers to create a simple Super Gas Biogas system which runs exclusively on organic materials such as human and animal stools.

SUPERFLEX created a work in collaboration with Rirkrit Tiravanija and Tobias Rehberger for the exhibition "*More Works about Buildings & Food*" (fig. 5) in Oeiras, Portugal, 10 November 2000. After the exhibition the project was dispatched to *The Land* in Chiang Mai in Thailand, where so many innovative projects have been installed. This project created a cheap method of cooking, but also new relations among people. The "project presented ideas on how to integrate the biogas system into a domestic kitchen environment later to be used in the country in Chiang Mai. It consisted of a 1:1 model landscape of the environment including a floor (8 x 12 metres) that uses the weight of people standing on it to create the pressure needed to supply gas for cooking purposes. The model comprised: one biogas system / mattress / gas storage / wooden floor / kitchen / camping."¹³

There are some clear parallels between the aims of SUPERFLEX and one of the key- words in Shusterman's original development of pragmatism. This concerns what he calls "community" and which he characterizes as "an indispensable medium for the pursuit of better beliefs, knowledge, and even for the realization of meaning through language and the arts." He is convinced that "community is not only a cognitive theme in pragmatism but also an aesthetic, ethical, and political one, and it contributes to pragmatism's fundamentally democratic orientation. Pragmatists have offered cognitive, ethical, and aesthetic arguments for democracy." Shusterman's concept of sensory perception in somaesthetics also provides a better understanding of both the aesthetic dimensions of eating as well as its ability to create new relations between people, thereby improving the lives of underprivileged societies. And the surprising environment and setting enrich the embodied experience of gustatory taste and the inviting smell.

13 http://www.superflex.net/activities/2000/11/10/supergas_-_more_works_about_buildings_-_food/image/2#g



6. Song Dong. *Eating the City*. Installation, London, February, 2006.

Song Dong is one of China's leading experimental artists. He has been active in sculpture, performance, photography and video. He uses food as building materials in his installations to get the viewer to eat them in new ways, thereby creating a different understanding of their tastes and smells. This is particularly true of his series of edible installations titled *Eating the City* which were exhibited from 2003-2006 in Barcelona, Beijing, Hong Kong, London, Oxford and Shanghai. He also visualizes the dramatic transformations that these cities have undergone. He describes his goal as follows:

“The purpose (..) is for the city I build to be destroyed ... As the cities in Asia grow, old buildings are knocked down and new ones built, almost every day (...). My city is tempting and delicious. When we are eating the city we are using our desire to taste it, but at the same time we are demolishing the city and turning it into a ruin.”¹⁴

A very impressive example is the large installation *Eating the City*, London, February 2006 (fig. 6), which was constructed out of different kinds of biscuits and stimulated two senses: smell and sight. Working with a team of very gifted food artists, he used wafers, biscuits, cookies and candy to create edible models of the most famous landmarks in Shanghai. This installation was shown in Shanghai on 25 December 2010. Viewers got a new and more tangible impression of the city and were inspired to eat in a new more leisurely manner which provided them with the opportunity to enjoy the special tastes of the different cakes.

Edible Penjing, which was shown from April 1 to July 1, 2000 in the artist's Open Studio at Gasworks consists of British ingredients - including mashed potato, salmon, carrot, mincemeat

14 a b c d “Song Dong: Waste Not”. London, Barbican Centre. 20 December 2011.

and broccoli. Penjing can best be described as an artistic composition, including miniaturized trees, rocks, water and other natural elements. It is also a famous Chinese cultural signifier. In *Edible Penjing*, Song Dong visualizes with irony and humor the relationship between art and life and between Western and Eastern cultures.

Many Chinese people who visited Song Dong's studio and tasted the *Edible Penjing* thought it was delicious even though they were not normally partial to British food. When food is put into a creative context, it becomes appetizing in a new way. In *Meat Mountain*, 2009 it is the construction of a mountain of meat that is in focus and the serving of it is highlighted in a special way. But there are also symbolic layers to the work. These are "Song's broader emphasis on ephemerality, drawn from Zen Buddhism, which points to the transience of bodily needs and desires, even as he aims to fulfill them."¹⁵ The encounter with this work also creates a sense of what it is to be a "cultural consumer."

In the video *A Blot on the Landscape*, which consists of four video works, the same theme is developed in a different and very surprising way and with a more dramatic optic. The visitors who saw this work agreed that the "most impressive of them was the one with blue lagoon and a boulder made of some form of meat hanging precipitously over 'the water.'" But they soon discover that "action creeps into the frames. A lone hand holding a cleaver descends from the sky over the lagoon, demolishing the boulder and its surroundings into unrecognizable pieces, while scissors savagely snip the broccoli and peppers into bite-size chunks."¹⁶ By using food as building materials, Song Dong has succeeded in visualizing the destruction of food and the mass production of food as well as the inevitability of natural forces in an innovative and provocative manner.

In the Fluxus artist Dieter Roth we see several roots for the experiments of subsequent artists with food as creative building materials. His *Portrait of the artist as a Vogelfutterbüste* (birdseed bust) consisting of multiple layers of chocolate and birdseed (1968) (fig. 7), is a good example of his ironic attitude to existence.

15 See *Gastronomica*: End of preview of the article "Edible Landscape. Song Dong", *The Journal of Food and Culture*, vol. 10, no 3, summer 2010, p. 10.

16 Song Dong At Pace Gallery Offers Food For Thought- Beijing - Beijing Blogs Blog, City Weekend Guide, 16 November 2010.



7. Dieter Roth. *Portrait of the artist as a Vogelfutterbüste (birdseed bust)* 1968, multiple of chocolate and birdseed. Dieter Roth Foundation. Hamburg

To achieve maximum impact for his social criticism and his rebellion against traditional notions of art, he created artist's books, using a variety of foodstuffs as his preferred artistic strategies. *Literature Sausage* (1969), is an artist's book made of gelatin, lard and spices in a natural casing. It expresses the hope of forging a path to a new world. The book entitled *Big Sunset* (1968) was created by pressing a sausage on card in a plastic cover. Dieter Roth's works are instantly captivating. It has been remarked that "they embrace decay while enduring into the present."

The Korean artist Yeonju Sung creates dresses primarily out of vegetables. She has created elegant evening dresses out of tomatoes and Lotus roots (2010) (fig. 8.) "For a brief moment they existed, but for far longer they inspire with their amazing creativity, brilliant hues and seductive forms. In many ways they aren't far in nature from a wedding dress, worn once and captured in photographic memory of the occasion... savored and remembered, never to be worn again."¹⁷

All of the aforementioned artists have used foods in different and imaginative ways. But none of them have been particularly interested in visualizing the particular power of fascination that the different aromatic scents many of the plants and various fluids create. This is also true of the foodstuffs that we use on a daily basis.

17 <http://www.visualnews.com/2013/04/23/wearable-food-from-korean-artist-yeon-ju-sung/#LuBKSQbcGLgAvwyb.99>



8. Yeonju Sung. *Tomato Dress*. 2010.

For the Venice Biennale in 2011, the renowned Chinese curator Peng Feng selected several artists who worked with this theme in very poetic and surprising ways. In an interview with Peng Feng, Shusterman pointed out the special talent that Chinese artists have in “defining art in terms of beauty and pleasure” and interpreting them “in a distinctively sensory, sensual way as opposed to a dominantly cognitive pleasure of intellectual form” characteristic of Western culture:

“Your pavilion conception *Pervasion* explains art in terms of beauty and then treats beauty in terms of flavors or smells - senses that the Western tradition considers least aesthetically valid because the least cognitive and clear. Your five installations involve clouds with tea fragrance; dripping pipes of wine, beer, and spirits; fragrant porcelain pots of herb medicine; fog of incense; and lotus-scented virtual snow. You explain this emphasis on beauty and flavor as a distinctively Chinese perspective.”

An example of this kind of artwork is Cai Zhisong’s installation, *Clouds with Tea* which is built up out of many elements like tea leaves, cotton, balloons, helium (fig. 9) creating a poetic atmosphere with different odors which appeals powerfully to our sense of smell.

Peng Feng told us that his contribution to Venice Biennale represents a Chinese perspective, because body consciousness has always played an important role in traditional Chinese art and aesthetics. But he adds that he has only really become aware of it since studying Shusterman’s somaesthetics.¹⁸



9. Cai Zhisong. *Sculptures of clouds with Tea* and Yoan Gong. *Fog*. Installation. Venice Art Biennale

The innovative Danish artist Ib Monrad has worked mostly with creating large projects dealing with very large interpretations of cosmic space. In the construction of these large-scale works he has used Western painting techniques as well as Chinese ink painting. Shusterman emphasized in his aforementioned lecture in Pollenzo that there is also “a tactile experience of eating.” He is thinking in particular of the tools that we use when we eat and which we seldom look at. Artists have often been capable of visualizing expressively the many things that we rush past in our goal-

18 Chine - commissaire Peng Feng” *Art press supplément* Venise 2011, pavillons nation- aux, p. 25

oriented world. One example is Ib Monrad's *Nature Morte* (2013)(fig. 10), in which the spoon is imbued with a particular power of fascination, because it is removed from the anonymous daily context in which it is usually locate.



10. Ib Monrad. *Nature Morte*. 2013.

The Austrian artist Erwin Wurm, who has made a significant impact on the international art scene, creates humorous and provocative “food art” like *Sausage Sculptures*. Using red frankfurters, he conjures forth five impressive situations, full of irony and unexpected forms. We encounter a sweet *dog* (fig. 11), an inviting door, a warm kiss, a thin pole and a fascinating Buddhist stupa.¹⁹

¹⁹ See Else Marie Bukdahl, “Surprising sculptures enabling us to think and create in new ways. About Erwin Wurm’s sculptures which reveal new aspects of our daily life” in the catalogue to the exhibition *The Discipline of Subjectivity*. Erwin Wurm, Tonson Gallery, 14 Nov 2013 - 5. Jan. 2014



11. Erwin Wurm, *Dog*.

The outstanding Danish performance and conceptual artist, Søren Dahlgaard uses surprising strategies and humor in artworks like *The Dough Warrior* (2008) (fig. 12). This work appeals very intensely to our intellect, emotions and imagination. It is a “landscape painting performance” in which Søren Dahlgaard is transformed into a comical, hard-working painter covered from top to toe in baguettes. The transformation imbues the project with surprising force and an astonishing tactility. The artist throws himself into the painting process with an almost warlike intensity. Traditional landscape painting is transformed into an exciting performance. The performance demonstrates Søren Dahlgaard’s ability to work intuitively and reflectively and reveals new aspects of the often unpredictable creative process and drawing us into his dynamic artistic universe.²⁰ Søren Dahlgaard’s artworks stimulate the viewer to experience them with their entire body and all its senses. This is precisely the embodied perception and experience of art that Shusterman highlights.²¹

20 Else Marie Bukdahl, “New challenges for art and society”, article in the catalogue for the exhibition *Søren Dahlgaard*, Kunsthallen Brændrigården, Viborg, Denmark. June 9 August 12 2012, pp. 6869.

21 Shusterman, Intellectualism and the Field of Aesthetics: The Return of the Repressed, *Revue Internationale de Philosophie* 220, 2002, p. 331.



12. Søren Dahlgard, *The Dough Warrior*, 2008.

For Shusterman it is important that “somaesthetics can help not only explain but also improve aesthetic experience.”²² Knowledge of somaesthetics deepens our insight into how the surprising and imaginative use of different foodstuffs as building materials by artists can create a renewed understanding of their uniqueness. We see aspects of these foods which we might not otherwise have noticed.

This contributes to an improvement in our sensory experience and the way we use our bodies. In addition, many of the works that the artist has built out of foods, have a particular sensuality and in many instances also alluring scents which create a singularly intense expressive force. In many respects, these artworks can create this “powerful aesthetic experience” which Shusterman believes is necessary for art to elicit a response from “the general public.”²³ This intense effect is something that Song Dong, Dieter Roth, Yeonju Sung, Cai Zhisong and Erwin Wurm have succeeded in generating. But foods and eating utensils produced in an attentive manner can also have this effect. This is true of, for example, Ib Monrad’s drawing. Different artists, especially Rirkrit Tiravanija, Song Dong and SUPERFLEX have created, in their own respective expressive ways, performances and projects in which they have prepared very inviting meals. “Eating” in their vision becomes, in a very significant and different way, what Shusterman calls a “collaborative experience.” New communities are also created through these performances, which are characterized by “the meliorist goal of making things better,” something Shusterman regards as “a key and distinctive pragmatist orientation.”²⁴

22 Richard Shusterman, “Somaesthetics and Burke’s Sublime”, *British Journal of Aesthetics*, vol. 45, no 4, October 2005, p. 341.

23 “Interviewing Richard Shusterman” Part in *Action, Criticism and Theory for Music Education*, April 2002, vol 1, p. 5.

24 Richard Shusterman, “What Pragmatism means to Me: Ten Principles”, *Revue française d’études américaines*, no. 124, 2e trimestre 2010, p. 64

Notes

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Regimes of Taste and Somaesthetics¹

Dorota Koczanowicz

Abstract: *The aim of the article is to point out the social and cultural conditions of culinary practices in light of Pierre Bourdieu's concept of habitus and Richard Shusterman's somaesthetics. Tastes reflect our social position and cultural background. We are what we eat, but what we eat is not exactly a matter of choice. We are ruled by various regimes of taste, and our bodies are formed in compliance with culturally entrenched norms and values. Drawing on theories from Bourdieu and Shusterman, this article explores the ways in which taste disciplines our bodies and examines possibilities of emancipation. Two feature films: *Babette's Feast* and *Blue is the Warmest Colour* are used as an art component, which helps to highlight the discussed problems.*

Keywords: *somaesthetics, habitus, food, taste, film*

Eating, in fact, serves not only to maintain the biological machinery of the body, but to make concrete one of the specific modes of relation between a person and the world...²

Luce Giard

In Western culture, the social structure consists basically of classes, strata, and occupational groups. Social divisions overlap with economic differences, which Karl Marx was intent on highlighting, yet this major criterion intersects with other important factors, such as education and social capital in the broad sense of the term. The analysis of interplay and mutual grounding of these forces was an important addition Pierre Bourdieu made to the Marxian account, contributing seminal to our understanding of how social divisions are shaped and perpetuated. Bourdieu's brilliant analysis is developed in his famous *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste*. Inquiring into what differentiates members of particular social groups, the French sociologist concludes that it is taste first of all, rather than economic capital. Taste denotes for Bourdieu both culinary preferences and aesthetic choices that determine our ways of interacting with the world.

To label the ensemble of predispositions which socialization processes encode in our bodies Bourdieu uses the term *habitus*: "The habitus is both the generative principle of objectively classifiable judgments and the system of classification (*principium divisionis*) of these practices."³ The space spanning between these two capacities of the habitus can accommodate a variety of lifestyles. The habitus is a form of embodied disposition, which is often unconscious and revealed,

¹ Preparing this text was supported by NCN grant: *Aesthetic value of food. Pragmatist Perspective*, No. 2013/11 / B / HS1 / 04176.

² Michel de Certeau, Luce Giard, and Pierre Mayol, *The Practice of Everyday Life, vol. 2. Living and Cooking*, trans. Timothy J. Tomasik, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998, p. 183.

³ Bourdieu, *Distinction...*, p. 170.

as Bourdieu writes, “only in bodily hexis, diction, bearing, manners.”⁴ The habitus tends to be described as an embodied necessity and a differentiating system that generates various practices and, at the same time, schemes for evaluating them. The habitus is a “structuring structure,” but it is also subject to “structuring” itself. It emerges from particular social and economic conditions.

Drawing on Immanuel Kant’s *The Critique of Judgment*, Bourdieu reminds that the Kantian aesthetics, preoccupied with setting apart that which pleases from that which gratifies, was supposed to result in capturing the distinctiveness of the aesthetic judgment as pure disinterestedness in contrast to “the interest of reason which defines Good.”⁵ The French sociologist observes that only the members of the privileged classes can possibly afford this “pure” aesthetics while “working-class people expect every image to explicitly perform a function, if only that of a sign, and their judgments make reference, often explicitly, to the norms of morality or agreeableness. Whether rejecting or praising, their appreciation always has an ethical basis.”⁶ This difference becomes particularly pronounced when we analyze the aesthetic categories guiding everyday choices and decisions, such as what to wear, where to live, and what to eat. “Taste classifies, and it classifies the classifier. Social subjects, classified by their classifications, distinguish themselves by the distinctions they make, between the beautiful and the ugly, the distinguished and vulgar, in which their position in the objective classifications is expressed or betrayed.”⁷

Bourdieu disagrees with Kant on one more point. He argues convincingly that our aesthetic choices are closely intertwined with our culinary preferences. There is a close affinity between artistic preferences and gastronomic taste. Examining the choices made by people from various backgrounds, Bourdieu points out that “[t]he antithesis between quantity and quality, substance and form, corresponds to the opposition – linked to different distances from necessity – between the taste of necessity, which favors the most ‘filling’ and most economical foods, and the taste of liberty – or luxury – which shifts the emphasis to the manner (of presenting, serving, eating etc.) and tends to use stylized forms to deny function.”⁸ Moreover, since culture highly appreciates such qualities as disinterestedness, refinement, exceptionality and sublimation, “art and cultural consumption are predisposed, consciously and deliberately or not, to fulfill a social function of legitimating social differences.”⁹

The forms of behavior instilled in training become a second nature, one so transparent that social actors take it for granted and hardly conceptualize at all. “The sense of limits implies forgetting the limits.”¹⁰ Paradoxical though it may sound, forgetting the limits is the surest preventive means against transgressing them. It is so because, as Bourdieu explains, “... primary experience of the social world is that of *doxa*, an adherence to relations of order which, because they structure inseparably both the real world and the thought world, are accepted as self-evident.”¹¹ *Doxa* is a framework which contains action and sets limits to social mobility. As Bourdieu emphasizes, “objective limits become a sense of limits, a practical anticipation of objective limits acquired by experience of objective limits, a ‘sense of one’s place’ which leads one

4 Bourdieu, *Distinction...*, p. 424

5 Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction : A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste*, trans. Richard Nice, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard UP, 1984, 5.

6 Bourdieu, *Distinction...*, p. 5.

7 Bourdieu, *Distinction...*, p. 6.

8 Bourdieu, *Distinction...*, p. 6.

9 Bourdieu, *Distinction...*, p. 7.

10 Bourdieu, *Distinction...*, p. 471.

11 Bourdieu, *Distinction...* p. 471.

to exclude oneself from the goods, persons, places and so forth from which one is excluded.”¹²

Weaving a grid of values, patterns of understanding and ways of action, the habitus organizes the style of engaging in social activity, modes of perception, and frameworks of assessment characteristic of particular individuals and social groups. What is the differentiating effect of the habitus on culinary choices? There are groups of products that are typically opted for by the urban and rural populations, respectively; there are also products that tend to be chosen by particular genders or age groups. The diet of peasantry features opulent servings of starches, pork, potatoes, and poultry. The bourgeois menus prioritize veal, lamb, mutton, fish, and seafood. Women tend to drink more milk and consume more sweet foods, at least in the peasant and working classes, with the rule being largely obliterated among senior managerial staff and liberal professions.

The Confessions of St. Augustine make it clear that the saint found it a lesser challenge to renounce sexual temptations than to withstand the enticements leading to the sin of gluttony.¹³ The attractions of the dinner table prove far more perilous than the allures of the body since we all must eat, but not everybody indulges in physical love.¹⁴ Out of the two obvious things shared by humans and sustaining human life – that is, eating and sex – eating is far more common. However, the activity, which is common to all people, is, at the same time, a strongly differentiating one. Social characterization through culinary choices is perfectly exemplified in two short dinner scenes in *Blue is the Warmest Colour* (*La vie d'Adèle*). Set in the homes of two main characters – eponymous Adèle, a high school student, and Emma, a spirited student of arts – the episodes pithily portray their differences in age, life experience and, emphatically, class background. In full accord with Bourdieu's theories, the fare served at Adèle's working-class home is simple, cheap and hearty, while Emma's educated parents treat their guest to expensive and not really nourishing oysters, the food Adèle has never tasted before. The oysters symbolize refinement, prosperity and sexually-laden sensuality. They are counted among the most famous aphrodisiacs and associated with the vagina. It has never occurred to Adèle's parents that Emma might be something more than an obliging friend that helps their daughter in learning. Passionate erotic scenes in Adèle's "maiden" room are not imaginable within the bounds of her parents' perception, so they regard Adèle's girlfriend as just a friend who simply stays overnight. Connoisseurs of refined cuisine, Emma's parents are socially and culturally educated, and supportive of their daughter's choices. Differences in culinary tastes instantaneously reveal differences of class and culture, which will ultimately contribute to the relationship falling apart in spite of considerable erotic fascination and emotional engagement.

The habitus forms habits, modes of thinking and perception, and moral convictions. It is a mold which imposes severe constraints and is extremely difficult, if not entirely impossible, to shake off: "It functions as a social orientation, a 'sense of one's place', guiding the occupants of a given place in social space towards the social positions adjusted to their properties, and towards the practices or goods which befit the occupants of that position."¹⁵ The inflow of money does not furnish a *nouveau riche* with a skill of spending it freely, an apparently inborn capacity of owners or heirs to old fortunes. A new-rich may afford sophisticated foods, but he still enjoys pork chops best and regards pancakes and jam as the fare suitable for women's palates.¹⁶ As Bourdieu

12 Bourdieu, *Distinction...*, p. 471.

13 See St. Augustine, *The Confessions*, trans. R.S. Pine-Coffin, London: Penguin Books, 1971, pp. 235-7.

14 Cf. Sander L. Gilman, *Diets and Dieting: a Cultural Encyclopedia*, New York: Routledge, 2008, p. 61.

15 Bourdieu, *Distinction...*p. 466.

16 Cf. Bourdieu, *Distinction...*, pp. 373-374.

explains, this is so because “the schemes of habitus, the primary forms of classification, owe their specific efficacy to the fact that they function below the level of consciousness and language, beyond the reach of introspective scrutiny or control by the will.”¹⁷

What will happen if a refined culinary taste collides with a Puritan taste? Does an attempt to change the entrenched tastes and tradition stand any chance of success?

Babette’s Feast

Alice B. Toklas, a Paris-based American, Gertrude Stein’s long-time partner, and, crucially, an excellent cook, had no doubt that the French had developed an outstanding culture of gastronomy, and that cooking could be considered art. She believed that exceptional dishes triggered emotions comparable to those evoked by artworks. In her cook book, she admitted to a telling dilemma: “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 Anglaise, which would one choose?”¹⁸ Cooking herself for the Parisian artistic elite, she used her dishes many a time as a tool of emotional hierarchization and emotional communication. Sometimes, the emotional gesture was not reciprocated. This is what, famously, happened when Alice served fish with the idea to celebrate Picasso. She cooked a sea bass, decorated it with tomato puree-colored mayonnaise, and embellished it further with a pattern of hard-boiled eggs, black truffles and herbs. Proud of her work, the cook did not expect to have her tribute rejected by the artist, who actually suspected the color configuration of garnish to allude to his rival Matisse.¹⁹ Picasso was Stein’s close friend. Matisse was also one of regular guests to her house, but was definitely less liked. *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* features a story about a very competent “maid of all work,” Héléne, who had very distinct opinions on a variety of issues, claiming for example that “a Frenchman 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.”²⁰ The author of the autobiography recounts further that Héléne “was terribly interested in seeing Monsieur Picasso and his wife and child and cooked her very best dinner for him (...)”²¹

The Café Anglaise, mentioned by Toklas and generally enjoying the reputation of the best restaurant in 19th-century Paris, is where the eponymous heroine of *Babette’s Feast* is revealed to have worked. Babette’s history is told in one of Karen Blixen’s short stories and in its screen adaptation,²² which transfers the narrative of “Babette’s Feast” from the original location in 19th-century Norway to a remote village on the coast of Jutland, home to two beautiful sisters – Martine and Philippa. Their father, the leader of a strict Lutheran community, spared no effort to make the girls entirely committed to himself and the religious group. Named in honor of Martin Luther and his friend Philipp Melancthon and brought up in strict evangelical discipline,

17 Bourdieu, *Distinction...*, p. 466.

18 Alice B. Toklas, *The Alice B. Toklas Cook Book. With a Foreword by M. F. K. Fisher*, New York et al.: Harper Perennial, 2010, p. 98.

19 Toklas, *Cook Book...*, p. 28.

20 Gertrude Stein, *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*, the web edition published by eBooks@Adelaide. Retrieved 3.07.2015.

21 *Ibid.*

22 1987, dir. Gabriel Axel.

the sisters relinquished the chances of love and worldly life offered at a certain moment in their lives by two men. Martine did not requite the advances of Lorens Löewenhielm, a young officer “exiled” to live with his aunt as a punishment for his dissipated lifestyle. Philippa, in turn, refused the offer made by Achille Papin, a famous opera singer who, enchanted with her voice, promised her triumphs on the stages of Paris. After their father’s death, the sisters keep up his work. But with its charismatic leader gone, the community descends into aggravating antagonisms and, as the years go by, its members grow ever more embittered, and mutual resentments exacerbate.

On a rainy evening in 1871, an exhausted woman knocks on the sisters’ door, and presents a letter of reference penned by Papin. She is Babette Hersant, a refugee from France, where the civil war is raging. With her family brutally killed and herself narrowly surviving, Babette is grateful to offer her housekeeping services in exchange for a safe place to stay. She conforms to the principles of the village, and tunes into its rhythm of life. She learns how to cook bread soup and dried fish dishes, the local staple fare. As she is very reticent about herself, little do the sisters realize that for all these years they have had the most famous Parisian chef for a servant. The years go by with hardly any variation until the day when Babette receives a letter informing that she has won the lottery of 15,000 francs, an exorbitant sum. Upon this event, she persuades Martine and Philippa to let her prepare a real French dinner to celebrate their late father’s hundredth birthday. With the planned dinner courses including turtle soup, quail with *foie gras* stuffing and truffles, and *blini* with caviar, Babette has all the ingredients of her opulent and refined dishes brought over from France together with beautiful tablecloths, candlesticks, and China crockery. The stream of supplies keeps flowing in as each course is to be served with the best wine vintages and champagne, and the dessert features rum sponge cake with candied fruit. Witnessing their pantry fill with cages of fowl, crates of beverages, and other odd produce barred from their diet so far, the sisters begin to regret their decision and feel anxious about how their conservative fellow-believers will react. Martine has a dream in which a huge turtle is consumed by flames. The terrified sisters, for whom eating has routinely had only a life-sustaining function, with food for the soul given an absolute preference, call a meeting, in which the congregation decide to give the dinner a go, but deliberately to ignore its sensory thrills and pass in silence over the food served. A congregation member concludes: “It will be as if we never had the sense of taste.” Comforted a little by this resolution, the sisters stop worrying so much about what Babette is up to. The last question concerns the bottle put on the table. Martine asks: “Surely that isn’t wine?” “No,” replies Babette, “it’s Clos de Vougeot.”

The ostensibly simple story-line of *Babette’s Feast* telling about two sisters – inhabitants of a remote village – stages, in fact, a highly complex world of symbolic relationships lending themselves to diverse interpretations, and conveys a richly polyvalent message. The eponymous feast has been analyzed in terms of ethics and politics (Alain Finkielkraut), in religious (Zbigniew Benedyktowicz, Dariusz Czaja, and Priscilla Parhust Ferguson) and aesthetic perspectives (Wiesław Juszczak), and in the psychoanalytic framework (Sharn Waldron). This catalogue of approaches implies what complexity nutrition accrues when it is incorporated into the order of culture.

In the light of Bourdieu’s categories, the story can be construed as an unexpected clash between and an intervention of one habitus into another one. On the one hand, there is the Protestant ethos, which, as French philosopher Alain Finkielkraut contends, never appreciated cooking: “Nutrition was necessary, but a *necessity* must under no circumstances be elevated into *an art*.”²³ On the other hand, there is an entirely different attitude to food. For Babette, as well

23 Alain Finkielkraut, *Serce rozumiejące (Un coeur intelligent)* [The Understanding Heart], trans. Jan Maria Kłoczowski, WUW, p. 164.

as for the whole social class she served in France, food was not reducible to meeting the basic needs. It patently connoted prestige and pleasure. Satisfying the expectations of the bourgeoisie was an art of the highest order. In Bourdieu's terms, the film suggests that the Protestant *doxa* yields to the enchantment of art: "A second article of faith in *Babette's Feast* is the certainty of the instantaneous and direct power of art. (...) art touches individuals of every station, even against their will."²⁴

The members of the religious community come to realize their limitations. Partaking of the feast is a transformative, albeit admittedly fleeting, experience to them. As Bourdieu teaches us, the situation verges on improbability. There has actually been no time enough to learn new – odd and intense – flavours. In attempting to defend the film's message, we could cite the argument advanced by Ferguson, who observes that "two performing arts, music and cuisine, speak to the senses directly; their effect is all in the moment. Critical appreciation enhances the experience by increasing understanding, but the senses make the primal connection."²⁵ This suggests that gustatory pleasure can be felt even if one does not realize that what one tastes is famous champagne rather than lemonade. This is, incidentally, what one of the guests at the dinner mistakenly believes. Granted, *Babette's Feast* is not a socio-psychological account of reality, but even so it can effectively serve as a starting point for reflection on the possibilities of transforming taste. It is a perfect starting point for at least two reasons. Firstly, it deals with French cuisine, which boasts the status of the world's best, and is, as such, a unique benchmark and frame of reference for culinary tastes. This reputation has certainly been aided by the fact that, as Toklas observes, "the French approach to food is characteristic; they bring to their consideration of the table the same appreciation, respect, intelligence and lively interest that they have for the other arts, for painting, for literature and for the theatre."²⁶

Secondly, 19th-century France went through a social makeover propelled by the French Revolution, and, at the same time, through a culinary transformation triggered by the emergence of a new institution – the restaurant. The best cooks, who had worked for the aristocracy before, turned chefs cooking for a new, robustly developing social stratum – the bourgeoisie. These factors facilitated and channeled a metamorphosis of the culinary tradition. Bourdieu convincingly shows that financial and social advancement entails also educational challenges. Acquisition of new tastes and learning to spend new money are painstaking and exigent processes. Contrary to his idea of how such transformations come to pass, they require both determination and competent teachers. The birth of restaurants precipitated the rise of culinary literature. Professional restaurant critics appeared side by side with literary critics and took upon themselves the task of "serving, modifying and mediating consumption."²⁷

In the age of post-revolution transformations, the role of the guide through the world of new possibilities and new challenges fell upon Alexandre Balthazar Laurent Grimod de La Reynière. His *Almanach des gourmands* (*The Almanac of Gourmands*) was the first guidebook through tastes. The groundbreaking and voluminous work, published annually from 1803 to 1812 (except 1809 and 1811),²⁸ proved a bookselling blockbuster and a model to be emulated by

²⁴ Priscilla Parhust Ferguson, *Accounting for Taste: The Triumph of French Cuisine*, Chicago-London: The University of Chicago Press, 2004, p. 193.

²⁵ Ferguson, *Accounting...*, p. 194.

²⁶ Toklas, *Cook Book...*, p. 1.

²⁷ Robert Appelbaum, *Dishing It Out: In Search of the Restaurant Experience*, London: Reaktion Books Ltd., 2011, p. 47.

²⁸ See Stephen Mennell, *All Manners of Food: Eating and Taste in England and France from the Middle Ages to the Present*, Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1996, p. 267.

numerous imitators.²⁹ Its popularity soared as many craved to know where the best seafood was on sale in Paris, how to carve mutton properly, what the proper table manners were, and how a banquet menu should be put together. Grimod noticed that changes in customs and habits had led to an increased appreciation of bodily – “purely animal,” as he calls them – pleasures. He wrote:

The hearts of most wealthy Parisians suddenly metamorphosed into gizzards. The sentiments are no longer anything but sensations, and their desires no longer anything but appetites. It is for that reason that one conveniently renders them a service by giving them, in several pages, the means of accomplishing, within the domain of good (*La bonne chère*), the best match possible between their inclinations and their money.³⁰

Grimod did not keep his observations to himself only; nor did he combat “the new.” Instead, he created a kind of guidebook for gourmets in which criticism blends with humor, and scornful commentaries on the new class of owners are interspersed with precious advice on how to handle the challenges mounting for all those who venture onto the path of food connoisseurship. His reasonable decision was to make money on the transformation of the previous-age man of sentiment into the 19th-century consumer, and to profit from enlightening him and making him happy.³¹

Somaesthetics

If we seek to re-draw the habitus, the article “Somatic Awakening and the Art of Living” is, certainly, a useful source to consult. It describes Richard Shusterman’s own experience of a stay at a Zen monastery, and relates in detail the rituals of meals with all the involved difficulties, such as mastering the art of eating with chopsticks. What the article offers is an account of successful training, which aimed at discarding the somatic style of the Western professor for the sake of conduct and manners proper to the Buddhist monks.³²

A monastic stint and demanding somatic training are no surprising choices in Shusterman, who has long been dedicated to making the ideal of unified theory and practice a reality. It is, actually, one of the pillars his somaesthetics project rests on. At this point, we should rehearse the project’s major tenets. William James said that pragmatism was “a new name for some old ways of thinking.” Shusterman thinks similarly about somaesthetics, and claims that in founding a new philosophical discipline, he in fact revisits the primary assumptions of philosophy.³³ Somaesthetics aims to comprehensively focus on the body,³⁴ which corresponds to the Ancient ideas of practicing philosophy as an embodied art of living.³⁵ So we go back to basics under the new banner of “somaesthetics,” which is a conscious move as, according to the author of *Pragmatist Aesthetics*, a new name “can have a special efficacy for reorganizing and

29 Grimod’s most famous follower was Jean Anthelme Brillat-Savarin.

30 A. B. L. Grimond de la Reynière qtd. in Appelbaum, *Dishing...*, p. 45.

31 Cf. Appelbaum, *Dishing...*

32 See Richard Shusterman, “Somaesthetic Awakening and the Art of Living: Everyday Aesthetics in American Transcendentalism and Japanese Zen Practice,” in Richard Shusterman, *Thinking through the Body: Essays in Somaesthetics*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012.

33 See Richard Shusterman, *Pragmatist Aesthetics: Living Beauty, Rethinking Art*, 2nd ed., New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2000, p. 263.

34 Shusterman, *Pragmatist Aesthetics...*, p. 262.

35 See Shusterman, *Thinking...*, p. 290, and “Introduction” to R. Shusterman, *Practicing Philosophy: Pragmatism and the Philosophical Life*, New York: Routledge, 1997.

thus reanimating old insights.”³⁶ Shusterman defines somaesthetics as “the critical, meliorative study of the experience and use of one’s body as a locus of sensory-aesthetic appreciation (*aisthesis*) and creative self-fashioning.”³⁷ The first two parts of this definition is crucial to this article. Shusterman’s project presupposes accumulating knowledge and discourses on and of bodiliness, but it has also a normative dimension that pertains to methods of optimizing human somatic functioning. Knowledge on how the body functions and consciousness of one’s own bodiliness must be intertwined with somatic practice because only through combining theory and practice can the perceptive capacities be enhanced. This is prerequisite to a better and fuller functioning both in the natural environment and in the social one. Shusterman recommends a therapy of mindfulness, knowledge of one’s own body, and reflection on how it operates so that we could make the most of what our body and our environment offer us. He also calls for a greater sensitivity to our own and other people’s needs. Expanding perceptual capacities creates opportunity of amplified being in the world and deriving pleasure even from the simplest experiences.³⁸

Summing up, we should emphasize that somaesthetics fuses three dimensions – analytical, pragmatic and practical. The analytical level concerns accumulation of knowledge. Shusterman considers traditional ontological and epistemological body-related issues, and augments them with the socio-political considerations as developed by Foucault and Bourdieu.³⁹ The pragmatic level comprises the normative and prescriptive elements of somaesthetics, and entails “proposing specific methods of somatic improvement and engaging in their comparative critique.”⁴⁰ The practical level, in turn, pertains to action – specific somatic practices which are the ultimate goal of constructing the theoretical framework.

At the core of the somaesthetics project lies the idea of conscious work and change – the idea of improvement. Somaesthetics is a democratic project addressed to everybody, irrespective of their age, sex, class and/or somatic dispositions. Of course, Shusterman is not oblivious to various limitations and dichotomies we are entangled in as members of society: “For culture gives us the languages, values, social institutions, and artistic media through which we think and act and also express ourselves aesthetically, just as it gives us the forms of diet, exercise, and somatic styling that shape not only our bodily appearance and behavior but also the ways we experiences our body...”⁴¹ As the American pragmatist stresses, all aspects of our lives are modeled by culture, but, though always subject and exposed to external forces, we have also a potential of change and, thus, of overcoming various barriers – a potential of emancipation.

Looking to Shusterman’s somaesthetics for ways of extricating ourselves from the “snares” of the habitus seems a natural step to take as Bourdieu and Shusterman come from a similar pragmatic background.⁴² In his article titled “Bourdieu and Anglo-American Philosophy,” Richard Shusterman dwells on the affinities between Bourdieu and Dewey. The two share the notion that social practices are constituted on the pre-linguistic and pre-reflective level, which, however, does not entail their complete repeatability and permanence. Social practices are

36 Shusterman, *Pragmatist Aesthetics...*, p. 263.

37 Shusterman, *Pragmatist Aesthetics...*, p. 267.

38 Shusterman, *Thinking ...*, p. 299.

39 Shusterman, *Pragmatist Aesthetics...*, p. 271.

40 Shusterman, *Pragmatist Aesthetics...*, p. 272.

41 Shusterman, *Thinking ...*, p. 27.

42 Bourdieu is sometimes called a pragmatic sociologist. In an essay titled “A (Neo) American in Paris: Bourdieu, Mead, and Pragmatism,” Mitchell discusses the influence of pragmatic philosophy, in particular of Mead and Dewey, on the French sociologist’s theoretical concepts.

responses to the changing environment, and yet they enable people to re-make this environment as their needs dictate. Admittedly, Bourdieu and Dewey employ different categories: Bourdieu's central notion is "habitus," while Dewey's – "habit." This notwithstanding, there is a striking resemblance between their concepts, which not only reassert each other's validity, but can also be mutually complementary. Pragmatism can rely on Bourdieu for "providing a more precise, sophisticated, and empirically validated system of concepts for the analysis of society's structure and its strategies and mechanisms of reproduction and change."⁴³ For example, Shusterman points out that "Bourdieu's Nietzschean strain of emphasizing the intrinsic social conflict over power and prestige provides a useful balance to Dewey's excessive faith that all conflict could somehow be reconciled in the organic social whole."⁴⁴ Bourdieu, in turn, as Shusterman argues, could benefit from espousing the concept of language that Dewey adopts. A particularly important thing is that Dewey postulates a critique of ordinary language as tending to include elements of oppression. Of course, as Shusterman writes, it is an open question in how far such a revision is possible (if at all), and, if so, whether or not it puts at risk the stability of the whole social system. Be it as it may, philosophy, together with critical social sciences, cannot give up on that task.

Shusterman repeatedly cites the writings of Bourdieu, whom he counts among important formative sources of his theory. When elucidating his concept of somaesthetics, the author of *Body Consciousness* frequently refers to the French philosopher. What the two frameworks have in common is the idea of the body as a social construct that reflects the culturally differentiated conditions in which particular individuals live. In other words, individuals' social histories are written in their bodies. However, despite indisputable affinities, their conceptions are not identical. The basic differences seem to lie in the emancipatory potential – the promise of healing inscribed in somaesthetics. Bourdieu's world is hierarchical and stiff, and his vision eschews transformation and shuffling off the regime of the habitus. It does not offer a dynamic account of culture which, in spite of its order and controlling function, finds itself in constant change. This is the objection Luce Giard advances against the author of *Distinction*, calling the book's hypotheses a dogma that brackets off the role of chance, influence of other people, or just individual ingeniousness: "Everything happens as if society, without any history other than the temporal unfolding of individual trajectories, were immobile, locked in the vise of a stratification into classes and subclasses that are clear-cut and strictly hierarchical."⁴⁵ Since dietary practices are formed in early childhood, Bourdieu believes they are particularly deeply entrenched and perpetuated. But as Giard notices, "in spite of its scope, *Distinction* remains silent on ways of doing-cooking: as is often the case with Bourdieu, feminine activities are a place of silence or disinterest that his analysis does not trouble itself to take into account."⁴⁶ Bourdieu develops his argument and draws conclusions based predominantly on the consumption styles, rather than on the culinary practices as such. Drawing on the concept of practices put forward by Michel de Certeau, Giard suggests that women's creativity eludes Bourdieu's attention even though preparation of food is usually the task of women, who in their individual cooking practices are on many occasions able to defy the constraints imposed by stiff social styles.

The idea behind somatic exercises, mentioned above, is expanding the array of sensory and aesthetic pleasures, on the one hand, and eliminating the negative habits inscribed in our bodies, on the other. As a practitioner of the Feldenkrais method, Shusterman works on the

43 Richard Shusterman, "Bourdieu and Anglo-American Philosophy," in: *Bourdieu: A Critical Reader*, ed. R. Shusterman, Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1999, p. 21.

44 Shusterman, "Bourdieu..." p. 21.

45 Certeau, Giard, and Mayol, *The Practice...*, p. 182.

46 Certeau, Giard, and Mayol, *The Practice...*, p. 183.

bodily re-education of patients who report many problems caused by malfunctioning bodies. In his discussion of somatic pathologies bound up with inappropriate habits recorded in the body, Shusterman addresses also wrong dietary routines.⁴⁷ Building on the normative notion of “perfection of every sense” developed by David Hume, Shusterman concludes that there is no reason why training of taste buds should not be included into the scope of somatic exercises.

Culinary practices and social change

Somaesthetics shows the way we could follow to understand how changes can be made to the habitus, and, more importantly perhaps, explains how our choices, including the gastronomic ones, affect our total functioning. But let us return to *Babette's Feast*. It is by no means coincidental that there are twelve banqueters around the table. At its core, *Babette's Feast* is, namely, nothing other than a Last Supper⁴⁸ effecting a transubstantiation and healing of the community, parallel to the transformation of a meal into a work of art. Contrary to the sisters' expectations, it is not Babette's farewell dinner before her return to Paris. Just the opposite; this is a gesture in which she ultimately bids farewell to her old life and pays homage to art – its essence and core. It is the last opportunity that Babette seizes to showcase her perfection in the culinary art, and, which is a striving common to all artists, to find self-fulfillment in giving others pleasure and happiness.⁴⁹ We could say that Karen Blixen offers a profoundly pragmatist message, a message which insists that art occupies a very special position, and that each action and each experience, a dinner in this case, may deserve the name of art. This is how we could interpret the (already cited) pronouncement Priscilla Parhusip Ferguson, a researcher of French culinary tradition, makes: “A second article of faith in *Babette's Feast* is the certainty of the instantaneous and direct power of art (...) art touches individuals of every station, even against their will.”⁵⁰

From the viewpoint of somaesthetics, far more interesting than the change of habitus is the question whether bodily practices, including new culinary experiences, may effect social change.

Babette's Feast, albeit masterfully evocative, is but an individual example of how culinary culture may launch change in internal social ties. It would be highly pertinent to reflect on ways in which contemporary culinary culture may perform the same function of transforming cultural habits of a community, yet on the mass scale this time. Post-modern culture is a culture of consumption, also in the literal sense of the term. We are interested in eating, read about eating, watch cooking shows, go to restaurants, cook, and love banqueting. Research shows that in planning holidays people more and more frequently take the local cuisine of their destination into account. A question arises whether tourists and the audience of extraordinarily popular culinary TV channels learn to open up to otherness as they immerse in new cooking cultures and/or find out about new recipes.⁵¹ Discussing the issue, I believe, we should rely on Shusterman's division of somaesthetics into representational and experiential components. By analogy, a similar differentiation could be identified in culinary practices. The feast Babette serves to the

47 For more details, see “Somaesthetics and the Art of Eating,” in: *Practicing Pragmatist Aesthetics*, ed. Wojciech Małecki, Amsterdam-N.Y.: Rodopi, 2014.

48 See Ferguson, *Accounting...*, p. 190.

49 “The happiness is the accomplishment of great art. And of great love, of the material with which the artist works, and of the public that she serves.” Ferguson, *Accounting...*, p. 192.

50 Ferguson, *Accounting...*, p. 193.

51 The belief in the dialogic character of eating underpins artistic practices of Rirkrit Tiravanija. The cosmopolitan artist, a Buenos Aires-born Thai who divides his time between New York and Berlin, uses meals to build temporary communities around the table. He believes that eating is a message comprehensible to all. In his performances, he prepared red and green curries – the dishes characteristic of his native Thailand. In this way, the meals turned into deliberate artistic gestures and communications of openness. An invitation to the table is, at the same time, an invitation to understanding and friendship.

villagers on the coast of Jutland is, undoubtedly, an equivalent of experiential somaesthetics. It expands their world perception, and changes social relations in which the community members are entangled. It meets the basic criterion of experiential somaesthetics, that is, a holistic cultivation and transformation of the individual. Where is the boundary, however, between the surface and the depth of a culinary experience? Shusterman's concept furnishes us with a conceptual apparatus to analyze this issue, and can serve as a starting point for the study of the emancipatory potential of contemporary culinary culture.

Notes

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Fiat Vinum - Salvum Mundus

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Abstract: *More than mere sustenance, food offers a source of identity, community and tradition, and a catalyst for reflection, exploration and exchange. This is likewise true of wine, a gustatory pleasure whose distinct values – somatic, aesthetic, cognitive – make it a particularly ripe lens through which to examine the broader value of gastronomy. Looking at wine’s role in history, philosophy, and daily life, and examining the powerful role critics have played in its reception, I present a model of appreciation that, in begging thoughtful, measured participation, elucidates its value as a catalyst for personal growth and robust aesthetic experience.*

Keywords: *somaesthetics, wine history, philosophy of taste, Brillat-Savarin, high and low culture, inebriation, Hume’s standard of taste, nouveau riche drinking habits*

Some people have a foolish way of not minding, or pretending not to mind, what they eat. For my part, I mind my belly very studiously, and very carefully; for I look upon it, that he who does not mind his belly will hardly mind anything else.

–Samuel Johnson, from James Boswell’s *The Life of Samuel Johnson* (1791)

What do you think of when you think of wine? Inviting intoxicant or intimidating mystery? Elegant Old World labels and vineyards, or \$5 bottles with yellow kangaroos? Convivial evenings shared amongst friends, or nauseous mornings spent near a sink? Do you greet tastings with an open, inquisitive spirit, or anxious uncertainty? Do you think high or low, wine snob or wino, unmitigated pleasures or unrelenting headaches?

Wine critics – academic and nonacademic alike – rarely help settle matters. Rather, in positing their subject as a rarefied locus of aesthetic study they obscure its accessibility and charm. Wine becomes a pop quiz for which many fail to properly study. And in the process of tasting, the hunter becomes the hunted or, rather, the judger becomes the judged. Can you identify styles, countries of origin, or varietals? Are you versed in a highly technical yet unfailingly subjective vocabulary of description? Can you parse distinct notes in the symphony of flavors? Or are you what Jean Anthelme Brillat-Savarin dismissed as a person who “neither separate[s] one sound from another nor appreciate[s] what they might thus hear”? Are you, in brief, refined or coarse? Educated or ignorant? Grounded in knowledge and experience? Or dull in taste and intellect alike?

Beer and liquor carry little such angst. The nomenclature associated with each underscores this point: oenological discourse simply conveys far more gravitas. You never “shoot” or “slug” wine, as you would, say, whiskey or beer (or both, with a pickle juice “chaser”). You would never stop for a “cold one” of Vermentino or Viognier on a hot day, or bring a six pack of Gamay to the Big Game. Nor, confronted with a bottle of Barolo, would you deign to “put one back” to

get “wasted.” The language associated with its consumption demands wine is taken *seriously*: sipped, sniffed, observed, discussed, debated, ruminated on, *appreciated*. If beer is, say, the slovenly joker, and liquor the exuberant wild card, wine is the high-profile guest you cannot help but feel mildly intimidated by. It puts you on stage, which, as an object of aesthetic appreciation, rings counterintuitive.

Why all the fuss? For literally thousands of years, the fermented juice of grapes has been uniquely idolized, and granted a dynamic role in social life, economic affairs, religious rites, and learned discourse. Wine is considered spiritual, nourishing, enlightening, exciting, cultured, “the intellectual part of the meal,” Alexandre Dumas mused, distinct from its “merely... material parts” such as meat.¹ Yet it has also fallen into periods of acute disrepute, dismissed as everything from sinful and proletariat to pretentious and old-fashioned, receptions spurred by global trade and fraud, agricultural blight, and, most notably, historically capricious standards of quality and consistency (ancient wines were typically non-potable without the addition of water, sweeteners, and/or spices).

Since the Enlightenment, philosophers and gastronomes have played prominent roles in salvaging wine’s reputation and clarifying its virtues. Yet their influence has also fostered a culture defined by hierarchy and exclusion, particularly in a contemporary age when high-profile critics, reductionistic ratings systems, and swollen economic interests reinforce, rather than dismantle, the barriers restricting wine’s appeal. After all, wine gratifies on at least four levels: experiential (good times), somatic (the physical sense of well-being), intellectual (stimulating reflection and critical inquiry), and social (promoting conviviality). By contrast, high-cultural defenses – as in America, where wine is often viewed with an inchoate mix of reverence and suspicion – render its appreciation a pleasure of the dullest sort: strict, monologic, desexualized, and deaf to its most untamable virtues.

To be clear, tradition, context and cognitive awareness can stimulate wine’s appreciation. Yet unlike, say, Sapphire Gin – whose reputation rests on its ability to consistently deliver a proprietary flavor profile of “10 exotic botanicals” over time and space – its joys lie in its dynamism and unpredictability. Wine’s manifold variables, evident at every stage of production and consumption, promote a uniquely vibrant, exploratory opportunity for absorption and engagement. And in the most rewarding instances, wine begs robust conversation, a point obscured by top-down mandates of standards and quality.

To best appreciate wine we might therefore reconsider our approach to render its virtues more accessible in theory *and* practice. Towards such end, I will trace wine’s historical and philosophical evolution, examining its development as a living narrative grounded in both tradition and innovation, and guided by ever-evolving standards and open, mediated experience. In so doing we might thus reclaim wine, not simply as a locus of aesthetic merit and philosophic inquiry, but also as a catalyst and guide for willful action, engaged dialogue, and a bit of fun to boot.

“Human beings,” William B. Fretter argues, “have valued wine for thousands of years, as they have valued painting and sculpture.”² Why so? “[A]n eye for brightly colored fruit, a taste for sugar and alcohol, and a brain attuned to alcohol’s psychotropic effects.” These predilections, Patrick McGovern speculates, impelled our hominid ancestors to move “beyond the unconscious craving of a slug or a drunken monkey for fermented fruit to the much more conscious, intentional

1 Alexandre Dumas, *Alexandre Dumas’ Dictionary of Cuisine*, trans. and ed. Louis Colman (London: Spring Books, 1958), 267.

2 William B. Fretter, “Is Wine an Art Object?,” *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, Vol. 30, No. 1 (Autumn, 1971), 97-100.

production and consumption of a fermented beverage.”³ Evidence of human experiments with fermented fruit juice date back to the Paleolithic and Neolithic periods,⁴ and a wine cellar with jugs to hold over 500 gallons was recently uncovered near a 1700 BC Canaanite banquet hall in northern Israel.⁵ Wine was also a centerpiece in Anatolian and Mesopotamian feasts, rituals and ceremonies.⁶ In Babylon’s *Epic of Gilgamesh*, King Jamsheed fortuitously ‘discovered’ its curative properties, and quickly ordered production to commence.⁷ And in Protodynastic Egypt, King Scorpion was buried with over 300 jars – presumably for a festive after-party in the afterlife.

Wine is, of course, a natural product: break a grape, leave it in a container, and it will ferment, thanks to the residual yeast “bloom” on its skin.⁸ Yet in ancient cultures, this transformation seemed a gift from the heavens. As Paul Lukacs writes, “people believed that wine came directly from their gods, [and] valued it... for its apparently divine origin.”⁹ Wine was sensual, mesmerizing, *mysterious*. Harvested from vines reborn each spring, it imparted a jovial buzz, carried deep, bloody hues, and came from fruit (whose temptations, Adam reminds us, have proven irresistible to the human palate, consequences be damned).

We know that Caesar celebrated triumphs and toasted Jupiter with the finest draughts of Chios.¹⁰ Virgil wrote of divine Olympian feasts where “crystal vases fill with gen’rous wine.”¹¹ Athenaeus noted their digestive, “nourishing” qualities, while Horace and Pliny sang the praises of refined reds from Piemonte to Campania. “When [Mediterranean] civilization disappeared with the barbarian invasion,” Dumas laments, “wine, the measure of civilization, disappeared too.”¹² (Barbarians apparently prefer cider and beer.) “Sophocles,” he adds, “calls them Zeus because, he says, like the king of gods they give health and pleasure, the finest gifts the gods can give.”¹³ And in Plato’s *The Symposium*, wine is the catalyst for Socrates’ extended meditation on love and self-possession.

Treasured for its intellectual, physical and cultural properties, wine has also proven economically lucrative. The Greeks introduced grapes to the Romans, who planted vines and exported barrels of fermented juice throughout their empire, including territories in modern-day Loire, Burgundy, Champagne, Bordeaux and the Rhone.¹⁴ Such robust trade spurred a new class of connoisseur, wealthy enthusiasts who thirsted after high quality regional vintages like the Falernum “Opimian” of 121 BC.¹⁵ And citizens of all income brackets shared the joys of

3 Patrick E. McGovern, *Uncorking the Past: The Quest for Wine, Beer, and Other Alcoholic Beverages* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009), 12.

4 *Ibid.*, 11.

5 John Noble Wilford, “Wine Cellar, Well Aged, Is Revealed in Israel,” *The New York Times*, Nov. 22, 2013. Accessed December, 2013 at: <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/11/23/science/in-ruins-of-palace-a-wine-with-hints-of-cinnamon-and-top-notes-of-antiquity.html>.

6 Paul Lukacs, *Inventing Wine: A New History of One of the World’s Most Ancient Pleasures* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2012), 11.

7 McGovern, *Ancient Wine: The Search for the Origins of Viniculture* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), 4. See also: Liz Thach, “The Ancient Connection Between Women and Wine,” *Wayward Tendrils Quarterly*, Vol 18, No. 2 (April, 2008).

8 McGovern, *Ancient Wine*, 8.

9 Lukacs, 1.

10 Dumas, 268.

11 From Virgil’s *Aeneid*, Book VII, quoted in Launcelot Sturgeon, Esq., *Essays, Moral, Philosophical, and Stomachical, on the Important Science of Good-Living, Second Edition* (London: G. & W. B. Whittaker, 1823), 78.

12 Dumas, 268.

13 *Ibid.*, 268.

14 Lukacs, 19.

15 *Ibid.*, 20.

consumption in the stimulating, learned banquets or *convivia* praised by Cicero and Plutarch.¹⁶

Not that it was *all* fun and games. As Livy reminds us, Dionysian and Bacchanalian cults brought wine's self-destructive potential to a decadent, unfettered fore. The Roman Senate eventually outlawed such festivals in 186 BC, presaging a rise in both sober, clinical defenses of wine (epitomized by Galen's cautious notes on blood production and nourishment)¹⁷ and, more powerfully, the Christian asceticism of Augustine and Athanasius. Restraint proved a compelling response to the broader excesses of Roman society. Wine usage was soon contained, harnessed by rites and rituals imbuing consumption with severity and gravitas. Following the doctrine of transubstantiation, for example, wine is literally absorbed as the blood of Christ, a testament of our ontological guilt and the possibility of redemption through submission, and a sharp rejoinder to the loosely celebratory models of communion cherished in Ancient cultures.

In codifying wine's ceremonial role, the Church nonetheless proved an ironic catalyst for wine's reintroduction into quotidian life. Beyond the strict confines of Christian dogma, consumption in the Middle Ages flourished from poorhouses to noble palaces. Furthermore, the rise of world trade and correlative birth of an independent merchant class spurred a new market driven by entrepreneurs with increasingly urbane tastes. From the 12th to 14th Centuries AD, the apex of Genoan and Venetian dried grape vintages, wine commanded sustained interest as a status-laden global commodity.¹⁸ Its quality, luster and appeal broadened, and critics again sought to explicitly identify its merits. In his c. 1256 *Le Régime du corps*, Aldobrandino da Siena thus championed "wine in moderation, in accordance with the needs and capabilities of... nature [and] custom" for providing, in measure, "good blood, good color, and good flavor," adding that "it will strengthen all bodily virtues and make a man happy, good-natured, and well-spoken."¹⁹

Da Siena here linked wine to a widely accessible *eudaimonia*, a good-naturedness of body and spirit alike. Yet, as Odile Redon, Françoise Sabban and Silvano Serventi note, drinking patterns were increasingly drawn along class lines: "People chose their wine on the basis of their social standing, their occupation, their age, and their constitution."²⁰ The rich savored delicate, refined clarets and whites, for example, while physical laborers consumed heavier reds for their purported promotion of musculature.

Inequalities notwithstanding, the popularity of wine far outpaced beer – this, despite the hop-fueled 13th century rise of German commercial brewing. Almost 22 million gallons (over 111 million bottles) of Bordeaux were shipped yearly by the early 1300s, largely to England.²¹ And this success induced corruption. Unscrupulous tavern owners adulterated imports and sold swill as hi-priced claret, a fraudulent practice particularly rife during the English Civil War. Yet wine enthusiasts had already been introduced to finer products, and were developing increasingly sophisticated palates to match, a point illustrated by Richard Ames' lament that the "Wine with which we now engage, Has not that body, taste or age, It had before the War began."²²

16 Ibid., 23.

17 Lukacs, 29; Galen, *On the Properties of Foodstuffs*, Owen Powell, tr. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 149-150.

18 Lukacs, 48.

19 Odile Redon, Françoise Sabban and Silvano Serventi, *The Medieval Kitchen: Recipes from France and Italy*, Edward Schneider, tr. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 15-16.

20 Ibid., 15.

21 Lukacs, 60.

22 Richard Ames, "A Farewell To Wine, By a Quondam Friend to the Bottle" (1693). Accessed December, 2013 at: <http://www.poemhunter.com/best-poems/richard-ames/a-farewell-to-wine-by-a-quondam-friend-to-the-bottle/>.

Conflicts notwithstanding, a vocal connoisseurship was taking shape.

Four additional technological, cultural and scientific innovations spurred wine's ascension as an object of increasingly rarefied appeal. First, during the Middle Ages, Cistercian Monks pioneered meticulous studies on varietals, yields, soil content, weather, growing conditions, plotting, harvesting and grafting, applying their empirical research towards radically improved methods of production.²³ Second, the introduction of coal furnaces, leaded glass, and advanced shaping moulds in 17th century England yielded stronger, more uniform, shatter-resistant bottles, an innovation that enabled producers to create rich, complex vintages for aging and storage in private cellars.²⁴ Third, the rise of the restaurant in 18th century France heralded the democratization of gastronomy,²⁵ providing a newly public forum for wine consumption that facilitated its role as a vital constituent of fine dining. And finally, 18th and 19th century research conducted by Adamo Fabroni, Louis Jacques Thénard, Joseph Gay-Lussac, Antoine Lavoisier and Louis Pasteur on fermentation, yeast, sulfur and sugar helped vintners better understand, and subsequently command, flavor profiles, preservation methods, and product stability.

Equally, two prominent currents in Enlightenment thought spurred wine's legitimization as a subject of critical inquiry. First, the rise of scientific rationalism shed new attention on dietary and culinary habits. George Cheyne and Jean-Jacques Rousseau, for example, championed the somatic and moral virtues of a lighter, less ostentatious, more elegant cuisine, at once theoretically "populist" correctives to decadent royal traditions and healthy alternatives to waves of cream and butter. Born of the vines ubiquitous throughout France, increasingly delicate and refined, relatively unadulterated and unprocessed, wine paired well with this newfound embrace of, to borrow Susan Pinkard's term, "simplicity and authenticity."²⁶ Second, and more significantly, the philosophic examination of concepts such as beauty and taste came into vogue during the 18th century. Following Hutcheson's *Inquiry* (1725) and Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten's master's thesis (1735), and in rebuttal to Plato's ancient denigration of art as anathema to the philosophical life in *The Republic*, Hume, Rousseau, Diderot, Voltaire, Schiller and Kant reclaimed aesthetics as a field of philosophic inquiry on par, and often overlapping, with politics and morals.

Amidst this climate, Hume famously introduced his 1757 study of standards with an empirical observation: tastes are ubiquitous, diverse, and generally dissentious, and we all think ours to be *good* – a "self-conceit" nourished amongst even "men of the most confined knowledge." Yet because judgments – aesthetic and moral both – presuppose an ability to discern right from wrong, or virtue from vice, lack of consensus is tantamount to moral indeterminacy. In seeking a standard, Hume therefore sought a practical and virtuous corrective, one that satisfied our "natural" human impulse to establish moral and critical boundaries in polite, learned society.

Against Plato, Hume contends that concepts such as "beauty" are determined empirically, via experience and observation, rather than conceptually, via imagination and pure reasoning. In the absence of universalist standards, aesthetic rules must necessarily be "drawn from established models, and from the observation of what pleases or displeases."²⁷ We can reasonably praise

²³ Lukacs, 39 & 71-74.

²⁴ Aged wines were so popular that, in his 1823 *Essays, Moral, Philosophical, and Stomachical, on the Important Science of Good-Living*, lawyer Launcelot Sturgeon notes: "It is commonly said, that new wine, a family dinner, and a concert of amateurs, are three things to be equally avoided." Sturgeon, 16-17.

²⁵ This brought to the public sphere what had previously been restricted to royal and aristocratic households, who alone could afford the ingredients and staff needed to prepare elaborate *ancienne cuisine*.

²⁶ See: Susan Pinkard, *A Revolution in Taste: The Rise of French Cuisine, 1650-1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), Chapter 6.

²⁷ David Hume, *Essays: Moral, Political, and Literary*, ed. Eugene F. Miller (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1985), 235.

Homer, for example, because *The Iliad* is still roundly celebrated after thousands of years. And we can confidently serve a \$2,400 bottle of Chateau Margaux, knowing it has, since the 1600s, delighted everyone from Richard the Lionheart to Friedrich Engels.²⁸ Historical reification and common accord therefore legitimize aesthetic judgments and cultivate immunity to the distortive whims, trends, prejudices and jealousies that characterize the “variety and caprice of taste.”

Following Rousseau, Hume believed that natural human sentiment, pure and unclouded by mediation, is “always real” and “never errs.” Yet our apprehension and articulation of these sentiments is fallible, swayed by external stimuli and individual biases. In art as in life, prejudice perverts; and only critics, those “easily to be distinguished in society, by the soundness of their understanding and the superiority of their faculties above the rest of mankind” might offer enlightened guidance.²⁹ Possessing the “delicacy of imagination... required to convey a sensibility of those finer emotions,” critics maintain minds “free from all prejudice”³⁰ characterized by clarity (of conception), precision (of distinction), and vivacity (of apprehension).³¹ As Hume concludes, it is a matter of “fact not sentiment” that questions of taste must therefore be entrusted to this expert class.³²

At face value, the contemporary wine world seems to have absorbed much of Hume’s counsel. Delicacy, clarity, vivacity, and an empirical approach to learning dominate the language and disposition of formal tastings. Consensus and traditions of excellence uphold the reputations and exorbitant prices commanded by some of the world’s most prestigious chateaux. And the wine critic’s prominence has swelled since the 1970s, directly influencing production and consumption patterns. Together, these developments suggest Hume may have underestimated the constrictive influence of literally and metaphorically placing the critic above the general populace. To borrow Montaigne’s simile,³³ our increasing reliance upon expertise has fostered a culture wherein wine critics train wine *parrots*, creatures far better suited to mimicking, rather than participating in, sustained dialogue on wine’s role in society. In application, Hume’s standards have therefore fostered subservience; and they certainly don’t allow wine the opportunity to *breathe*.

As wine further evolved, in Kantian terms, from a source of “agreeability” to something approaching a symbol of “pure” aesthetic beauty, its evaluations increasingly relied upon objectivity as a requisite of legitimacy. This is particularly evident in the rise of the “rational epicure,” a phrase coined by William Kitchiner in the preface to his 1830 edition of *The Cook’s Oracle*.³⁴ Kitchiner’s temperate vision of the gourmand combined scientific reasoning, medical

28 A. Craig Copetas and Guy Collins, “Chateau Margaux: Luxury Liquidity Is Pricey at \$2,400 a Bottle,” *Bloomberg Luxury*, October 3, 2011. Accessed January, 2014 at: <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2011-03-10/chateau-margaux-s-mature-luxury-liquidity-comes-pricey-at-2-400-a-bottle.html>.

29 Hume, 243.

30 Ibid., 238-239.

31 Ibid., 240.

32 Ibid., 242. Clearly, Hume does not subscribe to the notion “à chacun son gout,” a position Leon Battista Alberti (1404-1472) similarly dismissed as “a common error of ignorance” some three hundred years prior. Alberti categorically dismissed the contention that standards are “changeable according to the taste of each individual and not dependent on any rules.” In brief: rules matter. Quoted in Dabney Townsend, *Hume’s Aesthetic Theory: Sentiment and Taste in the History of Aesthetics*, (New York: Routledge, 2001), 66.

33 See, for example, “Of pedantry” and “Apology for Raymond Sebond” in: Michel de Montaigne, *The Complete Essays of Montaigne*, Donald M. Frame, tr. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1958).

34 William Kitchiner, *The Cook’s Oracle and Housekeeper’s Manual, 7th and Final London Edition*, (New York: J. & J. Harper, 1830). First edition published in 1817.

authority, and a somewhat rigid *bon vivant* Epicureanism bound by rational “rules and orders.”³⁵ If the *Oracle* rang a bit self-important, it was partly a sign of the times: the nascent field of gastronomy ascended mightily during the 19th century, precipitating the proliferation of self-conscious, systematized guides.

Earlier, and to greater effect, the self-described “*vieil amateur*” Grimod de la Reynière published his yearly *Almanach des Gourmands* from 1803-1812. A *locus classicus* of modern food writing, Grimod’s work heralded a changing cultural climate in which gastronomy held a central role. As he observed, “Hosts have come to consider the dining table a serious matter, guests have become more refined in their tastes,”³⁶ and the table had become “the linchpin of political, literary, financial, and commercial matters” alike.³⁷ This was particularly true in Grimod’s Paris, where *nouveau riche* “cellars and larders [were] far better replenished than their libraries.”³⁸ Grimod’s eight-volume *Almanach* took note, serving as treatise, chaperone, testimonial and trailblazer of the gastronome’s exploratory appetite and rising influence.

In a similar spirit, Brillat-Savarin, an aristocratic ladies man with a penchant for pornography who wrote the notes for his *Physiognomy of Taste* while serving as a judge in Versailles, wholeheartedly promoted gastronomy as a vibrant new field of scientific, sociological, historical and theoretical inquiry. As Roland Barthes put it, The *Physiognomy* remains “the great adventure of desire” personified.³⁹ Employing a mixture of aphorism, intimate narrative, travelogue, and speculative science, it paints cuisine as an art of universal appeal: one as ancient as the world itself (even “Adam must have been born hungry”) that merits heightened attention on multiple fronts, from experiential and cognitive to economic and interpersonal.

Others explicitly applied this ethos to wine. André Jullien, a Parisian-based Burgundy-born merchant, scribed the earliest modern guide devoted exclusively to its consumption.⁴⁰ His 1816 *Topographie de tous les vignobles connus* provided rules and rationale on standards and tasting practices. Echoing his more food-obsessed contemporaries, he described taste as a cultivated quality apprehended, and enhanced, through education. This was particularly true of wine, an object of aesthetic appreciation that demanded ruminative experience to grasp its virtues. In publishing the *Topographie*, Jullien disseminated his model amongst the public sphere, codifying rules for assessment and enjoyment epitomized by the practice of *savoring*.

If erudition was again posited as a requisite to sound judgment, it would also be identified as a form of fraud protection. As Cyrus Redding argued in his *History and Description of Modern Wines* (1833), “the best test against adulterated wine is a perfect acquaintance with that which is good. Those whose test of wine is the degree of spirituous strength it affords, may remain satisfied with wines as they are.”⁴¹ In other words, drunks need not fret; but for those who aspire to greater sophistication, wine study can elevate your sense and sensibilities alike.

Connoisseurship thus presented an increasingly aspirational model of tastefulness and cultural savvy. Yet wine still proved difficult to master, a source of some agitation to would-be

35 As a Doctor and man of faith both (his work was subtitled “a Complete System of Cookery for Catholic Families”), wine is conspicuously absent from Kitchiner’s diagnoses. His Preface also suggests “[t]he most useful art” was teaching readers to combine the “*utile*” with the “*dulce*,” “to increase their pleasures, without impairing, their health, or impoverishing their fortune... and, with a little discretion, enable [them] to indulge occasionally.”

36 Quoted in Lukacs, 137.

37 Quoted in Denise Gigante, “Romantic Gastronomy: An Introduction.” Accessed December, 2013 at: http://romantic.arhu.umd.edu/praxis/gastronomy/gigante/gigante_essay.html.

38 Ibid.

39 Barthes, 251.

40 Lukacs, 138.

41 Cyrus Redding, *History and Description of Modern Wines* (London: Whittaker, Treacher, & Arnot, 1833), 341.

experts. Writing on his peers, influential Victorian wine merchant Thomas Shaw observed that:

the character of these old [quality] standards is a guarantee of goodness, but it also shows very distinctly the little confidence which the oldest and most experienced wine merchants have in their own judgment; and they are right, because it is utterly impossible for anyone to avoid being often mistaken, even if the wines tried were always the same, but such is not the case.⁴²

As Shaw makes plain, wine eschews absolute proficiency. A dynamic, living, breathing product, it is governed by variability in everything from varietals, harvests, weather, soil and *terroir*, to production techniques, storage conditions, and the tasting environment itself.

Such unpredictability was only compounded by a wave of 19th Century threats, most notably diseases imported on New World vines which riddled the continent with rot and fungi, temperance movements (also generated in America), and rampant adultery and fraud. Without much warning, wine quickly found itself in the metaphorical gutter once more; and again its revival was linked to a new breed of critic – this time hailing from America.

Working at the intersection of taste and commerce, author, importer and marketer Frank Schoonmaker became one of wine's most influential pundits. He possessed what American consumers generally lacked: expertise, erudition, an ability to communicate standards of appreciation, and a wholehearted willingness to debate his peers.⁴³ He wrote on American wine traditions as early as 1936 (before there was much to speak of),⁴⁴ completed two ambitious, comprehensive tomes (*The Complete Wine Book* in 1935 and, in 1980, *Frank Schoonmaker's Encyclopedia of Wine*), proffered purchasing advice to readers of his *New Yorker* columns, and, in founding Frank Schoonmaker Selections, made vogue the practice of importing wines *mis en bouteille à la propriété* direct from producers. Schoonmaker therefore served a Humean role with a commercial twist. He established wine's validity as an object of aesthetic appreciation, constructing – much like James Beard did for cuisine – a distinctly “American” history of wine production and hierarchy of standards, while helping build a sustainable national market. This was no mean feat during an epoch of cocktail vogue, when wine was viewed with increasing suspicion as stuffy, old fashioned, and (worse yet) *European*. Schoonmaker nonetheless sparked a cultural dialogue on wine that simultaneously identified, and established, its role as an esteemed, achievable object of desire in mid-century America.

A second, more sudden turning point occurred with the 1976 Judgment of Paris, a blind tasting in which Californian upstart Stag's Leap Cellars defeated some of Bordeaux's most prestigious *premier cru classés* including Haut-Brion and Mouton-Rothschild. The Judgment proved influential beyond its years, challenging both heretofore European-dominated standards of taste and, more broadly, the objectivity of existent aesthetic hierarchies. California's victory suggested that the New World could produce, and also consume, with the best of them, thereby sparking America's thirst for wine. Yet as Lukacs notes,

these new wine drinkers also wanted guidance, and they soon turned to a new kind of expert to get it. Promising impartiality, critics supplanted merchants (whether at the wholesale or retail level) in providing both counsel to individuals and direction to the marketplace.

⁴² Thomas George Shaw, *Wine, The Vine, And The Cellar, Second Addition* (London: Longman, Green, Longman, Roberts, & Green, 1864), 17-18.

⁴³ See: Raymond Postgate, “Snobbery of the Vine and Table Cloth,” *The New Yorker*, November 20, 1937; and Frank Schoonmaker, “Department of Correction, Amplification, and Abuse,” *The New Yorker*, December 11, 1937.

⁴⁴ Frank Schoonmaker, “The Ups and Downs of Vinland the Good,” *The New Yorker*, September 5, 1936.

They assigned allegedly objective scores or grades to wines, and those numbers, when high, propelled sales like nothing else.⁴⁵

Three points here merit consideration, two of them ironic. First, the American public quickly turned to critics who purported to represent precisely the sort of objective standards of wine tasting so recently subverted by the Judgment. Second, these critics – theoretically autonomous, uncompromised arbiters – shaped the 20th century wine market, at times single-handedly. And finally, the resultant rise of wine drinkers generated additional demand for guidance – namely, more critics.

Unlike the Bordeaux Classifications of 1855 (public, joint, government-sanctioned codifications of centuries-old traditions), *individuals* set America's standards. And on this front, no one proved more influential than Robert Parker. A former lawyer who started his *Wine Advocate* newsletter in 1978, Parker positioned himself as a sort of consumer watchdog. An “advocate” in both senses of the word (fighting on the public's behalf, and upholding higher laws of quality and taste), he entered wine writing as a part-time consumer hobbyist.

Parker rose to prominence largely on the appeal of his 100-point ratings system. Arbitrarily inflated to a 50-100 point scale (in contrast to the 20 point models favored in France, and by English authority Jancis Robinson), and marked by broad descriptions (terms such as “profound,” “character,” and “flaws”), this formula was embraced by wine sellers for whom neatly accessible numerations proved remarkably lucrative consumer stimuli. Indeed, by most accounts Parker's ratings have dictated production and consumption patterns in both the New and Old Worlds, ushering the market saturation of high-alcohol, fruit-forward reds, creating sustained demand for previously unheralded producers, and fomenting the rise of a costly new category of “cult wines” including Ribera del Duero's Pingus and Tuscany's Tenuta dell'Ornellaia.⁴⁶

In brief, Parker's ratings foster a cult of personality as oblique as it is dominant. Objections to his critical qualifications have subsequently mounted in recent years, largely in reaction to his overwhelming influence, focused (some claim narrow) palate, and oblique financial interests.⁴⁷ As author and Berkeley importer Kermit Lynch recently put it, Parker “is the only person in the wine world who does not think there is a Parker palate.”⁴⁸ Dismissing the “label-oriented” Bordeaux market Parker helped revive as a distraction from “what counts” (namely “what is poured into the glass”),⁴⁹ and citing “the incredible power the wine journalists have gained in the marketplace,” Lynch argues that adopting such critics as guides yields little more than “an ulcer.”⁵⁰ His dismissal of the hyperbole epitomized by ratings scales is rooted in experience: “seventeen years in the wine trade, has taught me never to reject a vintage out of hand, and never go overboard with enthusiasm.”

More pointedly, Lynch believes the concept of a purely objective “best vintage” is categorically amiss; to repeat, when it comes to wine simply too many variables lay at play. As he writes, your

45 Lukacs, 279.

46 See: <http://www.wine-searcher.com/robertparker.lml>

47 See, for example: Per-Henrik Mansson, “Robert Parker's Bordeaux Assistant Faces Criminal Charges: French police charge the wine critic's tasting coordinator with forgery, in connection with allegedly billing a winery on Wine Advocate stationery,” *Wine Spectator*, Posted: January 30, 2003. Accessed January, 2014 at: http://www.winespectator.com/webfeature/show/id/Robert-Parkers-Bordeaux-Assistant-Faces-Criminal-Charges_21528.

48 Kermit Lynch and Daniel Duane (Interviewer), “Kermit Lynch Knows the Terroir,” *The New York Times*, October 18, 2013. Accessed December, 2013 at: [http://www.nytimes.com/2013/10/20/magazine/kermit-lynch-terroirist.html?partner=rss&emc=rss&_r=1&pagewanted=all&#h\[AWIijm,2\]](http://www.nytimes.com/2013/10/20/magazine/kermit-lynch-terroirist.html?partner=rss&emc=rss&_r=1&pagewanted=all&#h[AWIijm,2]).

49 Kermit Lynch, *Inspiring Thirst: Vintage Selections from the Kermit Lynch Wine Brochure* by Kermit Lynch (Berkeley: Ten Speed Press, 2004), 100.

50 *Ibid.*, 170-172.

experience ultimately “depends on YOUR palate, the cuisine you are matching, the maturity of the wine when you uncork it, and the particular domaine or château.”⁵¹ Furthermore, overreliance on critics yields little in the way of confidence, education or gratification. “You consumers,” he suggests, “for the most part, are ready to let journalists decide what goes into your cellar and glass before you are ready to trust... even your own palate. I think I understand why. You don’t trust your own palate as much as you trust a rating or numerical score.” Yet placing such faith in a formula denudes us of wine’s most distinctive pleasures.

As Terry Theise argues, “Wine can be a bringer of mystical experience.”⁵² And while he suggests “there are no invalid moments of pleasure” in its consumption, the rise of the critic has molded a consumer culture which privileges status and cost above all else.⁵³ We treasure wine’s “financial jujū,” Theise laments – the value and cachet certain vintages convey – above the specific tastes, experiences, histories and narratives it imparts.⁵⁴ (Consider this the “Johnnie Walker Blue” approach: purchase the nicest looking, most expensive brand-name bottle you can find, present it with a flourish, and bask in the awe of your peers.) Theise instead suggests we distinguish between “higher and lower pleasures, [and] delineate the distinctions among inadequate, ordinary, good, fine, and great—or between mass-produced ‘industrial’ wines and small scale ‘agricultural’ wines.”⁵⁵

At face value, his point reads blunt and dichotomous: good versus bad, high versus low, local versus corporate, agriculture versus technology. Yet it also provides a call to arms, a suggestion that wine might offer so much more than we expect; we simply need to rethink our modes of appreciation and consumption. The impetus, in brief, lies on us. After all, wine’s pleasures, are often uncovered on winding roads both literal and metaphorical, shared with friends or in contemplative solitude. The rise of critical mediation and, more specifically, rote, delimiting models of taste has nonetheless denuded us of these firsthand experiences. And while Lukacs argues that “when all is said and done, pleasure in all its various forms—spiritual and communal, then secular, intellectual, emotional, sensual, aesthetic, and more—remains the only reason why anyone has ever cared about wine at all,” history suggests otherwise.⁵⁶ But the future is still very much of our molding. To effectively realize wine’s potential as a source of gastronomic, social, cultural and aesthetic appeal, we must therefore reorient our approach.

Towards this end, Richard Shusterman offers insight. His study of somaesthetics demands reclaiming the body as a “locus of sensory-aesthetic appreciation (aesthesia) and creative self-fashioning.” Stressing the value of lived experience, he argues that “improved awareness of our feelings [provides] greater insights into both our passing moods and lasting attitudes.”⁵⁷ Greater understanding thus stimulates the will, serving as a catalyst “to correct the actual functional performance of our senses by an improved direction of one’s body,”⁵⁸ and yielding “joys and stimulations... intensified or more acutely savored through improved somatic awareness

51 Ibid., 171.

52 Terry Theise, *Reading Between the Wines* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011), 7.

53 As Fretter notes, “Just as all paintings are not works of art, so all glasses of wine are not works of art.” Some taste mass-produced; are thoughtless and bland, or poorly executed. But no matter your tastes, still aesthetically rich experiences to be had. See: Fretter, 97.

54 Theise, 112.

55 Ibid., 101.

56 Lukacs, 314.

57 Richard Shusterman, *Performing Live: Aesthetic Alternatives for the Ends of Art* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2000), 139.

58 Ibid., 138-9.

and discipline.”⁵⁹ This, in turn, bears fruits consistent with a more robust model of wine appreciation: knowledge in the form of sensory perception (attentiveness to wine’s symbiotic cognitive and physical effects); self-knowledge accrued from improved physical awareness (greater attentiveness to the process of tasting); enhanced will engendered by “right action” (emphasizing the value of concerted choice in enriching the experience of wine consumption); and a revival of the ancient philosophical quest for the good life (the realization of pleasure and joy with heightened intensity).

In addition, somaesthetics “offers a way of understanding how complex hierarchies of power can be widely exercised and reproduced without any need to make them explicit in laws or have them enforced,” revealing how “entire ideologies of domination [have been] covertly materialized and preserved by encoding them in somatic norms.”⁶⁰ In other words, power relations, as Foucault and Bourdieu likewise understood, are reified unconsciously, particularly in the case of wine. As we have seen, hegemonic and cultural forces from ancient rulers to pagan cults, pious Christians to bourgeois mercantilists, colonial forces to intellectual and critical elites, have shaped the manners in which we define and appreciate its virtues. What we think of and feel about wine has therefore been directed by forces – instrumental, expectant, economic, status-driven – remote from, and often at odds with, the pleasures it imparts.

Yet taste, Barthes rightly insists, is far richer and more complex: it is “that very meaning which knows and practices certain multiple and successive apprehensions: entrances, returns, overlappings, a whole counterpoint to sensation.”⁶¹ And while taste requires “*discernment*,” scrupulousness and training,⁶² the process itself imparts “a kind of enchantment; the first moment, the first time, the freshness of a dish, of a rite, in short the *beginning*, [which] refers to a... state of pleasure: where all the determinations of a felicity combine.”⁶³ A revised model of criticism must facilitate this felicitous moment, engendering the “rehabilitation of earthly joys” without sacrificing thoughtfulness or depth.⁶⁴

Alas, as Dumas notes, “The arts of eating and drinking are not learned overnight,”⁶⁵ and solutions are far from simple, let alone compact or formulaic. So where to begin? Perhaps with raised glass, and a revival of what the ancients intuitively grasped, free of self-doubt or irony or pretense: that the beauty of wine lies in its inherent mystery, in the unique combination of social, intellectual, somatic, aesthetic, sensory, and gustatory experiences it engenders. The more routes that lead us down this path, the more we might appreciate the journey.

Notes

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⁵⁹ Ibid., 140.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 140.

⁶¹ Roland Barthes, *The Rustle of Language* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), 250.

⁶² Ibid., 257.

⁶³ Ibid., 264.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 270.

⁶⁵ Dumas, 267.

Notes on Contributors

Else Marie Bukdahl, D. Phil., is an affiliated professor at the University of Aalborg, Denmark. She is a former professor at the University of Aarhus, the former president of the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts (1985-2005), and a member of The Royal Danish and Norwegian Society of Sciences and Letters (1985- and 2006 -). Bukdahl is also an honored member of international *Who's Who* and was selected as one of the Leading Educators of the world by *International Biographical Centre, Cambridge* and is an *Officier des Palmes Académiques* and *Chevalier de l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres*, Paris. She has a long list of publications spanning from philosophy, aesthetics and literature to visual art and architecture, among others articles on somaesthetics and postmodern philosophy and books on art and architecture, e.g. *The Baroque. A Recurrent Inspiration* (1998), *The Re-enchantment of Nature and Urban Space. Michael Singer Projects* (2011). She has also been involved in exchanges programs with the Academies and Universities in China and The United Arab Emirates and Jordan and has, for example, published books about *The exhibition of Art Works in Xiamen from The Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts* (2005) and *The Islamic Golden Age in Spain* (2006).

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She is director of the research teams ESPAS (Aesthetics of Performance Art) at the Institute ACTE (Arts Creations Theories Aesthetics) of the University Paris 1 Sorbonne and CNRS (French National Center for Scientific Research). She is also the founder and co-director with Dr. Mélanie Perrier (University Lecturer and choreographer) of the *Laboratoire du Geste* (Gesture Laboratory), a research collective working in the area of performance art.

Joshua Karant teaches philosophy, food studies, and hip hop culture at Pratt Institute in Brooklyn, NY. His current research interests include local food and wine traditions, the politics and economics of wine production, and the concept of terroir.

Dorota Koczanowicz holds a PhD in Art Sciences and is an Adjunct Professor at the Department of Cultural Studies, University of Wrocław. She authored *Doświadczenie sztuki, sztuka życia. Wymiary estetyki pragmatycznej* [Experience of art, art of living: Dimensions of pragmatist aesthetics] (2008) and co-edited *Między estetyzacją a emancypacją. Praktyki artystyczne w przestrzeni publicznej* [Between aestheticization and emancipation: Art practices in the public space] (2010), *Shusterman's Pragmatism: Between Literature and Somaesthetics* (2012), and *Discussing Modernity: A Dialogue with Martin Jay* (2013), the last two published by Rodopi. She publishes on aesthetics, arts, and culture, but also collaborates with journals and magazines (e.g. *Format* and *Odra*), writing exhibition reviews. She has conducted research at John F. Kennedy Institute, Berlin; The Wittgenstein Archives at the University of Bergen (WAB), Norway; and Columbia University (East Central European Center), New York.

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Carolyn Korsmeyer is Professor of Philosophy at the State University of New York, Buffalo. Her research areas include aesthetics and emotion theory, and she also has a special interest in the senses that have been traditionally neglected by philosophy: taste and touch. Several of her publications address taste, food, disgust, and related subjects. *Savoring Disgust: The Foul and the Fair in Aesthetics* (2011) concerns the appeal of disgust when it is aroused by works of art (and even on occasion by foods). *Making Sense of Taste: Food and Philosophy* (1999) explores the gustatory sense and its aesthetic features. She has also analyzed gender and its influence on philosophical ideas in the book *Gender and Aesthetics* (2004). Her current book project, *Things: In Touch with the Past*, concerns the experience of “genuine” or “real” things, especially insofar as old things can bring us in touch (sometimes literally) with the past.

Charles Michel is a Franco-Colombian professional chef graduated from ‘Institut Paul Bocuse’ cookery school in Lyon, France in 2006. After a classical training in kitchens in France and Italy, including two years at the three Michelin-starred restaurant “Dal Pescatore”, his work as a cook took a turn in a collaborative research with professor Charles Spence, applying insights from sensory and psychological science to culinary creations. He is currently conducting research on food aesthetics as *Chef-in-residence* at the *Crossmodal Research Laboratory*, Department of Experimental Psychology, University of Oxford. His work focuses on understanding the role of the senses in modulating flavour perception. He has recently been applying the knowledge of brain and sensory research to inform creative processes and experience architecture: Creating a bridge between art and science could play a crucial role to design the healthier, more sustainable habits for the future of mankind. Charles has conducted academic research, public and private consultancies, media, advertisement, and developed entertainment concepts. London’s Science Museum, Magnum Media TV, The Fat Duck Experimental Kitchen, Oxford’s Saïd Business School, Discovery Channel and Jack Daniel’s are amongst its clients/collaborators. He is an active researcher on the emerging field of ‘Gastrophysics’ at Oxford’s department of experimental psychology, collaborator of an artistic/theatrical group called ‘The Crossmodalists’ delivering high-end dinners and performances, and is visiting experience-curator at www.lastanusas.com, a luxury hotel in the Pacific coast of Ecuador, South America.

Living on the Belgian countryside, **Jean-François Paquay** is a cartographer in the urban planning department of Catholic University in Louvain-la-Neuve (UCL); a gardener specialized in preparing and using artisanal soils; and a ceramist renowned for using homemade ash glazes. His *Portager*[®] (a portmanteau of *portable* plus *potager*) offers a system for transforming abandoned lots, flat roofs, balconies, sidewalks, parking lots, and driveways (spots with direct sunlight) into easily-removable farmable plots. *Homemade Soil Potential* (2015), his solo exhibition curated by philosopher Mateusz Salwa, recently traveled around Finland in Klein Gallery, philosopher Max Ryyänen suitcase gallery. His research concerning farming with mole-hill soil is forthcoming in the *Proceedings of the 2013 'Art and Ecology' Conference* at University of Wrocław in Wrocław, Poland.

Marius Presterud is a lyricist, psychologist and cultural entrepreneur. In addition to leading the eco-artist group Oslo Apiary & Aviary, he is currently Poet in Residence at Flatbread Society, Oslo. Previous to this, he spent a decade as the front singer of the band Bourgeois Stallion. His original background is in psychology, with years of experience as a clinician from both public and private sector. Thematic commonalities throughout his work, writings, and lectures is a focus on relations, selfhood, embodiment and health.

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Associate Editor of *Aesthetic Investigations*, the journal of the Dutch Association of Aesthetics, **Sue Spaid**'s 2013 doctoral dissertation *Work and World: On the Philosophy of Curatorial Practice* reflects twenty-five years of experience working as a critic, gallerist, curator, and museum director. The current issue of *Rivista di Estetica* features her paper "Biodiversity: Regarding its Role as a Bio-Indicator for Human Cultural Engagement." Additional philosophy papers appear in the current issue of *Aesthetic Investigations*, as well as the forthcoming *Proceedings of the 2014 Spanish and Portuguese Society of Aesthetics Meeting* and *Journal for Aesthetics and Art Criticism*. As 2015 was UN International Year of Soils, Spaid wrote three new papers regarding artists focused on soil, including the catalog essay for the exhibition catalog *Patricia Johanson's Environmental Remedies: Connecting Soil to Water*. Her 2015 philosophical research was supported by a Mutinous Stars Foundation grant.



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