Christina Bartz, Jens Ruchatz, Eva Wattolik (eds.)
Food – Media – Senses

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Interdisciplinary Approaches

[transcript]

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Preliminary Observations

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If one does not want to reduce eating to nutrition, then the aspect of sensorial experience comes to the fore. The observation that eating is linked to the sense of taste seems self-evident. The sensuality of eating is not restricted to taste, however. During a meal all senses are likely to be involved in a complex interplay.[1] *How* the senses are activated and brought into mutual relation is largely defined by cultural tradition or social habit but can be creatively aestheticized in fine dining, thereby moving eating into the realm of art. The modernist cuisines of the last two decades have taken recourse to scientific findings and processes in order to redefine the relations of color, shape, taste and texture, more or less freed from the constraints produced by natural ingredients (Pryba 2017). In their quest for a scientifically founded boost to their creative opportunities, these cooks were interested not only in the chemistry of cooking, but also in an exploration of the sensory perception of food, which they were eager to play upon.[2]

Not only in the culinary art of fine dining, but also in the design of industrially processed convenience foods,[3] trends of controlling all the senses in relation to each

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1 For a philosophical and anthropological dialogue on the interrelation of the senses, see e.g. Korsmeyer/Sutton 2011. Moreover, from an anthropological perspective there is a criticism – proceeding from food – that the specification of five senses, based on the Western philosophical tradition, could be overly reductionistic; see, e.g., Sutton 2017. For a brief introduction into the psychology of multi-sensory taste perception see Spence 2017b.

2 As a prime example, Heston Blumenthal's *Big Fat Duck Cookbook* contains a section titled *In the LAB: The Science of Food at the Fat Duck*, which contains short pieces by renowned researchers in the field of chemistry, neuroscience and perceptual psychology. Contributions include, amongst others, *Flavour Perception and Preference as a Learned Experience* by John Prescott, *Pleasure, the Brain and Food* by Francis McGlone, *Multisensory Perception* by Charles Spence, and *The Role of the Mouth in the Appreciation of Food* by Jon F. Prinz (Blumenthal 2008: 462–507).

3 The rich psychological research into taste experiences, which can be practically transformed into food design, cannot be covered here in full. See as several representative examples Velasco/Nijholt/Karunanayaka 2018; Mota et al. 2018; Spence 2017a; Dar/Light 2014. In a similar vein, scientists collaborate with chefs as in Mouritsen/Styrbæk 2017. For an anthropological critique of the sensory research for the food industry cp. Lahne 2016.

other may be observed. For instance, when we consider the example of a salt and vinegar chip, then the sensory stimulation does not only consist of the extremely salty and sour taste announced to us by the smell when we bring the chip to our lips. Likewise playing a role in the experience is the visibly curved form of the dry slice of potato, which points towards the process of deep frying, just as is quite obviously the case with the tactile and acoustic sensation of crispness.[4] In a similar sense, the use of artificial coloring shows there is justification to the assumption that the optical perception of color is deeply involved in the gustatory experience and, particularly with industrial products, stabilizes the overall sensory experience (from a psychological point of view, see Spence/Levitan 2021). Conversely, blind tasting demonstrates how artificial it is to separate the senses (Korsmeyer/Sutton 2011: 462–464). In the erroneous conviction of being able to objectify sensory experience, the optical sensation is cancelled in order to block automatic retrieval of associative knowledge – whether based on cultural mediation or personal experience. But this sort of purification of the gustatory experience falls woefully short of the situations in which eating and drinking are customarily experienced. The fact that wine tastes better in conjunction with a fine meal or a creative label on the bottle does not constitute a distorting falsification that must be ferreted out, but instead corresponds to the multidimensional reality of experience and corresponding moldability of eating. Consequently, we argue that sensory and sensual *interaction* is the core of *all* eating practices, regardless of their cultural prestige. With eating (in the broader sense) we understand a set of cultural practices including the consumption of food as much as its preparation and presentation.

In the booming food research of the last three decades, the sensory aspects of eating have, of course, almost inevitably come up. It has to be qualified, however, that for the majority of the contributions the sensuality of eating has not been the starting point and basic premise; "despite its fundamental role, taste is often mysteriously absent from discussions about food" (Korsmeyer 2017, back cover). The humanities and social sciences have instead most often tended to foreground political and cultural aspects of food, without considering the arena of sensual experience in which they play out.[5] Most studies have not appropriately acknowledged how fundamentally food and eating are based on the agency and interplay of the senses. This reluctance to address the senses might be at least partly due to the fact that sensual

4 There is an amazing amount of empirical research into the multisensory perception of potato chips; for a narrow selection see Vickers 1987; Zampini/Spence 2004; Spence 2012; Luckett/Meullenet/Seo 2016.

5 An exception inside the field is certainly anthropology, which has made the socially embedded sensory experience one of its core concerns; for an overview, see Sutton 2010 and more generally Howes 2019. A multidisciplinary overview of the research on the sensuality of eating is offered by Korsmeyer 2017.

experience was and still is denigrated and only considered as culturally acceptable when it is sublimated into the creation of meaning and knowledge. The ingestion of the object of perception, as happens in eating, has in no way seemed to be in a position to transcend the bodily aspect, in the manner of the distal sensory perceptions of seeing and hearing (Perullo 2016: 15). We are confronted with an implicit hierarchization of the senses that devalues the proximal senses over sight and hearing (Simmel 1992 [1908]; Korsmeyer 1999: chap. 1). The degree to which public and scientific discourse denigrates sensual experience becomes apparent upon observing that current research almost inevitably associates sumptuous visual representations of food with 'porn,' for the purpose of robbing them of all cultural pedigree.[6] This negative bias might be the reason for a lack of differentiated linguistic tools and of useful distinctions when it comes to tasting and smelling – the senses which are key to describing the specificity of eating. Whereas tools for capturing the visual and auditory have been developed by scholars of musicology, art history, media studies or theater studies, a language for grasping the aesthetic and media-related properties of tasting and smelling has yet to be developed.

Attempts at linguistic differentiation like the Wine Aroma Wheel, which was created by UC Davis sensory chemist Ann C. Noble in 1984, lay open how little original language is available to describe taste. The Aroma Wheel provides close to 90 descriptors, but all of these designate taste by way of comparison to given objects whose taste is evoked.[7] In wine tasting, the majority of these objects of reference are fruits other than grapes. Noble is, however, rather inventive and offers some unexpected associations. The most eye-catching categories are "burnt match," "horsey" and "wet wool/wet dog." To be helpful, these categories presuppose that taste works by association. In this vein, the challenge for a study of food which chooses to welcome its sensory aspects is to reflect upon and develop research tools commensurate with the sensuality of eating.

A cultural science which is on eye level with the cultural technique of designing food – as fine dining or as convenience food – is still lacking. Even the most re-

6 A critical view of the term is offered in McBride (2010). Most texts, however, adopt instead an affirmative attitude and identify #foodporn with the aestheticization in the social media, without critically examining the implications of the metaphor: e.g. McDonnell (2016) and David/Allard (2022). The photographers on Instagram have put a positive twist on the word as a hashtag which is proudly attached to aestheticized photos of food.

7 See Noble et al. 1987; on the invention of the Aroma Wheel in the context of scientific sensory research, Shapin 2016. Inspired by the Wine Aroma Wheel, many followed suit and created respective aroma wheels for whiskey, honey, cheese, etc.; see for example Shields-Argelès 2016. On the challenges of appraising and describing wine from a philosophical point of view, Perullo 2021: 33–53, 99; Smith 2007. But the observation has been made that the lack of vocabulary is not a fundamental impediment to a diversified gustatory experience (Ankerstein/Pereira 2013).

cently flourishing food studies seem only peripherally concerned with the sensually experienced *aisthesis* of dishes and, when dealing with the socio-cultural aspects of eating, fall back onto a wider perspective of cultural studies instead of rephrasing that point of view by virtue of an approach starting from the sensory. In order to acknowledge the material and media-related aspects of eating as a cultural praxis, the anthology at hand proposes to understand the various manifestations of eating as a purposefully designed sensory experience. We insist that when the cultural and social aspects of foods are at issue, the sensorial experience must not be left out or marginalized, but should rather be at the core – a site where the social manifests and intersects with the bodily.[8]

This is where we want to introduce the concept of the medium: as an interface bringing food, the senses and culture into mutual connection. By including the perspective of mediality we mean understanding cooking as a sensual design. Insofar as dishes are designed with regard to a sensual experience which they activate, they themselves may be considered as media. They organize perceptive opportunities which are strongly formed by culture and in special ways address the sensory as much as the cultural production of sense. Focusing on the senses in combination with the concept of media is our proposal for re-drafting the relation of food and the senses in the humanities and social sciences. In addition, fine dining even works with textures, smells and nuances of taste in an attempt to create meaning and even 'tell' stories.[9] Focusing on the senses in combination with the concept of media and its heuristics is meant to open up a new perspective on food and eating.

This perspective is initially oriented less towards media as mediators. Media as mediators are interesting, for example, with regard to food packaging, with its information regarding the contents of the package. But it is more a matter of the modeling of perceptual acts with respect to the preparation and consumption of foodstuffs. Here it is indisputable that both – the actual food product that is the focus of the act of perception and the add-on such as is constituted by the informative packaging – cannot be separated one from the other. Consumable contents and external presentation partially exist in direct correspondence, as is indicated by the example of Capri-Sun[10]: the drink is marketed in a flexible upright bag along with a straw. The outer form has a direct influence on the mode of consumption, because the flow of liquid can be regulated by squeezing the bag. The act of compression adds a further sensory aspect to the act of drinking: a haptic aspect comes into play along with the texture of the liquid and the sweetness of the sugary drink, which can be tasted

8 Thus the anthropologist David Sutton perspectifies the relationship between sensory perception, food and culture with a particular emphasis on individual and collective memories; see exemplarily Sutton 2001, 2017; Korsmeyer/Sutton 2011: pp. 468–474.

9 For one compact example, see Boutaud 2012: 89 with reference to Sagot/Dupont 2009.

10 https://www.caprisun.com/

and felt by means of the tongue. The squeezable bag of Capri-Sun already provides a first indication that the interconnection between food and media is not limited to the fact that food serves as content for media or as the subject of representation by the media. Instead, the transitions between the media presentation and the 'actual' food are free-flowing. The outside of the package provides an indication of the contents while at the same time the packaging and its design cannot be separated from the contents and their consumption.

This is evident not only in the area of industrially produced foodstuffs but also in fine dining, which makes the reflection of this convergence the theme of its menus – at the latest since the 2010s, when there was a trend to deconstruction upon the plate. During that decade, the fashion was to separate the components of the food upon the plate, to alter or unify the textures of the respective foods in an unusual manner so as to cause new interpretations to emerge with regard to taste.[11] These dishes frequently present themselves draped upon the plate in a variety of differently colored dabs around a scenical center – in most cases, an animal product; only the central item is featured with its own texture, whereas the other elements are made to resemble it. The dabs could be said to represent that which is generally considered to be a side dish, inasmuch as they consist of the same components. The alteration of the handling of the products and the gustatory-sensory experience is accompanied by a change in the procedure of its optical presentation: the 'pointillism' on the plate, consisting of same-shaped but differently-colored points, goes hand in hand with a redefinition of dishes with regard to taste. The mode of deconstruction reflects only a phenomenon that is fundamentally valid, namely that presentation makes a difference and already belongs to the 'actual' food (see also Boutaud 2012). It is not only the visual conveyor of a gustatory experience, but also always an integral component. The one blends into the other.

It is precisely this comprehensive design of a perceptual object which, in a multimodal manner, addresses the senses that constitute the mediality of food. The term mediality first of all addresses the finding that media do not simply convey messages. Instead they stand in direct relation to the manner of perception, thought and recollection, and thereby to accessibility to the world, in other words how the relationship to the world, or more precisely to reality, is organized – indeed, how something becomes reality in the first place (Krämer 1998: 14). The question then arises as to how our access to food and to eating is structured and how food, as a designed object integrated into significatory contexts, itself participates in this act of structuring.

This sort of mediality oriented towards perception points towards a media-aesthetic research program that has its point of departure in the mid-twentieth century and is based on an altered understanding of aesthetics. In place of art-theoretical

11 For a consideration of plating as a "pictorial practice" see van der Meulen 2017.

considerations, an orientation towards the beautiful and towards the cultivation of refinement, issues of perception and cognition come to the fore. And emerging in place of an art considered to be a separate realm of reality that is responsible for engendering discernment is an everyday aesthetic which identifies shapeliness in all areas of life (Barck/Henninger/Kliche 2000: 389–398).

What is significant for the present context is not only the understanding of aesthetics in the sense of *aisthesis*, but also the observation of a comprehensive aestheticization; in other words, the act of shaping comes to light in all reaches of reality – especially in the field of the media, which appear from a media-aesthetic perspective as designed providers of perception: they shape perception, each in its own particular way. The media-aesthetic program inquires into how media form reality and insists upon the *how* in contradistinction to that which is offered to perception. A premise of media aesthetics is that every form of media expression "possesses a specific manner of perception that is inherent to it and to it alone" (Schnell 2000: 11). The question is subsequently raised as to the precise intrinsic mode of various media. As a rule, however, primacy is given to the auditory and the visual: the senses that proceed from a distance (Schnell 2000: 11). Proximal perception tends to be taken seldom as a theme. This gap can be closed by an involvement with the theme of food, its mediality and its multimodality. In this way there is a neglecting of the media quality of imbuing what is absent with presence, but there is a highlighting of the design of perception and the manner of its organization.

Moreover, the study of the involvement of media in eating needs to be extended by adopting a broad concept of media, one which makes it possible to include the constitutive roles of menu, cutlery, tableware and dining room without relegating them to the secondary role of 'context.'[12] In this sense, we have to describe the preparation and combination of food together with the specific choice of tableware, table decoration, furniture, interior design, music and, last but not least, the service at the table and additional media components. Also, the fine arts have always reflected on such aesthetic and socio-cultural dimensions of food, for example in the genre of the still life or, since modernity, in interactive settings which take eating as a starting point for blurring the realms of art and life or even for creating a *Gesamtkunstwerk* (Jaques 2015: 181; Beil 2002: 45–47; Wattolik 2018).[13]

12 This becomes particularly evident in the design of restaurants, most obviously in ethnic and event gastronomy. Restaurants are not just sites where food is cooked and consumed, but where eating is contextualized – or even staged – in a meaningful way; see Möhring 2012; Beriss/Sutton 2007. A multidisciplinary view of the effects of eating with the hands as compared to eating with cutlery is presented in Spence 2022. Likewise, the role of material artifacts in the cooking experience has been explored by Sutton 2009. For a concise and combined history of cooking and eating tools, see Wilson 2013.

13 Tommaso Marinetti describes how in the First Futurist Meal at the Taverna del Santopalato opening in Torino on March 8, 1931, all five senses were addressed. While eating foods com-

Finally, media come into play when representing and communicating the act of eating in advance or after the fact. Under this aspect, we may ask by which forms of linguistic expression, structure and imagery a cooking recipe is characterized, for example; how film and television evoke the sensual experience of eating; or how the oeuvre of a certain chef is represented in photo books. Complementarily, it has to be asked in which ways a whole media ensemble is grouped around food and its preparation, how such a media ensemble organizes perception and consequently feeds back directly onto the senses. The intrinsic logic of particular media and how it affects the presentation of food has to be taken into consideration, too.

In order to offer a systematic structure, we have identified three fields in which the relation of food and the senses are mediatized. We offer them as a heuristic proposition that can help to structure our reflections: Food as Medium, Food in Media, Sociality and Culturality of Food.

1. Food as Medium

United Arab Emirates – On March 11, 2017, during the opening of Sharjah Art Biennial, the London based artist-duo Cooking Sections (Daniel Fernández Pascual/Alon Schwabe) arranged a happening for lunch. Guests and voluntary performers of the piece named *CLIMAVORE: On the Movement of Deserts* consisted of the international art crowd. The group gathered around tables that were designed especially for the event. Their geometric patterns were based on the formations of desert plants which collectively grow in accordance with scarce water supplies. In that sense, the design of *CLIMAVORE's* setting referred to an example of extreme ecological adaption. The multi-course menu offered a selection of edible desert plants: served as aperitif was a *Dryland Salinity Drink* made out of tamarind, agave and jujube. This was followed by a *Dune Stabilization Salad* which was made of sorghum, caper, sea asparagus, sea rosemary, sea purslane and elderberry.[14] Four more courses with telling names were served: *Insurance Crop Sticks* and, as the menu reads, *Water Accumulators*, *Water Reductionists* and *Desert Stoppers*. By providing information about the climate conditions of its ingredients as much as about desert-spreading in general, the menu charged all dishes semantically and, on the edge of the Arabian Desert, pointed to a broader dis-

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bined in aesthetic, symbolic and gustatory interrelationships, the guests touched with their fingertips arrangements of damask, velvet and glass paper while a fragment from an opera by Wagner could be heard and a waiter sprayed perfume (Beil 2002: 47; Stronciwilk 2021).

14 The first and second course of the menu are documented with two photographs on the website of Universes in Universe: https://universes.art/de/sharjah-biennale/2017/sharjah/visual-tour-12/cooking-sections

cussion on climate change and its underlying structures of economic and political power.

It is not only since the invitation of the star cook Ferran Adrià to the documenta 12 in 2007 (Beaugé 2018) that food and art have inspired each other. The beginning of food-related stagings by artists under the heading of a modern notion of art – in other words, in an overarching display of food designed as both the material of art and its subject of reflection – was already identified in the futuristic cuisine of Tommaso Marinetti and the erotic arrangements of Salvador Dalí. The 1960s and 1970s bring a continuation of their experiments in Eat Art, Fluxus, Happening and Environment, for instance in the works of Daniel Spoerri, Peter Kubelka, Gordon Matta-Clark or Allen Ruppersberg (Beil 2002; Novero 2010; Smith 2013; Bottinelli/D'Ayala Valva 2017). Finally, offers of participatory eating experience a renaissance at the beginning of the 1990s, when Rirkrit Tiravanija begins, against the background of preceding reflections concerning the museum display, to cook Thai curry at his exhibitions and to distribute it among the visitors. With these and other stagings of food, there is an emphasis on the immediate experiential dimension and its potential for creating community in a society that is deeply marked by the mass media.[15] Moreover, Jörn Schafaff introduced the notions of set, scenario and situation, thereby aiming at the definition of a reflective experiential space which is deliberately staged with artistic means and according to which the actions of visitors to the exhibition are oriented. Here the set and its objects can represent a comprehensive significatory framework when they refer to a context of utilization or a lifestyle (Schafaff 2018: 49).

Food appears to inherently annul the seeming opposition between bodily-related implicit and explicit, mostly linguistically or socio-culturally encoded knowledge. For this very reason there has in recent years been a recognition of the potential for a connection between art and food in aesthetic approaches whose considerations are centered around a sensory, bodily-based perception of the world (Koczanowicz 2023; Smolińska 2020; see also Shustermann 2012; Michel Serres 1995; Mattenklott 1982). The regarding of stagings of food as sensorily perceived and simultaneously encoded, mediating instances makes possible a double consideration of 'object and sign' (Koch 2005). With respect to the semiotic character of food – or more precisely, its taste – Carolyn Korsmeyer proposes the rendering fertile of the term of "exemplification" coined by Nelson Goodman. Exemplification, which according to Goodman is a "symptom" of art, occurs when an object not only possesses its characteristics but also presents them (Goodman 1968: chap. VI, 5). Korsmeyer says that a gourmet pays attention to the characteristics of culinary dishes and drinks, perceiving, evaluating or enjoying them in a special way. Contextual information such

15 Particular attention was given in the 1990s to the term relational aesthetics, which was coined by the curator and critic Nicolas Bourriaud (2001 [1998]).

as the site and date when a foodstuff was harvested only becomes relevant when it contributes to explaining the specific characteristics of the gustatory experience (Korsmeyer 1999: 128). Thus Korsmeyer – whose book on *Making Sense of Taste* was groundbreaking for the academic field of gustatory aesthetics[16] flourishing since the early 1990s – is able to refute the criticism that food is incapable of expressing anything beyond the sensory pleasure it engenders, of signifying anything at all, and hence is utterly unsuitable for art (Korsmeyer 1999: 108–109).[17] Jean-Philippe Dupuy, on the other hand, sees the artistic potential of the culinary in the connection between the gustatory composition of food and its staging – from the architecture of the restaurant all the way to the arrangement of the plates on the table and the serving practices – as well as in the semantic energizing through language: for example, in the menu and the discourse that accompanies the meal (Dupuy 2012: 102). It is only with a view to this superordinate arrangement that such rhetorical figures as exaggeration and euphemism can develop and direct attention from the *what* to the *how* of food. Here the framing of food serves to highlight its function as a medium which shapes sensory experience. These two exemplary positions make it clear that the question concerning the degree to which the culinary is capable of being art can be discussed and answered in quite divergent manners (see also Cohen/Csergo 2012; Perullo 2017; Csergo/Desbuissons 2018; Koczanowicz 2023). In any case, the contrasting or also complementary approaches of Korsmeyer and Dupuy not only demonstrate approaches for evaluating food as art from a semiotic perspective, but also go much further in sufficiently clarifying its media-related qualities, which are capable of shaping sensory experience. These media-related qualities are inherent to food as an aesthetic practice, because it is impossible not to perform the act of shaping. Under certain conditions, it is possible not only in art for something potentially lying beyond the field of the senses to find sensory expression.

When food becomes the subject and material of the visual arts, its media-related potential becomes situated in a specific discursive context that is only rendered comprehensible against the background of artistic traditions. For example, when in 1992 Tiravanija removed all the furniture from the back room of the 303 Gallery in New York and shifted it into the main room, he was linking up with an institutionally critical intervention of Michael Asher in 1974 at the Claire Copley Gallery in Los

16 For an overview on gustatory aesthetics, see Jaques 2015; Perullo 2019.

17 The semiotic potentials of food were already explored from a structuralist perspective by the anthropologist Mary Douglas, beginning with her classic text *Deciphering a Meal* (1972). She establishes a structural grid, based mostly on binary distinctions, into which flow the aesthetic-sensory parameters of food – taste, texture, and so forth – that imbue food with a cultural location and hence with meaning, but that neglect the sensory experience (Sutton 2010: 210–211). The French scholar of communication Jean-Jacaues Boutaud, on the other hand, endeavors to conceive of the semiotics of food on the basis of synaesthetic, sensory experience (2005, 2012). For a general overview of the semiotics of food, see Stano (2015).

Angeles.[18] Asher had removed the wall separating the gallery-owner's office from the exhibition space and thereby brought to the fore the site where the communication is carried out that is crucial for every gallery, where decisions about purchases are made. If now over the entire course of the exhibition Tiravanija was preparing two types of Thai curry – one with ingredients from a nearby supermarket, the other in the way it is eaten in Thailand – this was initially a matter of adapting a foreign cuisine to the available offerings of foodstuffs or of conforming to the culturally determined taste preferences that predominated at that place. Whereas Asher merely revealed the way in which the art market functions, Tiravanija transferred everyday functional interconnections into the realm of aesthetic reflection and, by distributing food at no cost, contrasted the context of the profit-oriented art market with the concept of largesse. Furthermore, at the beginning of the surge in globalization from 1989 onward, he thematized his own position as a cosmopolitan artist of Thai origin in an art market which, particularly in the 1990s, was still strongly subject to Western domination (Saltz 1996; Nesbitt 1992; Schafaff 2018: 135–151; also Schafaff 2014). Also with respect to the initially presented work *CLIMAVORE: On the Movement of Deserts*, it should be observed that the protagonists from the art world who were invited to the meal are not merely consumers but also objects of reflection in the artistic scenario so that, for example, their co-responsibility for climate change can be thematized by the specific offerings of food just as can the concomitant consequences. This is all the more the case inasmuch as every artistic position that works after 1992 with the means of a staged provision of food must allow itself to be referenced to Tiravanija and his critique of institutions and globalization.

The first block focusses on the media-related qualities of eating, which is understood as a designed sensual experience. Food as a multisensory and multimodal object of perception comes into view along with all related practices of preparation, presentation and consumption. In contrast to traditional approaches in the study of meals, we suggest an understanding of the preparation, presentation and consumption of food not as a cultural framing, but as a communicative practice which includes the meal's design and its whole field of experience: Which role is played by sensual experience when buying and preparing food? Which options are there to control the parameters of sensory experience during cooking? How is a meal arranged so as to let the eater have a certain experience? How is food semantically charged? Of course, specific associations are induced in food; but can we imagine other strategies as well? The analysis of happenings in the fine arts which perform and simultaneously reflect on the preparation of food as much as on its communal

18 Installation views of *Untitled (Free)* from 1992 are presented on 303 Gallery's website (https://www.303gallery.com/gallery-exhibitions/rirkrit-tiravanija2). The work's name was changed into *Untitled (Free/Still)* in 1995 and today belongs to the collection of the Museum of Modern Art, New York: https://www.moma.org/collection/works/147206

consumption can yield great insights. Art works not only use food and its staging as a vehicle for messages but can also convey its sociocultural implications and even reveal how the construction of culture works.

2. Food in Media

The representation of eating and the sensual experience connected with it has a long history: the interest in food's colors and tactile surfaces is one of the major causes for the emancipation of the still life as a genre of its own. Still lifes can function in analogy to the sense of taste when painterly means such as sharply modulated edges and striking chords of color convey the piquancy of a lemon's sourness (Leonhard 2020: 74). Moreover, by means of the exaggerated illusionism of trompe-l'oeil painting, the depicted food can acquire so intensive a corporeal presence that it is capable of addressing the bodily knowledge of the viewer by means of an "eating eye" or a "seeing stomach" (Ebert-Schifferer 2018: 189–190). These strategies of the visual depiction of food are continued in food photography, whose aesthetic program is intended to give an appetizing appearance to and hence to create advertising for products and dishes on the one hand, and recipes in a cookbook or a blog on the other (Bright 2017). Consequently it is a matter of transferring the sensuous qualities of food into colors and form in such a way that they have the possibility of engendering sensory reactions in the viewers. This objective has been extended further by professional food photography into the social media, where the term #foodporn has freed itself of negative connotations and is instead laying claim to a special aesthetic quality in the photographic depiction of food. The core of the promise made by pornography, namely to impact as a "body genre" upon the physical body of the viewers,[19] is realized in the intrinsic value of the image as a visual spectacle in which there is a loosening of its relationship to actual food that, as is well-known, is designed solely to please the camera of the food photographer and not to satisfy the palate (Hunter 1991: 153–154). This shift is due to the fact that depictions of food are obligated to conform to the respectively dominant media parameters and cultural conventions, thereby becoming able for their part to impact upon the practice of eating: photogenics and, recently, instagrammability favor colorful and structured dishes, which has rendered dishes like bowls popular.[20]

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19 The term of the filmic "body genre" coined by Linda Williams (1991) differs from food photography inasmuch as it proceeds from the premise that the excesses presented in film by female bodies are reproduced by the viewing bodies. The non-sublimated, desire-filled affects of the senses which are linked to the visual depiction remain a parallel, just as does the cultural degradation of the pictorial form.

20 For research on the cultures of digital food photography see Leaver/Highfield/Abidin, 2020; Beil 2020; de Solier 2018. Less concerned with the sensory and insofar typical representatives

Nonetheless, the presentation of food in the media is fundamentally concerned with how the respective medium can use its particular possibilities to capture – or in any case to convey – the multisensory design of food. Medial observations of food and eating are confronted with the problem of how the sensory registers of the medium of food can be captured and paralleled by the sensory registers of the observing medium. The fundamental challenge lies in using language, picture and sound to catch not just taste but also the full spectrum of the sensory. Thus, the objective of food in media is typically not 'representation' but 'evocation': the purpose is to make the sensory experience tangible, even relivable in a sense. The method is, therefore, remediation, coupling a particular design of sensory experience with a corresponding one. This possibility of rendering the mediality of food in another medium is based, especially in the case of the visual and audiovisual media, upon the fundamental synesthesia of perception, which always integrates gustatory and olfactory experiences in a network of sensory experiences.[21]

Why are food and eating so prevalent in media culture, even when it is so difficult to evoke smell, taste and texture with the media currently available? Leaving the cultural currency of food aside, one could argue that the challenge is exactly *why* the evocation of food and eating is so often attempted. The remediation of food is prone to produce a media spectacle which offers the media an opportunity to showcase their potency to evoke the sensory. The exploration of painting's evocative capacities is obvious in the genre of the still life. And this goes as well for the animated film, when it invents pictorial forms to convey an indulging in the sensory – a potential, not available to the same degree to the dominating 'photofilmic' and 'photographic' depiction of food and eating. The animation film *Ratatouille* (USA 2007) and even more so the Japanese anime series *Food Wars! Shokugeki no Soma* (JP 2015–2020) have proven to be particularly inventive in creating excessive visual metaphors in which not only the delicacy of the dishes but also the tasting experience become images.[22]

Food in media can – to list only some of the most pertinent instances – crystallize into genres in different media, some of which we will briefly touch upon:

- Recipes and cooking instructions, whether in books or online in food blogs, employ language, drawings, photographs or video to advise how to prepare

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of current Anglophone media research are Contois/Kich 2022, Lupton/Feldman 2020, Lewis 2020 and Leer/Krogager 2021.

21 Without using the term remediation, the French communication scholar Jean-Jacques Boutaud (2012; 2016a) posits a convergence between the signification of food and its aesthetic mediatization.

22 In its visual language, Food Wars focuses not least of all on the affinity between sexual and gustatory pleasure. Moreover, Swahn/Nilsen (2023) emphasize with regard to ratatouille the role of the soundtrack for the synaesthetic impact.

food: firstly, in relation to the sensuality of the practices and gestures involved; secondly, through motivating the audience to give it a try by showcasing the presumed sensual pleasures of the result. Cookbooks can generate sensual surplus value through stylistic choices in the writing and by adding additional parts to the text (Humble 2020) or, more commonly, by using spectacular food photographs (Hunter 1991; Dennis 2008; Ruchatz 2017). With regard to illustrations, a potential conflict can arise between the didactic function and the intrinsic aesthetic value and sensual appeal of the picture.

- Fiction, particularly when it is presented audiovisually, frequently includes scenes of eating, less often of cooking. Whereas the sensual experience may often be less important than the social interaction around the table – an aspect that provides story information – films sometimes make use of their audiovisual prowess, combining close-up, camera movements and sound in order to evoke the sensual experience of eating and cooking.[23]
- With regard to television cooking shows, it is not only the preparation of the food, typically stressing the sounds in the kitchen, which brings the sensory to the fore (Adema 2000, de Solier 2005; Collins 2009; Spies 2010; Meier 2013; Oren 2023). It is also the question as to how the sensory experience can be transmitted to the audience when the cooked food is eaten and judged.[24]
- Food reviewing is a verbal practice, putting the experience into words and judging it. The sensory drawbacks of language are typically compensated for, as already stated, by using metaphors and comparisons in an inventive manner (Spillner 2002, 2015).
- Mukbang- and ASMR-videos, with the success they have had in recent years on YouTube, are an especially strange instance of the thematizing of the act of eating. Their point of departure is not so much the sensory presentation of the dishes; instead, they bring the process of eating front and center by using extremely sensitive microphones to record the noises of chewing and lip-smacking which are customarily suppressed (or are covered over with background music), thereby turning these sounds into a fundamental attraction of the presentation (Nielsen/Petersen 2021).

It is noticeable that as a rule in the investigation of these media artifacts, such issues as cultural significance and ideology, power structures and patterns of exploitation,

23 Particularly interesting with regard to the sensual experience of film, because seen from a phenomenological point of view, is Zechner 2013. See also Wocke 2012; Kofahl/Fröhlich/Alberth 2013; Lindenfeld/Parasecoli 2017, 2018. For food in fictional literature, see e.g. Humble 2020, Crucifix 2016; Moss 2013; Becker 2000; Korsmeyer 1999.

24 The sensual can also be shifted to another, most often sexualized, register (Andrews 2003; Chan 2003).

or also gender roles are addressed, whereas the role played by sensory experience in this framework is consistently marginalized, if not ignored.[25]

The observation of food and eating in textual, visual and audiovisual media is not a one-way-street, however. The visual mise-en-scene of food is often fed back into the experience of eating. To give just three striking examples:

- The visual and linguistic design of menus, especially with regard to the naming of the dishes, awakens expectations in the diners, impacts upon their selection of dishes, and thus makes an essential contribution to preparing their sensory pleasure.[26] Ethnic or high-cultural associations with regard to culinary offerings are awakened not least of all through the appropriate naming of the dishes (Zwicky/Zwicky 1980; Freedman 2010). Linguistic research on the 'rhetoric' of menus has elaborated how this works to merge sensory experience and social identities (Lavric 2009; Dupuy 2009; Freedman 2010; Hugol-Gential 2015; Parizot/Giboreau/Hugol-Gential 2015). A particular case are photographic menus (particularly common in fast food restaurants or international tourist spots) which pictorially arouse sensory expectations and result in the choice of a certain dish (for just one example, Kuo 2015).[27]
- Visual communication as an applied science, at the service of the food industry, deals with the relationship between packaging design and buying decisions.[28] On product packaging, food photography can work like a serving suggestion inasmuch as it can trigger sensual associations in combination with color design, etc. The staging of food on food packaging – in the typical form of the serving suggestion – is designed to enhance the eating experience, optically suggesting the material and sensory qualities that have been lost in the process of industrial production (Ruchatz 2018; d'Errico 2021).
- The already mentioned UC Davis Wheel works in the same realm, but with a different objective: it is not about reconstituting sensory qualities that have possibly evaporated, but about using the medial intervention to educate and refine

25 The marginalization of the sensory element in current research regarding the media can be clearly recognized in the omnibus volumes: Bradley 2015; Leer/Povlsen 2016; Marinescu 2020; Fakazis/Fürsich 2023.

26 This effect of recipe labelling has been ascertained by empirical marketing research with a nod to restaurant owners (Wansink/van Ittersum/Panter 2001, 2005). For a historical perspective on naming dishes in cookbooks, see Notaker 2017: 98–111.

27 For a more general view on the visual design of menus, which is in most cases only loosely tied to what is served, see Poulain 2011; Heimann 2022.

28 For a semiotic and cultural studies perspective see Haden 2017; Jones 2014. For empirical psychological studies with the appeal to practical use, see among others Velasco et al. 2016; Huang/Lu 2015; Chardon 2012.

taste. As the official website states: "Novice tasters often complain that they 'cannot smell anything' or can't think of a way to describe the aroma of wine. They don't have the words! […] Using the wheel during wine tasting will facilitate the description of the flavors you perceive. More importantly, you will be able to easily recognize and remember specific details about wines."[29] In this case, the capacity to describe taste linguistically is not just about reproducing the experience but is seen as feeding directly back into the tasting experience, which shows how intricately food and its remediations are interrelated.

3. Sociality and Culturality of Food and Eating

In addition to the connection between eating and the media, the question of interest is also how the sensuality of eating is treated in specific cultural contexts. It is not only about preferences – for example, for the bitter or for the sour – but also about the involvement of the different senses in eating: In which cultural contexts is the sense of sight particularly emphasized? In which cultural contexts is the sense of touch addressed through texture?

At the same time, the consideration of touch, smell, taste and so on suggests first of all that these are natural processes. But in the context of his investigation of the distinction between raw and cooked or rotten and cooked, Claude Levi-Strauss has already pointed out the semanticization of the supposedly natural side of this distinction: the raw is not the natural and unprocessed food, it seems, but the opposite of processed, as he makes explicit with an anecdote from World War I. He tells of the olfactory challenges of U.S. soldiers in the face of Norman cheese, the aroma of which reminded them of the smell of a corpse (Lévi-Strauss 2008 [1966]: 37). What is a process of maturity for the Frenchman is a process of decay for the American, and what for one is culinary refinement is for another exactly its opposite, depending on cultural identities.

In addition to the findings of Lévi-Strauss, not only the relation between the raw and cooked (1983 [1964]) but also the distinction between liquid, soft and solid plays a role. Noodles are a good example, because they are a widespread food. Even if the

29 https://www.winearomawheel.com/why-use-it.html; see also: "The Wine Aroma Wheel is an incredible tool to learn about wines and enhance one's ability to describe the complexity of flavor in red and white wines. Initially, most people can't recognize or describe aromas so the purpose of the wheel is to provide terms to describe wine aromas" (https://www.awslonestar.org/wine-education/wine-evaluation.html). For the effects of the aroma wheel on the wine tasting practice, see Shapin 2016 and James 2018. Boutaud 2016b expresses an ambivalent attitude to the cultivation of the taste for wine, which can also be understood as domestication.

basic ingredients may vary between the countries, noodles share the same production process: the finely ground wheat or its alternatives are mixed with water and kneaded into a dough which can be shaped, dried and thus preserved (Lucas 2009). The noodles are then cooked in boiling water and this is where it starts to get exciting, because how to cook noodles properly and what texture this should achieve varies widely. The tasting and evaluation of noodles seems to be an extremely culturally-specific process. National identities correspond in part with the sensation of the consistency of noodles. And cultural affiliations are expressed on the basis of noodle preferences.

A quick search on the internet and social media makes this clear. The search starts with a German-language entry on the search engine which could be rendered in English as "cooking noodles the right way." The prime result is "cooking tips directly from Italy." In Germany and in many parts of Europe, Italy reigns supreme when it comes to preparing pasta. Even if there are German pasta dishes, pasta is associated with *italianità* – as Roland Barthes (1977 [1964]) already knew. Pasta is therefore eaten like the Italians do: *al dente*. Whereas in Germany during the eighties this knowledge could be used to gain distinction, today everyone imitates the Italians (Alberini 1990: 39). It is interesting that *al dente* is the only statement about texture with reference to Italy. It is repeated permanently, but at the same time there are no other descriptions for the consistency. It seems as if Italian pasta cooked *al dente* is the medium for the taste of the sauce.

And this is perhaps also where the cultural identity of pasta lies, because Italian eating habits are characterized by the peculiarity of taking carbohydrates as a separate course before the *secondo* consisting of meat and vegetables (Lucas 2009: 4). This then perhaps also accounts for the Italian dominance in the pasta discourse. With this particularity, Italians were able to gain sovereignty over pasta.

After Germany has bid farewell to its soft-cooked noodles over the course of about 50 years and accepted and adopted the *al dente* noodle as superior in taste, we are now confronted with another cooking culture: China. It seems that Chinese cuisine demands a softer texture of the noodle than *al dente*, even though this softness is certainly different from the softness of the former German noodle. Soft, but not mushy. The perfect noodle is supposed to have the characteristics of being chewy, springy, smooth. Here, then, we find a rich repertoire of words that serve to describe the texture of the perfectly produced noodle. This verbal abundance can be read as an indication that Chinese cuisine places an increased focus on this component of the meal and therefore also serves the dishes at the same time, thus placing the textures next to each other instead of separating them from each other in a specific sequence of courses as in Italy. The preference for a specific texture of pasta can thus be explained by a whole culinary and cultural cosmos. The cultural habitualization of the interaction of food shapes the taste preferences that are part of social identity. However, it becomes clear that pasta is eminently suitable for cultural comparison. On the one hand, it belongs to many cuisines; and on the other hand, it is so different that the variations can be named in order to express one's own cultural identity through the assessment of the texture of noodles. Thus sensual experience becomes understandable as basically being socially formed. The difference lies in also how much attention is paid to the aspect of texture.

At this point, we would like to reflect on the sensuality of cultural and national identities (Helstosky 2003). Following the discussion regarding a sociology of taste, as has been prominently guided by Pierre Bourdieu (1984 [1979]), we aim to identify how the relationship between sensual experience and social biography contributes to the formation of social identity. Sensory experience becomes understandable as basically socially formed; concurrently, the socio-cultural formation is recognized as a naturalized one when, for example, preferences of taste are regarded as being gender-based.

Bourdieu provides illustrative examples here when he identifies interconnections between the division of labor in the household, class distinctions, and taste preferences. The acknowledgment of the work of women in the upper class is transferred into a preference for salad and grilled meat, something which additional corresponds to a certain body image. In contrast, the lower class esteems the *pot-au-feu*, in which much time is spent to alter the texture of meat of less quality through protracted simmering (Bourdieu 1984 [1974]: 430). And Bourdieu likewise sees the high degree of aversion to bones in fish as the effect of a certain class-specific and gender-marked bodily image: since the physically laboring man requires a correspondingly sufficient intake of calories, he cannot be expected to ingest food in such tiny bits that the possibility of the presence of a fishbone is taken into consideration. The food must be able to fill the entire mouth (Bourdieu 1984 [1974]: 435–437). The body image, including notions regarding the characteristics of the mouth, and the sense of taste are directly interrelated; at the same time, both are socially influenced. "Taste," writes Bourdieu, "is an incorporated principle of classification which governs all forms of incorporation, choosing and modifying everything that the body ingests and digests and assimilates, physiologically and psychologically" (1984 [1974]: 435). He is concerned with the manner in which taste is determined by social conditions, and how the sense of taste experiences a naturalization in its relationship to the body but also, it may be added, in its supposedly sensory evidence. But even if Bourdieu's observations about the social distinctions between culinary preferences take quite concrete sensory impressions into account, it should not be forgotten that he examines taste and its social shaping not only on the basis of practices of eating, and that he conceives of taste more in the sense of the formulation of an aesthetic evaluation that also lies beyond the boundaries of the culinary. The latter statement is also valid with respect to processes of naturalization and in situations where it is not a matter of a delicate sense of taste which lays claim for itself to a certain degree of reflection.

There is a huge amount of research literature that follows after Bourdieu's inquiry into food and focuses on the socio-cultural aspect of food and taste (see e.g. Geary 2020; Maguire 2018). A prominent position is occupied by the works of Antoine Hennion, who has worked extensively on taste (Hennion 2004, 2007), especially in the area of music sociology, but also concerning wine connoisseurs (Teil/Barrey/Floux/Hennion 2011). His prominence, however, is certainly also due to his central position at the Centre de Sociologie de l'Innovation as well as to his critique of Bourdieu. Inasmuch as he therein turns his attention increasingly to connoisseurs and amateurs, the focus of the examinations shifts to the act of tasting/testing (Hennion 2017 [2010]: 117). The connoisseur is characterized by a delight in subtle response and by a specific sensitivity. This sensibility is the product of an effort consisting of continuous instances of trying out samples. It "is work done out of a tightly woven tissue of individual and collective past experiences which have built up the sensibility" (Hennion 2017 [2010]: 117).[30]

With a completely different theoretical background and without giving special consideration to the connoisseur, David Sutton argues partially in the same direction when he insists that in its tastefulness, food cannot be viewed independently of its interconnectedness, and he situates memory at the center of his deliberations. The contexts of food belong to its taste. Sutton formulates this insight by using the term gustemology. This means approaches "that organize their understanding of a wide spectrum of culture issues around taste and other sensory aspects of food" (Sutton 2010: 215; also Sutton 2011). The sensory element marks each respective point of departure, such as he exemplifies in reference to a study concerning sweetness by Mintz, who sees the sweetness of sugar as an inducement for the development of the moral concept of idleness and female cravings (Mintz 1996: 72–76; Sutton 2010: 212). In an exaggerated formulation: here taste does not experience a socio-cultural overlay; instead the act of tasting has socio-cultural effects inasmuch as connections – for example, to feminine cravings – are produced. Precisely these sorts of connections to a broad socio-cultural field prove to be of interest in the section *Sociality and Culturality of Food and Eating*, where in most cases the sensory aspect of food is focussed upon and serves as a point of departure.

The present anthology has been included in the *Open Library Medienwissenschaft*. We are extremely pleased about this distinction and the concomitant support. The volume goes back to a same-named conference that took place online in July 2021 under the auspices of the *Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft* (DFG). Here we would like

30 See in this context also Jürgen Dollase (2006a), whose concern within the notion of culinary intelligence is precisely the development of this sensibility. He thereby formulates a program consisting of a training of the senses by deliberately producing various sensory impressions (Dollase 2006b).

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1. Food as Medium

My Eye is a Mouth
Spectacular Food for the Eyes

Felix Bröcker

Abstract *This paper examines the interplay of taste and visuality in dishes of European-style high cuisine, posing the following questions: Is the appearance of a dish important? Does it enhance the pleasure of eating? Or does it only distract from the central taste? Is the tongue decisive for the perception of a meal or is the eye even more important so as to allow culinary enjoyment without taste?*

In this paper, I will present the significance of the visual aspect for dishes of European-style high cuisine and show that culinary enjoyment is also possible without taste impressions. In the first part, I will deal with different aspects, all of which make clear that the appearance of food, the way it is arranged, and the viewing of food were already relevant centuries ago and not just since we have had worldwide access at any time to photographed food, which we look at and share with our mobile phones. There is a long tradition to the current omnipresence of food images which declare the eye to be the most important sensory organ for culinary enjoyment. In part two, I will use a comparative analysis as an example to show how revealing a purely visual analysis of a dish can be. For even if the dish is reduced to its appearance, this reveals a lot about its time of origin, and it also makes it possible to compare plated dishes across time and space. Finally, in the third part, I will look at an example that demonstrates the extent to which food is suitable for attracting attention via social media. I am less interested in an increased sensuality that evokes pleasure and enjoyment in the sense of classic food porn; instead, I want to show that food may function as a purely visual medium and is accordingly used by chefs in high cuisine to communicate with guests on site but also with digital followers. It is then about the concept and not the recipe – less about culinary details and more about ideas that the food conveys as a cultural medium (Bröcker 2021).

In the following discussion, I am always concerned with the dishes themselves and not with the photograph as a medium of its own. In this sense, the images are only a means to an end; the focus is on the chef as author, not on the photographer; hence the peculiarities of the images are not discussed.

1. Visual Cuisine

Today, cooking is often reduced to the eye, due to its visual dissemination in social media, books or magazines. To approach cooking visually seems misguided; after all, it's all about taste. So, it would be time to counter this trend and revalue taste as an essential sense, and to emphasize the uniqueness of culinary experiences instead of supporting this trend.[1] The predominance of the eye as the most important sense to perceive our environment is currently being questioned by various disciplines. Artists working with food are also working against such a hierarchy of the senses. For Dieter Roth, the mouth becomes the eye and Salvador Dali declares: "Beauty will be edible or it will not be at all." (Beil 2002: 58, 172)[2]

The fear that chefs could develop dishes not primarily to provide a special gustatory experience but for the eye or for distribution via visual media is shared by gourmets and chefs alike.[3] But elements that appeal specifically to the sense of sight have always been part of culinary presentations and were deliberately placed in the center in order to impress visually. Already the Romans played with visual illusions while eating. Such trompe l'œils created visual expectations that were only revealed as misleading upon being tasted.[4] This visual game has been implemented in many variations over the centuries and has also established itself in today's high cuisine.

In the Middle Ages, impressive buffet set-ups were created and elaborately designed entremets provided entertainment and amazement, without any taste qualities.

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1 Which is certainly done in philosophical treatises, e.g. in Perullo (2016) or Korsmeyer (1999).

2 But the dominance of the eye is also questioned from a scientific perspective (http://www.wissenschaft.de/gesellschaft-psychologie/die-hierarchie-der-sinne-2/).

3 Like Christian Bau, for example, who laments: "Due to the new media, a lot is now only about optics" (https://www.welt.de/iconist/article144566974/Die-Wut-kocht-bei-Dreisternekoch-Christian-Bau-mit.html) or Michel Guérard: "I find it a little bit sad that for some the picture has become more important than the food itself" (https://time.com/4661405/michel-guerard-michelin-stars/). Critic Patricia Bröhm laments about dishes that seem to be designed by food stylists (https://www.faz.net/aktuell/stil/essen-trinken/gault-millau-ehrt-die-besten-koeche-13902520.html).

4 In the Roman cookbook of Apicius (9th chapter, "The Sea", 13) a recipe is given for salt fish without salt fish, for which the livers of animals are formed into a fish (see Robert Maier (ed.), Das römische Kochbuch des Apicius). In the Middle Ages, there were dishes that were primarily for entertainment, so-called entremets, which often worked with visual illusions. For example, prepared animals were served in feathers (cp. Normore 2015: 23), and even later in Max Rumpolt's cookbook of 1581, p. LXX. There were also recipes for pies from which birds flew when cut open, as recommended by Robert May in his 1688 cookbook *The Accomplisht Cook* (see http://www.bl.uk/learning/langlit/texts/cook/1600s2/birdh/birds.html (10.11.2018)). Even in 18th-century cookbooks, recipes for Lent recommend serving vegetables in sausage form (Pinkard 2009: 91).

The aim was to impress the table company, to display power and wealth; obviously, this was particularly well possible via visual stimuli. While taste perceptions and evaluations are considered highly individual, visual impressions are easier to share and perceive as a community. What is now done by many people at any time via social media used to be a privilege of wealthy rulers. But the principle remains: by displaying what I eat, I show who I am – or who I want to be taken for. For chefs nowadays, visual communication via food seems to be as important as the actual cooking, as I will show in part three; and it is well possible to do so, as I also demonstrate in part two.

In general, banquets were conceived as visual feasts; colorful dishes and elaborately prepared showpieces were important components of these productions.[5]

As late as the 18th century, there were elaborately produced *pièces montées*, culinary sculptures made primarily for the eye. Today, professional competitions still require the creation of show plates and buffet sculptures that are not eaten.[6]

The eye has always been part of the meal, and while in the past this provided additional animation for the people at and around the tables, today the visual perception of a meal, digitally or via books, often replaces, enhances, anticipates or relives multi-sensory enjoyment on the spot. Criticism of this culinary spectacle is also nothing new at all. Chefs, diners, critics or gastronomic theorists have been discussing for centuries whether taste should be the focus or to what extent the eye may also be addressed. While the differentiation and intensification of the taste of the dishes is understood as an integral part of the chef's craftsmanship, a culinary art that is too focused on externals is perceived as misguided.

Advocates of taste-oriented cuisine despise decorative elements and advocate a culinary art that concentrates on the essential and does not seek to impress with visual effects, but rather works with convincing taste images based on craftsmanship. Antonin Carême (1784–1833) is a famous advocate of a cuisine that does not concentrate on taste alone. His contemporary Antoine Beauvilliers (1754–1817) contradicted this view: "… the task of the cook is to flatter the palate, not the eye, not to fill leisure hours, but the stomach." (Mennell 1988: 196)

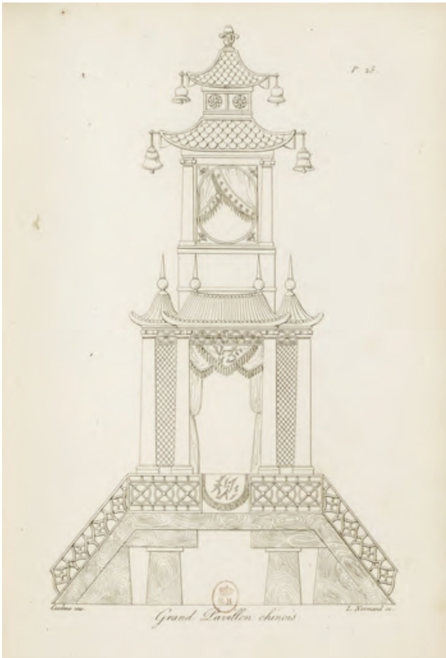
Even if chefs repeatedly emphasize the taste of their food or speak out against the cult of the visual in the kitchen, today, encouraged by elaborately designed cookery art books as well as by audio-visual and social media, food is consumed visually

5 Titles like *A Feast for the Eyes* (Normore 2015) or *The Appetite and the Eye* (Wilson/Brears 1992) stress the importance of the eye for medieval cuisine.

6 IKA – Culinary Olympics: this competition still involves the creation of show plates. It is only since 2020 that plates for direct consumption have been prepared instead of cold show plates, but showpieces are still exhibited, and vegetables are carved (see www.ahgz.de/gastronomie/news/-chefs-table-loest-plattenschau-als-publikumsmagnet-ab-258534; http://www.olympiade-der-koeche.com/en/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2019/09/Individual-Artistic-sculptures-D_GB_IKA2020.pdf).

more than ever. Well-known restaurants are visited by many diners; but the number of those who experience the restaurant visually – digitally via social media or analogue via cookbooks or magazines – is far higher. [7] The worldwide exchange about cooking – about styles, dishes, restaurants, the entire gastronomic discourse – does not take place directly at the dining table, but rather via digital and analogue media.[8] The eye not only eats first; it is also much more voracious than our mouth and devours vast amounts of culinary data. In the words of Dieter Roth: "My eye is a mouth." (Beil 2002: 172)

Fig.1: Antonin Carême, sketch for a Pièce montée.



Source: Antonin Carême: *Le Pâtissier Pittoresque*, Paris 1815, gallica.bnf.fr / BnF.

7 This is also shown, for example, by the reservation requests for world-famous restaurants such as El Bulli. In one year, about one million requests were matched by 8,000 available seats (Prats/Quintanilla/Mitchell 2008).

8 As numerous magazines, podcasts, blogs, documentaries, social media accounts or platforms like Reddit or eGullet confirm.

Culinary analyses based on pictures are nothing new either. Many examples show that it is possible and rewarding to analyze plated dishes like paintings as a visual medium.

Roland Barthes analyzed pictures of food in *Elle* magazine under the heading "Ornamental Cookery" (Barthes 1991: 78).[9] Barthes formulated insights into society, based on the culinary staging of food. He thus applies Lévi-Strauss' consideration of the significance of cuisine with regard to the constitution of a society to images of this cuisine. Indeed, many advantages arise from a purely visual approach. This is what makes comparisons of plated dishes across time and place possible in the first place. What André Malraux describes as the "imaginary museum," which makes it possible to compare works of art via photographs, is of even greater significance for culinary art, since the ephemeral character of the works is overcome, at least for the realm of the visual (Malraux 1994). The apparent lack of being able to look only at the outward appearance of a dish can prove to be an advantage. Photography makes it possible to concentrate entirely on the visual aspect. In addition, the food, taken out of the context of the eating situation, is unified. This is helpful in terms of a comparative view. What is otherwise, appetizingly designed, intended for immediate consumption can be extensively viewed and analyzed in a photograph. The immediate enjoyment gives way to a distanced theoretical classification.

Analyzing food on the basis of visual characteristics is a useful way of dealing with dishes and, despite the proverbial controversial taste, of verbalizing peculiarities. Taste needs visualization, so photographs of food provide a vivid basis for talking about visual design and using it as a starting point to explore intentions and meanings. The important role of photographs is also evident in cookery books, which are now published in large formats and with elaborate visual material. Digital culinary discourse, as already described, also takes place through images. In both cases, food is deliberately staged to compensate for a lack of sensory impressions, which can ultimately have an effect on the design of culinary works, because they are not only intended to convince not only the eater, but increasingly or once again also the secondary viewer. Both elaborately decorated plates from a kitchen that seeks to be visually convincing as well as simple plates that are reduced to the supposedly essential are suitable for an image analysis.

When analyzing pictorial representations of food, it is not necessary to dispense with references to the ostensibly most important sense involved in eating, because the eye does not only eat in such a way that we are also visually delighted. Rather, the visual impression is constitutive for or retroactive to taste. The visible appearance of a dish creates expectations that influence the taste experience. Famous ev-

9 In this book he also deals with the cultural meaning of beefsteak and French fries. On food he also published "Toward a Psychosociology of Contemporary Food Consumption" (1997 [1961]) and compares the arrangement of food with a painting in *Empire of Signs* (1992, 11).

idence for this assumption is a study for which white wines were colored red. Oenologists then described the taste of what were actually white wines with attributes that are typical of red wines (Morrot/Brochet/Dubourdieu 2001). In general, the eye is said to be predominant, so that in the case of contradictory perceptions of mouth and eye, the visual perception is decisive for the assessment (Spence 2014: 260). The eye often sets an analysis in motion and opens up spaces of experience, so to speak, within which the judgements made via smell and ultimately taste usually move. Ingredients and preparation methods are registered and, based on previous experiences, determine the expectation of the taste experience. Different taste variations also announce themselves visually: colors, for example, convey information about the degree of ripeness and freshness of a product or indicate the intensity of the frying aromas. Last but not least, the way a dish is arranged determines how it can be eaten and in what proportions the arranged elements are perceived. Many chefs or experienced diners can recall or anticipate a taste experience from illustrations, as they are able to translate all the visual characteristics of a dish into taste sensations. The illustration is then like a score that can be read. While it is important to acknowledge the relevance of the traditionally neglected close senses, the influence of the senses of distance cannot be denied. Even less can the field of cooking be reduced to the sensory perception of tasting. In this sense, visual perception, despite its superficial approach, will be used here to understand conceptual elements of high cuisine beyond more sensual aspects of taste that are usually focused on.

As an example, I will look at two dishes that are separated by about 100 years. The first dish, "Filet de Boeuf à la Moderne" by Auguste Escoffier (1846–1935), is typical for many changes that Escoffier brought about and is described in his *Guide Culinaire* of 1903 (200, 359) and prepared and illustrated according to his instructions in *L'Art Culinaire Français* of 1957.

In the case of Escoffier's dish, I am going back to a representation that was realized according to his specifications but not taken from his own cookbook, which was published with almost no illustrations. Nevertheless, Escoffier also thinks of the dish visually; the original recipe gives hints on how to arrange the dish, and Escoffier himself writes about the arrangement in his *Guide Culinaire*: "La question du dressage a une importance presque égale à celle de l'exécution pratique, et ceci n'est pas une idée paradoxale." (Escoffier 1903: 345)[10]

The second dish, "Vegetable Field" by René Redzepi, is taken from his 2010 book *Noma Time and Place in Nordic Cuisine* (120). Both chefs left their mark on the cuisine of their time, and their work had a decisive influence on the development of European high cuisine.

10 English translation: "The question of dressing is of almost the same importance as is that of practical execution – and this is absolutely not an empty assertion."

The photos are only a means to an end for this analysis. It is not about the arrangement of the photo, but only about the food shown there. By analyzing the way the food is arranged, the ingredients and the way it is prepared, I want to show that it is possible to draw conclusions about the time and the social values of that era. In the sense of Peter Kubelka: "A dish must express the spirit of the times. A dish cannot lie." (Riedel 2016)

It is about a level of meaning beyond the actual taste. About concepts that are conveyed through food. Taste is only interesting if it is relevant to the concept in addition to enjoyment. As indicated in part one, taste aspects can also be discussed via appearance; but in contrast to an actual tasting, only limited things can be said about it.

2. Visual Analysis of Dishes

Auguste Escoffier: "Filet de Boeuf à la Moderne"

(This dish is arranged on a platter and served table side *à la russe* for about ten persons)

Fig. 2: Auguste Escoffier, Filet de Boeuf à la Moderne.

Source: Ali Bab et al.: *L'Art Culinaire Français*, Paris 1957, pp. 384/408. © Flammarion.

A large piece of beef forms the central focus. This expresses a hierarchy of products. The most important element, usually the most expensive product that determines the dish, is placed in the centre. Everything else is a side dish.

Meat is traditionally an expression of (male) power and wealth. Here it is the fillet, the "best" or most tender and expensive piece of the animal. Eating meat was reserved for the wealthy sections of the population for centuries. The plate is symmetrical, and the clear structure of the accompanying elements additionally emphasizes the sliced meat in the middle. They surround the main product and point to the center in a star shape. The meat is "embedded" by vegetables and veal dumplings on the plate, which form the frame for the main product. The vegetables are artfully tournéed. The natural product is cut to size and thus cultivated. In this, the staging takes up the self-image of Baroque table culture, which emphasizes the dominance of man over nature in its symmetrical presentation. Sliced truffles lie on top of the small vegetable towers. In this form, they are reduced in contrast to the lavish use that was common in earlier times, but they still stand as a traditional ingredient of French high cuisine for a luxurious dish. The dumplings are adorned with an ornamental decoration. They are trimmed, cured calf's tongue. The great expense is evident in the fine workmanship. This kind of cooking is not done at home. It requires larger kitchen teams, which Escoffier reorganized with his brigade system, a measure that still ensures high efficiency in kitchens today. Intense yet natural colors have an appealing effect and indicate the processing of the products. Blanching preserves and intensifies the colors of the vegetables. The meat is perfectly cooked *à point*. When cut open, the pink core is revealed. This is where the kitchen demonstrates its precision craftsmanship. It is pink through and through, or still slightly bloody towards the centre, and has no visible cooking gradient. If done improperly, the meat is cooked through by intense heat from the outside, which would result in a grey edge. On the outside, a deep brown coloring promises intense roasted aromas. The fillet has been tied, which gives it a uniform shape. This is not only for visual reasons, because bridging facilitates even cooking. Another detail is the white dots on the upper edge of the beef fillet. These are strips of bacon. They serve to increase juiciness and prevent possible drying-out during searing. The so-called larding is a classic method that is hardly used today. Newer techniques make it possible to cook the meat without drying it out because the heat supply can be regulated precisely. Another central element of grande cuisine is the sauce, which is served *à part*. You can already tell the quality by its gloss and color. Dark and dense, the sauce promises an intensity of flavor that is achieved by boiling it down for a long time. During the reduction process, all the aromas are condensed and the water evaporates. Such a sauce is very expensive because it is reduced to a small quantity. The dish is served on a silver platter for several people, as is usual for service *à la Russe*: the waiter shows the platter and places some of its contents on the guest's plate, or does this at the side table, the guéridon, after the platter has been shown to the guests. The guest is thereby first visually introduced to the dish. The way the dish is arranged and presented on a silver platter emphasizes the luxury of an upscale restaurant and, together with the rules of behavior that apply there, stands for a differentiated process of civilization when eating in company (Elias 2000: 139). The spatial staging of a restaurant also functions through the eye: luxurious furnishings, silver cutlery, etc. render the luxury of the aristocracy tangible for the middle classes. In view of earlier forms of presentation, which included whole animals or parts of animals, this form of staging is simple. In contrast to previous staging strategies, e.g. of the Middle Ages, there is no opulent display. The decoration has been simplified considerably. The focus is on the edible part of the animal. Escoffier writes: "…nous établissons en principe formal que toute surcharge inutile on doit etre proscrite, que toute addition en dehors des elements que comportent les mets en doit être écartée; qu'elle doit être regie par und simplicité de Bon goût, et ne plus être cause de pertes de temps inutiles." (1903: 346)[11]

Reduction to the essential also plays an important role in other areas. The architect Adolf Loos links culinary development with modern architecture and writes in 1908 in *Ornament and Crime* (280)[12]:

> The representative of the ornament believes that my urge for simplicity is tantamount to mortification. No, dear professor from the school of arts and crafts, I do not mortify myself! It tastes better to me that way. The show dishes of past centuries, all with ornaments to make peacocks, pheasants and lobsters seem tastier have the opposite effect on me. I walk through a culinary art exhibition with horror when I should be thinking I should be eating these stuffed animal corpses. I eat roast beef.[13]

In contrast to Escoffier's then comparatively modern dish is the following, which about 100 years later became a signature dish of New Nordic Cuisine and thus represents important aspects of this cuisine.

11 English translation: "…we are also in favor, on principle, of keeping out all foreign elements that distort the dish and of wasting no useless time. The preparation should be based on a simplicity that shows good taste."

12 The name *à la moderne* perfectly fits these ideas.

13 Escoffier's most important work, *Le Guide Culinaire*, appeared in 1903, just five years before Loos' text.

René Redzepi: "Vegetable Field"

(This dish is one plate for one person and part of a multi-course tasting menu)

Fig. 3: René Redzepi, Vegetable Field.

Source: René Redzepi: *Noma,* New York 2010, p. 120. Photo: Ditte Isager.

Vegetables form the centerpiece and are staged as if they were served unprocessed. It is still in the 'earth,' which refers to its direct proximity to nature. The product is seemingly at the center of the dish in its untouched form. This negates the cook as author. The cook normally carries out all the work steps after the harvest: washing, cleaning, peeling, cooking, seasoning. The dish is not arranged on a plate but is served on a stone, which reinforces the natural impression. Earth and stone stand for the terroir, for the region that determines the taste of the dish (Hermansen 2012).

Although New Nordic Cuisine proclaims a cuisine close to nature and sometimes serves ingredients in an almost unprocessed state, this self-image becomes a visual gesture here. What looks natural and simple is the result of an elaborate working process. Compared to a plate of vegetables in a normal restaurant, this arrangement is extremely labor-intensive. For this dish, it is precisely what appears simple that is highly elaborate. What nature represents is a signifier of high culinary culture. The imitation of a natural situation shows mimetic aspects of cooking. The arrangement of vegetables as a field translates a familiar image into a dish. The transfer of certain 'images of nature' has become a theme in its own right in contemporary gastronomy. Once again, in a very direct, playful and almost kitschy manner, it reveals the desire to create a cuisine in harmony with nature. The mimetic has a long tradition. Even medieval presentations showing birds in feathers imitate the living animal on the one hand, and also associate the food with its original state on the other. But when it comes to bringing the environment of the restaurant, its region as an essential point of reference for the cuisine, onto the plate or the stone, there are other role models from more recent kitchen history. Michel Bras' (*1946) dish *Gargouillou* from 1980 is an important influence in this respect.[14] Vegetables and herbs are also central there. This is unusual in the context of high cuisine, where proteins are traditionally an integral part of a dish. Neither in Bras' nor in Redzepi's dishes do the vegetables correspond to classic cut shapes; moreover, they are not arranged strictly symmetrically but are organically distributed. In Bras' case, the idea of depicting the environment is already present in the staging of the food, but it remains more abstract in its implementation. Later Albert Adrià (*1969) made bringing landscapes onto the plate as an image of nature a subject that has been imitated many times. In his book *Naturà*, published in 2008, he made this consideration the theme of sweet cuisine and designed desserts inspired by nature (Adrià 2008).

An important model for a cuisine that brings the environment onto the plate through seasonal and regional ingredients and also incorporates natural materials is Japanese cuisine, specifically *kaiseki*, the high cuisine of Japan. Japanese *kaiseki* also captivates through the apparent simplicity of the dishes. In this respect, an already existing development is continued but is at the same time updated and radicalized. Radicalized because New Nordic Cuisine does not take place in France or refer to the regions there, which have a special reputation among gourmets, but to the region of Denmark and the North, a terra incognito for gourmets. This signature dish seems to capture an entire generation and its zeitgeist. Vegetables instead of meat, original and simple products instead of luxury and ostentation. High cuisine is making a U-turn that redefines pleasure and luxury. A kitchen that flaunts luxury is being replaced by one that stands for a new simplicity, or at least for new values. With regard to the spatial staging, this also applies to the design of the restaurant. The furnishings of Noma do not correspond to classic notions of luxury – silverware, chandeliers, tablecloths – but instead rely on natural materials: bare wooden tables,

14 See Bras' website: https://www.bras.fr/en/page-article/en-the-gargouillou-of-young-vegetables (14.10.2022).

earthy warm tones, and furniture in the tradition of Scandinavian design. This appears simple and unpretentious; but due to the handcrafted production, it is definitely exclusive and, like the food, stands for a new definition of luxury.

There are already clear visual contrasts with Escoffier's dishes: The product hierarchy disappears; there is no arrangement according to product value. Which also reflects a society that strives for openness and is less characterized by irreconcilable differences. The typical center, the main product, which classically includes protein in the form of fish or meat, is completely absent. The dish is the focal point in its entirety; no single element is emphasized. The organic presentation does not attempt to stage the creator as the ruler over nature; instead, a symbiosis with nature is sought. Ornamental decoration gives way to a 'naturalness' in which the vegetable retains its original form and does not appear to have been refined. It is good the way it is and is allowed to be completely itself. Instead of a silver serving plate, a stone is used as a natural plate, which reinforces the intention of untouched nature and suggests simplicity. What is there, or what nature produces at the moment, is used. The human intervention is obvious in Escoffier's work, whereas in Redzepi's it recedes into the background. Redzepi's dish is emblematic of a time when people seek closeness to nature and want to live in symbiosis with it.[15]

3. The Visual Staging of Food

Chefs like Redzepi have perfected the use of visual gestures and thus serve not only the guests in the restaurant, but also a large international community of followers.[16] Not only beautiful dishes are served, but dishes that appeal to our visual memory in a special way and awaken associations. Dishes as visual media are very well-suited to provoke, to trigger controversy and thus to generate attention. These can be real ants, replicas of beetles and butterflies or the perfect staging of a duck's brain.[17] The utilization of offal as part of the 'nose to tail' trend is not a new invention. Many regional cuisines traditionally utilize all parts of an animal, and this includes lungs or brains. Today, however, consumption is no longer a matter of course, and accordingly Redzepi chooses a staging that elevates such a dish to an extraordinary challenge. The presentation of the duck's brain as part of the "Duck Feast" dish, which is served in the open head of the animal (fig. 4), evokes associations that evoke feelings

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15 Cp. the cover of *Time Magazine* of March 26, 2012, on which Redzepi is described as a "locavore hero" and can be seen kneeling in a green meadow with a knitted jumper and rubber boots (http://content.time.com/time/covers/europe/0,16641,20120326,00.html).

16 René Redzepi and his restaurant Noma each have one million followers.

17 Cp. Instagram profile of René Redzepi (https://www.instagram.com/reneredzepinoma/?hl=de).

such as disgust and stylizes the eating of these innards into an act of overcoming. The target group of cosmopolitan foodies will probably be familiar with the pop-cultural allusions to films such as *Indiana Jones* or *Hannibal*. In *Indiana Jones*, a monkey's brain, also in the animal's skull, is served for dessert, which – courtesy dictates – should be eaten by the guests (fig. 5). The own and the foreign become very clear here through culturally defined enjoyment. In *Hannibal*, it is a cannibalistic predilection that leads to a macabre scene. Hannibal Lecter prepares the brain of his victim, who is sitting at the table with his head open and shares this treat with him (fig. 6). By referencing such depictions, *Duck Feast* becomes a cleverly staged banquet that playfully leads to or crosses the boundaries of one's own realm of pleasure.

Fig. 4: René Redzepi, Noma, Duck Feast.

Source/Photo: Anders Husa: *Review: Noma's Game & Forest Season*, 2018 (https://andershusa.com/nomas-game-forest-season-the-best-and-most-provocative-season/).

Through special ingredients but also through an appropriate staging, the regional cuisine of Noma becomes an eerily exotic spectacle that can unfold its effect in the restaurant as well as on social channels. Somewhat less excitingly but just as effectively, Sota Atsumi (1987) at the Clown Bar in Paris served a calf's brain that has been carefully processed and thus clearly shows what it is (Fig. 7).

Fig. 5 (left): Steven Spielberg, still from Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom, *1984.*

Source: © Paramount Pictures/Lucasfilm (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vNZ63iwnn5M).

Fig. 6 (right): Ridley Scott, still from Hannibal, *2001.*

Source: © MGM/Universal Pictures (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ibfBDKiw1ac).

Fig. 7: Sota Atsumi, Clown Bar, Cervelle de Veau.

Source/Photo: Felix Bröcker, 2017.

In both cases it becomes clear that the saying "You eat with your eyes first" is not a platitude. Taste in its complexity goes beyond what is perceived on the tongue. The head (or brain!) also plays an important role. The same ingredient in a sausage would trigger far less reaction in the eater. The staging of a dish, i.e. the visual impression, helps to determine the taste and makes it possible to use food as a visual medium. Anyone who wants to increase the enjoyment of digital or even analogue food should therefore look closely and not miss out on the potential of the visual enjoyment of food.

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The Restaurant as a Medium (Connect/Disconnect)

On Culinary Temples and Porous Spaces

Torsten Hahn

Abstract *The paper proposes to define restaurants as media. It distinguishes two types of restaurants, namely those whose medial task is closure and those whose task is the opening of space. The latter type is the focus of the text. The essay introduces two restaurants that emphasize the indoor-outdoor boundary and make it a part of the culinary experience: Once by creating an exterior within the interior (UV, Shanghai) and once by bridging the boundary through messengers (Bo Innovation, Hong Kong). Following this, a definition for this type is proposed. In the description of the functioning of the restaurants, the integration of popular elements, usually situated in the beyond of fine dining, is particularly striking. This then leads to an attempt to define culinary pop or culinary pop art.*

Everything began, as always, with a disturbance of order: noise. It is the disturbances that interrupt the usual and force to meditate on things that usually escape our consideration. Thus, I would like to start with an anecdote: Some time ago, when a friend and I were dining at Haerlin in Hamburg, it so happened that a guest had not properly closed the heavy wooden door, which resulted in audible music and chatter from the bar across the hall. A rather corpulent diner then rose laboriously and visibly annoyed from his seat to close the door. Afterwards, he lectured the maître d' that such a thing would not be considered an issue in other establishments, but in a – I quote the unknown diner – "gourmet temple" like Haerlin, it must not happen. The phrase 'gourmet temple,' which was pretty common for this kind of restaurants but now seems anachronistic, made me think – and I would like to briefly present what I have been thinking about in the following paragraphs.

The guest's behavior was somehow still justified considering the weight of the massive, church-like wooden doors, yet it was also outdated. It harkens back to the origins of haute cuisine and its cult. As is known, this origin relates to the institution of the grand hotel and the person of Auguste Escoffier. After working at the Savoy Hotel in London, Escoffier was hired by César Ritz in 1898 as a chef for his grand hotel in Monte Carlo, which ultimately established Escoffier's fame and led to a transformation of the status of chefs in fine dining. The historian Habbo Knoch has defined the specific space 'grand hotel' as a "luxury space" (2016: 14). This also applies to the embedded restaurants: their space is detached from everything ordinary and interfering, and it is also well known that luxury and obvious consumption do not exclude the sacred, at least since Thorstein Veblen wrote about "conspicuous consumption" (1899: 49). The behavior of the waiters in this type of restaurant is solemn, and their handling of the seemingly mundane things like glasses and dishes comes close to the priestly manipulation of the liturgical chalice. Food thus becomes more than just food. The diner is expected to adopt a receptive attitude akin to that towards works of art. This also means that the chef, who was previously part of the invisible staff, has his moment. He is transformed into a cuisine artist, and the guest becomes the audience.[1] We can think of the restaurant – a concept by which we mean, first of all, a kind of assemblage that includes a multitude of elements: actors, things (plates, glasses etc.) as well as discourse – as endowed with a power analogous to the museum or the art gallery: It lowers the threshold of acceptance to consider something as a (culinary) artwork, or more precisely, as a successful artwork. Restaurants, especially star-category restaurants, are structures characterized by complexity – think of the interplay between chefs, waiters, and things – most of which remains invisible. If this complexity was to become noticeable, it would cause disruption. The plate can be defined as the result of "blackboxing" (Latour 1999: 304) this complexity, which is consumed along with the food. We can now specify the question of successful culinary communication, i.e., increasing the probability of acceptance, by defining the plates as the "symbolically generalized communication media" (Luhmann 1995: 161) of culinary communication, analogous to the œuvre ("Werk") in art.[2] In the sense of Niklas Luhmann's system theory, this type of medium processes a form of improbability in communication, namely the likelihood of it being successful or, in other words, achieving "*success*" (Luhmann 1995: 158).[3] This type of media "secure[s] acceptance of the proposed selection" – here to observe food as culinary art.

The temple-like of restaurant accomplishes the task of transforming food into a culinary œuvre by strictly separating the exterior from the interior. This is ensured by mechanisms such as heavy doors or heavy, luxurious curtains. The present text primarily deals with the alternative to closure, which is the increase of complexity through the inclusion of elements from the restaurant's environment.

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1 With Ferran Adriá's invitation to the Documenta 2007, this transformation process is, so to speak, symbolically completed. Thanks to Eva Wattolik for the hint.

2 The proposal to understand the œuvre as a symbolically generalized communication medium of art can be traced back to an essay by Gerhard Plumpe and Niels Werber (1993: 25–27).

3 For all three improbabilities see Luhmann 1995: 157–159. For a short explanation of the concept "symbolically generalized communication media" see Baraldi/Corsi/Esposito 2021: 229–234.

This transformation is still present today in ironic quotations, such as when Quique Dacosta serves artificial roses at the end of a meal in his eponymous restaurant (fig. 1). What was once thrown onto the theater stage as a sign of admiration for the performers now, in a reversal of communication, ends up being consumed by the guest.

Fig. 1: Part of the Fronteras' menu.

Source: Photo taken by the author on October 13, 2016.

The space is strictly separated from everything mundane, through such means as music, as Joanne Finkelstein pointed out in *Dining Out* (1989). It is all about a "well-constructed atmosphere" (Finkelstein 1989: 58) that contributes to the enjoyment as much as the food itself. In the classic fine dining restaurant, there is a solid partition between the 'art space' of the restaurant and the rest of the world: Beyond the dining room's limits there may be or surely is disordered noise (in the sense communication theory attributed to the concept), but within, orderly sound, i.e. music, has to prevail. Even the dishes should not draw attention to themselves by producing noise – the waiters and waitresses are required to take care of this. Creating atmospheres is still a central instrument for a successful evening, but these atmospheres have now, as the present discussion claims, become hybrid: nowadays they have become media that connect elements of different spheres: art and life, interior and exterior, cultivated or exclusive luxury spaces and the street. The gatekeeper function that lets through only what fits the celebratory atmosphere is no longer predominant. More and more, agencies can be observed that connect the inside and the outside. Among the most striking ones are certainly transparent panes. Apparently, this border, that separates luxury from the common, order from noise, cultish dining from the rather simple action of eating had become permeable at Haerlin – a restaurant that, for the unknown diner, apparently was one of the last bastions of 'culinary temples.' The metaphor of the (culinary art) temple, where diners become worshippers, seems to have become increasingly obsolete.

The following will focus on this permeability addressed above as a sort of culinary or gastronomic program. This means that the boundaries of luxury spaces are becoming porous. Closed spaces become 'porous spaces' where the interior and (real/simulated) exterior can merge. When one asks how this works, it quickly becomes apparent that the medial qualities of the restaurant are also crucial in this case. The restaurant functions like a window that separates the interior and exterior and can be permeable, semi-permeable, or completely closed, depending on what is desired. Like the window, the restaurant also controls the exchange with the environment.[4] The text at hand discusses how the space becomes permeable to an environment that breaks in as either real or simulated. Furthermore, the dishes themselves reference the everyday, intertwining with what they were meant to transcend: the profane and ephemeral nature of food.

In the case of restaurants located in areas characterized by seasonal heavy rain, such as Shanghai and Hong Kong in our case, the 'porous space' becomes a metaphor for practices of opening boundaries. One wonders how this happens through media. Here, I would like to explore two possibilities: immersion in artificial worlds and the transformation of the guest into some kind of messenger, connecting the interior and the exterior. The former is part of a paradoxical movement that achieves openness through complete enclosure against the real exterior. But first, I would like to convey these two types through very brief discussions on the question of the transferability of atmosphere, a reconstruction within the guest's home, which was an important factor for fine dining in times of a pandemic.

The creation of transportable frames has proven to be effective. The restaurant boxes not only contained the dishes but also, as e.g. in the case of Le Moissonier in Cologne, tableware: messages from the restaurant that initially enriched the table and then the cabinets with new elements, such as the glass Tajine, whether desired or not (fig. 2). The domestic space is charged and partially taken over by fragments of the restaurants, it is to a certain extent recoded, if you will. Such items tend to

4 For the medial qualities of the window with a focus on the interior-exterior difference see Levinson 2004: 9f.

charge with the energy inherent in nostalgia, become memorabilia, and settle into the living space long after the food has been eaten and even the pandemic, that felt like forever, has passed.

Fig. 2 a-b: Le Moisonnier Box, including the tajine.

Source: Photos taken by the author on January 30, 2021.

In addition to this material practice, there were also immaterial practices of recoding the private space into another space, with transitional zones into a different reality, namely that of the restaurant. The media used were hyperlinks that led to playlists on Spotify, conveying a particular idea that imported the indirect origin of the food along with the dishes into people's homes, creating a distinct ambiance. This was the case, for example, with the collaboration between Nobelhart und Schmutzig from Berlin and Maibeck in Cologne: the "brutally local" cuisine of Nobelhart und Schmutzig was adapted to the Rhineland environment, incorporating dishes like *Sauerbraten*. However, at the same time, the playlist accompanying the meal featured electronic music that harmonized with it, effectively functioning as a reference to both Cologne (nineties) and Berlin (present day). This combination turned the Cologne apartment into a mixed space where times and cities intertwined.

If we were to look for the restaurant's programming codes – let's say culinary/non-culinary – connect/disconnect would certainly be a candidate. The distinction has been reversed: while 'disconnect' was desired in the past, connecting the interior and the exterior is now the new preference. It is a gross mistake to underestimate the environments of the dishes (starting with the plate, even though in the present text, macroscopic structures are initially of interest) and consider them mere decoration or ornamentation – in the sense of a 'mere' frame. In fact, they act as performers, constantly conveying their scripts (sensu Latour). The second chapter, dedicated to food proper, also focuses on the question of crossing the boundaries of 'interior' and 'exterior' – only the focus shifts: it moves from the environment to the dish, thus from the medium to the message, which, as one can expect, following McLuhan, is itself a medium (McLuhan 2003: 19) – as we have already suggested in relation to the question of the "symbolically generalized communication medium" of culinary art. I want to show how even the forms for what was previously excluded become permeable: the mass-produced, everyday, slightly vulgar. Forms that were previously excluded are now quoted. With this observation, I would like to briefly touch on an aesthetic transformation, for which I would like to propose the term 'pop' for now.

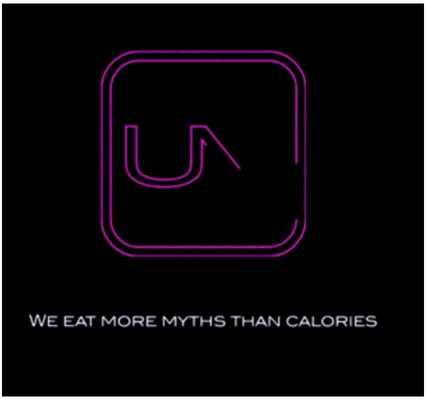
1. Porous Spaces

Now, let's turn to the environments of food and the opening of the luxury space. The first porous type of space that I would like to introduce interrupts the relationships with the environment to produce controlled, new environments, or simulacra if you like. These are intended to enhance and emphasize taste: the signature of the restaurant is its variability. The restaurant visit is thus expanded with variable visual and acoustic dimensions – although it is not primarily about music. Leading in this regard is Paul Pairet's Ultraviolet in Shanghai: Projectors and sound systems create a unique ambiance for each course. The *Fish and Chips* course, supported by simulated rain and accompanied by music from the Beatles, is certainly well-known, as it has for example been featured by the *New York Times*.[5]

This clearly revolves around complete immersion in something that, analogous to Roland Barthes' concept of "Italianicité" (1964: 41), can be referred to as 'Britishness' or 'Britannité.' The restaurant becomes a space of signs. The clichéd environment of the product is reproduced, where nature and culture constantly merge. The ultraviolet light enhances effects that have always existed, namely, creating a specific ambiance through addressing the sense of hearing. However, it is taken to such an extent that the term "Psycho Taste" (fig. 3) for the environments created is not entirely far-fetched.

5 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q2TPxH42MFw

Fig. 3 (left): Screenshot Homepage UV, seconds 1 to 2 after opening page.
Fig. 4 (right): Screenshot Homepage UV, seconds 3 to 4 after opening page.



Source: Screenshots of https://uvbypp.cc/.

It is natural to think of Roland Barthes' concept of 'myth' from his earlier work *Mythologies* (1957) in this context. The dishes at Ultraviolet are transformed into a statement or translated into a form that becomes the myth. The food begins to signify something – according to Pairet's idea, almost completely, so that in the end, only a few calories remain (fig. 4).[6]

As Pairet states in the above quoted *NYT*-feature, his restaurant is about the connection between food and multisensory technology with the goal of complete control. This seems to be successfully achieved through the transformation into the myth, presenting a seemingly 'natural' statement. The formula doubles the experience by doubling the perception: into a mental and a sensory experience that together unlock the product as a whole. The respective ambiance completely envelops the diner, making the reality of Shanghai forgotten: whether it's incredibly hot and humid or, as is often the case, rain is pouring. In the restaurant, weather, regions, and acoustic spaces are generated that have nothing to do with the outside world. The diners are actually encased, separated from the current environment of the southern Chinese metropolis with its typical sounds and smells. And indeed, the goal is to consume the entire staging. It is meant to be a myth, a discourse that consists partly of the presented dishes and partly of the respective simulacra.

The next restaurant I want to cite as evidence for my thesis on the porousness of restaurant walls operates in diametric opposition to Pairet's encapsulation approach. Instead, the focus here is on the attempt to achieve an opening towards the

6 The sentence is actually a quote, as you can learn from the "UV Brochure" (https://uvbypp.cc/brochure/). Alain Senderens is quoted.

street through the experience of the restaurant visitor prior to entering. The guests become storage media, and their activation create fine networks that dissolve the separation between the interior and exterior. The diner is (without knowing it, at least on his first visit) a messenger who transports messages from the outside world to the restaurant, encoded messages that are decoded only on the plates. Here we find something that is similar to what Walter Benjamin and Asja Lacis described as the "porous architecture" (1978: 175f.) of Naples. Here, the porousness is achieved in a pre-technical and artful manner, although it does not imply that media are not interconnected in a complex manner. The architecture of the restaurant Bo Innovation already hints at this. But it is actually the dishes of X-Treme Chinese Cuisine, created by Alvin Leung, that merge the exterior and interior in a mixed space. However, this would not be possible without the messenger and his message from the street. This is, of course, somewhat risky. One could formulate the thesis, in reference to Pierre Bourdieu's findings on the role of the "art museum" for the conception of art in *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste* that the clearly defined Michelin-starred restaurant is a location where the culinary "disposition becomes an institution" (Bourdieu 1984: 105) – which certainly applies at least partially to the sacred and charged temple-type of restaurant. But here, the difference between interior and exterior is precisely blurred, or rather, this blurring is the program.

X-Treme Chinese Cuisine accomplishes what can be described as "translation" in the sense used by Bruno Latour in *Pandora's Hope*. More specifically, it involves a "chain of translation" (Latour 1999: 27) that bridges the gap between "context" and "content" (Latour 1999: 165). The menu at Bo Innovation is committed to the metabolism between the street and the restaurant: Through the dishes and the memories of the 'guest-messenger,' the plate connects with the outside world, resulting in the perforation of the shell. Through the guest's recollection of recent impressions, the 'porous' space emerges from the dishes.

Therefore, it is not about an external staging of spatial experience, but an internal one. The dishes are presented to the guest with an explanation of the origin of the elements: ingredients are used that bring forward flavors which the guest has inevitably encountered in the narrow streets of Wan Chai, the immediate urban environment of the restaurant that they have just traversed (assuming they were pedestrians). The narrow sidewalks act as a catalyst for perception. The aromas that Leung utilizes are constantly present in the ever-narrowing streets of Wan Chai, with their street food stalls, vendors who are eating, and so on (fig. 5).

This concerns, for example, the bamboo liquor *Chu Yeh Ching Chiew* (竹叶青酒), which by no means belongs to the high-priced spirits – quite the opposite. Its distinctive aroma connects the street and the plate through a subtle thread and thus provides the mentioned "translation." The acoustic-visual simulation of the exterior, which embeds the dishes in their quasi-natural environment, is internal this time. It involves a mixture of the current space (restaurant) with the environment (the streets of Wan Chai) through memory and the images, smells, and sounds invoked by it. The same applies to the signature dish *Molecular x-treme 'xiaolong bao.'*

Fig. 5: Street in Wan Chai leading to the restaurant.

Source: Photo taken by the author on 20.08.2013.

Furthermore, something peculiar happens: In the translation, in the act of connecting the street with the restaurant, culinary elements become a sort of 'culinary pop art': they are present – think of the liquor – but at the same time, they also become their own quotations and thus part of a network of references of the popular. This can even extend to direct visual quotations of popular product forms, closer to classic definitions of the concept 'pop art.' The classical haute cuisine and its establishments are transformed into 'culinary pop' in somewhat 'mixed spaces.'

2. The Popular Becomes Pop

In the case of a successful translation, the popular elements are sublated: They are integrated and do not create discordance in the dish – which could be possible in the case of bamboo liquor, for example. The popular, profane elements are aestheticized and, although liquor is still liquor, they are transformed: The transformation turns elements of the popular into 'pop material.' In this respect, the process is analogous to the processes in the 'restaurant temple' type: food is elevated to art. This translation process is becoming more frequent now, and it is neither necessarily successful nor does it always lead to positive criticism. However, the process is an expression of taking the environment of fine dining seriously, connecting it to its already accomplished theoretical valorization. This environment is not something external to the 'actual' object and the emphasis on form, which is often criticized as merely distract-ing and therefore disturbing. On the contrary, translation demonstrates how popular forms give structure to the 'actual' object or the 'substance' of the plate. Translation means enfolding the environment and thus bridging the gap that separates the 'inside' from the 'outside.'

In this sense, 'pop' can also be found in the cuisine of the so-called *Neue Deutsche Klassik*, e.g. at Vendôme in Bergisch Gladbach, one of Germany's three-star classics (although it has currently been reduced to two stars). Chef Joachim Wissler perfectly represents the "New German School" – the title of one of the menus, *Modern Classics*, says it all. The preparation techniques partly represent the advanced modernity of cuisine, which places it in the avant-garde realm (in Jürgen Dollases' sense). However, due to the imposed proximity to the product, this initially does not help much with the visual language – the approach itself prohibits excessive visual effort that distracts from the product. Accordingly, the menu from 2015 includes "Roasted Veal Head and Tongue [Parsley-Caper Vinaigrette: Butter Bean Salad: Gribiche]" and "Rock Red Mullet [Lovage: Bouillabaisse Broth & Curry – Macadamia – Nut cream]" (Vendôme 2015, p. n/a). This is clearly part of the culinary classic and precisely for this reason an iconic counterplay is required. Once again, accessing the popular and its transformation offers itself as a possibility, this time purely on the side of form. The form is taken from what is the opposite of the carefully handcrafted food, namely the mass-produced junk food. The form is separated from the industrially produced matter and the former is lifted. The temple metaphor no longer helps here, unless one wants to be reminded with every communion wafer that it is also an oblate. As an "Auftakt" (overture), for example, the menu presents "fish sticks" (Vendôme 2015, p. n/a), an excellently processed product in a 'downward inclined' (Luhmann 2008: 181) form, as well as the presented "Toffifee," that are only apparently indistinguishable from the original, but have nothing in common with the usual filling. For the "Abschluss" (finale), the diner is then served a "Magnum Royal [Marc de Champagne]" (Vendôme 2015, p. n/a), although the 'M' in Magnum on the handle has been transformed into 'V' for Vendôme (fig. 6).

The surfaces are replicated and transferred into a different cultural system of signs. The effect is that now the form, having been 'liberated' from its original content, stands on its own and has become somewhat autonomous, while emerging as an aesthetically appealing shape. It is evident that the Magnum form is perfectly designed – an effect that was also demonstrated when Jeremy Scott recreated the beauty of McDonald's uniforms, including the logo, for Moschino.[7] Wissler then varies this still further, for example, by taking the Celebrations package, which usually contains chocolate bars from the Mars range, and putting them on the table with the petits fours typical of star kitchens. The irony is obvious: while the bars

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7 One should also think of the Ikea shopping bag by Balenciaga or their Tote Trash Bag made of calfskin in this context.

are supposed to be enhanced by the 'noble' packaging (box of chocolates instead of plastic bag) (inclination upwards), it is the opposite with Wissler Desserts: here the elaborate is presented in a banal setting (inclination downwards) (fig. 7).

Fig. 6 (left): Remains of the Magnum shaped dessert (Vendôme).
Fig. 7 (right): Celebrations (Vendôme).

Source: Photos taken by author on 03.06.2022.

The contents of fine dining are presented in popular forms. This is how the environment is imported here. The forms are borrowed from the stuff you can buy at the kiosks located around the nearby train station or at any supermarket. This inclusion of the external into the interior of the fine dining worlds probably heralds the (temporary?) disappearance of the temple metaphor and the sacred spatial type. But perhaps this can indeed be an occasion to reflect more precisely on the function and prescriptions of the architectures and designs that surround fine dining, as well as the ambiance of light, sound, images, etc. One thing is certain: even the classical setting of the temple type now appears as what it is and always has been: contingent, that is.

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Once Upon a Taste in the East

A Different Picture Tale About Space Food

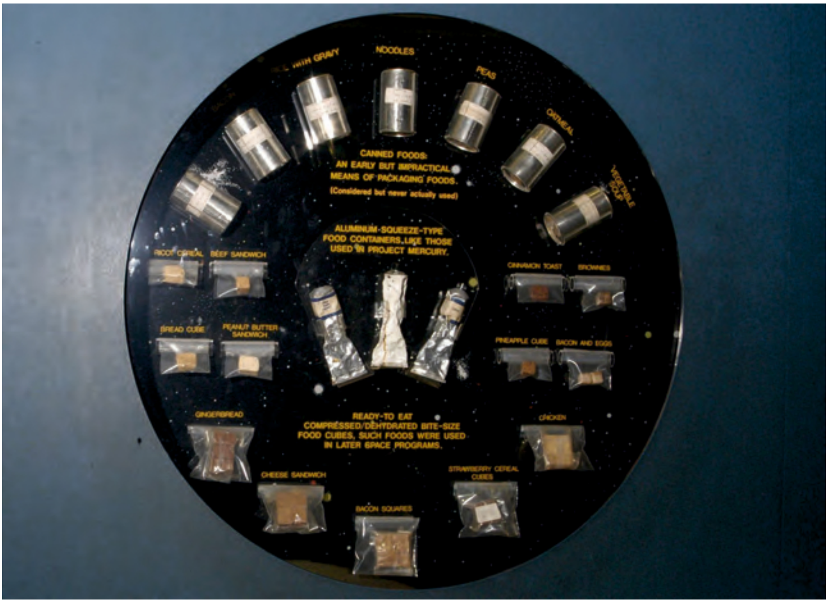
Sven Grampp

Abstract *There hardly seems to be anything less sensually appealing than space food. Space food is an indexical sign, a trace of the otherness and artificial requirements of life in space. In this 'non-sensual' form, space food is particularly attractive for the sensual representation of space missions in museums or documentaries nowadays as "a window into the 'techno-food' of the future" (Spence in this volume). I demonstrate that there is also another history of showing, imagining, and representing space food, which today has, to a large extent, vanished from popular cultural memory. During the so-called Space Race between the USA and the USSR from the 1950s to the 1970s, especially in Soviet news reports on space missions, space food was imagined as something that dissolved the categorical difference between 'natural,' fresh food and preserved, plastic-wrapped food. Mainly on a visual level, a lot of attention was paid to making food in space sensually appealing by presenting it within a home-like atmosphere.*

1. Making Senses of Nonsenses

There hardly seems to be anything less sensually appealing than space food. Water and air extracted, shrunken together, all ingredients carefully pureed, packed in plastic containers or aluminium tubes, strictly calculated according to calorie requirements. Entirely based on quantitative efficiency, NASA puts the mass of an average daily ration for a space traveller at 1.2 kg (cf. Smith et al. 2014: 7–14). Taste or even appealing appearance are simply unimportant. It is precisely in this 'non-sensual' form that space food is particularly attractive for the sensual representation of space missions in museums or documentaries, because it can open "a window into the 'techno-food' of the future" (Spence in this volume) (see for example fig. 1). Insofar, space food is an indexical sign, a trace – in a nutshell – of the otherness and technological requirements of life in space. In contrast, I would like to show that there is another history of showing, imagining, and representing space food, which today has, to a large extent, vanished from popular cultural memory.

Fig. 1: The sensual presentation of 'non-sensual' space food at the National Museum of the United States Air Force.



Source: https://www.nationalmuseum.af.mil/Visit/Museum-Exhibits/Fact-Sheets/Display/Article/197687/space-foods/.

During the so-called Space Race between the USA and the USSR from the 1950s to the 1970s, especially in Soviet news reports on space missions, space food was imagined as something that dissolved the categorical difference between 'natural,' fresh food and preserved, plastic-wrapped food, even rendering it irrelevant. Especially on a visual level, a lot of effort was expended to make food in space seem like food at home. As I will demonstrate, this mode of representation follows a specific ideological worldview. Space food operates in this case as a mediator for such a worldview. And it does so in a particular, sensually especially attractive way, namely via its "multisensory appeal" (Spence in this volume) through visualization. Soviet images present space food in a way that allows the viewers to not just see the food, but also to think about the smell, taste, or even sound of the food. This 'multisensory appeal' stems not only from the visual appearance of the food items, but also from various extrinsic factors such as the arrangement of the food, the choice of tableware, the depiction of communal eating situations, and the atmosphere of the surroundings. Especially in comparison with representations of space food in US news reports and popular culture at the same time (and nearly worldwide up to this day), it becomes quite clear how differently space food was presented on the other side of the Iron Curtain. For this reason, I would like to start my analysis of Soviet representations of space food with some contrasting examples from the US-American context of broadcasting and popular culture.

2. Space Food American Style

In the American sitcom *The Lucy Show*, which first aired on the television network CBS from 1962 to 1968, a test takes place in the episode *Lucy Becomes an Astronaut*. The aim is to find out whether women are suitable for space travel. Lucy and her best friend have been chosen for this test. Most of the episode takes place in a locked room designed to simulate life in a spaceship cabin. From the moment they are locked in the simulation room, the two women are struggling with their situation. In particular, the prospect of only being able to subsist on space food in tubes leads to an extended exchange of grievances between Lucy and her friend. Her displeasure with the tube food is written all over Lucy's friend's face as she tries to eat it. The difference between 'normal' food and space food in tubes is highlighted again and again to draw humorous effects from this difference.

A very similar scenario can be found in the 1955 science-fiction film *Conquest of Space*. At the beginning of the plot, we find ourselves on a space station orbiting Earth (Westfahl 2009: 39–40). A crew has just been selected to travel to Mars. In preparation for this mission, the chosen ones are exposed to a special diet. They are only allowed to take pills, which results in all sorts of expressions of displeasure. In this scene, to clearly mark the contrast with 'normal' food, the dietetic food is contrasted with the opulent meals enjoyed by the other crew members, with dishes that include roast beef, heavy sauces, French fries, and fresh salad.

Amerika – a Russian-language magazine, financed by the US government specifically with the purpose of exporting it to the Soviet Union during the Cold War (see Rockwell 2012) – published, in late 1969, a detailed report on space food, which is compared with dishes from a restaurant mentioned in the text. This comparison also takes place on a visual level: Three plastic containers are juxtaposed with a decoratively arranged menu of steak, vegetables, potatoes, and baguette rolls accompanied by water and coffee. The image caption reads: "Пища в пластмассовых мешочках (слева), может быть, и не так вкусна, но по своей питательности она не уступает сытному земному ужину (справа)." [Trans.: "The food in plastic bags (left) may not be as tasty, but its nutritional value is no worse than a filling terrestrial dinner (right)."] (Amerika 1969: 70) This clearly marks a difference in terms of taste, which is clarified visually by the differences between freshly prepared food vs. hermetically sealed food, colourful vs. monochrome, displayed on dishes vs. wrapped in plastic bags, tasty vs. not very delicious. The September 27 1963 issue of LIFE magazine likewise published a report on space food. The cover photo already shows astronauts during a parabolic flight test. We can see how the astronauts struggle to drink from plastic bags while being whirled around during the phase of weightlessness (fig. 2a). In the corresponding article, the visual difference between space food and 'earthly' food is marked not so much by the report itself as by the contextualization of the report in the magazine. The food for the astronauts, dehydrated, shrink-wrapped in plastic bags and with toxic or at least very artifical colour connotations (such as acid yellow, neon violet) on Page 32, contrasts sharply with advertising images that offer opulent fast food for immediate consumption, like the *Deluxe Hot Dog* on Page 46 (figs 2b-c).

Fig. 2a-c: 'Fast food' in space and on Earth.

Source: a-c: *Life* 27 October 1963, cover, p. 32, p. 46.

3. Soviet Space Food

Soviet reporting presented a different perspective. The alternative take on space food is clearly illustrated within a long article published in 1963 in the popular science youth magazine Хочу всо знать [trans.: I WANT TO KNOW EVERYTHING]. The article *Меню космонавтов альманах* [trans: *Cosmonaut Menu Almanac*] not only explains how space food is produced, it also tells the long history of food conservation. Again, the illustration is particularly revealing. The image shows the transition from 'natural' food to preserved space food in tubes as a continuous transition from bottom to top (fig. 3). The transition from natural food into artificial space food takes place without a clear cut. The magazine shows a smooth, almost indistinguishable transformation process. Visually there are no clear differences between instant, cooked, baked, or completely untreated food. And against the white background and without further framing, the image conjures the impression of a food genealogy floating in space.

Fig. 3: On the genealogy of space food.

Source: Хочу всо знать, 1963: 23.

This strategy is very similar to the one discerned by Roland Barthes (1980 [1964]) in his famous analysis of a Panzani advertisement in the 1960s. In the advertising picture, preserved food (tomato cans) and fresh tomatoes are placed in a shopping net in such a way that a categorical difference between them is no longer highlighted, but rather blurred. More precisely: The connotations of fresh tomatoes – juicy, healthy, and fresh from the regional Italian market – become, through the spatial entanglement with the tomato cans on the photo, a quasi-natural quality of the latter. The difference between Panzani's tomato cans and space food remains, of course, obvious. Barthes is talking about conserved food down on earth 'for everyone' and not about food made for a few pioneers in space. Nevertheless, the strategy of blurring the boundaries between the separate states of food is in both cases striking (and a common mode of food representation in advertisement until today).

The idea of connecting natural and preserved foods can be traced back genealogically to an era long before the Panzani campaign and the first space flights. For the Soviet Union, food was a particularly popular topic from the very beginning, especially in the ideological propagation of a new life or a 'new man,' respectively. We can trace this ancestry in книга о вкусной и здоровой пище [trans.: The Book of Tasty and Healthy Food], a cookbook, illustrated with sumptuous colour photographs. The book has gone through eight editions since 1939 and is said to have sold around 3.5 million copies in the Soviet Union (Schlögel 2017: 264–75). The cookbook contains many recipes, which are, above all, intended to demonstrate and promise that the socialist revolution will be accompanied by culinary prosperity. In addition, this cookbook celebrates the rationalisation of cooking and, especially, food preparation. Among other things, the preservation of meat in cans and the compression of beef broth into stock cubes are proposed in order to decrease the time needed for cooking. The crucial point is that unpreserved and preserved foods are depicted and described on the same level, especially in the editions from the 1950s onwards.

Fig. 4: The symmetry of living and conserved animals.

Source: книга о вкусной и здоровой пище, Edition 1952: 3–4.

For example, the visual framing of the introduction to the 1952 edition depicts canned food on a double page together with live animals (fig. 4). Not the method of processing live animals into canned meat is shown, but rather the categorical distinction between living and dead, fresh and preserved is flattened. They are literally on the same (double) page. This is likewise true for the packaging of stock cubes, soups, desserts, lentil and vegetable dishes. They are visualised in a similarly aesthetically pleasing way on the same page in книга о вкусной и здоровой пище (fig. 5).

Fig. 5: The art of stock cube dishes.

Source: книга о вкусной и здоровой пище, Edition 1952: 27.

Another example: corn on the cob is, in this cookbook, not just presented as if it had directly come from the field, but is specially draped in green plastic packaging (fig. 6). This is a particularly revealing case because there is no actual reason for the additional plastic packaging. Based on this example, it is only a small step to situate natural food, canned food, bouillon cubes, and ultimately space food on the same level of taste, or even to value preserved or synthetically produced food higher and display it accordingly on the visual level.

Fig. 6: Corn draped beautifully in plastic.

Source: книга о вкусной и здоровой пище, Edition 1952: 59.

This last step was actually achieved in 1969 with a photograph taken for the New Year's season. On a photo in the January 1969 issue of the magazine Огонёк [internationally known as Ogoniok, trans.: Spark], cosmonaut Boris Volynov watches his daughter with affection as she eats space food from a tube as if it were a treat. At the bottom right edge of the picture is a box with New Year's tree decorations. We are obviously in a domestic, family environment at the time around New Year. The photograph suggests that this tradition now includes not only celebration decorations, but in addition space food from a tube for the little ones. The association of this food with outer space is thus taken back, instead it is inserted into the family sphere of life on Earth. Instead of biscuits, chocolates, or nuts, space tubes are the special treat – the categorical difference between biscuits and space tubes is removed.

The very first cooperation between the USA and the USSR in space, the so-called Apollo-Soyuz Test Project (ASTP), led to the release of the Soviet documentary *Экипажи кораблей Союз и Аполлон* (trans.: *The crews of Soyuz and Apollo*) in 1974.

Long passages of the documentary show the cosmonauts and astronauts visiting a restaurant. The joint training of the space travellers included sightseeing, such as a visit of the space museum in Kalúga, and afterwards, a small reception was held nearby, to which the international press was invited as well. Its main attraction: space food in tubes. In this case, too, the categorical difference between space food and food in dining establishments on Earth is levelled. Although the food from the tube is presented as a highlight of the meeting and thus as something unusual, space food has nevertheless already arrived in a restaurant on Earth.

As part of this first space cooperation between the two superpowers of the Cold War, a frequent exchange of symbolic gifts and gestures took place after the coupling of the Soyuz and Apollo capsules in Earth orbit on 17 July 1975. Of particular interest for the media was apparently – at least judging by the extensive coverage – *where* the astronauts and cosmonauts shared their meals. Menu plans were published in advance, photographic evidence of the joint 'meal training' circulated in magazines, and the finally realized joint meal in Earth orbit was broadcast live and transcontinentally on television.

The cosmonauts allowed themselves a joke in this context, which was frequently reported on: to celebrate the joint meeting in space, the cosmonauts presented the astronauts, quizzically facing the camera, with tubes that were decorated with the labels of two very well-known Soviet vodka brands. These 'vodka tubes' were used to make a 'toast' (Scott/Leonov 2004: 359–60). It soon turned out that these tubes 'only' contained a famous speciality of Russian cuisine, namely borscht (alcohol was strictly forbidden on board). Nevertheless, the gesture reveals a symbolic strategy: 'homeland' food (borscht) and 'homeland' spirits (vodka) had now arrived in outer space (even if only as a simulation for the time being). In these instances, broadcast live on television from the modules of the ASTP, viewers were frequently invited into the Soviet space station Salyut 4, which was in Earth orbit at the same time. Again and again, cosmonaut Pyotr Klimuk explained the plant experiments on Salyut 4 to the television viewers directly from the space station (DRA 1975).

Two ideologemes are deeply connected with this performance, which stem from a specific Soviet tradition. The first ideologeme states that terrestrial and extraterrestrial spheres are to be regarded as a homogeneous space. Or more precisely: these different spheres are made into a homogeneous space by 'socialist' efforts. During the reporting on the ASTP, the performance of this homogenisation took place primarily on a visual level. The second ideologeme establishes a local centre in this homogenised space that resonates in two directions: the starting point of all actions is the Soviet Union as the centre of power. Consequently, all achievements must also ultimately lead back to it.

To give some examples for the second ideologeme: the Soviet leadership insisted from the outset of the negotiations on the ASTP that the Soyuz rocket had to be the first to be sent into space from the Baikonur Cosmodrome (see Ezell/Ezell 2010:

186–90, 317–23). Thus, the joint mission had its starting point on Soviet territory. Years before the ASTP, the Soviet spaceport was repeatedly presented visually as the starting point of extraterrestrial networking of the world, for example in the opening sequence of an East German documentary from 1969: In *Wege ins Weltall* [trans. *Paths to the Cosmos*], the Baikonur Cosmodrome is the starting point of a graphically animated network initiated on planet Earth. 'Paths into space' means in fact that there is only one path into space, namely the one from the Soviet spaceport.

Many examples could be given to show that the paths to space often lead back to the Soviet Union, or, to add geographical precision, to Moscow. For instance, the Soviet film production *Вселенная* [trans.: *Universe*] from 1951 provides various facts of the universe. The film also speculates about possible exploration of the universe. The starting point of the journey into the universe is clearly marked visually in Moscow. After the journey leads to distant galaxies, the return to Earth takes place at the end of the film, ultimately ending back in Moscow, more precisely still within sight of Lomonosova University (Kohonen 2017: 32–33).

This spatial constellation is a Soviet ideologeme insofar as it is part of a tradition that was frequently used for propaganda purposes under Stalin at the latest. Since then, Moscow was presented as the centre of power. From there, all decisive movements started and there they all returned (Kohonen 2017: 31–35). In reference to extensive research on the Soviet conception of space in the Stalin era, Ihina Kohonen observes: "Moscow was like a magnetic pole whose field-controlled movement external to the centre. As if pressed by a centrifugal force, movement was directed outside of the core. Moscow organised power around itself in such a way that remote areas were directly related to the city centre and in a circular manner, so that the most sacred area was the Kremlin." (Kohonen 2017: 32–33) Moscow can indeed be understood as a magnetic pole, or more precisely: as a reversibly adjustable centre, since all movement emanates from this magnetic pole centrifugally on the one hand and returns to it centripetally, on the other.

The opening and final sequences of the reports about the ASTP on Soviet television were designed in exactly this way: first they showed a shot of the Red Square (with the reference that this was an Intervision programme, i.e. a programme that was broadcast transnationally), followed by the image of a starry sky. This vision was then overlaid with a picture of the rotating Earth, which finally was enveloped by the logo of the ASTP mission. At the end of each ASTP special broadcast, the opening sequence was shown in reverse order. This means at the end the viewers would find themselves back at the starting point of the programme, right on Red Square in Moscow (DRA 1975).

This practice of centralisation and cyclical return is interesting above all – and this brings me back to the first Soviet ideologeme – because it relates to a certain form of space representation and thus a certain representation of food: the terrestrial and extraterrestrial spheres were homogenised or at least assimilated in a very peculiar way. In other words, the extraterrestrial sphere underwent a process of domestication.

This is already true on the level of motifs: as mentioned before, plants grown in Earth orbit were held up to the camera during the coverage of the ASTP, to demonstrate once more the progress of plant experiments (DRA 1975). Above all, this was about the prospect of growing wheat, that is, of food production in space. Philosopher Peter Sloterdijk calls the establishment of space stations metaphorically an act of "implantation of a world into a former nothing" (Sloterdijk 2016: 179 [trans. SG]), which makes it "suitable as an environment for humans into the external world" (Sloterdijk 2016: 179 [trans. SG]). For the case at hand, the metaphor of implantation can be taken quite literally: A transplantation of plants is taking place in an 'external world container' while broadcast live all over the world.

The returning cosmonauts were also given plants by young pioneers on Earth live in front of the television cameras (DRA 1975). So, the 'fruit' of (Soviet) Earth is literally found everywhere. Or to put it another way: Soviet fruit or plants advance into Earth orbit, thus claiming spaces previously considered 'other' and transferring them back home. The Soviet agricultural state is thus expanded into the vastness of space. Space, in this sense, is not the place of transformative future technology, but rather the place of expansion for the agricultural heritage of the Soviet Union.

The Soyuz module was designed to offer a very 'homely' module for the gathering of astronauts and cosmonauts (see Meuser 2015: 39–40). In this module, the space travellers met for the first time in space, held press conferences together, spent their free time together – and above all: ate together.

On the design level, the Soyuz module represented something that, in the words of philosopher and media critic Günther Anders, can be described as "trinketification" (1994 [1970]: 65–66). 'Trinket' (German: 'Nippes') originally referred to small objects displayed for ornamental purposes, mostly in private settings, especially in the living or dining room. Examples include porcelain angel figurines or blue and white painted small smurf figures. Günther Anders took up this term, including its pejorative association, in the 1960s and 1970s to describe the relationship between events taking place in space and their representation on television. Through televisual reporting and its reception in the domestic environment, Anders argues, a very specific perception of events in space is prefigured. The result of this prefiguration is what Anders calls 'trinketification;' meaning that the events in space are diminished, trivialised, and thus perceived as ornamental objects among others in the living or dining room at home. 'Trinketification' would thus be a diminutive, even trivialising transformation of distant and alien occurrences into everyday life brought in private spheres through television.

Anders himself writes quite vividly in this regard: "The larger the space of what we have conquered and achieved, the tinier it seems to become, since, in order to reach us, it must first be 'trinketified' with the sun, moon, earth and stars, i.e. translated into the miniscule size of our television screens." (Anders 1994 [1970]: 65 [trans. SG]) It is not the awareness "that we are looking into the infinite depth and vastness of space," he goes on to explain, that is promoted by television reporting from outer space, but rather: "Conversely, when we sit in front of our apparatuses, we usually forget that we are in the universe together with our room and house and city and earth; no, we often even have the feeling that the universe is in our room: on the right is the record cabinet, on the left the liquor cabinet, and in the middle the universe floats as the third piece of furniture." (Anders 1994 [1970]: 65–66 [trans. SG])

In the case at hand, the term 'trinketification' is meant to denote the transformation of the universe into a piece of furniture in the living or dining room, as Anders argues. What is at stake for me is not that the universe was in the viewers' living or dining rooms during the Soviet television broadcast of the ASTP, but rather that an *extension* of the living or dining room into the universe was staged in the reporting itself. The universe is not in the living room nor in the kitchen, just as the living room or the kitchen is not simply in the universe, but instead the universe looks like an (admittedly fancy) living or dining room. The universe is inserted into the living room and/or dining room – in other words: it is quite literally domesticated.

Such a 'trinketification' is anticipated in a biopic about the Russian space pioneer Konstantin Tsiolkovsky from 1957. In *Дорога к звёздам* [trans. *Road to the stars*], the connection to home is not only highlighted by the 'homely' interior design of the space station, but by the choice of cultural activities as well: the cosmonaut receives a live transmission from the Soviet State Ballet, which is performing SWAN LAKE. The cosmonaut has made herself comfortable in a dressing gown. To the left of the picture is fresh fruit, which is now apparently available in space. This is the final stage of the homogenisation of outer space: Space has become so ordinary that the actual events no longer take place in outer space but on Earth. There is no longer a need to conserve food in plastic tubes. The extraordinary has been 'transfigured' into the ordinary, the extraterrestrial transformed into the terrestrial.

This kind of 'trinketification' is contemplated in a Soviet science-fiction film that hit the cinemas barely a year before the ASTP's space flight. In *Москва – Кассиопея* [trans.: *Moscow–Cassiopeia*], a very young crew, namely children, set out on a space journey to the constellation of Cassiopeia. To survive this long journey, over 80 different simulation scenarios are installed in the ship, which – like the holodeck on the USS Enterprise in the series *Star Trek: The Next Generation* – make it possible to simulate a lifelike environment on board. In the case of *Москва – Кассиопея*, however, the simulations do not feature fantastic worlds or training scenarios for emergencies, as they frequently appear in *Star Trek*. Instead, real places from the Soviet homeland are chosen without exception – such as a lake district near Moscow or the family dining room of one of the young cosmonauts. Familiar foods and beverages can always be found in the simulation rooms, especially biscuits and tea from a samovar (figs. 7a-b). On the way from Moscow to Cassiopeia, the homeland – even if it is just a simulation – should travel with the passengers and always be accessible. The dining room and the familiar dishes from Earth are travelling 'with us' into the universe.

Fig. 7a-b: The simulation of a dining room on the way to Cassiopeia.

Source: Москва – Кассиопея, USSR 1973, Screenshot.

4. Conclusion: The Dialectic of Multisensory and Non-Sensual Appeal

These future utopias in space are curiously the exact opposite of the presentation strategy employed in the cookbook described below, which was published around the same time as the biopic *Дорога к звёздам* and the movie *Москва – Кассиопея*. While the films are celebrating the premodern state of food (not wrapped in plastic or preserved), the cookbook celebrates corn wrapped in plastic as a modern achievement. In the socialist vocabulary common in the Soviet Union, one could understand this contradiction as a dialectical strategy of representation: At home on Earth, 'we' become modern, while in outer space 'we' become premodern and homely, or will at least return to such a state soon in the future.

With reference to experimental psychologist Charles Spence, one might explain the Soviet representation of food in space in a much more functional way. While the USA, in the age of the Space Race, tended to visualize food as "a window into the 'techno-food' of the future" (Spence in this volume), the Soviet side responded with visual forms of representation that compensated for and indirectly evoked the missing "multisensory appeal" (Spence in this volume) of space food. And because this 'multisensory appeal' could be evoked by depicting a homely environment and atmosphere – the grain from the field, the fresh fruit from the tree in the garden, the tea in the dining room enjoyed in community –, these elements were used and integrated into a Soviet tradition of representing space. The fact that food on earth is in turn infused with space food (tubes as sweets on New Year, corn aesthetically wrapped in plastic) can be understood as a complementary operation to make 'our' homes modern and technology driven.

The key point of these visual presentations lies in a dialectic of multisensory and non-sensual appeal: Not in space, but down on Earth a "window into the techno-food of the future" (Spence in this volume) is opened. Space, on the other hand, offers a window into the traditional food of the past. In space, it will be as it has always been at home, and 'we' will eat in this inhospitable environment what 'we' have always eaten at home with our families, or always wanted to taste again because of the homely feeling associated with this 'multisensory' memory. This is the basic strategy of the long faded picture tale of Soviet space food.

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Space Food in the Media

On the Multisensory Design and Marketing of Food in Space

Charles Spence

Abstract *There are a number of deadly-serious issues around the provision of food and astronauts' consumption behaviour when considering the planned long-haul mission to Mars. One major concern relates to the phenomenon of 'space anorexia', where astronauts, as they typically do, fail to consume the recommended daily food/nutrition intake while in space. It has been suggested that a lack of multisensory appeal may be one of the key problems for the design of space food currently. At the same time, there are also more mundane questions about the catering on board for those ultra-high net-worth individuals who will be amongst the first wave of space tourists. Considering how to make space food more multisensorially desirable, as well as making the experience of eating and drinking in space (more) enjoyable has, over the years, stimulated the creativity of a number of designers, gastrophysicists, and star chefs. However, despite the various issues and challenges, the majority of the food 'research' that the public is likely to have come across in the popular press in recent decades can be seen as nothing more than merely expensive brand marketing, sometimes dressed up as 'scientific research'. From the very earliest days of manned space flight, it has been clear just how successful a marketing proposition it was for food brands to be linked to astronauts and space travel. That such marketing efforts should have proved so effective is, though, somewhat surprising given the traditionally poor reputation of space food, in terms of its lack of multisensory appeal, amongst astronauts.*

1. Introduction

There are a number of challenges around the provision of food for the planned long-haul mission to Mars (Cooper et al. 2011; Marriot 1999; Roach 2011). One of the most worrying relates to the phenomenon of 'space anorexia'. This is the name given to the fact that astronauts typically fail to consume the recommended daily intake of food/nutrients while in space (see Smith et al. 2015a, b). Indeed, anorexia was already being flagged as an issue of concern on the original Apollo XI mission (Smith/Berry 1969). While such undernutrition has little impact on an astronaut's health when considering short space trips, its impact on ultra-long distance space travel (e.g. to Mars) could potentially be catastrophic. At the same time, however, there are also questions about the catering on board for those ultra-high net-worth members of the public who will be amongst the first wave of space tourists (Obrist et al. 2019). Considering how to make space food desirable, as well as the experience of eating and drinking enjoyable has, over the years, stimulated a number of designers (cf. Horwitz 2004; Obrist et al. 2019)[1], gastrophysicists (Spence 2017b), and star chefs to consider (more or less speculatively) what the future of food and beverage consumption in space might be/taste like.

The emerging science of gastrophysics offers a number of concrete suggestions as to how the multisensory experience of eating and drinking can be enhanced by the multisensory design of both food and drink, but also by the contexts/environments in which consumption takes place. Gastrophysics, a neologism represents the combination of 'gastronomy' and 'psychophysics' (the latter the systematic study of human perception), describes a relatively recent approach to the study of food choice, and food perception in humans (Spence 2017a). In contrast to more traditional approaches to food science, where the focus tends to be on the physicochemical structure and shelf stability of foods, the scientific focus in the case of gastrophysics is very much centered on psychological sciences (including psychophysics, cognitive neuroscience, behavioural economics, anthropology, design, etc.; Velasco et al. 2021). While much of the recent popularization of gastrophysics research has occurred in the context of the gastronomic creations of the world's most innovative chefs, it is worth noting that the optimizing of food, and food experience design is increasingly been taken up by the food industry both on the ground and in the air (see Spence 2017d).

However, despite the fundamental issues, not to mention challenges (physiological, nutritional, and technical) associated with the design and construction of desirable eating experiences for those who find themselves hungry in space (see Grampp in this volume; Gupta/Gupta 2010; Preston 2015), the majority of the food 'research' that has appeared in the popular press in recent years turns out to be little more than expensive marketing.[2] Indeed, from the very earliest days of space travel, it was apparent just how successful a marketing strategy it was to link food brands to astronauts and space travel (Blitz 2017). Nowadays, it often seems as though the majority

1 For instance, in the very early days of space flight, the father of industrial design, Raymond Loewy developed face-to-face trays for dining in space (cf. Horwitz 2004). This can be seen as a prescient recognition of role of eating together (commensality) as an important element in ensuring team building (see Salas et al. 2015).

2 The US restaurant chain Pizza Hut paid the Russian space agency a purported $1million to send one of their pizza deliveries up to Yuri Usachov, one of the Russian cosmonauts on the ISS as a promotional stunt (Anonymous 2001).

of the coverage in the popular press around space food has marketing very much in mind. At the same time, however, one of the other popular tools in the successful marketer's portfolio is product placement (e.g. in movies; Doolin 2016). Somewhat surprisingly, however, there is a noticeable absence of branded food products in space movies, perhaps reflecting the notable absence of food/eating in this particular genre of film.

This narrative historical review highlights some of the key elements in the history of research on food in space, focusing, in particular, on the interface between nutrition science, gastrophysics (Spence 2017a), design (Obrist et al. 2019), marketing, and media studies (Kauffman 1994). The enhanced multisensory design of eating experiences for the peculiarities of the space environment will also be discussed. One of the key points to be highlighted here concerns the marked discrepancy between the seeming lack of multisensory appeal of actual food/eating experiences for those astronauts who find themselves eating and drinking in space (Spence 2017b), and the popular portrayal of, not to mention the striking marketing opportunities for, those food brands that somehow manage to associate themselves with space ('research'). The terrible food provided to the astronauts in the early days is unambiguously brought out by the following quote:

> These space foods contain the necessary nutritional, vitamin, and caloric content to sustain an astronaut during long periods of space travel. Since some of the ingredients have a relatively offensive odor, taste, and texture when condensed in a small total volume of the food product, flavorings such as chocolate or vanilla may be added in an attempt to make the product more acceptable. (Wolfson/Oshinsky 1966: 21)

2. Using Gastrophysics to Tackle the Problem of Space Anorexia

Space anorexia is a potentially serious problem for long-haul space flight (e.g. Smith/Berry 1969; Smith et al. 2015a, b). Based on data from various space flights/missions over the decades, it has been repeatedly documented that astronauts consume only 60–90% of their daily recommended intake (e.g. according to World Health Organization, WHO, guidelines). The consequence of this underconsumption is a 4% reduction in body mass that is observable within the first 30 days in space, which then stabilizes amongst those spending periods of up to 6-months in space. Given that the meals prepared are carefully designed by nutritionists to provide an optimal diet for the astronauts concerned, such findings are especially worrying, when contemplating the long-term mission to Mars, currently scheduled for 2035 (O'Callaghan 2014). The Mars mission will take an estimated 32 months to complete and, as one headline put it: "NASA can't send humans to Mars until it gets the food right." (Reynolds 2018; see also Perchonok et al. 2012) The cost and practical difficulties associated with having to lift an estimated 12,400 kg of dried food into space for a successful mission to Mars should not be underestimated either. Indeed, the latter concern has led to an interest in the possibility of growing fresh produce in space (i.e., to supplement the rehydrated freeze-dried items; cf. Finetto et al. 2010; Neilson et al. 2021; Preston 2015).[3] This should also help to tackle one of the most commonly-voiced complaints amongst astronauts concerning their space provisions, namely the lack of freshness (Masters 2012), or crunch (see Taylor et al. 2020 for a review).

Space food has been evolving ever since the Soviet cosmonaut, German Titov, became the first person to eat in space in August 1961. According to Miller (2018), it was Yuri Gagarin, who first ate in space (from tubes of pureed meat and chocolate sauce in 1961). The first North American to consume food (applesauce) on the third manned Mercury mission (in August 1962) was John Glenn (Perchonok/Bourland 2002: 913). Looking back over early space meals, it is easy to understand why the astronauts may have lost weight.[4] Shown below is a sample space menu illustrating what the astronauts would have been given to choose between eating during the Apollo missions to the moon:

> *Meal A:* Peaches (R), Bacon Squares (IMB), Cinnamon Bread Toast Cubes (DB), Breakfast Drink (R)
> *Meal B:* Corn Chowder (R), Chicken Sandwiches (DB), Coconut Cubes (DB), Sugar Cookie Cubes (DB), Cocoa (R)
> *Meal C:* Beef and Gravy (R), Brownies (IMB), Chocolate Pudding (R), Pineapple-Grapefruit Drink (R)
> *Abbreviation Key:* R= Rehydratable; DB= Dry bite; IMB= Intermediate Moisture Bite (Bourland/Vogt 2010: 13)

As Space.com put it: "Along with the hazards of space travel, early astronauts proved their bravery again during meal times" (see Belasco 2006; cf. Perchonok/Bourland 2002: 913). The food industry (e.g. Pillsbury) were involved in developing the earliest food to go into space. NASA astronaut, Scott Carpenter, went into space on the Mercury capsule Aurora 7 back in 1962, carrying the first solid space food, small cubes of

3 Along similar lines, Chinese space scientists have been considering the possibility of feeding their astronauts mealworms, given their high protein ratio (Tong et al. 2011)

4 According to Levi (2010: 6): "While one of the early US criteria for food selection was, reassuringly, that it should be 'liked by astronauts', some technologists did not pay much attention to their feedback."

food that had been developed by Pillsbury's research and development department.[5] Taking Pillsbury scientists more than a year to develop, space food cubes were followed by other space-friendly foods, such as cake that was not crumbly, relish that could be served in slices, and meat that did not need to be refrigerated (see fig. 1 for an example of a NASA space meal from 2003).

Fig. 1: Bags of International Space Station food and utensils on tray from NASA in 2003.

Source: https://www.nasa.gov/audience/formedia/presskits/spacefood/gallery_jsc2003e63872.html.

Over the last half century or so, researchers have been working on the question of how to make the food offering in space more appealing, increasingly turning to the emerging field of gastrophysics (see Kerwin/Seddon 2002, for an early suggested shift in emphasis from a focus solely on what is nutritious, but on foods designed for the limitations of the astronauts' taste buds; Spence 2017a, b) – e.g., going beyond the molecular gastronomy and food science of the physicochemical structure of the food itself, to thinking about the multisensory eating experience, and how it might

5 That said, the strawberry cubes were apparently so unpopular with the astronauts on the early Apollo missions that eventually they were dipped in Lucite and sold as souvenirs to space tourists back in Houston (see Crumpacker, 2006, pp. 114–115).

be affected by various food-extrinsic factors such as naming/description (Wolfson/Oshinsky, 1966), visual appearance (see Smith/Berry 1969 for an early suggestion that this might affect appetite), cutlery and plateware (see American Physical Society's Division of Fluid Dynamics 2015; see also Belasco 2006; Bourland/Vogt 2010), eating in company[6], atmosphere/environment while eating (cf. Neilson et al. 2021), etc. (see also Obrist et al. 2019).

There are a number of atmospheric factors that likely exert a detrimental influence over the astronauts' enjoyment of food in space, including the presence of various volatile organic chemicals (VOCs) in the atmosphere (i.e., the olfactory environment is malodourous, specifically sulphurous; Garber 2012), the background noise (c. 60dB, as compared to 80–85 dB in commercial air flight) which may suppress taste perception, and the lack of orthonasally-appreciated aromas, etc. (see Taylor et al. 2019; Taylor et al. 2020). The design and layout of the dining spaces themselves also likely play an important role (see Anderson 2004; Horwitz 2004; Spence 2017), as do postural considerations (Biswas et al. 2019). Nevertheless, in recent years, designers have come up with a number of potential solutions to various of these issues (see Obrist et al. 2019). A number of these have been inspired by, or at the very least build on, the emerging science of gastrophysics.

However, while things have undoubtedly improved as far as the provision of tasty food is concerned over recent years (see Lane et al. 2006; Lane/Schoeller 2000; Perchonok/Bourland 2002: 913), the fact that the problem of undernutrition (space anorexia) has still not been satisfactorily resolved, suggests that something is still fundamentally not right with the provision of food in space (Kerwin/Seddon 2002; Taylor et al. 2020). Intriguingly, the results of the four-month mock space mission in Hawaii highlighted the beneficial effects on food/eating of allowing the astronauts to engage their creativity as far as meal creation was concerned, rather than necessarily having all dishes entirely pre-prepared, which would presumably seem more efficient (e.g. Hunter et al. 2011; Isaacson 2013; Wall 2013). Nevertheless, given the lack of appeal of so much of the food that astronauts have been offered in space, it is perhaps surprising that so many of the world's largest food and beverage brands should have chosen to associate themselves so enthusiastically with the world of manned space flight.

6 Unfortunately, the time delay with communications back on planet Earth means that any attempt to establish 'digital commensality' with loved ones is unlikely to be feasible for longer trips (e.g., to Mars, see Spence et al. 2019; and see Reynolds 2018 on the importance of the social aspects of eating together in space).

2.1 Self-Promotion for the Star Chef's Brand: 3D-Printed Space Pizza, anyone?

Although never a serious possibility, the suggestion by North American star chef, Homaru Cantu, that astronauts would soon be eating 3D-printed pizza in space (Jayakumar 2013; Klotz 2013) garnered huge amounts of press coverage a decade ago (much of it incredulous it should be said). In fact, a closer reading of the evidence reveals that funding was only ever offered for Stage 1 research (see https://www.nasa.gov/directorates/spacetech/home/feature_3d_food.html#.V18jf-Z96Rs). Chef Cantu's proposal involved developing a food 'replicator', a converted ink-jet printer that was already producing 'tasty prints' for the guests in one of his restaurants (see Furness 2016 for the subsequent evolution of this pizza-printing technology). Having already conquered the skies with their tie-ins with various airlines (see Spence 2017a, d), several celebrity chefs have recognized the opportunity for self-promotion offered by collaborating with scientists in the design of space foods. The list includes the sadly-deceased Homaru Cantu (see above), Alain Ducasse (with 28 Michelin stars to his name) and Thierry Marx, with the highlight of their culinary endeavours apparently being a meal of 'beef tongue with truffled foie gras and duck breast confit' (see Anonymous 2016; Hughes 2015). Meanwhile, over in the UK, former world-leading chef, Heston Blumenthal (and his culinary research team), generated a huge amount of media interest when they lent their hands to developing space meals for the UK's first fully-British astronaut Major Tim Peake (see Green 2015). In this case, Blumenthal came up with dishes such as Nova Tiffin Capsule, Rocket Lolly, and the Big Breakfast Launch. With a nod to the emerging literature on gastrophysics, Blumenthal and his team also emphasized the importance of having a tablecloth (see Spence 2017a).

2.2 Catering for Space Tourists

The challenges facing those who have been tasked with catering to space tourists, when this sector really takes off (e.g. Crouch et al. 2009; Stockmans et al. 1995; see also Virgin Galactic: http://www.virgingalactic.com/; and the collaboration between Grey Goose vodka and Virgin Galactic on the theme of space cocktails; or Champagne House Mumm's work on drinking bubbly in space; Miller 2018)[7], may well be

7 Miller (2018) writes that: "This week, France's national space agency, CNES, will test whether a specially engineered bottle and glass are able to recreate that uniquely Earthly delight of popping some bubbly during a parabolic flight of a converted Airbus A310. The French champagne maker Mumm is behind the stunt, along with a Paris-based design firm called Spade. The zero-g test will be conducted in the skies above France's Champagne region and generate 22 seconds of weightlessness, during which the passengers will test Spade's new bottle."

that many people tend to feel sick on first entering space (due to the lack of gravity and unusual G forces; see Levi 2010; Olabi et al. 2002; Smith/Berry 1969). Separately, the reduction in gravity also means that more blood flows to the head and this has been reported to lead to a constriction of the diameter, and possibly even to a blocking, of the nasal passages (Kloeris 2001; Olabi et al. 2002; cf. Taylor et al. 2020). This is likely to have an especially detrimental impact on taste/flavour perception in space, given the often-cited claim that 75–95% of what we think we taste actually comes from the sense of smell (e.g. Lane et al. 2006; see Spence 2015 for a review). Intriguingly, Smith and Berry (1969) highlighted the lack of aroma (i.e., orthonasal olfaction) of foods that had to be sucked through straws as a likely concern when it came to the multisensory enjoyment of food more than half a century ago. New methods of drinking, involving the recently-invented space mug would also appear to have been greeted enthusiastically by a number of the astronauts (see Stanton/Spencer 2015).

3. On the Benefits of Food Marketing in Space

Ever since the earliest days of manned space flight, the food marketers were quick to recognize the phenomenal benefits for branding of being linked in some way to astronauts/space travel. Writing in *The New York Times*, Sang-Hun (2008) notes how the food companies have invested heavily in advertising, by putting their food brands into space. First off of the blocks in terms of capitalizing on the popularity of the space program was Pillsbury with their peanut butter space food sticks.[8] Thereafter, perhaps the most famous example was the powdered soft drink Tang. Although Tang was not invented with astronauts in mind, it became a popular hit amongst North American astronauts as one of the only things they liked, given the unpleasant taste of the water on board (e.g., as in the case of North American astronaut John Glenn in 1962, see Blitz 2017). The publicity surrounding this case led to a huge increase in sales.[9] In the 1970s, so-called Space Dust, a hugely popular sachet of brightly-coloured popping candy for kids, was launched into the market (Rudolph 2006).[10] The latter, note, being linked to space in name only. Nevertheless, the approach made

8 Though Space Food Sticks were successfully commercialized, they were subsequently withdrawn from sale. That being said, a cannabis-infused version has recently reappeared in the US for those wanting to 'release their inner astronaut' (see https://www.spacefoodsticks.com/).

9 However, after an unfortunate incident with a helmet full of Tang during the lunar landing, astronauts were only allowed to drink water subsequently (see Preston 2015).

10 As a young child in the 1970s, your author remembers Space Dust with great fondness. Intriguingly, the North American food scientist William Mitchell of the General Foods Corporation was responsible for inventing both Tang Flavor crystals and Pop Rocks.

perfect sense given the findings of research by Wolfson and Oshinsky (1966), published a few years earlier, demonstrated that simply associating a food product with space can make it taste better to the general public.

In a study published in the *Journal of Advertising Research*, Wolfson and Oshinsky (1966) gave their participants a commercially available chocolate milk and/or a chocolate-flavoured liquid space diet drink. These drinks could either be identified as 'space food' or as 'unknown'. When participants tasted each of the drinks once, changing the name was found to significantly alter their ratings. In particular, the drink labelled as 'space food' was rated an average of two points higher (on a 9-point preference rating scale) than the drink labelled as 'unknown'. Wolfson and Oshinsky went on to conclude that: "Altering the name of a food product to something related to the exotic would enhance the preference rating for the product" (1966: 23).[11]

Taking a closer look at the various press stories that have emerged in recent years, the pattern that emerges is that when an astronaut from a particular country is planning to go into space (e.g., to the International Space Station, ISS), then a brand associated with a typical/iconic food from that country will step forward, to dream up some 'research' with the said product: Think kimchi when the first Korean astronaut went into space (Song et al. 2009),[12] and espresso and lasagne (though presumably not at the same time) when an Italian went into space (American Physical Society's Division of Fluid Dynamics 2015; Associated Press & McLaughlin 2015; DesignBoom 2014).[13]

Of course, not all of the food and drink that makes its way into (or close to) space is necessarily destined for the astronauts themselves. Ardbeg whisky launched some unmatured malt whisky (Daily Mail Reporter 2015; though see also Hongo 2015 for the equivalent Japanese whiskey space research).[14] It is striking how such 'research' often nebulously talks about the importance of the findings, namely, in the case just-

11 It is, though, worth noting that no such naming effects were reported when participants were presented with the same drink twice.

12 According to one scientist working for the Korea Food Research Institute: "If a Korean goes to space, kimchi must go there, too" (Sang-Hun 2008). Sang-Hun (2008) also notes how: "After millions of dollars and years of research, South Korean scientists successfully engineered kimchi and nine other Korean recipes fit for space travel. When the Russian space authorities this month approved them for Ko's trip, the South Korean food companies that participated in the research took out full-page newspaper ads."

13 The coffee drinking experience is presumably far less enjoyable when the drink has to be consumed from a plastic pouch with a straw. The lucky Italian astronaut Samantha Cristoforetti also apparently had a slow-food chef making lasagne designed so as not to fly off the fork for her trip on the ISS (Callaghan 2014).

14 Talking of which, see also the haggis that was launched up to the edge of space before returning to Earth for Burns Night in 2021 (see Best 2021).

mentioned, how the whisky tastes different to a 'nose'. According to Dr Bill Lumsden, of Ardbeg Distillery, the company responsible for sending the spirit into space: "They reveal a different set of smoky flavours which I have not encountered here on earth before." (quoted in Daily Mail Reporter 2015). In this case, the aim of the 'research' was apparently to find out how micro-gravity affects the behaviour of terpenes, which are found in many food and spirits (see also https://www.ardbeg.com/ardbeg-events/Archive/Ardbeg-in-space).[15]

It is, though, unclear from these press reports as to whether the whisky was tasted blind, as would obviously be desirable for any proper research, nor whether the approach has sufficient power to detect any differences between samples. Bear in mind here only how the tasting of wine and spirits is subject to all manner of biases (see Spence 2010) and demand characteristics (see Orne 1962). One can easily imagine how the noses would have to come up with something to justify the expense, and deliver the media-friendly headlines and soundbites such as that "Whisky blasted into space as part of an experiment has returned with flavour literally out of this world, says its creator" (a quote that appeared in Daily Mail Reporter 2015). In fact, it would often seem as though the press headlines are more important than the findings of the 'research' itself.

From a media studies perspective, this discussion of food marketing raises the question of the various ways in which the relation to space is represented in media communications. While verbal cues have undoubtedly been used in some cases (think Space Dust), there is also a visual language that seemingly tries to represent the exotic or futuristic character of the food, by association (or transference) from the visual backdrop against which it is presented (see fig. 2). According to restaurant critic William Sitwell: "One finds excitement around food and space also playing out down on earth, as when Genroku Sushi opened in 1958: Having summoned the local press to his reopening, he announced: 'My plates of sushi circle the room like satellites in the sky.' Shiraishi used the language of the space age as he ushered journalists and customers into his establishment that day." (2020: 164)[16]

One other aspect of the press stories connecting foods to space emphasizes the more emotional (i.e., rather that the technical/nutritional) side of food. While, in the early days of space flight, little attention was paid to the palatability of space food (in part given the relatively short duration of the missions), in more recent years, a greater emphasis has been paid to the multisensory qualities of the food itself. While this is, in part, due to negative comments about some of the earlier food, there would

15 The Japanese brewing and distilling company Suntory also sent six samples of its whiskies and other alcoholic beverages up to the ISS, where they were kept for a year to study the effect of zero gravity on aging (Hongo 2015).

16 It is interesting to note that the sushi moves at exactly 8 centimetres per second. Any slower would apparently be frustrating, any faster would be too frantic.

also appear to be a growing recognition of the central role of food/mealtimes play in maintaining social cohesion amongst those on-board, not to mention the delivery of luxury food items, such as 30g of black caviar (Parfitt 2015), to astronauts on the ISS, obviously play a primarily emotional, rather than nutritional, role. Similarly, one might consider the rehydrated Thanksgiving Turkey dinner with candied yams that was presented to the North American contingent (Reuters/Beall 2016; Weitering 2016), or the Christmas pudding delivered to the first 'fully British' astronaut Tim Peake (Wyke 2015), while they were on board the ISS, as once again prioritizing the emotional value of familiar foods/dishes.

Fig. 2: One of the dishes served by chef Jozef Youssef of Kitchen Theory to passengers who have booked a seat on one of Virgin Galactic's forthcoming space flights at a pre-flight Sensploration event held in Wyoming, 2022.

Source: https://kitchen-theory.com/.

In such cases, however, one might want to question whether it is the flavour *per se* that is connected with emotional well-being or rather the more ritualistic elements associated with preparing/consuming these foods that is key (see Spence 2021). In other words, one might worry that something is lost in translation (cf. Stano 2016) when, as on Apollo 8's 1968 Christmas Day meal, the unappetising-sounding "thermo-stabilised turkey, gravy and cranberry sauce" (Masters 2013) was served, requiring the astronauts to suck the pureed rehydrated foods out of plastic pouches. It is easy to imagine how the emotional connection/nostalgia element might be missing, when that seasonal dish has to be rehydrated and then sucked through a straw (cf. Lu et al. 2015; Miller 2018). The role of comfort foods (Spence

2017c; though see also Hoffman 2014) has also started to become more prominent. Indeed, there would appear to be a growing acknowledgement of food's ability to lift the spirits, again something that may be especially important as the duration of trips into space increase (Associated Press & McLaughlin 2015; Lane et al. 2006).

Given the direction of many of the food recommendations for space missions that have emerged in recent years, there are a couple of foods/ingredients that would seem to have an especially legitimate link to the provision of space food (and hence to the marketing of food in space) currently: Specifically, energy-dense food bars (MacDonald 2016) and those products with added spice. On the one hand, there has been interest in developing lightweight, yet energy dense, breakfast bars to help address the payload issue for long-distance space travel.[17] On the other hand, given the reported dampening of the taste buds in space, the recommendation to add spice/pungency is something that has been mentioned in recent years by a growing number of space nutritionists, star chefs, and gastrophysicists alike (e.g. Green 2015; Oberg 1981; Olabi et al. 2002; Spence 2017b). In fact, extra spice was added to the pizza that was sent up to ISS by Pizza Hut a little over two decades ago (see Anonymous 2001).[18]

3.1 Product Placement in Space Movies

Given the huge marketing appeal associated with connecting food/beverage brands with space travel and astronauts, one might have expected there to be examples of product placement in space movies (Doolin 2016). There is, however, a noticeable lack of food and eating in this genre of movie, perhaps explaining its absence. (One could ask, whether this lack of eating also has to do with the difficulties associated with trying to represent the 'newness' of the food, and/or any of the unique chemosensory properties it might possess, in a medium that is essentially audiovisual.) One of the few movies where space food makes a cinematic appearance is in Stanley Kubrick's *2001: A Space Odyssey* (Eddy 2015; Haden 2005; Ronsen 2007). Furthermore, what food there is in space movies, is rarely portrayed in a flattering light, typically being shown

17 According to press reports, the astronauts on NASA's planned long distance Orion mission around the far side of the moon were to be given a calorie-dense food bar for breakfast, with each bar containing 700–800 calories. The flavours on offer at the time included banana nut, orange cranberry, ginger vanilla, and barbecue nut (see Mathewson 2016). These breakfast bars were designed in order to deliver the energy that the astronauts would need at the start of their day, while at the same time minimizing the space/mass required to deliver all the nutrition that will needed in the small spacecraft for the duration of the astronauts' journey. Here, one might also consider the suggestion that breakfast constitutes the most important meal of the day (see Spence 2017e).

18 This just one small step toward addressing Bourland and Vogt's comment concerning the fact that: "*After all, when you are 250 million miles from Earth, you can't just send out for a pizza. If you don't have a pizza maker on board, it is best not to think about pizzas.*" (2010: 181)

as bland/disgusting. What is more, many of the historical fictional accounts of space foods (e.g., in series such as *The Jetsons*, actually involves a meal in a pill; see Spence/Piqueras-Fiszman 2014 on the early portrayal of space food in TV shows). Similarly, in the TV series *Lost in Space*, the characters swallowed protein pills designed to provide all of their daily nutrition. This idea, a meal in a pill, something that the astronauts themselves have resolutely refused to countenance (see Spence 2017a; Spence/Piqueras-Fiszman 2014).[19]

4. Conclusions

In conclusion, the history of research on the multisensory aspects of food in space represents a fascinating interface between nutrition science, design, marketing, and media studies.[20] In recent years, there has been growing interest in adopting a gastrophysics approach to the design of food experiences on the ground, in the air, and also in space (see Spence 2017a, b). One important aspect of the design of foods/food experiences that is made particularly salient by comparison with the experience of food in space is the importance of the multisensory appeal of the food itself (i.e., what it looks, smells, sounds, and tastes like, even how it is described/labelled), over-and-above the traditional focus solely on a food's nutritional properties. Space food research has also proved to be something of a brand-enhancing vehicle for the media-savvy star chef, some of whom have also incorporated insights around how to enhance the meal experience taken from the emerging gastrophysics literature (Spence 2017a). While space 'research' appears to be a very successful approach for many food brands, it is certainly not a cheap solution to getting one's brand into the popular press (Anonymous 2001). Nevertheless, many food and drinks brands around the world would appear to consider it a cost worth

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19 In the science fiction genre one can find a range of dystopian suggestions concerning what food could be like in the future under the circumstances of an overpopulated and totally exploited and hostile to life planet Earth. For instance, humanity feeds (largely unknowingly) on cannibalism in *Soylent Green* (1973; see Spence/Piqueras-Fiszman 2014), while in *Blade Runner 2049* (2017) a couple of indefinable bars (possibly made from worms) are prettified with the help of a hologram (Cawley 2017). In *Star Trek* the Klingons love to eat "Gagh" which consists out of (living) serpent worms and seems to taste awful to humans (see https://intl.startrek.com/database_article/gagh).

20 There has always been careful management of image that fits with what one sees in food. Just take the following quote from Kauffman (1994): "Even so, both NASA and the press contrived to present the astronauts as embodiments of the leading virtues of American culture and this has continued from the 1950s to the new millennium. Both NASA officials and the astronauts themselves carefully molded and controlled their public images every bit as successfully as those of movie idols or rock music stars."

paying, at least while the public's fascination with space travel continues at its current enthusiastic levels.

At the same time, however, there is an intriguing discrepancy between the seeming lack of multisensory appeal of actual food/eating in space (possibly contributing to space anorexia) and the popular portrayal of space food as being in some way desirable (perhaps because it is portrayed, or popularly-seen, as providing a window into the 'techno-food' of the future). This has, on occasion, suppressed the appetite for media coverage of food brands that have made it into space. Consider here only the problem of 'wet burping' (see Kloeris 2001): This phenomenon, attributable to the lack of gravity in space, means that the experience of carbonated beverages is none too pleasant. This may perhaps help to explain why little mileage has been made of heavily-marketed beverages such as Coke and Pepsi making it into space.[21] Of course, over and above any nutritional issues associated with space travel, it is important to note that there may be a range of other health concerns that should also be considered, and which might, ultimately, outweigh, nutritional considerations (e.g. Borkhataria 2017; Brojakowska et al. 2022; Carbone 2022; Gabel et al. 2022; Prigg 2017; Zwart et al. 2013).

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21 Though, interestingly Mumm Champagne made no mention of wet burping when their sparkling wine was sampled on a zero-g flight (Miller 2018).

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Gustatory Knowledge

Ice Cream and Practices of Palate Pleasure in Archival Documents and Cookbooks (1770–1830)

Heiner Stahl

Abstract *This article links the production of ice cream in courtly kitchens and pastry workshops with the practices of congealing in civic households. Frozen desserts were nodal points at which the conditions of taste and delight met with gustatory regalement experienced in the palate. Celebrating connectivity by sharing gustatory experiences and by making space through taste, performativity and communication, this contribution argues that material and sensory culture are linked in the social environment of eating and the forms of relish linked to the arts of alimentation. In such a setting, various transfers of knowledge are enclosed in ice cream and tables where it was served and displayed were designed as multimedia and multisensory environment. Cookbooks, in this respect, provided insight into the arcane alchemy of gastronomical artistry and gave a civic public of readers, male and female cooks, gentlemen and gentlewomen, access to the secrets made in pots and pans and the homemaking of ice cream served in crystal glasses or china cups.*

1. Media and Practices of Taste: How to Freeze Ingredients to Ice Cream

Media, senses, and food are interwoven, bound to the histories of their formulation and preparation, in which ingredients, temperatures and compounds intersect and interfere. As outlined by the author of *The Italian Confectioner; Or, Complete Economy of Desserts*, edited, printed, and distributed by the London based publisher John Harding, frozen desserts are a hybrid composition of various media – condiments, flavors, plates, place settings, course of the menu etc. – sampled and mixed, adjusted and stirred and infused with different sets of temperature and means of cooling.

> Ices are composed of the juice of fruits, creams and liqueurs, prepared and concealed by means of pounded ice, mixed with salt, or with salt nitre or soda. The freezing pot should be always of pewter, because it prevents the contents of the

> vessel from congealing too quickly, and there is time enough to mix them thoroughly; for on this circumstance, in a great measure, depends the excellence of the ice. Tin vessels occasion too rapid a congelation, and do not afford time to well mix the materials. (Jarrin 1820: 123)

This statement refers to the chemistry of ingredients whose contents melted on the surface – of the tongue and in the warm environment of the palate and mucous membranes of the mouth. Nevertheless, it would be a dubious claim to hold that Guglielmo Alexis Jarrin, a confectioner and ornament maker, employed at a West London tea shop and coffee house, located at Berkeley Square in the borough known as the City of Westminster (Allen 2013; Reber 2019), had the spare time to compile recipes and had acquired sufficient language skills to translate them from his native Italian tongue into a mode of English accepted by the urban middle classes. Therefore, it is rather probable that Harding, the publishing house, hired a ghostwriter who helped the expatriate and non-native speaker with the compilation of his artistic knowledge.

The tea shop had been founded by Domenico Negri in 1757. James Gunter became his partner in 1784 and fully acquired this catering business in 1799, renaming it Mr. Gunter's Tea Shop and targeting upper-class customers of both genders. His son Robert, who was trained on the job in the family business became his successor in 1819 (Reber 2019). Gunter's established a brand for luxury and the distinctive tastes of coffees and teas, of course imported from the colonies, and cakes, pastries, tarts and glacés. The surname Jarrin stems from continental Europe, more specifically from the Piedmont – reigned by the Duke of Savoy and King of Sardinia – or the Lombardy-Venetia region, which had been part of the Austria-Hungarian empire since 1815. As Italy did not exist as a kingdom or an early nation state at the time of the publication, the geographical signifier *Italian*, when linked with the professional attribution *confectioner*, served to claim expertise, craftsmanship and artistry when making a concoction of flour, eggs, sugar, salt, and water, and then combining these basics with ingredients that induced various flavours. Some readers and customers knew the fine cuisines of urban southern Europe through their travels that one may connect to the beginnings of tourism. Jarrin's persona – as an artist of food composition and as an author respectively as a trademark of an exquisite brand – retained a trace of reticent exoticism. Marked as Italian, though he was born and raised in the Piedmont region, the pastry confectioner stood for specialty, expertise, and tacit knowledge. For his publisher, these aspects became key pitches and main selling points to market the cookbook as well as its reissues and new editions.

Food addresses the senses (Sutton 2010): the nose (odor/fragrance), the tongue, the palate and the tips of the finger (gustatory taste and tactility), the eyes (vision), and the ears (hearing). Such multisensory activity is interwoven with communication (Rodaway 1994; Howes 1994), as early as at the stages of production: Preparing food, bringing it to the table, presenting it there, customers being catered and landlords being served, eating dishes alone or accompanied by invited guests, all this contains social bonds and networks of representation (De Vooght 2012) as well as various stratifications: this process relates firstly to social interaction; secondly it comprises sensory experience; thirdly it entails conditions of space, infrastructure and provision of goods; fourthly, it bears on the composition of ingredients with regard to time-sensitive operations like heating, frying, stewing or cooking. Finally, there are two additional layers bound to this constellation, namely household economies as well as the media that stores and preserves knowledge of how to confect extraordinary meals and provide memorable gastronomical and gustatory experiences.

> Some are of opinion, that when any article is iced, it loses its sweetness, and that it ought therefore to have an additional quantity of sugar; but this is not correct; the diminution of the sweetness arises from the materials not being properly mixed or worked with the spaddle, when in the freezing pot. In Ices that are badly mixed the sugar sinks to the bottom, and they have necessarily a sharp unpleasant taste. (Jarrin 1820: 123)

Meals matter (Symons 2019), because they exemplify the social, cultural, sensual, economic and media entanglements involved in the consumption and enjoyment of food. These dimensions have become deeply inscribed in food cultures in general and in understandings of taste in particular, but they rarely form the core of historical examinations. In addition, food contains procedures of communication, of acoustic and auditory experience (Stahl 2022b), of time perception, the control and measurement of temperature, as well as spatial relations. "Of all the arts, cooking is most ephemeral" (Di Palma 2014: 118), because the courses on display melt away and are dispersed bite by bite. They were not designed to endure as works of art, but to be remembered as a performance within the palate. The French word *le palais* announces and signifies the different stages of such tasty spectacles being originally preserved to royal and aristocratic pleasures. In this respect, Marie-Antoine Carême, a confectioner and self-made *mâitre de cuisine* who lived from 1784 to 1833, established his name as a brand of quality and gastronomical ingenuity. He was a creator of aesthetic compositions and, in his restaurant, Carême performed the arts of gustatory sensual pleasures (Ferguson 2003) and subsequently became – like Jarrin and others – a successful cookbook author, who sold a lot of copies and editions. He referred his skills and reputation to his service to the royal kitchen and the haute cuisine of Parisian restaurants (Carême 1815).

It seems safe to assume that everybody knows something about ice cream and that many have held cones with portions of such frozen delight in hand, leading them to mouth and tongue, even if connoisseurs of the period were spooning icy sorbets from china cups, which may have been the usual way of consuming this frozen treat around 1800. Ice cream is an object of common knowledge. Analyzing the contexts in which this edible, which is all but an aliment, is produced, presented, and consumed opens pathways and perspectives that focus on where ice cream has been sensorially registered within cultural and social practices of eating and who can allow themselves such trices of luxury. It is an experience of ingredients, space, time, taste; jars and bowls made of glass; spoons first made of materials like brass, tin, and aluminum, to later be substituted by plastic in the second half of 20th century, or even nowadays by sustainable and degradable materials.

Looking into the inventory of courtly kitchens and confectionary workshops is a convenient way to learn whether frozen dessert or ice cream was frequently served at the aristocratic dining table and tied to specific occasions. In April 1786, a confectioner Friedrich Daniel Fischer, born in Ansbach, received a certification and testimonial, that he catered the daily provision of cookies and glacés extraordinarily well and proved to serve official events with his artistic excellence in terms of tasty pastry and frozen desserts.[1] In this written record it was also noted what victuals (coffee, tea, sugar etc.) the confectionary at Arolsen Palace served at a daily basis, who was entitled to them and to what extent.[2] At the Wilhelmshöhe Palace, the residence of the Dukes of Hessen-Cassel, a clerk counted and registered the inventory of the facilities and amenities which were used to cook and provide meals for the members of the court's administration and the nobles, both groups having been granted the right to dine with the Duke on a daily – or at least on a regular and serial – basis. Equipped with pen and paper, this clerk was obliged to manage the supply, maintenance and provision of foodstuff and infrastructure, also noting what dishes and tableware had been allocated to the stock. By the end of December 1822, the clerk counted four large and four small ice cream bowls (Eisgläser) in the shelves designated for glassware. They held the contents for scoops of ice cream, when such occasions were due.[3]

The concept of distinction provides one way of reading such artefacts and the practices connected to them. But making sense of eating, understood as a social, cultural, and sensory practice also requires reflection on temporal/spatial relations. Temporality and temperature are two major driving forces in this context. Both

1 Testimonial for Friedrich Daniel Fischer, confectioner from Ansbach (then Hohenzollern-Brandenburg now Bavaria), specifications related to the courtly confectionary workshop at Arolsen, in: Federal Archive of the State of Hesse (Hessisches Staatsarchiv (HStA)) Marburg, 119a, Nr. 28, 15.04.1786, Bl. 1.

2 "Specification was an Thee und Caffe tägl[ich] aus der Conditorey gegeben wirdt", 1745 and 'Specification der Persohnen welche wochentl[ich] aus der Hochfürstl[ichen] Conditorey an Zucker, Thee und Caffe bekommen', 1748, in: HStA Marburg, 119a, Nr. 28.

3 Inventarium of the courtly kitchen at Wilhelmshöhe Palace, compiled by (Johannes) Fabronius, Cassel, 04.12.1822, in: HStA Marburg, 7a, 1137, Nr. 1, 28.12.1822, Bl. 1.

mark layers of ingestion, dish, pantry and, of course, digestion. Meals structure the timely order of workdays and Sundays (Aymard/Grignon/Sabban 1993). Then as now, a kitchen was a space in which knowledge interacted and communicated with social and preparative time, infrastructures, media, workforce, temperature, and the provision of foodstuff. Gastronomical spirit, economies of alimentation and rationalization of cooking procedures, therefore, connected a court's kitchen with a gentry or (upper)middle class household's domestic nutrimental affairs. This stretches to environments of gastro-production in restaurants (Möhring 2012, 2013a, 2013b; Iwanczek 2016) and to specialized services for gustatory enjoyment. Such services were outsourced to the craftsmen and craftswomen who ran companies that catered to the local or regional aristocracy (Kliewer 2015), or at least to distinguished families who enjoyed a high public profile. A restaurant's daily menu, understood as a public space for those who could afford it (consumers), with its table settings and its series of courses, expressed a condensed version of a courtly banquet. Re-enacting gastronomical distinctiveness at a table *de convives* or in a space with acquaintances (invitees), sitting in a dining room of an estate or a house, gastropolitics has been understood as a mode of social hierarchy and interaction that operates at a specific setting: namely, while sitting at a table (Appadurai 1981). It connects feudal banquets (De Vooght 2011), diplomatic dinners (Stéfanini 2016), civic table societies – in relative seclusion – along with the orchestration of stock in tea shops, coffee houses or restaurants. Public performances also play a part and provide additional values in terms of communication, interaction, posture, and distinction. In this respect, preparing meals requires skills of composition. Knowledge stored in memories of practices is one layer of such composition. This also requires notation, mainly on sheets of paper. On such surfaces recipes were registered, compiled, and bound between covers or bindings. Access to such arcane epistemic space was restricted until granted by a supervisor, a chef de cuisine. Another medium that garnered, translated, and construed gastronomical experience and gustatory knowledge was the cookbook, and access to such comprehensive culinary lore could be purchased (value of acquisition). *The Italian Confectioner*, a compilation of recipes allegedly authored by William (Guglielmo) Jarrin, or the *Pâtissier Royal Parisien*, collated by his French competitor Marie-Antoine Carême, provided a lively insight into the alchemy of fine taste of sweet tidbits. In this respect, multiple temporalities are assigned to the process of preparation. Assessing the most convenient point of time to adjust ingredients, when the temperature is accurate to apply inventories of materials, infrastructural tools like tableware and equipment and the orchestration of condiments drew sceneries of delicacy. Those landscapes of bodily and sensory enjoyment consisted of several nodal points at which transfers of gastronomical and gustatory knowledge occurred. And tables were the multimedia and multisensory environments – the spatial arrangements and temporal textures of fine taste – in which such experiences happened (Brillat-Savarin 1826).

2. Gustatory Knowledge: Ice is the Palate's Frozen Delight

Cookbooks are a form of media relaying multisensorial experience. Such printed matter can provide insight into the gastropolitics of alimentary tastes and into the arts of kitchen management at a feudal or royal court. Since the second half of 18th century, collections of recipes claimed relevance in providing the many with access to the exclusive gustatory knowledge of the few. The literate public to whom these collections were addressed included male and female food artists, daughters of the landed gentry who were preparing for marriage and had to be trained in directing households with servants, or bourgeois gentle women guiding a domestic workforce. For those who learned how to read, and, in general, for social groups who invested in educating their offspring, cookbooks offered access to flows of culinary information that was already transregional at that time. During the 19th and early 20th century, presumably beginning in the 1830s but after the 1848/49 uprisings at the latest, national attributions became common features for including or excluding recipes in such compilations. This tendency extended to the competitions between local confectioners and peregrine, trans-local and regionally and seasonally migrated ice cream makers (Möhring 2013a; Stahl 2022a). The cookbooks considered in this article, *Dictionnaire portatif de cuisine, d'office et de distillation* (Vincent 1767), the *Italian confectioner* (Jarrin 1822) as well as the *Kochbuch für alle Stände* (Armster 1828) represent only a small sample of the publications that characterize the contemporaneous market for guidebooks and manuals. These volumes had been preceded by numerous works which had been published in numerous editions, translated into other languages (Massialot 1691, 1692; 1698; 1702; Lehmann 1999) and received relevance and appreciation mostly through illegal reprints and pirated copies (Marin 1739; Menon 1749). Over time, and in circles of recurrence, these cookbooks underwent adaptations of titles, translations, expansions, and recompilations.

These recipe collections offer insights into the practices of household and kitchen management. Contemporary cookbooks of the mid-18th and early 19th centuries show, and this is the second thesis of this paper, that cooks shared recipe knowledge transnationally, traded among themselves and, with the support of their publishers, marketed it to a middle-class audience. Their designations of taste thereby performed a popularization of gastronomic and gustatory knowledge. Cookbooks provide insight into the spatial and temporal dispositions of presentation by referring to table manners and to notions of health precautions that were also included in understandings of food. These compilations served as culinary guides into gustatory landscapes revealing how premodern nobles and aristocrats celebrated cultures of eating, relish and savoir vivre. They sold by offering putative access behind the doors of courtly kitchens. This opened pathways of cultural appropriation and engraftment of such knowledge in civic practices of luscious food. These printed media combined nutritional knowledge, practices, and technologies of preparation with suggestions for presenting dishes at the table. As collections of recipes and written manuals of how to make meals, which were issued and published for a developing market of readers, cookbooks also enabled culinary empowerment. They had in common the intention of giving advice, explaining, and presenting the preparation of fruits, salads, vegetables, and animals and suggesting different combinations. They claimed for themselves "thorough instruction on the art of cooking as well as on the preparation of baked goods, creams, jellies, drinks," according to the subtitle of the collection of recipes published by the German cook and restaurant owner Sophie Armster in 1828. Those instructions – provided by Armster, Jarrin, Vincent, and other authors – focused on applicability, especially when kitchen environments lacked certain equipage and gear.

Printed books popularize the preselection of gustatory and gastronomical knowledge. Printed, published, and distributed in 1767 by the Paris publisher and bookseller Philippe Vincent[4], who advertised his services as a publishing house with reference to the Duke of Burgundy, the *Dictionnaire portatif de cuisine, d'office et de distillation* accomplishes both. The recipe collection was a portable archive. It contained the cooking knowledge of the first half of the 18th century, could be taken along, read aloud, and served as a reference study of the art of food. Like an advertising insert, announcing the value of the book, the title page already indicated the book's diverse contents, such as "la façon de faire toutes sortes de gelées [...] et de composer toute sortes de liquers [...] de syrops, de glaces, d'essences." (Vincent 1767) The *Dictionnaire* included details on the preparation of jellies, as well as the composition of liqueurs, ice cream, thickened syrups and other liquids added with natural flavors. In addition to instructions on mixing liquors, the volume explained the uses of such concoctions, aimed at application by buyers who were capable of writing and reading. This in turn limited the target audience. It was aimed chiefly at the most skilled and dexterous chefs in princely court kitchens and restaurants, as well as at cooks – and female *cuisinières* – who were exclusively responsible "pour des Tables bourgeoises" (Vincent 1767) and thus employed by bourgeois lords. Subsequent editions were advertised as expansions. Supplements offered special content that increased the marketability and dissemination of this (secret) cooking knowledge. The publishers aimed at serial publication in order to tell the story of gastronomic and culinary skills (Williams 2020). Although this elaborate designation in the subtitle implies gendered attributions and a distinction between professional independence or dependent employment, it dispenses with the spatial definitions of the domestic and homely, even if such private residential building may have encompassed several hundred acres of acquired or inherited property (Wertz 2013). Female cooks in the mid-1760s were identifiable as cookbook buyers.

4 About Philippe Vincent (1724–1790) see https://data.bnf.fr/12231108/philippe_vincent/ and https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k98044590.texteImage

They occasionally managed (upper) middle-class kitchens and were anything but bound to domestic cooking environments, as we might assume and re-imagine that time. Male chefs, contrary to the common narrative (Revel 1982; Brears 1999), by no means dominated gastropolitics or controlled kitchen regimes. The artistic gastronomy, that, read as masculine, had split off from the feminine, artisanal preparation of food in household kitchens, without however attaining the status that it is commonly accorded in retrospect.

Designating dishes and contouring landscapes of flavor, the editor of the *Dictionnaire portatif de cuisine, d'office et de distillation* noted in the preface that he had compiled this collection of recipes to serve all tastes. He was an "officier de bouche" who had acquired knowledge of artful food and fine taste through his own experience. Vincent arranged knowledge transfers. He listed dishes, arranged them, and assembled them in menus. In this way, he composed tastes, or rather, he made selections. The author evaluated food according to bodies of knowledge that were essential to apply. The statement "la connaissance qu'on aura du goût de ceux pour lequels on travaille" (Vincent 1767: vii), thus refers to knowledge that cooks acquired about the tastes of those for whom they worked. These were the aristocratic *Hausherren* – whose function was somewhere between landlord, bourgeois, and proprietary host – who employed food artists in whose gastronomic establishments they had previously dined. According to Vincent, the pocket dictionary of cuisine served several functions for its readership: first, it appealed to those who could afford a healthy and expensive cuisine; second, it targeted people who were delicate (délicat) on the one hand, but still wished to dine well (bonne chère) on the other. Third, Vincent spoke of those who were just learning the arts of cooking. He said that the cookbook and dictionary enabled these people to act and cook for themselves. Tied to such a marketing pitch, Vincent's cookbook negotiated forms of self-empowerment by emphasizing the individual acquisition of skills of preparation and taste. His *Dictionnaire* followed encyclopedic practices, providing names of dishes and explaining their preparation. The food arranger used two procedures in this process. He took on the role of archivist and wrote down, as it were, notations of taste. The recipes he collected resembled miniatures of taste music that followed a compositional logic and were intended for performance and use at the table.

First of all, Vincent explains culinary terms for those who "ne sont point de l'Art", i.e. who were not familiar with the craft. While studying and employing this book, even thrifty people would discover that one could make "de très bonnes choses" inexpensively and without much effort. For this, the manorial palates did not need to be spoiled too much (souvent on les gâte), or "qu'on consomme infiniment plus qu'il ne faudroit pour bien faire" (Vincent 1767: ix), to receive at the table vast quantities of food for consumption. With this emphasis, Vincent distinguished the unrestrained consumption of food as gluttony from an approach to food that was conducive to health. To the letter D, Vincent assigned dessert and labelled this the fourth course.

He referred to “glâcer” as a coating of gravy that enhanced the flavor of meat; on the other hand, he understood it to mean a crust of heated sugar (une croûte de sucre) with which “les fruits ou pâtisserie” (Vincent 1767: xii) were spread.

Targeting a literate public of buyers, kitchen management trainees and professionals as well as cooking experts and gentlewoman, the following considerations put their emphasis on dessert, more precisely on frozen fruits and creams, the gustatory and culinary precursors of today’s ice cream. On the one hand, Vincent’s annotations express temporal sensitivity, when it comes to the ‘right moment’ to adjust ingredients and to compose condiments at diverse temperatures. On the other, his explications concerning the aromatic contents of fruits, in relation with the procedures of cooking and heating, refer to textures of food, which consist of interaction, mixture and communication of elements, long before palatine enjoyments enfold.

Under the entry “Groseilles (Glace de)”, the author explained how to prepare frozen food from red currants. Cooks were to measure out “deux livres de groseilles” and mix them with the amount of about a French pound of raspberries in a pan. The pulpy broth was to be separated into three or four parts and poured into a strainer one at a time to separate the juice from the fruit. The liquid was then to be placed on the stove and heated over an open flame. The confectioners then added “une livre & demie sucre” and dissolved it in the broth. This aimed to balance the sourness of the currants. A “chopine de l’eau”, that is, an English pint, about six hundred milliliters of water, was then to be added to replace the liquid evaporated by the boiling. “Vous la mettez dans une terrine pour refroidoir.” After the temperature-controlled treatment of the brew, it was to be drained into a deep bowl. Vincent did not comment on the nature of this vessel. The next step in the process followed: cooling down the temperature and initiating the process of congelation.

> Ensuite vous mettrez votre eau de groseilles dans une salbotiere, pour faire prendre à la glace. Si vous n’êtes dans le tems [sic!] de la groseille en grain, prenez de la gelée de groseilles framboisées, un pot ou deux, selon la quantité que vous en voudrez faire; vous la mettrez dans de l’eau chaude, pour qu’elle soit plus facile à se dégeler; passez-la au travers d’un, en la pressant avec une spatule; ajoutez-y du sucre & un peu de cochenille, si vous n’y rouvez assez de couleur, & vous finirez vos glaces comme à l’ordiniaire. (Vincent 1767: 311)

Vincent had seasonal time in his mind and explained that if there were no ripe currants available, the basic ingredient could be replaced by a jam of currants and raspberries that had previously been prepared. Furthermore, he discussed controlling the temperature, mentioning the process of (re)cooling (refroidir) and defrosting (dégéler). Other aspects highlighted the *Dictionnaire portatif*: specific vessels for cooling recipes in salted ice water (salbotiere)[5] and tools for detaching the aggregates of special treat from the brass cans (spatule), as well as the admixture of animal dyes such as crushed beetles (cochenille), to stain the mélange in the colour red, providing calculations of quantity with regard to the eaters. Freezing, Vincent clarified, was the result of different blending ratios. Ingredients, materiality, processing methods, time and temperature became important variables in the process of preperation. Garden fruits and forest berries could be boiled down, preserved, thickened into jams or, of course, frozen. In the mid-1700 – lasting until the end of 19th century – it was quite a time-consuming procedure to congeal food in a kitchen Vincent's pocketbook listed the recipes in alphabetical order and thereby restaged them without updating them. Therefore, there was little room for reinvention. Combinations saved time. Falling back on juices or schnapps suggested itself everywhere. With "Geniévre (Glace de)" frozen juniper berry, the preparation followed a similar path. Une demie poignée de geniévre que vous concassez & mettez-le dans une pinte d'eau, avec un peu de cannelle & une demi livre de sucre." (Vincent 1767: 303) The ended mixture was to be brought to a boil as a whole. After this process, the cook was to separate the composition into five or six parts and "ensuite vous le passez à la chauffe", to heat again. "Vous le mettez dans une salbotiere pour prendre à la glace." (Vincent 1767) The decoction of juniper berries and sugar, enriched with cinnamon, was to be put, very probably in a tin container, in a vat filled with salted water and crushed pieces of ice. In this receptacle, and with constant stirring, the mixture changed its nature. It assumed the state of freezing. After that, the frozen, previously thickened, creamy mixture could be scraped off the inner walls with a wooden spatula or spoon. The same principle had to be transferred and applied to all kinds of fruits and berries, for example, sour acerola cherries (azerolles). Here, the portable kitchen dictionary provided comparisons with other similar fruits, helped to determine the exact type and degree of ripeness, and designated geographical locations. "Ce fruit, quand il est mûr, est rouge, doux & mol, les meilleurs sont celles qui croissent dans l'Italie & le Languedoc." (Vincent 1767: 58) However, this variety of cherry was hardly useful in preparing food. Therefore, it was neither worthwhile to purchase them on a regular basis, nor to store them. Vincent advised dipping these cherries, pierced with a small skewer, into a mixture of caramelized sugar and then drying them. If it were to be served, cooks would have to "donner d'une autre façon que dans leur naturel" (Vincent 1767) to the acerola cherries. They were only presented at the table after having undergone a preparatory treatment.

This treatment aimed at transforming the cherries' natural flavor. Thus, by the middle of the 18th century, the kitchen was a laboratory in which planned and prescribed sequences prevailed. As long as the blueprint of production had been inter-

5 For a delineation of a salbotiere see Jarrin 1820, 281, Plate 2, drawing 9, see December 11, 2022 (https://www.loc.gov/resource/rbc0001.2015pennell18106/?sp=308).

nalized, it could be rather easily adapted to the gustatory preferences of the landlord and the landlady and their offspring, those who were the target audience of such arts of cooking and publics of private sensory displays.

Sophie Armster, a restaurant owner and chef de cuisine, who has been already mentioned earlier in this article, published a collection of recipes in 1828. She placed frozen desserts and glacés in a chapter and gave an extended explanation of the means and technologies applied (Armster 1828: 519–526). "Usually use a bucket filled with ice" when preparing frozen dessert from fruits and syrups. The crushed ice needs to be well mixed "with salt" and poured "a hand high" into the container. "Then you put the freezer container with the mass on top, and now fill all around the ice mixed with salt." The confectioner additionally sprinkles the lid of the freezing container sprinkle with salt. In this cooling environment, "the can is left to stand still for a quarter of an hour, then it is turned around in the bucket in a circle for a quarter of an hour." (Armster 1828: 519, translated by HS) After this thirty-minute procedure, the lid of the can is lifted and "the frozen mass is scraped off the side with a small wooden shovel made for this purpose". The contents must now be stirred well and sealed again in the can. Then, and here Armster does not give an exact time, the housekeeper, cook or housewife continues "to turn and stir the mass until it stood out like butter". The author also describes the material composition of the freezing container. It must have "the form of a high tin pot" (Armster 1828: 520). Based on this cooling and freezing process, she explained various flavors: Vanilla, cream, champagne, punch, maraskino (marasca cherry liqueur from the Eastern Adriatic coast), canehl (cinnamon), pumpernickel, chocolate, coffee, tea, pineapple, orange, lemon, melon, peach, apricot, apples, rosehip, quince, strawberry, raspberry, currant and cherries. All of these flavors could be refined with almond pieces. At first glance, it can be assumed that Armster initially referred to fruit that could be grown in northern Germany, and by doing so, she addresses what kind of syrops and jams might have been available and stored in a household's larder. It included a well-stocked wine cellar as well as flavors traded nationally and imported from colonies. At second glance, and after reading *The Italian Confectioner* (London 1820), it becomes clear that Armster and her ghost writer and co-author were merely translating Jarrin's recipes into German. She copied and aligned her enumeration in the same order, using identical titles (Jarrin 1820: 130). In addition to these indications, related to the provision of goods, the contents of recipe collections and cookbooks and the evolution of a genre of customer-orientated literature, a third layer emerges that displays gustatory knowledge. Both features are registered in the handy explications given. In this respect, the printed recipe (as text) contains sensory experiences that indicate which meals and desserts are prepared in laboratories (kitchens as space) and whether they are consumed in dining rooms or restaurants (tables as place).

3. Cooking as Artistry and Scientific Practice. Or: The Kitchen as a Laboratory of Modern Times in the Early 19th Century

The physical process of 'de-servir' becomes condensed into the word 'dessert' (Tebben 2015: 11). With this registration into the terminology of indulgence, "frozen desserts also featured prominently in the sweetcourse beginning in the seventeenth century." In cookbooks, printed and published since the early 18th century and reissued repetitively until the middle of 19th century, the authors, mostly cooks themselves holding prominent positions in the court kitchens of princes or kings or running their restaurants, communicated the appropriate technologies and methods of freezing. They offered readers "numerous recipes for iced cheese, cream, and fruit dishes" (Tebben 2015: 12) that could be reproduced in practice.

The cookbooks considered here represent only a small sample of the publications that shaped the market for guidebooks and manuals of the time. The new editions could be advertised as extensions accompanied by supplements that offered special content. Such add-ons created extra benefits for the literate public and increased the marketability and dissemination of this cooking knowledge. Publications fostered popularization and empowered a reading audience. To gain knowledge of recipes meant, as it were, to peek behind the scenes of court cuisine and partake of its simmering odors, then to imitate and reinvent what one has observed – all from the comfort of one's own home. To let these gastronomic skills melt on one's tongue while reading, this experience reflected tasteful, voyeuristic, and sensationalizing potentials, and required individual capacities of assessment to be in place along with notions of good taste. In this overall context, research about the uses of culinary and gastronomic literature or about gustatory knowledge is almost completely absent. Cookbooks underwent adjustments of titles, translations, expansions, and recompilations. Recipe collections provide insight into the practices of household and kitchen management (Teuteberg/Neumann/Wierlacher 1997; Mohrmann 2006) and sensory communications, while also mapping territories of gender and colonial experience (Kowalchuk 2017; Bickham 2020).

Understanding the production of ice cream (gastronomical art), its display and staging at tables – which can be understood as media inasmuch as they are arranged for consumption in public space – and the modes of consuming of such ambrosial and congealed treats (gustatory performance) configured links between material and sensory cultures of eating. Such an approach celebrates the connectivity that has been established through the customs related to sitting at a table: designating space while sharing food; enforcing social bonds, including covert asymmetries and open hierarchies; taste; and communications about temperature, smell, taste, and satiety. The court kitchen was one place where frozen desserts could be prepared with the taste of vanilla – food chemists invented a substitute in the 1870s – another was the workshop of confectioners. The confectioners performed their skills on prominent occasions and served special dishes at royal courts, European aristocratic houses and in restaurants, frequented by an affluent bourgeois clientele. Ice cream was a tasteful and aesthetically staged form of culinary delight. Inventories, menus, invitation cards to banquets and delivery invoices stored their performances, knowledge of recipes, tastes repertoire of bourgeois kitchen management and food preparation via cookbooks. Bourgeois table manners increasingly aligned themselves with aristocratic ones and thus assimilated them (Lévi-Strauss 1973). Imitation allowed transfer and translation. The distant world of princes could be tasted and felt. It becomes clear that geographical space and food culture are not only in constant, trans-regional exchange (Braudel 1966), but also link medial, gastronomic, and sensual spaces. This double consideration expands the understanding of body, sense, and spatial knowledge.

Books, storing and revealing knowledge about the secretive and previously undisclosed arts of preparing and presenting food were addressed to a reading public of middle-class consumers (Hyman/Hyman 1999; Pinkard 2009). As early as the mid-18th century, they were aimed at those who considered themselves responsible for the multifaceted tasks of household management and targeted those who aimed at investing in performative acts of fine dining in order to gain cultural capital and to compete with other contenders from an equivalent social rank. This applied to gentlewomen, as they were called by English advisors, who ran households like large businesses (Moxton 1758; Leighton/Spiers 1846; Light/Prentice 1980; Peterson 1989; Ruiz 2017; Hickman 2019). But they particularly targeted their staff. In large middle- and upper-class households' leadership within a kitchen environment required captaincy in terms of coordination and organisation of trades. Employees strove to meet and serve the sensual and aesthetic tastes of aristocratic and bourgeois rulers and to transform their crafts – intertwined with gastronomical experience and gustatory knowledge of the landlady and the landlord – and skills of alimentary composition with them. Cookery was aimed at the palates of those who paid and those who provided the means of production of the household. The head of the household, *la maîtresse de maison* (Demarson 1838), instructed her cooks and evaluated the craft and artistic knowledge along her own sensual taste experiences and ideas.

Reflecting on ice cream initiates curiosity in reference to gustatory memories and indulgences. Reading cookbooks and recipes for preparing ices as well as for icing fruits, liquors and syrups reveals semantic acuteness and sensory presentiments linked to the arcane alchemy of gastronomical artistry and providing a glimpse of how ice cream might once have tasted on the surface of the tongue, coaxing the palate of gustatory pleasures, *le palais du goût*. Recipes for ice cream and frozen desserts, compiled and printed in cookbooks, disclosed that sensory experience of fine taste was – and is – bound to spatial and temporal relations. It was – and is – also linked to artistic and experiential knowledge that shaped gastronomical practices and gustatory customs. Emerging media outlets recruited authors who selected, compiled, commented, and explained recipes. By doing this, they provided guidance and became points of reference when those of the literate public aspired to prepare meals, to serve dishes to perform the arts of cooking and eating.

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Sense Makes Memory

Sugar, Plants, and María Magdalena Campos-Pons's Countervisuality in Cuba

Silvia Bottinelli

Abstract *This paper analyzes Cuban artist María Magdalena Campos-Pons's installation* The Herbalist Tools *(1993–94), exhibition* Alchemy of the Soul *(2016), and community-based project* Intermittent Rivers *(2019–ongoing), all of which center food production and processing as markers of collective identities. Specifically, Campos-Pons's visual and material language incorporates references to sugar plantations and refineries, as well as to foraging and agricultural traditions passed down by her ancestors – enslaved Yoruba and Chinese indentured workers in Matanzas, Cuba. Countering the distanced visuality of 19th century paintings that illustrate plantation landscapes and sugar refineries as efficient and productive, Campos-Pons's artworks offer immersive spaces that activate the viewers' senses, including smell and taste, to evoke her vivid childhood memories. Through multisensoriality, her installations allow the public to feel what she felt, to get a taste of the embodied experience of Cuban communities often left at the margins. In ongoing projects, the artist collaborates with Matanzas residents to create functional and symbolic infrastructures for the reinvention of Cuban food systems, returning some of the sensorial landscapes of the artist's generation to the present through community gardens and food forests.*

María Magdalena Campos-Pons (Matanzas, Cuba, 1959) creates multimedia works, including synesthetic installations and performances, that evoke her experience growing up in a family of African and Asian origin: her ancestors were Yoruba slaves and Chinese indentured workers brought to Cuba to work in the sugar production industry. Her home was in former barracks within sugar plantations in the town of La Vega, in the region of Matanzas. In Campos-Pons's work, vivid childhood memories are evoked by immersive spaces that activate the viewer's senses, including smell and taste. This paper contrasts the visuality of sugar plantation representations that circulated in the 19th century with Campos-Pons's multichannel video and installations for the exhibit *Alchemy of the Soul* (2016); and with two of the artist's artworks that revolve around edible and medicinal plants – *The*

Herbalist Tools (1993–94) and *Intermittent Rivers* (2019-ongoing). I argue that, through multisensoriality, Campos-Pons constructs a counternarrative embedded in the materiality of experience; and a multisensorial countervisuality that plants seeds of empathy, resistance, resilience, and sovereignty.

Transportation of enslaved people across the Middle Passage connected Europe, Africa, and the Americas from 15th to the 19th centuries, enabling a violent system of chattel slavery and unpaid labor, exploited by European settlers to build economic and geopolitical power (Sullivan 2015: 145; Townsend 2018: 5). Visual representations – together with natural history, religion, written commentaries, and legislation, among other tools – contributed to colonial mindsets that intended to justify slavery and legitimize European trade gains based on supposed racial hierarchies. According to visual culture theorist and art historian Nicholas Mirzoeff, "Visuality's first domains were the slave plantations, monitored by the overseer, operating as the surrogate of the sovereign. This sovereign surveillance was reinforced by violent punishment but sustained a modern division of labor." (2011: 2) The author further explains that

> The overseer, who ran the colonial slave plantation, embodied the visualized techniques of its authority, and so I called it 'oversight.' Oversight combined the classifications of natural history, which defined the 'slave' as a species, with the spatializing of mapping that separated and defined slave space and 'free' space. These separations and distinctions were enabled by the force of law that allowed the overseer to enforce the slave codes. (Mirzoeff 2011: 10)

Plantation paintings and prints usually adopted distanced points of view, allowing an overall representation of the landscape that incorporated slave figures as part of the whole, to highlight the efficiency and supposed naturalness of forced labor while concealing its violence and dehumanizing oppression. Visuality of this kind helped romanticize the institution of slavery in the eyes of European colonizers. Similar visual strategies can be found across the Americas, from Louisiana to Puerto Rico and Brazil. In the Cuban context, a significant example is offered by prints with vistas of sugar refineries and plantations that illustrate Justo Cantero's book *Los Ingenios: Colección de Vistas de los Principales Ingenios de Azúcar de la Isla de Cuba*, published in Havana in 1857 and illustrated by French artist Eduardo Laplante (Cantero 2005 [1857]). Cantero and Laplante provided textual descriptions of individual sugar refineries and the Cuban sugar production system as a whole to demonstrate the industry's financial potential. Within this context, Black slaves were considered part of the *ingenios*'s capital, similarly to how they were treated and insured as cargo on ships crossing the Middle Passage (Sharpe 2016: 34–62). According to this cynical worldview, Black people were only valued for their function and labor in production systems governed by upper class white colonizers. The language of *Los Ingenios*'s introductory text adheres to this conceptualization of race hierarchies and labor structures. The book describes the workforce used in the overall Cuban sugar production system in the following terms:

> The number of workers employed on these farms amounts to more or less two hundred thousand, to which we must add eleven thousand Chinese indentured laborers, who provide some benefits. On the other hand, since the slave trade is completely prohibited and the lack of labor is made increasingly felt, the owners of mills have no choice but to resort to the employment of said Chinese settlers, although they are actually much inferior in physical strength to the Blacks and their acquisition is more expensive, circumstances that have naturally made labor more costly, and that have created the conditions by which regular Black slaves for work in the fields cannot be obtained for less than eight hundred to one thousand pesos. (Cantero 2005 [1857]: 98)[1]

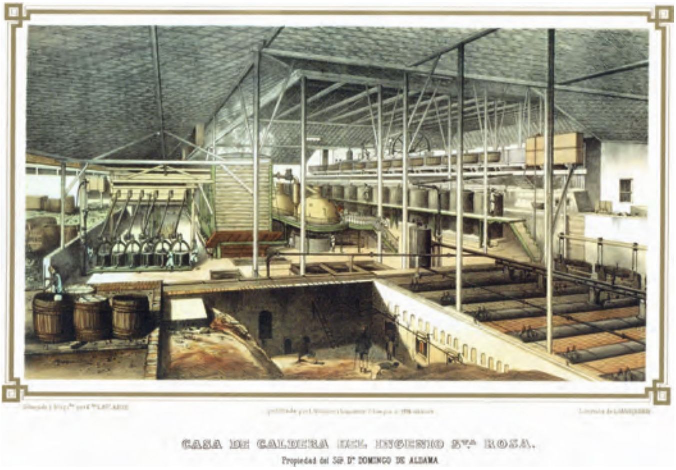
Black and Asian humans are exclusively described as numbers: number of bodies to signify production pace and power; and number of pesos to signify the costs associated with their acquisition, livelihood, and (in the case of Chinese salaried workers) salary costs. This is further shown by detailed accounts of the 'value' of individual sugar refineries, in Cuba and, for comparison, in Louisiana: the list of goods includes, in this order, land, buildings, machinery, slaves and animals (Cantero 2005 [1857]: 94). Similarly, the costs for the *ingenios*'s maintenance include food and clothes for enslaved people. This shows that Black and Chinese workers were not looked at as subjects with distinct personal histories and cultural baggage; this representation is amplified by the volume's illustrations, which have attracted previous scholarly attention.

Latin American History and Economics scholar Alejandro De La Fuente (2010: 36–45) has shown that *Los Ingenios*'s images participated in conveying the idea that well-fed and efficiently managed slaves would be content, their happiness seen as a way to curb the risks of revolts. According to a recent contribution by art historian Rachel Stephens (2021), Laplante represented orderly and harmonious views to convey nationalistic ideas and depict the Cuban sugar industry as modern and efficient.

1 English translation by author. The original Spanish text is included here: "El número de labradores empleados en dichas fincas asciende poco más o menos a doscientos mil, a los que debemos añadir once mil chinos importados hasta la fecha en calidad de colonos asalariados y que proporcionan algunas ventajas. Por otra parte hallándose completamente prohibida la trata y haciéndose sentir cada vez más la falta de brazos, los dueños de ingenios no tienen más remedio que acudir al empleo de dichos colonos, aunque muy inferiores realmente in fuerza física a los negros y aun cuando su adquisición resulta más costosa, circunstancias que han hecho naturalmente más cara la mano de obra, y que han dado margen a que no pueda conseguirse un negro regular de campo en menos de ochocientos a mil pesos."

As further argued by Latin American Art scholar Emily Sessions (2021), in *Los Ingenios*'s vistas Black bodies are shown as part of an efficient machine system, signaling the plantation owner's aspiration to automation and industrial progress at a time in which, by the mid-1800s, the industry was in decline.

Fig. 1: Eduardo Laplante, Ingenio Santa Rosa, *1857.*



Source: Print published in Justo Cantero (1857): Los Ingenios: Colección de Vistas de los Principales Ingenios de Azúcar de la Isla de Cuba, Havana: Litografía de Luis Marquier, p. 49.

The treatment of slaves as merely gears of an overall production machine is well exemplified by Laplante's print titled *Ingenio Santa Rosa* (fig. 1) in the Matanzas region, the same area in which María Magdalena Campos-Pons's family lived. Laplante depicts the interior of the *ingenios* from a distanced point of view that showcases various phases of sugar manufacturing. The rigorous linear perspective helps render the three-dimensional space to signify rationality, order, and control. Laplante emphasizes the large architectural scale of the building – meaning wealth – by representing its multiple levels and environments. Machinery, ovens, and storage units are neatly positioned within the space, indicating its efficient management. The architecture itself, and the modern tools inside it, are the real protagonists of this lithograph: the distanced perspective underlines the perceived lack of importance of the laborers, who fade within the larger structure. One needs to look carefully in order to spot the thin bodies of Black laborers who participate in the scene: hidden by dark shadows, or camouflaged through visual devices such as scale, color palette, and composition, the workers cannot be easily distinguished from sugar production structures and spaces. Laplante's representation contrasts with Campos-Pons's later visual documentation of a sugar refinery in the Matanzas region – the Horacio Rodriguez central – as seen in the video *In Cuba with María Magdalena Campos-Pons* that accompanied the artist's solo exhibition titled *Alchemy of the Soul* at the Peabody Essex Museum in Salem, Massachusetts, in 2016 (fig. 2). While stills from the video almost replicate Laplante's *Ingenio Santa Rosa*'s viewpoint, the place is depicted as decrepit, documenting decay instead of promise for the future. Campos-Pons is shown walking around the 'skeleton,' as she calls it, of the former refinery. She speaks about the building as a ruin, what is left of the powerful sugar industry. The artist appropriates historical visual language and turns it around to convey a counterhistory of sugar refineries and plantations, both through the very subject matter of the ruin, and through the visual language that she employs.

Fig. 2: María Magdalena Campos-Pons, In Cuba with María Magdalena Campos-Pons*, 2016, three-channel video.*

Source: Exhibited in *Alchemy of Soul*, Peabody Essex Museum, Salem, Massachusetts, 2016, min. 0.21 to 2.39. Available online https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MULRM5OHid8.

Multi-channel video, as a format, allows one to view multiple facets of the structure at the same time. Similar visual strategies – combining several windows with separate scenes within the same artwork – were also used by anti-slavery prints that illustrated phases of an enslaved person's life. Such prints circulated in abolitionist circles in North America in the 19th century: they assumed white viewers' 'right to look' (Mirzoeff 2011: 77–116), thus implicitly acknowledging their power, while also pushing the viewers to assume responsibility in the name of such power (Goddu 2014: 20).

Similarly, *In Cuba with María Magdalena Campos-Pons* shows problematic views of the sugar production systems and their socioeconomic legacy in Cuba, and addresses non-local publics to prompt involvement: the intended contemporary viewers of the video are in an analogous position of both power and responsibility as the intended public of anti-slavery prints in the 19th century. In fact, the video was first shown in Salem, Massachusetts, a city the economy of which indirectly depended on Cuban sugar, as the product was imported to feed the rum distillery industry in New England. As highlighted by Latin American and Latinx Art Historian Adriana Zavala (2019: 23–29), Campos-Pons's work shows that New England was as implicated in the system of slavery as areas that practiced plantation agriculture between the 16th and 19th centuries (see also Mintz 1985). For contemporary publics, understanding various facets of history can foster a more aware approach to racial relations in the present.

In the context of the exhibit *Alchemy of the Soul*, María Magdalena Campos-Pons's video co-existed with sculptures that evoked the architectural outlines of Matanzas *ingenios* and the aesthetics of refinery machinery, often recalling alembics and tools from alchemical laboratories. Zavala describes the multisensorial aspects of these installations, in which smells of rum and sounds of Afro Cuban rumba filled the air:

> The last of the five units, set against one wall, was filled with amber liquid that flowed through tubing, bubbled, and pooled in clear bowls, giving off the sweet scent of rum. Walking among the sculptures, visitors experienced the second of Neil Leonard's sonic installations. The sound of real liquid coming from the fifth sculpture was accompanied by gurgling sounds and swelling vocals emitted from speakers around the room. These evoked the pouring of rum, a precious 'elixir' and the culmination of the histories and arduous processes evoked by the sculptures arrayed. (Zavala 2019: 21)

Through multisensoriality, Campos-Pons counters the visuality of *ingenios* vistas: by engaging the viewers' senses of smell, touch, and taste, the artist makes space for the exploration of memory, personal narratives, and subjectivity. Thanks to the activation of multiple senses, Campos-Pons introduces yet another point of view: not that of the plantation owner or the wealthy and complicit Northern American resident, but rather that of the enslaved person or their descendants. Campos-Pons created a number of synesthetic installations that refer to sugar production and plantation life by incorporating sugar and sugarcane as materials throughout her career.[2] In these works, the artist conveys a sense of embodied knowledge that rivals both the supposedly rational and distanced visuality of plantation vistas and the complicit

2 Examples, including the installation *Sugar/Bittersweet* (2010), are analyzed in Muehlig and De La Fuente (2010).

yet empowered visuality of the Northern abolitionist. For the enslaved and for those who continued to endure the harshness of the plantation and sugar refinery industry after slavery was abolished, including the artist's family, the perception and materiality of sugar were pervasive and often overwhelming. Complex personal memories were associated with the experience of sugar plantations, raw sugar, and derived products like rum, which Campos-Pons reintroduced in her installations to evoke such memories in immersive ways (Enwezor 2007: 69–71; Hassan/Finley 2008: 211–254).

The associations connected to specific scents vary from person to person, thus the artist's memories will not necessarily coincide with those of all viewers. Via smell and taste, Campos-Pons curates multiple levels of access, depending on the positionality of the public. For those who share the artist's intimate experience of Matanzas, rum and sugar will be sensorial signifiers that activate similar memories, even without the aid of additional information encoded into text, images, and objects that co-exist in the installation. For those that are outsiders to the artist's story, smells and tastes might provide a shared experience in the context of the installation, and yet they will be connected not to the artist's but to the viewer's own distinguished memories, becoming evidence of a degree of cultural and personal distance from the artist's community. This complicates the reception of the work, fostering a level of empathy while revealing difference.

In other installations and performances, the artist does not only incorporate sugar and sugar products, but also herbs and plants. In the latter cases, she embraces multisensoriality to elicit the cultivation and foraging of diverse traditional plants, used for nutrition as well as healing and spiritual purposes: herbs and vegetable consumption functioned as coping mechanisms that helped maintain autonomous cultures and ties to ancestral knowledge for Cuban workers of Yoruba origin. Campos-Pons recalls that, as a child, her father – a herbalist in the context of the Santería religion – brought her on herbal walks in the woods and, when a plant was to be harvested, he knocked on the tree's trunk, asking for permission to take a sample. Animism, that is the belief that plants and all beings have a soul and thus require careful and respectful treatment, guided his relationship with the environment (Casanova 2002: 148–49).

Campos-Pons's early installation titled *The Herbalist Tools* (1993–94) evokes the figure of her father within the frame of these foraging trips, using multisensoriality as a way to immerse the viewer into an embodied experience (fig. 3). In an interview with art and visual culture scholar Lynne Bell, the artist describes the piece as follows:

> The three columns stand for the three different trees in my backyard in La Vega: la ceiba is a sacred tree, la palma is the national tree and the almacigo just happened to be in my backyard. On the top of each column is a glass bowl inscribed

with the name of each tree. On the walls are drawings of different plants and frames that contain live plants from Cuba. In Cuba people put offerings in the bottom of a tree, they create a little temple in which they reproduce everything that was outside, inside. When I was a little girl, I wanted to make a house like this – now I'm doing it in this piece! I open up the trees to make a little place to contain offerings; you can look inside and the texture looks like the skin or bark of the tree. I was trying to reverse the dynamic of inside and outside. One of the columns contains a bowl of cornmeal: my father used to give corn as an offering and this is why I use corn in this particular piece. The installation combines sound, sight and smell too – with all the fresh plants. (Bell 1998: 40)

Fig. 3: María Magdalena Campos-Pons, The Herbalist's Tools, *1994, mixed-media installation, collection of the artist.*

Source: Courtesy of the artist.

The columns echo the verticality of sacred trees that grew close to the artist's home; their concave bases emphasize the relationship between inside and outside spaces, the domestic space and the backyard, and even the forest where the artist's father foraged plants. Plant drawings on the walls and actual specimens – placed on stools that were similar to those used by herbalists to both seat on and arrange their herbs – occupy the installation environment: these visual and material elements enrich the installation by communicating through representation and presentation. They undoubtedly activate the viewers' sight, yet their presence is greatly amplified by scent. In a conversation with me, Campos-Pons put stress on the strength of the herbs' odor: "So, when a visitor enters the installation room, the smell is very powerful, the air is filled with scents from the plants. The viewers encounter this entire range of plants from the forests in Cuba." (Campos-Pons/Bottinelli 2021) Scent is an integral part of the piece, to the extent that museum attendants are asked to replace wilted plants with fresh ones on a regular basis to maintain an intense scent over the duration of the show.

The sense of smell's centrality in *The Herbalist's Tools* may be connected to the fact that the piece evokes a particular time in the artist's life: her childhood. In fact, according to chemosensory scientists Maria Larsson and Johan Willander, childhood memories are more effectively triggered by smell than by visual or verbal cues; smell affects stronger emotional reactions capable of triggering deep associations with a past phase of one's life. Larsson and Willander write:

> Current evidence suggests that memories triggered by olfactory information are localized to the first decade of life (< 10 years) rather than to young adulthood (10–30 years) which is the typical finding for memories evoked by verbal and visual information. Further, empirical evidence indicates that odor evoked memories are more emotional, associated with stronger feelings of being brought back in time… (Larsson/Willander 2009: 318)

Thus, through the inclusion of scented herbs, Campos-Pons immerses the visitors into an embodied experience that, complemented by textual and figurative elements in the installation, gives access – if at different levels – to memories from her childhood's time and space. Having moved to Havana to attend boarding school at age eleven, her memories of her family's agricultural life are indeed rooted in her first ten years. Compared to the distanced view of the plantation overseer and *ingenios* prints, and even to multi-scene prints meant for anti-slavery advocacy, Campos-Pons's multisensorial installations provide a counter-experience that does not aim to control, rationalize, justify, acknowledge, or empower Cuban sugar plantation owners, industries, and trades. Rather, her work transports the viewer into the sensations of her childhood, sharing the immanence of her own personal histories, while also allowing space for the viewer's own personal associations, which fluidly intermix with the artist's.

In *The Herbalists' Tools* plants are represented and presented in the context of a gallery space, using installation as an art medium. In more recent works, the artist's media expand to incorporate the very act of planting seedlings and caring for their growth. Campos-Pons sees this as a form of expression that is rooted in art performance, social sculpture, and community-based practice. Her gardens are art mediums and function as tools for communication.

In a unpublished interview (Campos-Pons/Bottinelli 2019), Campos-Pons listed some of her gardening-based art projects, which I further analyze elsewhere (Bottinelli 2023): for example, on July 15th, 2018, at the Montalvo Art Residency in San Francisco, the artist and several volunteers planted *Imole Blue II (Field of Memory)* a garden in the shape of a previously-classified archival aerial map used during the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962: from a distance, the map recalls a mandala, yet it hides the terrible realities affecting the territory on ground level (Montalvoarts.org). In 2011, Campos-Pons planted a garden of blue hyacinths in Vanderbilt University's botanical garden with the help of twelve students who used spoons to dig the soil; the garden had the shape of Matanzas's aerial view based on a Google Maps image of the city, and the color blue of the flowers was meant to evoke a blueprint. The garden was seen as a form of architectural drawing, though it was materially rooted in the ground and in the practice of agriculture (Lee Burd 2018). Finally, as part of *Interiority (Or Hill-Sided Moon)* at La Marrana, Montemarcello, La Spezia, Italy, the artist planted a garden of lavender and blue verbenas in 2003 (Hassan 2004).[3] Through such actions, Campos-Pons intentionally embraces the legacy of German artist Joseph Beuys and his seminal piece *7000 Oaks* for documenta 7 in 1982 (Campos-Pons/Bottinelli 2019).[4] The long-lasting social and environmental purpose of Beuys's famous piece fascinated Campos-Pons, who observed Kassel's oaks attentively during her time in the city for documenta 14 in 2017.

Shortly after, planting and gardening became incorporated into *Intermittent Rivers* (*Ríos Intermitentes*), a series of initiatives directed by the artist in Matanzas beginning in 2019 (Cuban Art News 2019). The project involved collaborations with students of the Camilo Cienfuegos University, the local Environmental office authority, and local artists, curators, and exhibition spaces. Research on edible trees and plants – both native to the area and associated with diasporas – continued with the harvesting of seeds and climaxed with the planting of thirteen palm trees – the national tree of Cuba – in May 2019 (fig. 4). This was the first of a series of nine gardens, most of which edible and medicinal, that the artist would like to plant over time in order to make public fruits available to a local population in need of achieving food sovereignty.[5]

Campos-Pons's plans for the gardens have changed through the years, since they have adapted to existing regulations, the logistical challenges of the coronavirus pandemic, inflation, social unrest, and other overlapping crises on the island. The long-term goal is to eventually recreate an urban environment where locals can

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3 Silvia Bottinelli, *Unpublished Conversation with María Magdalena Campos-Pons*, September 6th, 2019. See also: "María Magdalena Campos-Pons *Imole II*," Lucas Artist Program, last accessed June 23, 2021 (https://blog.montalvoarts.org/imole-blue-ii.html).

4 Bottinelli, *Interview with Campos-Pons*, January 2nd, 2021.

5 In 2022, the second edition of *Intermittent Rivers* also included a garden-based piece titled *Suelo Constellado* by local artist and curator Helga Montalván, who honors the experiences of women through her art. This project is a garden of henequen, or Cuban sisal (*agave fourcroydes*), displayed in the shape of a constellation. Sisal is traditionally used to make ropes and other items, and was cultivated in the region of Matanzas from the late 19th to the mid-20th century.

easily forage foods and medicine that are part of their national identity and diverse histories (Campos-Pons/Bottinelli 2021). Exposure to those histories can foster a deeper awareness of Cuba's biodiverse environment prior to the centuries-long deforestation process triggered by plantation agriculture.

Fig. 4: María Magdalena Campos-Pons, planting Royal Palms at the University of Matanzas during Intermittent Rivers, *2019.*

Source: Photo by Amor Diaz Campos.

Deforestation systematically reduced the number and variety of trees and plants to make space for cash crops and was tightly linked to Spanish colonialism and the slave trade since the late 15th century (Funes Monzote 2008: 217–62). Thus, planting trees in Matanzas, a former center of sugar plantations, counters the environmentally and socially exploitative patterns of settler colonialism to foster a rebirth of local vegetation, as well as the residents' reclaiming of their own story and access to a wealth of foods. The loss of biodiversity corresponds to a loss of cultural diversity as well as a loss of bodily sensations, which are enabled by human and non-human connections through the care for edible and medicinal plants. *Intermittent Rivers* seeks to reestablish such connections through planting, growing, foraging, and harvesting. The caring for edible and medicinal plants is enhanced by sensorial perceptions that become associated with both personal and collective identities: for example, the haptic feel of soft aloe leaves, the velvety surface of orchid petals, the pervasive scent of cedar, and the intense taste of fruits like mangos or cherimoyas bring the artist and others from her town and generation back to a time past, which they hope to return to the present through *Intermittent Rivers*.

Taste plays a crucial role in María Magdalena Campos-Pons's work: food-based and participatory performances punctuate her whole *oeuvre*: she has offered foods and drinks to viewers from different places – from Milan to Boston, San Francisco, and Nashville, to name a few – encouraging the public to savor flavors imbued with symbolic meanings and historical weight. Among other ingredients, her audiences have tasted raw sugar cane and rum – of course connected to Cuba's plantation systems and international trades – and pomegranate juice. Pomegranate grew in the artist's backyard in Cuba; thus the choice of this fruit is linked to the artist's own story. It also combines the artist's memory with ancient Greek mythologies involving women narratives: Hades lured Persephone with pomegranate seeds, marking her return to the Underworld during winter seasons.[6]

The peculiarity of Campos-Pons's edible and medicinal gardens for Matanzas is that they encompass Campos-Pons's vision for the city: through them, the artist affirms a right to the land and cultivates food sovereignty in Cuba by exposing younger generations of local residents to the tastes and smells that made the fabric of her everyday life growing up in the same places. When she surveyed high-school students in the city, she realized that most of them could not list or remember eating any local plant and fruit among those that nourished her body and spirituality as a child (Campos-Pons/Bottinelli 2019). Sharing the fruits and herbs that she smelled, touched, and tasted with young Cubans means immersing them into her story, which is their story too. Campos-Pons's hope for the near future is that Matancero children and teens will be able to walk in a forest of edible fruits, pick

6 Examples include the following performances: *A Conversation with Fra Angelico in the Garden*, Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, Boston, March 24, 2018: Campos-Pons offered edible sugar and chocolate sculptures in the form of pears, exploring the connection of Beato Angelico's and her own iconography; *Agridulce*, Peabody Essex Museum, Salem, January 21, 2016: during the performance, Campos-Pons offered the public small pieces of sugarcane; *Habilitation, Mojitos and Crocodile Tears*, at the exhibit *Getting Emotional*, ICA Boston, 2005, and at Galleria Pack, Milan, June 21, 2006: the artist offered mojitos, made with rum and sugar, to deconstruct the drink, demonstrating where its ingredients come from; during a performance at the Bernice Steinbaum Gallery, Campos-Pons offered pomegranate juice to the public.

them and consume them, feeling their texture, inhaling their scent, and savoring their juices – taking in the complex story of their country a bite at a time.

To conclude, such sensorial knowledge does not map the island's landscape to own it and conquer it, as colonial vistas like Cantero and Laplante's *Ingenios* did. It also avoids linking the viewers' 'right to look' with their responsibility to affect change for others, like historical anti-abolitionist prints and contemporary multichannel videos meant for not-Cuban publics. Rather, Campos-Pons's installations and gardens engage the body's senses to offer a ground-level learning, and foster forms of sharing and community-engagement that hope to build resilience through slow, everyday, and embodied experience.

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2. Food in Media

Nicolaes Maes

Taste, Painting and the Five Senses

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Abstract *The paper examines five paintings by Nicolaes Maes which today are distributed among various museums all over the world and which, according to an auction catalog from 1816, form a series allegorizing the five senses. Probably many sense allegories, as was the case here, are no longer recognizable as such today, also because the subject seems to have inspired painters to come up with variations and individual solutions. Within art history, there are only a few recurring iconographic motifs, such as eyeglasses for the sense of sight. Also, the order in which the senses are presented changes frequently. In the example discussed here, Maes surprisingly has combined allegory with the family portrait. This raises the question of what it means when identifiable people embody senses in an image. This paper shows how the five senses are interpreted by the painter and what role is assigned to the sense of taste, symbolized by food.*

Fig. 1: Cornelis Cornelisz. van Haarlem, Kitchen Interior with Amorous Couple, *1596.*

Source: Formerly Galerie Stuker, Bern, Switzerland.

1. Provenance after 1816

It was not until late that the connection between five early works by the well-known Dutch painter Nicolaes Maes (1634–1693), which are now distributed among four museums in Europe and North America, was recognized by the author.[1] For the last time in its entirety, the series was on display on September 2, 1816 in the death house of the former mayor of the city of Leuven, Joannes Franciscus Xaverius Baelmans de Steenwegen,[2] at Rue de Namur No. 97 in Leuven. The auction catalog describes the works in great detail under lot numbers 70–74 as "les cinq sens naturel" ("the five natural senses") in the following order: *Taste*, *Hearing*, *Smell*, *Sight*, and *Touch* (figs. 2–6).[3] According to information in the Getty Provenance Index, based on annotated copies of this auction catalog, the series was bought for 560 frcs. Lots 70 and 71, *Taste* and *Hearing*, were then sold separately to a Van Mechelen, lots 72 to 74 to a Comte de Robiano. *Taste* appeared again in 1852 at the auction of Count de Turenne in Paris. Through various French, English, Dutch and North American collections, the piece eventually made its way to the Philadelphia Museum of Art. *Hearing* and *Sight* immediately found each other again. On April 17, 1818, they were acquired for the Duke of Wellington at the auction of the collection of the late dealer Nicolas Lerouge in Paris. *Touch* was described as the work of Pieter de Hooch by Sir John Murray in 1819 at Lange Voorhout Palace in The Hague in the private rooms of the Princess of Orange.[4] Passed down through several generations in the princely family, it entered the Berlin art trade after 1918, from which it was acquired by Baron Heinrich

1 Krempel 2000: pp. 358–360, cat. No. D 21, 22, 27, 31, 32. All works are painted in oil on canvas. Painted surface dimensions taken by the author from museum catalogs vary slightly. *Taste*: 58 x 66 cm. *Hearing*: 57.5 x 66 cm. *Smell*: 59 x 62 cm. *Sight*: 57.5 x 62.5 cm. *Touch*: 62 x 66.4 cm. Similar dimensions do not occur in Maes's known œuvre. It has not been investigated from which period the frames originate.

2 J. F. X. Baelmans, son of Petrus Leonardus Baelmans and Clara Helena Vandervorst, was elected mayor ("uit de geslachten") on June 23, 1790. He was married twice. His first wife, Barbara Isabella Roberta Detru de Fontenay, died on February 21, 1783, and no children were born of this marriage in Louvain. His second wife, Isabella Henrica Michaël S. Carton, died on December 13, 1819 and had three children, all of whom died shortly after birth. He himself died on June 18, 1792 and was buried in Lubbeek, where he had acquired the Gellenberg castle in 1757. With thanks to B. Grymonprez, City Archives of Leuven, for his letter of October 3, 1996 to the author.

3 De Strycker 1964: 17, 24; Getty Provenance Index Sale Catalog B-259. When Baelmans started collecting, whether perhaps his father passed the passion on to him is just as unknown as the sources of supply of the paintings. According to the Getty Provenance Index, the 141 lot numbers in the catalog are distributed among the following schools: Flemish (79), Dutch (23), Flemish or Dutch (4), Flemish or Belgian (1), Dutch (1), Italian (9), French (2), German (1), Spanish (1), unknown (9).

4 Vandeputte (2017: 24–26) points to unresolved inconsistencies in the provenance of the *Naughty Drummer* in Madrid. According to her, the painting *La correction maternelle*, formerly

Thyssen-Bornemisza in 1930. The painting, known as *The Naughty Drummer*, is now in the Thyssen Bornemisza Museum in Madrid. *Smell* is recorded in the collection of Peter Norton in London in 1833. The painting remained lost for a long time until 1917, when it was auctioned with the collection of Mrs. Anna Mitchell and acquired by the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford. The title *The Sense of Smell* still preserves a memory of the painting's origin from the series.

2. *Taste*

Without knowing the original context, various interpretations have been proposed for the painting in Philadelphia (fig. 2). The rifle and the hunting bag, the dead fowl, the wine jug and the wine glass suggest a hunter who has just been with the young maid. In comparable compositions by 17th-century Dutch painters, such as *The Hunter's Gift* by Gabriel Metsu from c. 1658–c. 1661 (Rijksmuseum Amsterdam), with a statuette of Cupid to emphasize the amorous content, the hunter offers his prey to the maid. Maes shows his protagonist alone, seemingly concentrating on plucking a duck, disregarding how a cat is sneaking up. The apple is reminiscent of the Fall, but here nine apples roll out of the overturned wooden bucket, alluding to an unwanted pregnancy. The kitchen disaster is worse than in reality, which is in accordance with a definition of comedy in Aristotle's *Poetics* (cap. 2, 18). Maes seems to follow a moralizing pictorial tradition that associates taste with pleasure, which were identified with two of the Seven Deadly Sins: Gluttony and Lust. At the same time, he wants his work to be appreciated as a good piece of painting itself. Look how aptly the materiality of glass, earthenware, majolica, metal, skin, feathers, blood, etc. is rendered. The coloration, the chiaroscuro, the perspective as well as the salty humor of the narrative leave little to be desired. The didactic message is sweetened, as so often by Dutch allegorical artists, who followed the recommendation "to please and educate" in Horace's *Ars poetica* (verse 333). Taste, counted among the lower senses, is upgraded. The artist participated here in a trend that began in the Renaissance and, according to Kanz (2010: 42), progressed through the notion of good taste to the concept of stylistic epochs in the young discipline of art history in the nineteenth century. The positive attitude toward taste manifests itself in painted still lifes that celebrate this and others of the five senses, especially sight, but also smell and even touch (see Ebert-Schifferer 2018: 187–188; Leonhard 2020). Karel van Mander (1548–1606), the father of Dutch art history, can be cited as a key witness to this. In his *Schilder-Boeck* from 1604 he often used witty metaphors

in the collection of Théophile Thoré (alias William Bürger) and thought to be a Jan Vermeer, could be a copy after or a variant of Maes.

of eating and digesting for a variety of subjects (Kauffmann 1943: 138), as if painting were closer to the art of cooking than, say, sculpture.

Fig. 2: Nicolaes Maes, Taste *(also known as* Woman Plucking a Duck*), c. 1655–1656.*

Source: Philadelphia Museum of Art: Gift of Mrs. Gordon A. Hardwick and Mrs. W. Newbold Ely in memory of Mr. and Mrs. Roland L. Taylor, 1944-9-4.

The progressive place Maes occupies in the history of taste-evaluation with the Philadelphia painting becomes clearer when we take a look at a *Kitchen Interior with Amorous Couple* by Cornelis Cornelisz. van Haarlem from 1596 (fig. 1; see Van Thiel 1999: 385, 386, no. 240). Gluttony, drunkenness, and the initiation of a love act appear here much more explicitly staged. Cornelisz. uses fish as a general sexual symbol, while Maes depicts an empty fish colander (*visvergiet*, Willebrands 2022: 196). Only by knowing the purpose of the cookware can one imagine the food that goes with it and its meaning in the context of the pictorial tradition. However, the variety and opulence of still lifes – fish, fruit, flowers, metal tableware, poultry, and meat – in the painting by Cornelisz. add up to a feast of painting.

Judging by the style and form of the signature, *Taste* can be placed around 1655 and thus somewhat earlier than the other paintings in the series. The high viewer standpoint that makes it possible to spread out the still life upon the floor can be compared to the *A Woman Scraping Parsnips* and *The Idle Servant*, both dated 1655 and located at the National Gallery in London. The ligatured signature type, which dominates in Maes's work from 1653 to 1655 but which after 1655 occurs only extremely sporadically, also speaks for a creation of this painting in 1655 (Krempel 2000: 27–29). The other three signed paintings (figs. 3–5) show the unligatured signature type, which Maes used rarely before 1656 and almost exclusively from 1656 to 1669. If the relative chronology corresponds to the actual order in which the paintings were created, Maes may have considered the 16th-century tradition of the kitchen still life as an appropriate starting point, since it offers the possibility of thinking about sensuality, taste in a broader sense, and painting. However, he may also have seen no other option than to follow this tradition because he did not have access to painted five-senses series that met his expectations. He may have seen prints of that theme, but only what is probably the most recent work in his series, *Smell*, clearly points to this source of inspiration.

3. *Hearing*

The motif of mostly female servants neglecting their domestic duties for the sake of their base desires became widespread through the didactic poetry of the Dordrecht statesman Jacob Cats (1577–1660) into the 18th century. However, Cats counsels forbearance in the face of others' faults, recognizing therein a national virtue. His pre-Enlightenment words remind us that ultimately all people are equal (Cats 1726, vol. 1: 362–363). So, too, does Maes in another interior at Apsley House (fig. 3). In a kitchen through which one looks through an open door, a nanny imagines herself unobserved while her lover leans in through the window and grabs her breast. In front, the woman of the house descends from a study, looks at the viewer with a knowing smile, and holds her index finger in front of her mouth. With this ambiguous gesture, she asks the viewer to observe the tryst and remain silent, as the mockery could damage the good reputation of the house, indicated by the books, the writing utensils and the wax seal in the study. Eavesdroppers paintings were a popular specialty of Maes, who created six different versions of them between 1655 and 1657. The name-giving figure is similar in function to the jester on a stage; its pointing gesture goes back to Italian Renaissance history painting (Robinson 1987; Baxandall 1988: 72). The combination with an allegory of hearing is attested only for the painting discussed here. Maes, for once, does not show the sense of hearing, which is ennobled by music and language and ranks right after the sense of sight, from its undisputed side.

Fig. 3: Nicolaes Maes, Hearing *(also known as* The Eavesdropper*), c. 1656.*

Source: English Heritage, The Wellington Collection, Apsley House.

4. *Smell*

Kauffmann (1943: 134–135) illustrates his thesis, then new among experts, of the dressing of allegorical themes in everyday scenes, which had become common in seventeenth-century Dutch painting, by linking Maes's Oxford composition (fig. 4) to a sheet titled *Odoratus* from an engraved series of the five senses by Abraham Bosse, from which individual motifs such as the garden parterre, terrace, balustrade, flowerpot and drapery appear to have been taken with a few changes. This appropriation of motifs briefly brings us back to Karel van Mander, who explains to the painter's youth (1646: fol. 5r) that, loosely translated, stolen turnips make a good soup if you only cook them well. Robinson (1996: 195–203) devoted a separate section to the Oxford painting in his dissertation on Maes's early work. As he noticed, the differences in age and dress of the figures already led to a classification in the Decimal Index of the Art of the Low Countries as "the ill-matched couple combined with smell" (Robinson 1996: 196). The interpretation of it as allegory of the sense of smell "fails to do justice to the complexity and originality of Maes's invention." Robinson demonstrates an overlooked connection to the iconography of the seasons. The motif of an old man in fur next to a younger woman in an off-the-shoulder dress, for example, is found in an allegory of winter by Jan Brueghel the Elder and Hendrick van Balen (Bavarian State Painting Collections, dated 1616).

Fig. 4: Nicolaes Maes, Smell *(also known as* A Man holding a Carnation to a Woman's Nose*), c. 1656–1657.*

Source: © Ashmolean Museum, Oxford.

The Oxford painting can easily be dated earlier than has previously been assumed by some. The quality of delicate and shimmering textiles shows parallels to paintings dated 1656 to 1657 (Krempel 2000: figs. 31, 42, 46, 73). Judging by its style, however, it remains the most recent painting in the series. And it is the only one in the series that clearly places itself in the tradition of the five-senses allegory through its reference to Abraham Bosse.

5. *Sight*

The contrast old-young returns in the *Milkmaid* at Apsley House (fig. 5). An old woman is counting money into her hand. No one wants to be cheated. The connection with the sense of sight is symbolically clarified by the old woman's eyeglasses. Maes varied the theme of the milkmaid in three other paintings of his early period. Here he is following in the tradition of depictions of market bustle and street life that were already common in 16th-century prints and found their way into Dutch painting after the mid-17th century (Dumas 1991: 419, note 11; Robinson 1996: 221–236). Maes did not leave things at representing the dominant sense only by an example of its everyday use. The attribute of eyeglasses would have been sufficient to make the allegory clear. For it can hardly be a coincidence that he lets the money transaction in the foreground take place in front of a city backdrop with an aligned house front, as if he wanted to give an example of the art of perspective. If the viewer was just reminded of the importance of seeing in trade, here he is reminded of another kind of deception: namely the deceptive character of painting, which is a selling point. Indeed, the Dutch term *gezicht* for the sense of sight also refers to the view of a landscape or a city, be it real or depicted. The painter and businessman Maes is obviously bringing himself into play here. He is not portraying himself, but instead his address in the Steegoversloot in Dordrecht (Staring 1965: 171, note 6). One recognizes the St. Jorispoort and, halfway across the bridge over the Lindengracht, today Museumsstraat.[5] With the image of the city gate, Maes perhaps wanted to suggest that he himself could contribute to the glory of Dordrecht. In any case, it shows his civic pride. The medieval doctrine, according to which the five senses can be compared with the five gates of a city, also echoes here (Nicholas of Cusa 1982: chapter 8; Kanz 2010: 35; Palazzo 2020: 69). But what is the function of the boy *tasting* the cream while looking at the viewer? The unusual connection between sight and taste could once again refer to 'good taste' in art (see Kanz 2010), now connected with a reference to its commercial value.

5 The point of view here and in two other early genre paintings by Maes (Brooklyn; The Anthony de Rothschild Collection, Ascott) corresponds approximately to a black-and-white photograph taken shortly before the demolition of the building in 1865 (Regionaal Archief Dordrecht, Collectie W. Meijers, inv. no. 555.12356). A *Vegetable Seller with Two Boys* by Jan Vollevens I, a pupil of Maes, shows the St. Jorispoort with the adjacent buildings from the opposite side. The painting, dated 1668, was auctioned at Christie's in Amsterdam on May 14, 2003 under lot number 193.

Fig. 5: Nicolaes Maes, Sight *(also known as* The Milk Woman*), c. 1656.*

Source: English Heritage, The Wellington Collection, Apsley House.

6. *Touch*

Since Valentiner (1924: 42), *The Naughty Drummer* (fig. 6) has been described as an informal family portrait. The crying boy shows Maes's stepson Justus de Gelder (1650–after 1709). The woman with the raised rod is Adriana Brouwers (1624–1690). Maes had married the widow of the preacher Arnoldus de Gelder in Dordrecht on January 13, 1654. The child in the cradle is likely Maes's firstborn daughter Johanna, who was baptized in Dordrecht on April 24, 1656. A son Conraedus was baptized in Dordrecht on September 9, 1654 but died young. He can hardly be depicted, since Johanna would then be missing. Maes depicted himself in a mirror on the wall, in front of the easel with his head turned toward the viewer in three-quarter profile.

The painting in Madrid is the only one in the series that Maes did not have to add his name to, as the integrated self-portrait made the usual signature superfluous. However, it is more than a family portrait of the artist, as it shares allegorical qualities with the other works in the series. And it is likewise rooted in painterly traditions. The conflict between young siblings, under the eyes of more or less strict parents, is a recurring motif in 17th-century Dutch painting (Franits 1993: 138–141).

Based on the map of the Seventeen Provinces by Claes Jansz. Visscher, which can be seen on the wall next to the mirror, Hedinger (1986: 63–70) interprets the painting as a political allegory of the Peace of Westminster enforced by the grand pensionary Johan de Witt against the opposition of the supporters of the House of Orange. The troublemaker in the picture, represented by Justus de Gelder, who was born in the same year 1650 as Willem III (he died as William III of England in 1702), would thus represent the war party.

Fig. 6: Nicolaes Maes, Touch *(also known as* The Naughty Drummer*), c. 1656.*

Source: © Museo Nacional Thyssen-Bornemisza, Madrid.

Having summoned two senses to the stage in *Sight*, Maes now unites three. They are all defined negatively and indirectly. Thus, touch is expressed only in the face of the boy, who obviously does *not* understand why he should stop drumming. The mere threat of punishment is enough. The drum, which in the context could also allude to the sense of hearing, *lacks* one of the two requisite drumsticks – Justus has dropped it to wipe the tears from his eye. He does *not* hear; that is, he does not obey. Seeing, too, appears *imperfect*. The painter needs a mirror, a common attribute of sight,[6] in order to complete the allegorical self-portrait with family, and he needs his wife to supervise the children. Discipline, one could read the message, characterizes the family man as much as the artist. One wonders here if Maes already saw his stepson as his future successor, whether he addressed the series to him.

Just as the senses of taste and smell have been increasingly valorized in philosophy, literature, and the visual arts since the Renaissance, the same has happened with the sense of touch (Putscher 1978; Nordenfalk 1990; Zeuch 2000). If the sequence of images that has survived in the auction catalog is the original, which cannot be proven with certainty, the position five for *Touch* would strengthen the punch line. This artistic decision would not have remained unique. The Delft painter Barent Fabritius combined the theme of the five senses with the stages of life. His series from 1666 (Aachen, Suermondt-Ludwig-Museum) shows a boy with a cat in front of a mirror: *Sight*, a young grape eater: *Taste*, a self-portrait with a pipe: *Smell*, a violinist: *Hearing*, and an old man with a chicken: *Touch*.

7. Hidden Portraits

Given the obvious self-referentiality of the entire series – including the reflection on the potential of painting, Maes's ambitions as an artist, his livelihood, and his family – it is not too speculative to assume the presence of other portraits from the painter's family circle. For this, let us look at the *Smell* in Oxford. The slender face of the elderly man seems to recur with different beard shapes in the *Eavesdropper* (Museum of Fine Arts Boston) and in two other genre paintings from the second half of the 1650s (Krempel 2000: cat. no. D 13, D 39, A 17). Do we see here perhaps Gerrit Maes, the father of the painter? And is the elegant lady next to him Henrica Maes? That would make sense, because this older sister of Nicolaes, born in 1624, remained unmarried and could therefore have been painted together with her father.[7] If the blond boy in *Sight* (fig. 5) really stands for good taste in painting, it is obvious to

6 The painter Gonzales Coques connected the sense of sight in a series of the five senses with a portrait of his colleague Robert van den Hoecke (National Gallery, London). He has him holding a small painted panel in his right hand. It shows a military encampment, indicating Van den Hoecke's specialization as a battle painter. However, similarly to the view of St. Jorispoort at Maes, the view also refers to the sense of sight.

7 Henrica was baptized in November 1624 in Dordrecht. A Henrica Maas, elderly and unmarried, made her will before the notary Cornelis van Aensurgh in Dordrecht on February 25, 1703 (Regionaal Archief Dordrecht 10, no. 29: fol. 247). The building with a tower in the background evinces similarity with the Dordwijk estate in the south of Dordrecht.

recognize in him another portrait of Maes's stepson and future successor Justus de Gelder.[8]

When allegories serve to illustrate abstract concepts, the implementation of contemporary portraits in place of personifications enhances their credibility by bringing them closer to life. In the allegorical portraits assumed here, it does not seem arbitrary who plays which role. Unlike in theater, for example, the persons portrayed do not disappear behind their costumes.

8. A Portrait of Arnoldus de Gelder?

Among the Dutch masters in the collection J. F. X. Baelmans there is still the portrait of a *Scholar* (lot. no. 30) known in the literature on Nicolaes Maes, which is said to bear his signature and the date 1656 (fig. 7; Krempel 2000: cat. no. B 19).[9] It was acquired by Auguste-Marie-Raymond, 6th Duke of Arenberg, and can be traced in the Arenberg Gallery in Brussels until 1897. Research by the author (c. 1997) into the whereabouts of the painting was inconclusive. The occurrence of Maes's series datable around 1656 *and* his portrait of an unknown man dated 1656 in the same collection very much later does not rule out a hitherto unrecognized connection. Earlier identifications of the unknown man with famous scholars of the 17th century – Nicolaes Heinsius, Joan Blaeu, Caspar Fagel – did not hold. They were quite unfounded, and it must be added that in 1656 Maes was far from enjoying the fame that such commissions would have required. However, if one looks into the artist's family circle, it is not possible to get past Arnoldus de Gelder, father of Justus de Gelder, preacher in Wijngaarden near Dordrecht from 1638 until his death 1652. One can assume that Maes and his wife Adriana Brouwers were concerned that Justus would grow up without his biological father. Adriana had more family experience than her ten-years-younger husband (Ghandour 1999: 218). Indeed, there is some evidence that the unknown sitter may be his likeness. A desk and books, sometimes even a globe, appear more frequently in uncontested portraits of Dutch preachers.

8 The blending of portraiture, allegory and other genres in 17th-century Dutch painting is a phenomenon that can be easily overlooked. A good example of this is provided by the small panel of a *Young Seamstress* signed and dated 1657 (private collection), which was one of the highlights of the Nicolaes-Maes exhibition in The Hague and London during 2019–2020. In his catalog entry for the painting (Van Suchtelen 2019: 108–111), Bart Cornelis draws attention to the discovery of an age reference on the dress of the figure. It is an unmistakable indication that a limited circle of people, probably family members of the 15-year-old girl, recognized her individual traits in this portrait with genre-like features.

9 On canvas, 99 x 90 cm.

The cute little dog at the bottom right could have been painted for children's eyes. It is missing in a copy of the painting.[10]

Fig. 7: E. de Loose after Nicolaes Maes, Possible Posthumous Portrait of the Preacher Arnoldus de Gelder*, 1656.*

Source: Formerly Collection Arenberg, Brussels.

Despite the different formats of the five + one paintings they can be understood as a unity because of the family trees they represent, and the juxtaposition of the two professions of painter and preacher. A possible source of inspiration for Maes could have been the popular English comedy *Lingua*, first published by Thomas Tomkins in 1607 and translated into Dutch in 1648 by Lambert van den Bosch (1620–1698), who settled in Dordrecht in 1655 to become co-rector of the Latin school. In the play,

10 The painting, known since 1904, was acquired in 1921 by the Scheepvaartmuseum in Amsterdam as a portrait of the cartographer Joan Blaeu, and sold again in 1974 with an attribution to Cornelis Bisschop (Krempel 2000: under cat. no. B 19). The work changed hands on July 6, 2004 at Sotheby's in London (lot number 457) for a relatively low price. The possibility, that it could be the painting of the Arenberg collection, cannot be ruled out. In this case, however, in addition to the dog, the signature of Maes, the date 1656 and a Latin motto would have to have been painted over or removed. The inscriptions are described in the 19th century literature on the piece (Krempel 2000) and most recently by Hofstede de Groot (1915: 531–532).

the Five Senses, presented as male, succeed in defending their dominance over Language as the 'feminine' sixth sense. Language, on the other hand, asserts its power in rhetoric, logic and law. Maes would have added theology to this short list, showing humility and confidence in the Dutch Reformed Church. (Van den Bosch 1648; Parker 1989: 454–458)

9. Schilderijen van de familie

According to what has been said so far, it's fair to assume that Maes created the *Five Senses* for himself and his growing family. For what buyer or client would have found pleasure in the many self-referential allusions? The same applies to the supposed portrait of Arnoldus de Gelder, whose unusual composition does not fit at all with the first portrait commissions to Maes in the 1650s. The possibility that the five + one paintings were passed down in the family for a long time can be proven.

When Maes died at the end of 1693, his last will of 1685 provided for an equitable division of the estate among the three daughters and the stepson (Krempel 2000: doc. 83). Works of art are not mentioned in them. Johanna Maes (1656–1696), whom we have already met as the child in the cradle in *Touch*, married the Frenchman François Baugé. Also Arnoldina Maas (1660–1702), wife of Hendrik Crollius, as well as Ida Margareta Maas (1664-?), wife of Adriaan de Graaf, who emigrated with her or as a widower to Surinam, reached adulthood and had children.

Justus de Gelder was the stepson of Maes from the first marriage of his wife Adriana Brouwers, who died in 1690, to the preacher Arnoldus de Gelder. After the discovery by the author of a painting signed by his hand and dated 1671 (Krempel 2000: 40, fig. 439), scholars have begun to attribute other works to de Gelder that he may have created partly under the guidance of his stepfather. Six children from his marriage to Maria van der Prep were born in Amsterdam and Vianen, where he was an alderman from 1682 to 1709. The burial books of Vianen have not been preserved, but his widow sold property there and it can be concluded that he was buried there before October 30, 1716.[11]

Maria van der Prep returned to Amsterdam no later than 1720 and died there in 1724, at which time she lived on Prinsengracht near Prinsenstraat. She decreed a year before her death that her son Nicolaas Maas de Gelder should receive all her paintings and books as well as the best Bible. After his death in 1727, the paintings passed on to his sisters Margareta Ida de Gelder and Maria de Gelder. In the inventory of the later dated January 1, 1742, there are thirty-nine unspecified paintings distributed

11 At the baptism of Justus de Gelder's granddaughter Adriana Sibilla Temminck on October 30, 1716 in Amsterdam, Maria van der Prep is named as Justus's widow (Stadsarchief Amsterdam 5001–109: 511; Eldering-Niemeijer 1960: 56).

over six rooms of her home on Brouwersgracht near Herenmarkt. When the inheritance was distributed on May 1, 1742, Maria de Gelder's second husband Nikolaas Russelman received eight paintings as a gift, including a self-portrait by Justus de Gelder and a pair of portraits of him and his wife.[12]

Adriana de Gelder allowed her son Coenraad Temminck (1724–1758) to take all the paintings of the family (*schilderijen van de familie*) in advance shortly before her death. Her inventory of October 15, 1754 lists a total of thirty paintings distributed among five rooms of her house on the Keizersgracht near the Prinsenstraat.[13] It is likely that this collection came to her via Margareta Ida and Maria de Gelder as the inheritance of their common father Justus de Gelder. However, some of the paintings might have been inherited by Adrianas husband Jacob from his father Adriaen, who lived there before.[14]

After the death of Coenraad Temminck, his widow Angeneta Fogh (1732–1825) was married again to Nicolaas Lublink in 1759. The elder of Coenraad's two sons, Hendrik Temminck (1757–1820), may have inherited some of the paintings described above, but may not have disposed of them until he came of age in 1782. References to an auction or money difficulties, in which Hendrik would have been involved, are missing. He may have sold the heirlooms privately due to lack of interest, understanding or space. Should the paintings discussed in this article have been among them, they would have had to be brought to Leuven directly or via detours before the death of J. F. X. Baelmans on June 18, 1792.[15]

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12 Nothing is known about the whereabouts of these paintings. They may have been sold soon after the death of Nikolaas Russelman at the auction of his estate on April 12 and 13, 1676 (Oprechte Haerlemsche Courant, March 2, 1776).

13 The house Keizersgracht with today's number 84 (Burgerwijk 49, kleinnummer 443 since 1796) was occupied at the death of Hendrick Temminck by the broker Paulus Weslingh Lublink, a stepbrother of the deceased (Daarnhouwer 1953/54: 176). With thanks to Bart Schuurman, Stadsarchief Amsterdam.

14 For Adriaen's painting collection see Getty Provenance Index, Archival Inventory N-708. Some paintings may also have been come from the estate of Gerardus Baugé (1682–1737). At the death of this last surviving son of François Baugé in 1737, from Nicolaes Maes's own still-living descendants there was only Adriana Cordula de Graaf, who lived in Paramaribo, Suriname. In an estate inventory of Gerardus drawn after his death, presumably in his house in Prinsenstraat near Spiegelstraat, we find forty-five paintings distributed over five rooms and the garden house. If there were paintings among them which Johanna Maes had inherited from her father, they may have been sold on September 25, 1737. A newspaper advertisement ('s Gravenhaegse Woensdaegse Courant, September 11, 1737) promoting the auction speaks of "artful paintings by the most important painters" (*konstige schilderyen van de voornaemste meesters*).

15 The account of the ownership of paintings in the families of Nicolaes Maes and of Justus de Gelder is based on the following sources: Stadsarchief Amsterdam 5075, notary D. van der Groe 4255: pp. 423–435; 4256: pp. 240–286; notary J. Backer 4646: pp. 997–1006; notary G. van der Groe 6637, no. 15; notary A. Baars 8757: no. 1953; notary Jan Ardinois 9085: no. 57; 9103: no.

10. Conclusion

The *Five Senses* by Nicolaes Maes testify to a connection of the sense of taste with the art of painting, the rise of the three lower senses, and the significance of the sense of touch; while the presumed posthumous portrait of Arnoldus de Gelder could emphasize the intertwining of sensory perception with language and reason. What makes this complex allegory so special is its semi-private nature, the portrait of a young 'patchwork family' (possibly extended by other portraits), the messages to the adolescents, the commemoration of the dead, and the dynastic ambition of the artist. He would become the most sought-after portraitist in Amsterdam two decades later.

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644; 9193: no. 765; notary W. Lageman 9281: no. 128; 9282: no. 103; 9289: nos. 251, 275; notary G. de Kok 9562: no. 650; notary B. Phaff 10209: no. 544; notary D. van den Brink 10308: no. 111; notary S. Dorper 10710: no. 391; 10777: no. 1416; 10834: no. 990; notary G. Schaak 11492: no. 221; notary H. Morré 11663: no. 137; 11664: nos. 3, 61; 11672: no. 62; 11674: nos. 57, 66; 11676: no. 72; 11677: nos. 30, 32, 35, 43, 44; notary A. J. Vermeer 13087: no. 2; notary J. Harmsen 16419: no. 716. Transportregisters Vianen, Family Search, International film 921193: fol. 265v-266r.

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The Recipe and Photography

The Sensual Appeal of Image-Word Relations in Cookbooks

Jens Ruchatz

Abstract *Before the advent of photography and its photomechanical reproduction recipes had only rarely been accompanied by pictures. However, from around 1900 the common imagery of food stuffs and kitchen utensils is supplemented by visualizations of cooked dishes as well as step-by-step photographs of food preparation. Whereas the recipe has been thoroughly studied as a pertinent text type or as an indicator of eating habits, its relation to pictures has received little scholarly attention. On a theoretical level this article will discuss, how the recipe can accommodate pictures, going beyond the hierarchized concept of 'illustration.' By looking at various examples across the history of cooking publications, dating from 1896 to the present, the evolution of the photographic recipe picture will be traced in order to elaborate, how in the course of this development the photographic recipe picture changes from an instructive image to a sensory evocation of a dish that is mainly designed to be pictorially indulged.*

1. Creating Recipes Without Words?

The book's front cover is bright white, lacking text it is only adorned with a stylized graphic representation of a smiling mouth, with a red tongue licking the lips (fig. 1). The back cover is even more sparsely designed, only prompting the observer "Régalez vous," gift yourself, set in a sober font without serifs. In the same type, the spine hints at the books contents: "La cuisine sans bla bla" (Larousse 2018), indicating verbally what the cover design suggests namely, a cookbook without a lot of words. The French publisher Larousse, somewhat acting as corporate author, is also given on the spine.[1] A brief preface of only four brief paragraphs, titled a "petit bla bla…," sets out the concept of the book: "Because our hectic lives don't allow us to waste time in the kitchen, we're bringing you 200 recipes to grasp in the blink of an eye!" (Larousse 2018: n.p. [my transl. here and subsequently]) The efficiency promised is based on a

1 The design of the dust jacket repeats the cover, apart from the onomatopoia "miam…" which are added on both inner flaps. Moreover, it is stunning that the book even avoids pagination: Just the recipes are numbered and indexed.

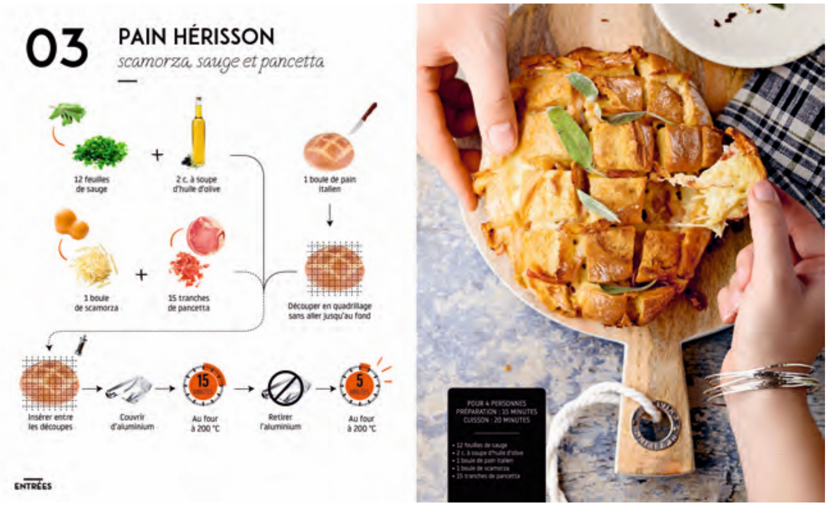
photographic encoding of the recipes replacing the usual verbal instructions: “Do you want to cook but hate deciphering a recipe of 25 lines? [...] The formula is simple: follow the pictures, and you’ll get the recipe. Welcome to the kitchen of simplicity!” (Larousse 2018: n.p.) These introductory remarks claim that what renders cooking complicated is not the process itself, but its verbal encoding in the form of the written recipe. It’s pictorial substitution, chosen for *La cuisine sans bla bala*, promises to be more concrete, showing rather than telling and without recourse to culinary terminology that many users might not be familiar with. “Would you like to buy a parsnip but have no idea what it looks like?”

Fig. 1: Cover of La cuisine sans bla bla. *Size: 20.8 × 24cm.*

Source: Larousse 2018.

As can be seen in the example of the double page devoted to *Pain hérisson*, the *Hedgehog Bread* (fig. 2), *La cuisine sans bla bla* uses small packshot photographs, drawn from several picture libraries, to represent all ingredients and most kitchen utensils. The promise to do away with “instructions” altogether is, however, misleading. “Here, you’ll find just the essentials: add up the +’s and follow the arrows: as sure as 1+1 makes 2, these 200 recipes will work wonders!” (Larousse 2018: n.p.) Whereas showing food stuffs in photographs may make them easy to identify when shopping in a supermarket, the representation of cooking operations by pictures alone through plusses and arrows, etc., would easily result in confusion. Thus the pictorial coding is supplemented throughout by written information detailing what to do ("cover with aluminum"), giving quantities ("12 leaves of sage") and even captioning all of the packshots, identifying verbally what is visible – and indicating limited trust in the informational value of photographs by themselves (Larousse 2018: n.p.). The interaction of images and writing produces some overlaps and redundancies, as well as complementarities, which are needed to remedy both media's respective shortcomings, thereby ensuring the recipe's practicability.

Fig. 2: The recipe of Pain hérisson *in* La cuisine sans bla bla*: Double-page size: 38.4 × 23 cm.*



Source: Larousse 2018: n.p.

Even if the revolution, announced in the introduction, gets stuck halfway, *La cuisine sans bla bla* experiments successfully with a relevant change to the visual aspect of the cookbook. For each of its 200 recipes the book reserves a double page, with the recipe on the left and a full-page photo depicting the ready-made dish on the right. By covering the entire page, these food photos testify to the importance *La cuisine sans bla bla* grants to the picture. The photo depicts the bread's crispy brown crust, which is contrasted with the soft texture inside of the loaf, which is revealed by one torn out piece. The photograph does not only show what a cooked *Pain hérisson* could look like, but also adds some context, indicating where and on which occasions the dish could be consumed. The bread is arranged on a rough wooden board, signifying, with the checkered napkin on the right, a simple but authentic lifestyle. Two hands reaching into the space of the photograph from the outside, occupied with breaking off pieces from the bread loaf, dynamize the pictorial time, as they refer to the process of eating which reaches even further into the future than the preparation of the meal. As the hands are positioned diagonally and made to look to belong to two different people, one of them coded as female by its display of bangles, the communal character of the meal is portrayed, suggesting that the loaf is positioned in the middle of a table with everybody sharing in. This kind of coding, which could be easily analyzed further, is common in food photography. A deviation from the standardized layout is, however, that the list of ingredients as well as the contextual information about cooking times and number of servings, which typically go on the instruction page, are situated inside the photograph. Yet, the indications are designed to harmonize with the picture by being inserted into a small black box on the margin of the page, so that they provide not only information, but also a visual accent. This layout which divides the typeface between the opposite pages, while at the same time reducing its overall surface, lays open the aim and selling point of *La cuisine sans bla bla*. It is not just about claiming more space for pictures, but about undermining the typical duality of the cookbook's double page with pictures on the one hand and text on the other. This is not only effected by increasing pictorial content and minimizing typeface, but also by distributing both on the oppositive pages. *Cuisine sans bla bla* manages to extend the primacy of the picture by realizing a continuous pictoriality as its main appeal. Despite the foreword, the pictorial encoding of the recipes seems less a functional choice than an aesthetic one that allows pictures to enter all pages and give the publication a distinctive look.[2]

Transferring written instructions into the realm of the pictorial may be not more than a noteworthy exception – and probably not even an efficient one for the swift imparting of the relevant information. In the context of this paper, this extreme case raises fundamental questions about the status of the photograph in relation to the recipe. How do food photographs contribute to recipes? Do photographs form part of the information or do they mainly perform a decorative function? To what extent do contemporary recipes rely on the inclusion of photographs? Or is it the other way round and the recipes are dominated by pictures which form the true attraction of

2 The success of the book is difficult to judge as the sales haven't been reported by the publisher. It can serve as an indicator that Larousse issued a series of cookbooks, working with the established template and title: *La cuisine sans bla bla special kids*; *La bonne cuisine sans bla bla mijotée en France*, *Cocktails sans bla bla* etc. Besides, some of these books have been translated into German and Dutch. What is more, *La cuisine sans bla bla* is only one series among others, which likewise emphasize the structural simplicity of their recipes in their layouts, the most successful of which is *Simplissime*, created by Jean-François in 2015, available in French, English, Spanish, Dutch and German editions. The double page layout of the *Simplissime* books uses photos to make up the ingredient list, which – according to the basic premise of the series – never contains more than five items. Another prominent mode of visualizing the descriptive recipe text is using step-by-step photography.

current cookbook productions? Such considerations have driven the design of the cookbook at least since the nineteenth century, when it began to turn into a popular genre of non-fiction publication. How to best mediate dishes and their modes of preparation is not a recent challenge. Whereas recipes were originally collected to be read, the availability of comparatively inexpensive forms of illustration, which (since the introduction ofwood engraving) could be inserted into the text, furthered layouts which presupposed the constant switching between reading and viewing, until in *La cuisine sans bla bla* and kindred attempts the latter has totally supplanted the former. The book's premise that imparting cooking knowledge verbally is inferior to doing so by pictures runs counter to the established cultural hierarchies. The new medial arrangement inside the cookbook puts a lot of effort into conveying culinary knowledge by addressing sensory perception instead of mediating the information through the abstract code of language. The role the photograph plays in the communication of cooking will be first discussed on a systematic level before I take a cursory look at a few stages of the history of the cookbook to show how the photograph came to be one of its essential elements.

2. Recipe Photograph Parameters

Recipes are texts which describe how to prepare specific dishes and are typically employed as instructions when cooking (Wolańska-Köller 2012: 93–104).[3] They also come into play at an earlier stage, preliminary to cooking: when choosing a dish to make, reflecting on how to prepare it (e.g. comparing different recipes of the 'same' dish) and shopping for necessary ingredients. Recipe texts may, however, perform various functions. Obviously, recipes can figure as memories, documenting culinary cultures or even works (Wolańska-Köller 2012: 95–97), without the need to be actually realized in the kitchen. Moving even further away from the practice of cooking, recipes are texts which may be read as a particular form of literature, playing on culinary imagination (Leonardi 1989; Humble 2020: 195–226; Crucifix 2016). In 1950 Elizabeth David's *Book of Mediterranean Food* introduced the British to a then exotic cuisine, giving recipes of dishes for which the necessary ingredients could be hardly obtained at the time. "But even if people could not very often make the dishes here described," David looks back five years later, "it was stimulating to think about them; to escape from the deadly boredom of queuing and the frustration of buying

3 Derived from Latin and French origins around 1500 (and likewise 'receipt' as the older term [OED 2023a]) the term 'recipe' originally referred to a "formula for the composition or use of a medicine, a prescription" (OED 2023b), was then transferred to other fields of use and came to be typically associated with cooking in the 18th century. The analogue development can be observed for Italian and German (Liebman Parrinello 1996: 294).

the weekly rations; to read about real food cooked with wine and olive oil, eggs, butter and cream, and dishes richly flavoured with onions, garlic, herbs, and brightly coloured Southern vegetables" (1955 [1950]: 12; for the illustrations see Hunter 1991: 146–147; for the context see Humble 2005: 125–136). With this qualification in mind, it is important to remember that recipes do not reliably mirror what was cooked, "they will always have more to tell us about the fantasies and fears associated with foods than about what people actually had for dinner" (Humble 2005: 4). Of course, some styles of writing recipes lend themselves more than others to literary reception. The desire for maximum clarity and simplicity in descriptions has produced an at times highly formalized, rigid and sober type of expression, which Humble terms "scientific food writing" (Humble 2020: 198) – in other words: with as little 'bla bla' as possible. Others, like David, put more individuality into their texts and find "specific space for digression within the formally delineated structure of the recipe itself" (Humble 2020: 199), which allows authors to express themselves. It is useful to keep this in mind, when thinking about the recipes' pictures. It is rather obvious, that, if food photographs form an instructive element of the description on the one hand, they also offer pleasures beyond mere factuality on the other. To conceive of the recipe itself as a literary form helps to understand that the photograph, perceived as an attraction, is not a digression from the functionality of the written communication about food, but rather, an extension of an ambiguity that is inherent in the text type of the recipe.

The text type of the recipe is structured by different elements. At its most basic, a recipe is composed of three elements: the title and the name of the recipe, a list of ingredients and the description of the steps of the cooking process (also called 'method section'). The major innovation of the 19th-century cookbook was to separate the list of quantified ingredients from the method section, in which they had formerly been integrated. *Cooking for Modern Families*, first published in 1845 by Eliza Acton, is often credited with the introduction of a separate list of quantified ingredients, which was appended to the method section (Humble 2005: 10–11; 2020: 195; Carroll 2010: 67). Two decades later Isabella Beeton's *Book of Household Management*, first published in part-issues from 1859 on (Damkjær 2014), moved the ingredients further up, positioning them before the instructions. Working with a larger and less canonical corpus, Henry Notaker (2017: 115–116) has shown that a list of ingredients, printed in a separate column, had been realized as early as 1817. More important though than correctly identifying the first, is the insight that there was no revolution that turned the ingredient section into a norm overnight. It co-existed with the age-old two-part form for a century and only became established as the preferred structure way into the 20th century (Wolańska-Köller 2012: 182–189; Carroll 2010: 68; Notaker 2017: 116). This structural change is part of a modernization and redefinition of the cookbook, which was brought about by a shift of usership. Formerly, cookbooks had been directed at male professional cooks employed in noble and wealthy households, whereas since the middle of the 19th century more and more of them addressed bourgeois housewives, giving them directions for an efficient and economical household management (Wiedemann 1993; Beetham 2003; Damkjær 2014; Coydon 2015; Notaker 2017, 123–125). The demand for printed replacements or supplements for orally transmitted cooking knowledge increased potential readership to an extent which incited dynamic publication activities and the development of cookbook concepts adapted to the new customers.

It is obvious that most of the recipes published today are not restricted to just three components. Already Acton frequently supplements observations, which add information on the ingredients, give possible variations or indicate how to serve the respective dish. In Beeton's *Book of Household Management,* the list format is not limited to the ingredients, but continues to indicate the preparation time, the "average cost," the number of servings and when it is "seasonable," sometimes even adding further tips as "note." Linguistic research has identified and differentiated such supplementary elements and variations of the three-part structure (Tomlinson 1986: 203–204, 207–208; Wolańska-Köller 2012: 109–114, 191). Among the different potential supplements, Humble has singled out that "preliminary remarks" putting the recipe into a context had currently become "the dominant practice," thus eventually building up to a "four part structure" (2020: 199–200). Still, the tripartite form stands out as the core of the modern recipe, insofar the graphic separation of the list of ingredients makes a text instantly identifiable as a recipe (Carroll 2010: 67), even if the distinction of the list may materialize in a range of different shapes. Print culture has stabilized the text structure of the recipe into a conventional pattern of composition, a 'typographic dispositive' (Wehde 2000: 14), which indicates that a given text belongs to this text type.[4]

It is telling that linguistic descriptions of the recipe typically fail to include pictures either as a characteristic element or at least as a common supplement (Tomlinson 1986; Liebman Parrinello 1996; Wolańska-Köller 2012), sometimes even if the cases discussed integrate a picture (Cölfen 2007: 86). When pictures are considered as part of the recipe (Carroll 2010: 69; Coutherut 2018, par. 15) they are still only discussed in passing. This neglect of systematic reflection stands in stark contrast to the ubiquity of pictures in cookbooks at least since the second half of the 20th century.

4 Wolańska-Köller (2012: 188) notes that in Germany the typographic distinction of description and ingredients began to be employed around 1900, long before the three-part structure has been firmly established as norm.

tury.[5] Today, it is very uncommon to find a published recipe that is not associated with a – usually photographic – picture.

Most of the text-linguistic research on the recipe is motivated by the historical interest in tracing the text type from medieval to modern usage (Liebman Parrinello 1996; Görlach 2004: 121–140; Coutherut 2018). From this vantage point it would be easy to maintain that food photographs are neither a necessary nor important part of the recipe, because for the most part of its history the descriptive text lacked pictures. Put differently, it is possible to imagine a functioning recipe void of pictures, but it would be hardly possible to create a recipe out of pictures alone. This is what *La cuisine sans bla bla* sets out to do, but fails to follow through with.[6] Therefore, it seems admissible to regard the pictures as something that can be added to the recipe instead of possibly forming a relevant element of it. It is plausible, though, that, when a picture is provided, it must be considered a part of the information that the recipe tries to impart. Coutherut distinguishes two functions which integrate the photograph into the recipe: Firstly, a seductive function which is inciting readers to choose one recipe over another competing one in the cookbook, and secondly a descriptive function, showing what the dish should look like when completed (2018, par. 15). Based on the observation that recipe texts typically cross-reference the corresponding photograph, Carroll downplays the pictures' function "as a browsing aid," and instead points out "that the photograph is primarily intended to aid in creating the dish rather than in choosing a recipe" (2010: 69). Even if the function of photographs can vary more than Carroll would suggest,[7] it is important to note that 'recipe pictures' – of the prepared dish –, which typically accompany recipes, form a substantial part of the information that is provided. With the aim to give a most complete description of the preparation, recipe text and recipe picture work together in complementary ways. The recipients of the recipe are thus addressed not only as readers, but as reader-viewers. Today, users and readers expect a photographic picture as an

5 This neglect also harms major histories of the cookbook (Humble 2005; Notaker 2017; Elias 2017), which reserve just a few pages for the subject of photography and 'illustration' in general. Most startling in this respect is Eric Quaile's *Old Cookbooks. An Illustrated History* (1978) which contains plenty of pictures, without discussing them. For an exception consult the brief history in journal article format in Dennis 2008.

6 This remains true for recipe videos like the ones posted on the famous *Tasty* YouTube channel which largely craft a narrative produced from a montage of gestures. But they cannot renounce words when it comes to the title and quantifying ingredients.

7 This view seems too restrictive, as in browsing a broader corpus it becomes obvious that it is difficult to generalize: references can go both ways, from text to picture, but also the other way round. In most cases today the layout eliminates the necessity of references, by placing recipe text and recipe picture on facing pages, so that the double page devoted to one recipe turns its two components into an intermedial whole.

integral element of a recipe. It is necessary, therefore, to study closely how the image-text combinations in recipes work.

An alternative conception of the text-image relation is put forward by German linguist Hermann Cölfen, who argues that the pictures belong to the cookbook rather than to the recipe: "The 'classic' recipe is mostly just one part within a broader book concept that can include many other components beyond the recipe part: pictures, narrative elements, background information, shopping tips, etc." (2007: 86, my transl.) It is somewhat illogical to isolate the 'classic' recipe text from its extensions, since the pictures are usually connected to the recipe, as are the other supplements. But it is appropriate to put the emphasis on the defining role of the publishing site for the recipe. Eventually, it is not some internal logic of the recipe – as single specimen as well as text type – that will determine which elements a recipe should contain, but rather its context of publication, be it a food blog, a recipe platform, a magazine or a book. Whereas recipes can stand alone in principle, they usually are elements of larger wholes consisting of more than one recipe, which follow a certain order and are contextualized by further textual and pictorial material. It has always been the case that recipes have normally appeared in a collection; as Liebman Parrinello states: "The 'natural' historical trajectory leads from the individual recipe to the recipe collection." (1996: 294, my transl.) In these contexts, every recipe intertextually refers to the accompanying others so that together they form a unit. It follows, that such collections don't throw together ready-made recipes, but, on the contrary, define in each case which recipes may enter the collection at all and how they need to be designed to conform to the overall concept.[8] In the context of the cookbook, recipes are organized as serialized content that is tied together by a shared orientation and consistent formal traits throughout. It is the book that defines the status of the recipes with regard to the role that they play for the overall concept: given the context, they can be made to demonstrate the culinary merits of a country, a region or a specific chef, represent one variety inside a certain genre of dishes or exemplify an easy to cook meal.

That said, the concept of the book defines not only the quantity, selection and form of the recipes, but also the number, size, style and medium of the pictures as

8 The linguist Hermann Cölfen (2007: 88–89, my transl.) distinguishes three genres of books, which contain recipes: "recipes in recipe collections," which are limited to the minimal format of the recipe (as in most cookbooks before the mid-20th century, cramming together hundreds of often numbered recipes); "[t]hematically oriented cookery literature using pictorial elements as well as narrative and factual subtexts," which include the bulk of contemporary offerings; "cooking schools," in which the recipes serve a general introduction to cooking and are therefore supplemented by additional explanations. Whereas this typology covers the book market of the 20th century quite well, to adequately represent the cookbook market of the last two to three decades a closer look at the second category of the "thematically oriented" publications would be expedient.

well as their layout with respect to the written content. On the one hand, the chosen recipes dictate which dishes need to be depicted, on the other, a recipe may be just as well selected due to its visual appeal, in other words, because the dish makes excellent material for an enticing photograph.[9] A cookbook will often be designed primarily to instruct cooking, but may also be conceived for pleasurable viewing-reading and for the coffee table. In fact, it is the latter scenario that fuels the cookbook market, as it stands as the most convincing selling point to justify offering ever more publications to consumers most of whom already own more cookbooks than they will practically be able to use. In this respect, cookbook author Brenda Houghton (1994) observes: “Illustrated books are not intended for the kitchen shelf: they are for the bedside table, for dreaming, for wish-fulfilment. And people buy whole shelves of them.” Harking back to earlier reflections on different functions of recipes, it is therefore advantageous to distinguish the two main practices afforded by cookbooks: The recipes included may be either *used* as instructions for cooking or *read* and viewed as ‘illustrated literature.’[10] Depending on the concept materialized in the design of the book, the propensity to use or to read will not be balanced equally, but nonetheless both options remain open.

If the form of a cookbook does not determine its use, its look betrays what was envisioned by the publisher. The layout – and the design in general – is a “form of non-verbal communication” which reveals “the way in which the recipes are expected to be used, and about the relationship between the individual recipes and the collection which contains them” (Carroll 2010, 62). The design of the cover, the weight of the book, the quality of the paper, the size of the pages, the dimensions and quantity of the food photographs, the referencing between pictures and text, indicate whether the recipes are rather intended for cooking or for looking. Along these lines, the value of the photograph for the recipe should be appraised not by focusing on the single recipe, but by reconstructing the pattern in its serial deployment across recipes. The layout can either favor the photos’ function for the practical use of the recipes or highlight the aesthetic appreciation of the composition, colors and textures, which the recipe pictures present. In short, it needs to be ascertained to what

9 That this supposed primacy of photogenicity over taste will feed back into the practice of cooking can be assumed long before Instagram. Houghton (1994), long-time women’s editor of the *Sunday Times Magazine*, laments that the lavishly illustrated cookbooks, though they served only for bedside browsing, impacted the cultural recipe archive: “Nobody photographs succulent roast meat and gravy, or a steak and kidney pie, because this is brown food and brown food looks dull. So these recipes slowly disappear from our repertoire. I once had to drop a delicious meat loaf recipe because it couldn’t help looking like dog food.”

10 I follow the terminology but deviate from the judgement of Carroll who argues that the text type of the recipe presupposes to be ‘used’ (“for information”) instead of being ‘read’ (“for entertainment”), but admits that there “exist books that blur this distinction” (2010: 70).

extent the picture serves to embellish the book or to add to the recipe's description of a dish's preparation.

But how can a photograph relate to a recipe? Contrary to drawn and painted pictures, photographs cannot be derived directly from texts, for they capture, first and foremost, fragments of the reality in front of the camera lens. Roland Barthes has argued that this innovation revolutionized the relation of word and image in the print media. Instead of the traditional mode of illustration, in which a picture serves to "to elucidate or 'realize' the text" (Barthes 1977a [1961]: 25), photographs typically follow the mode of "anchoring," in which text (condensed in the form of the caption) interprets a given picture (1977b [1964]: 38–40; for further discussion with respect to print culture see Ruchatz 2022: 113–117). Instead of the picture "illustrating the words," the words are now "parasitic of the picture" (Barthes 1977a [1961]: 25). This logic can be seen at work in the use of photojournalistic pictures in illustrated magazines. In cookbooks, however, photographs generally refer to a text that logically precedes them, since they capture and showcase realities created from recipes. Food photographs should be considered as staged photographs, insofar as they create a reality in front of and for the camera that is quintessentially constructed and completely under control. In the process of illustrating recipes, professional specialists work together on three levels: Chefs and studio cooks, who realize the recipe; food and prop stylists, who often design the plating and frequently incorporate the plated dish into a more complex visual arrangement; and finally, the photographers, who illuminate the arrangement, transfer it into an image from a specific perspective and with a chosen framing. Therefore, this variety of staged food photography, representing a recipe, is multi-authored – or sometimes not authored at all, as it often used to be the case that the creators were not credited. In the case of food photography the picture serves an illustrative function not only genetically, as it visualizes what the recipe text describes with words; in doing so the recipe picture also illuminates and clarifies what the recipe text is meant to lead to.[11] The photograph offers a

11 Another relevant dimension of the photo-text relation in the cookbook concerns the picture's temporality. It is frequently claimed that, by virtue of their photochemical ontology, photographs cannot but refer back to the past, more exactly to the moment, when the light created a trace on the photosensitive layer. In this respect, a food photograph would prove that a recipe had already been successfully realized once in a particular visual arrangement. This could easily be applied to cookbooks which aim to document a cuisine, as in some publications of renowned chefs, which most cookbook owners would not dare to try out themselves: The photographic recipe picture forms part of the documentation of a culinary artwork. For cookbook *users*, however, the recipe is always looking into the future, in which it will be or at least could be realized. The recipe may be seen as a promise of a successful, delicious outcome (Tomlinson 1986: 211). It is the photographs which make this prospect tangible, by visually suggesting not something past, but what could be, because it has been (Ruchatz 2018).

sensualization of the content which is encoded in the abstraction of writing.[12] Thus, it could be argued, that the food picture in the cookbook adheres as closely to an illustrative function as a photograph can.

For a user leafing through a cookbook, the picture will not appear as a secondary extension of the text, however, but rather come first as an eye catcher which draws the attention to a particular recipe.[13] The same typically happens in a bookstore, when an appealing cover photo, easily visible from a distance, may motivate a potential customer to engage more with a book, probably first and foremost its pictures. Most food photographs are easy to grasp in a glance, whereas reading requires more time and a closer look. A typical cookbook layout of today prefigures this viewing logic by using page size pictures throughout, thereby making it attractive to browse a cookbook by just looking at the photographs. In this case, the words of the recipe text might just as well serve as anchor providing an interpretation of what is in the picture. Most of the contemporary cookbooks reserve at least half of each double-page for photography and invite reader-viewers to flip through the pictures. Photographs arranged on the page without borders – and in this respect contrasted with the text – underline the claim of photography to dominate the layout and not to be subordinate to the word.

That said, it is difficult to ascertain which mode is dominant: The image-word constellations in the cookbook cannot be grasped with a sharp distinction between anchoring and illustration. Neither are food photographs just fragments of reality that are anchored in the cookbook through verbal interpretation, nor can their dominant presence in the layout be reduced to an illustration drawn from a text. For image-word constellations in contemporary cookbooks, which most often progress by a series of recipe text/recipe picture couples, meeting on a double page, I want to propose the new term 'parallelization,' since the books allow reader-viewers to instantly switch between text and picture, without a limiting hierarchy. Reader-viewers may jump from text to picture or vice versa as well as browse just the pictures or, even if unlikely, only read the recipes. Inside the parallelized structure, which cookbooks are modelled on, the recipe photo can still selectively serve as an instructive illustration of the recipe text or the photographic recipe image can be anchored and interpreted with the help of a recipe text.

12 This observation refers to the medial level of the codification of writing only, which materializes on the printed page: Obviously, words can be used to feed the visual imagination of readers.

13 For the discrepancy between the logics of production versus reception in image-word constellations see Ruchatz 2022: 114–115.

3. Historical Materialisations of the Recipe Photograph

Considering the entire history of the printed cookbook, which goes back to the 15th century (Willan/Cherniavsky/Claflin 2012: 38–63), the recipe picture is a rather recent achievement (Day 2004: 98–101). From the beginning, there were cookbooks which contained pictures. Most of these featured only one picture, their frontispiece, which typically either showed a portrait of the author or an allegorical still life, both with the aim of ennobling cuisine (Fink 1996: 100; Bickham 2008: 480–481). The frontispiece position could also be filled with "illustrated scenes of cookery" (Bickham 1996: 482; see also Day 2004: 104). The most common pictorial feature were diagrams which modeled the ideal order at the table, which was relevant for representative occasions as large banquets (Bickham 2008: 477; Fink 1996: 98; Day 2004: 103–122). But one thing that was never depicted were prepared and plated meals (Fink 1996: 92; Coutherut 2018: par. 14): Recipes were not illustrated. What comes closest to the dishes – instructing their preparations in the kitchen or their serving at the table – were simple line diagrams displaying kitchen utensils (Fink 1996: 93–94), indicating how to carve meat or giving designs for pies, pastry and confectionery (Day 2004: 100–101, 122–147). In the branch of *pâtisserie* and *confiserie*, for which the spectacular design of the external shape was (and still is) of foremost importance and visual beauty was even considered to be its most pertinent yardstick of value (Boutaud 2012: 92; Csergo 2012: 19–20), "images of actual food" (Day 2004: 129) could appear. But these specialized representations, which display models for sculptural or even architectural creations, diverge very much from the usual recipe pictures, insofar as the perfect surfaces of their culinary achievements detach their appearance as much as possible from the materiality of their construction.

In the 19th century, despite the new audience for cookbooks, the situation changes only slowly. In print technology the broad introduction of wood engraving from the 1820s onwards permits cheaper production of reproducible images, which can easily be printed along with typeface, whereas traditional engraved pictures needed to be bound in as plates, inevitably separated from the corresponding text passages (Desbuissons 2022: 39; Ruchatz 2022: 119–122). If the majority of cookbook publications in the 19th century were still devoid of imagery, the innovation of wood engraving meant that the number of images in a cookbook could be easily increased, given that the publishers had decided to invest in pictures at all.[14] As general information on the origin and quality of foodstuffs and materials took up an important part of many cookbooks, somehow acting as cooking schools, the

14 For an inventory of the types of cookbook pictures on the eve of the introduction of photomechanical illustration see Ruchatz 2017: 281–285.

depiction of animals, plants, fruits and vegetables become a recurrent feature.[15] These subjects allowed to increase the number of illustrations and more often than not the decorative function stands out. However, it was important for cookbook authors to insist that their images did not just serve decorative purposes but were instrumental to their didactic aims. To name but one example, Jules Gouffé, author of probably the pictorially most refined cookbook publication of the 19th century (1867),[16] featuring 25 lavish and finely nuanced chromolithographs (for an extended study of the iconography see Desbuissons 2018), pointed out:

> although the plates are undoubtedly a very great addition to the appearance of the work, they were not introduced merely on that account, but also materially to assist the culinary teaching, which has been my first object in writing the book. […] Whenever a sketch has seemed to me necessary to make an operation clear, I have introduced it, convinced of the advantage young cooks will derive, whilst working from this book, from having correct representations, which they will be able to follow exactly. (Gouffé 1868: XV-XVI)

Gouffé attributed the use value of illustration – as a complement to verbal description – to the principle that cooking should be learned not least through observation and study.

If recipe pictures were included in the illustrated cookbooks of the 19th century, they still mainly concerned dishes, whose sculptural and elaborate design was in particular need of a pictorial model – and made for better pictorial content than, say, a pot of stew. The respective food was presented on a plate, avoiding any further contextualization of the situation (fig. 3). The black and white engravings were inserted directly into the corresponding recipe text, in order to make clear that they form an integral element of the recipe. This entailed that the recipe pictures were designed to take up little space and thus turned out relatively small. Among the hundreds or even thousands of recipes a cookbook of this time gathered, only a small fraction was pictorially treated. It was only photography that established the pictured dish as the staple of cookbook illustration. This suggests that the photographic recipe picture must have brought about something new and conveyed relevant dimensions of the food. I argue that photography put a new emphasis on the sensuality of food, leaving the construction drawings of the graphic representations behind.

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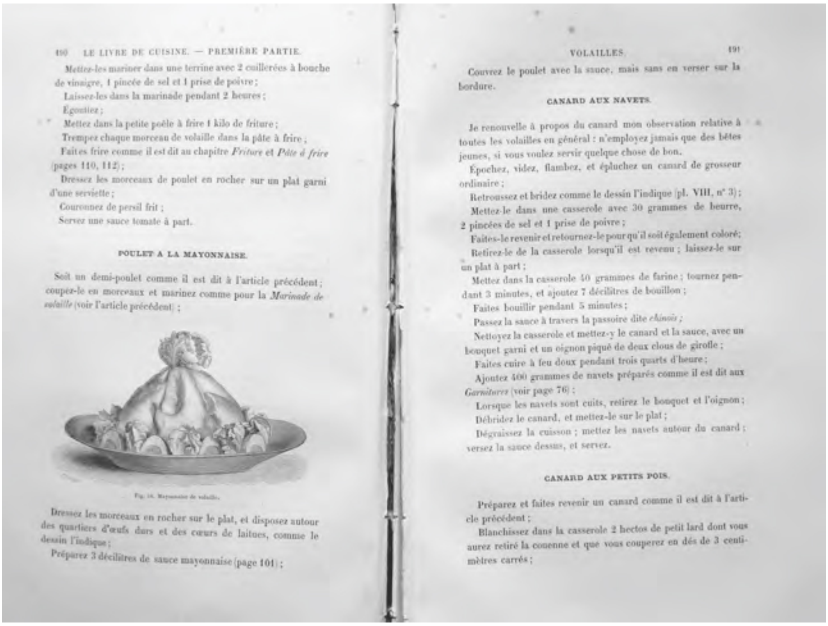
15 For example, the bulk of the illustrations in Beeton (1861) is of this type, clearly used as a drawcard to motivate customers to stick with the serial part-issue publication.

16 Gouffé's book was published in Paris in 1867 and quickly translated into English, Spanish, Dutch, German, and at the end of the century also into Italian. The layout follows the same concept across the national editions. There is some variation, however, with regard to the number of color plates.

Fig. 3: Wood engraved recipe picture for Mayonnaise de volaille *in Gouffé's* Le Livre de cuisine. *Double-page size: 34.4 × 25.6 cm.*



190 LE LIVRE DE CUISINE. — PREMIÈRE PARTIE.

Mettez-les mariner dans une terrine avec 2 cuillerées à bouche de vinaigre, 1 pincée de sel et 1 prise de poivre ;

Laissez-les dans la marinade pendant 2 heures ;

Égouttez ;

Mettez dans la petite poêle à frire 1 kilo de friture ;

Trempez chaque morceau de volaille dans la pâte à frire ;

Faites frire comme il est dit au chapitre *Friture* et *Pâte à frire* (pages 110, 112) ;

Dressez les morceaux de poulet en rocher sur un plat garni d'une serviette ;

Couronnez de persil frit ;

Servez une sauce tomate à part.

POULET A LA MAYONNAISE.

Soit un demi-poulet comme il est dit à l'article précédent ; coupez-le en morceaux et marinez comme pour la *Marinade de volaille* (voir l'article précédent) ;

Fig. 16. Mayonnaise de volaille.

Dressez les morceaux en rocher sur le plat, et disposez autour des quartiers d'œufs durs et des cœurs de laitues, comme le dessin l'indique ;

Préparez 3 décilitres de sauce mayonnaise (page 101) ;

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Couvrez le poulet avec la sauce, mais sans en verser sur la bordure.

CANARD AUX NAVETS.

Je renouvelle à propos du canard mon observation relative à toutes les volailles en général : n'employez jamais que des bêtes jeunes, si vous voulez servir quelque chose de bon.

Épochez, videz, flambez, et épluchez un canard de grosseur ordinaire ;

Retroussez et bridez comme le dessin l'indique (pl. VIII, n° 3) ;

Mettez-le dans une casserole avec 30 grammes de beurre, 2 pincées de sel et 1 prise de poivre ;

Faites-le revenir et retournez-le pour qu'il soit également coloré ;

Retirez-le de la casserole lorsqu'il est revenu ; laissez-le sur un plat à part ;

Mettez dans la casserole 40 grammes de farine ; tournez pendant 3 minutes, et ajoutez 7 décilitres de bouillon ;

Faites bouillir pendant 5 minutes ;

Passez la sauce à travers la passoire dite *chinois* ;

Nettoyez la casserole et mettez-y le canard et la sauce, avec un bouquet garni et un oignon piqué de deux clous de girofle ;

Faites cuire à feu doux pendant trois quarts d'heure ;

Ajoutez 400 grammes de navets préparés comme il est dit aux *Garnitures* (voir page 76) ;

Lorsque les navets sont cuits, retirez le bouquet et l'oignon ;

Débridez le canard, et mettez-le sur le plat ;

Dégraissez la cuisson ; mettez les navets autour du canard ; versez la sauce dessus, et servez.

CANARD AUX PETITS POIS.

Préparez et faites revenir un canard comme il est dit à l'article précédent ;

Blanchissez dans la casserole 2 hectos de petit lard dont vous aurez retiré la couenne et que vous couperez en dés de 3 centimètres carrés ;

Source: Gouffé 1867: 190–191.

In the following pages I will look briefly at four examples drawn from cookbooks and a news magazine of the 20th century to shed light on the development of the recipe picture after the invention of photography. This small selection condenses the analysis of a much larger corpus, but the sample is, of course, limited and incidentally biased towards US material.[17] What matters is just that these cases allow me to access the bigger picture, which I will paint here only with broad brushstrokes. My main interest in this will be to elaborate how the photograph interacts with the recipe text and to what extent the recipe picture is interested in conveying the sensuality of the food in a sensually – i.e., visually – enticing depiction.

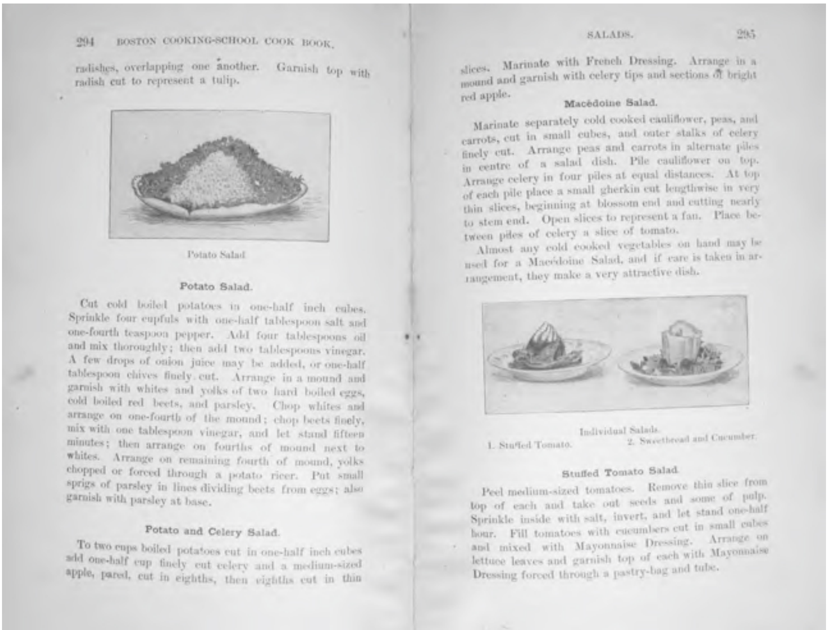
3.1 Mush on the plate

To my knowledge, Fannie Farmer's *The Boston Cooking-School Cook Book*, initially published in 1896, is the first cookbook publication making use of the recent innovation of the half-tone process to reproduce its imagery (fig. 4). Some of the pictures

17 The article is part of a larger and ongoing project of reconstructing the history of photography in the cookbook, which was first and more extensively presented in Ruchatz 2017.

are heavily retouched, but in most cases the photographic image source can be surmised. The sharpness and definition of the photographs contained in the first edition leaves a lot to be desired, the small size of the reproduction even making things worse. It is difficult to even make out what is depicted without recourse to the caption: If we go by the words, the picture on the left page depicts potato salad, the one on the right a stuffed tomato side by side with sweetbread and cucumber salad. In the photographs every dish appears arranged on a plate, then cut out and subsequently endowed again with suggested materiality by an artificial shadow, which is produced by a few manual hatchings. The character of the meal, its textures or even the ingredients can hardly be discerned from the picture. What remains is a decontextualized shape that can give a vague orientation how the prepared dish could be presented at the table.

Fig. 4: Photographs of 'Potato Salad' *and* 'Individual Salads' *from the* Boston Cooking-School Cook Book. *Double-page size: 24.3 × 19.2 cm.*


294 BOSTON COOKING-SCHOOL COOK BOOK.

radishes, overlapping one another. Garnish top with radish cut to represent a tulip.

Potato Salad

Potato Salad.

Cut cold boiled potatoes in one-half inch cubes. Sprinkle four cupfuls with one-half tablespoon salt and one-fourth teaspoon pepper. Add four tablespoons oil and mix thoroughly; then add two tablespoons vinegar. A few drops of onion juice may be added, or one-half tablespoon chives finely cut. Arrange in a mound and garnish with whites and yolks of two hard boiled eggs, cold boiled red beets, and parsley. Chop whites and arrange on one-fourth of the mound; chop beets finely, mix with one tablespoon vinegar, and let stand fifteen minutes; then arrange on fourths of mound next to whites. Arrange on remaining fourth of mound, yolks chopped or forced through a potato ricer. Put small sprigs of parsley in lines dividing beets from eggs; also garnish with parsley at base.

Potato and Celery Salad.

To two cups boiled potatoes cut in one-half inch cubes add one-half cup finely cut celery and a medium-sized apple, pared, cut in eighths, then eighths cut in thin

SALADS. 295

slices. Marinate with French Dressing. Arrange in a mound and garnish with celery tips and sections of bright red apple.

Macédoine Salad.

Marinate separately cold cooked cauliflower, peas, and carrots, cut in small cubes, and outer stalks of celery finely cut. Arrange peas and carrots in alternate piles in centre of a salad dish. Pile cauliflower on top. Arrange celery in four piles at equal distances. At top of each pile place a small gherkin cut lengthwise in very thin slices, beginning at blossom end and cutting nearly to stem end. Open slices to represent a fan. Place between piles of celery a slice of tomato.

Almost any cold cooked vegetables on hand may be used for a Macédoine Salad, and if care is taken in arrangement, they make a very attractive dish.

Individual Salads.
1. Stuffed Tomato. 2. Sweetbread and Cucumber.

Stuffed Tomato Salad.

Peel medium-sized tomatoes. Remove thin slice from top of each and take out seeds and some of pulp. Sprinkle inside with salt, invert, and let stand one-half hour. Fill tomatoes with cucumbers cut in small cubes and mixed with Mayonnaise Dressing. Arrange on lettuce leaves and garnish top of each with Mayonnaise Dressing forced through a pastry-bag and tube.

Source: Farmer (1896): 294–295.

As principal of the Boston Cooking School, Farmer championed a rational and science-based approach to cooking (Shapiro 1986: 106–126; see also Humble 2020:

196; Elias 2017: 32–37; Carroll 2010: 68).[18] Therefore, it could be assumed that photography's technical image would have suited the direction of the cookbook. However, the choice of using photographic images as recipe pictures is not even mentioned in the preface, which suggests that the innovation might have been received skeptically. The fact that photographic images were cheaper to produce and reproduce may just as well have driven the decision. At this stage, the visual quality could hardly account for the use of photographic images, because they fell far short of the standards set by the long-established wood engraving in this respect.

Meanwhile, the layout stuck to the established patterns. The recipe pictures were inserted right before the recipe texts, acting as a sort of pictorial introduction. As in Gouffé's book, the captions repeated the name of the recipe to rule out uncertainties. The framing of the pictures is efficiently adapted to their respective subjects, which are cropped tightly, not wasting any space on the page, with the result that the picture format varies from case to case. Viewed over the entire volume, photography was not used to increase the habitual share of illustrations: While a few double pages boast two photographs, passages of more than sixty pages devoid of pictorial decoration exist as well. A photograph appears only when the artful presentation of a particular dish seems to ask for one. Moreover, the number of pictures is limited by technical constraints of photography. Black and white food photographs require a graphically organized object that is sculptured. In a cookbook, which is neither aimed at professionals nor households with servants, the quantity of such recipes diminishes: In the *Boston Cooking-School Cook Book* recipe pictures harmonize best with salads, fish, deserts and pieces of raw meat. In this early example, the photographs seem to replace the wood engravings, without further change. The basic communicative parameters remain unchanged, but the poor picture quality manages to even reduce the potential to pictorially evoke the pleasures of tasting.

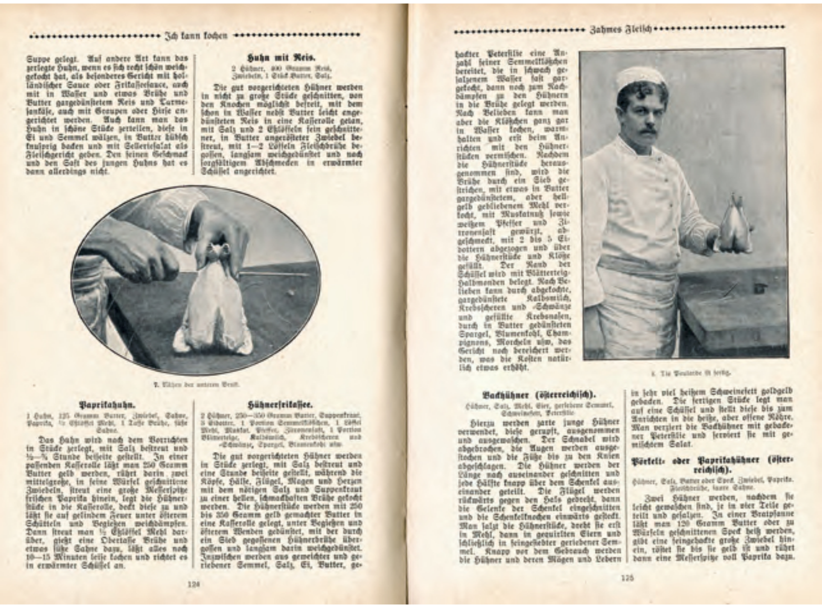
Only a few years later, new cookbooks, among them an edition of the Fannie Farmer cookbook with a totally renewed iconography (Farmer 1906),[19] tried to remedy the problem of the muddy half-tone reproductions by re-introducing plates, on which two or three exposures were printed on coated paper. As the downside of this solution, the 'neighborly' relation of recipe text and picture was severed and replaced by cross-referencing (Ruchatz 2017: 285–287). Whereas the picture quality improved, the restriction to selected groups of dishes remained. A more inventive alternative, chosen by the 1909 German publication *Ich kann kochen*, was to do away

18 Besides the very successful cookbook (Shapiro 1986: 112), the campaign extended to the launch of the long running *Boston Cooking School Magazine*, which equally relied on photographic images from the very beginning, starting with a modest number, but rapidly increasing in quantity.

19 The revised edition's title page finally advertised the inclusion of "one hundred half-tone illustrations" (Farmer 1906).

with recipe pictures altogether. Instead, the volume innovated step-by-step photography, spreading the series of pictures covering one step in the process over several pages (fig. 5; Ruchatz 2017: 287–290). According to a different logic, step-by-step photographs could conform more exactly to the objective of illustrating a recipe, as they follow the preparation of a meal as a process, trying to capture the manual sensuality of the cook's movements and gestures.

Fig. 5: Step-by-step photographs depicting two steps of the dressing of a chicken in Ich kann kochen. *Double-page size: 31.5 × 22.9 cm.*



Source: Urban 1909: 124–125.

3.2 The colorful table

The major obstacle that would mar any attempt to represent dishes that were less sculpturally modelled than the sugary artifices of the confectioners was the lack of color in the picture, regardless of the distinction between photography and engraving.[20] Even if the quality of black and white photographic reproductions improved and their size increased, what could be made to look appetizing in black and white

20 For a brief overview of color in cookbooks see Poulain 2008.

was very limited. It took color photography, which had more means to render structure and texture in objects, to change this. In Alice Kuhn's small vegetarian cookbook *Käse-, Milch- &Rahmspeisen* (1927) this revolution is instantly visible. The photographs made the surfaces of cheesecake and buttered toast visually tangible (fig. 6), as well as exploring the textures of spaghetti with parmesan, cauliflower au gratin and fried eggs with cheese. These recipes did not prescribe an elaborately constructed surface and shape, for which the users were in need of a visual orientation.[21] In contrast, it was simple recipes that got picture treatment, because they now looked appealing. Although the pictures betray some retouching, they celebrate their capability to render the materiality of their object, even paying attention to incidentals like the texture of the fabric of the tablecloth or the play of the light on the plate. This observation leads to another factor, which is changing the recipe picture of the 1920s, if not exclusive to its color variety. Still, color advances the new form of composition, in which the plated dish is no longer isolated, but situated on a table and thus in the context of a prospective eating situation, which draws the viewer more strongly into the image. At the same time, the design of the spatial environment opened up the opportunity to propose an interpretation of the dish and to introduce additional graphic and colorful elements on the aesthetic level.[22]

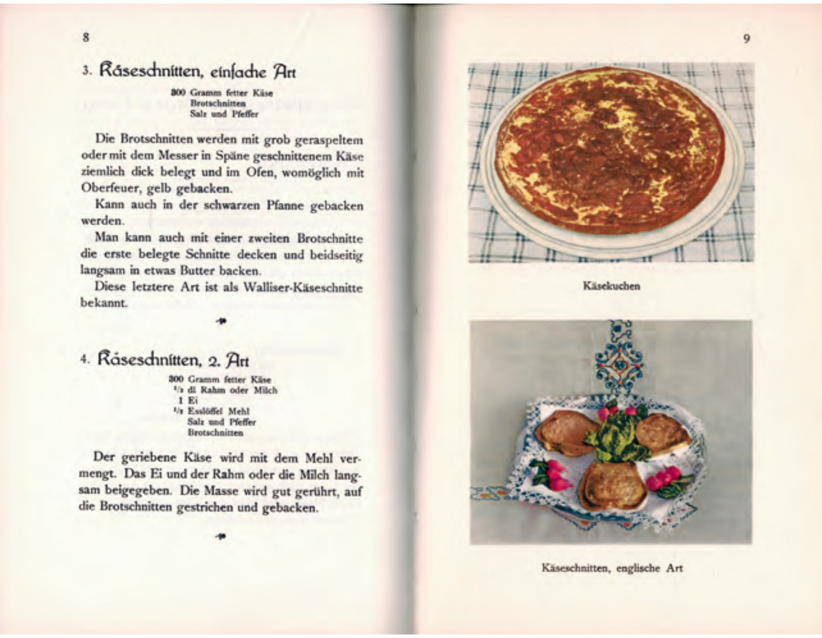
Kuhn's book relies on the Uvachrome process (on the background see Jaeger 2014: 612–613) to produce the color imagery, one of the more or less experimental processes which were used before the reversal films of Kodak and AGFA took over the scene from 1936 onwards (Boulouch 2011: 93–116). Already at the end of the 19th century, printing half-tone reproductions in color was an economical rather than a technical issue. The technology was frequently employed to reproduce art works on paper. Indeed, it was the effort required to take the photos, which could be reproduced, that hindered the further spread of color in print. The earliest gastronomic publications boasting color food photography addressed professionals. *The Book of Bread* (Simmons [1903]), published in 1903 by the magazine *The British Baker*, included twelve close-up shots of so-called 'prize loaves.' Even if the photographic basis had difficulty in optically prevailing against the heavy retouching, the play of soft and crispy textures as well as the variation in the brown hues had a photographic appeal. In 1913, the owner of the Dresden confectionery school published a manual

21 Nevertheless, Kuhn's preface asserts that the color photographs were intended to ensure "that spot checks can determine whether the recipe has been correctly recorded and executed" (Kuhn 1927: 6).

22 Other cookbooks continue to cut the plated dish out, with the intention to contrast it starkly against a monochrome background, to bring out the colors of the meal in the best way; for the example of the publications of Swiss author Frida Nietlispach, starting in 1928, see Ruchatz 2017: 291–292.

illustrated with 111 plates of color photographs, showing top shots of cake decorations to serve as models (Weber 1913). Over the next decades, Weber continued to successfully produce updated version of his color-photographic manual, frequently in international multi-language editions. Of course, the sensual dimension was reduced here to scanning the artfully crafted surfaces of the confectionery, whereas the taste, smell and texture were not implied.[23]

Fig. 6: Photographs of a cheesecake and rarebits in Käse-, Milch- & Rahmspeisen. *Double-page size: 26.7 × 20.5 cm.*


8

3. Käseschnitten, einfache Art

300 Gramm fetter Käse
Brotschnitten
Salz und Pfeffer

Die Brotschnitten werden mit grob geraspeltem oder mit dem Messer in Späne geschnittenem Käse ziemlich dick belegt und im Ofen, womöglich mit Oberfeuer, gelb gebacken.

Kann auch in der schwarzen Pfanne gebacken werden.

Man kann auch mit einer zweiten Brotschnitte die erste belegte Schnitte decken und beidseitig langsam in etwas Butter backen.

Diese letztere Art ist als Walliser-Käseschnitte bekannt.

4. Käseschnitten, 2. Art

300 Gramm fetter Käse
1/2 dl Rahm oder Milch
1 Ei
1/2 Esslöffel Mehl
Salz und Pfeffer
Brotschnitten

Der geriebene Käse wird mit dem Mehl vermengt. Das Ei und der Rahm oder die Milch langsam beigegeben. Die Masse wird gut gerührt, auf die Brotschnitten gestrichen und gebacken.

9

Käsekuchen

Käseschnitten, englische Art

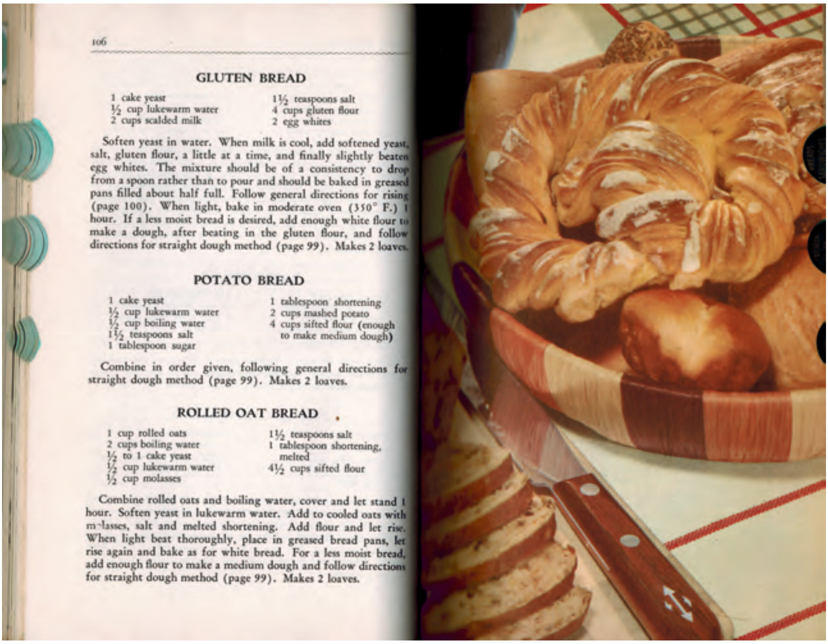
Source: Kuhn 1927: 8–9.

Color-photography cookbooks for the general public did not gain momentum until the mid-1920s. One year before Kuhn, corporate food producer Procter & Gamble published a small format cookbook to promote its shortening brand Crisco, which contained a few well-done recipe pictures in color, without drawing attention to this particular feature (Field Splint 1926). Kuhn's book is more ambitious, insofar it is completely in color, comprising sixteen recipe pictures inside and four more

23 For an inspiring but unsystematic selection of further examples of food photography in color, see Bright 2017.

on the cover. It is to be noted, that the majority of these early publications in color were specialized cookbooks, which only contained few recipes that covered small fields of cooking, compared to the several hundreds of standard cookbooks. Put differently, it is cookbooks that are meant to be bought in addition to the ones which one already owned.

Fig. 7: Photograph of various rolls in The American Woman's Cook Book. *Double-page size: 25.1 × 20.1 cm.*



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GLUTEN BREAD

1 cake yeast
½ cup lukewarm water
2 cups scalded milk
1½ teaspoons salt
4 cups gluten flour
2 egg whites

Soften yeast in water. When milk is cool, add softened yeast, salt, gluten flour, a little at a time, and finally slightly beaten egg whites. The mixture should be of a consistency to drop from a spoon rather than to pour and should be baked in greased pans filled about half full. Follow general directions for rising (page 100). When light, bake in moderate oven (350° F.) 1 hour. If a less moist bread is desired, add enough white flour to make a dough, after beating in the gluten flour, and follow directions for straight dough method (page 99). Makes 2 loaves.

POTATO BREAD

1 cake yeast
½ cup lukewarm water
½ cup boiling water
1½ teaspoons salt
1 tablespoon sugar
1 tablespoon shortening
2 cups mashed potato
4 cups sifted flour (enough to make medium dough)

Combine in order given, following general directions for straight dough method (page 99). Makes 2 loaves.

ROLLED OAT BREAD

1 cup rolled oats
2 cups boiling water
½ to 1 cake yeast
½ cup lukewarm water
½ cup molasses
1½ teaspoons salt
1 tablespoon shortening, melted
4½ cups sifted flour

Combine rolled oats and boiling water, cover and let stand 1 hour. Soften yeast in lukewarm water. Add to cooled oats with molasses, salt and melted shortening. Add flour and let rise. When light beat thoroughly, place in greased bread pans, let rise again and bake as for white bread. For a less moist bread, add enough flour to make a medium dough and follow directions for straight dough method (page 99). Makes 2 loaves.

Source: Berolzheimer (1942): p. 106 and n.p.

As a special attraction that breaks up the usual series of black and white pictures, color photography soon also conquered general cookbooks, targeting a broad audience in large editions. Some of these publications follow a modified aesthetic in their color imagery, which has progressed significantly from *Käse -, Milch- & Rahmspeisen* and shows where food photography was heading. Regarding the texts, Ruth Berolzheimer's *American Woman's Cook Book* (1938) built on the cookbooks published by the recently defunct women's magazine *The Delineator*. Along with others, their black and white food photographs had championed an aesthetic, which has become so pervasive in food photographs, that it is hard to spot (Ruchatz 2017: 295; 2019: 224–225). The composition is determined by two principles. First, the table is not photographed frontally, but from an angle above, so that the objects on the table surface are not lined up horizontally or vertically but are arranged in slants or diagonals. Secondly, the photograph marks its cropped nature by deliberately creating cuts. It is not farfetched to assign an overarching message to these design elements. The impression suggested by the bleeds that the table goes on without limits is reinforced by the diagonals, which visually accentuate the depth extension of the pictorial space. In other words, the composition of the photograph expresses abundance.

The American Woman's Cookbook continues this aesthetic, blows up the size of the pictures to full page, frames the table scenes in close-up and uses color photography (fig. 7). The borderless arrangement of the image on the page transforms the page itself into a cutout, a window onto the culinary delights. The close-up allows the viewer to indulge in the textures, but leaves only a few objects intact, without being cut by the frame. And even the rolls which are left 'intact' reciprocally conceal parts of each other. Therefore, instead of identifying the objects, we are invited to explore the textures offered by the basket, the knife, the cake and the pastries. We are offered a close look at the environment of a laid coffee table, which leaves to imagination what happens outside the tightly cropped photo's margins. The dust cover advertises the merits of the cookbook's iconography, pointing out:

> The essential purpose of visual education is accomplished by hundreds of beautiful halftone photographs that explain … as words never can … just how to repeat in your own home the triumphs of culinary experts. And, by seeing the actual result delectably illustrated, often in glowing full color, you will be inspired to undertake new and interesting recipes that will add variety to your menus. (Berolzheimer 1942: back flap)

Here, the primacy of the sensual exploration of the visual is laid out for reader-viewers, who can become users after they indulged in the pictures, then checking the pictures for "how your food should look when it comes to the table" (Berolzheimer 1942: front flap). In the case of the *American Woman's Cook Book's* color plates the viewers will have to scour for the corresponding recipes, as these pictures lack a specific reference. If cookbooks still instruct how to cook, they enrich the reception with a visual experience that can lead back to the kitchen but can also be sufficient in itself. The feature introduced by the use of color is image information of unprecedented density, which allows a differentiated rendering of textures through color and thereby expands the field of photogenic foods. Interesting shades and contrasts become more salient than the clear shape and graphic structure. Eventually, it is not so much color itself which is at stake, but the complex play of textures which it permits: "The full-color illustrations in *The American Woman's Cook Book* reproduce with striking fidelity the tempting texture of nicely browned chicken, the appetizing hue of roast beef done to a turn, and the verdant crispness of leafy salads." (Berolzheimer 1942, n.p.)

3.3 The full picture

Fig. 8: Photograph of a paella in Life *January 31 1964. Double-page size: 53.4 × 35.5 cm.*

Source: Life (1964).

The large pages of *Life Magazine* (1964) are entirely taken up with a food photograph of a paella served in a black ceramic bowl (fig. 8). A narrow vertical strip of image on the far left of the double-page, takes the viewer even closer to the surface of the rice, on which minute saffron threads are visible that have already colored one half of the rice yellow. The main image, looking from the side, puts more focus on the seafood which always adds a touch of luxury to a paella. A shallow depth of field also creates the impression of a space virtually endless in depth, filled with paella. On the right, the tail of a shrimp protrudes beyond the edge of the bowl, opening the picture into the space of the viewer, where the small block of white type also seems to be situated, contrasting with the black of the bowl's glaze in the background. The close-up achieved by massive cropping brings the viewer's eye so close to the edible pictorial objects that the diverse textures of the crustaceans, mussels, and rice become tangible. In its interweaving of surface and depth, in its exciting distribution of colors, in its combination of side view and top shot, the picture is, however, also captivating in itself. In a publishing environment, saturated with advertisements vying for attention, producing full color double page spreads of food was one strategy to showcase the quality of the editorial content for which the subscribers actually paid.

The associated text, which encompasses the recipes for a complete menu formed around the depicted dish, as well as shopping and serving tips, contrasts with the image by its minuscule size alone, which forces the eye to move closer. Moreover, the recipes have to find the space between ads weighing on them from both sides in a visually dominant fashion so that it requires two double pages to conclude. On the previous page, the article on paella from January 1964 is announced as the first installment of a new series *Great Dishes of the World*, which is to be continued, if not in every number, at least once a month.

For the illustrated news magazine, the subject of food was so attractive because, in contrast to most other content, it readily translated into color photography. The initially significantly longer exposure times for color film (Boulouch 2011: 119; Schwartz 2020: 146, Timby 2015: 239) were not an obstacle for gastronomic 'still lives.' The more time-consuming processes of printing, which made color slow and expensive (Timby 2015: 237; Banham 2020: 453–454; Schwartz 2020: 146), were equally not an issue because the subject of food maintains a rather relaxed relationship to timeliness. Food photography, which is closely related to commercial product and advertising photography, also did not have the aesthetic reservations about color that occurred in photojournalism, for example (Timby 2015: 238). Lastly, color could be ideally controlled and shaped in the artificial studio situation (Schwartz 2020: 148). *Life* had already capitalized on this in the 1950s, at first irregularly running stories on cooking in its lifestyle department *Modern Living* (alongside fashion, gardening and interior design – all ideal color material), which were distinguished by large-format color images.[24] At the time, the competing organ *Look* was one step ahead in this respect and had already installed a weekly feature that combined recipes with lush color photography.

To continue my sequence of cookbooks with a magazine is justified because, as a neighboring print medium, it forms a relevant reference. Particularly in the U.S., high-circulation cookbooks were not infrequently published by women's magazines: *Delineator*, *Better Homes & Gardens*, *McCall's* or *Good Housekeeping* developed cookbooks at one time or another, which in some cases enjoyed numerous editions.[25] Likewise, the French fashion monthly *Elle*, US culinary magazine *Gourme*t or the illustrated news weekly *Life* have brought cookbooks to the market. That magazines have had an influence on the development of the cookbook has been suspected, but not substantiated in the aesthetics of the magazine issues. Lynette Hunter observes that the in-house cookbook publications, produced by the respective magazine's staff, pave the way for a new form of publication, in which "the 'author' becomes the design team" (1991: 152). Where "the picture has to carry the burden of telling the story"

24 Food photography in color occurred earlier in the advertisements than in the editorial content (Boulouch 2011: 87–90; Timby 2016: 236–237).

25 For an analysis of magazine's cookbooks from Britain see Hunter 1991: 142–146.

(Hunter 1991: 152), because simple "naturalistic" representations do not appeal to the buying public, recourse to a team of specialists had become mandatory (Hunter 1991: 144, 151–153). The result was cookbooks which did not mind to include deceptively illusionistic photographs which did not represent the recipe text. Concentrating on the production of the pictures, Hunter misses what happens on the page, though.

What puts the magazine aesthetically ahead of the cookbook is that it no longer conceives of food photography from the perspective of the recipe – because cookbooks remain collections of recipes in text and images – but dominantly, perhaps even exclusively, from the perspective of the photograph. Which recipes will be published in *Life* is not decided by the culinary excellence of the cuisine or the practicality of the recipe, but by its potential to produce a particularly spectacular image that can be stretched over at least a full page, or better yet, a double page. The text's treatment by the layout shows just how subordinate it is considered to be: While the recipe picture stands undividable on the double page, the recipe texts stretch over two to three double pages, because they have to share the space with advertisements.

The varying degrees of dominance of image over text was clearly evident when, in 1969, the recipe series *Great Dishes of the World* ended up in a book, that brought together a selection of 50 recipes from well over five years (Graves 1969). When the recipes enter the book, the recipe text nearly regains equality with the recipe picture. The opener for each recipe unit is again a pictorial double-page spread that nearly duplicates the one previously published in *Life*, but leaving the picture intact, while situating the dishes' name and introductory text in a white space, which delimits the image space on either side or at the bottom. Then follows a text double-page that unifies the associated recipe text, so that an impression of parity prevails.[26] In addition, the slightly smaller format of the book drains strength from the image, while it should be rather irrelevant to the text.[27] In the long run, however, the magazine has provided the cookbook with a model of how to successfully reverse the traditional hierarchy of recipe text and recipe picture. What the book could learn from the magazine was, first, to grant the individual picture at least as much room as the text and, secondly, to no longer print a recipe without a picture. Both of these principles gradually became standard in the cookbook sector in the 1970s and 1980s. The visually orchestrated recipe, which through the dimensions of the picture brings its textures as well as its color nuances into the spotlight, underscores the visual experience of the meal and sensitizes the eye to stimuli that it might previously have not known.

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26 This is sometimes counterbalanced by a small drawing signaling the end of the texts and acting as a page filler. The magazine version shows a similar feature, albeit with the vignettes situated in different positions inside the columns.

27 53.4 ×35.5 cm for the magazine, compared to 44.6 × 28.8 cm for the book.

3.4 The Sensuality of Gastro-Porn

Fig. 9: Photographs of String-bean salad *and* Hungarian cheese *in* Paul Bocuse's French Cooking. *Double-page size: 41 × 27.2 cm.*

Source: Bocuse 1977: n.p.

In 1976 Paul Bocuse published his signature cookbook *La cuisine du marché* under a title, that called for a simple and 'authentic' cuisine, built on fresh and local market produce.[28] As the French gastronomic movement *nouvelle cuisine* was just about to gain international recognition, it was only logical to quickly translate the first cookbook by a personality who acted as an international 'ambassador' for the French gastronomy and was arguably the most renowned representative of French *haute cuisine* of his time (Mognard: 191).[29] Just one year later a US edition became available under

28 The book, whose full French title *La cuisine du marché, en hommage à Alfred Guérot* makes reference to a chef of the 1930s, was, however, as French critics noted, rather traditional than innovative (Mognard 2012: 189), which should have worked in favor of its usability for amateur cooks.

29 Hunter observes a "re-emergence of 'great chef' cookbooks over the last ten to fifteen years" (1991: 151). It is true that in the 19th century some of the most prominent chefs, mostly of French origin, like Marie-Antoine Carême, Alexis de Soyer and Auguste Escoffier left a legacy by writing cookbooks. The aspiration to become a public figure (as an artist) had to materialize in literary production (Garval 2007). Since the *nouvelle cuisine*, cookbook publication

the less programmatic title *Paul Bocuse's French Cooking* (Bocuse 1977).[30] Its distinctive design had somewhat re-invented the book: It used colored paper of a dark brownish hue; the layout reserved a small column for the ingredient list, which left more free space emphasizing the paper's color; for the headlines and recipe names the typography employed a handwriting font, even including squiggles. In choosing a sober and fine font interspersed with bold headings in a fresh red tone and printed on white paper throughout, the French version (Bocuse 1976) had opted for a more modern, clear and simple look, fitting the *esprit* of *nouvelle cuisine*. Addressing a different market, the US publisher apparently decided to give the book (Bocuse 1977) a more traditional, pastoral (perhaps aristocratic?) and, to American eyes, more European appearance.

The iconography of the book only comprised "[t]hirty-two beautiful four-color photographs," depicting "Bocuse's regal specialties and show[ing] how he presents them at the table" (Bocuse 1977: front flap), a very modest number if set in relation to its roughly 1150 single recipes. The photographs are reproduced on glossy coated paper, to optimize their quality. Whereas the French version had inserted the plates into the text, in close proximity to their corresponding recipes, the American translation established a separate section right at the end of the book, just before the index, which incited the reader-viewers to flip through the unpaginated photographs. The pictures of the US translation are captioned with the title of the recipe and page reference. The recipe text, however, does not link back to the photographs, which implies their limited instructional interest. In the end, the compact photographic section should probably be seen as a visual condensation of the essence of Bocuse's cuisine. As it would have been hardly possible to provide a recipe picture for every recipe text anyway, this strategy of a radical reduction seems particularly well-considered.

The shots are cropped tightly, but rarely cut into the main dish. It is made obvious that the integrity of the culinary work of art is key for the photographic documentation. The serving context for the plates, which is constructed inside the picture space, looks surprisingly traditional – not *nouveau* at any rate – with old-fashioned silver ware, filled wine glasses and noble tablecloths in the leading role, sometimes alternating with a country kitchen look. In the case of the double page reproduced here (fig. 9), the chaotic structure of the *String-bean salad* contrasts playfully with the fine lace doily, the smooth green peppers of the *Hungarian cheese* stand out from the

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has again become key to a chef's standing. However, the importance of the literary is pushed back today, as all available media – text, photos, graphic elements, typography – are collectively geared towards documenting the culinary works of art and often also towards making the personality of the cook visible (Ruchatz 2017: 305).

30 To underline the importance of the publication, it must be mentioned that *La cuisine du marché* got translated – at least – into English, German, Italian, Spanish, Catalan, Dutch and Danish.

basket weave and the matte surface of the autumn maple leaves. The bright artificial illumination of the scenes is set up to induce highlights on reflecting objects, which helps to bring out the materiality of the dishes in the photographs. The layout design is simple. The photographs are all situated at the top of the page. The horizontal images leave nearly half of the page blank, only the vertical shots fill the pages, surrounded by a slim white frame. The continuous plate section allows the observation that the width of the picture varies slightly (between 17 and 20 cm) from picture to picture, giving each picture (and its dish) an individual treatment. Precisely because there are only a few images, they seem to be designed with particular care.

Bocuse's book is not alone in its decision to use color plates and do so sparingly. In French and German cookbooks of the time it is not uncommon to insert the recipe photographs this way (Ruchatz 2017: 297). What is more, the publications of Bocuse's *nouvelle cuisine* colleagues in the iconic series published by Robert Laffont, starring amongst others Michel Guérard, Alain Chapel, the Troisgros brothers and Roger Vergé, contented themselves as well with a very reduced color plate section, whereas, at the same time, some popular cookbooks already followed the policy that every recipe text needed to be complemented by a recipe picture.[31] The visual economy, reducing the amount of pictured dishes, seemed to be a characteristic of artful cuisine. Not to include any photographs would have, however, deprived the documentation of the culinary art of a core aspect. The photos' task is to represent the cuisine more than the particular recipes.[32]

For a history of the photograph in the cookbook, the iconography and the layout of *Paul Bocuse's French Cooking* do not make it an obvious choice, as the publication presents itself first and foremost as a literary achievement. It is not coincidental that Bocuse recommends to view his book "first as a novel to be read for enjoyment." (Bocuse 1977: ix) This makes it all the more amazing, that this very publication is reputed to have started the metaphorical equation of food pictures with pornography. Ann McBride (2010: 38) traces the first use of the porn metaphor back to a cookbook review in the 1977 Christmas issue of the *New York Review of Books*, in which Bocuse's book figures among the twelve publications discussed. This instance provides an adequate ending for an inquiry into the evolving status of photographic recipe pictures, since it motivates us to rethink the – visual – sensuality of the picture in connection with the sensuality of eating laid out in the recipe.

Reviewer Alexander Cockburn rants about *Paul Bocuse's French Cooking*:

31 An early example is the *Hamlyn All Colour Cook Book* (1970), advertising "over 300 quick and easy recipes all illustrated in full colour" on its cover. The dustjacket of the 1990 printing claims that "over 2,000,000 copies" had already been sold.

32 For example, the *String-bean salad*, as shown in fig. 9, was mentioned by famed culinary critics Henri Gault and Christian Millau as a revelatory experience with regard to the foundation of the *nouvelle cuisine* (Drouard 2010: 108).

> It turns out really that the book is not actually a guide to practical cooking but rather a costly exercise ($20.00) in gastro-porn. Now it cannot escape attention that there are curious parallels between manuals on sexual techniques and manuals on the preparation of food; the same studious emphasis on leisurely technique, the same apostrophes to the ultimate, heavenly delights. True gastro-porn heightens the excitement and also the sense of the unattainable by proffering colored photographs of various completed recipes. […] The delights offered in sexual pornography are equally unattainable. Roland Barthes made an equivalent point about ornamental cookery in *Mythologies* […]. (Cockburn 1977: 18)

That the "cuisine ornementale," which had struck Barthes in the pages of a 1955 issue of *Elle* magazine (Barthes 2010 [1957]: 148–153), is now found in a cookbook, confirms the abovementioned model role of the magazine. From Barthes Cockburn borrows the verdict of 'unattainability.' However, quoting the unavailability of crayfish and black truffles in the US to validate his harsh judgement, is not a sound argument. Of course, some recipes require ingredients like truffles, foie gras or crayfish which might not only be hard to procure, but prohibitively expensive for most. Still, the vast majority of the hundreds of recipes are highly accessible, like the vegetable dishes reproduced above (fig. 9), crêpes or waffles, which had likewise received treatment in the plate section. By stating the literary objective of his cookbook, which Cockburn refers to mockingly, Bocuse had already given some sort of 'directions of use.' To accord with the concept of a *cuisine du marché*, he proposes to start reading in his book "to whet [one's] appetite" (Bocuse 1977: ix) (or to get 'aroused,' as Cockburn might have it), subsequently visit the local market and only then choose a recipe, starting from the produce factually obtained. That the lack of certain ingredients could require an adjustment of a recipe is already factored in: the user need not be "a slave to the book," but make use of "a certain margin of maneuver and […] of fantasy" (Bocuse 1977: xiii), while keeping to the spirit. Bluntly, Cockburn derides nouvelle cuisine's claims to respect the authenticity and purity of the ingredients. The politics of *nouvelle cuisine* had primarily to do with the "history of publicity and the demands of the French tourist and restaurant industry rather than with gastronomy" (Cockburn 1977: 17).[33] Indeed, Cockburn seems to oppose any kind of refined cooking, considered by him as out of touch with reality, and finds it particularly despicable when it becomes a "solipsistic ritual" in the bourgeois household. Somewhat paradoxically, gastro-porn is criticized as publicity for and symptom of an ostensibly self-serving cooking practice.

Let us finally return to the pictures, however, and start from the alleged 'gastro-porn' photographs to illuminate the relation between recipe picture, recipe text and

33 It could be surmised, that the contrived layout of the US edition might have fueled Cockburn's accusation of elitism more than the original French one would have, but Michel Guérard's *La cuisine minceur* is greeted with similar disdain.

the cookbook. If, for Cockburn, 'porn' extends also to the language of the 'manuals' – but do sex manuals actually equal pornography? – it is the photographs which get special attention: "True gastro-porn" required photographs of "completed recipes," because this "heightens the excitement and also the sense of the unattainable" (Cockburn 1977: 18, see above). The ambivalence, implied in the terminology of 'porn,' becomes evident. On the one hand, talking of 'porn' grants the recipe picture a sensual appeal of its own, which transgresses the verbal recipe text, characterizing it as site of pleasure. The recipe text does not have the same capacity to evoke affect and sensual pleasure as its visible materialization in the photographed dish of the recipe picture. On the other hand, the pleasure triggered is no more than ersatz, because the meal viewed remains materially unattainable for the viewer. With the identification of food photography with 'porn,' the image's power visually to evoke a sensual reality, which transcends vision, is acknowledged, but at the same time culturally devalued, not only as despicable, but even worse, as a deceptive illusion, which lays bare how strongly the viewers crave the – if only vicarious – excitement of their gustatory desires.

Based on this premise, every pictorial presentation of food could count as pornographic, as it materializes for the eyes something that is materially unattainable. To be more specific, the critique of food pornography generally presupposes that the difference between visual presence and material unavailability does not only exist in principle but is reinforced by deliberate efforts. On the one hand, this entails a pictorial aesthetic which strengthens the visual impression of presence, e.g. by introducing color, framing food in close-ups, lighting the dishes to render their texture and suggest their haptic qualities. On the other hand, the material unattainability can be supplemented with a social one, when the dish cannot be prepared, because required ingredients or cooking skills clearly exceed what is usually accessible. It is precisely this discrepancy that Cockburn observes in the photographs of Bocuse's recipes.

From a different point of view, the very aestheticization of the food photo could be seen as merely an extension of the habitual perceptive practices involved in eating. Given that the experience of eating is essentially synaesthetic, flavor is always conditioned and pre-figured by the external appearance of the food to be consumed. Inversely, the gustatory experience is itself prone to produce associated imaginary images (Boutaud 2012: 86–88). Thus, the visual aspect of food is not an extraneous and artificial addition but a natural and integral part of its complex sensory experience.[34] In the first place, it is therefore the synaesthetic interrelation of sensory impressions that allows to create pictures evoking the multi-sensory experience of food. The representation of food in any picture medium, therefore, does not need to

34 That said, it is the malleability of this relation of the visible with the other senses which is frequently addressed by ambitious chef's to showcase their creativity (Boutaud 2012: 86, 90–91).

be restricted to an external view of the dish, but may infer the full sensory experience, by activating the viewers:

> The image has no shortage of expressive resources for staging, activating and vibrating this aesthetic world of flavor. It emerges from light, contrasts, colors, shapes, positions and orientations – in other words, from a compositional play that doesn't simply reproduce the external image of an object, but manifests, above all, our sensory relationship to it through a dominant sensory modality that orients the others. (Boutaud 2016: 222, my transl.)[35]

The food image does not simply address vision, but only takes the eye as a point of entry to access the other senses. As Boutaud remarks, food images stage not so much the food itself as the sensual relationship to it, inviting viewers to enter into a perceptual position which oscillates between viewing the picture as an object and gazing through it at the culinary object depicted. The impulse to enter in such a sensory relationship depends, of course, on the picture's design. Earlier aesthetics of the recipe photograph, following the engravings of the 19th century, were not well equipped to model sensory experiences and had to stay on the 'sculpted' surface of the objects, first and foremost due to unsurmountable technical limitations. If at all, it was the words of the recipe text which had to stimulate the sensory imagination. The compositional pattern with dynamic diagonals and expressive cropping, coming into use in the 1930s, however, activated viewers to move beyond the frame and imagine the photograph's 'off.' Eventually, the introduction of color photography was quintessential to capture the haptic qualities of food, which was brought to the fore even more in extreme close-up shots. These options for stimulating synaesthetic perception largely contributed to turning the photograph into an essential component of the recipe and the cookbook.

These sensual recipe pictures do not just illustrate a recipe, prefiguring for potential users what the result of a cooking effort should look like, but draw viewers into the sensory world, which the cookbook conjures with its particular style and choice of recipes. In an instant, recipe pictures can establish a *sensory* relation not only with the book (as an object), but with the food the recipes envision. As port of access, recipe photographs have become indispensable for the cookbook of the past 50 years.[36] The photograph section in *Paul Bocuse's French Cooking*, if very brief and

35 Inside the 'gustative image,' Boutaud (2012: 87–88, 2016: 206) distinguishes three interacting levels: the image of the flavor (*saveur*), which is his truly innovative category; the image of the food object (*aliment*); the image of the context (*scène alimentaire*).

36 It might be added that some cookbooks deliberately opt for line drawings (Irma Rombauer's *The Joy of Cooking* being a notable case [Mendelson 2003: 204–208, 268–270]), which connect the viewer to the food less through the evocation of its sensual properties, but by offering an –

relegated to the end of the book, is therefore instrumental in inviting reader-viewers into the world of the chef's *nouvelle cuisine*. Whether reader-viewers eventually switch to 'using' the recipes, has become more and more secondary, owing to the pictures' conveyance of multiple sensory registers tied to a dish thereby creating a self-sufficient experience. As we have seen, Bocuse ascribed his cookbook a double function: to be read as culinary literature (and, I would add: to be viewed as a photobook) and to be used as a set of cooking instructions. Some recent publications strive to go one step further and pretend that the cookbook can do its work without any 'bla bla.' The distribution of colors and surface textures, as offered by their new food photography constitutes a visual spectacle of its own kind. It remains to be discussed then, whether the sensual experience of recipe pictures remains unconditionally bound to the sensual experience of the food or whether they have already managed to create an aesthetic sphere of their own.

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Food and the Senses in Film

Laura Lindenfeld and Fabio Parasecoli

> Good food is like music you can taste, color you can smell. There is excellence all around you. You only need to be aware to stop and savor it.
> *Chef Gusteau, Ratatouille*

Abstract *As food has acquired greater prominence – not only in film but across a range of visual media – its representation has evolved as well: we see a growing emphasis on and further refinement of the textures, surfaces, light and sounds connected with cooking; eating elicits even stronger physical reactions in spectators, ranging from salivation to hunger, from desire to disgust. This attention to materiality intensifies the effect of realism to the limit of hyperrealism, with extreme close ups, enhanced glistening on ingredients and dishes, and amplified sound effects. In this essay we explore this intensification and consider how the shift toward the food film as a genre in and of its own right has changed, highlighting the vicarious nature of sensory consumption even further.*

1. From the Grotesque to the Sublime – A Short History of Food in Film

Aside from precursors such as *La Grande Bouffe* (Ferreri 1873), the food film has fully developed into a genre in its own right since the second half of the 1980s. Works such as *Tampopo* (Jûzô Itami 1985), *Babette's Feast* (1987) and T*he Cook, the Thief, His Wife, and Her Lover* (Greeneway 1989) launched a new phase in the representation of food in film. Shortly after, we see the full emergence of the genre in *Like Water for Chocolate* (Arau 1992) and *Eat Drink Man Woman* (Lee 1994), which introduced a new visual language to represent food, a shift representing an extension food photography adapted to the moving image. This body of films established conventions, camera movements, lighting and sound effects that have been described as 'food porn,' which, according to Erin Metz McDonnell, is "a set of visual aesthetics that emphasizes the pleasurable, sensual dimensions of food, derived from (but not actually employed in) human sexuality" (2016: 239). In film, the metaphor is particularly apt because this approach often used techniques widely applied in the porn industry (Kaufman 2005), from extreme close ups to the 'disembodiment' of body parts or the use of water mist and other tricks to increase the glistening qualities of skin.

Why and how the food film genre develops at this point of time has been a question that we have considered as scholars (Lindenfeld/Parasecoli 2016: 13–17). In our previous work, we recognized that food moved into the foreground, becoming a protagonist in its own right and not just functioning as a narrative or descriptive tool that enhances the realism of the action or the characters. Food acquired its own kind of narrative agency in film: its sensuous nature, its quality, and the emotional experiences connected with it affect the human characters who relate to it and often define their identity in relation to what they produce, cook, and eat. In fact, the protagonists are often professional chefs, domestic cooks, or people who, for various reasons, maintain a strong connection to food. Anne Bower points not only to the camera's attention, but also to settings like restaurants, private and professional kitchens, and domestic living rooms as key sites of representation (2004: 6). Cynthia Baron draws attention to an increasing number of scenes revolving around food and the order in which they appear in the narrative (Baron 2006: 103). Moreover, both critics and audiences now use the category, which has grown to include fiction film, animation, and documentaries, in describing this kind of film.

Since we first began exploring the evolution of this genre, we have seen food become even more stylized and central as a narrative force. Food has acquired greater prominence across a range of visual media; film has greatly contributed to this rapidly evolving ecology, especially in terms of a greater emphasis on movement and sound, and their potential to enhance textural and haptic elements that go beyond what still photography can provide. Together with growing attention to light and the way it plays on moving surfaces, representations of cooking and eating elicit even stronger physical reactions in spectators, ranging from salivation to hunger, from desire to disgust. This focus on materiality intensifies the effect of realism to the limit of hyperrealism, with extreme close ups, enhanced glistening on ingredients and dishes, and amplified sound effects. In this essay we explore this intensification and consider how the shift toward the food film as a genre in and of its own right has changed, highlighting the vicarious nature of sensory consumption even further.

At the same time, research on multisensory eating experiences that add haptic, aural, and smell elements to food consumption has stimulated filmmakers,' artists,' and critics' interest in the interaction of different senses around food and the potential of new technologies to heighten such experiences to involve spectators not as mere receivers but as co-creators (Velasco/Obrist 2020: 4). Well beyond Aldous Huxley's imagination of multisensory cinema in *Brave New World* and the 1960s attempts at Smell-O-Vision, current research strives to integrate different kinds of physical stimuli such as temperature, movements, and even pain not just as add-ons but as constitutive story-telling elements designed into the narrative from the get go (Velasco/Obrist 2018). The popularity of food films and other food-related visual media is also connected with the growing interest of the younger generations towards food not only as a form of self-expression in social media but also as an element of community identities and as a political topic, above all in terms of sustainability and justice (Surace 2022).

Food films now originate in very different cultures from around the world, each with their specific connections with gastronomy and eating. However, the global success and the international circulation of such films suggest that audiences' interest is based on a shared experience rooted in the body, its sensory world, and its relationship with food beyond cognitive and discursive elements. Aida Roldán-García (2020: 40) argues that the emphasis on embodiment and alternative modalities of connection to the moving image can foster a more open, less judgmental way to relate to the Otherness, as the sensory engagement with food tends to help viewers to identify with the life experience of characters from other cultures. We also cannot help but think that the COVID-19 epidemic invited viewers to transfer their experiences of dining out – or even dining together – onto representations on screens, a further displacement from communal eating toward vicarious visual feasts, where viewers can enjoy the consumption of food in all its glory through highly polished, evocative images and sounds.

In this article, we examine works that present and define themselves as film, regardless of their length or their medium, which includes movie theaters, Blue Rays and DVDs, streaming services, or hand-held devices even if the impact and effectiveness of cinematic specificities on viewers' experience, such as surround sound and communal spectatorship, are obviously limited. After the brief introductory examination of the rise of food film as a genre, we discuss different theories of how food invites interactions with viewers' senses. We then move to the analysis of more recent food films, focusing on animated movies as a case study.

2. Senses and Food on Film

The embodied experience of consuming food films invites us to consider what happens off screen in spectators' bodies as they watch a movie. It also asks us to consider the qualities and characteristics of the images (Sobchack 2004, 59–60). In this section we explore how film theory has examined the off-and-on screen dimensions of virtual food consumption. This brief literature review also suggests that food and taste are quite often marginalized in such reflections, while great attention is dedicated to touch or, as it is usually referred to, the haptic. As Roldán-García states, "a haptic image is one that seeks to erase the distance between spectator and film by capturing objects from extremely close perspectives, so the viewer can appreciate physical textures of the portrayed objects [...] Haptics take the audience's experience beyond the mere visual by resorting to physical reactions" (2020: 39). Moreover, the haptic aspects of the cinematic experience can be amplified by sound and the way the camera moves closer to or further away from food and the characters that cook or consume it.

The body, with its physiological and affective reactions, reemerges as an important site for examination in film theory. According to phenomenological approaches to embodiment, communication in and through film is effective only because it is built on "shared structures of embodied experiences" (Elsaesser & Hagener 2015: 127) that are activated in the spectator's bodies before any cognitive process or emotional involvement. The starting point for such investigations is the human sensorium, which, in Angela Ndalianis's words "refers both to the sensory mechanics of the human body, but also to the intellectual and cognitive functions connected to it" (2012: 16).

Since the early 1990s, film and media theories, particularly those grounded in feminist thought, have tended to focus on the body itself in movie-watching as part of a broader reexamination of the primacy of vision over the other senses, often interpreted as an expression of patriarchal ways to be in the world (Marks 2000; Shaviro 1993; Crary 1992). Linda Williams described horror, porn and melodrama as "body genres" (1991: 2): centered respectively on violence and pain, sex and pleasure, romance and emotions, they allow spectators to experience "sensations that are on the verge of respectable" (1991: 2). According to Williams, the mechanism through which such experiences take place is the involuntary mimicry on the part of the viewers of the emotions and sensations performed by characters on screen. Until this body of scholarship emerged, the body tended to be ignored as the site where visual and audio representations landed.

Referring to food films such as *Babette's Feast*, *Like Water for Chocolate*, and *Big Night,* Vivian Sobchack (2004) drew attention to the centrality of the spectators' bodies in the cinema experience as "cinesthetic subjects." Viewers are able to experience the more visceral and tactile aspects of film through two characteristics of the human sensorium: synaesthesia, the exchange of feelings among the senses and with language, and coenaesthesia, the "prelogical and nonhierarchical unity of the sensorium" (Sobchack 2004: 69) that spectators experienced as their sensory at birth before any organization of stimuli shaped by culture and practice. The emphasis on embodiment drew attention to haptic perception, which Laura Marks describes as "the combination of tactile, kinesthetic, and proprioceptive functions, the way we experience touch both on the surface of and inside our bodies. In haptic visuality, the eyes themselves function like organs of touch." (2002: 2)

The sensorium, however, is never isolated from viewing habits that are actively learned through cinema technology and memories that accrue over time, reflecting specific contexts (Stephens 2012). The viewer's experience cannot be separated from the on-screen aspects of cinema. Their multisensory perceptions constantly, actively, and creatively interact with the narrative and stylistic components of the film through visual and aural elements such as camera work and sound design. The audiovisual elements of mimetic images are meant to elicit multisensory reactions in spectators that involve other bodily experiences, such as flavor, touch, proprioception, and movement (Antunes 2016). Tiago de Luca argues that the long take, in particular, allows spectators to explore the physical reality of the fictional world of the film through the embodied experiences of the characters that inhabit it (2014: 11).

The improvement of film technology and the availability of digital tools alongside their integration in viewers' daily experience of food, and the increased use of professional video and photography in food and drink business to stimulate sharing among users and greater sales has upped the ante for cinematic representations of food and eating (Cankul et al. 2021). We see this along with the shift toward augmented and virtual reality. Agnes Peth observes that a cinematic experience of food "can no longer be connected exclusively to films seen at the cinema, but can also be found in video installations, new media art, or in a variety of 'vernacular' forms enabled by these new, accessible digital technologies" (2015: 1).

This brief literature review indicates great interest in the sensory aspects of cinema and the bodily experiences of spectators, with a particular focus on genres such as horror (Barker 2009; Hanich 2010; Ndalianis 2012), and porn (Stella 2020; Ryberg 2015; Groda 2009). However, very little theoretical reflection about the senses extends to food films, which are instead widely examined from psychoanalytical, symbolic, and narrative points of view that at times seem to bracket the materiality of what is represented on screen and its sensory relations with the bodies of film characters and spectators (Novielli 2021; Kostopoulou 2020). We argue that it is necessary to expand Williams' 'body genre' approach to include food films, as they also elicit physical reactions in viewers. James Keller, for instance, evoked the 'cinematic hunger,' a full sensory response that filmmakers are capable of stimulating through the manipulation of gustatory imagery: "Food cinema thus invokes the gustatory appetite in a fashion similar to the arousal of the libido through romantic and sexual imagery, accessing the full sensory experience of the actor and, subsequently and vicariously, of the audience." (2006: 1)

Taking the body as a starting point, how then might we consider the evolution of food films and the ways in which they invite sensory engagement? In the following pages we look at a number of more recent food films, focusing on animated films as a case study, to consider how viewers' bodies are invited to participate in the virtual consumption of food.

3. Where is the Body? Moving from the First Food Films to Contemporary Cases

When we consider the earlier food films, we see a noticeable shift toward the sexualization or glorification of food. As the genre evolves, the films representations of food become more and more visceral, and the viewer is invited to an ever more immersive experience of consumption. This shift in tone and style heightens opportunities for more intense sensory experiences.

As we move into the 1990s and beyond, we see an evolution in how food films represent food and eating. In the early 2010s, sensual representations of food and food porn stylistic elements appeared also in documentaries that focus on the work of famous chefs, such as *Three Stars* (Drei Sterne – Die Köche und die Sterne, Hachmeister 2010), *A Matter of Taste: Serving Up Paul Liebrandt* (Rowe 2011), *El Bulli: Cooking in Progress* (Wetzel 2011), *Jiro Dreams of Sushi* (Gelb 2011), and *Step up to the Plate* (Entre les Bras, Lacoste 2012) (Parasecoli, 2016). These documentaries have provided a template for food documentary series that have enjoyed great success on streaming platforms, including *Chef's Table* and *High on the Hog*. The appeal of sensual images of food and eating has recently extended to films that do not fall under the food film genre per se, but in which nevertheless food plays a central role; we can mention *First Cow* (Kelly Reichardt 2019) and the Academy Award winning *Parasite* (Bong Joon-ho 2019). The case of animated movies is particularly interesting in examining the foregrounding of food as a character in food films and the growing role the sensory dimension plays in them. The visual and haptic approaches and the narrative dynamics that have supported the development and broadening success of food film as a genre are purposely recreated through technological means that mimic camera work.

Animated films that were released in the second half of the 2000s show a visible shift in how food is represented. Using sophisticated graphic technology, *Bee Movie* (Hickner and Smith 2007), *Kung Fu Panda* (Osborne and Stevenson 2008), *The Tale of Despereaux* (Fell and Stevenhagen 2008), and *Cloudy with a Chance of Meatballs* (Lord and Miller 2009) represented ingredients and dishes with precision and attention to detail so they stand out as realistic elements in the films' fictional worlds, even when animal and human characters are more whimsically drawn. Accuracy in the visual description of edible matter obviously signals its relevance in the plot and in the protagonists' individual stories. These cartoons present the same extreme close-ups of food, amplified sounds, and attention to the textures of ingredients that characterize the food film genre. For example, in *Bee Movie* the glistening and transparent honey drips, flows, and whirls in ways that accurately mimic the real substance. The dumplings and soups in *Kung Fu Panda* are luscious, with vapors that stimulate spectators to relive their own smell and texture experiences.

Released in the same period, *Ratatouille* (Bird 2007) is the film that takes the sensorium most seriously. The subsurface light scattering and new CG techniques make the dishes appear translucent, appetizing, and realistic. According to a promotional podcast, graphic simulations were conducted on pictures of actual dishes prepared in the studio so that artists could make food relax and drape on itself, while great attention was paid to the textural and optical qualities of steam, heat waves of various intensities, and simmering sauces (Pixar 2007). During Remy the rat's first visit to a fine dining restaurant kitchen, besides swift and dramatic movements connected with the cooks' activities, sounds of whooshing flames, sizzling pans, knives chopping ingredients on cutting boards all contribute to the viewers' sensory experience, wrapping them up in a dynamic barrage of visual and aural stimuli. Ratatouille even experiments with the graphic representation of the internal sensory experience of Remy he tastes and pairs a piece of cheese and a strawberry: the background fades to black, and at each bite burst of shapes and colors pop up and disappear in synch with music with different moods, rhythms and instruments, causing the rat to smile blissfully. When he combines the two ingredients together, lively music, a colorful background, and explosions of colorful shapes point to a qualitatively, richer, more stimulating and satisfying experience. Later in the story, Remy manages to share his inner world experience of food with his brother, who implicitly stands in for viewers and their participation in the rat's gustatory (including olfactive) discoveries. In this case the movie shifts from realistic images toward abstract, but still accessible, representations of individual perceptions of flavors and aromas. By doing so, the film explores the synesthetic potential of images and sounds to convey other categories of gustatory sensations such as flavors, smells, and textures (Ransom 2021).

Ratatouille and the other food-centered animated movies that were produced in the US and released around the same period have established recurring tropes in terms of narratives, topics, and use of the sensory that continue to shape the genre, as more recent examples indicate. Many of such movies appear to focus on Asian culinary culture; such interest may be partly a consequence of the mainstreaming of Asian cuisines in US, partly the reflection of the desire of inclusiveness and multiculturality; moreover, all these Asian-themed films hinge on the same central theme, which the filmmakers may easily project on Asian cultures: food as the core of family ties or, at least, a crucial component in human connections. These topics appear less central in food-centered anime, as indicated by series such as *Oishinbo*, *Food Wars!: Shokugeki no Soma*, and *Silver Spoon*, which highlight instead various forms of somewhat obsessive foodism, competitiveness in showcasing culinary skills, and inflexible motivation toward professional success. From a visual point of view, such series explore food textures and the gustatory experiences of their characters in modalities that also emerge in full length animation films such as Hayao Miyazaki's 2001 masterpiece *Spirited Away*.

Bao (Domee Shi 2018), which won the 2019 Academy Award for Best Animated Short Film, moves between realism and imagination. The story is about a woman that fills her lonely life with cooking, until a bao dumpling she makes takes life and an anthropomorphic shape; she nourishes and cares for it. As the bao grows, it starts acting like a teenager. To pacify it, the woman cooks a whole meal; yet, it refuses her food, which she ends up eating all by herself in anger. When the ungrateful bite-size creature decides to leave with a woman, she ingests it in a fit of rage. We eventually realize that the bao was a personification of his estranged son (whose head is weirdly shaped as a bao), who at the end of the movie reappears, bringing desserts that they consume together, trying to recreate their bond. In the last scene we see the son trying unsuccessfully to close a bao while his girlfriend proves – to everybody's delight – to be very good at it. The whole family is reunited again around the table and food.

The eight-minute short is filled with very sensual and realistic representations of Chinese delicacies. It starts with a close up of hands kneading elastic down over a wood board covered in flour; the dough is then shaped, cut in small pieces, and flatted into small disks to make *bao* dumplings. The stuffing is also very realistically rendered also in the way it moves as the hands close the dumplings. They are then steamed in bamboo trays and brought to the table. The accuracy with which the different steps of bao making are depicted and the details of the ingredients contrasts with the human characters, who are much less true to life. This becomes particularly apparent when, in the opening sequence, we see just hands making *baos*: the food is represented much more realistically than the human body, also in terms of surfaces and light reflection. The cooking and the dish are accurately drawn, with liquids and vapors perfectly represented, their textures glistening, their movement accurately reproduced, the sounds of kneading, chopping, sealing, and steaming the *baos*, adding to the overall sensory experience. Even the little *bao* never loses its traits as an edible object, although the woman and the *bao* interact like humans. When he stumbles and falls, it flattens its head and the woman has to add filling to it to bring it back to its normal shape. The precision of the food depictions support both the realism and the absurdity of the short, which both operate to highlight the centrality of family values and food's capacity to both express contrasts and to reinforce bonds.

The same themes dominate *Let's Eat* (Dixon Wong 2020), winner at the 2020 Los Angeles Asian Film Festival. In the short film, Chinese food embodies the tension between an immigrant mother and her daughter, who grows up in a different world. A way for the mother to confirm her identity, food is central to the family relationship and is representative with extreme accuracy. As the daughter grows, she refuses her mother's cuisine together with her culture. The food the mother lovingly prepares, which the daughter leaves untouched on the table, is represented in detail. Food also turns into a symbol of the crisis in the relationship. One day the daughter comes back home to find her mother unconscious; we do not see her, but we see instead a pot of stock boiling over, with realistic effects of the vapors pushing up the lid and the liquid dripping on the side of the pot and onto the stove. The sickness brings the two close again: the daughter feeds her mother while she is lying in the hospital bed. In the end, she will embrace Chinese cooking to express her love for her own little daughter. The same dishes she shared with her mother reappear on the family table, with the same luscious textures and attention to details that advanced 3D animation allows. The realism of the food is not just used to make viewers salivate or desire Chinese choking: the sensory involvement is meant to increase the emotional impact of the story.

In the full-length Netflix film *Over the moon* (Glen Keane and John Kahrs 2020), food is once again leveraged to convey the closeness between a mother and a daughter, and the daughter's grief when her mother passes away. In fact, her attachment to her mother's food brings her to refuse all attempts from her father's new partner to also use her own food to get close to her. The protagonists' family business is a mooncake shop in a traditional village. In one of the opening scenes, the images painstakingly describe the process of mooncake making: we see the traditional objects, the hands movement, the consistency and texture of the dough, and the stuffing up close from the girl's point of view, accompanied by a song that explains the various steps of the preparation. The sensory realism of the sequence is enhanced by details such as specks of dough sticking to a rolling pin and the vapors from the baked mooncakes swift out the shop onto the street where passersby visibly inhale them. The same attention to the materiality of food comes through when the whole family comes together to celebrate the Mid-Autumn festival around a festive table full of dishes that the young protagonist messes up to express her frustration. As the girl embarks on a trip to the moon, the food slowly moves to the background of the narration to reappear in the end. At the following Mid-Autumn festival the family gathers for dinner again, but now that the young girl has accepted her new stepmother and her son as a brother, she can enjoy food again, which reappears in all its glory. Viewers learn that "the circle of the mooncake is the symbol of a family coming together." The dessert expresses traditional skills, cultural identity, and family values, all represented as core elements of the Chinese community. The ethnic family dynamics are shown almost as exemplary, using the somewhat familiar but still exotic food to both titillate appetites and to draw global audiences into a culture that they may otherwise feel excluded from.

The tryptic East Asian culture – family values – replete with luscious culinary spectacles has become a trope of animated movies with Asian protagonists, even when food is not the main protagonist. In both *Wish Dragon* (Chris Appelhans 2021), an East Asian take on the Middle Eastern Aladdin lamp story (via the Disney adaptation), and *Turning Red* (Domee Shi 2022) food preparation and consumption in the family are used as a symbol of close family ties, and dishes are depicted with greater attention to sensory details than other elements in the story. A *Turning Red* sequence in which the protagonist's father cooks dinner has the same accuracy of movements, textures, and light as a famous scene from Ang Lee's *Eat, Drink, Man, Woman,* where another father also cooks for his daughters to tighten emotional ties he feels are loosening. The camera still frames the family home exterior when viewers hear the sounds of knives at work. In the next shot, a shiny cleaver cuts a head of lettuce, droplets flying everywhere. Then a red chili pepper is thinly chopped and thrown dramatically into a sizzling wok, followed by a squirt of soy sauce. The movement, lighting, and sound of the ingredients being sauteed in the cooking vessel, together with very appetizing-looking pork belly slices, make viewers feel like they are in the kitchen. Even the salt falls into the food accompanied by an almost heavenly chime. Pixar is fully aware of the attention the food in the film attracted. They released the video *Mei from Turning Red Makes Congee* in the *Cooking with Pixar* series (Pixar 2022). *Turning Red*'s production designer Rona Liu said in an interview:

> The design inspiration we kept referring to was 'chunky cute.' So it's like, things have to be thicker, rounder, beefier. Instead of going for realism, the shape of everything has to be a little bit rounder, a little more simplified. Leaves can't have a thousand different turns and folds. It has to be cute. From *Bao*, we learned a lot about the textural and light response to the food – the shape can be stylized, but the shading response has to be realistic. Meat needs to look like meat, the way the light passes through the leaves has to look real, in order for the viewers to have the connection that this is food. The key ingredient is the oily gloss that we put over everything. (Saxena 2022)

In sum, representations of food in animated movies from the mid 2000s display increasing attention to the senses and materiality. It is a phenomenon that critics and scholars have not explored beyond the examination of *Ratatouille*. Nevertheless, we deem it significant. Highlighting the haptic attributes of food is likely to introduce young viewers to the contemporary aesthetics of food in kid-friendly ways that prepare them for the glorified images they will experience as adults, when they become consumers of food television, movies, magazines, and websites, as well as co-producers of food-centric social media. At the same time, the visuals appeal to adult food enthusiasts, widening the audience base for the animated films. The oversized presence of culinary delights in Asian-themed movies is so pervasive to almost constitute its own subgenre. On the one hand, these films appear to take advantage of both the growing popularity and familiarity of Asian culinary cultures and the glorification of food that has become central to contemporary consumers' culture in high-income countries. On the other hand, they present themselves as focused on tradition and family values that seem in opposition with Western culture, indirectly represented as shallow and lacking human connections. Is it a case of the dynamic that bell hooks described as "eating the other" (1992)? Is consumerist food culture trying to find salvation in ethnic communities from any accusation of lack of depth?

4. The Senses in Food Film and the Food Media Ecology

The case study of animated films indicates how the sensory dimension has come to the forefront in food films as a genre, following changes in the way food and eating are represented on screen. Advanced digital technologies in making, showing, and watching movies, as well as new approaches in filming and editing, allow for haptic and aural aspects to be blended with visual ones, generating shifts in storytelling and providing more immersive experiences for spectators. These developments are connected with the growing porosity of film as a medium, which is increasingly integrated with a sprawling ecology that includes visual media ranging from video to photography. Users can now consume similar content through different media on appliances as diverse as computers to TVs, tablets, and smartphones. Cinema screens are now just another component of this communication ecosystem.

This meshing of disparate media accelerated during the COVID-19 crisis, when cinemas had to close and the movie industry took to launching new films directly on streaming platforms. Visual social media such as YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok have made food representations even more accessible and popular, well beyond the success that food TV shows enjoyed from the late 1990s. To catch viewers' attention, which has turned into a marketable asset, media producers have progressively leveraged food's immediacy and its growing popularity as a marker of individual and collective identities. Moreover, they have embraced and amplified the sensory features of food representations to increase the appeal of their visual products. Film has inevitably adopted many of these communication strategies, which spectators have grown used to especially when the COVID-19 pandemic forced many to give up restaurants and other forms of social consumption of food to focus on their own cooking in their private kitchens. Deprived of varied eating experiences, consumers turned to vicarious consumption with a vengeance.

Food's growing presence in social media, deeply entangled with commercial enterprises geared towards marketing and monetization, inevitably has had an impact on film, in particular the food film genre. Against this background, food's visual consumption is not simply a surrogate of sensual experiences of flavors and aromas to which spectators do not have physical access. It rather constitutes an act of ingestion that shapes and conditions not only our enjoyment of media but also our sense of taste alongside the actual food we consume. Food representations alter the way we speak, think, and act around food, generating long-term trends and short-term fads that in turn have an impact on food business and the media industry, including cinema. We suggest that we cannot think of the consumption of food on screen and actual ingestion as totally separate. Our enjoyment of food images in film, made more engaging and intense through recourse to multisensory dimensions, makes us hungry for 'real food,' just as 'real food' makes us hunger for mediated images of food.

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Picturing Food

Sense and Sensuality of Culinary Content on Social Media

Marie Schröer

Abstract *Food content is among the most popular topics on Instagram; the so-called FoodTok is becoming more and more trendy on TikTok. This article aims to expand the discussion (often reduced to the question of distinction) about food photography on social media and to find out about the most popular dishes, leitmotifs, and aesthetic conventions by looking at a sample of concrete examples of posts on #food and #foodtok. The analysis shows: alimentary communication is not reduced to self-representation but also bears sensual and ludic traits that can be identified through a close reading.*

1. Alimentary Signs: Introductory Remarks

In *Pour une psycho-sociologie de l'alimentation contemporaine*, the semiologist Roland Barthes (1961) emphasizes the symbolic nature of food, i.e. the *sign*ificance (in the most literal sense) of food choices, traditions and preferences, which can be read not only in terms of nutritional physiology, but also historically, sociologically/culturally, and psychologically. Among other things, he discusses the US-American preference for sugar (its consumption being twice as high as that of the French). With reference to the French national drink, wine, he shows that sugar and wine are not just sugar and wine, but institutions and attitudes which evoke dreams, taboos, tastes, preferences, values and, above all, emotions. He therefore calls on the (social) sciences and humanities to take a closer look at food and, among other things, to dive into advertising, which not only creates needs, but also reveals them. Barthes urges researchers to think outside the box in order to realize the potential of food decoding.

> I have started out with the example of the American use of sugar because it permits to get outside of what we, as Frenchmen, consider 'obvious'. For we do not see our own food or, worse, we assume that it is insignificant. Even – or perhaps especially – to the scholar, the subject of food connotes triviality or guilt. (Barthes 1997 [1961]: 20)

Approximately sixty years after his plea, this volume, among others, shows that academia has taken up his suggestion and that most of us would sign the article's main thesis without any hesitation. Barthes asks and concludes: "For what is food? It is not only a collection of products that can be used for statistical or nutritional studies. It is also, and at the same time, a system of communication, a body of images, a protocol of usages, situations, and behavior." (Barthes 1997 [1961]: 21)

In order to *see* or *read* food communication, as suggested by Barthes in his *Psychosociology of Contemporary Food Consumption*, we today dispose of a very productive source, in addition to advertising and artistic works dealing with food. How fascinated Barthes would have been by a platform like Instagram as an inexhaustible collection of food pictures or Generation Z's TikTok as a never-ending supply of visual, verbal, and filmic food performance! Both platforms stage (or pretend to represent) the everyday life of so many different users of highly diverse geographical and subcultural provenances, and both offer *food for thought*: more specifically an infinite source of visual and filmic food-related material.

Of course, Barthes was not the first person to realize that food is not only about nourishment and sustenance, but also reveals a lot about personality, origin, and emotional state. "You are what you eat" is the corresponding *bon mot* that is often used as a catchy motto in nutritional advice, TV formats, columns and (popular) scientific contributions on the subject of food culture.

The two authors of this (admittedly slightly varied) phrase, who (independently of each other) expressed a similar thought, are Ludwig Feuerbach and Jean-Anthelme Brillat-Savarin. The Feuerbach quote from 1850 has a sensual dimension as well as an ethical one: Feuerbach not only pleads for responsible nutrition, but also for the freedom to enjoy; he sees culinary connoisseurship as a source of potential happiness (see the chapter *Der Mensch ist, was er isst oder Zum Ursprung der gastrosophischen Feuerbach-These* in Lemke 2016). The fact that Brillat-Savarin, probably the most famous gastrosopher, boldly proclaimed in his *Physiology of Taste*, published in 1825, that he could fathom the essence of man by means of his eating habits points even more explicitly to the fact that food intake does not merely serve to secure one's existence but is connected with culture, sophistication and (pleasure) cult. Brillat-Savarin's *Physiology* is a treasure trove of sharp-tongued aphorisms on the doctrine of the pleasures of the table: "Have we not seen in our own time that gourmands can distinguish the flavor of the thigh on which the partridge lies down from the other?" (Brillat-Savarin 2008 [1825]: 67) It is no wonder that the author himself can distinguish the gourmand from the real connoisseur and interpret the alimentary signs: "Tell me what kind of food you eat, and I will tell you what kind of man you are." (idem: 12)

In the era of Instagram and TikTok, the *bon mot* can be varied in a number of different ways: "Show me what you eat and I'll tell you who you are" is one of them, "Show me what food you're looking at and I'll tell you who you are" is another. Proceeding loosely from Feuerbach, one could argue that: "We photograph what we eat" or, in a reversal that in some cases is probably more appropriate to the realities of social media: "We eat what we photograph." After all, in addition to taste, health and ecological/ethical and financial considerations, the photogenicity of a food item, as summarized in the questions "Is it (insta -)grammable?" or (increasingly more frequently in the last two three years) "Is it tiktokable?" can certainly represent a criterion for taking a picture. The question of how to grasp *Instagrammability* in culinary contexts will be the focus of my considerations; due to the increasing importance of TikTok, a concluding part will be devoted to initial observations on *Tiktokability.* Roland Barthes can once again serve as inspiration here. After all, he has not only pointed out that food itself is charged as a sign, or as multiple signs; but he has also shown that *pictures* of food, whether in advertisements for Italian pasta (Barthes 1964) or in the opulent arrangements in women's magazines (Barthes 1957), create and satisfy needs that are worth taking a closer look at.

2. The Why: Notes on the Sense of Food Postings

What caused at least some irritation back in 2010, when Instagram was brand-new, has become an everyday scene in culinary contexts: People using mobile phones go to great lengths to put the meal waiting to be eaten in the right light. This applies not only to spectacularly prepared dishes from Michelin-starred cuisine, but also to cafeteria meals, breakfast cereals, burgers in all variations or (not only in Corona times) home-cooked meals. Some restaurants have benefited from this development and adapted their décor and recipes to the app[1]; others ignore, defy, or even resist the trend for different reasons (some of them trying to retain sovereign rights

1 In their introduction to the first volume on the subject *Food Instagram. Identity, Influence and Negotiation*, the editors refer to Isabelle de Solier's take on McLuhan's famous declaration and conclude that "the medium *shapes* the message". Creators and restaurateurs have reacted accordingly: "Beyond 'grammable' foods gorgeously plated on attractive dishes, restaurants seeking to go viral invested in eye-catching wallpaper, photography-enhancing lightning, decorative floor tiles, exterior feature walls, and a revival of colorful, neon signage." (Kish/Contois 2022: 1–2) Leaver et al. share a few Food Instagram anecdotes in the first monograph dedicated to Instagram, including the story of how a restaurateur in Singapore refused to make a slight modification to a dessert (specifically, omitting the whipped cream) because "every item was part of their branding" to ensure the dishes' photogenicity (2020: 167). Both publications provide detailed information on the concrete dynamics of Instagram; a similar elaboration on TikTok has not yet been published. *Food Instagram* deals with various media, with cultural studies and, not least of all, with sociological approaches to the analysis of Instagram content; an overall view of the most popular dishes/posts is less in focus than the specific analysis of individual food trends (such as #unicornlatte) or representation trends (such as @hotdudesandhummus).

over the images and the resulting image). The gourmet restaurant Nobelhart und Schmutzig in Berlin is not the only one with a no-photography policy, explicitly asking its customers to refrain from using their mobile phones. The request is printed in the menu: "Please take memories not pictures." The "either-or" mentality implied by this (admittedly tongue-in-cheek) formulation could, of course, be questioned. It is not for nothing that a number of examples of *Ars memoriae* (like the *Mind Palace*, for example) are based on pictorial memory aids[2]. No matter how critical individual restaurateurs are, it is obvious that the trend is not likely to go away. While an in-depth academic classification (with the exception of nutritional sciences) is still awaited, the trend has been debated and not infrequently criticized in feuilleton articles, in commentaries and interviews, especially in the early phase of Instagram. Nearly a decade ago in 2013, the German news magazine *Der Spiegel* asked the sociologist Eva Barlösius about the (then quite recent) phenomenon [translation by the author]: "In restaurants, you can often see guests taking pictures of their food. Later they post the picture on Facebook. What's the point?" (Spiegel 2013: 46) The primary reason, according to the sociologist's answer, is to exhibit the poster's culinary cultural capital with the celebration of special occasions and the corresponding high-end meals. She states: "It's not about everyday life. You will hardly come across fast food pictures in the social networks. With these photos you show: I can afford this. But also, and this is much more important: I have cultural knowledge and know how to appreciate 'good food'." (Spiegel 2013: 46) Ten years after the publication of this interview, I agree with Barlösius on one point and strongly disagree on the other: Yes, instagramming and TikToking are (also, but not only) about exhibiting cultural capital; but no, it doesn't have to be special food. Instagram and everyday life, albeit a staged one, and Instagram and fast food (specifically burgers), belong together like the *beefsteak et pommes-frites* to which Roland Barthes paid homage in his *Mythologies*. The (pseudo -)authenticity of shared intimacy is a decisive feature of successful postings; the food can then also be quite profane. Too often the sensual, pleasurable, positive element is lost in the journalistic discussion of food postings, which concentrates on sociological or psychological aspects: the fact that food is also shown *for food's sake*, that images stimulate the imagination, and that the pictures could be simply meant to generate enjoyment seems to be ruled out. I would therefore like to deal implicitly with the sociological facet (as Barthes and Bourdieu have shown, aesthetic preferences and thus sensual experience can also be explained sociologically) and primarily ask whether and how enjoyment is transported with the help of food photography or videos, by examining which posts are particularly popular. What is

2 I have remarked elsewhere that images can certainly serve as a memory aid and that Instagram posts, not least of all, also represent diaristic functions for visual autobiographers (see Schröer 2020).

generally appealing about food content on social media and which images do users like to look at and why? Are these images particularly sensual and, if so, in what way?

3. The What and the How: Sensuality and Aesthetics of Food Postings

#instafood, #omnomnom, #foodporn, #food, #foodie, #organic, #healthyeats, #goodeats, #vegetarian, #vegan, #glutenfree, #hungry, #homemade, #madefromscratch, #foodiesofinstagram, #eats, #instacool, #foodstagram, #instafood, #foodpic, #foodgasm, #delicious, #foodoftheday, #foodpics, #cleaneating: These are just some of the hashtags that specialized sites with names like www.top-hashtags.com or best-hashtags.com recommend to social networkers to accompany culinary posts for the purpose of optimal distribution and follower generation. Digital cameras and especially smartphones offer tools with which food can be photographed particularly well or special apps with which photos can be edited afterwards. Countless blogs give tips with regard to good exposure, suitable backgrounds and varied composition. There are currently (December 2022) 490 million posts under the hashtag #food, compared to 416 million in November 2020. TikTok, which is the fastest growing social network of all times, has not replaced Instagram, even though it can be noted that the number of new postings per month on Instagram has slightly decreased since food content has become so popular on TikTok. Some of the similarities and differences will be sketched in lieu of a summary; it is obvious that #foodtok would not have existed without Instagram. The observation that people who post on the topic of food are often active on both networks (and, for example, refer in their TikTok videos to the fact that the recipe can be read on Instagram) shows that the portals a) sometimes fulfill different, complementary functions or also b) focus on a different target group (the older ones on Instagram, the younger ones on TikTok) with similar content/aesthetics. In any case, both networks (separately or in dialogue with each other) offer the opportunity to heed Barthes' call to search for fertile sources (besides advertising) in order to make food communication or food-picture communication visible. The identified recurring aesthetics and recurrent content promise to reveal significant things about the users and the zeitgeist they translate visually. Instagram came first: In order to understand TikTok you have to know Instagram.

It can be assumed that food postings on Instagram are (still) so popular among viewers because they convey an aura of intimacy much more than do those that depict furniture and also more than those that show clothes. As research shows, social media is constantly concerned with the question of the authenticity of self-representation (see e.g. Allan S. Taylor's *Authenticity as Performativity on Social Media* from

2022). Sharing[3] (pictures of) food can be understood as a particularly intimate act which automatically transports an *effet de réel*. It is directly related to the physical dimension, which is especially crucial in the context of digital *technologies of the self*. After all, furniture and clothes are close to the poster's body but what we see in the food pictures is something that is supposed to become part of the body in a few moments. This implied physicality (and sensuality) makes the digital distance seem smaller; even more so when familiar tastes are involved. The motivations of the posters and the readers are as different as the motives and the quality of the artistic *mise-en-image*, which sometimes places itself decidedly in the tradition of still-life painting and sometimes acts entirely without regard to aesthetic demands. The glimpses into the private lives (especially of influencers with high numbers of followers) are of course styled in many cases (see Leaver et al. 2020: 104). The more imperfect the performance (think of Erving Goffman's "expressions given off"), the more authentic it appears. As Contois and Kish put it when they describe the changing Instagram aesthetics of the late 2010s: "While nonetheless curated, users produced unfiltered, less edited, even 'ugly' images, performing authenticity as an act of rebellion." (2022: 8) However: the exhibition of individual eating practices does not only or always serve to gain distinction (on the part of the posters) or voyeurism or sublimation[4] (because one does not allow oneself certain food for financial, health-related, or other reasons) on the part of the consumers, but also serves to increase enjoyment.

3 The verb "to share", which is often used synonymously with "to post" in the social media context, already implies the social, sociable component. As Nicholas A. John shows in his study *The Social Logics of Sharing*, the verb was often employed without this connotation in the Web 2.0: "In the most general terms possible, sharing in this context quite simply means participating in Web 2.0." (2013: 172) However, it can be used differently on social media today: "While sharing still has concrete objects today, these have been joined by fuzzy objects of sharing, which vastly extends the scope of what we are expected to share so as to include our lives or our worlds. In this context, sharing is more about communication than distribution, and is at one and the same time both much vaguer and far more inclusive." (John 2013: 173) Especially when food pictures are shared or even exchanged almost live, i.e. immediately before consumption, one can certainly speak of a shared experience, even if it remains virtual consumption on the side of the picture recipient.

4 The philosopher Robert Pfaller (2010: 59–67) argues that the widespread consumption of cooking programs and books is in many cases a "delegated enjoyment" [translation by the author], i.e. a substitute action for actual cooking. He subsumes compensation acts of this kind under the term "interpassivity". A quick glance at the Twitter feed shows that this definitely does not apply to all viewers of cooking shows. When shows like "Das perfekte Dinner" are on, the community (using the hashtag #dasperfektedinner) not only exchanges gossip about the candidates, but also shares pictures of their own (mostly homemade) dishes, which are consumed parallel to watching the show (and tweeting). The event is thus celebrated on different levels.

In view of this rampant "gastromania" (Gianfranco Marrone 2014), I assume that both the act of photographing and the act of exhibiting and sharing and consuming food photographs serve to prolong and intensify the moment of enjoyment, whether at home or in a restaurant. A function that is as sensual as it is pragmatic is obvious: the fleeting pleasure is preserved photographically and can be recreated to some extent when viewed again or also externally (perhaps even a photo of the madeleine would have triggered a minor memory shock in Proust in a parallel universe). A diaristic function can be seen here, in which the image is of course also accompanied by sometimes descriptive, sometimes emphatic comments. The act of photographing becomes part of the ritual, in that the gustatory is preceded by the visual pleasure: hence Feuerbach's and Brillat-Savarin's *bon mot* can be varied in the following triad: you are what you photograph; you are what you eat; or (in the case of home-cooking even more small-step, more holistic, more sensual) you are what you cook, what you prepare, what you photograph, what you eat. A study in the *Journal of Consumer Marketing* from 2016 actually says that photographing food leads to a more intense taste experience. The eye literally eats with you (as it is expressed in the German saying *Das Auge isst mit*); the experience is a multi-sensory one. The Instagram community, which does not post and eat but only consumes visually, is possibly inspired to cook or at least to consume; but in any case, it can share the moment of pleasure. As John states: "Part of what we are encouraged to share on SNSs is our feelings, and so there is an overlap between a common spoken use of the term and the Web 2.0 meaning." (2013: 175)

In order to substantiate these initial intuitive observations and thoughts, I undertook a close reading of selected Instagram posts over a limited period of six days in May 2021 (25.05.21-30.05.21), which was intended to filter out leitmotifs and representational conventions[5]. I chose the most general of the food-related posts, namely those collected under the hashtag #food, and analyzed the top posts suggested by Instagram, i.e. those nine posts that are constantly updated at any given time and suggested by the algorithm based on the popularity of the profiles or follower interaction that has already taken place. So I looked at a total of 54 posts that are or will be among the most popular. This ensures that the selection is reasonably representative and not limited to particularly aesthetic images. Entries with a *bad taste touch* with their very own modes of presentation are also popular: after all, the craving for junk food can also be stimulated visually and translated accordingly. I examined the sample with the following questions in mind:

Which foods appear again and again? Are they popular because they are photogenic? With which image-inherent (composition, color design, use of filters,

5 The challenges of scientific work with social media and Web 2.0 are currently one of the most important topics in media studies. A good review article on the current literature is provided by Carolin Säugling (2021).

metaphor, intertextuality) and paratextual stylistic means (hashtags, comment function, placement, making-off) is the taste experience translated or conveyed? Which traditions of food representation of a commercial and/or artistic nature are referenced? And which eating aesthetics result from the different stagings, which conventions are established? Or, in short: How is the gustatory experience translated into Instagram?

The first question was easy to answer: What are the most popular foods in the mini-sample and why? Desserts are way out in front (16 posts), followed by burgers (8 posts), meat in general (6 posts), pasta (5 posts) and fish dishes (5 posts). No big surprise, but of course a direct refutation of Barlösius' thesis that no one photographs fast food. The fact that desserts and cakes are so well-placed is not astonishing given their photogenicity. Desserts can definitely be staged better than a stew or a soup. However, following Barthes, one could also speculate about the high value placed on sugar, or talk about the need for sweet and also figuratively cute, 'cure-all' food, which is no longer a US-American peculiarity (think of cupcakes, donuts, etc. and other icing, color and sprinkle-decorated examples of "ornamental cuisine"[6]).

I have tried to outline why burgers are also predestined for the Instagram presence and which common modes of presentation appeal across all foods under the keywords listed below. The keywords can give an idea of why there is always talk of *foodporn* in the feuilleton and, as a result, also in academic discourse – the connotation of indecency arises not only from the 'sinful' content of the food depicted (such as fat, sugar, calories), but also from the perspective and the image detail chosen[7]. Of course, there are intersections between the categories, so several keywords can be assigned to individual posts: a) Exhibition of the Inside, b) Proximity, c) Quantity/Size, d) Still-Life Elements, e) Seduction and Availability, f) Comfort and Intuition.

a) *Exhibition of the Inside*: As can be seen in fig. 1 burgers and sandwiches offer themselves as Insta-favorites through their richness of layers; the different colors, textures and ingredients are predestined for the sometimes almost sculptural staging. The clear division makes a sensual re-experience through visual consumption more vivid. The food is transparent and thus comprehensible; the textures and tastes are revealed at first glance. This dynamic can also be found in other interior images in which the products are cut open for the same effect; the contents are explicit and thus convey a clear picture of the taste experience to be expected: see, for example,

6 "Ornamental Cuisine" is the title of one of Barthes essays in *Mythologies* from 1957. In the following, it will be discussed what differences exist between the ornamental cuisine diagnosed by Barthes and the ornamental cuisine on Instagram.

7 "Foodporn" is now an umbrella term that encompasses all possible facets and, of course, a common term for tagging via hashtag on Instagram. I have subsumed those connotations of the notion of porn that can be made productive for analysis under the keywords cited here. An overview of the genesis and polysemy of the term can be found in "Foodporn: An Anatomy of the Meal Gaze" (David/Allard 2022).

the very tempting chocolate patisserie (here of course potentiated by the sensuality already connoted with the product chocolate). Particularly in the case of pastry and cakes, cutting is a good way to present the structure of the dough and thus also the craft of the patissier, or to score points with the pastry's surprising inner life, which very often consists of a liquid or at least creamy core that can stimulate the imagination. If the product is bitten into instead of merely cut into, as in the case of the cream puff in my sample, there is an additional directly physical or "gastro-erotic" (Kofahl 2018) reference.

Fig. 1: Exhibition of the Inside.

Source: Compilation of Instagram Posts tagged with #food (05/25/2021-05/30/2021).

b) *Proximity*: The posts that I have subsumed under this keyword have a similarly physical reference. The zoom is mainly on the tempting surface: from crispy poultry skin to oily, shiny pasta. Here, viewers get close and personal with the food, so that there is an almost voyeuristic moment which enables immersion.

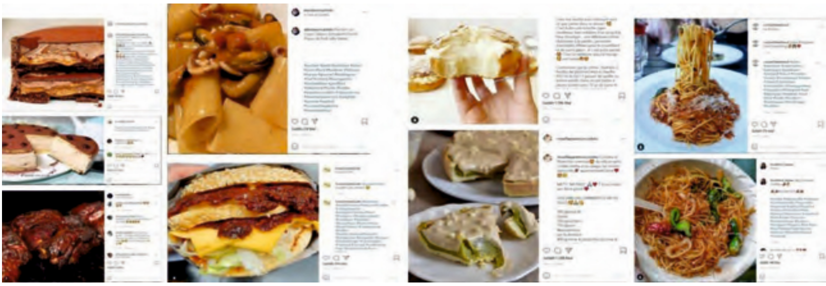
c) *Quantity/Size*: Speaking of the 'indecent touch', images that focus primarily on quantity, abundance and size (often combined with meat consumption) also enjoy great popularity. These celebrate the unrepentant hedonism that wastes no thought on aestheticizing frills or moderate consumption but cultivates the pleasure of gluttony – here the paratexts in the comments' column confirm the animal-orgiastic moment by paying respect to the post/the food depicted in the corresponding metaphorical lexis. In the comments' column, user "taste_felicity" pays her respects to a double-decker burger garnished with bacon and cheddar with the following words: "What a beast" (fig. 1).

d) *Still-Life Elements:* Of course, among the top posts there are also those that focus less on (food)porn and more on the aesthetics familiar from the cooking magazines and cookbooks of these days, in the tradition of various phases of still-life painting as can be seen in the color scheme and arrangement of the components. These depictions stimulate the appetite more subtly, and are perceived more as pictorial compositions than the others, which place the focus very decidedly on the matter depicted – i.e. the food – and with it on the physical lusts or cravings of the posters and viewers. Apart from the color selection, familiar tropes of still-life painting are integrated as decorative elements: i.e. isolated 'fallen' berries, colorful ceramics in the background, and of course silver cutlery, which brings some additional glamour into the scenery. Heavy cutlery contributes to the fact that a meal is enjoyed more, as the neurogastronomy professor Charles Spence from Oxford University found out (2013); possibly the depiction of heavy cutlery also contributes to a potentiation of enjoyment in the viewers. Opulent, colorful fruit arrangements are a classic of still-life painting. This topos is also recalled, of course, when, as in one example of the sample, raw vegetables in all conceivable versions stand for freshness, health, and variety (note also the bouquet of dandelions in the background), even if this 'natural' harmony is irritated by the object to be advertised, an industrial product, namely a mayonnaise *façon maison* (homemade style).

e) *Seduction and Availability*: The observation that posts with a still-life character depict pleasure and are aesthetically very appealing, but still do not make up the majority of the most popular posts is, I assume, due to the fact that photographically they keep the viewers at a distance. We look at an entire arrangement or an opulently set table; but the degree of immersion, the possibility to really dive in and put ourselves in the position of the diner is comparatively low. This is why the keywords *seduction* and *availability* are apparently so important for Instagram posts. Many dishes present themselves (through cut pieces, bitten corners, or even prepared forks with carefully sauce-laden spaghetti: fig. 2) as *ready-to-be-eaten* or shared. Here, the aesthetics have almost the character of an appeal. The food shines in a seductive way; the burger is ready at mouth level. Canonized classic dishes such as spaghetti bolognese with which the viewer is lured in are reminiscent of correspondingly canonized food photography[8] and are connoted with Italianity (Barthes 1964), timelessness, lightheartedness, unpretentiousness, and down-to-earth enjoyment. All these associations are contained in the fork which is offered to the viewer.

8 Weegee's photo [Phillip J. Stazzone Is on WPA and Enjoys His Favorite Food as He's Heard That the Army Doesn't Go in Very Strong for Serving Spaghetti] from 1940 has become iconic.

Fig. 2: Seduction and Availability.



Source: Compilation of Instagram Posts tagged with #food (05/25/2021-05/30/2021).

f) *Comfort and Intuition*: It is precisely in this aspect of light-hearted, down-to-earth, familiar enjoyment that the common denominator of most of the top posts lies. It is striking that many of the dishes can be eaten with the hands or with just one piece of cutlery. Filleting fish, plucking artichoke leaves, cutting meat: all these steps that are part of the eating ritual in upscale cuisine do not play a role in most of the posts. The dishes pictured are easy to handle, quasi-intuitive (no elaborate cutlery skills required) and can also be eaten on the couch in combination with binge-watching. Interestingly, they are mainly dishes that do *not* fall into the category of 'acquired taste' (i.e. the acquired taste for less easily accessible foods such as artichokes, oysters or coriander that can only been cultivated when the products have been tasted more often; see Birch 1999), but are dishes that would probably have been tasty even to the children in us. Exceptions confirm this rule: in the sample of 54 posts, one red mullet on liquid stock was actually the only food that meant extra effort in consumption. Here cutlery is needed.

Of course, Instagram consists not only of images, but also of commentary, recipe details, emoticons, and chat dialogue. Looking at these additional texts and codes and seeing how they enhance the moment of enjoyment would be a further, certainly very productive task. In conclusion, two keywords can be found with which the top posts can be contextualized. Indeed, the power of *seduction* through voyeuristic images, zooms, staging of textures and suggestion of availability is a common denominator of many posts. The second common denominator is *comfort*, evoking comfortable consumption as well as consolation. Instagram food, even if it is not labelled with the hashtag #comfortfood, is first and foremost approachable, intuitive food that makes the world a little less complicated for the duration of its consumption. And that's why, despite all the criticism of the shallow, superficial Instagram world, the "what" is often more decisive than the "how" in the case of food photographs. Even a blurred, poorly exposed burger photo will probably not go without "likes".

The categories that have been distilled from reading the top posts have shown the following: Even if the original motivation of the content creators is to distinguish themselves individually in their timelines (the distinction factor stressed by Barlösius remains a relevant motivation for posting), the motives and realizations of their postings reveal not only something about their self-image ("I am what and how I show what I eat"), but also something about the current zeitgeist, collective food preferences and aesthetic conventions. A look at the more recent phenomenon (FoodTok) should make it possible to find out whether the trends there are different. After noting the parallels and differences, i.e. identifying recurrent signs we can ask with Barthes what these might say about the posting and reading clientele – or even about current society in general.

4. Outlook: TikTok – Performance, Play and Pleasure

The sound-on platform was best known for dance videos and music clips in its beginning. In the last two years, TikTok has also been repeatedly talked about for its food content. Accelerated not least by the Corona pandemic (due to closed restaurants, a general search for home-based hobbies and digital companionship), a new target group for food content was opened up, and creators like Eitan Bernath and Emily Mariko have become famous.

First of all, it can be said that some of the factors that make Instagram exciting for people interested in food can be found on TikTok in a kind of extended version. TikTok is based on videos. This means that motion and sounds play a major role; other senses than those on Instagram are inevitably addressed. However, this does not mean that still-life conventions are not used when some dishes are placed in a perfect light and arrangement. All in all, the network is initially difficult to grasp for the untrained eye: TikTok is a celebration of sensory overload and eclecticism. As is also the case with Instagram, the video feed is tailored to the individual algorithm, so it is not easy to identify the posts that appeal to the majority of TikTok users. It is even more difficult to identify the particularly popular posts than is the case on Instagram, inasmuch as a selection of 'top posts' is not offered but viewers are instead bombarded with a multitude of deliberately unsorted videos. As on Instagram, different target groups are addressed with very different food content: top chefs demonstrate their skills, sometimes accompanied by classical music, sometimes by hard rap beats; mothers explain how they cut out vegetables in a 'kawaii' manner to fill their children's bento boxes; influencers who don't specialize in food recreate TikTok trend dishes and report on their experiences. In short, similar to the analysis of Instagram posts, it makes little sense to base the exploration of the FoodTok universe on one's own algorithm, which does not necessarily correspond to the majority taste. Journalistic articles reveal which are the most popular Food Tik-

Tokers and describe their stellar careers on the network, in some cases as a result of alternative employment/occupation sought during the COVID-19 pandemic (most prominently Thomas Straker, who is about to open a restaurant in Notting Hill as a result of his new fame). To find out which food-related posts are the most popular and to gain an overview of the possible stylistic and culinary range, I consulted different best-of lists of 2022 (on the Network itself and on food blogs) and looked at the most-mentioned posts and topics[9]. I asked to what extent the keywords and leitmotifs identified in the Instagram analysis also apply to TikTok and which other senses are addressed and how. Summarized in one question: What kind of food is particularly popular on TikTok and (how) is it aestheticized?

To have a representative selection, I took a closer look at the trends whose names kept coming up in magazines' and newspapers' relevant best-of lists. These include the viral posts about Cloud bread, butter boards/charcuterie boards (which can be easily viewed together given the very similar aesthetics), Pasta Chips, Lemon Pasta, Green Goddess Salad, and Pink Sauce. There are countless videos on each of these food trends; I watched the ones with the most likes. It is not so easy to categorize the videos clearly; a large number of them (in keeping with the TikTok mentality) lie between (syn)aesthetic staging of the cooking process, autobiographical performance with anecdotal parts, and step-by-step-recipe videos with specific cooking tips – or reviews of recipe videos and restaurants – and all that in just a few seconds. It is precisely this hybrid mixture that constitutes TikTok's unique selling proposition. The immersion in the hitherto unknown FoodTok world and the "close reading/viewing" of a selected number of videos enabled me to identify some recurring motifs and common denominators here as well. It is well known that TikTok is first and foremost an entertainment network.

In this respect, it is not surprising that the recipes and products presented, or simply the way they are presented, often have a ludic component. Mythologically connoted names such as *Cloud Bread* or *Green Goddess Salad* whose pathos (as shown in the videos) comes across with a twinkle in the eye, show this just as much as the almost childlike joy in drawing and modeling with food (for example, staging vegan dinosaur nuggets from the frozen food section in a landscape of mashed potatoes and small broccoli trees). Bento Boxes are the specialty of one of the most successful TikTokers, Jessica Woo, who currently (December 2022) has 5.8 million followers. Even though her catchphrase "let's make some lunch for my kids" implies otherwise, surely the cravings of not only children are satisfied. Homage is paid to the former and inner child when rice figures are dressed in nori costumes and little stars and flowers are cut out of raw vegetables. After all, who says you can't play with food? The

9 The hashtag #foodTikTok recorded over 106 billion views in 2022. Among others, Chiquito, a restaurant chain in the UK, has identified the food trends with the most clicks (see "The Top 10 Food Trends of 2022, According to TikTok. Have mug cakes taken over your feed, too?").

consumable fantasy worlds tell of the ludic, creative, and escapist potential of "picturing food". It's a similar story with trends like the *pink sauce* that caused a sensation on TikTok in 2022. The allure of novelty (none of the well-known sauces were pink until now) combines with the connotations of the color as sweet, cute, and trashy and also provides a fun and comfort factor. Dipped in pink sauce, the world is immediately less boring and gray; the green sauce turns simple salad into the food of a goddess. It is fascinating how Barthes' reflections on ornamental cuisine in *Elle* are still relevant to some of the TikTok food trends, even though the ingredients are different. Barthes writes:

> But above all, coatings prepare and support one of the major developments of genteel cookery: ornamentation. Glazing, in *Elle*, serves as background for unbridled beautification: chiseled mushrooms, punctuation of cherries, motifs of carved lemon, shavings of truffle, silver pastilles, arabesques of glacé fruit: the underlying coat (and this is why I called it a sediment, since the food itself becomes no more than an indeterminate bedrock) is intended to be the page on which can be read a whole rococo cookery (there is a partiality for a pinkish color). (2012 [1957]: 78)

However, the case of *Elle*, according to Barthes, depicts a purely fictional kitchen whose recipes are merely for viewing: "This ornamental cookery is indeed supported by wholly mythical economics. This is an openly dream-like cookery, as proven in fact by the photography in *Elle*, which never shows the dishes except from a high angle, as objects, at once near and inaccessible, whose consumption can perfectly well be accomplished simply by looking." (Barthes 2012 [1957]: 79) In contrast to the world of *Elle*, the TikTok universe is often both magical and real. The feasibility and affordability factors play a big role in the success of the posts, as the most popular posts clearly show. The steps that need to be taken to become a green goddess or to embed rice eggs in lettuce leaves are comparatively uncomplicated. It is striking how many of the videos end with a hearty bite into the created dish. While the staging of eaters tends to be avoided in the visual arts (see, for example, in still-life painting) and also on Instagram (after all, it's not easy to take a favorable and non-sexualized picture of an eating person), TikTok is full of people who are happily eating. Often the tasting scene marks the end of the video; this structure has become a signature trait of TikTok videos. Especially from a feminist point of view, the fact that women are publicly eating needs to be emphasized. Again and again, blogs draw attention to the fact that authentically eating women are a rarity in the film and series landscape; TikTok is full of them.[10] The most popular videos are therefore those that provide

10 I am not referring to the mok-bang trend imported from South Korea, which basically consists of people filming themselves eating oversized portions. This popular trend can of course also be found on TikTok (see Hakimey/Yazdanifard 2015).

concrete tips and inspiration – it can be assumed that these will actually set one or two cooking processes in motion (even if it is to make a TikTok response video).

This does not mean, however, that (as is also the case for *Elle*'s readership) imaginary dishes can't be created in which the criterion of re-cookability no longer plays a role. This cuisine, created primarily for the senses and the imagination, is found above all in the videos of professional chefs who show the large number of steps of the cooking process in fast forward, often supported by music that underlines and dramatizes the individual steps. It is clear that a potential for conveying the sensory experiences generated by cooking and tasting comes with the additional video and audio levels. The sound component brings us to an important feature found in the vast majority of top posts about food. While the videos do in many cases feature speaking (sometimes as a voice-over by the creator himself or by a female, robotic voice, sometimes in real time) and music is frequently but not always present, cooking sounds are part of the DNA of most FoodTok videos. The success of ASMR (autonomous sensory meridian response[11]) is not limited to food-content videos but can be implemented particularly well here. Even if not all viewers are equally receptive to all degrees and types of sounds (and find, for example, smacking and slurping noises or even the whispering noises popular with ASMR fans to be less pleasant), most can apparently agree on the common denominator of cooking noises. This may be where two interest groups come together: those who are generally ASMR-affine and consume all kinds of sounds that have a calming effect; and those who perceive cooking itself as a meditative activity and can put themselves in the cooking process through the visual and auditory background. For videos of chefs who want to demonstrate their speed, artistry and virtuosity, the cooking sounds (like music) are a way to give rhythm and tempo to the cooking process, whose different steps are accented by the sounds. The popularity of trends like pasta chips may be due not only to a love of life hacks, new experiments, and the simplicity of the recipe, but also to their suitability for ASMR effects – crunch is at the top of the list. One of the most popular pasta-chips videos shows creator Nick Di Giovanni dressed in black and wielding a knife with a mesmerizing look, an artist in his element. Without the intensified sounds, the performance would immediately be less powerful.

Another common denominator of TikTok videos of different genres is a fondness for lifehacks. Particularly popular are hacks that show tricks for achieving a big effect with little effort. Pizza buns are made by thawing frozen pizza and then rolling and cutting it; for the revival of the charcuterie board, there is a simple technique to quickly form salami florets with the help of a glass.

11 ASMR is a pleasurable sensation of shivering in the skull or other peripheral areas of the body in response to an (auditory or other) stimulus. ASMR-video-creators try to stimulate that sensation: for example, by eating food and playing with its wrapping in front of a good microphone.

Fig. 3: Lemon Pasta.

Source: TikTok Post by Emily Mariko from 07/14/2022, https://www.tiktok.com/@emilymariko/video/7120084633638718766. Retrieved July 6, 2023.

Many dishes, such as the legendary feta pasta of 2021, are one-pot dishes that virtually cook themselves once the ingredients are assembled. Among the hits of 2022 was *Lemon Pasta* by Emily Mariko, which is also a dish with limited ingredients and minor level of difficulty. Since her viral hit *Salmon Rice* (a simple but tasty Japanese-inspired rice dish) in 2021, her follower count has steadily increased, and she is arguably the most important food influencer on TikTok. Right now, she has 12.5 million followers. Unlike most creators, Mariko doesn't play her videos in an accelerated way; she doesn't talk, but cooks uncomplicated dishes in silence. Only the cooking sounds can be heard. Perhaps one reason for her success is this contemplative aspect, which provides a break in the extremely hectic TikTok world. In addition, she perfectly fulfills the 'that girl' profile of the life-affirming 'girl next door' that was much discussed in 2021 (cf. Sweeney-Romero/Marisol 2022). Her video on lemon pasta (fig. 3) also demonstrates the 'that girl' aesthetics and well-being (nice, clean, uncomplicated) and the easy take on food (and thus on life?) with which the young woman obviously attracts many viewers. The clip is 1.06 minute long. We see fragments of the following steps: Mariko, dressed to match her dish (cute shorts with a lemon motif and a lemon yellow top), takes perfect huge lemons from a bowl, grates a giant mountain of Parmesan, cuts lemons and a fair amount of high-quality butter, cooks bronze-cut spaghetti in a Le Creuset-style pot, squeezes lemon juice over the cooked pasta, adds the butter pieces, some pasta water and more lemons, stirs everything ceremonially, pours herself a glass of red wine, and gleefully turns up some pasta with her fork. Finally, she takes a bite and shows with happy gestures and a smile how satisfied she is with the result. The cooking sounds replace speech: we hear the soothing sound of concentrated cutting, grating, sizzling; the uncomplicated recipe is understood without words. The entire production celebrates the cheerful, summery, light, Italian taste. As we saw in the analysis of the top Instagram posts, pasta is the social media star alongside burgers. They evoke Italianity/Mediterraneanity (Barthes 1964), a down-to-earth quality and comfort. No wonder the sun-colored video went viral: here, unchanging pasta popularity and an easy but aesthetically pleasing dish meet currently popular stagings of the authentic that imply effortlessness. The trend towards charcuterie boards[12] and butter boards meets similar demands. Cooking is omitted altogether (as long as the mixing of butter with spices or herbs is not considered cooking), and the focus is on the arrangement. The result is simple but attractive. The sliced meats and cheese landscapes arranged on the boards in turn stimulate the imagination and are reminiscent not least of still-life paintings in their coloring and also in their range of products (butter, ham, cheese).

In a culturally pessimistic manner, the FoodTok development could be interpreted as follows: TikTok fits perfectly into this time of sensory overload, in which the attention span is minimal and complexity reduction is the top priority, even in the field of cooking, if anything is to be conveyed at all. To dismiss the whole thing as 'cooking for dummies' would, however, be short-sighted: it is true that "culinary intelligence" (Kofahl 2010; Dollase 2020) or gourmetism and the art of cooking are less in focus than the *gourmandise.* Nevertheless: unlike *Elle*'s kitchen, this is not a purely fictional kitchen but a real one with a penchant for self-irony. The food that is staged can actually be re-cooked and eaten, usually with very little effort. Nevertheless, it is not a purely pragmatic anti-enjoyment endeavor. People who like to stage food AND people who like to eat and cook gather on Instagram and on TikTok – even if it's just a pureed sauce that can impress with a flashy color: the posts show how all

12 TikTok uses the word "charcuterie" very freely (and incorrectly). Plates that present cheese or dessert variations are also labelled accordingly by the users. This is yet another confirmation that TikTok is not home to conventional foodies with the appropriate food knowledge, but to people who enjoy making new discoveries.

types of dishes can help life become more sensual. The celebration of the magic of transformation is part of the joy of cooking and eating and looking at people while they are cooking, in amateur and star cuisine alike. *Eatertainment* and the so-called chaos kitchen may not provide the most refined dishes, but they certainly celebrate pleasure.

5. Conclusion

Immersion in the universe of Instagram and TikTok shows that the popularity of the images of (seductive) comfort foods can be interpreted both pessimistically and optimistically in cultural terms. In the first variant, the sugar and fat bombs that can be consumed with bare fingers could be read as a) the abandonment of civilizational and gustatory standards which are, moreover, more compatible with smartphone addiction, or as b) purely visual substitute satisfaction in times of health dictates (keyword 'foodporn' as a kitchen of the imagination). In the second interpretation – which is often left out of the feuilletonistic view – these images are also signs of pleasure, a visual manifesto against the ascetic life and all-too-elitist culinary conventions. The escapist, hedonistic and voyeuristic potential of the posts varies depending on the motive and motivation of the readers and posters. What the preferred dishes and aesthetics reveal about the zeitgeist is difficult to reduce to a thesis or truth. At a time when more than a few foodies complain that there is a lack of culinary intelligence, it is certainly positive that social networks celebrate cooking, arranging and enjoying. They inspire those whose culinary habitus does not correspond to that of haute cuisine to actually cook. The inhibition to participate in culinary discourse is low; food content on Instagram and TikTok is decidedly anti-elitist. The down-to-earth, ornamental cuisine of TikTok and Instagram does not necessarily need to be a cuisine of illusions (unlike the "ornamental cuisine" studied by Barthes), but it certainly invites participation.

With their ability to convey synesthetic experiences, Instagram, TikTok and subsequent platforms are here to stay; they are a playground for people who celebrate their identities through food depictions, and also for those who cherish food as a comforting part of everyday life.

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Naturalness

On the Aesthetics of Ecological Food Cultures

Johannes Lang

Abstract *Ecologically oriented food cultures – understood as the entire process from cultivation, to processing, to trade, to places and ways of consumption – have increased greatly over the last two decades. This development suggests that within these food cultures, not only have procedures and technologies been changed to improve de facto ecological compatibility, but certain forms of aesthetics have developed as well. Using selected examples, two aesthetic principles are presented from a philosophical point of view that seem to be characteristic for ecological food cultures as a whole: 1. working with contingencies, as the provocation of processes that cannot be controlled in their entirety, which are decisively responsible for the impression of 'naturalness' and 2. working with traces, which have through their indexical character the potential to transfer ecological conditions of origin and processing into the present of perception. These aesthetic principles are analyzed both in relation to different artefacts, such as the food itself, the utensils of the meal and accompanying media, and in relation to different senses, such as the senses of sight and taste.*

1. Introduction

Since around the turn of the millennium, there has been a boom in ecologically oriented food cultures and their associated industries within Western markets. This is evident not only in the drastic increase in the number of organic farms,[1] the establishment and expansion of various organic supermarkets and the entry of dedicated organic ranges into conventional supermarkets and discount food stores, but also in the increase in restaurants or canteens specializing in organic ingredients and the numerous organic cookbooks as well as food blogs that promise a healthier diet in harmony with the ecological conditions of the planet. In connection with ecological nutrition, from cultivation to trade to the places and types of their processing and

1 In Germany, the number of organic farms almost tripled from 2000 to 2020 (from 12.740 to 35.396 farms), as did the share of agricultural land managed by them (from 3.2 per cent to 10.3 per cent) (Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture 2022: 14).

consumption, these cultures are characterized not only by factual consideration of ecological criteria, but also – at least within Western markets – by a peculiar aesthetic. This aesthetic, which begins with the appearance of the individual organic foods and is then continued in the design of their packaging, the places where they are staged, the ways in which they are prepared both in terms of taste and visually, and the ambience in which they are consumed, is probably also intuitively conscious to most people in its peculiar specificity. We experience that there is an aesthetic difference between an organic shop or organic supermarket and conventional supermarkets, the 'organic corner' and the other offers of a conventional supermarket, the packaging design, and the ambience of restaurants presenting themselves as organic, as well as the flavourful and multi-sensory creation of organic dishes. But how can this peculiar aesthetic be described and analyzed?

In view of this organic trend, which is widely acknowledged, it is astonishing that apart from marketing-oriented surveys or communication-scientific identifications of individual design features that function as symbols of 'ecological' or 'organic' (especially the color green, ecological labels and pictorial motifs that evoke an association with nature), there has still been rather little dedicated examination of the aesthetic principles of ecological food cultures.[2] This is not least because on the one hand the ecological movement itself was particularly focused on the factual change and consideration of ecological contexts. On the other hand, the aesthetic – at least in the early days of the ecological movement – was under a general suspicion of merely serving economic interests, of concealing the actual ecological contexts and of merely pretending to consumers, of seducing them.

Thus, arguably the most influential pioneer of ecological and social design, Victor Papanek criticized aesthetic aspirations of design as a mere marketing tool and called for problem-oriented design instead:

> I am questioning, then, the entire currently popular direction of design. To 'sex-up' objects (designers' jargon for making things more attractive to mythical consumers) makes no sense in a world in which basic need for design is very real. In an age that seems to be mastering aspects of form, a return to content is long overdue. (1984 [1971]: 185)

2 For example, in their evaluation of 2531 print advertisements for organic and conventional food, Beate Gebhardt and Lara Heinz only come to the following distinction: "Organic advertises differently, this silent expectation of customers and companies in the organic sector can be confirmed for print advertisements: Organic advertising is greener, shows more landscape images and, above all, many more labels than advertising for conventional food. Ecological aspects and ethics are unique topics in organic advertising." (2019: 4 [translated by J.L.])

Equally paradigmatic for this view of the aesthetics of consumer goods is a statement by Wolfgang Fritz Haug, author of the influential *Critique of Commodity Aesthetics* (1986 [1971]), in the context of a survey by the International Design Centre Berlin:

> In a capitalist environment, design has a function that can be compared to the function of the Red Cross in war. It nurses a few – never the worst – wounds that capitalism inflicts. It performs cosmetic care and thus, by beautifying in some places and keeping morale high, prolongs capitalism like the Red Cross prolongs war. The design thus maintains the general disfigurement through a special design. It is responsible for matters of presentation, environmental presentation. (IDZ Berlin 1970: 55 [translated by J.L.])

Thus, the aesthetic, afflicted with the character of appearance, had to become the problematic antithesis of the authenticity and naturalness now demanded. A product had to be ecological, it was not just to look ecological – whatever was to be understood by this ecological appearance.

This tendency towards the anti-aesthetic in the early days of the ecological movement is also reflected in the widespread view that in ecological food cultures the taste qualities are neglected or not specifically designed, since it is merely a matter of being factually healthy or ecological. However, it is precisely against the background of this anti-aesthetic attitude that essential aesthetic principles of revealing, disclosing and documenting the ecological conditions of food have developed. Even if a specific aesthetic is not consciously striven for, characteristic forms of aesthetics can still develop. In the following, I would like to focus on two aesthetic principles that seem to me to be particularly characteristic of ecological aesthetics and explain them in the context of ecological food cultures.

2. Provoking Natural Perceptions

The theme of naturalness, or nature in general, obviously plays an essential role in ecological cultures. Especially given the traditional understanding of 'nature' as opposed to 'culture', as that which exists by itself and through itself, as possibly untouched by the formative interventions of humans, the design of artefacts with an ecological claim faces a fundamental problem. Because even organic food is ultimately always influenced and modified nature through breeding and various cultivation methods – i.e. biofacts – even if they are wild varieties (Kleinert/Braun 2018). How can artefacts be used to express that they are as little as possible an artefact and as much as possible nature, in other words: that the artefact itself is nature? How do you create the impression and sensation of naturalness?

Certainly, the most common way of creating a reference to nature is to make associations with nature by means of symbolic and pictorial features in the settings of organic food, for example through vegetal motifs or the depiction of landscapes, but also through textual messages that refer to ecological or rural aspects. This kind of media representation of nature, however, has the fundamental problem that 'nature' is always found only on the side of the represented and not on the side of the representing media. By merely representing 'nature' on food packaging, with the displays of its presentation or the media of its advertising, a gap is drawn between the food and 'nature' as it is usually true of symbols and images that their bearers are not themselves what they mean or represent, otherwise they would not be symbols or images.

This applies not only to the accompanying media, but also to the food itself, both visually and in terms of taste. For example, fruit gums visually representing fruit communicate different types of fruit through their pictorial character, but at the same time generate the awareness that the fruit gums themselves cannot be fruit. Even if the fruit gums are made with fruit juices, they will not eliminate this gap between what they represent and what they are themselves, because processed fruit juices are something different than the unprocessed fruit that is represented. Artificial flavours also appear to follow this logic of images, with the difference that this is an image phenomenon in the realm of the sense of taste – taste images, so to speak. Just as with visual images, we perceive something other than what the image itself is in an ontological sense. So, for example, with artificial strawberry flavouring we taste strawberries, although the substance of the flavouring was neither extracted from strawberries nor has anything in common with them chemically. Thus, even in the case of artificial flavours, certain natural phenomena are merely represented (Lang 2019: 240–248).

Through this kind of thematization of nature, 'nature' wanders structurally into a realm that lies beyond the context for which it is actually supposed to be thematically claimed. 'Nature' is then somewhere out there, in the countryside, with the farmers, but not in the food, in the dish, in the organic food shop or in the restaurant. This gap between medium and message becomes a problem for ecological consciousness because it is interested in the ecological conditions of the medium itself and not merely in the message. For this reason, the marketing of ecological products is also characterized by various credentialling strategies or as Moritz Gekeler describes it, factionalization (2012: 165–206). So how would the perceived have to be composed so that it itself takes on the character of the natural and does not merely symbolize or represent 'nature'?

Gernot Böhme calls this perceptible impression of naturalness sometimes the ephemeral (1989: 166) and sometimes the gesture of naturalness (1992: 141) and, following Ludwig Klages, formulates the criterion of vivid unpredictability (1992: 154) as a kind of sensual uncertainty of expectation in which the expectation is always disappointed by the concrete manifestations in perception. However, he refers in particular to fleeting atmospheric phenomena such as light reflections, the flickering of the air, or sounds that surround things and in which they are embedded. Martin Seel, in his aesthetics of nature, focuses on very similar phenomena, which he calls the play of appearances and which would be noticeable through disinterested attention (1996: 38).

Figs. 1 and 2: Conventional and organic mixed rye bread.

Source: my-bakery.de

Jens Soentgen goes one step further by examining the natural appearance of things themselves. This natural appearance, which he also calls a fractal structure (1997b: 256), is based on the fact that the causes of this appearance lie in the object itself, in contrast to an artificial appearance, where the causes of this appearance lie outside the object (1997a: 197). The natural appearance is therefore the self-expression of substances (1997b: 267). An example of an artificial appearance is fish fingers, as the appearance is determined by external agents, whereas an example of a natural appearance is the irregularly cracked crust of organic bread, as here the dough can largely give itself its shape and thus express itself in this (figs. 1 and 2) (1997a: 196–201).

The art psychologist Rudolf Arnheim determines the difference between natural and artificial things in the same way:

> [N]atural objects are created by the very forces that constitute them. The shape of the ocean wave results directly from the action of propelled water. The flower is grown rather than made, and therefore its external appearance consists of the perceivable effects of the process of growth. (1964: 30)

And referring to artificial things, he writes: “Man-made objects are produced by external forces.” (Arnheim 1964: 30) Both authors thus justify the natural appearance of something by the fact that it carries its cause in itself, whereas that which is perceived as artificial is seen as caused by external causes. Rudolf Arnheim calls these inner causes forces whereas Jens Soentgen understands them as material self-activity (1997a: 196). This concordance is no coincidence, because this distinction between natural and artificial things goes back to Aristotle: "Some things exist, or come into existence, by nature; and some otherwise." (1957: 107 [192b]) "By nature" means for Aristotle "that they have within themselves a principle of movement (or change) and rest" (1957: 107 [192b]). For manufactured things applies instead: "none of them has within itself the principle of its own making. Generally this principle resides in some external agent, as in the case of the house and its builder, and so with all hand-made things." (Aristotle 1957: 109 [192b])

However, I consider the criterion of 'inner causes' and the subsequent conclusion that appearance expresses these inner causes to be epistemologically untenable. Firstly, these natural-looking fractal formations, such as the cracked crust of bread, always arise in interaction with other substances and other processes, such as heat or humidity, so they always have 'external causes'. Second, no expressive relationship can be derived from a causal connection: To perceive something as the effect of something else does not mean that this other thing is expressed in this effect, otherwise everything perceived would always express at the same time what caused it. One could, so to speak, see the causes of things by merely looking at them. On the contrary, the perception of such seemingly arbitrary, chaotic and contingent[3] fractal formations is distinguished precisely by the fact that we cannot say exactly what caused them in detail.

Why is the bread crust puffed up like this and not like that, why do two fish of the same species look different, and why does one strawberry taste slightly sweeter than the other, even though they come from the same bush? The sensory impression of naturalness seems to be caused by the fact that we do not know and do not understand the reasons why something is sensory in a certain way, or that we have difficulties in identifying what we perceive in detail with something that is already known. When we claim about something that it looks natural or smells natural or tastes natural, we mean precisely that contingent abundance of perception and perceptual variations that our comprehension cannot grasp. The same mental perplexity that we know from many perceptions of nature also takes place here. With regard to the perception of nature we are used to not understanding them in detail, and if this impression of incomprehensibility also occurs with artefacts, they seem natural (Lang 2019: 53–57). That could be the reason why "a lack of standardisation with 'less regular appearance' and 'less perfect shapes' are criteria for organic quality which to some extent are expected by consumers and emerge as a guarantee for superior

3 The term 'contingency' is meant to express that these perceptions occur but do not appear to be explainable to the perceiver neither by natural law nor as a product of human intention.

taste", according to a Europe-wide marketing study on the sensory experiences and expectations of organic food (Stolz/Jahrl/Baumgart/Schneider 2010: 10).

These sensory perceptions, which are incomprehensible in detail, are not merely found in natural objects, but can be provoked, i.e. consciously initiated, by allowing processes that are not entirely controllable: for example, as in the case of the bread crust, or through the use of heterogeneous, trace-rich material surfaces, the exposure of fruits and vegetables to complex individualizing environmental factors, lack of cleaning, seemingly random arrangements, or simply the use of colors and shapes that are difficult to conceptualize, such as broken, earthy hues, broken lines or hatchings. The undefinable smell (Biedermann 2018) so characteristic of some organic food shops, which is also described as "musty", "strange" or "weird" in various internet forums speculating on the causes of this smell, may evoke the impression of naturalness precisely because it is of a complexity that no longer allows the individual odour notes to be identified and thus understood. The impression of naturalness thus arises neither primarily through certain symbols of naturalness or nature, nor through a resemblance to nature, but through the systematic production of perceptions that cannot be grasped in their entirety and only through this incomprehensibility come into affinity with our other experiences of nature. Thus, a rich natural taste is not characterized by the fact that it tastes like nature – whatever that would be – or that certain tastes have become a symbol of nature, but that they contain flavour notes that we cannot identify in tasting, thereby giving the taste an infinite depth.

3. Provoking Natural-Historical Perceptions

Such contingent sensualities, which we perceive as natural, do not necessarily remain in the mode of incomprehensibility. On the contrary, due to their ambiguity, they challenge a desire to interpret and understand. This interpretation, however, differs from the interpretation of symbols or representations; instead, it is comparable to the reading of traces. Precisely because these natural perceptions seem to make so little sense, we try to reconstruct their genesis in our imagination, through which processes – mostly in the past – they became the way they are now. In this way, the singular production history of these sensualities, with their ecologically relevant processes, can become thematic in perception. Accompanying media in the form of food packaging, advertisements or even menu cards, which point to certain conditions of origin and production processes, play a decisive role here, since they can steer the tracking in a certain direction. Certain sensory features thus become indicative of various processes involved in production and seem to authenticate them, since they are interpreted as causal effects of what they refer to.[4] I would like to explain this interpretation of contingencies as traces of ecologically relevant processes briefly with a few examples, one in relation to two sets of tableware and another on the basis of the aroma design of sustainable roasted coffee.

Waste in ceramics production due to faulty production poses a certain ecological problem, as ceramics are difficult to recycle. However, what is perceived as defective and thus given the status of so-called seconds or B-goods is usually not based on functional defects but on aesthetic preferences. In the field of serially produced ceramics, an aesthetic expectation of flawlessness and purity dominates, which is disappointed by even the slightest production-related deviations and thus downgrades the object to seconds.

Figs. 3 and 4: The B-Set *porcelain service for Makkum, 1997.*

Source: jongeriuslab.

In order to break with and change this aesthetic convention, Hella Jongerius designed the *B-Set* porcelain service for Makkum in 1997 (figs. 3 and 4). In this, all the conventional conditions of serial ceramic production are maintained and only one, namely the firing temperature, is changed by raising it to the point where the porcelain begins to deform slightly (Hinte 2006: 159). The simple shapes of the service and the monochrome glaze draw attention to the slight irregularities that stand out in contrast with them, which we are usually accustomed to reading as the result of a handcrafted production process. The serial number embossed on the top and the product name, on the other hand, refer to the serial production process and thus give direction to the interpretation of the natural-looking irregularities. They are

4 I have presented in detail the role traces play in the aesthetics of ecological design in the publication *Prozessästhetik* (2015).

now understood not as the result of a handcrafted process, but as traces of the firing process.

Accordingly, Hella Jongerius's endeavors not only to keep manual influences out of the production process, but also to draw the viewer's attention to the serial production. In this way, product perception is determined by the apparent paradox that individual forms can emerge under identical production conditions. These individualized forms are no longer experienced as designed, that is, artificial; instead, they must be understood as the independent result of material processes and their interactions. In conventional ceramics firing is instead understood as a pure act of fixation, which is not intended to change the form but to preserve it, and thus the form passes through the firing process unaffected, as if it did not exist. In the *B-Set* tableware, however, the product form is visibly co-determined by the firing process. While we experience the basic geometric forms of the tableware as artificial, we understand its irregularities as traces of the processes involved in its production. What previously would have been perceived as a flaw now becomes an aesthetic feature capable of saying something about an ecologically relevant process, namely the burning energy involved in its creation (Lang 2013: 70).

Figs. 5 and 6: The tableware line Lücke.

Source: studio booom.

Susann Paduch pursues a similar idea with her tableware titled *Lücke* (the German word for "gap"), which was awarded the German Federal Ecodesign Prize in 2020; but *Lücke* goes a step further (figs. 5 and 6). The tableware was developed in small series for the eponymous temporary organic restaurant Lücke in Weimar (figs. 7 and 8). The restaurant was built in a gap between buildings as the final project of the architect Hannes Schmidt at the Bauhaus University in Weimar, using locally available second-hand resources such as reclaimed timber from fences and roof trusses, old truck floors and windows (Euen 2014). Each element told its own backstory and thus made it possible to experience that it had come together temporarily to form a restaurant, only to go different ways again afterwards.

Figs. 7 and 8: The restaurant Lücke *in Weimar.*

Source: studio booom.

The eponymous tableware by Susann Paduch also used an already existing resource, namely graded B-goods of the *Update* tableware of the porcelain manufactory Kahla. She categorized the defects of this downgraded tableware and coded them with abbreviations. Each defect was framed by a print with a kind of information box and highlighted as an individual attraction. Whereas previously these traces of production were merely contingent, incomprehensible deviations from the ideal that led to an aesthetic devaluation, the creative intervention has now turned them into interpretable traces that tell of very specific production processes. These range from foreign substances in the kiln atmosphere, the accumulation of small porcelain particles, iron stains, unglazed edges and glaze stains to deformations caused by the pressing tool. In this way, not only is waste reduced, thus conserving resources, but the utensils of dining initiate an awareness that is characteristic of ecological interests as a whole, namely reflecting on the processes involved in the production contexts and what ecological relevance they might have.

In relation to food, this ecological interest in its origins and the conditions under which it was produced, traded, and prepared becomes even more salient. This is not only reflected pragmatically in the countless organic product labels, which are supposed to ensure the credibility of their statements about the conditions of origin through certification procedures, but also in the tendency to depict conditions of origin in the presentation of organic food and organic dishes and to keep the ingredients distinguishable in such a way that they reveal something of their condition before processing. This tendency is particularly noticeable in the photographic representations of organic cookbooks, recipes, and the food packaging of organic brands. It is not essential whether the food actually claims or even certifies the use of ecological technologies and processes, in the sense of cultivation, processing, transport and preparation methods, but whether ecological conditions are reflected in the aesthetics. Therefore, similar aesthetics can certainly be found in high cuisine, for example, by Alain Ducasse with his concept of *naturalité* developed at the *Plaza Athénée*, which focuses on seasonal, regional and low-meat cuisine, where the flavors of the individual ingredients and their individual natural histories are central (Ducasse 2020). This interest in the ecological prehistory of the food thus also leads to a different shaping of the sensual. The sensual is supposed to open up, so to speak, to its own conditions of emergence, to say something of these conditions. The question arises, however, whether this tendency towards, so to speak, historical perceptions is primarily to be found in the design of the visual aspect of ecological food cultures or whether it also continues into the gustatory and olfactory levels.

Figs. 9 and 10: The coffee roasting company Röstbrüder *in Weimar.*

Source: Johannes Lang.

To investigate this question, I interviewed Vincent and Collin Höckendorf, the owners and operators of the coffee roasting company Röstbrüder in Weimar (figs. 9 and 10), about how they arrive at their aroma creations and whether the origin and, in the broadest sense, the genesis of the coffee plays a role. Röstbrüder is a small and young roasting company whose coffee is neither fair trade nor ecologically certified, but who strive for the greatest possible complete transparency about the origin, cultivation and trade of the coffee through direct imports from small plantations and coffee farmers as well as personal relationships with the suppliers. With their range changing according to availability and season, they serve the trend of single origin coffee, i.e. a single coffee variety originating from a specific growing area or even from a single plantation and not blended with other varieties. They also offer espresso blends of two to three varieties.

According to Vincent Höckendorf, naturalness played a role in flavor design insofar as the "whole trend of single origin coffees is to somehow find a pure taste of a pure variety of coffee. In that sense, it is already the stated goal to emphasize the natural aromas of the coffee instead of simply covering them up with roasted aromas."[5] These natural aromas are the "potential" that a coffee brings with it. Then, when roasting and creating the right roasting profile, they would focus on "sharpening" and "teasing out" this potential:

> Every raw coffee you buy has a different potential. So you're never going to get the kind of fruity notes out of a Brazilian, and you're not going to get the kind of fruity berry notes out of a coffee from Ethiopia. You can think of it like wine. That's why the coffee arrives with, I'll say, a certain potential, which is inherent in it. We simply try to sharpen that. We try to pick out what we like about it and try to tease that out. But it arrives within a certain framework." (ibid)

Collin Höckendorf sees a clear difference in this approach to the classic coffee products of the big brands such as Lavazza or Dallmayr:

> I believe that the big brands all have a very clear idea of taste and also implement it through the various blends of raw coffees and through the various adjustments to the roasting so that they always taste exactly the same: a Dallmayr always tastes like a Dallmayr, a Lavazza always tastes like a Lavazza. The big difference is basically: we have a small assortment, some of which also change. We have seasonal coffees. Our products come from much smaller farms, where again very small dependencies change the taste. If it rains more or less, that changes the product. You taste it in the cup at the end. The big companies try to prevent exactly that. These want, no matter what the year was, no matter where the coffee comes from, no matter what ends up being roasted: it is roasted and mixed in such a way that it tastes exactly the same in the end as it does every time. They practically always create the same product. And we have individual exciting things that are also influenced by fluctuations every now and then." (ibid)

This description makes relatively clear what could distinguish taste design against the background of an awareness of the respective individual geographical and cli-

5 Quoted from an one-hour-long interview I conducted with Vincent and Collin Höckendorf on 17.05.2021 in Weimar. The quotes were translated from German.

matic conditions of the cultivation of basic food stuffs. The diversity of taste and its individuality conditioned by the local ecological contexts becomes the starting point, the source of inspiration for the final product in terms of taste, instead of, conversely, starting from a specific ideal of taste – such as a typical Italian coffee taste – selecting the ingredients and preparing them in such a way that the taste emancipates itself from the concrete spatial and temporal ecological conditions, as if they did not exist at all. The individual basic taste given by the ecological conditions is potentiated and intensified, so that the tastes are first and foremost related to ecological diversity. Through accompanying media that provide information about the most diverse conditions of origin, from the variety to the place, the altitude of cultivation, the means of cultivation and the local climate, the taste becomes a trace of these conditions, a taste that seems to say something about its own conditions of origin. The aesthetics of ecological food cultures appear as a sensual articulation of the ecological prehistory exhibited not only by the prepared but also the artefacts interacting with it.

4. Conclusion

At the outset, the question was raised whether ecological food cultures have produced not only technological and procedural innovations – in terms of environmentally friendly cultivation methods, low-material, low-energy and low-emission transport, processing, and packaging methods – but also a specific aesthetic. The purpose of the heterogeneity of examples was to find general principles that work across artefacts and senses, thus accounting for the encompassing nature of ecological cultures that tend to permeate every sphere of life. The examples are not so much to be understood as sufficient evidence for the theses put forward, but rather as points of reference and suggestions for further aesthetic considerations and design approaches. Likewise, they are certainly not representative of ecological food cultures in a quantitative sense. Conventional strategies of symbolizing and visualizing idealized notions of nature are far more common. Rather, they seem to be representative in a qualitative sense, i.e. aesthetic strategies that represent a certain unique proposition compared to conventional food cultures.

The principles formulated are, first, the provocation of contingent perceptions that create the impression of 'naturalness' due to the incomprehensibility present in the details, and second, the provocation of trace reading up to the interpretation of traces of taste, as an aesthetic possibility to let causal conditions of ecological prehistory become a moment of present perception. This perceptual psychological interpretation also makes it clear that the perceptual impression of naturalness is not to be confused with factual naturality or untreatedness. In principle, artificial flavours are conceivable which, due to their complexity, appear more natural than their natural counterpart and, conversely, natural flavours which, due to their distinct taste, are experienced as highly artificial. The impression of naturalness can therefore be designed.

These aesthetic principles correspond to two needs by which ecological food cultures are characterized. On the one hand, the need that not every factor of food production is under human control, but that the individual ecological conditions of geography, climate, and biosphere have had their independent part in its creation. This need is expressed in the provocation of natural perceptions, since these are involuntarily perceived as something that cannot be manmade, that is, the result of self-acting processes. On the other hand, the need for ecological transparency, that is, the possibility of having an awareness of the ecological conditions under which the food was created. This need is expressed in what I call the provocation of natural-historical perceptions, since these seem to credibly convey some conditions of origin.

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3. Sociality and Culturality of Food and Eating

Toward a Gastronomic Criticism

From Good Taste to Haptic Taste

Nicola Perullo

> I am not a critic. My business is to give recommendations.
> *Anders Husa*

Abstract *In this essay, I propose a different approach to gastronomic criticism through a new theory of taste, that is, an unconventional model of gustatory perception. I show that what is usually understood today as 'food criticism' is a distortion of it in terms of a mere exercise in reviews and ratings. This distortion is linked to a corresponding conception of the gustatory experience, where mainly, if not exclusively, sensible aspects referring to an objective and static conception of food are taken into account. This objective and static conception is consistent with and supportive of the contemporary domain of visual food images, understood as immediate outputs of the gastronomic reality. As an alternative, I propose a haptic taste, that is, engaged and involved, processual and multisensory, as a model for a new kind of gastronomic criticism. Haptic taste can contribute to the creation of a contemporary gastronomic critique that, consciously reaping the increasing power that visual images have in the digital age, deconstructs them by arranging them along planes where they are experienced and questioned.*

1. Criticizing is Not Reviewing: A Different Approach to Gustatory Experience

In this essay, I propose a different approach to gastronomic criticism through a new theory of taste, that is, gustatory perception. I show that what is usually understood today as 'food criticism' is actually (and of course, this is subject to exceptions) a distortion of it in terms of a mere exercise in reviews and ratings. This distortion is linked to a corresponding conception of the gustatory experience, where mainly, if not exclusively, sensible aspects referring to an objective and static conception of food are taken into account. I shall call this conception *optic taste*, to point out both the prevalence of the visual element in all its medial aspects, as is evident today, and the fact that the gustatory experience itself is modeled on the standard conception of sight as a distal and objective sense. Instead, I propose a *haptic taste*, that is, engaged and involved, processual and multisensory, as a model for a new kind of gastronomic criticism.

Underlying my argument is the distinction between the criticism and the review: a distinction that is very often all but nullified. What is mostly understood by 'gastronomic criticism'? In general, it refers to food, drink, and restaurant reviews; an activity that often produces journalistic communication based on the development of rankings, awards or, more simply, advices and recommendations. The food critic is seen, with rare exceptions, as the one who reviews and rates. Are we sure that this conception of criticism is right or, more modestly, that is what we still need today? Do not get me wrong: reviews and recommendations are of course legitimate and I do not advocate their disappearance. I am not arguing that they should disappear. I argue, however, that a difference between their nature and function, and those of criticism, must be established. Similarly, I do not deny that gustatory perception implies also some skills to detect the sensory qualities of a food; however, it is not to be reduced to that, and a new approach to taste is needed precisely to go beyond that conception summed up in the expression 'good taste.' I suggest an alternative, according to which gastronomic criticism should not be concerned with reviewing and evaluating, at least not in the first instance (Perullo 2019). For while criticism is reflection and discernment (cf. Barthes 2007), a review is an expression of value that arises – often in an immediate and noncritical way – from the application of standard criteria over many cases, thus producing a comparison and thus a classification. To criticize is not to review, much less to make rankings and lists of the best kitchens, the finest wines, the top cafés, pizza joints, or ice cream parlors. In this sense, TripAdvisor – but also the Michelin Guide and the Fifty Best Restaurants ranking, to name the three most important contemporary industry benchmarks – are all reviewing devices and not critical tools. Today, what goes under the name of 'gastronomic criticism' is actually a huge reviewing apparatus, based on both traditional (guides) and new (web) media.

2. From Good Taste to Haptic Taste: The Ecological Perception beyond the Visual Objectification of Food

Along the same line, an effective gastronomic criticism calls for a theory of taste that does not reduce it to the ability to recognize tastes and smells, but that opens it to the ability to connect them to the experiential and ecological (i.e., socio-cultural, environmental) processes presupposing them.[1] In contrast with an optic approach to tastes and tasting, in some previous works I have suggested the notion of *haptic taste*. I do not mean by 'haptic' just a synonym for touch, because the tactility of the haptic is not a *grasping*; rather, haptic taste is explorative, open and not immediately judging. Moreover, it is trans-sensory: it accords a particular privilege neither to touch nor to sight. Hence, haptic taste describes a perceptual engagement deeply involved in the processes of experiencing food and beverages; it is an attitude focused on processes rather than on objects (Perullo 2018b). Whereas the optic approach perceives objects understood as outcomes, as crystallizations in stable and standard features, the haptic approach, instead, perceives processes. Not considering food in the terms of an object takes us back to a different way of perceiving, but also of representing it.

The notion of 'good taste,' as is well known, was born around the middle of the seventeenth century, in the modern context of bourgeois society and the new forms of state and democracy (Agamben 1999: 13–27). As early as the 1970s, Pierre Bourdieu highlighted well the connection between the emergence of good taste and the question of class representation. In the case that concerns us here, this kind of taste is shaped along a progressive autonomy of food value from its contexts, its ritual, symbolic, communal meanings, assuming the recognition of 'good' just as in reference to the object. Within this framework, the 19th century (with Grimod de la Reynière and Brillat-Savarin) witnesses the birth of modern gastronomic criticism: it involves evaluating a food, meal or drink by recognizing its sensible qualities. The qualitative value of food becomes disengaged from its ecologies, that is, from the set of processes – temporal, geographical, ritual, and convivial – that make it possible and illuminate its deeper meaning. In other words, only the outcome, the 'product,' matters more and more. Now, my thesis is that this reduction of food from the whole processes that originate it to the mere sensible qualities attached to the object runs in parallel with a certain idea of gustatory experience, from which originates the idea of criticism identified with reviews, ratings and recommendations. Limiting the taste experience to the sensory, albeit multisensory, profile of food is a two-dimensional and horizontal operation; it is the *optic* approach to gustatory experience (see Perullo 2018b, 2020). In parallel, identifying gastronomic criticism with reviews and evaluations of food and restaurants means objectifying and classifying them. This is a legitimate but reductive move.

When and how did this reduction of processes to objects, this reduction of the value of a work and perception, come about? The question is complex, requiring a lengthy analysis that would take us away from our topic. To cut a long story short: this change concerns the formation of modern subjectivity and sensitivity within a

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1 I use here "ecology" in the sense developed by J.J. Gibson with the notion of "ecological perception" (1966).

changed scientific, philosophical, social and economic framework. But this is the framework still in force today, embodied in media channels, via their use of visual imagery and its corresponding vocabulary. Of course, this is not to deny the importance of images or sight in gustatory processual and haptic perception. On the contrary, according to the haptic approach, sight and taste are in continuous correspondence, dialoguing and interrogating the perceiver far beyond the immediate sensory qualities of food (Perullo 2018a).

As it is well known, the very notion of criticism, as well as the one of 'good taste,' is modern, and is an expression of essentially modern feeling/thinking that arose within the realm of aesthetics (a modern discipline, born in 1750) especially with reference to art (see Dickie 1996; Perullo 2017). However, if today critics (of fine art, or literary critics, or even film critics) were to be asked to list the landmarks of their respective disciplines, their answers would be more solid and certain compared to those by food critics faced with the same question. In gastronomy, which to this day seems to enjoy endless media success, it is very difficult to find undisputed points of reference. Why? It should be remembered that this social and cultural practice immediately developed through two channels: amateurship – the paradigmatic case being that of Brillat-Savarin – or journalism: it seems that the first restaurant review appeared in 1859 in the *New York Times*, significantly anonymously.[2] To the amateurship and anonymity, I return to later. Let us now reflect on the relationship between journalism, reviews, rankings and recommendations, and gustatory perception.

The birth and development of gastronomic criticism did not come about because of scholars, scientists or academics, but mainly because of journalism. Food criticism flourished within a model – precisely that of journalism – based on current affairs that has prevented the creation of a broad, perspectival and diachronic cultural canon (as was the case, for art criticism or even, more recently, for film criticism). It is true that, in general, every criticism is a modern attitude that shares similar assumptions. First of all, the assumption that there is a judgmental and evaluative act on the part of a subject (often, an individual) towards an object (or work). Secondly, as observed before, this paradigm is rooted in the modern idea of taste, precisely in the birth of 'aesthetic taste,' conceived as something that, on purpose, can overlook the contexts in which a work of art is immersed. Modern conception of taste focuses first on shared criteria of judgement considered, in a peculiar sense, 'objective,' that is, 'intersubjective' (Hume 1760); and then, with the blooming of scientific accounts on taste, on a referential sensory analysis, more and more objectifying the gustatory experiences and detaching them from the contexts they unfold.

Modern criticism, however, arises in a social context where wealth and culture often go together. In other words, if in the 18th, 19th and still in the first part of the

2 See: https://www.nytimes.com/1859/01/01/archives/how-we-dine-by-the-strongminded-reporter-of-the-times.html

20th century, the man of good taste, the cultivated and educated person, is also the person with financial means, from here onwards this link has been dissolving. Today, indeed, it is perhaps more common for culture and money to be in opposition. This has enormous consequences both in the field of taste perception and education for an amateur approach (those with sensibility and attention often do not have the means to afford certain experiences, so they forgo them) and in the field, mirrored, of the profession. In fact, working for a food newspaper or a magazine does not necessarily imply having high sensibility, education and attention to food.

On the one hand, what today goes by the name of 'gastronomic criticism,' is an expression typical of the modern Western and bourgeois consciousness it emerged from. On the other hand, by creating the very notion of a 'culture' of taste and of good taste, this consciousness has been responsible for the reduction of food to a mere object.[3] However, there is one important difference, as the reduction of the so-called food critic to the journalist today suffers from a double difficulty. As mentioned before, early modern critics had the possibility to practice their gastronomic expertise, although reduced to the objectual attitude, with freedom and without needing to be salaried. Nowadays, instead, this is far from a given. People write, review, evaluate quite often without having sufficient experience to do so, limiting themselves to the bare minimum, caught in a publishing production mechanism that does not allow for any kind of long experience and education. In the 'hit and run' journalism, the capacity of gustatory perception is very limited. We are thus faced with the situation whereby the modern model of taste judgment towards food, already reduced to an object of sensory analysis, undergoes a further, this time definitive, degradation. However, the often little skill possessed by the reviewer goes by the wayside or is even completely irrelevant, because the immediacy and haste evaluations and recommendations are consumed by do not even allow it to be noticed. Precisely in this context, paradoxically, food as an object to be sensitively enjoyed disappears too: only its media representations remain, and the judgments that are made about it, which are then valid in themselves. To paraphrase Lautréamont (1870: 8), we might say that when criticism is mixed up with the carousel of lists, recommendations and reviews, judgments about food and drink become more valuable than the food itself.[4]

3 These reflections arise from more general research I have been developing starting from *Taste as Experience* (Perullo 2016) and which then has become part (with particular attention to wine criticism) of *Epistenology* (Perullo 2020). In the specific field of restaurant criticism, I have reflected at great length on the articles of Lisa Abend (2018) – one of the exceptions who actually knows how to tell apart a review from gastronomic criticism.

4 On this aspect, I draw on the analysis provided by Agamben (1999).

3. The Birth of Modern Gastronomy and the Rise of the Expert

Of course, the responsibility for this situation does not rest with individual reviewers. As already made clear, the notion of 'gastronomic criticism' as a socio-cultural practice is a modern phenomenon and, as such, expresses the characteristic tensions of modernity. It arose in the Europe of bourgeois society, for a new public willing to pay for individual experiences of pleasure and aesthetic appreciation untethered from ritual and community: the birth of museums, exhibitions and restaurants, of course, goes hand in hand with that of criticism. In the specific case, the restaurant is a French invention of the 18^{th} century (Appelbaum 2011), but a century earlier, we can already see the emergence of the gastronomic approach we have described as the reduction of food to an object whose sensitive qualities constitute its value, both cultural and economic. Consider the case of wine. In a small treatise on the cultivation of vines and olives (published in 1766, but his trip to France dates back to the century before, during the 1670s), John Locke (1766) writes about a famous Bordeaux, Château Haut-Brion, he visited after tasting a bottle in a London tavern, being most impressed with its taste and price. The rise of the wine market coincides with the development of the restaurant as a brand. The restaurant is a place where one has the opportunity not only and not so much to feed themselves, as to appreciate the skills of a maker who is able to create something that a normal person could not cook, especially not within a domestic kitchen, due to the lack of specific capabilities (acquired mostly through professionalism) and tools.[5] As was the case in the transition from ancient and medieval art to modern art, so in the transition from ancient and medieval cuisine to modern cuisine the emphasis begins to fall on free and individual expression of creativity, which is represented as a form of professional expertise. On the side of the eater's experience, that is, gustatory perception, the recognition of such skills is equally individual, but not as free: the canons of good taste are codified according to rules that follow different factors. Some of these factors are closely related to the market economy. When a restaurant becomes a cultural *and* commercial activity, it turns into a space of exchange between audiences and critics. Whereas, in the *Ancien Régime*, a cook like François Vatel could still express his art thanks to patronage, from then on, this became impossible. It is via the relationship with the spectator and the marketplace that the question of cuisine and its criticism must be investigated; and the moment the spectator, from being a mere enjoyer of the aesthetic experience, is also able to take on the role of its critic, the question becomes somewhat more complicated.

Modern gastronomy has developed within this scenario. With perfect consistency, the notion of good taste was thus gradually eclipsed or, rather, mixed with that

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5 The French word *chef* expresses well this axiology: according to the historian Jean-François Revel (1982), a chef is a man able to invent what has not yet been eaten at home.

(born in the 20^{th} century) of 'conspicuous consumption' (Veblen 1994). At this point, the notion of good taste should be further clarified, in that it embodies the very zeitgeist of modernity. Despite its derivation from taste as a physical sense, good taste is a cultural performance, which differs partially or even completely from taste as a 'natural' sense. In fact, for a good portion of aesthetic theorists (just think of Kant), good taste is not about the ability to take pleasure in food and drink at all but is a specific and peculiar faculty. Good taste in reference to gastronomy thus becomes an appendage of the cultural discourse and, as is well known, the concept of the 'man of taste' has been subjected to major questioning like that of the classic study of Pierre Bourdieu (1979). Since then, a plethora of social studies has also investigated the relationship between taste structures and social classes. It is almost trivial today to note that the man of taste is mostly an adult male, white and bourgeois, educated and affluent – the landscape has only changed slightly to this day. As has been pointed out many times, the first figures traceable to gastronomic criticism are anything but professionals, but rather laymen and amateurs. Laurent Grimod de La Reynière – considered its founding father, with his *Almanach des Gourmands* (1802–1813) – was a lawyer and heir to a great family fortune. Jean Anthelme Brillat-Savarin – who promoted the term *gastronomy* throughout the world, becoming synonymous with it – was a member of the Constituent Assembly and a magistrate. Outside of France, the Italian Pellegrino Artusi – who codified a notion of Italian national cuisine (the first edition of *La scienza in cucina e l'arte di mangiar bene* dates back to 1891) – was the son of a wealthy textile merchant. This situation was to remain typical for a long time to come: enthusiasts, amateurs, and dilettantes would wedge themselves into the food domain so as to reflect a new cultural sensibility. However, as already said, among those founders, as in many members of the wealthy bourgeoisie of the time, money and knowledge were still closely related. One could be cultured and have good taste – of course, not only for food, but for art, letters, and life in general – while having a lot of money; indeed, certain cultural 'experiences' were only accessible to those with money in their pockets. This decreed the rise and success of the bourgeoisie, where the separation (if not even opposition) between knowledge and money embarked on its ultimate decline. Such a process marks the vicissitudes of the so-called gastronomic criticism. Hence the question: in order to be considered fully cultural activities, compatible with study and research, must cuisine, food, and criticism – at least for the time necessary for the establishment of a code external to everyday and mundane journalism – be disengaged from the market and thus from the economy? And what kind of perceptual attitude towards gustatory experience would this move require?

The activity of reviewing in regard to wine emerged and developed in affluent English-speaking countries (Shapin 2012): first in England (home to the 'Masters of Wine') then in the United States. That of restaurants, on the other hand, first came about in France, partly because of the origin of the phenomenon itself. According to the historian Jean-François Revel (1982), *chef*, as already stated, refers to one who creates food that, in terms of ingredients and techniques, is unattainable in the domestic dimension. The *Michelin Guide* began publishing lists of hotels and restaurants with stars in France in the 1920s, in Italy only from 1959. It should be recalled that in France, in the 1950s, Robert Courtine joined *Le Monde* to write the weekly gastronomic column, under the pseudonym 'La Reynière;' meanwhile in Italy, Luigi Veronelli, a philosophy graduate, anarchist and libertarian, founded the magazine *Il Gastronomo* (1956). Based on socio-economic differences, an ensuing school of gastronomic journalism developed in each country: while England, the United States and France dominated the field, Italy was instead a backward country in this respect until the 1960s, with a society disinclined towards food discourse wallowing in thematic reviews. Such practices began to come into being from the 1970s with Veronelli, only to explode over the following decade, with names, publishers, and acronyms still to be found to this day.

4. Gustatory Experience Exceeds the Sensory Qualities of Food

I believe that the recovery of the amateur dimension allows both the foundation of a gastronomic criticism that is not reduced to an apparatus of reviews and evaluations, and the possibility of a haptic and ecological taste, involved with values that do not deal with food as an object to be measured through its sensitive qualities. Despite its elitist origin, in fact, the figure of the amateur provides gastronomy with a depth and breadth that the exclusively professional dimension currently prevents.

Unless we call for public investment in pure study and education, economic matters and the immediacy of reactions required in the current flow of information will remain a shadow hanging over the issue. Art critics too have been formed through infrastructures, such as museums and galleries that are tied to the needs of the market and economic exchange. However, the kind of sensory experience required by a food critic calls for a higher financial investment. It is true, on the one hand, that an art critic needs money to travel and visit places; on the other hand, differently from visual and auditory experiences, gustatory ones can neither be reproduced nor replaced. Nowadays, media technologies make expertise in the field of audiovisual art without the need for travel. This is not so in the field of culinary art, which is experienced only through direct perception. Beyond that, the aura of art still foresees forms of patronage and freedom unthinkable in gastronomy to this day. Not everything revolves around journalism and profit. This was not the case for gastronomy, with a very few exceptions and, unfortunately, too insignificant to be taken into account: no one has ever been paid just to think; at best – and this was true up until a few years ago; by now even this is almost over – they have been paid to review. It may be that this is so solely because there are long-standing codes in the arts, and gastronomy has to make do with histories and outlooks yet to be written. In the meantime, however, an inverted strategy should be suggested: a critique that moves from a different approach to taste. An ecological and relational approach, not immediately evaluative and therefore not aimed at reviewing. For reasons I explained earlier, this approach to taste can take root more easily among amateurs and mere enthusiasts than among professionals.

5. Three Examples: The Michelin Guide, TripAdvisor and the World's 50 Best Restaurants

Let us now give three examples of review models mistaken for criticism. The most important and influential restaurant ranking is undoubtedly the *Michelin Guide*. It bases its authoritativeness on codified authority and power, a self-assigned law insofar as it constitutes the guide of reference on a historical level as well. A mainstay of the modern, Western, bourgeois restaurant model, it exists as kin of that very model. In a perfectly circular way, the *Michelin* is the source of the criteria it deems objective for evaluating the quality of a restaurant. Having a critical and 'ecological' attitude towards these criteria, not taking them for granted, should be evidence for worthy criticism. Instead, passively accepting them, as if they were natural data and incontrovertible facts (for example, a table set elegance asks for certain cutlery, certain glasses and tablecloths) is symptomatic of a lack of discernment and distraction. The *Michelin* model synthesizes two different trends. On the one side, it continues the approach of authoritarian authority typical of the modern expert, that possesses good taste but also power, and of the academic, that represents the institution defining the rules of good and decent art; on the other side, it fits into the new 20th-century strand of the democratization of taste. Characteristics of this approach are teamwork but also a certain 'anonymization' of the final judgments, which are not tied to a specific and individual signature. There is a seemingly paradoxical combination between the exaltation of good taste as a judgment that recognizes food qualities and its anonymous, depersonalized leveling; from this point of view, *TripAdvisor* rankings are the consistent extreme of the principle promoted by the *Michelin*. Anonymity also seems to have moral value, because the only way to exercise a (presumptively) unconditioned and therefore 'objective' judgment is not to be recognized at all. The moral interpretation, on the other hand, may thus be turned on its head, taken instead as a sign of total immorality as dissimulation. Being reliant on the epistemologically bogus assumption that by moving the subject out of the way, only the pure fact remains as a form of unconditioned 'objectivity,' it in fact deresponsibilizes. As we see, it is still a matter of power, represented differently according to the reputation of the anonymous figures of the moment.

Seemingly opposite and despite their obvious differences, the *Michelin Guide* and *TripAdvisor* share an underlying common assumption. Of course, *TripAdvisor* is an expression of the social-cognitive revolution ushered in by the digital age and the web, with the endless proliferation of positions and 'points of view.' As is well known, *TripAdvisor* is the gastronomic exemplification of what some have called the 'death of expertise' (Nichols 2017), and therefore would appear the opposite of the *Michelin*. In actual fact, it fulfills its very assumptions. With the gradual absorption of good taste into the flow of information and media representation, the real and attentive gustatory experience dissolves thus legitimizing all opinions. In the domain of authority given by good taste, the acknowledgement of expertise takes place via the sharing of a common cultural perspective that is akin or at least comparable to that of those who, in turn, have already been granted the authority to exercise it. Now, as long as a society accepts hierarchy in social and cultural classes, as was the case in early modernity, this might just work. When, however, everything goes progressively horizontal and the idea of authority gradually weakens taking the 'democratization of taste' to its logical extreme – for this is the essence of pop culture, in which appreciation is no longer mediated by cultural training – the cogs start to stick.

Gastronomy shows this apparent paradox very clearly. Having unmasked the neither objective nor absolute nature of taste, it becomes a free-for-all. If the value of food is recognized through a good taste understood as a cultural, socially constituted performance, it will then be possible to justify everything to the extreme: *de gustibus non est disputandum* – there is no accounting for taste, as the motto goes – is only the apparent opposite of good taste. In reality, it constitutes its most radical application. A similar process happens in the field of representative democracy: by dint of voting for representatives, voters first ended up voting for themselves (slowly eroding the sense of the formation of the 'ruling class') before then toying with the notion that representative voting is no longer needed, for one may instead exercise one's power directly.

Indeed, this is how *TripAdvisor* came about. One might say that this mechanism represents the very essence of nihilism as the implementation of subjectivity as a self-fulfilling power. The power of the taste of individualistic subjectivity becomes so absolute and immediate that it can even do without the signature, that is, the author and their authority: the only real authority is that of statistics. Here, the sensibilities of not a few experts but of all those who, spontaneously, wish to take part in the game, are brought together. Have you longed for the democratization of taste? Coming right up. This regime of subordinate and unpaid reviewers, this spontaneous and anonymous tyranny of the masses is, however, at least stated and explicit: 'one is worth one,' means that, in the end, no one is worth anything. One 'works' for free for portals that make the fortunes of a few.

In this respect, *The World's 50 Best Restaurants*, a highly media-driven ranking sponsored by San Pellegrino, represents perfect continuity and, concurrently, complete dissimulation. In fact, its distinguishing characteristic lies in its being a synthesis between the modern trappings of expertise and the contemporary world of digital information and the web. Even I was once called upon to become part of the jury of this highly influential ranking, made up of around 700 people including chefs, journalists and other 'experts,' chosen and selected largely by word of mouth and personal reference. Thanks to the internet and a series of powerful backers, this model represents the reorganization on an extensive and planetary level of those circles on the basis of class membership formed in the 18th century. Among other things, here the sponsors ensure the media spectacle of a model of fine dining, where those 700 'anonymous' reviewers decide on the 'best' restaurants each year. An important note: judges are simply asked to make a self-styled declaration stating that they have visited the restaurants included on the list (everyone has to choose seven restaurants). Here are some simple questions a critic ought to ask of such a system: *best* for whom and for what? What exactly defines fine dining? Does this worldwide list imply that every restaurant in the world has been visited and rated by every juror? *The World's 50 Best Restaurants* is a kind of Oscars in the field, but unlike in the real Oscar awards, where at least the jurors see all the films in the offing, in this case, as it is obvious, not *all* the restaurants in the world can be evaluated. How many times in a year can a reviewer visit a restaurant on the other side of the world, for example? Now, I want to stress that the underlying idea dominating this ranking is that opinions can be expressed on something that has not even been experienced directly, deeply and ecologically. Through audiovisual information, these reviewers perhaps keep informed and participate in a global conversation without feeling the need – both aesthetic and ethical – to experience. This is what 'the judgment of the work becomes more important than the work itself' means. Again, it would suffice to come clean: it is not criticism. The gustatory experience (both in the optic and haptic approaches) ultimately plays a limited role here. However, if food appreciation and its enjoyment neglect the gustatory experience, what will it be based on? Mainly on its pure medial information, understood as immediate visual representation: the optic approach to perception. But even if the taste experience comes into play only as a recognition of sensitive qualities of the food/object, the model will always be the optic and reductive one.

We thus arrive at another short circuit: that between the so-called culinary avant-garde and the mass media. If the avant-garde is supposed to be what produces new languages, forms and values that, for this very reason, cannot be immediately adopted by the mainstream, how can we account for the fact that self-appointed representatives of the culinary avant-garde constantly seek consensus through the most widely used means of communication? Indeed, if you have a business such as a restaurant, you may legitimately wish to make people talk about you and stay in the limelight. However – as Ferran Adrià has pointed out in many talks and interviews[6] – this is precisely what impedes 'pure' research and the avant-garde. In this respect, too, there are key differences between the artistic and culinary spheres.

6. The Restaurant Business in the Age of Aesthetic Capitalism: The Case of Noma

The restaurant is a business that originates from the modern context of the aesthetics of the spectator, that is, of an individual subject who seeks cultural pleasures: when taste becomes a cultural device, the dining experience falls within such pleasures. Without positive responses by the eaters, there is no possibility for the restaurant to exist. In the age of digital imagery, however, this fact has been taken to its extreme consequences: more than the positive feedback to the experience itself, it is how it is couched and the talk about it that count. 'How can I get people to talk about me? How can I drive interest in what I do?' are often the questions celebrity chefs, perhaps in spite of themselves, strive to answer. Where, herein, does the avant-garde lie? There is not one. Rather, there is an attempt to feed a niche market through a project that is not so much information as advertising. Press officers, PR representatives or influencers are not communicators: they promote and sell; they make recommendations. To confuse communication with information and promotion is a mistake that has major consequences for the fate of chefs and the scope of criticism. The point is: can one communicate the avant-garde through the same languages as the mass media? How can one think of being radical and cutting-edge by using Instagram stories or appearing on television? How may one reconcile aggressive advertising with (supposedly) sophisticated and elitist content? Of course, this is not a matter of blaming anyone: it is of course legitimate to try to hold on everything; there are also sincere attempts to combine culinary research, education for an attentive taste that perceives beyond the sensory profile of food, and mass information and communication circuits. However, these attempts continually come up against enormous difficulties; in any case, these ought to be the issues and themes underpinning gastronomic criticism. And above all: is it not at least a little bizarre that so many chefs and gastronomes who advocate limited, local, small-scale, and

6 The most relevant official reason that led to the closure of El Bulli in 2011 is that this restaurant had explored all the creative possibilities within the limits of what a commercial establishment can do. Adrià has often stressed that in order to continue on the path of true 'research and development,' i.e., real avant-garde, it was necessary to end El Bulli business as a commercial activity. Hence, the decision to take the path of the research centre and cultural activities (such as the El Bulli 1846 Museum), which also heavily rely on patronage. For a reflection on the relationship between Adrià's cuisine, art and media see Hamilton/Todolì 2009.

artisanal food production are at the same time entirely at the service of the meat grinder of media information? How strange that we do not perceive how, according to a basic principle of coherence, the two should not be bedfellows: supporting the locally made and the artisanal and, at the same time, propping up the most aggressive logics of late capitalism by foraging the global cultural info market. Again: this is not to propose simplistic ways out, but merely airing issues that are very often overlooked by the gastronomic establishment and by many famous reviewers. We shall now examine an emblematic case, that of the restaurant Noma in Copenhagen. According to gastronomic journalism, Noma is one of the world's apexes of fine-dining excellence that, however, does not market itself as an expression of comfortable, bourgeois good taste but rather as a quest for the avant-garde. Obviously, Noma is an amazing place and those who have the chance should not forego the opportunity to dine there.[7]

However, a number of issues deserve to be raised. First, Noma is one of those (few but very relevant) restaurants where it is very, very difficult to get a table, as availability is limited compared to the sky-high demand. Noma's reservation system is online, opening at midnight at the start of a certain day every three months, offering tables for the following season. System failure is usually to be reckoned with: at that moment, it inevitably crashes under the balk of thousands of people simultaneously logging on to try and make reservations. Now, this situation itself is already part of the appreciation game, creating a seemingly paradoxical effect: if one manages to find a table and make a reservation, the experience has partially been fulfilled *before* the actual dining. The very possibility to attend the event is perceived to be a form of success: the extreme consequences of ostentatious consumption in the age of food imagery, of food whittled down to imagery and news information, dictate that ostentation must take place *prior* to consumption. As observed earlier, this may no longer even require the act of consuming itself. Of course, this initial 'fulfillment' colors with emotionally positive expectations the time that separates from the actual consumption. Now, this will also involve an attitude toward the gustatory experience itself. Let us resume the proposed difference between optic taste and haptic taste. If optic taste aims to describe the value of food as an object, it is also linked to a precise design model: the underlying idea is that of knowledge acquired by information. Optic taste, in other words, starts from an expectation and tries to realize it, to reconceive whether the experience corresponds to it. Haptic taste, on the other hand, works on the value of processes. But processes, as such, are always in the process of being realized; therefore, haptic taste pays attention with an attitude

7 While I was writing this text, the news agencies communicated that Noma, at least in its ordinary form as a restaurant, will close permanently in 2024. A parallel can be drawn here with the story of El Bulli.

of open curiosity and exposition to what is going to be experienced, without predefined expectations. In this sense, information as such – that is, the objective content conveyed by the media, especially those that prevail in gastronomy today, i.e., audiovisual media – conditions the haptic approach much less. Haptic taste suggests opening up to the gustatory experience attempting to set previous knowledge. Anyway, while it is generally true that perception acts on the basis of memories, expectations, and contexts that precede and concurrently accompany the experience, nevertheless, in the age of capitalist consumerist aestheticization, this takes place in specific ways (Lipovetsky/Serroy 2013). As with other fetish products, we thus reach the point where a very expensive restaurant (a meal at Noma costs at least €600 per person) is thanked and hailed by those who pay for having been given the opportunity to be there. The dining experience thus becomes highly dematerialized; its characterization is structured almost like a daydream.

In the case of Noma, this emerges right from the very start of the journey that ensues after the long wait from afar. Another deferral then occurs: diners arrive at a kind of greenhouse that serves as a waiting room where they sit around, being plied with courtesy herbal tea or an alcoholic beverage, until an attendant leads them to the front door of the restaurant's interior. This greenhouse itself is a manifesto of the imagery promoted by Noma: Nordic rurality, wild herbs and plants displayed everywhere. But the first real 'shock to the system' is yet to come. Upon entering, like at one of those (fake) surprise birthday parties, we find the entire staff there to welcome us, dozens of people in front of the entrance greeting us with a fixed and carefully cultivated smiling 'hello!' This is repeated for each group of customers entering in regulated succession at various pre-arranged times. This pretense, evidently constructed to put one at ease through a token of informal friendliness, ends up creating the opposite effect, generating a kind of artificial, plasticized estrangement. On another level, having condescended to an interview to be carried out in his home, in a supposedly informal and natural setting, Jacques Derrida chose to introduce this seemingly spontaneous atmosphere with a statement of truth. He declared in front of the camera that everything you are about to see is fake – constructed and designed to induce an effect that is quite the opposite of what is actually happening (Kirby/Ziering Kofman 2002). The supposed spontaneity of that interview indeed corresponds to the supposed spontaneity of the restaurant.

Everything is fake insofar as everything is representation; but criticism should tear any veil of representation, letting its underlying processes and intentions be discerned; without getting caught up in the mangle, pandering to the narrative and perhaps exalting it as if it were the outcome of some act of spontaneity. Any genuine gastronomic criticism should help us understand the relationships between design, atmosphere, food, and cooking, proposing an approach to gustatory experience that is not reduced to superficially validating pre-acquired information and instead is oriented toward perceiving in a processual and ecological way. Instead, the review merely 'assesses' gustatory pleasure according to canonized rules: the food on the plate, as if there were an absolute 'food on the plate,' without all that 'before,' and without context. Of course, there is *also* the cooking side to Noma; but a critic should avoid rushing immediately to the question that, like any *TripAdviso*r user, the journalist-reviewer deems to be the main one, namely, 'Yes, but what was the food like?'

7. Three Points for an Ecological and Haptic Gastronomic Criticism

The critic does not offer grades or suggestions, but s/he *also* reflects on the cooking. Here, then, are three further points of reflection on the matter.

1. What is meant today, in the age of food imagery, i.e., of food reduced to its journalistic-visual media representation, by the *perfection* of a dish? What is the mark of excellence accepted and recognized by the ranking system? Almost from its origin, the modern restaurant has been based on the assembly-line model and on the fragmentation and compartmentalization of labor (consider, for example, Escoffier). Like many other contemporary gastronomic restaurants, Noma, in this respect in perfect continuity with the Western modern restaurant, clearly shows that perfection is an idea at the service of which lie techniques and technologies. We are faced with an *industrial*-type creative perfection (an adjective I use here without any moral or negative connotation), far removed from any singular and specific artisanal intervention. This technological-industrial model flexes all its muscle: one can find very sophisticated and complex dishes that have been elaborated – or whose raw materials have been touched and processed – by a great number of people. This passage of many hands and many minds poses two issues. The first: how does such food 'reach' the end user, the final 'consumer'? Might this industrial, fragmented and serial conception of creativity, and notably, of culinary creativity – understood as rational design and predetermined planning – engender cold and pre-packed gustatory results? Might not, then, the stylistic cipher of this cuisine coincide with the kind of digital emotionality – according to some, definable as cold and abstractly cerebral – inherent to contemporary society? Is there a general misunderstanding of 'absolute' creative freedom, so that it is today mainly assumed as a *pure brand* in capitalistic aesthetics? With this, I mean that, in many different arts as well as in cuisine, we – in some ways paradoxically – witness the triumph of the author and the power of branding (the signature) as pure medial exposition. At the end of the day, this system aims at satisfying the 'aesthetic appreciation,' independently of any content. What I call optic taste – which assumes a distance, an objectification of experience that, thanks to contemporary audiovisual systems, can even come to dispense with the taste experience itself, or to experience it very superficially – is perfectly consistent with and functional to this state of affairs. A change of paradigm implies then a different approach. The second issue con-

cerns the already mentioned relationship between research and business. As is well known, many of these award-winning and widely hailed media restaurants are often, per se, economically unsustainable: another apparent paradox. They need a supply chain, and here too is where the media aspect and marketing support come into play. Moreover, any serious criticism should go back to ponder the expense of the meals in such venues. These exorbitant prices are mainly due to the very high costs incurred by the high number of employees involved, the settings, and the technologies deployed. Once again, however, the point is to reason about the value of such processes. The gourmet restaurant came into being to express the taste of a new bourgeoisie; the high price was due to the luxurious staging of the furnishings, the tableware, the glasses, the large number of waiting and kitchen staff as well as, of course, the price of raw materials. The equation between the gourmet restaurant and expensive foodstuffs was obvious until recently. Should the contemporary trend of shifting the economic value of the meal from the bare cost of the ingredients and foods to a type of effort that amplifies the fragmentation of work taken for granted? For example, does it make sense to give surplus value to a salad constructed by choosing every single leaf to be arranged on a plate by four or six different staff members? A critic should ask these questions, rather than waxing lyrical exclusively on the taste of the salad itself.

2. According to the haptic taste approach, there is the possibility to perceive quality, then value, differently from the above. As we have made clear, the Noma experience is the result of upstream thinking as the outcome of strict design: there is no room for improvisation (see Perullo 2022). Creativity lies not in the event itself but in its planning. The event is a stage play, the faithful recital of a script. What we witness is a performance where almost nothing may deviate from the script, barring the entirely unexpected. The chef is the director, the presenter of a palimpsest in which every other actor plays a role, often a minor one. This state of affairs is of course legitimate and justifiable, but it opens up a number of questions that a critic should take into account, especially in reference to the representation, the imagery promoted by these experiences that by no means corresponds to their actual reality. My impression is that such a model of industrial seriality, not popular but very exclusive and elitist, linked to a notion of gastronomic quality built on impressions, shocks, and originality, is perfectly aligned with the rules of the visual market of emotional immediacy, the likes of which may be found on social networks such as Instagram. These rules are based on the need for continuous 'novelties' and experiments to fuel the information feed: that's entertainment, folks!

3. Noma is the epitome of gastronomic neo-naturalism. Here the whole focus of representation – not only of the dish, but of the overall setting (tables, lighting, design, etc.) – revolves around the idea of nature and the seasons. The narrative of natural and seasonal, however, calls for a pact of complete trust with the customer. Following a haptic approach, thus taking less interest in sensory qualities and more

in overall ecological perception, a critic should ponder this relationship: are we sure that the audience really cares whether a duck was caught in the Scandinavian woods? Or is this just a game, a theatrical space in which more than factual truth we are interested in the spectacle, the theater of taste to which such a narrative contributes? Or might it be the creation of an atmosphere, the evocation of an emotion through key expressions, words and terms? It should be noted that paying a high amount of money, together with the brand, helps to create a sense of trust and confidence. Otherwise, one would have to admit to being easily deceived.

The three points above should contribute to develop a critical sense of media representation and, by this, to help forming a haptic approach. Without bringing up misplaced moralisms, it is a matter of understanding whether, behind the curtains, there are noteworthy cultural and artistic – as well as sustainable and lasting – consistencies or not. The impression experienced at Noma was, for me, akin to a good rollercoaster ride at the funfair: efficiency, speed, technological precision dominate the atmosphere (two evening service shifts, no time to think, no empty space to pause). You feel like you are in the right place, a smart atmosphere, an expression of the spirit of your gastronomic times and the social elitism of free Western democracies. It is not avant-garde, however, but comfortable luxury for an elite that is nonetheless mainstream. Don't get me wrong: many things at Noma are perfect. The experience really is amazing, but it is largely entertainment. And the gustatory experience that corresponds to the appreciation, immediate and emotional, of this spectacle and entertainment is optic perception: based on objects and elements taken in isolation (scents, flavors, foods, wow factors) that succeed one another without being brought back to a background, a context, a more comprehensive sense.

8. Haptic Taste as an Engagement for a Diet-Ethics of Visual Food Forms

The web and the digital age have produced a mirroring model of cooking and reviewing; several media and communication scholars have been working on it for a number of years, particularly on the meaning of sharing photographs and videos (see Rousseau 2012; Vagni 2017; La Rocca 2018). My thesis is that the gastronomic field, here exemplified with the cases of the *Michelin Guide, TripAdvisor* and *The World's 50 Best Restaurants* on the one hand, and Noma restaurant on the other, is in perfect continuity and consistent with the modern paradigm of optic taste. A gustatory perception that is based on the idea of the distance between subject and object and of the objective evaluation of the sensory qualities of a food.

Haptic taste, on the other hand, does not invoke any nostalgic feelings for a predigital era. Instead, the issue being to overcome food perception as optic – that is, static, at distance and passive –, the haptic perception proposes to awaken an active, involved and processual engagement. Via the haptic, it is possible to rethink the relationship between gastronomic criticism and technologies, reflecting on the rhetorical and ideological nature of any immediate review in order to go beyond it. Food imagery today usually corresponds to photographs on the plate prior to its consumption, i.e. with full reports on the meal accompanied by a caption. While the visual image provides support, it also fuels a reductive approach and a number of misunderstandings. The first: confusing the reality of food with its visible presence and, therefore, the act of consumption with its disappearance (Perullo 2018a). In other words, food tends to achieve its function and purpose in the destruction of the visual image of it, the appreciation of it indeed arising from this very process. Clearly, this concept prevents the emergence of any critical canon, for it works only on the immediacy of gustatory perception, neglecting the effects and presuppositions, the memory and the actuality of the existent, which cannot be seen.

The second misunderstanding is about immediacy. As I have already observed, the dominance of the optic paradigm in gastronomy – a domain that was not born with the digital age, but which the latter has certainly further enhanced – provides the idea of a style, and that we may thus discuss a restaurant's offerings without even experiencing them directly. Very often, reviewers and journalists are enthralled by it, as if suddenly turned to stone by Medusa's gaze. Here, we find again the perfect solidarity between this medial model and the corresponding perceptual model of optic perception, understood in its two-dimensional immediacy, originating an optic taste, which purports to be distancing and thus objectifying, and thereby capable of judging and evaluating the dish in 'objective' terms.

What is lost, in this immediate approach, is not only the multidimensionality of food, its capability to express, communicate and symbolize in a broader way than sensory qualities alone say. What is also lost is the possibility to construct an engaged, communal, socially shared taste. The optic model of the immediate judgmental review avoids the dimension of slow metabolization. Such slowness calls for a notion of time understood not as the instantaneity of emotional reactions, but as duration and memory. Working through the orthogonal depth of food, perceiving it as an overall, relational experience, haptic taste tries to root the correspondence between the food (a dish, a meal, an 'experience') and its perception into an ecology.

Treating food haptically also means developing a *diet-ethics* of visual food forms. Again, this does not mean dabbling in unlikely nostalgic or iconoclastic conceptions, but rather considering the relationship between visual and gustatory perception in terms of their ongoing *correspondence*. Appreciating food visually is certainly legitimate, but as part of a more overall perceptual experience. Not only in a multisensory sense, but also in a haptic sense. Multisensorial modality of gustatory experience is of course an essential indication, but by itself, it is not sufficient, because the difference between optic and haptic perception covers all the senses. Notably, the haptic approach concerns the wholeness of sensing, rather than specific sensory channels. Thus, a correspondence is haptically activated between the visual and the gustation. Visual images suggest and question; *gusto* responds by giving rise to other questions, which, in turn, image will answer. Aware of the power and usefulness of images, a critic should be educated to perceive them accordingly, not for their immediate consumption. Very often, the work of the food reviewer is instead totally absorbed in visual and gustatory immediacy. Ratings often express prêt-à-porter criteria. Haptic taste can contribute to the creation of a contemporary gastronomic critique that, consciously reaping the increasing power visual images have in the digital age, deconstructs them by arranging them along planes in which they are experienced and questioned. To this end, gastronomic criticism must begin to ask questions such as those suggested in this text.

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Threefold Documentation

Jürgen Dollase's Conception of a 'National Registry of Culinary Art'

Jens Schröter

Abstract *In the Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung of September 11, 2015, the – not always entirely uncontroversial – restaurant critic and gastrosophist Jürgen Dollase wrote a short essay called Dreifache Dokumentation. Who really wants to preserve our culinary knowledge, needs a national culinary art register. What would its creation look like? In this essay, Dollase raises a number of fundamental cultural and media-theoretical questions concerning the archiving, canonization and documentation of 'culinary art', which in many respects can be connected to fundamental questions of art and media history, the theory of documentation and the archive. In this contribution, the essay will be analyzed and discussed in detail in order to outline the theoretical challenges of a documentation and archiving of culinary art beyond the – for various reasons very problematic – symbolic registration by the algorithmic 'recipe'.*

How is it possible to archive culinary art and cooking practice, given that they are designed for instant consumption and therefore ephemeral? The obvious answer is to archive recipes – but this answer has its problems. If one function of media is to store information, how can culinary information be stored?[1] This and similar questions are the central concern of my paper. I will discuss them with reference to an inspiring paper by Jürgen Dollase, who also explores these questions.

Jürgen Dollase is a renowned 'gastrosopher' and culinary critic, who has contributed to several journals on fine dining. His best-known work is perhaps a series of articles entitled 'Geschmackssache' (A Matter of Taste), produced between 2004 and 2016 for the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*. He has written several books on avant-garde cuisine, but also on very specific techniques and experiments in cooking (see Dollase 2017). His writing is known for the transposition of theoretical lingo ('structuralism', 'deconstruction') into culinary discourse and for the creation of new

1 There are several different initiatives that are dedicated, in different ways, to the question of archiving the culinary tradition, see for example https://www.maas.museum/australianculinaryarchive/

concepts ('nova regio').[2] This theoretical rhetoric has earned him ridicule from other writers, who find his style exaggerated and annoying.

Fig. 1: Dollase, Jürgen (2015): "Dreifache Dokumentation".

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Geschmackssache

Dreifache Dokumentation

Wer unser kulinarisches Wissen wirklich bewahren will, braucht ein Nationales Kochkunstregister. Wie sähe dessen Erstellung aus?

Die Dokumentation von Kochkunst und Essen gehört auf eine Ebene, die den Geschmack der Menschheit im Range eines Weltkulturerbes sieht. In dieser zweiten Folge zur Diskussion einer möglichst präzisen Beschreibung und Erhaltung kulinarischer Errungenschaften (siehe F.A.Z. vom 4. September) geht es um Überlegungen zu Theorie und Praxis eines möglichen Nationalen Kochkunstregisters.

Welche Werke sind es wert, in ein solches Register aufgenommen zu werden, wer trifft die Auswahl? Man wird Persönlichkeiten finden müssen, die sowohl die traditionelle Küche als auch Klassik und Avantgarde überblicken und in der Lage sind, Hervorragendes zu erkennen. Die Schwierigkeit wird dabei kaum im Bereich der üblichen Hochküche liegen, sondern einerseits bei der Bewertung traditioneller Küchen, die man von den Schlacken der Kommerzialisierung und Industrialisierung des Geschmacks befreien muss. Andererseits aber auch bei jener innovativen Avantgarde, die nicht so einfach in Schubladen zu stecken ist und eine zügige Dokumentation deshalb verdient, weil sie – etwa aus wirtschaftlichen Gründen – nur begrenzt erfassbar ist. Allgemein muss es sowohl um bereits durchgesetzte Werke von Rang gehen als auch um solche, die nicht massenkompatibel sind, aber eine Erweiterung des kreativen Spektrums bedeuten.

Die Dokumentation eines Werks beginnt natürlich im Wesentlichen damit, was normalerweise in schriftlichen Rezepten erfasst werden kann. Das sind Listen verwendeter Produkte, Mengenangaben, Garzeiten, Kerntemperaturen und Handlungsanweisungen, die gründlich spezifiziert werden sollten. Bei den Produkten werden Herkunfts- und Qualitätsangaben eine Rolle spielen. Mengenangaben und Garzeiten sollten seriös dokumentiert werden. Die Kerntemperaturen, die bei vielen Stücken nicht wirklich aussagekräftig sind, sollten spezifiziert werden, und es sollte neue Kriterien geben, um den technisch erfassbaren Teil genauer als bisher zu beschreiben. Dazu gehören das Erfassen der Intensität von Reduktionen, die Messung von pH-Werten oder auch Angaben zur relativen Dichte von Flüssigkeiten in Grad Brix.

Bei Aromatisierungen wird es nicht nur um „eine Prise Curry" oder Ähnliches gehen, sondern auch um das Ausmaß an Röstnoten oder die Einwirkungen von aromatisierenden Flüssigkeiten wie Fonds beim Pochieren oder Überglänzen. Die Diskrepanz zwischen den üblichen Rezepten und dem, was tatsächlich erfassbar ist, wird dabei erheblich sein müssen – von der Möglichkeit, zu Studienzwecken per Gaschromatographie ein Aromenspektrum zu analysieren, abgesehen. Bei der bildlichen Dokumentation verstehen sich diverse Fotos von selbst. Step-by-Step-Fotos, die normalerweise bei Kochbüchern als besonders präzises Element gelten, sollten unbedingt durch eine filmische Dokumentation ersetzt werden, die sämtliche Schritte erfasst. Es wird dabei wichtig sein, diese Dokumentation unter Anleitung des dokumentierenden Spezialisten zu machen und nicht – wie das in fast allen Fernsehformaten der Fall ist – vorrangig auf atmosphärisch dichte, kommerziell motivierte Bilder zu achten. Es muss sichtbar werden, was zu dokumentieren ist.

Der mit Abstand komplizierteste Bereich ist die geschmackliche Dokumentation. Er wird im Wesentlichen in drei Schritten ablaufen. Erster Punkt ist ein Gespräch mit dem jeweiligen Protagonisten über die Beweggründe seiner Arbeit – vor allem bezogen aufs konkrete Gericht. Ein wichtiger Teil sollte sich damit beschäftigen, wie die Gerichte unter sensorischen Aspekten zu essen sind und welche möglichen Inhalte kommuniziert werden sollen (von Erinnerungen an frühkindliche Geschmacksbilder bis zu geschmacklichen Irritationen). Der zweite Punkt ist die Dokumentation einer Degustation mit dem Ziel einer objektiven Geschmacksbeschreibung. Diese Beschreibung sollte ebenfalls durch eigens geschulte Spezialisten erfolgen, die in der Lage sind, Geschmacksbilder in all deren Komplexität und in so vielen Zusammenhängen wie möglich zu registrieren und in Worte zu fassen. Diese Beschreibungen müssen ein Gesamtbild ergeben, das von den sensorischen Details bis zu den Zusammenhängen der kulinarischen Konstruktion möglichst viele Daten ermittelt.

Diese objektivierende Analyse muss um eine völlig neuartige Betrachtung ergänzt werden, deren Ziel es ist, das Geschmacksbild des zu dokumentierenden Werks in seiner Beziehung zu anderen Geschmacksbildern zu beschreiben. Ein vollständiges Bild kann sich erst dann ergeben, wenn der Topos des Objekts zwischen ähnlichen Werken im Verhältnis zu populären Kreationen oder auch zur industriellen Geschmackskultur ermittelt wird. Es kann dabei klarwerden, dass Werke der Avantgarde viele Leute nicht als „richtiges Essen" einstufen, klassische Werke als immer fremdartiger gelten oder allgemein Hochküche wegen mangelnder Bezüge zur populären Esskultur zu einer Spezialküche wird, dass Qualitätsbegriffe unter Druck geraten oder die Präferenz für bestimmte Werke bestimmten gesellschaftlichen Gruppen zugeordnet werden kann.

Diese kulturelle Rückkoppelung des kulinarischen Werkes wird schließlich abgerundet durch eine stilistisch-historische Einordnung, die die Stellung des Werks innerhalb der Fachgeschichte beschreibt. Die Frage, inwieweit solcher Aufwand überhaupt notwendig ist, sollte sich angesichts dessen, was wir in dieser Richtung bisher besitzen, erübrigen. JÜRGEN DOLLASE

Source: FAZ September 11 2015, p. 12.

2 See Borkenhagen (2017), who analyzes how, in the field of high cuisine, scientific and technological procedures have become important in recent years (e. g. 'molecular gastronomy'). Dollase's discourse is the equivalent of this development in the field of 'gastrosophy', in that he imports notions from the humanities and philosophy.

In this paper, I want to focus on an article from *Geschmackssache*, published on September 11, 2015 in the *FAZ*. It is called *Dreifache Dokumentation* (*Threefold Documentation*).

Dollase does not discuss the pros and cons of particular chefs, restaurants, cooking styles or techniques – he addresses the question of how cooking and particular 'works' (by which he means finished meals), can be documented and archived. He invokes classical questions from media studies and related disciplines but applies them to an object that has not previously been examined within these disciplines, culinary information. In the following paper I will read Dollase's article closely and contextualize its arguments. As he states, this is the second of two articles addressing this question, but the first one – in *FAZ*, September 4, 2015[3] – will not be the focus of my essay.[4]

1. Constructing the Canon

Dollase begins by declaring that he sees the art of dining as part of the world's cultural heritage. That is, he sees dining not only as a biological necessity, but also as a form of cultural expression and heritage, in line with other forms such as architecture, art etc.[5] The logical next question is therefore: "Which works are worthy of inclusion in such a register, and who makes the selection?"

First of all, by using the notion of *Werk* (work), Dollase puts the results of cooking on the same level as other artworks and compares them to other art forms. Secondly, he addresses the question of which of these works might be selected for the 'register', meaning a kind of canon. And indeed, this is a central question for the constitution of cultural heritage. What is included? And who decides? "It will be necessary to find personalities who can survey traditional cuisine as well as classical and avant-garde, and who are able to recognize excellence." Obviously, the selection should be made by competent personalities (*Persönlichkeiten*), capable of recognizing excellence and of making a trained and experienced judgement – similar to those described by Galison for the analysis of images in 20th-century science.[6] 'Excellence' is of course

3 Its title is "Schreib das auf, Koch! Um die Kochkunst steht es gut, um deren Dokumentation dagegen nicht. Vor allem bei der Beschreibung von Geschmack fehlt es nahezu an allem." (Write that down, cook! The art of cooking is in good shape, but its documentation is not. Almost everything is lacking, especially in the description of taste.)

4 All quotes are from Dollase's text, unless otherwise stated. They were translated from German by myself.

5 This is not a completely new idea, see e.g. Csergo/Desbuissons (2018).

6 See Galison (1998) on the central role of the trained eye and the "interpreted image" (329). See the above-mentioned first essay by Dollase, that focuses on outstanding chefs and their publications, which publications he later came to see as unsatisfactory.

notoriously difficult to define. In many fields where 'taste' plays a role – in wine (e.g. Shapin 2016), tea, whisky, beer,[7] but also in art (Bourdieu 1984) and even high-end sound equipment – a certain kind of accumulated expertise, refined sensory perception and an elaborate and sometimes highly idiosyncratic jargon is the apparent form of this type of judgement.[8] Basically, Dollase distinguishes three styles of cooking: traditional cooking, classical style and avant-garde. This resembles on the one hand the differentiation between high and low culture ('classical' vs. 'traditional'), on the other hand established narratives from the history of art (from 'classical' to modernist 'avant-garde'). 'Avant-garde' is understood as innovative and difficult to classify. Dollase insists that the canon should include both established 'works' and experimental extensions of the 'creative spectrum'. His discussion strongly resembles early (and more recent) discussions on the construction of a canon of art (and literature etc., see Guillory 1993: 3–82).

Such discussions immediately raise questions about the limits of inclusion: What about non-European forms of food? The notion of 'traditional' is perhaps open enough to include global styles of cooking, but do the 'classical' and 'avant-garde' categories apply to every development in global cooking? Perhaps they do apply in China, for example, where there are several local, 'traditional' cooking styles, but also one or more 'classical' high cuisines? Is avant-garde global anyway? Or are these categories deeply Eurocentric? The troubling questions that beset art history and literary studies – of how to construct a canon while avoiding unjustified exclusions – are crucial here too. One could argue that 'canon' is an inherently problematic concept that should be avoided, since a canon is exclusive by definition. But a canon has important functions (Guillory 1993: 3–82). It is a reduction of complexity and should include examples that show the outstanding achievements in a certain field. Of course, there has to be a discussion about what exactly is meant by 'outstanding', but to have *no canon at all* is actually not a progressive but a reactionary idea. This is because it could lead to a competition in which it is not necessarily the most outstanding but the most aggressively marketed examples that prevail. Dollase obviously does not want to leave the field to the commercial food industry, which establishes – as its canon, so to speak – a range of stereotypical, undifferentiated taste models (too much sugar, too much salt, too much fat etc.).

7 Beer is an interesting case: in the past, beer was coded by class, and in a sense, this is still the case today. Beer was the drink of the laborer, while wine was associated with the upper classes, and the whole elaborated discourse was restricted to wine. Nowadays, with phenomena like 'craft beer', a kind of 'winization' of beer seems to be taking place. This shows, as Bourdieu (1984) has pointed out, that 'taste' is coded by class.

8 There is of course the obvious problem that the competent personalities have to be found first – by another level of competent personalities and so on. This infinite regress can only be solved historically, in the sense that there has to be a historically sedimented institutionalization of what is called 'good taste'. Such institutionalizations presuppose recording media.

He wants to protect the more difficult, complex, subtle concepts of high cuisine against this dominance of easily consumable, popular, aggressively marketed, even addictive taste schemas.

2. Documentation of a Work of Cooking

Dollase continues his discussion with the question of how a 'work' of cooking can be documented. The most obvious form is the written recipe. In 2004 Ferguson wrote:

> [C]uisine belongs with the performative arts, and as for other such arts, the social survival of the culinary performance depends on words. Recipes make it possible to reproduce the original, or a reasonable approximation thereof. On this continuum, the plastic arts lie somewhere between the literary and the performing arts because although there is a disjuncture between the medium of creation-production and the idiom of criticism, there is a palpable, more or less permanent product. (Ferguson 2004: 20)

The recipe is addressed here as the basic and sufficient medium to store the culinary knowledge necessary to reproduce (and thereby perform) the dish. The recipe is an algorithm that specifies the steps and sequences of actions to be taken to arrive at the finished dish. But as everyone who cooks presumably knows, often these recipes do not really work as they should – terms like "a pinch of curry" are imprecise and give only a vague hint of how the dish is actually prepared. The reduction of the cooking process to a sequence of written instructions tends to reduce complexity in a problematic way. This is why Dollase calls for a large amount of precise additional information: "Origin and quality information will play a role in the products. Quantities and cooking times should be seriously documented. Core temperatures, which are not really meaningful for many pieces of meat, should be specified, and there should be new criteria to describe the technically recordable part more precisely than before." But even with much additional information, there are still aspects that are technically not 'recordable' (not least because often ingredients are responsible for the taste – which can only be described in abstract or abbreviated terms, e.g. 'pepper' in general without specifiying which pepper exactly[9]). This immediately recalls Kittler's insistence that notation cannot record certain aspects of music, namely the actual sound produced.[10] Notation is an algorithm showing how to perform a given piece of music, but it does leave some room for interpretation and is always colored by the concrete and contingent circumstances of performance. As

9 With special thanks to Jens Ruchatz.

10 The limits of recording are also a central theme in theatre and performance studies, and since dining has an irreducible performative aspect, these problems reappear here too (Eco 1977).

we can compare concrete performances of a given composition, we can also compare concrete performances of a given recipe.[11] There is a crucial difference, however: the development of first analog, then digital sound recording has made it possible to archive the contingent performances of musical compositions, but no similar mode of preservation exists for smell and taste.[12] While we can document a specific performance of a specific composition, we cannot document a specific performance of a specific recipe.

Taste and smell are chemical senses, and taste at least is a 'near' sense.[13] We have no media for the storage, transmission and processing of chemical information, only for physical (in the sense of 'physics') information. So, we cannot build an archive that contains the best meals made by the most talented chefs, in the same way that we can collect the best performances of musical pieces. For a genre like jazz, incidentally, such recordings are far more important for transmission than notation, since jazz improvisations resist written notation. Perhaps someone should write a history of cuisine in analogy to jazz … In any case, the fact that there are no media for chemical (gustatory, olfactory) information[14] may be the reason for

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11 See Kittler (1999: xxiv-xxv) (translator's introduction): "For sights, sounds, and other data outside the traditional purview of language to be recorded, they had to be squeezed through the symbolic bottleneck of letters, and to be processed in meaningful ways they had to rely on the eyes and ears of hermeneutically conditioned readers. Reading, in that sense, was an exercise in scriptographically or typographically induced verbal hallucinations, whereby linguistic signs were commuted into sounds and images. With the advent of phonography and film, however, sounds and pictures were given their own, far more appropriate channels, resulting in a differentiation of data streams and the virtual abolition of the Gutenberg Galaxy."

12 A performance of music is fleeting, as is a meal which disappears – but in contrast to music the performance of a meal cannot be recorded (and even in music there remains an unbridgeable gap between the performance and its recording in terms of intensity and sound quality, not to mention the question of which performances are recorded in the first place). The solution of exhibiting reproductions, which is used for other perishable objects (such as mushrooms in a mushroom museum, see https://www.pilzmuseum.de) does not make sense for cooking: in the case of mushrooms, it is the visual appearance that is central, but a meal is meant to be tasted, so a reproduction in wax etc. is of no use for archiving it. There are of course wax reproductions of food, often to be found in window displays in Asian countries to represent the food on offer, but these do not serve the function of archiving a meal.

13 Since it is a 'near' sense, it is unclear how the information could be transmitted. Some interface directly connected to the tongue would be necessary, but such an interface would presumably produce too much discomfort ('somatic noise') to be usable.

14 In principle, it is possible to imagine that you could reconstruct chemical information, e.g. a smell, if you had all the information about its components, but this would be exceedingly difficult. See Gardner/Bartlett 1994, 212: "For example, there are some key flavour constituents of beer that are below the detection limits of most gas chromatographs. Moreover, the relationship between the physicochemical properties of the odorant molecules and their sensory impact is still unclear, in spite of a considerable amount of research effort."). What I mean when I say that there are no media for chemical information is that there is no technology

the comparatively low acceptance of cooking as an art and could also be the reason why smell and taste were always conceptualized as lower senses in philosophy (Korsmeyer 1999). But this also points to the limits of our 'physicocentric' notion of media, which is historically centered on physical transmission, be it vibrations of a medium (sound) or electromagnetic waves (sight).

These basic differences notwithstanding, Dollase insists: "The difference between the usual form of the recipe and what can actually be recorded will unavoidably be considerable." Therefore, the extended form of documentation Dollase proposes goes far beyond what 'usual recipes' can deliver. He explicitly recommends the use of film/video: "Step-by-step photos, usually considered a particularly precise element in cookbooks, should definitely be replaced with filmic documentation that captures all the steps." He describes the established practice, in some cookbooks at least, of showing photos of isolated steps of the cooking process. Although this might be helpful, Dollase is of course right in saying that complex movements of the hands, for example, cannot really be conveyed in this way. The purpose of visual or audiovisual documentation is to transmit the precise, and in conventional recipes often implicit, forms of manual knowledge applied in the preparation of food. In this sense, the additional forms of documentation can be seen as ways to store as many forms and aspects of 'tacit knowledge' as possible (which then of course loses its 'tacitness').[15] But a video camera alone will not suffice: "It will be important to make this documentation under the guidance of a documenting specialist and not – as is the case in almost all television formats – to focus primarily on atmospherically dense, commercially motivated images." Specialists in culinary documentation are needed, who can focus the documentation on the aspects that are actually necessary and avoid the kitsch of a certain culinary aesthetics – for example, one that evokes a kind of 'Italianicity' and associated emotional values in the representation of food, instead of conveying the precise information needed.[16] This shows once again that a simple audiovisual reproduction is not sufficient; the documentation must be guided by expert knowledge and intersubjective standards for how the cooking is to be documented. "The process that is to be documented must become visible." Not only is trained subjectivity needed to recognize the excellence of the taste and smell

similar to a camera, with which you could take a kind of 'snapshot' of a smell and then share it with someone else to tell them how wonderful a dish smells. There are in fact technologies for the analysis of smells, so-called electronic noses. But these technologies do not store and reproduce smells, they simply analyze whether there are potentially problematic chemicals in the air and then sound an alarm (e. g. when food is starting to go bad).

15 Schmidt (2012) criticizes the notion of 'tacit knowledge' since there are local didactic practices – e.g. the use of photography to document manual skills – to store and transmit such knowledge, which is therefore not tacit. If it really were tacit, it could not be taught at all.

16 See Barthes (1977) for the famous analysis of an advertisement for a pasta sauce and the way it produces 'Italianicity'.

of a given food, but also – and every theorist of documentary cinema would agree – trained experience is required to document the significant elements (and not the 'atmospheric' aspects) of a cooking process. Perhaps a reflexive documentary, which lays bare its own premises and the standards applied, would be a useful approach (for the reflexive documentary style of Harun Farocki, see Pantenburg 2015).

3. Documentation of Taste

But all these steps are still just the beginning. Now comes the most complicated part. "By far the most complicated area is the documentation of taste. It will essentially take place in three steps." This is where the "threefold documentation" comes into play.

First of all, interestingly, Dollase recommends interviews with the relevant chefs: "The first point is a conversation with the respective protagonist about the motives of his work – especially related to the specific dish. This should include a discussion about how the dishes are to meant be eaten, with respect to sensory aspects, and what content they are intended to communicate (from memories of early childhood taste images to *geschmacklichen Irritationen* [literally 'taste irritations', meaning surprising, disconcerting or discordant flavors])." Dollase's endorsement of a qualitative method – doing interviews with chefs (for more on interviews, see Ruchatz 2014) – makes it clear that the operation of turning food into an art relies on mechanisms known from the art world. As we know already from art, this is helpful, but not sufficient. As with (audiovisual, performative) arts, the art of cooking might reveal the difference between the self-description of artists and their external appearance and the way it is interpreted by others. Interestingly, these self-descriptions include a kind of set of instructions for 'how the dishes are meant to be eaten, with respect to sensory aspects'. This disrupts the naturalized ideology that dining is a purely private affair. It shows the cultural construction of food: one cannot simply eat by oneself. Perhaps some forms of eating are just private forms of absorbing nutrition and having gustatory and olfactory experiences, but many if not all are social forms of *Tischgesellschaft* ('table company') (Därmann/Lemke 2008),[17] and of course cultural forms – media – that can communicate certain values, markers of distinction, or cultural concepts of eating. What courses are served and in what order? How is the food arranged on the plate, forming a composition similar to that of an image? (Autsch 2012) What message does this composition transmit? What message does the order of elements and the combination of different elements convey? How does the meal quote cultural traditions and transform them by 'taste irritations'? How does it relate to 'early childhood taste memories',

17 Rirkrit Tiravanija and Daniel Spoerri are artists who reflected on this in very different ways.

thereby acquiring a kind of psychological dimension?[18] Finally, a meal can also transmit political messages – for example, does it contain meat or not? (Adams 2010) This plethora of difficult questions shows how complicated Dollase's idea of a documentation of taste really is.

Secondly, Dollase demands the description and documentation of the taste: "The second point is the documentation of a tasting with the aim of an objective description of taste. This description should also be produced by specially trained specialists who are able to register flavors in all their complexity and in as many contexts as possible and put them into words. These descriptions must provide an overall picture that identifies as much data as possible, from the sensory details to the contexts of the culinary construction." Here, once again, we encounter the problem that the flavor has to be transcribed into words, a notoriously difficult media transposition that leads to sometimes bizarre language games. And Dollase calls again for trained specialists – who are able to transform the subjective experience of taste into an 'objective' description.[19] There is also a comparative perspective: "This objectifying analysis must be supplemented by a completely new kind of consideration, the goal of which is to describe the flavor of the work to be documented in its relationship to other flavors." The existence of a standardized and in this sense 'objective' archive allows comparisons to be made – as in art history, where, since the invention and use of the double slide projection, it has been possible to make comparisons between artworks, standardized to the same scale. This then allows the construction of formal, stylistic or iconological histories of art and also panoramas of global art, in a *musée imaginaire* (Malraux 1961).

Dollase envisions a *musée imaginaire culinaire* of this kind. Not only does this pave the way for formal, stylistic histories of cooking and also panoramas of global food, but

> [a] complete picture can only emerge when the topos[20] of the object is defined in relation to similar works, popular creations, or even industrial taste culture. It may become clear that works of the avant-garde are not considered 'real food' by many people, that classical works are considered increasingly foreign, or that high cuisine in general is becoming a detached cuisine because of a lack of reference to popular food culture, that concepts of quality are coming under pressure, or that a preference for certain works can be attributed to certain social groups.

18 For a Lacanian discussion of food see Zwart (2015). The famous 'madeleine' in Proust, the smell of which triggers involuntary memories, has to be mentioned here.

19 For 'objectivity' see Daston/Galison (1992).

20 Dollase uses the unusual expression 'topos of the object' in relation to food. I presume what he means by this is stereotypical concepts of taste.

The comparisons also reveal social stratifications of taste, which ultimately show the production of 'distinctions'[21] and the way certain 'avant-garde' forms of cooking reach and challenge the limits of the ontology of food itself.[22] The reception of these forms is therefore mixed – like the reception of avant-garde art. Finally, Dollase comes back to the formal, stylistic history of cooking, which allows the historical positioning of the work: "This cultural feedback of the culinary work is finally rounded off by a stylistic-historical classification, which describes the position of the work within the history of culinary art. The question of whether such an effort is really necessary should be superfluous in view of what we possess in this direction so far." The last sentence of the paper shows that Dollase is not satisfied with the contemporary state of things. Food is not documented well enough – so it cannot become a cultural heritage comparable to other forms of art.

Jürgen Dollase's short essay is rich and dense and shows that he is not only an outstanding restaurant critic, but also a theoretician on the infrastructures, media and media aesthetics of cooking and food. He addresses fundamental questions, which I have tried to sketch in this essay. The central problem is how culinary information (besides recipes) can be stored, and therefore how a culinary archive can be constructed. These are questions that are likely to remain central for all future study of media and food.

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21 See Bourdieu (1984) esp. pp. 68, 185 & 405 on culinary topics – which are rare in Bourdieu's famous book.

22 This is especially the case in 'molecular gastronomy', of which the work of Ferran Adrià is the most famous example (https://elbullifoundation.com). In this kind of avant-garde cuisine, several basic parameters of food are 'deconstructed' (as Dollase would put it) and critically reflected on in a way that is reminiscent of the reflexive strategies of modernist aesthetics. Another stunning example is the work of Stefan Wiesner (https://www.stefanwiesner.ch), see this comment: "'Cuisine de terre', at least this is what it is for us, because Swiss Stefan Wiesner cooks with charcoal, bog oak, wood, stones, leather, rust, peat, tree resin, moonmilk, cow's horn or ambergris" ('Cuisine de terre', zumindest ist sie das für uns, denn der Schweizer Stefan Wiesner kocht mit Kohle, Mooreiche, Holz, Steinen, Leder, Rost, Torf, Baumharz, Mondmilch, Kuhhorn oder Amber, https://www.foodhunter.de/stefan-wiesner-der-hexer-aus-der-schweiz/).

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Food in Jewish Exile in Shanghai
An Investigation Concerning the Aspect of Culinaristics

Wei Liu

Abstract *The present work seeks to understand the phenomenon of 'food' as an access to the past. Serving as an example is the Jewish exile in Shanghai because alimentation or gastronomy plays an important role in those historical records and literary depictions. The phenomenon of 'food' allows a micro-perspective with which this special chapter of the history of Shanghai can be viewed differently and understood better.*

1. The Jewish Exile in Shanghai and the Aspects of Culinaristics

After Hitler's seizure of power in 1933, many Jews had to leave their native country and were driven into exile. Because of its extraterritoriality, the Public or International Concession in Shanghai was not under Chinese administration and was designated as a free seaport. Therein lies an extremely widespread misunderstanding, namely that the city of Shanghai was open for everyone. More precisely, it was not Shanghai but the International Concession in Shanghai that was open for everyone and, until 1941, became one of the last places to which Jewish refugees could flee.

The political situation which existed at that time in Shanghai, characterized as it was by complexity and chaos, offered an unexpected possibility of survival for Jewish refugees. Japan, which actually had occupied Shanghai since the end of 1937, was not interested in the 'Final Solution to the Jewish Question.' In an article published in the *Gelbe Post* on June 1, 1939 under the title *Japan and the Jewish Immigration in Shanghai*, one reads, for example, that the spokesperson for the Japanese mission in Shanghai let it be known "that Japan does not intend to undertake special measures to bring this immigration to an end. All in all, this matter does not directly concern Japan." (Storfer 1939b: 64) The Jewish refugees used these special circumstances in the city of Shanghai or the disinterest of the Chinese and Japanese in order to find and to enhance their own chances of survival. The survival or rescue of the Jewish refugees in China was accordingly the result of many interconnected factors which had not been planned or predicted by any country.

At that time, Shanghai constituted one of the last chances for flight from Nazi Germany; however, it was not desired as a permanent destination by the Jewish refugees but was considered to be only "a site of transit, a place for waiting" (Buxbaum 2008: 52). For that reason, an emotional and cultural distance existed between them and their place of refuge. This was confirmed, for example, by the survivor W. Michael Blumenthal in an interview in February 2006: "It was not customary to occupy oneself with Chinese culture. Unfortunately, the emigrants adopted this attitude." (Sherman 1973: n.p.) This emotional and cultural distance gave rise to a contradiction which became particularly apparent in the details of everyday life – for example, with regard to food. On the one hand, the refugees were compelled to adapt to the living conditions current in China at that time. On the other hand, consciously or unconsciously, they endeavored to preserve and to perpetuate their own living and eating habits, even during their exile. Coming to light in this contradiction between the obligation to adapt with regard to food and the inability or unwillingness to make this adjustment were the psychological and sociocultural problems of the expatriates: namely their identity crisis as exotic figures or as 'white' persons: in other words, as Jews, as Germans or Austrians, and as stateless individuals.

In his theory of culinaristics, Alois Wierlacher has investigated the function and meaning of the phenomenon of 'food' and points out that "all foodstuffs have a corporeal-material and a psychological-sociocultural aspect" (2008: 3). And with regard to these aspects, it is possible to observe and to imagine from a micro-perspective the story of the exile of the Jewish refugees with the help of the phenomenon of 'food.' At the same time, according to Wierlacher's theory (2011: 5–6), the concept of relatedness with regard to food belongs to the cultural form of hospitality. Particularly with respect to the concept of relatedness, one recognizes the circle of acquaintanceship and communication experienced by the Jewish refugees in Shanghai as well as their relationship to the events occurring at that time in China.

2. Food as a Reflection of Jewish Exile in Shanghai

2.1 Food as the Foundation of Corporeal-Material Existence

Viewing the Jewish exile in Shanghai from the corporeal-material perspective of culinaristics entails above all a delineation of the situation of the refugees with regard to foodstuffs. Confronted as they were with an existential crisis immediately after arriving in Shanghai, the Jewish refugees struggled above all with a lack of food. The assistance and provisioning provided by various organizations in Shanghai covered only the bare minimum necessary to sustain life: "every new arrival received a blanket, a sheet, a plate, a cup and a tin spoon. Food was likewise provided by the kitchens of the organizations." (Buxbaum 2008: 47) These measures assured the recipients a humble existence. The lack of preparation for exile and the difficult circumstances confronting the refugees may clearly be recognized.

Likewise the food which guaranteed their corporeal-material survival was dependent on the actions of strangers or the various aid organizations. According to a contemporary report, the International Committee for Granting Relief to European Refugees (IC) alone maintained a kitchen that prepared food for 8,000 refugees each day (Buxbaum 2008: 49). On the one hand, this figure shows the approximate number of Jewish refugees present in Shanghai in 1938; on the other hand, it also indicates the situation and influence of the Jewish community that had long existed in Shanghai, because all aid organizations had a Jewish background[1].

At that time, the chances the Jewish refugees had of surviving in these new surroundings were also closely connected with gastronomy and, in a certain context, were even dependent on it. For example, the exiled Franziska Tausig remembers that the passengers were registered on board the ship even before it had docked in the harbor: "The highest demand was for women to work in bars." (2007: 92–93) This scene is also described in detail in the novel *Shanghai fern von wo* by Ursula Krechel, in which the protagonist, once a cultivated lady in Vienna, was called upon to bake an original apple strudel in order to apply for a job in the Concession. All of her refined management of a complex household in Vienna was reduced to baking a cake. She was nonetheless fully aware of the value of this opportunity: "The apple strudel was a lifesaver, a wonder." (Krechel 2008: 36)

In the recollections of the Jewish refugees with regard to food, one can find a clear contrast between the early and late phases. Whereas the lack of food and the difficulties with nutrition are repeatedly noted and emphasized at the beginning of the exile in Shanghai, later on food is discussed and described as a normal, everyday phenomenon. This clarifies the transition from the initial crisis of survival to what was subsequently a relatively normal life.

2.2 Food as the Foundation of Socio-Cultural Identity

As soon as the scarcity of food during the initial phase had been resolved to some extent and the refugees' very lives were no longer threatened by starvation, more meanings and functions could be ascribed to the phenomenon of 'food' and it could

1 The Jewish organizations known at the time were: *Shanghai Jewish Communal Association* (SJCA), *Shanghai Jewish School* (SJS), *Shanghai Volunteer Corps* (SVC), *Shanghai Ashkenazi Collaborating Relief Association* (SACRA), *Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society* (HICEM), *Committee for the Assistance of European Jewish Refugees in Shanghai* (CFA or COPMAR), *American Joint Distribution Committee* (JOINT).

be viewed from a metaphysical or psychological-sociocultural level. Food symbolized the native country and identity of the refugees which, in spite of the deprivation of their citizenship, they were unable and unwilling to renounce.

Food is depicted as a connecting link to the lost homeland and culture both in personal memoirs and in literary depictions. Food meant not only the satisfaction of hunger but also a homesickness; it is for this reason, for example, that in the novel *Shanghai fern von wo* by Ursula Krechel, the figure Lothar Brieger attempts to come "for the second or third time to eat apple strudel" (2008: 134). A new significance and function had been integrated into what had previously been an utterly normal, everyday dessert. To the refugees, this customary apple strudel meant a concretization of identity and a reminder of their beloved homeland; it conveyed to these homeless persons the comfort and illusion that it had been possible to reconstruct a piece of the native country they had lost.

In this way, the refugees simultaneously tried to avoid the identity problem. Here one reads of the return to a sort of normality in everyday life, inasmuch as the refugees can once again enjoy the old, familiar taste and can establish a hermetic, illusory homeland. Having been expelled from Europe as Jews, they were viewed by the local inhabitants of Shanghai as 'white people,' 'exotic figures' or 'stateless persons.' Consciously or unconsciously, however, they continued to consider themselves, depending on where they had come from, as Germans or Austrians.

Identity or the crisis of identity during exile in Shanghai was repeatedly thematized in a scholarly or literary context. For example, this identity with one's own land of origin or native culture is directly evident in the advertisements for food in the *Gelbe Post*, which was published by the Jewish refugee A. J. Storfer. The grocery store Vienna Food run by Oskar Weiss offered typical products, even specialities, from Germany and Austria such as, for example, "pudding powder, baking powder, vanilla sugar, mustard, etc." ("Vienna" Food Produce 1939: 47). At the same time, there was a special emphasis: "Produced according to original Viennese recipes, certified by the Public Health Department. Import of Hungarian paprika, Dutch caraway, Singapore pepper, and all sorts of spices." ("Vienna" Food Produce 1939: 47) On the one hand, the claim of genuineness served to guarantee the promised quality; on the other hand, it awakened an emotional connection with the homeland, even if at that time in Shanghai, a non-German business was not permitted to set up a German sign (Storfer 1939a: 45). In accordance with this regulation, the name of the store was written in English, but the description remained in German; an attempt was made to exhaust all possibilities in order to maintain a connection with the refugees' own past.

This emotion can be recognized even more distinctly in another advertisement for the Austrian restaurant The Palm-Garden, Café-Restaurant-Bar, where "a piece of Grinzing has been brought to Shanghai!" (Rosdy 1999: 6). And in a report in the *Gelbe Post*, a booth selling sausages on a street in the Shanghai ghetto is described as "the remains of the homeland" (Rosdy 1999: 6). Since the stomach never lies, the attempt was made to find a circuitous path to the taste from back home. The Café Louis operated by the Eisfelder family adapted its menu to the foodstuffs that were available. It as well was familiar with the so-called "coping strategy [...] of always searching for what could be produced under the given conditions while maintaining an orientation towards the taste of the customers" (Weißbach 2017: 214).

The connection between the lost homeland and gastronomy was so pronounced that, according to the statistics in *Shopping News* on May 29, 1939, twenty-nine coffeehouses and one sausage factory were opened by Jewish refugees (Storfer 1939c: 85). Also later in the ghetto, which had an overall area of only around 2.6 square kilometers, and despite its critical condition during the war, many known coffeehouses maintained their operations (Buxbaum 2008: 77). For this reason as well, there arose in a short period of time the so-called 'Little Vienna,' where "may be found the bright, vibrant, cheery Hongkou with its restaurants and bars in the European style, actually the Viennese style" (Buxbaum 2008: 72).

Culture and the phenomenon of food have a mutual influence on each other and are connected with the identity of the refugees. Even if their respective German or Austrian citizenships had been officially terminated, their eating habits as Germans or Austrians continued as before. Herein lies the cause of the identity crisis experienced by the Jewish refugees in Shanghai, because even the designation as Jews was problematic. Most of the Jewish refugees were not orthodox, but instead assimilated Jews who had been expelled not because of their religious faith, but because of their Jewish background. Their identity as Jews served the Nazi regime merely as a pretext for their expulsion; but it did not change the social prestige of the persons, and especially not their living habits. This corresponds to the fact that it is scarcely possible to find traces of Jewishness in the area of gastronomy. With regard to food, the Jewish refugees maintained their own identity, which they could in no way renounce. The refugees identified with the place they had come from, and only seldom with Jewish tradition and religion.

2.3 Food in the Concept of Relatedness during the Exile in Shanghai

The concept of relatedness that is mirrored in gastronomy brings clarification to the circles of communication or lifestyle experienced by the Jewish refugees during their exile in Shanghai. It in fact answers the question of whom one eats with.

One seldom finds in the contemporary reports and documents indications regarding the communication between Jewish refugees and their Chinese fellow human beings in the area of gastronomy. Only in the memoirs from a later time is there a description of the approach between the two sides. The extremely limited emergency assistance from the Jewish communities in Shanghai separated the refugees from the native residents, so that a functioning and normal communication between the two sides was scarcely possible and necessary, totally disregarding the fact that language was an insurmountable barrier. All in all, the Jewish refugees constituted a separate group closed within itself. Their communication with the external world was often limited to the Westerners in Shanghai, even if from 1941 onwards Germans were no longer allowed to enter Jewish businesses in Shanghai (Buxbaum 2008: 59.x). Their shared fate – misery and destitution – brought the Jews and their Chinese counterparts closer and closer during the wartime years and even left behind many moving stories, but it did little to improve mutual understanding. Warnings were even issued – for example, by the chief editor of *The Shanghai Times*, A. Morley, who observed that "Jews should heed as a warning the example of Kaifeng, where the longstanding Jewish community gradually died out or was absorbed by the Chinese population" (1939: 27).

At that time, the restaurants operated by Jewish refugees not only offered gustatory delights but also constituted a certain circle of communication. Upon reading the guests' book of the Fiaker restaurant operated by the exiled persons Hans Jabloner and Fritz Strehlen, such names are to be found as Zhou Enlai, Song Qingling, Mei Lanfang, Pearl S. Buck, Pu Yi, Douglas MacArthur, etc. (Buxbaum 2008: 83–84) The circle of guests included almost the entire prominent society of modern Chinese history. This circle represents social success, not the struggle for survival. And the reason for this success lies precisely in their Western originality and exoticism. In no way did the Jewish refugees manage to achieve an acculturation[2] in the host country or in Shanghai.

Now in this context, it can be understood why the exile of Jews in Shanghai scarcely found an echo in the Chinese press of that time, even if Song Qingling, the widow of Sun Zhongshan, publicly criticized the treatment of Jews by Nazi Germany[3]. Even though this history with regard to exile proceeded in parallel to the ongoing events in China itself, it nonetheless had a separate and different impact on the Jewish refugees on the one hand, and on their Chinese fellow human beings on the other.

2 This acculturation refers to the process of approach and assimilation with regard to the culture of the country of exile, to its established values and lifestyle habits. The figures in the novel scarcely evince an identification with the history and culture of the host country. The gap between the two remains unbridgeable from beginning to end. (Kreuter 1998 305)

3 On May 13, 1933, Song Qingling and a few other prominent persons such as Cai Yuanpei, Lu Xun, Lin Yutang et al. delivered their protest against the Hitler regime to the German Consulate in Shanghai. (Qingling 1952)

3. Food as Access to the Real China for the Jewish Refugees

In conveying what it was like to be in a foreign country and culture in Shanghai, there was a pronounced tendency to focus on the phenomenon of 'food.' For example, a photographic portrayal of the Jewish refugees shows everyday life in Shanghai at that time by presenting "Rikschakuli breakfasting in the street" (Friede 1939: 134). Food is a clear example for the state of being foreign in exile. It is for this reason that one finds in the *Gelbe Post* numerous articles about nutrition in China or about the diets of certain social echelons, in order to make it possible for the reader to imagine in any way what actual reality in China was like.

For example, poverty and distress were perceived differently by the Jewish and Chinese contemporaries. Upon disembarking in Shanghai, each Jewish refugee received between fifty and one hundred U.S. dollars (Buxbaum 2008: 47)[4] as well as a bed in a residential accommodation. This gave rise provisionally to a 'cultivated life' of which their Chinese fellow human beings had no idea whatsoever. Nevertheless, each refugee attempted "to leave the hostel as quickly as possible" (Buxbaum 2008: 47), because the living conditions there were a 'shock.' The gap that had existed from the beginning between the Chinese and the white Europeans persisted to the very end.

Many years later as well, after more and more memoirs by the Jewish refugees had appeared, there are scarcely any personal memories to be found with regard to their Chinese contemporaries. The emotionally impactful stories that can be read today come in most instances from the research of scholars or historians from a later era. The reason lies in the facts that on the one hand, China was in a state of war with Japan and had no interest in the state of Jewish refugees, and on the other hand that the poverty and distress of the Chinese people was not perceived by those who shared their fate at the time, because poverty and hardship are relative concepts which can only be imagined and understood through comparison and relationship.

In this context, the phenomenon of food also provided the Jewish refugees with some access to the China of those times. The *Gelbe Post* often reported about the situation with regard to food in China. In an article entitled *Street Children*, for example, one can read about the nutritional crisis that Chinese children were suffering from (Storfer 1939d: 86). In other articles, the newspaper described the desperate situation in a Chinese refugee camp and told about beggars on the street. The critical situation in China was also evident in the lack of hygiene in gastronomy. In the article *Filth in China* that appeared on November 1, 1939 in the *Gelbe Post*, for example, Carl Crow reported on "the indescribable filth […] that is felt by many foreigners to

4 This amount constituted a large fortune at that time, because the month's rent of an apartment in Shanghai, according to the specific conditions, was approximately 1.5 to 15 U.S. dollars.

be completely intolerable" (1939: 157). These impressions and experiences served only to deepen further the homesickness of the homeless persons because, in the initial moment after disembarking, they compared their present suffering and desperation with a past that they had spent in contented prosperity. The destitution and privation were not on the same level for the two sides.

This contrast gave rise to a sort of comfort and compassion, a recognition that there were even worse things. Otherwise persons would have lived in a mood of permanent melancholy. In the article *The Standard of Chinese Farmers and Agricultural Workers*, the author, Professor Wolfgang Wilmanns (1939: 57), endeavors to convey to his readers the situation in China by drawing a comparison between the calorie intake and the share for purposes of nutrition between the Chinese and other peoples in the world. For the Jewish refugees, food provided an easier and more immediate access to the Chinese reality of the time. The critical situation being endured by the Chinese was also evident in the depiction of the circumstances with regard to foodstuffs: "Chinese refugees in Shanghai, as far as their nourishment comes into consideration, cost the International Red Cross six-and-a-half Chinese cents per day, […] which means 6.50 dollars for one hundred daily rations." (Storfer 1939c: 85) It is for that reason that the editor-in-chief of *The Shanghai Times*, Mr. A. Morley, observed that the living standard of "foreigners […] is significantly higher than that of the Chinese" (1939: 27).

4. Conclusion

If one considers the phenomenon of 'food' as providing an access to history, then it functions like a door swinging in both directions. On the one hand, food counts as an access for the contemporary Jewish refugees to the China of that time, so that they could better understand their country of exile as well as their own situation; on the other hand, this can also be understood as a reflection of current events for the later generation, so that it becomes possible to imagine the past from a microperspective. The phenomenon of 'food' also serves simultaneously as a concrete criterion for the analysis of or comparison between varying perceptions of reality. The perception of history is based on complicated background circumstances and is always linked to a relative evaluation. For this reason, there is need for a dependable benchmark or a double perspective so that the historical 'truth' remains ascribable and recognizable in subsequent remembrance.

This text has been translated by George Frederick Takis. This also applies to the quotes that were originally in German language.

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Eating with the Dead

Ritual, Memory and a Gustemological Approach to Taste

David Sutton

Abstract *This contribution argues for a culturally embedded approach to food, memory, and sensory experience. While 'taste' is often treated as something that can be abstracted from context and studied in various laboratory or 'real-world' laboratory situations, I argue for the ways that the experience of taste is deeply shaped by cultural experience, for which I suggest the term "gustemology" as an appropriate term. In my analysis of Greek food, memory, and sensory experience, I focused on the role of food in ritual and exchange practices as one way of understanding these cultural contexts that matter. As a key example I present research on the Greek funeral food, kollivo, which is deeply tied with ideas about memory and the ongoing relations with the dead. It is these non-abstractable social relations that are key in understanding the experience of the taste of food and its memory in ritual, as well as everyday interactions.*

When I first became interested in the topic of food, memory, and the senses, it was in the late 1990s, as an outgrowth of my research on the island of Kalymnos in the Greek Dodecanese. "Eat, to remember Kalymnos," was a phrase I often heard during the course of a year and a half that I lived there with my family in the course of my study of Kalymnian lifeways and historical consciousness. The phrase itself was almost always accompanied by the offer of food, from the typical grilled fish and octopus – staples on most of the Greek islands, to more unusual, to me, island offerings from crisp medlars and juicy tangerines to all varieties of wild greens, snails, and other local delicacies. By the 1990s there were growing scholarly fields of "food studies," "the anthropology of the senses," and "memory studies". But the connection between these topics remained in the realm of anecdote.

Twenty years later, scholarly work on food, memory and the senses has blossomed in multiple directions, as attested by review articles, monographs and articles in mainstream journals. Yet google 'food, memory and the senses' and the most popular hits are still suggestions for foods that boost memory powers and references to works in psychology claiming to show that our "evolved psychology" explains the connection between food and memory ("it's in the hippocampus;" "we naturally desire sweet flavors")[1]; and a cognitive "neurogastronomy" to manipulate our senses by changing the shape of plates or the color of forks.[2] Whatever the value of such understandings, they tend to ignore what to me is key in understanding the relationship of food, memory and sensory experience: the centrality of context. Anita von Poser, in her ethnography of foodways of the Bosum of Papua New Guinea, notes of their staple sago pudding that regardless of whether it appeared to her to have the right consistency or preparation, Bosum insisted that a sociable person cannot fail to produce tasty sago pudding (Von Poser 2013: 118). By contrast, the tendency of neurogastronomy and other hard science approaches to taste, to try and isolate taste in the laboratory to get at its objective/inherent/sui generis properties (Shepherd 2013), is basically misguided in my view, no one, or perhaps very few people eat, by choice, in a laboratory. And not just the individual and social contexts, stressed for example in Charles Spence's (2017) work in which food on an airplane tastes different than food at your neighborhood pub because these are multi-sensory experiences that mediate our tastes. These insights may well be true. But for the anthropologist, it is wider cultural contexts[3] that need to be brought into the frame of analysis. This diversity suggests a different type of explanation than any provided by evolved psychology. How we taste, and how we remember taste, can only be adequately explored within such cultural preferences and practices. Elizabeth and Paul Rozin (1981) famously describe the "flavor principles" of different world areas that allow one to distinguish taste preferences and spice combinations. But even here, there is something missing in an approach that subsumes Greece to Mediterranean cuisine, and ignores key difference, for example, between the use of basil for cooking in Italy, and the very different relationship to basil in Greece (discussed below). A culturally informed approach to taste, in fact, a gustemological approach that sees taste as part of a broader world view, might offer some answers.

Another way to think about these issues I am raising is in terms of Latour's concept of mediation. When I write of taste being embedded in culture and social relations, I recognize that these include people, matter and techniques. As Latour notes in discussing the concept of mediation: "The mediation, the technical translation, that I am trying to understand resides in the blind spot where society and matter exchange properties." (Latour 1994: 41) In my analysis of Greek food, memory, and sensory experience, I focused on the role of food in ritual and exchange practices as

1 https://harvardpress.typepad.com/hup_publicity/2012/05/food-and-memory-john-allen.html

2 Yogurt, it is claimed, tastes sweeter on a white spoon than a black one (see https://www.theguardian.com/science/2019/apr/28/five-tricks-of-the-senses).

3 The concept of social or cultural context is not unproblematic, and scholars are increasingly aware of how contexts are created (in analysis and in people's own claims to relevance), and not simply *there* to be found. See e.g., the discussion of context in Dilley (1998), as well as some of the critiques of context from Actor-Network Theory (Asdal 2012).

one way of understanding the ways that some, though not all of the characteristics of *remembrance are tasted and consumed*. In focusing on food's mediating role in the rituals I describe, I am arguing, in other words, that these cultural contexts make a difference. I suggest that certain foods and their tastes are context-bound, and further are deeply shaped – though often in different ways – by their symbolic associations with death.

For example, Greek memorial services for the dead (mnimosina) would be incomplete without the funeral food, kollivo (pl. kolliva), made from boiled winter wheat berries mixed with a variety of other ingredients, which often include pomegranate seeds, sesame seeds, a variety of nuts, dried currants and raisins, spices such as cinnamon, cloves and allspice, parsley, and breadcrumbs. The recipe can take several days to prepare because the wheat berries need to be soaked overnight, then boiled and rinsed, and then dried overnight (See Sutton 2003). Once mixed with other ingredients, it is ideally left in the refrigerator for another night for the flavors to meld, before being spread out on a plate and covered with powdered sugar and various decorations (Jordan almonds, more nuts, dragees) which are typically formed into the shape of a cross, but also may include flower and other shapes. The female head of household who has typically prepared the kollivo will then take it to the local church for blessing. It is served at the multiple memorial ceremonies that are held for the dead three, nine and 40 days after death, and three, six and nine months and then every year on the anniversary of the person's death.

This is a food that is used, then, to remember the dead, and in eating it, you offer prayers for the forgiveness of the dead person or the "lightening" of the dead person's soul. It is also meant to be offered *on behalf of the dead person* (or "in the name of the dead person" – sto onoma tou pethamenou), to extend their acts of food generosity and thus to continue to build their generous reputation for giving food to neighbors and to strangers – as well as their memory more broadly – even after death.[4] Contributing a pomegranate to a neighbor who will use it to make kollivo can be seen reciprocally as a blessing for the dead person (Panourgia 1995: 136). Serving kollivo to others, then, is a way of balancing accounts so that one's sins in life are forgiven, which makes the symbolism of kollivo even more striking. On the one hand, kollivo clearly partakes of the Christian symbolism of rebirth, as the ingredients, being seeds, will, in the process of rotting, give forth new life. Panourgia notes the symbolism of each ingredient of the kollivo preparation. The almonds "symbolize the bones freed of their flesh; the parsley (in lieu of ancient celery?) symbolizes the grass, the coolness of the point of arrival of the dead; the raisins testify to the fact that after the death and Resurrection of Christ death is bitter no longer" (Panourgia 1995: 131). But kollivo also partakes of more ancient symbolism, both with ingredients such as

4 For a full discussion of the relationship of memory and food generosity, see Sutton 2001: chapter 3.

pomegranates being associated with the underworld in Greek mythology, as well as the association of the word itself with ancient coins, thus suggesting again a balancing of accounts. On Kalymnos the expression "paying your debts with the koliva of others" suggests an attempt to cheat the work of generosity that goes into building a valued reputation. In times of political oppression, serving kollivo in public to memorialize the victims of government violence can also constitute an act of indirect resistance (Panourgia 1995: 137).

Fig. 1: Two plates of kollivo at the memorial service for Katina Miha, 2021. As is typical, a photo of the deceased is placed behind the kollivo, suggesting that they are offering it to the guests (the smaller photo to the right is of her mother).

Source: Katerina Miha. Reproduced with permission.

However, some people reject kollivo, or refuse to eat it under certain circumstances because of its association with death. This takes a number of forms. In times prior to refrigeration, kollivo could be dangerous because of the long processing time associated with making it. If it should spoil, people were known to have gotten sick or even died from eating kollivo. So, it was important to have trust in the kollivo maker to have properly prepared it. A morning television show in Greece in 2022 called Society Hour (*Koinonia Wra*) on the Mega channel included an interesting scene featuring kollivo.[5] The hosts were interviewing the head of the Union of Hospital Doctors of Athens and Piraeus, Matani Pagoni, about COVID-19 restrictions. However, before starting the interview one of the hosts offered Pagoni a bag of kollivo, saying that one of the TV crew had brought it in. Pagoni immediately responds by asking why she is being offered kollivo early in the morning. The other host responds "Isn't kollivo a superfood?" When the hosts insist, Pagoni asks "are these side effects of COVID? (i.e., these strange actions). Did I come to a funeral?" The hosts still insist that it is "great food" with pomegranate in it, and she responds once again: "Eat it yourself. I'm a superstitious person." When I asked Greek friends about this, they had different reactions. My colleague Nafsika Papaharalambou noted her reaction: "It kind of feels like a provocation to me. Conscious or unconscious. As if she were to be blamed for the death of all these people, or somehow to accept the kolliva and the responsibility of those deaths. I think the image of a doctor in the midst of a pandemic eating kolliva would be a very powerful one." She notes, by contrast, that her father said that kollivo is a food that "warms you up" which is why they were eating it for breakfast [in the middle of winter]. Many noted that what was inappropriate was to treat kollivo like any ordinary food (or even a superfood) that should be judged by taste (the fact that it had pomegranate in it, which many people prefer), or nutrition. It was *out of context*. Further, as Papaharalambou noted to me, they were making her responsible for remembering the death of a stranger. But other interpretations are possible. People told me stories about superstition about kollivo, that it was a dangerous food (not just because of the danger of poisoning noted above), because it brought one close to death. One woman compared it to people closing their windows when a funeral was passing their house – so that death wouldn't slip in. One man told me about taking some kollivo that he had received at a memorial ceremony with him on a hunting trip with his brother on a nearby, uninhabited island. When he brought out the kollivo to enjoy with the rabbit that they had caught, his brother went and hid in the boat and wouldn't come out until he had disposed of it. In this context, the actions of Pagoni, ironically perhaps because she was responsible for COVID-19 policy at the time, could be taken as a display of traditional superstition in the context of a national television program, and many people expressed variations of this view to me.

In eating kollivo, then, Greeks may activate many different contexts that surround it as a meaningful sensory practice. They may focus on the ingredients, in some parts of Greece it can include parsley or very occasionally, basil (but see below), but on Kalymnos most people prefer it without these ingredients. They may focus on the decoration of the kollivo described above, which some women gain a reputation in the community for being particularly skilled at. In the context of contempo-

5 It can be watched here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2po6Bft7VZM&list=PL3GSIeV8qPMDn7XHoEP33K4vEBWw6mI2J&index=13

rary times, they may, like the hosts of the morning show, suggest that its ingredients (wheat berries, nuts, and pomegranate) qualify it as a "superfood." But they may also refuse to separate it from its primary context and function: to literally remember the dead, and thus see it as polluting in non-ritual contexts.

Memory also plays a key role here in eating kollivo, as it does for all food in Greece, a theme I have developed elsewhere (Sutton 2001; 2011). Eating kollivo may call to mind previous occasions of its consumption – that is, previous memorial ceremonies and the people being memorialized in whose memory the kollivo is consumed.[6] It makes particularly explicit the connection of food and memory that has led me to suggest a more general theory of food memory might begin to be developed: one which focuses on how familiarity and novelty combine in each act of eating. Elsewhere (Sutton 2011) I argue that food is not simply a memory jog, in the Proustian sense, but memory itself could be thought of as a sensory capacity. Not, that is, if we think of senses as passive recorders of experience. Rather if we understand them, following Howes, as conduits between inner and outer worlds. This allows us to move beyond the Western "five sense" model and broaden our understanding of the capacities that shape our perception. Memory shapes perception as each act of tasting is both an immediate experience, and one that calls upon previous tastings to place a flavor, to compare and contrast, to evoke familiarity, comfort or disgust. On Kalymnos, because people often cooked and ate a known range of dishes familiar to the entire community, small variations such as the kind of water used to soak beans, the kind of salt used to flavor octopus stew, or other "minor" variations on each meal were topics that provoked extensive discourse at mealtimes, when people would taste the meal, share their sense impressions, and discuss what was similar and different from previous iterations (see Sutton 2001: chapter 4). This is true even for dishes that are strongly associated with ritual or tradition, as we have seen with kollivo. Similarly, with stuffed grape leaves, considered the favorite dish on Kalymnos and ideal for the Sunday meal. Each dish of stuffed grape leaves (filla) did not stand on its own, nor did it pass unremarked in its familiarity. Rather, memories of past filla were a constant presence whenever that dish was consumed (Sutton 2001: chapter 4). Any innovation, such as stirring bechamel into moussaka, rather than having it as a layer on top, would stick or be discarded based on a long knowledge/memory of previous iterations of the same dish (see Sutton 2021 for further discussion). Here, Maurice Halbwachs' classic work (1992) on the material and social milieu that makes memory possible is particularly relevant. It is the fact that each dish and each taste is not *only* a sensory experience but is embedded in practices which are recognizable to an entire community – as everyone in Kalymnos attends the memorial kolliva ceremonies – that makes for

6 This raises the issue of memory as an active process that mediates present perception, or in other words, memory *as a sense*. For more on this, see Sutton 2011.

such a powerful connection between food and memory. It is because cooking practices, and taste standards, are part of a shared social/sensory life in the community of Kalymnos that they can serve as anchors for what I would call a "gustemology" or a food-centered worldview.[7] What that might mean for studying memory in more individualistic, fragmented or diverse social settings is a question for future ethnography, though work on food memory among migrant communities (see e.g. Law 2001; Manalansan 2001; Vallianatos/Raine 2008) suggests the importance, in many cases, to be able to reconstruct a familiar world of food and tastes amidst the displacement of migration and cosmopolitanism. Indeed, for Greek migrants in the U.S., the U.K. and elsewhere, food is often a powerful solace to the pain of living abroad (a concept elaborated in the Greek term "xenetia"). Greeks often send packages through the mail to relatives as a way of reminding them of food from home and reaffirming their ties to a familiar sensory experience in the midst of an alien, and often alienating, sensory environment (Sutton 2001: chapter 3), another example of material objects and practices which mediate social and spatial relationships as well as memory processes.

One interesting detail that I believe has wider implications for our understanding of the role of context: Greek stores in the U.S. such as the well-known *Titan* grocery store in Queens, New York, carry not only typical Greek ingredients, but mass-produced, commodified Greek products such as candy and even bottled water. The 'taste of home' extends for migrants to these commodified products, and not just the localized cooking of families and small communities. Having the familiar, recognizable packaging of a water bottle or other products is, then, part of producing the sense of familiarity that immigrants are reproducing in these new circumstances. The implications of this relate to the question of whether the contextualized tastes I'm describing only apply to small 'traditional' communities with robust food cultures, no longer relevant to the globalized contemporary world of more fragmented communities? While I suggest above that this is an ethnographic question, I would still like to argue that contextual eating in familiar communities is potentially part of all human experience.

Sidney Mintz has famously drawn a distinction between societies that have a "cuisine" (what I would call a "robust food culture") and those that do not. As he put it: "I find it difficult to understand how a people can have a cuisine without ongoing, active producing of food and producing of opinions about food, around which and through which people communicate daily to each other who they are." (1996: 98) With this definition in mind, however, we can see that people generate opinions and memories of particular foods, even if commodified and mass-produced, and even if

7 Gustemology is a play on terms used by anthropologists like "acoustemology," to suggest cultural focus on different sensory ratios (see Sutton 2011; On acoustemology Feld 2003; on sensory rations Howes 2005).

living in fragmented societies (within which they may form smaller communities). So, for example, one might suggest how candy bought at candy stores, or mass-produced cereal, would form a source of this kind of embedded taste knowledge that I have been discussing for particular generations of kids sharing a certain experience even in the most modern, 'globalized' societies.[8] Indeed, this also suggests that just because foods are mass produced to sell to as wide a consumer base as possible, this does not mean that consumers don't add all kinds of specific meanings to make these foods meaningful in particular cultural contexts.[9] While I would not suggest that there is no difference between the mediating role of food in a place like Kalymnos and a place like London, I would argue that close ethnographic comparisons are needed to get at the actual differences that matter to people's experience of contextual and decontextualized taste.

One last example taken from my ongoing research once again emphasizes the importance of recognizing the embeddedness of taste in specific cultural contexts. Greeks love the smell of basil. It is grown in pots on windowsills throughout Greece, and Greek migrants often see the smell of basil as representing home to them. As one Greek folklorist famously wrote: "A flowerpot of basil can represent the soul of a people better than a drama of Aeschylus." (Dragoumis 1976) Basil features in offices, with large growths used to wipe one's hands before shaking the hands of an acquaintance, or sometimes the whole pot is shaken as a way to deodorize the office space. But basil is most importantly used in church – priests dip basil fronds in holy water and stroke it onto people's heads as a way of blessing them. As they do on the students the first day of school. Some people use basil to prepare the body for a funeral ceremony, making a frond of basil and putting it in the hands of the dead person to be displayed as they await burial. And the yeast mixture used to prepare bread for blessing in the church is often scented with water that has had basil dipped in it. This association of basil with the range of everyday and more ritualized experiences is tied to its holy status: basil was found at the tomb of Christ by Saint Helen (mother of Constantine the Great) and taken as a sign of the resurrection (whether this tradition is tied to the association of basil with holiness in India is a matter for future research). In all of these ways, basil is so deeply imbricated into the lives *and ideas about death* of Greeks that it seems inappropriate – even if not explicitly forbidden by the church, to eat basil. As one woman put it to me: "I don't like the taste of that smell." To analyze this statement as descriptive of a purely cognitive taste experience, rather than a total socio-sensory perception, is to miss the most important aspects of it. Basil is, once again, in Latourian terms, a material substance that mediates the experience of Greekness, even if it does so by smell rather than taste.

8 On candy as a source of sensory and embodied memories, see my discussion in Sutton 2008.

9 See Howes (ed.) 1996, as well as any of the voluminous work on consumption by Daniel Miller.

Fig. 2: Gravesite of Katina Miha (and other family members). A pot of basil is placed in the back left corner (near the photo of the deceased), once again emphasizing the association of basil with the care of the dead.

Source: David Sutton.

It is the embeddedness of food in exchange, ritual and everyday life, and the sensory attention given to food in Greek culture, which makes it a particularly useful exemplar. Not that Greeks are unique in this regard, and hopefully the readers of this chapter will find resonances in the cultural practices that they know best. But to the extent that we want to understand the relationship of food and the taste of food to people's everyday and collective ritual experience that I would suggest a *gustemological* approach in which memory and the senses are not isolated from cultural practices but are deeply enmeshed in the familiar contexts of cultural ideas and practices.

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Putrefaction

Dieter Roth, Sam Taylor-Johnson – and Peter Greenaway, *A Zed & Two Noughts*, 1985

Michael F. Zimmermann

Abstract *The text presents, beginning with a prelude in the 1920s, the visual arts' engagement with processes of decay from about 1960 to 1985. Fundamental is the observation that it is generally not those artists who appeal to sensuality or culinary culture, but above all those who lay out their oeuvre in a highly conceptual, epistemologically reflective manner, who focus on processes that are commonly perceived as disgusting. The examination of the cycle of growth and decay is not defeatist, but rather serves the purpose of shattering simultaneously what is acceptable in culinary terms and educated bourgeois or liberal ideals of temporality, generally directed toward a future, progress or some achievement. Basically, the integration of mold into the process of life seems parallel to concerns of classical modernism: initially, the artists stage their attempt to sublimate even disgust and abjection by integrating them into the cyclic order of time. All such efforts are tantamount to an attempt at reaching a position somehow above the curve of life in its randomness and finiteness – and thereby to a certain extent relieved from it. However, in such systems, putrefaction is nothing but an abstract extreme. Initially unintended, the artistic experiment shows that the attempt to sublimate death and decay ultimately is deemed to fail. This turns out to be the sense of the whole endeavor – a postmodernist gesture? Finally, we are left with the evidence that there is no position that would allow us to oppose the vital cycles (and history) we are part of by means of objective understanding. Thus, the subject of this essay is rationalization, insofar as even it reveals itself as a vital process, abandoned to decay.*

1. Devouring and Understanding: Metaphor and Sublimation

"What you chew becomes mush," noted Kurt Schwitters in 1922, quoting a botanist named Ernst Lehmann who would later declare himself to be a Nazi (Schwitters 2005, 70–71, 397). For Lehmann, this was a descriptive remark about an ordinary process. But Schwitters was summoning up the slightly disgusting aspect of this process. Above all, he used the "mush" in our mouth as a metaphor to attack the art criticism favored by the educated middle class, the same cultivated bourgeoisie that had impelled the peoples of Europe to throw themselves into the First World War. This was one year before the artist began to construct in his apartment-studio in Hanover his *cathedral of erotic distress* (Wiesing 1991; Elger 1999). The title alludes to sublimation, to the aesthetic and spiritual pleasures which we hope to be able to substitute for other, especially erotic satisfactions. Thus, Schwitters leads us to a double context: that of abjection and that of sublimation.

First of all, the state of abjectness and disgust (Menninghaus 1999; see also Rebecchi 2015). Here the artist mobilizes it like a metaphor: this is a matter of the comparison between food and knowledge, as well as between the act of eating and the activity, albeit futile, of (wishing) to understand (as with bourgeois art criticism). Examples abound in all languages: we swallow a lesson, devour a book, digest information, spit out what burdens thought, even vomit what we discover to be morally rotten. In his book *Rabelais and His World*, written in the 1930s, Mikhail Bakhtin traced out the trajectory of these metaphors (Sasse 2010; 157–176). We can use his key concepts, along with those of other intellectual witnesses – for example, elucidations by Nietzsche and by Freud – which will be discussed further on in this essay, in order to synthesize in a synopsis a series of oppositions that will serve as reference points in our discussion.

Devouring	Understanding
(living from) impure matter	episteme, the spirit, 'pure reason'
the (human) beast	Man
to be in the middle of the world, an embodied, participatory perspective	to adopt an objective position, as if one were not part of the world
desire lived collectively but hidden to reason	sublimation (substitutive pleasure)
experience of decay, the "death instinct" (Freud 1921) in the guise of the fear of death (or angst)	sublimation in the second degree: the rationalization of caducity
enjoyment and disgust (the appetizing and the rotten)	taste in an aesthetic sense, for example regarding a meal prepared according to a recipe (or an idea, artwork, book, etc.)

In his theory of the carnivalesque, Bakhtin showed that the body which swallows, devours, digests, spits or vomits tends to become collective when one shifts from a literal to a metaphorical meaning: it is an indistinct community, a singular collective that defends its social contours by its activities extending from orgiastic pleasure to defecation. Bakhtin situates the carnivalesque in a relationship of tension between life as linked to impure matter on the one hand, and on the other the episteme, the mind or, we could even say, 'pure reason.' Other contrasting polarities correspond to this opposition: the dualities between the (human) beast and the human being, and between the participatory perspective of a person who sees the world as embodied within it and the pretension of adopting an objective position, as if one were not part of the world (Bakhtin 1984 [1968], 303–436). This list can be completed with the tension between the animality of desire, experienced collectively but hidden to reason, and culture as sublimation (a substitutional pleasure).

Sublimation, in a Freudian sense, plays a key role in what follows. Postponing the immediate satisfaction of our drives – especially those linked to eros or survival – is generally seen as a prerequisite for structured, cultivated forms of communication, of non-violent cooperation and regulated social life. However, it leaves us with discomfort in culture. Here, we can only mention that the history of cookery and culinary rituals has often been told in terms of sublimation. From the 17th century onwards, cooking became an art, and since the 18th century, 'nouvelle cuisine' has had to be respectful of nature – of the natural potentials of agrarian products as well as of the nature and health of the eaters. Nature, in this context, is understood in the sense of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, not as lived in an unconscious, animalistic sense, but as meaningful in and of itself. On that foundation, during the 19th century, the metaphor of eating as linked to reading, thinking or understanding became commonplace. According to Hegel, the spirit has to appropriate the whole of historical development by grasping that the whole of historical evolution was nothing but a process leading to the spirit's own freedom – a door-opener for comparing studying and digesting. As soon as cookery was sublimated in terms of style or even of art, it became a powerful metaphor for the spiritual appropriation of the world (Ott 2011, 55–132 – chap. *Gastromythen der Moderne*).

However, aside from the drives linked to life and procreation, there might also be a drive leading in the opposite direction. In 1921, shortly after the First World War, Sigmund Freud "dared," so he wrote, to think of a "death instinct" (Freud 2000 [1921]). Since then, "sublimation," the transformation of psychological energies into cultural work, is no longer conceived as being nourished solely by sexual and vital energies or, to use Schwitters' terminology, by "erotic distress," but also by *thanatos*, by a process of decomposition which accompanies all growth, doubled by an unconscious wish to return to the origins, that is, to non-being. Is this drive, so to speak, useless for the individual, and necessary only for the species? Or can the single subject draw some satisfaction even from it – perhaps only by understanding it? It is to reply to that question that I have augmented the list with the opposition between, on the one hand, an unconscious desire to be null and void, the "death instinct," in the guise of the fear of death or of angst, and, on the other, a sublimation to the second degree: the rationalization even of nullity and emptiness. From the perspective of secondary sublimation, focusing on the somehow perverse pleasure of understanding even putrefaction, both pleasure and disgust (with regard, respectively, to the appetizing and to the rotten) stand in opposition to taste in the cultivated sense of the word, corresponding for example to the mere contemplation of a meal prepared according to a recipe, which in turn reflects culinary orders and myths.

We will see that certain artists who obsessively include decay and abjectness in their works are at the same time intensely involved with the conceptual, even the spiritual aspect here (for the study of a parallel topic, see Berger 2021). The central focus of this brief essay will be on the director Peter Greenaway. In a radical manner, he inserts decay into the second aspect of the context formulated by Schwitters: sublimation. One could also say: culture – and raise the question: opposed to nature?

2. Dieter Roth: Digesting Hegel and De-Romanticizing the Sunset

The Swiss artist Dieter Roth (1930–1998) explored the tension between sublimation and putrefaction in an exemplary manner. Here we can only allude to his investigation. Starting in 1960, a book becomes a sausage: Roth uses all the ingredients of a recipe for salami: fat, spices, salt. But in place of meat, he stuffs the gut of an animal with a book that has been entirely ground to bits. In 1961, he did so with a novel, *Halbzeit* by Martin Walser, male super-genius, written in a style not too far from that of Ernst Jünger or Lothar-Günther Buchheim and transformed into a "literary sausage" – which he then cut into two unequal pieces. Finally, in 1974, the most encyclopedic oeuvre of all: on a rack vaguely resembling the ones used by butchers to dry sausages, the Suhrkamp edition of the *Complete Works of Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel*, the quintessential thinker regarding global and total history. We have seen that devouring Hegel's philosophy of historic evolution is sublimation to the highest degree (fig. 1). With Roth, these books containing the meta-narrative par excellence, the history of the *Weltgeist*, have been reduced to food (Vischer/Walter 2003, 74–75, 103). Around the same time, Roth showed what makes the world turn. He replaced the sun in pictorial representations of the sunset with a slice of salami in decay (Vischer/Walter 2003, 105).

Implicitly, Roth stages the beholder as a subject aspiring to self-realization while simultaneously grasping hold of the world as far as possible by means of understanding. Here, he can imagine himself devouring the food of intellectual faculty such as Roth conceives of it. From 1969 onward, he also created busts, among them an extensive series of self-portraits, cast not in bronze but in chocolate and sharing the fate of all that is mortal: first devoured by worms, then by all sorts of mold, the chocolate 'Roths' are transformed into spectacles of color, bursting into various metamorphoses that are both unpredictable and inevitable – before perishing (but this takes time, inasmuch as the work still has not been 'terminated'). If "the death of the author" ever existed, then this is it (Vischer/Walter 2003, 115).

Fig. 1: Dieter Roth, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel: Werke in 20 Bänden, *1974, art object (books shredded and stuffed, together with all ingredients typical of sausages, into 20 guts, Staatsgalerie Stuttgart, Archiv Sohm (Inv. No. AS 1999/1271).*

Source: Graphische Sammlung Albertina (ed.): Dieter Roth. Gedrucktes, Gepresstes, Gebundenes 1949–1979, Köln: Oktagon 1998, p. 33.

3. Sam Taylor-Johnson: What Will Have Been and Putrefaction from a Neo-Baroque Perspective

Faced with the oeuvre of Sam Taylor-Johnson, one takes up the serious task incumbent on intellectuals, that of analyzing the spirit of their own times, the zeitgeist. Here is a photograph from 1993 (fig. 2) which, however, only becomes comprehensible upon realizing that it is the reenactment of another, formerly well-known picture. In 1980, only hours before the death of John Lennon, the photographer Annie Leibovitz created the mise-en-scène of the famous singer alongside his spouse Yoko Ono (Cohen 2019) (fig. 3). The two figures embody the post-1968 spirit in which the desire for sexual liberation was linked with a political utopia. Leibovitz inverted the gender stereotype by which the man would have had the more knowing and the woman the more instinctive part. Viewed with the knowledge that a madman would assassinate Lennon on the same day after the photo session, the photograph acquires an aura of nostalgia. The photograph of Sam Taylor-Wood, as she was named at the time, and Henry Bond certainly does not achieve a similarly melancholic effect (fig. 3). In the postmodern world, another form of nostalgia latches onto this sort of mimicry: lamentably, one is no longer there where these heroes, these martyrs to emancipation, were in 1980. There is great plausibility to the interpretation of Julian Stallabrass, who links this reenactment to the end of grand hopes and the beginning of deep fears in the 1990s, the renewal of a sort of history bereft of utopia (Stallabrass 2006 [1999], 43–147). Henceforth neither Lennon and Ono nor Taylor-Wood and Bond are viewed in their actual presence, but instead with respect to what will have occurred in the future, the manner in which they will be seen later, when the present moment has become history.

Fig. 2 (left): Photograph of Sam Taylor-Johnson [then Taylor-Wood] and Henry Bond*, 26 October 1993, color print, 58.5 x 48.5 cm [Bond claims authorship].*
Fig. 3 (right): Annie Leibovitz, Yoko Ono and John Lennon*, color photograph, December 8, 1980, Chromogenic print, 30.5 x 31 cm, Edinburgh, National Galleries of Scotland.*

Sources: Fig. 2. www.mutualart.com/Artwork/October-26–1993/C97C1AA0B59FB36C, screenshot 23–06-29; Fig. 3. Annie Leibovitz (1983): *Photographs*, New York: Pantheon Rolling Stone Press, n. pag.

Both photographs actualize a Baroque notion of time: according to Walter Benjamin, the bourgeois tragedy of the 17th and 18th centuries presents a narrative and its hero from the point of view of the denouement. Only at the end will the drama reveal whether the hero is a swindler or a martyr. Viewed from the perspective of its conclusion, the temporality of the play, as well as that of the world, will be annulled in a form of knowledge that surpasses time by synthesizing it (Benjamin 1974 [1925]; Menke 2010, 123–168). In Taylor-Johnson's photograph with her ex-lover, the future from which we now see it is imbued not only with separation and failure, but also with a prosaic disenchantment, a lack of sense of deep meaning. What remains of it is the quotation of Ono's and Lennon's picture, a form of sense based on transversal references and remaining on the surface.

An art of appropriation and melancholy can also be found in the famous still-lifes of Taylor-Wood that were done in 2001 and 2002 (Vincintelli 2006; Benthien/Berger 2021). In a highly personal way, the tension between death – what will occur? – and sublimation – what will have been? – is also a subtext of these images; the artist was fighting against breast cancer during the period she realized these works (Crutchfield 2008, 20). The motifs are vaguely derived from Jean Baptiste Siméon Chardin, the quintessential artist of the aesthetic still-life, which, thanks to the abstract rhythms of objects and colors, has already been emancipated from the idea of edibility (Demoris 1991, 28–28, 78–83, 143–153) (fig. 4).

Fig. 4: Sam Taylor-Johnson, Still Life, *2001, 35 mm film, DVD on a plasma monitor, color, no sound, duration 3 min. 44 sec, single frame.*

Source: Sam Taylor-Wood. Still lifes, Exhibition catalogue Baltic Center for Contemporary Art, Gateshead, May-September 2006, n. pag.

These still-lifes are indeed time-lapse videos of the process by which fruits or rabbits are putrefying in a picture frame: putrefaction reduced to the play of light.

Are we confronted with an aestheticizing reenactment of *vanitas*, of the tension between pleasant appearance and nullity, between sensuality and the memento mori, which is a fundamental theme of the still-life painting in the 17^{th} and 18^{th} centuries, especially those specifically referring to death – but of all the others as well (Bertrand Dorleac 2020, 2022)? Or could it be that this appropriation of the museum picture, of the history of art, confronts us with another sort of futility, with "the end of art history" in post-history, which Hans Belting raised in 1984 as a question and repeated in 1995 as a diagnosis with no question mark (Belting 1983, 1995)? The pen seen in the fruit still-life, which is of course not decomposing, makes us understand that here, time is lifted by being written: after the end of avant-garde utopias, art history ceased to be charged with the promises of a secularized salvational history. Its revelations are no longer epiphanies, and what it offers is, along with time mirrored in illustrations or moving slides, the written temporality of libraries (Wattolik 2018, 34–41).

4. Peter Greenaway: Sublimating Putrefaction?

Finally, the artist who is at the center of our reflections (or ramblings, inasmuch as we are part of the game we are seeking to analyze) concerning abjection and sublimation: the English director Peter Greenaway. For most of its initial viewers, except for incorrigible cinephiles, his film whose title is written *Zoo* and transcribed as *A Zed & Two Noughts* was at best beautiful but enigmatic, if not boring and pretentious (van der Pol 2005; Barber 2008). Greenaway had inquired into the myths surrounding cookery, whether refined or crude, as well as books and cannibalism in his film *The Cook, the Thief, His Wife & Her Lover* (1989), and it would be interesting to dwell on the phantasms of sex and violence by describing the hero Michael, at the end stuffed, like one of Roth's sausages, with books from his library. Authors (who do not share the victimized hero's first name) have done so. Here, I will concentrate on putrefaction instead of how a bookish guy's sex is swallowed (Gras 1995, 134–138; Petrivola 2017).

Zoo, first presented in 1985, shows slow-motion views of the cadavers of animals in decay; but it also opens the door to a cosmos of sublimation, a world composed of the substitute pleasures of comprehension and knowledge. A detour can help us to go back from Taylor-Johnson to Greenaway: The great scholar of Slavic studies Aage A. Hansen-Löve (2018, 627–680) demonstrated that the gesture of discovery, apo-calypse, is often closely connected with the (calyptic) strategy of an aesthetic of the surface – including surfaces used to cover unpleasant truths. Whereas metaphor promises to reveal a meaning located within depths (*Tiefsinn*), the calyptic aspect simply finds it – or rather covers it – on its surface, in a network of metonymical relationships. We can imagine meaning as situated on the surface of a soap bubble, alluding to the rainbow-colored waves oscillating on its surface. To contextualize these observations in a perspective close to Nietzsche (1980 [1872]), metaphor and sublimation are inscribed into the relationship between the Dionysian and the Apollonian: whereas the raw forces of nature (revealed by murky fumes to the Delphic sibyl) lie concealed in the inscrutable depths of the earth and of metaphor, it is repression that weaves the beautiful surfaces, that designs contours, harmonies and the metonymic rhyming of forms – all protected, like the oracle, by the god of the sun. Evidently sublimation, the strategy of suppressing desire in order to suffocate it amid the labyrinths and ornaments of signs, involves covering through the activity of repression, thereby still keeping up the illusion of somehow being in touch with a deeper truth. Whereas Romanticism, Symbolism and Surrealism were Dionysian arts, postmodernism, with its skepticism regarding the promises of interpretations made by all sorts of exegetes, and with its fondness for allusive quotations, sings the praises of the Apollonian. In his study of Nabokov (2011 [1952], 2011 [1972]), Hansen-Löve demonstrates that this precursor of postmodernism brought superficiality to the fore. Thus the apocalyptic/calyptic process fuses in a temporality of procrastination: enjoy the time fleeting like a butterfly, even if thereby you also enjoy the fact that you know it is incalculable, albeit measured! A postmodern superficiality can indeed be marked by a behavior – often confused with cynicism – through which we actively try to defer death, a supreme form of procrastination. It is in this context that Greenaway's work is situated: rarely is the apocalyptic content as successfully uncovered and covered at the same time as in *A Zed & Two Noughts*, a masterpiece of the calyptic.

It is not even possible to recount the plot of this film (reconstructed, in the complexity of its narrative strands, in Kim 2003) because it is more through the logic of absurd images than by means of the presentation of a storyline that Greenaway creates narrational relationships. Let us begin with the different initial scenarios which the film presents to us. We are invited into a set of duplications: first two zeros, the "Noughts," who are the twins Oswald and Oliver. They are devoted to their research involving animals in the zoo which, in this film, is that of Rotterdam. Later one hears that the two twins – even the actors themselves were brothers – were Siamese twins at birth. In the early parts of the film, this is not supported by visual evidence. At the beginning, they bear no more resemblance to each other than as two brothers with different hair colors. Nevertheless, over time they come to resemble each other more and more and ultimately become almost indistinguishable, thereby gradually transforming themselves back into Siamese twins (fig. 5). Indeed, the director presents them in a suit with a single sleeve for the right arm of one and the left arm of the other.

Fig. 5: Peter Greenaway, Zoo – A Zed & Two Noughts*, [Zoo], 1985, single frame showing Oswald and Oliver standing beside Alba's bed after her second leg – the one remaining after an accident – has been amputated in order to restore symmetry, and after having suicided her; her last will: "don't do anything with my body I would not do. now, I lay still and quiet."*

Source: Screenshot (1:44).

Fig. 6: Peter Greenaway, Zoo – A Zed & Two Noughts*, [Zoo], 1985, single frame showing a zebra in putrefaction.*

Source: Screenshot (1:34).

There are other duplications, this time concerning the relationship between medium and content, and at the same time between signifier and signified. Step by step, the film leads the spectator to question the semiotic fundament of meaning: early in the film, the zoo director raises the question as to whether a zebra is a black horse with white stripes or a white horse with black stripes. The zebra becomes an emblem of the film (fig. 6), which presents many striped or spotted animals. Moreover, the animals are often doubled, whether through the reflection in a mirror or on an actual physical level, in which case there is sometimes also a duplication between life and death – when, for example, two (striped) fish are in the process of decomposing. Slowly, the distinction between figure and ground is abrogated. At the same time, the difference between Oswald and Oliver is annihilated. More and more, sign and object, two basic sides of duplication in the activity of semiosis, collapse into each other. Without semiosis, it is not possible to develop a cinematographic narrative, so it is only in the end that we understand that they will disappear. And this annullation is linked to another history charted out in several branches: the story of growth and of decrepitude.

Despite its absurdity, the narrative framework is linked to these various aspects of duality. Everything starts with a double death. A woman named Alba ("the white one") is driving a white automobile, a Mercury (think of Mercury, the messenger of the gods) which collides with a white swan that is seen in front of the car. The swan is an allusion to the bird that gave birth to Castor and Pollux, the two mythical twins: a renowned sculpture showing them side by side, the famous Ildefonso group now at the Museo del Prado in Madrid (circa 10 AD), has been interpreted ever since Romanticism as the kinship between sleep and death, between *hypnos* and *thanatos*. In the accident involving the Mercury, the two women seated in the back, the wives of Oswald and Oliver, are killed. Alba, the surviving woman at the wheel, loses one of her two legs; it could not be saved. For reasons of symmetry – the central aesthetic strategy of this film – her other leg will be cut off as well by a surgeon (fig. 5). Thus, the film tells the story both of Alba's mourning – she regrets less the accident than the fact that she has lost a leg and thereby the allure of bodily symmetry – and of the sense of bereavement afflicting Oswald and Oliver (the two "noughts"), who are inconsolable at the loss of their wives. At the end of the film, all these persons will lose their lives.

Nevertheless, they initially try to console each other; this attempt constitutes the narration of the film. How to console oneself in the face of death? By trying to understand it. It is by means of experimentation with decomposition that Oswald and Oliver endeavor to grasp, to rationalize death. Eadweard Muybridge and Étienne-Jules Marey studied the vital movements of men and animals by measuring them. To do this, they created a sort of black stage marked by geometric coordinates in white. They had animals or persons cross above it; Marey measured their "locomotion." Through applying chronophotographic techniques, both had an important role in the prehistory of cinema (Prodger 2003; Didi-Huberman/Mannoni 2004). In the experiment conducted by Oswald and Oliver, it is a matter of a different movement: that of putrefaction. Instead of the early "bioscope" (as cinema was sometimes called), Greenaway made his heroes experiment with a thanatoscope.

They start with the Biblical beginning: The first living thing that Oswald and Oliver cause to perish is an apple, fruit from the tree of knowledge, that was stolen from Alba's room – to be specific, an apple into which someone has bitten. The brothers – along with the zoo personnel – measure the time that the fruit takes to decompose. Arising subsequently is a series of animals: a prawn, a crocodile and, among other creatures, a swan and a zebra, all of whose processes of decay they observe (fig. 6). At the end it will be the twins themselves, now having become almost identical, who arrange for someone to later observe their own decomposition (fig. 7). They poison themselves in a garden populated by snails, and the film explains that these are unisexual animals. Thus, even in the domain of sexuality, Greenaway continues his experimentation with a duality which, however, will ultimately be abrogated to reattain unity. In the end, the snails cover the lights, the camera, all the arrangements set up by the two suicidal heroes who intended to become martyrs for the sake of their experiment. Nature – traditionally conceptualized as singular and unambiguous – devours the twins' endeavor to understand death and decay by measuring the time it takes, and culminating in their sacrifice (see Gras 1995). Duality turns into unity – and their putrefaction, finally, will not have been recorded.

Fig. 7: Peter Greenaway, Zoo – A Zed & Two Noughts*, [Zoo], 1985, single frame showing the two "Noughts" Oswald and Oliver after having arranged themselves so that their own putrefaction can be filmed; which will not happen, as their legs are swallowed by snails (together with the whole equipment).*

Source: Screenshot (1:49).

5. (Un-)reading *A Zed & Two Noughts* – Undoing Difference and Taxonomic Orders

Various intelligent interpretations of this film have been offered: following Georges Bataille, a parallel has been identified between the museum and not only a zoo, but even a slaughterhouse. To grasp life through knowledge, through its classification and exhibition, etc., means to kill, even to cannibalize (Willoquet-Maricondi 2003, including a psychoanalytical reading of sublimation). Likewise recognized in the film has been a postmodernist playing with manifold ways of establishing meaning, even if thereby a first fixation is refuted through a second, and so forth (Barber 2008). Attention has been paid to the question of whether the film primarily addresses cinephiles, who can – briefly – be characterized as persons who delight in descrying quotes from other visual material (van der Pol 2005), thus taking *A Zed and Two Noughts* as a super-signifier disseminating meaningful relations to an unlimited number of other films. Finally, the readings of previous films by Greenaway add perspectives to *Zoo*, notably if they show food, thereby staging manifold aspects of desire (Gajda 2017). Offered with this present essay is an alternate reading that is complementary to several of those which have been proposed: if the film endlessly follows the passage from meaningful dualities back to amorphous unity, it also traces – before blurring it – the track that leads from signifier to signified, thereby exploring the trajectories of semiosis and sense, the peregrinations of meaning insofar as it is always aspiring to be fulfilled.

The separation between a material – which thereby becomes the material of a sign – and what it designates is a fundamental epistemic operation. The signifier and the signified – which, taken together, constitute a third entity, namely the sign – are the central paradigm in the *Course of General Linguistics* of Ferdinand de Saussure, which was compiled by his students and published in 1916 (Saussure 2011 [1916]). This basic semiotic relation would become the "structure of structures" in structuralism, even if in it the semiotic relation is not understood as quasi-natural: for example, when the sign within labyrinths (ornaments, fractals…) of ambiguities, so to speak, constantly searches for its meaning without ever finding it (Culler 2001 [1981], 3–46). Poststructuralism went further and endeavored to completely deconstruct this structure of structures, thereby dispelling the shadow of self-evidence in semiosis. Jacques Derrida (1967 a, 21–31, 149–202) understood it as a relationship that initiates the separation between nature and culture, comparable to the prohibition of incest such as analyzed by Claude Lévi-Strauss (1969) in his famous book *The Elementary Structures of Kinship* (his doctoral thesis from 1948, published in 1949). So the connection of the signifying material to a signified meaning, instead of being taken as natural, establishes the unequal relationship between the culture which we believe ourselves to have founded and nature from which we repel – thereby deluding ourselves that we master, even possess, it (Derrida 1967b, 9–49).

From 1950 to 1960, Lévi-Strauss had to teach, at the École pratique en sciences sociales, the religions of scriptless people, as his chair was denominated. The famous series *Mythologiques*, published between 1964 and 1971, was the result of his lessons (Loyer 2015, 483–586). In *The Raw and the Cooked*, first volume of this series, he also integrated putrefaction into his semiotically grounded, structuralist analysis of what is culturally accepted as edible (Lévi-Strauss 1964, 43–74, 340–347). In a triangular structure, a temporal trajectory fatally leads from what is raw to what is rotten. Only diverse treatments of cooking can, for a while, slow down or prevent that process. The cooked is what differentiates culture, in terms of nourishment, from nature. Four years later, after having inquired into a large variety of culinary practices and the myths linked to them, Lévi-Strauss added a second triangle that separates procedures of drying, whether by air-drying or by smoking food, from directly burning – by roasting and grilling – and finally from cooking: thereby, we need not only food and fire, but also a third thing, water in a vessel (Lévi-Strauss 1968, 390–411). So, boiling or steaming are often, but not always, considered to be cultural to the highest degree, and in most cases are practiced in a domestic ambiance – and thus coded as female, whereas roasting or grilling are considered as closer to nature, because they are based only on fire, not on a third, 'mediating' element (such as a jar or water), and moreover are related to practices of nomadic hunting, and therefore are often done by men, Lévi-Strauss argues. However, because of the smell or the aspect of the result, boiled food can also be associated with putrefied, for example fermented, nourishment. Lévi-Strauss does not intend to establish, with his culinary triangles, an all-inclusive structure according to which humans always rationalize food. However, he insists that they always establish some sort of an order in what they prepare and eat, and that they give some, most often mythic, reasons for it (see also: Walitschke 1995, 92–123).

All these strategies are aimed at integrating putrefaction into a cultural code, even if it is considered to be an extreme in it. However, phenomena of abjection suffice to demonstrate that the rotten also exceeds the mythology of cookery, even if mold and the rotten or even vomiting are inscribed into a semiotics of nutrition (Menninghaus 1999, 516–567). What is valid within the semiotic systems is pertinent also when we think about the strategies of understanding them. Also in methodological terms, putrefaction cannot be explained "away" by structuralist systems constructed by means of cross-over, intercultural comparisons. We no longer believe that the mythology of cooking is anchored in the structure of our brain or our neural system, and this cannot be inferred by anthropological generalizing on the basis of diverse ethnological observations. The philosopher Paul Ricoeur had linked Lévi-Strauss' attempt at uncovering general structures of human belief and behavior to Immanuel Kant's transcendental philosophy, aimed at implying from our epistemic practices the enabling conditions of all our experience. The French ethnologist agreed, in 1964, with Ricoeur (Lévi-Strauss 1964, 19; see: Walitschke 1995, 124–134).

Nowadays, such an attempt is recognized as yet another strategy of empiricizing, after Kant, the transcendental (the key word is borrowed from Ajouri/Specht 2019). Similar attempts at deriving anthropological universals from empirical observation of human culture – instead of just proposing useful but fallible models – are bound to fail.

Paradoxically, the idea to reduce human culture to what is inscribed in the genome is tantamount to naturalizing the human instead of understanding how it differentiates itself from nature (Kämpf 2015). In a more general way, Lévi-Strauss has rightly been criticized for basing the vast comparisons in his *Mythologiques* on an ethnology of the library (Moebius 2020, 97–101). Such criticism is often all too easily repeated by cultural scientists vaguely defining themselves as poststructuralists – without, however, having learned structuralism's lessons. It is certainly necessary to design models in order to understand the hidden roots regulating social practice, including cookery. However, thereby we always have to revoke our claims to knowledge to what can be observed from a perspective of participatory observation. James Clifford was highly successful by limiting ethnology, and cultural theory, to what can be reached by renouncing to an objectifying perspective which reduces culture to a text. He insisted that ethnography – and also cultural theory – instead of fixing its topic in texts, necessarily inscribes itself in contrast with other text producer's perspectives. Thereby, culture is not just described, but 'written,' that is, produced by means of interpretation (see, for an introduction to the 'writing culture' debate, and for further bibliographical indications: Moebius 2020, 123–129). Nowadays, 'praxeology' or 'inferentialism' invite us to revise our epistemological pretentions: yes, we need to propose reasonable models for how our practices are structured, but we have to be aware of our own historical position for doing so, and accept that our game of interpretation is itself part of an ongoing activity, and therefore constantly revised.

The division of culture from nature (for instance by forbidding incest and by cooking), as Lévi-Strauss and other early structuralists imagined it, has been critically reviewed already by early poststructuralists. They recognized that in such systems of totalized rationalization, nature always has the weaker part. Derrida, in the chapter in his *Grammatology* (1967, 235–378) which examines what Rousseau wrote about the origin of language, deconstructs the separation between everything that is considered to be nature and all that is viewed as the Other of nature, i.e., culture. For the author, nature and culture are not symmetric notions but a pair in which one concept – here nature, always elusive – is systematically weakened so that the other – culture – is strengthened. The deconstruction of the opposition of culture to nature was a primary interpretative gesture for Derrida – and thus for the very deconstruction that is behind deconstructionism. It does not leave intact the basic semiotic relation of signifier and sign. In our days, animal studies inquiring into the constant interdependence of human and other animals defined as the natureculture go further in the same direction (Haraway 2008, 19–23, 249–263). In his *On the Use and Abuse of History for Life*, Nietzsche (1980 [1874]) had spoken of animals living in the unity of life itself, of livestock in its happy innocence, in contrast to human beings, who are distinguished from all that through the act of understanding their own mortality.

This opposition between animal innocence and spiritual awareness is at stake in Greenaway's *Zoo*. Well before Haraway proposed the concept of natureculture, Oswald and Oscar, by inquiring into decay and putrefaction, deconstruct the relationship between natural need (potentially blind) and cultural sublimation (imbuing blind urges with productivity): in their work, in itself a supreme attempt at sublimation, all kinds of need, following the promptings of the death instinct, collapse into a type of oneness in which the distinction of nature and culture is finally annihilated. Once again, I would like to emphasize that not only the mythological systems such as the differentiation between raw and rotten are concerned, but also whole systems of taxonomy, and finally the primordial separation between sign and signified. In all these structures, nature is nothing but the empty ground for sublimation, something that is only by means of being culturally described and categorized. In this context, the significance attributed by Freud to sublimation comes to light in all its radicalness, its contemporaneity: sublimation, instead of meaning an activity of annihilating nature by enclosing it into systems of signification, is recognized as being itself part of nature. It does not stand in opposition to drives and needs but is a form of their expression. Greenaway undoubtedly enters the vast current of post-structuralism which brings us to understand culture not as opposed to the animal world, but as an aspect of it.

From the relationship of the double signifier/signified, Greenaway goes on to integrate all sorts of taxonomies – first, the one by which animals are classified. Using animals as examples, children are introduced to the art of recognizing and classifying species (first by distinguishing a cat from a dog), and this occurs in the film as well. One does not immediately understand why the director introduces exactly twenty-six animals into the labyrinth of his cinematographic narration – in this case soft toys. But this figure is subsequently legitimized as being the number of letters in the alphabet. In interviews, Greenaway adds that in his opinion, there are also twenty-six ways to illuminate a film scene, something that, he says, was already understood by Jan Vermeer van Delft (Gras 1995; van der Pol 2005). Today we know of twenty-six works done by the painter. Nevertheless, the counterfeiter Han van Meegeren tried to add some more Vermeers. As is well known, he failed in that endeavor. Greenaway assigns an important role to van Meegeren in the film, that of the surgeon who cuts off the remaining leg of Alba merely for aesthetic reasons, for the purpose of symmetry. Greenaway himself plays with twenty-six ways to assign a dominant color to the scenes of the film, beginning – as we have seen – with the white of the swan, the Mercury, etc., in the first scene (Costa de Beauregard 2010).

Nonetheless, the primordial relationship of signification subsides at the end. Even the swan which, in the myth, as a metamorphosis of Jupiter, had given birth to Castor and Pollux, the primordial twins known as the Dioscuri (one of them shared his immortality with the other, mortal one), succumbs to the process of putrefaction. Everything returns to a state of unity. The twins reduce themselves almost to a single being (fig. 7). The signified collapses into the signifying material which thereby in turn can no longer be qualified in any sense. There is no further significatory activity, only unisex snails. And in the *Zoo*, the double oo after the "Z," the last letter of the alphabet, is reduced to two zeros: zero plus zero equals zero. A key aspect of the film is that understanding and any epistemic activity are conceived not as a search for truth (and ending in it once it is found) but as an activity which is inherently vital, and consequently not as imparting meaning to life from some realm beyond or above it. Greenaway meticulously constructs a parallelism between life and everything that is linked to the activities of interpreting it, of discovering its meaning, or of inventing a signification for it. The primordial nature of these activities involves using something as a sign for something else; then comes reading a surface as the medium for an inscription (the question about the black or white stripes of the zebra); and finally the taxonomies based on the figure 26. Greenaway explores many parallel ways of rationalizing life as in fact being part of life itself. They all involve temporality: the effort to interpret the time of growth or of decomposition by introducing systems of spatial measurement is also part of life – in this case, of the work that Oswald and Oliver undertake, ultimately to no avail, in order to overcome the death of their spouses.

In summary, it is in following the efforts of the protagonists to conduct a careful and mathematical study of putrefaction (fig. 6) that viewers come to understand that life and death are merely two sides of the same coin – just as mind and matter, life and consciousness, are not opposed to each other. But without biting into the apple, without emerging from a blind and paradisal unity, it is impossible to achieve an understanding even of that interdependence … Is it ultimately possible to understand life or death? It is this question that the challenging film of Peter Greenaway raises without, however, providing an answer. The paradox of the film, of the apple of knowledge that is not only enjoyed but also – right from the first mouthful – begins to decay, is that a sublimation aiming at opposing life will never succeed. Of course, Oscar's and Oliver's life has become intolerable because of the terrible experience of the death of the women, a symbolic annihilation of the duality of the sexes. But that only reveals death as consistently accompanying our life in general. Like any thinking animal, the heroes know about it, inevitably hoping to overcome it along with their grief. The lesson might be: one cannot escape death by seeking to understand it. But it is not that easy: nor can one escape from the urge to cancel death by trying to comprehend it…

The undertaking of Oswald and Oliver is a metapoetic radicalization of a practice which has become habitual in our culture: we generally conceive of the opposition between life and reason, thereby purifying rational thinking as an activity supposedly not inherent to life but removed from it. But the snails cause the heroes to fail. If one takes up the lesson of Greenaway's *Zoo*, the episteme constitutes part of life rather than separating itself therefrom. This is an invitation to accept radical contingency: even our thinking one day will be prey to putrefaction. The postmodernist version is this: there is no meaning hidden in depth and surpassing life in its superficiality. Everything is contained within the texts of life, with nothing behind their ornament. There is no *hors-texte*, no space outside the text. And in our post-postmodernist world, we may add: nor does anything exist outside nature.

This sheds also new light on eating, and cookery. The rituals of the hearth fire, or of the kitchen, are not a system separating us from nature, sublimating what grew and has been killed, but an activity placing us in the midst of what is raw, uncooked, or even slightly rotten (such as all the deliciously fermented products, coffee, tea, vanilla, chocolate, cheese, etc.). Eating is animalic, and overprocessing food is barbaric. Not by chance are the most intensely processed – and certainly not animalic – food products understood as not just unhealthy, but decadent: the putrefied goes to the garbage, and junk food is close to it. The rotten is not just an extreme, it is part of nature, and we are part of it – and not above it. However, the most delicious nourishments – for those who pose as proven connoisseurs – are slightly disgusting, such as snails, or even animals devoured not raw, but living, such as oysters.

That does not mean that transcendence is futile, only that even hope can only be contingent, 'embodied,' vital! There is no consolation by escaping this existence in cultural systems conceived of as spiritualizing nature, as above or outside history, outside flesh, outside our own story and that of our societies. To conclude with another aspect of the same insight: Claude Imbert would say along with Maurice Merleau-Ponty that one is neither inside nor outside the world, but towards it, *au monde* (Imbert 1999, 297–98; Imbert 2005, 15–20; Bachir Diagne 2011). It is only in this somehow unthinkable (but therefore the only livable) position that we can enjoy even our attempts at escaping from our fate by rationalizing it. If we never manage to succeed in this playful but futile attempt, necessary but purposeless, maybe we can at least live *au monde* with a little confidence.

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