THE SENSE
OF TASTE &

THE ACT
OF EATING

As
metaphorical thinking

Martina Adela Miño Pérez
The Sense of Taste & The Act of Eating as Metaphorical Thinking.

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Abstract:
The Sense of Taste and the Act of Eating as Metaphorical Thinking investigates how the sense of taste and the act of eating can be used as tools of representation, exemplification and symbolism and are able to communicate meanings through something else than images. The aim of this work is to show the variety of contexts and situations where flavour has communicated history, culture in different contexts, artistic practice, poetry, fiction, non-fiction and everything in between. In the same way, it explores the act of eating as an exercise for extraction and digestion of values and virtues. My work specifically emphasizes the communication of meaning in the context of Contemporary Art and reveals how eating and tasting can transmit metaphors, tropes and ideas in a uniquely direct and intimate manner.

This Master Thesis is constituted by three different parts: (1) An academic research -the present manuscript-, (2) the Memory Popsicles Exhibition and (3) the Cooking from Memory cookbook.

1. The present academic research explains the role of the sense of taste and of the act of eating in the production and communication of meaning and metaphors. The concept of metaphor in this investigation is framed as a transposition of ideas and exchange of meanings between different objects and subjects.

This paper is built around the statement: Food has no meaning, but it acquires it through a specific historical period, specific location, and function. It explores how, from the beginning of time, different cultures, communities, religions, art movements and sub-cultures have attributed meaning to food in order to communicate or fix aspects of their identity. This meaning is not always articulated as images or as words but expressed metaphorically through flavours and textures. Through this research, I wish to portray the act of eating and the sense of taste as grounds where new forms of metaphorical thinking can take place and investigate why are these important in the construction of our identities.

This investigation starts by exploring how food has been used as a metaphorical tool to represent our human condition, its temporality and mortality; that is, the unavoidable passing of time. The act of eating is portrayed here as an act of consumption of values, virtues and defects. This leads us to the relationship between food, cannibalism and meaning. Specific cultural practices, such as the Christian Eucharist or the rituals of the Wari and Tupi communities in
the Brazilian Amazon, have framed the practice of cannibalism as a tool for the absorption of qualities, essences and symbols. We will then analyze how different disciplines such as biology, anthropology, philosophy, literature and the visual arts have approached and studied the act of eating and the sense of taste, in different cultures around the world. Further on, we will review the relationship between the performativity of eating and the performativity of writing and how these two types of languages support each other. A complete chapter will frame cookbooks as a common ground for the dialogue, among these different performativities. Similarly, the next section will present references to food and eating that exist outside the literary genre of cookbooks, such as comic books, artistic manifestoes and poems. Finally, we will take a look at how gustative metaphors have been increasingly used in Contemporary Art as tools for communication through textual and gustatory symbolism. In this context, I will present the concept of my final M.A. exhibition, Memory Popsicles.

The variety of examples and points of view discussed in this thesis can teach us about the way different ways cultures have approached their own history through taste and how has the act of eating been a powerful and intimate tool, for the interpretation of reality.

2. The second part of my thesis project is the Exhibition Memory Popsicles, a participatory installation of edible art. This exhibition materializes memories into flavours and explores the relationship between fiction, memory, subjectivity and taste. It wishes to exemplify how different palates and combinations of flavours can represent the multilayered nature of memory and communicate its narratives. This exhibition is based on interviews with different people about a particular memory they had regarding taste. This exhibition took place at two venues: as a Flavor Laboratory at Third Space Gallery in May 2018 and as a participatory installation during Helsinki Design Week in September 2018, at Flavor Studio A21.

3. The final part of this project is materialized in the form of a cookbook. This book is a compilation of the memories that were transformed into popsicles for the Exhibition Memory Popsicles side by side with their correspondent recipes. At its final version, it will also include interviews with the donors of memories about their experience at the happening and documentation of the cooking sessions of the popsicles.

**Keywords:** Taste, Food, Metaphor, Poetics, Language, Symbolism, Philosophy, Art, Subjectivity, Edibility, Interpretation.
Thank You

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And as soon as I recognized the taste of the Madeleine soaked in the Linden tea that my aunt used to give me (...) suddenly the old grey house that gave to the street, where her room was, turned up as a theatric scenography to install itself on the pavilion that was in front of the garden, that my parents had built in the back (...) and with the house, the city, from the morning to the evening, and during all times, the square where they sent me to have lunch, the streets where I went to deliver things, the paths through which we adventured if the weather was good (...) all of this that was taking shape and solidity, cities and gardens, of my cup of tea.  

HOW TO COOK A MASTER THESIS?

Figure 1: Filippo Marinetti. Sketch for plating in La Taverna del Santopalato 1930. Wikiphoto.
Ingredients:

- 2 cups of unsalted memory (vegetable broth).
- 1 cup of writing (letter-shaped noodles).
- 4 cups of reading and research (water).
- 200 ml of warm conversation (fried tomatoes).
- 1 whole piece of courage (carrot)
- 1 whole piece of commitment (potato)
- 1 teaspoon of motivation (sugar)
- ½ cup of boiled patience (black beans)
- ½ cup of creativity (sweet corn)
- ½ cup of boiled uncertainty (green beans)
- A sprinkle of humour (salt and black pepper)

Procedure:

1. After preparing our homemade unsalted memory, in this case, we prepare it ourselves, we will cook the rest of the ingredients that will form part of this Master Thesis.
2. Let’s start with courage and commitment. We wash, peel and cut the courage in 1 cm dices. We do the same with the commitment.
3. We place the unsalted memory in a wide casserole, where we will also add the warm conversation, the reading and the research. Let them start to boil and at that moment add the courage, the commitment and the motivation. We add a sprinkle of humour and boil it all together until the commitment and courage are tender.
4. After 30 minutes of cooking we will potentiate the flavour of this master thesis by adding creativity, uncertainty, and patience. Again, we bring it to a boil. If it would be necessary, we will add a little bit more research.
5. Add the writing to the casserole and let it all cook together for 15 more minutes. Re-season the dish with a little bit of humour if necessary. Enjoy it hot.
WHAT
WILL THIS THESIS INVESTIGATE?

Our mouth is like a stage: A stage for experiences to become alive; a stage where history takes place. Flavours become symbols. What we taste becomes an image, which transports us to moments that belong to the past, the present and the future. *The Sense of Taste and The Act of Eating as Metaphorical Thinking* will study the relationship between “metaphorical language in the form of writing” and “metaphorical language in the form of taste”.

In general, I am interested in thinking about food as a representational topic and the act of eating as a performative pursuit of meaning. Food has been around us as an essential nourishing element from the beginning of time. Nevertheless, the way we relate to it goes beyond that essential need. We don’t eat to only satisfy a bodily compulsion, but also to fill a symbolic one. In this thesis, I will talk about the metaphorical role of food and will portray the act of eating as the consumption of these metaphors. What happens when we consume them? What is the consequence of interiorizing them?

The objective of this M.A. thesis is to approach metaphorical thinking in relation to the act of eating and to the sense of taste. Metaphorical thinking is thought then as a tool for approaching our world through the subtle transposition of ideas and exchange of meanings. Metaphors are intrinsically evocative and never explicit. The connections they build are often invisible and the meanings they weave unexpected. As rhetorical tools, metaphors can work through representation, symbolism, signification, and exemplification.

In this research I am thinking of food as text. This means that in the same way that a text can be analyzed in form and content, food can also be “read” through the elements of its own language. As humans, when we eat, we approach food with our five senses; nevertheless, it is taste that dominates this approximation and the subsequent act of interpretation. To ingest food, savor it, and digest it is a form of exploring its form and its content. Form and content communicate biological characteristics such as flavor, temperature and texture, but they can also transmit concepts, ideas, and ultimately meaning.

Meaning is not intrinsic to objects; it is a construction that is formulated and attributed by each of us, according to the way we value our world. Food and the act of eating have no meaning in themselves, but acquire significance
depending on the implicit and explicit intention with which they take place in their historical and cultural context. The act of eating and the sense of taste also relate strongly to memory. Taste has the ability to immerse us into remembrance and transport us to another time and another feeling. It brings images to our head, dialogues to our ears and smells into our noses; all of these we might remember from the past. This research will explore how the sense of taste and the act of eating enable the communication of metaphors, memory and meaning in different sites and situations. These concepts are essential pillars of the building of our individual and collective identities. As human beings, we have the need to express ourselves, share memory, and gather through rituals. In all of them, we exercise the act of eating as a way of constructing and de-constructing our identities.

Through the history of humanity, different ways of communicating cultural identities and the memories of different communities have been used. Cookbooks are an important platform through which the history and traditions of different cultures are materialized in an edible form. This genre of literature is a shared playground or an “in-between” time and space where the language of taste and the language of text intertwine. They evidence the relationship between theory and practice, and engage the performativity of writing and reading with the performativity of cooking and eating.

In this thesis we are not only reviewing the history of cookbooks, but also analyzing how they have been appropriated by poets, visual artists, and even politicians to communicate specific meaning or information about our outer and inner worlds.

Cooks are not the only ones who have explored the themes of food, cooking, eating and taste in literature. This Master Thesis analyzes how different fields of study like philosophy, anthropology, biology and the arts have historically explored the sense of taste as a communicator of ideas, regardless of its subjectivity. Visual artists, such as the surrealists Salvador Dalí and Francis Picabia have involved the narratives of taste in a written and visual form, while futurists like Filippo Marinetti among others, created restaurants and cookbooks through which they communicated political propaganda. In Asia, the Indian philosopher Abhinavagaputa integrated a gastronomic vocabulary in his philosophical thinking. The way metaphors of taste have been employed by various disciplines and the role our senses have had in the building of poetics will be explored in this thesis.

*The Sense of Taste & The Act of Eating as Metaphorical Thinking* is a project that consists of three parts: This written research, the exhibition *Memory*
"Popsicles: Exploring Metaphors through the Act of Eating," and the publication *Cooking from Memory Cookbook*. These three aspects of the project will hopefully expand our understanding of the dynamics of taste, provoke new types of debates and engage us in more learning experiences that can be enjoyed mainly through our mouth.

How can the act of eating transcend necessity and reach symbolism? Is the hierarchy of our senses a biological or a cultural construct? These are some of the questions I will address in my research. This investigation will not work through facts and results, but will present possible panoramas of how taste can participate more actively in the production of metaphors and poetics and how these can transform our perception of the world.

Thank you for joining me through this investigation.
BANQUETS OF MORTALITY

Figure 2: Pieter Claesz, Still life with Turkey Pie. Oil on panel. 1627. Rijks Museum.

Because eating is a repetitive and transient experience, because food does not last but spoils, because it not only nourishes but poisons, eating is a small exercise in mortality.²

The exuberant banquet scene we observe above is called *Still Life with Turkey Pie* and was painted in 1627 by the Flemish painter Pieter Claesz. During the Dutch Golden Age, artists often depicted still lifes through a great baroque and decorative richness. Silver plates and cutlery, lobsters and oysters, wine and grapes, rare table textiles and live animals, occupied the tables of the seventeenth-century bourgeoisie. This painting is no exception. It represents the opulence and excess of the privileged, an exquisite banquet anyone would love to enjoy: the success of the growing Dutch Republic.

Nevertheless, there is something intriguing about this scene. This feast has been abandoned. The delicacies on the table are half-eaten and the leftovers are set to rot. Mortality is suggested here, through the evident relationship between food and time. The fruits are peeled and open, their flesh exposed. The oyster’s smell is probably pungent and sharp. What used to be an elegant and beautiful turkey, holding a flower in between its peak, sits behind its own death, a turkey pie. This painting evidences the temporality of life through the decomposition of nature and the imminent arrival of death. It is a clear portrayal of mortality, and of life as a process of decomposition. This banquet that is about to spoil, also comments on the guilt of the Dutch Empire and the consequence of colonization, domination and oppression of the other.3

In this chapter, we will revise what food, eating and our sense of taste can teach us about our own mortality. How do we think about the passing of time through the way we eat? Then, we will explore the metaphors of cannibalism and its portrayal of devouring and digesting as an act of ingesting and interiorizing virtues, meaning and identity.

In Claesz’s painting, a scene of gluttony represents richness and success. If we think about the act of fasting as an opposite gesture, what could it metaphorically communicate? Religious rituals such as the Ramadan in Islam, the Lent in Christianity, and the Yom Kippur in Judaism involve “periods when one should neither exercise the sense of taste nor nourish the body (...) they nourish the soul, for the assumption is that the body’s comfort is a hindrance to probing

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reflections of the spirit."⁴ These periods of time are meant to bring people closer to their gods through praying and fasting.

In the case of the Ramadan, the root of the word in Arabic, *ramiḍa* or *ar-ramaḍ*, means overwhelming heat and dryness and etymologically already communicates the devotional and costly nature of self-restraint. By pursuing the act of fasting during the Ramadan, Muslims commemorate “the first revelation of the Quran to Mohammed” and also observe rewards, such as having past sins forgiven and be given the “highest place in paradise”.⁵ In this ritual, beyond the aspect of taste, it is the act of swallowing and of digesting of food and drinks, which is strictly forbidden. It is the lack of nurturing or enhancement of the body, which shows a clear act of respect and devotion to Allah and makes believers eligible to receive the Taqwaā *righteousness or God Fearing*.

On the other hand, during the Christian Eucharist, the act of eating is specifically an act of integrating the Holy Spirit into the mortal being. It speaks through a metaphor of cannibalism. “Take and eat; this is my body” said Jesus, as he took the bread, gave thanks and then broke it for his disciples”.⁶ Similarly to Ramadan, in the Christian Eucharist, the aspect of taste is not as important as the act of eating. It is the edibility of a spirit and the consequence of its consumption, which marks the transcendence of this ritual. The Eucharist employs the narratives of sacrifice, to represent an enhancement of the soul as believers interiorize and embody Jesus Christ through the bread and the wine. Faith is shown through the acknowledgement of Jesus’s sacrifice and for this, they receive the Holy Spirit, which raises them from their mortal human condition, improve their soul and shorten the bridge between them and God.

Rituals that communicate metaphors and symbols through the representational aspect of food and taste often use text as a platform to present them. The Bible and the Quran contain endless references to different ingredients; flavours and ways of eating that are symbolic and signify a spiritual state. In the Bible, God leads his people to a land where “honey and milk flow” presenting, therefore, a promised land full of delights and faith. In several

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⁴ Korsmeyer, 1999, p.139
sermons the phrase “to suck honey out of the rock” is a reference to the act of absorbing truth from “memory-knowledge”. Here honey is a representation of the sweetness of the truth of faith. In this sermon the rock is a representation of Christ as the “rock of salvation”, nevertheless, if the “honey” wants to be obtained, the “rock” must be climbed first, since the honey will not lie on the surface but in its cracks and fissures.

This Deuteronomy also describes the biblical event of the children of Israel entering the hill country of Ephraim. Here, after forty years of wilderness they are able to grow olive trees in order to produce oil and to use the rocks of the hills to extract honey. The use of gustatory vocabulary in writing can attribute a sense of depth to narratives and trigger imageries of taste that resonate in our mouth and in our mind.

This has an influence not only the way we relate to food, but also affects the way we read, write, and think about history through our senses.

What happens when the gustatory metaphors we use are translated into another language? What is the consequence of this translation in terms of meaning? In Iran, as part of the New Year celebrations of Nowruz (Nowruz) families practice the tradition of the Haft-Seen (Haft Seen) also known as the “Seven S's Traditional Table”. This ritual consists of creating a table arrangement that puts together seven specific edible and non-edible symbolic items. Each of these objects exemplifies an aspect of Iranian culture and each of their names must start with the letter Seen (س) in Persian alphabet (the letter “S” in western alphabet). In this ritual, food that is going to be eaten is chosen according to the symbolic representation it possesses and the letter it starts with. It is a practice that works through the absorption of cultural identity.

Centuries before, the name of this tradition was different. It was called the Haft-Chin. It started as a pre-Islamic tradition that it is believed to have its origins in the semi-mythological Kayanian Dynasty. Its original denomination Haft-Chin derived from the word Haft meaning “seven” and the word Chin meaning “to

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7 Deuteronomy 32:13 New International Version.
8 Lily Lim, “Honey From the Rock.” Evangetabernacle, evangel.org.ph/honey-from-the-rock/. April 24, 2018
gather or to “pile up”. During the Haft-Chin, the table arrangement was comprised by milk, honey, wine, pure sugar, a candle, fruits and branches. Throughout the Achaemenid Empire (550-330BC) its importance increased, as many kings from different nations under Persian rule brought presents to the Emperor (Shahansha) of Persia during Nowruz, and many of them formed part of the king’s table arrangement. At this period of history, the items that were included and shown in the arrangement were strongly related to nature, in order to evoke blossoming and blooming. The curating process of the table’s items was delicate and precise; it acknowledged the letter Chin as a common denominator of all the symbolic elements that it included.

Later in history, the name Haft-Seen, emerged with the rise of Islam as the digraph Ch (چ) did not exist in the Arabic alphabet and was replaced by the letter S (س). The word Haft, on the other hand, has always remained the same, meaning the seven days of creation, the seven creations, and the holy immortals that protect them. The Epic Poem Book of the Persian Kings, Shanahmeh, written one thousand years before, already denominates this ritual as Haft-Seen.

Nowadays the Haft-Seen is comprised by the following items: Sabzeh (سبزه) – wheat, barley, mung bean or lentil sprouts growing in a dish; Samanu (سمنو) – sweet pudding made from wheat germ; Senjed (سنجد) – dried Persian olive; Seer (سیر) garlic; Seeb (سیب) apple; Somâq (سوماق) – dried berries; Serkeh (سرکه) – vinegar.

As the main pillars in Iranian culture, Sabzeh represents nature, exhilaration, love and rebirth; Samanu symbolizes power and bravery; Senjed, which was used as a medication to stimulate the brain, expresses wisdom and intelligence; Seer communicates stimulation, contentment and also respect to other people’s rights; Seeb signifies health, and a long term vitality; the Somâq.
which are red berries are often powdered as a spice and they symbolize the light after dawn and the color of sunrise; *Serkeh*, finally, is indispensable for the harmony of this table as it represents patience, disinfection and satisfaction of ageing.

The symbolic content of this tradition underwent a significant transformation, as it had to be adapted to a new language and alphabet, from Persian to Arabic. Along with its change of denomination, the items that comprised it, changed too. A new set of cultural symbols was introduced. This demonstrates how language affects the way we approach symbols, and how the symbolism that is conveyed through food depends on linguistic and cultural circumstances. What has this ritual gained and lost through this translation? What symbols are being devoured and what is their consequence?
Eating confronts us with the temporality of the food we have in front of us. As taste fades away almost at the same instant when it appears, the messages we consume might prevail for long. Eating is not only an act of assimilating concepts but also an act of assimilating the other. The other who is in front of us, or the other who is inside us. How do we appropriate what is unknown to us? Maybe it becomes familiar once we ingest it.
In the 1960’s, the Brazilian government intervened and gave end to a ritualistic practice performed by The Wari tribe (Pakaa Nova), one of the oldest indigenous communities of Brazil, who inhabit the amazon rainforest in the state of Rondônia. Their ancestral practice known as “reverential cannibalism” consisted on feasting on their deceased loved ones. This practice as much as it was portrayed as “savage”, from an outsider’s point of view, was understood later as an act of mourning that helped them deal with the memory of the dead. “Thus was our bodies. Thus was our custom”\(^\text{14}\) answered the Wari as they were asked, “Why did you eat the dead?”

Beth. A. Conkling, a researcher from Vanderbilt University investigates the subject of “mortuary cannibalism in the Amazonian Society” and suggests that for the Wari, cannibalism was a norm, not an option. For their community, eating their loved ones was the most respectful way they could treat their deceased bodies. Mortuary cannibalism for the Wari was an act of mourning, and a process of “emotional de-attachment from memories of the dead”.\(^\text{15}\) It was an act of forgetting, erasing and interiorizing death, through the act of eating.

The Wari people were not the only community in the Amazon region that performed cannibalistic rituals for spiritual meaning. The Tupinambá or “Tupi’s” who inhabited the area of São Luís of Maranhão during the sixteenth century, appropriated their enemy’s virtues through the ingestion of their bodies. They ate their opponents to become their own opponent, and to know it in depth. The consumption of their enemy’s strength and knowledge gave warriors new insights and strategies to win future battles. Nevertheless, as they were also fearful of absorbing weakness, they only ate the warriors who seemed as the strongest and bravest.\(^\text{16}\) The “Tupi’s” are one of the most important indigenous groups in Brazil’s history. Their influence, together with the one of the Waris is present in many aspects of Brazilian culture, and it is especially visible in the Antropofagia Movement.


\(^{15}\) Beth A. Conklin, 1995, p.76.

Antropofagia (Anthropophagy) as a literal term is the “assimilation of differences by means of ingestion and digestion of the other by the subject”. This act of consuming “the other” resembles the relationship between “the man and its taboo” and the transformation of this “taboo into a totem”. The trope of the cannibal exists in a “multilayered cultural matrix” that both maintains and re-articulates itself hand in hand with social, historical and political change. It maintains a clear purpose of devouring “alterities”. In 1929, the Brazilian poet Oswald De Andrade wrote one of the most influential pieces of poetry in the history of the country: Manifesto Antropófago (Cannibalistic Manifesto). Through a modernist and at the same time primitivist scope, he framed the action of appropriating and cannibalizing the dominant cultures as a strategy against post-colonial oppression. The metaphors of cannibalism absorb and re-appropriate European and United States elements of colonialism and neo-colonialism to re-articulate them from a Brazilian perspective. This Manifesto has been a powerful proclamation of Brazil’s independence over its colonial past: “Our independence has not been yet proclaimed. Typical phrase of D. Juan VI: My son, put that crown on your head before some adventurer does it first! We expel the dynasty!”.19

The Manifesto Antropófago as a modern piece of writing politicizes cannibalistic practices and evidences the dynamics of domination between the colonized and the colonizer. The cannibal re-appropriates, re-formulates, and reproduces from its own point of view the relationship to its enemy and to itself. It transforms itself from a “passive” being into an “active” one that finally finds the agency to conquer and becomes capable of transforming itself and the other.20 Anthropophagy as an artistic concept greatly influenced the Brazilian art movement of the 1960s: Tropicália. The artists, writers, poets and thinkers that associated themselves with Tropicália, made work that took influences from Europe and the United States while being rooted in Brazil.

19 This phrase forms part of the historical repertoire of Brasil. João VI directs the crown to his son, who claims the independence of Brasil and leads by the name of Pedro I until 1831.
In the words of Sara Castro-Klarén, author of *A Genealogy for the Manifesto Antropófago*, what is fundamental in Oswald de Andrade’s work, is the ability to make clear through his fragmented and metaphorical writing that cannibalism was indeed what Europe performed in the America’s at the moment of colonization. The old continent ate the new one. Andrade’s Manifesto, influenced greatly further theories on trans-culturalism, using as a powerful metaphor the act of eating and digesting as an appropriation of culture, knowledge and history. These forms of appropriation, through the digestion of the other and of the otherness of one-self, are present in a variety of contexts, in a variety of communities. In the next chapters, we will explore the metaphorical mechanisms that use the act of eating, digesting and the sense of taste for communication and the consequence of this.
Only Antropophagy bonds us together.

Socially.

Economically.

Philosophically.\textsuperscript{21}

\textsuperscript{21} De Andrade, 1928, pp.1-4.
TASTE IN CONTEXT
(S).
The world is not only a stage of action but also a stage for evidence. Our senses allow us to attribute value to our existence so we can hopefully build a coherent and unified understanding of our reality. Each sense is indispensable for our survival and responds to a biological need that has been defined through evolutionary processes. Yes, all of our senses are important, but what can we say about taste that is particular to it?

Taste is a deeply investigative sense, the only one that destroys or transforms the purpose of its research in order to interpret it. It works through experiences of engagement as it enhances a proximity with the object it examines, which no other sense can replicate. Our sense of taste allows us to create knowledge through a bodily experience if we consider that “the body is the human condition of the world”. It also presents us with an endless archive of references, rhythms and thresholds that we don’t consciously acknowledge we posses.

In order to fully understand the relationship between the metaphorical role of food, eating and taste with different types of languages, we need to have an idea of how it has been approached through different fields of study, in different parts of the world. In this chapter we will encounter how different disciplines and cultures have approached our sense of taste and in their own contexts. Starting from biological and cognitive approach to taste we will then explore the culinary, anthropological, philosophical, artistic and literary worlds. These worlds touch and affect each other, creating a complex net of knowledge about what is taste.


Ibid.
THE BIOLOGY OF TASTE

The way we taste our contemporary world of flavours has been shaped by a long evolutionary history. The ability to perceive flavour has allowed human beings to recognize food that should be consumed because of its nutritional content and food that should be avoided because of its possible toxicity. Taste is not only important but is fundamental for the survival of our specie.

The biology of taste works through chemical and physical processes that internalize the information that has been acquired and interprets it in order to formulate judgment. The genetic baggage of our specie combined with external factors influence the evolutionary changes in the way we taste. The biological function of this sense is to evaluate food’s content, prevent the ingestion of toxic elements and detect poisonous compounds. The taste buds, located in our tongue are composed by a variety of proteins that come in the form of receptors and define the way we interpret taste. A different gene produces each of these proteins:

“In vertebrates bitter, sweet and umami flavors are detected by particular proteins on our taste buds, the bittersweet detector is composed of a single protein, and the sweet and umami receptors are each made of two proteins linked together”

The presence of each taste is triggered by different receptors or proteins found in the taste buds: saltiness is known to be associated with sodium; acidity, with hydronium; sweetness with sugars, ketones and aldehydes; umami with fermented and aged food, even though it can also be found in fresh vegetables, roots or fish; bitterness, is associated with gustducin also known as the G-

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protein. Volatile compounds, which are aroma molecules, also influence flavour. These have the tendency to evaporate and are perceived by our nose as “aromas”. Each molecule represents one smell. Different fruits, vegetables, herbs and types of meat contain different amount of volatile molecules, which highly influence our perception of taste.

Different species of mammals are enabled to perceive different proteins. For example, cats cannot perceive sweetness. Bitterness, on the other hand, has been a gene manifested only in particular animals such as primates, mice, and humans. The presence of the gene TAS2R or the “bitterness” gene exists as a result of mutations that have altered our DNA’s sequence throughout evolution and can be mapped as far back as 400 million years ago.

Mutations, duplication and divergence in our DNA are ongoing processes that can be influenced by the way communities live and behave with their environment. Even though “bitterness” has been initially associated with toxicity in order to ensure survival, our contemporary diet includes it and de-associates it from this original meaning. When we drink coffee, alcohol or eat cranberries, we no longer associate their flavour with danger because our environment has re-shaped the purpose and significance of this taste.

Scientists have not been the only researchers that have studied the biology of taste. Gastronomers, such as Jean Anselme Brillat-Savarin have been investigating the virtues of taste through another current of study, the Culinary Arts. Savarin’s book, Physiologie du Goût, published in 1825, is an introspective and sensible study that was done in a more speculative than scientific manner and gave a voice to a new type of researchers, who were gourmands and cooks.

One of the most important reflections that Brillat-Savarin presented in his research suggested that the subjectivity of the sense of taste was already embedded in the biological structure of our tongues. According to his investigation, “the number of papillae on the tongue and the number of taste receptors among the papillae can vary tremendously from person to person”. This explains why the experience of eating can vary so much for each individual.

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and contributes to further philosophical theories that take “subjectivity” as one of the main intrinsic characteristics of our bodily senses: smell, taste, and touch.

Taste creates an extremely direct and sometimes overwhelming interpretation and validation of our existence. It is a discriminatory value that judges, selects and rejects what enters the mouth not only based on how it feels or tastes like but also based on its symbolic and moral meaning.28 There can be nothing more private than the experience of interiorizing and digesting what our eyes only allow us to see and our ears only allow us to hear.

**THE HIERARCHY OF THE SENSES**

The sense of taste has historically never occupied a primordial role as a cognitive instrument for judgment. It has been considered a secondary tool of interpretation along with the sense of touch and the sense of smell. On the other hand, the senses of vision and hearing have dominated the way we learn, the way we produce and acquire knowledge. The different cognitive role our senses perform is defined through a hierarchy, a hierarchy of the senses. How has this hierarchy been defined? Is there a fixed and unmovable rank our senses occupy, or can they exchange their role of importance?

If we speak about knowledge, many people argue that it should be produced through objectivity rather than through subjectivity. Of course, nothing is ever purely objective or subjective, but some of our senses approach us closer to a “universal” point of view. In her book: *Making Sense of Taste*, Carolyn Korsmeyer, suggests that the act of interpretation our eyes and ears conceive of our surroundings, always involves distance, reducing the “subjective” aspect of the cognitive experience and promoting a “cognitive, moral, intellectual and

aesthetic advantage”. From her point of view, these senses are also less involved with experiences of pleasure or pain, which might express themes more subjectively. Vision and hearing represent the “rational soul who must conquer or at least govern the senses and emotions of the body if it is to achieve wisdom and virtue”.

The writing of Western history, more than an experience of writing, has been an experience of observing the other. Observation has been one of the most important tools human beings have used to understand and conceptualize the behavior of our specie and its evolution through time. Has it been this way in other corners of the world? In the following paragraphs, I will present a study that shows how the hierarchy of the senses varies in different cultures and remarks different factors that might affect it. The word “Western” in this essay refers to central European thought.

In a period of several years, a group of scientists from the Max Planck Institute for Psycholinguistics in Nijmegen, Netherlands, conducted a linguistic study that would open up a new reality about the hierarchy of the senses. Their investigation analyzed thirteen languages from around the world by listening to the way people spoke about themselves and their surroundings with others. By examining the verbs people used in different conversations, they identified what type of references was most commonly used (visual, auditory, gustatory, tactile or olfactory).

Their results showed that in all of these cultures “vision ranks first and hearing ranks in second place, followed by the subordinate senses of touch, taste and smell”. The material they gathered from observing conversations and analyzing the linguistic structures of various cultures showed that vision was the most important sense across all of them, as most people talked greatly about their visual perceptions. San Roque, one of the head scientists of this study, also explained that recent findings in the field of brain research, suggest that “it is estimated that fifty percent of the cortex is involved in visual functions.”

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29 Korsmeyer, 2002, p.3
30 Korsmeyer, 2002, p.6
32 Ibid.
Therefore it comes as no surprise that vision dominates the way we perceive the world.

Even though this study reached some concrete conclusions, an overall fixed hierarchy of the senses could not be defined. As they revealed later, during the research they noticed that from our five senses, four of them were used and prioritized differently depending on the culture and its language. For example, in languages related to Semai, in Thailand, olfactory references were used more regularly compared to auditory connotations or allusions to sound. Asifa Majid, one of the main researchers of the project, explained in detail: “Olfactory perceptions figure more prominently in Jahai and Maniq, languages related to Semai, than in most other languages. The Jahai and Maniq, hunter-gatherer groups in southern Thailand and Malaysia, have around a dozen different abstract terms to describe odours”.33

The same way odours are perceived differently in different cultures, taste around the world is approached and appreciated differently too. According to David Le Breton’s research, in Thailand, people divide flavour into eight categories: sweet, salty, bitter, acid, spicy, tasteless, astringent, and oily. In China, people recognize five types of taste: sweet, salty, bitter, sour, and tasteless. The Desana Colombian indigenous community in Amazonia recognizes five main flavours as well: sweet, sour, acid, astringent, and spicy. In Birmania, the tasting list is as it follows: sweet, acid, spicy, salty, astringent, bitter, and sugary. The Sereer Ndut community from Senegal have a slightly different perception of flavour, because they blend the salty, the bitter and the spicy in one category, distinguishing each as if it would be a different shade of the same colour.34 By understanding how different communities and cultures recognize flavours we also understand their relationship to food and their relationship to the meaning of food.

The way we use our senses is not a purely cultural construction or a purely biological inheritance; it is a combination of both. This study is relevant because it remarks that even though a hierarchy of the senses exists, its

33 Ibid.
34 Le Breton. 2006, p.269.
arrangement is not the same in all cultures; the way we have learned to approach knowledge predominantly through our vision and hearing is a dominant cultural construction of the West. The most significant characteristic of this approach is the predominance of distance and objectivity in the process of learning. Whereas the corporality of our senses of touch, smell and taste have been disregarded as too subjective and intimate to communicate any “universal” knowledge.

THE PHILOSOPHIES OF TASTE

In trying to become “objective”, Western culture made “objects” of things and people, when it distanced itself from them, thereby losing “touch” with them.35

The hierarchy of the senses has also been deeply investigated through the field of philosophy. In Western thought, it finds its beginning in Ancient Greece, during the times of Plato and Aristotle. Back then, the sense of sight and the observation of the stars were strongly connected with mathematics and language and went hand in hand with conversations around the origin and the meaning of life. These dialogues explored themes such as the eternity of the soul, and the mortality it acquired through the body and the mind.

Timaeus of Locri, one of the most important Platonic dialogues, speculated about the cosmological and physical origins of life and was one of the first philosophical conversations about the hierarchy of the senses and its role in knowledge. Even though Plato studied the relationship between ideals and commonplace experiences, he did not explore in depth the aesthetic value of taste, because for him and for Aristotle it was non-existent.

During the period of Ancient Greece, an etymology of taste already existed but was studied in a speculative way. Plato pointed out four main flavours, which are nowadays recognized by contemporary physiology as: bitter, sweet, sour and salty. To these, he added harsh, astringent and pungent. Aristotle distinguished between sweet and sour but described the other flavours as only different intensities of the same taste. He also paired seven “basic flavours” with “seven basic colours” proposing a relationship between these.36 Theophrastus, the successor of Aristotle and the “father of botany” recognized eight basic tastes: bitter, sweet, oily, harsh, pungent, sour, astringent and saline. Greek philosophy acknowledged taste as a cognitive aspect of experience, but ignored the impact it had in philosophical thinking.

Later in Roman Italy, Pliny the Elder, an army commander who was also a writer, a philosopher and a naturist developed another etymological version of taste. In his encyclopedic book Naturalis Historia, he recognized thirteen different flavours and argued that “the different genres of taste, consist of the sweet, the sugary, the fatty, the sour, the astringent, the acid, the tasteless, the spicy, the intense and the salty”.37 He also included in his list a category he called “mixed flavours”, which he described as more complex and multilayered types of taste. In wine, for example, astringency, sweetness, and spiciness could be found in just one sip. For him, milk had a unique and particular taste, so he placed it in a separate category. He also labelled water as a separate element, due to its lack of flavour, essence and aroma.

In Greek and Roman philosophy, taste was not only considered poorly because of its relationship with gluttony, the biggest enemy of philosophical wisdom but also because it was a common denominator in the cognitive experience of all mammals. Along with the sense of smell and the sense of touch, the sense of taste has been mainly used as a tool for our survival. How could such a basic and animalistic sensorial quality provide any potential to elevate us intellectually from other species?

Philosophy taught us to approach knowledge through the distant and objective eyes of men who could discern the true from the false, the fair from the unjust, and the real from the imagined. The type of approach Aristotle and Plato presented, as “philosophical thinking” was both created and directed for privileged groups of people, accommodated enough to spend time thinking and reflecting, hearing and observing. This type of labour was elevated and separated from the popular aspects of life as it just focused on enriching the spirit and developing the intellect. Philosophical thinking through history has disregarded the capacity of the senses of taste, smell and touch to replicate the level of abstraction that the eyes and the ears enable. It has also labelled these senses as “lower”, “feminine”, “sensual” “domestic” and subjective”, therefore, not suitable for the creation of objective knowledge.

During the eighteenth century in Europe, the questioning and denying of the sense of taste in the philosophical field continued. Hegel and Emmanuel Kant, two of the biggest figures of Western philosophy and aesthetics of the time, argued that taste was principally speaking and giving information about the perceiver and its preferences. Therefore, it could never give place to a reliable or objective aesthetic appreciation of our surrounding world. For Hegel, vision and hearing were “theoretical” senses and taste was a “practical” sense that created meaning through the loss or destruction of its object of interpretation. This meant, that it could have never had the ability to carry knowledge in “lasting” and “universal” way.

Kant believed that “only vision and hearing qualified as aesthetic senses” while the bodily senses served only as tools for enjoyment rather than of valid cognition.\(^{38}\) Hegel and Kant were trying to articulate a way of thought that would be universal and objective. The etymology of taste, according to Kant, was classified into two very different expressions: aesthetic taste and gustatory taste. The first one was often applied in the field of fine arts and in the field of philosophy. It expressed the “taste of liberty and luxury” of the intellectual elites. On the other hand, the “gustatory taste” was related merely to the experience of eating and with the low “taste of hunger” of the masses.

Later, in the timeline of history, this way of thinking was challenged and flipped upside down by sociology and anthropology. Thinkers such as Pierre Bourdieu and David Le Bretón, argue that the real role of our senses and its impact is deeply and most essentially rooted in culture. The way we eat, the things we eat and the way we relate to food, communicate our role in society and seen from a broader scope, reflect on a whole community and its history.

Pierre Bourdieu, in his text *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste*, challenge Hegel’s and Kant's theories by saying that such a disengaged and disinterested opinion about a sense that is mostly studied within popular culture show their position in a privileged and elitist social class. Taste is rooted in empirical social development, according to Bourdieu, and this cannot be explored from the position of the established elites. The dominant philosophical discourses of Europe in the eighteenth century promoted the "purification and extraction of aesthetic pleasures from their social roots". By dictating a more “contemplative” view of our world, people's experience of existence become restrained, disengaged and distant. The compartments and the perimeters that are marked around the role of our senses, define until now, the way we learn and in many ways have limited our capability of exploration of our world.

The Western philosophical approach has deeply influenced education and has shaped the way we learn. The learning tools we have developed teach mostly through visual references. For example, they are books, maps, illustrations and paintings, not a dish of Bolognese. What would we know and how could we know it differently, if the ladder of our senses would be re-organized?

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40 Korsmeyer, 2002, p.64.
The lack of words indicates the ineffable nature of the experience of seeing: the words we know are insufficient to capture unknown visions and unknown experiences. The failure to make these recognizable to the eye and mind produces a vacuum in which the subject finds itself vulnerable, “open” to the “un (re) presentable”.41

ABHINAVAGAPUTA:

“THE MIND IS AN ORGAN OF TASTING”

The philosophical current of the eighteenth century Europe had its particular way of defining how we use our senses in our learning experiences. Nevertheless, these ways of thinking were of course not as universal, as they would have wished them to be.

In the eleventh century in the city of Kashmir, India, the philosopher, mystic and aesthetician Abhinavagaputa, wrote one of the most influential texts in the field of aesthetics and philosophy in India: *Sutra of Bharata or Vibhāvānubhāvavyabhicāri— samyogādrasa-nispattih*. This work is a reflection on poetry and its relationship with the theory of Rasa, which is described by Abhinavagaputa as a state of inspiration, an essence, or a taste. Rasa evokes meaning and emotion and it is a concept that is commonly used in India to describe visual, musical or literary works.

Abhinavagaputa, in his essay, expresses that language is essentially pragmatic. Suggesting that the role of words in poetry is secondary, and adding that they “exist in so far as they serve some purpose, and after we have used them they cease to be”. For him, the poetic meaning is found beyond grammar or dictionaries and can only be attained through sensibility: “Persons aesthetically sensitive, indeed, read and taste many times over the same poem”.

The importance of this text to my research is the way gustatory vocabulary is used to express philosophical thinking through poetic associations. Abhinavagaputa, through his writing, guides us on how to “taste the Rasa” or the inspiration and essence of the arts. He often uses terms such as “tasting”, “taste”, “delight”, “gustation” and “tasting related to cognition”. The figures of speech he handles are highly embedded in a gustatory vocabulary and are directed to

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43 Gnoli. 2015, xxxii
describe poetic thinking. The author expresses clearly that in India “sensations proper to the senses of taste and touch (...) are easily taken to designate states of consciousness more intimate and removed from abstract representations than the ordinary one- that is the aesthetic experience and various forms of religious ones”.44

This text exemplifies language as a multilayered tool, full of metaphors evoked by different senses, in this case specifically by the sense of taste. This characteristic makes the text rich, imaginative and intellectually fulfilling. One can taste concepts, through their different flavours, some sweet, and most of them complex. The following examples show Abhinavagupta's approach to tasting in aesthetics and philosophical thinking.

_The poem, for its part, is so to say, the tree. The activity of the actor, that is, representation, etc., is, as it were, the flower, and the tasting of the spectators, the fruit. Therefore all is pervaded by Rasa. xlix._45

_Rasa is tasted by the qualified persons (i.e., qui rationem artis intelligunt). It is made up of a full Intelligence, Beatitude and Self-Lumonisity. It is void of contact with any other knowable thing, twin brother to the tasting of “brahman”. It is tasted as if it were our very being, in indivisibility._46

_The mind is the organ of tasting; during the tasting the mind must be free of all obstacles, devoid, that is to say, of any other sensory perceptions, etc._47

_Does the taste of the Rasa of panaka perhaps occur in molasses, peppers, etc.,?_48

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44 Gnoli. 2015, p.2.
46 Ibid, p.47.
Aesthetic enjoyment consists in the tasting of one’s own consciousness; this tasting is endowed with extreme pleasantness (beauty), which it obtains from a contact with the various latent traces of pleasure, pain, etc.\(^{49}\)

This tasting, again, is not already born in the past, from some other means of knowledge, so that it is, now a form of memory; nor it is arisen now from some other means of knowledge (...)\(^{50}\)

“The Mind is an Organ of Tasting” is the most fundamental messages of Abhinavagaputa’s essay, as it engages the act of tasting in an intellectual process. It describes the act of thinking through a gustatory vocabulary, which validates taste as a possible tool for the creation of philosophical knowledge. Evidently, in the Indian sphere of Aesthetics, taste is an allegorical and metaphorical tool to communicate content. In contrast with Western through, taste in India has a bigger and more fundamental role in people’s lives. It probably even occupies a different position in the hierarchy of the senses. From this example, we can learn taste and its value as an intellectual tool depends also on a cultural context. Taste is an instrument that is relevant for the understanding of the world and doesn’t only give information about the perceiver but also exemplifies what is perceived. Personally, Abhinavagaputa leaves for me a big question, that is for each of us to answer: How do we build, curate and rethink our grammars of taste?

\(^{49}\) Ibid, p.83.

\(^{50}\) Ibid, p.104.
COOK BOOKS AS HISTORICAL DOCUMENTS.

Taste is a product of history, mainly in the way human beings position themselves in the symbolic story of their culture. It finds itself in the crossroad between subjectivity and collectivity.  

\[51\] Le Breton, 2006, p.269.
Cookbooks have been attempts to “fix and capture” processes that build the unavoidably temporary experience of eating. The culinary expression cannot exist without a vocabulary, which allows recipes to be narrated, exercised and documented so they can be reproduced in the future in a standardized way. Cookbooks can also be approached as historical documents that attempt to define and stabilize culture in different periods of time. Words have allowed us to express the function of food in its literary, philosophical, artistic and anthropological sense. The culinary investigation has become a discourse that can disseminate like the aroma of a flower into the rest of the garden of knowledge because of the existence of text.

The relationship different communities have with food has been developed and documented in different ways, depending on their historical circumstances. Nevertheless, a great number of recipes and books written in early history have not survived time. Also, there are many cultures that have had a greater oral tradition, therefore, they have not documented their processes in a written form and traces of their practices are rarely found. In the following chapter, we will review the historical importance cookbooks have had in different cultures.

The first cookbook dates back to 1700 B.C and was written in Mesopotamia. Here, recipes were found engraved into three Akkadian boards.\(^{52}\) The boards were translated by the French Assyriologist Jean Bottero. Through his research, he discovered Mesopotamian cuisine to be of “striking richness, refinement, and sophistication”\(^{53}\) and described that the recipes he translated often included a great number of spices per dish and also an elaborate garnishing. Mesopotamian food as early in history as it was prepared and consumed is believed to be of great complexity and had already taken influence from other cultures, such as the Assyrians and the Elamites in Iran.\(^{54}\)

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\(^{53}\) Ibid.

\(^{54}\) Ibid.
Remove the head and feet.

Open the body
and clean the birds, reserving
the gizzards and the pluck.

Split the gizzards
and clean them.

Next rinse the birds
and flatten them.

Prepare a pot and put birds,
gizzards and pluck into it
before placing it on the fire

... Rinse crushed grain,
then soften it in milk
and add to it, as you knead it,
salt, samidu,
leeks and garlic
along with enough milk and oil
so that a soft dough will result
which you will expose
to the heat
of the fire
for a moment.\textsuperscript{55}

Traces of early cookbooks have also been found in Asia and in other areas of the West Asia. In Iraq, the earliest cookbook written in Arabic dates back to the tenth and thirteenth centuries. Ibn Sayyar al-Warraq’s Baghdadi collected and edited Kitab al-Ṭabīḥ (The Book of Cookery) in the tenth century. This was the first cookbook in Arabic. It compiled more than six hundred recipes and was divided into one hundred and thirty-two chapters. The edition of this book was completed two centuries later by the compiler, Muhammad bin- al Hasan, also known as Al-Baghdadi. This last compilation of the Kitab al-Ṭabīḥ cookbook has been preserved in the Süleymaniye Library in Istanbul, Turkey where it was translated. It is known to be one of the most influential cookbooks in Turkey.

In China, the first known cookbook is believed to be written in 1330 by Hu Sihui, a dietitian and court therapist. His book: Yinshan Zhengyao (Important Principles of Food and Drink) is a compilation of Chinese, central and west Asian recipes, which was adapted from dishes eaten in the Mongolian Empire. It also has some influences from Persian and Turkic cuisine. Some of the theories that Hu Sihui presented in his book suggested that diseases were directly co-related with an improper diet and therefore, could be cured by improving eating habits. His recipes, which vary from soups to bread, represent the rich culinary tradition of the region and communicate the power food has over our health. Yinshan Zhengyao became a classic in both the culinary and medical field in China.

In the neighbouring country of South Korea, the first cookbook, Eumsik Dumibang was written and compiled in 1670, during the Joseon Dynasty. It’s author, Lady Jang, was a Korean noblewoman who studied calligraphy, wrote poetry during her youth, and was also a painter and philanthropist. She wrote her cookbook when she was seventy-two years old. It compiles around one hundred and forty-six recipes of traditional Korean dishes and a variety of

Translation of al-Kitab al-Ṭabīḥ, pp. 21–47.
methods for storing food.\textsuperscript{59} It includes also a broad section related to traditional alcoholic beverages. Eumsik Dumibang is praised and treasured in Korean Cuisine, as it is one of the only early Cookbooks that was written by a woman. Before her book, only instructional books on food had been published in Korea and these were written in an encyclopedic language, focusing mainly on medicinal properties.

In Europe, the oldest collection of recipes written in Latin is De Re Coquinaria (The Art of Cooking) written in Rome. The author of this book is believed to be the Roman gourmet Marcus Gavus Apicius, who compiled and edited it as early as the first century. The full book of recipes also known as an Apicius, compiled a collection of Greek and Roman recipes and their procedures. The book was fully compiled around the fourth and the fifth century and its final edition was published in 1483.\textsuperscript{60}

During the eighteenth Century, the gastronomic genre in text started to be increasingly explored in European countries such as France, where, the printed word in relationship with gastronomy came together as an attempt to redefine their national identity. After the French Revolution, a huge amount of text related to the nation-state was written and published, where reflections on food, cooking and taste were included. These new hybrid bodies of work, that started to emerge, explored through the language of text the identity of the “body that eats”.

The spreading and increasing interest in cookbooks that started in the private sphere of the kitchens soon relocated itself in the public sphere of politics. The way people from different nations ate, started to show how they identified themselves socially, economically and politically to their country. Different types of food reflected on various aspects and realities of a nation and inspired different forms of text. Cookbooks soon overcame their role as simple instruction books and became a form of history books that enclosed personal and collective identity in the form of recipes.


The French approach to food is characteristic; they bring to their consideration of the table the same appreciation, respect, intelligence and lively interest that they have for the other arts, for painting, for literature and for the theatre. Conversation even in a literary or political salon can turn to the subject of menus, food or wine.  

During the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, in Europe and in the United States, the role of cookbooks was closely related to domesticity and household management. They were exclusively read by people who belonged to higher social classes, as they were the only ones who knew how to read and write. In 1845 Eliza Acton wrote *Modern Cookery for Private Families*. This cookbook changed the way people approached modern food making as it was the first one that established the universal format for writing recipes with a list of ingredients for each recipe, cooking times and temperatures. Nevertheless, towards the middle of the twentieth century, the role of cookbooks became again more and more connected to the political realities of the time.

In the United States and in Great Britain books such as *Win The War Cook Book; Eating For Victory: Keep the War Food Cooking; Practical Patriotic Recipes and War-Time Cookery To Save Fuel and Food Value* became popular in households. As the First and Second World War greatly affected food supply, many of these books presented recipes that could be made using mostly canned and frozen meals. The crisis of war greatly influenced the way people ate and people cooked; it pushed everyone to “econimize” and at the same time “optimize” their use of products, as they were limited. Beyond teaching people ways to cook in times of conflict and crisis, these books communicated concepts and values of patriotism, nationalism and pride. The cooking books mentioned above are examples of how the role of cookbooks has transformed through history from being a documentation tool to a conceptual apparatus that communicates social meaning and even political propaganda. Today, cookbooks have a strong narrative aspect that is as important as the recipes themselves. This

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literary genre has emphasized the role of cooking as a communicational tool and has underlined the strong and bonding relationship that exists between text and food: They enable each other.

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Figure 5: War Economy in Food. Department of Household Science. Washington D.C. 1918.

Figure 6: The Wartime Cook Book Alice Bradley. London. 1940.

People nowadays use cookbooks as a mean of self-expression to share their personality, lifestyle, interests and aspects of their individuality with others. The idea of someone cooking a recipe that you have designed is fascinating. It is an exercise of theory and practice, of skill and imagination, of interpretation and expectation. There is no limit of concepts that have been applied to cookbooks. Between the most peculiar editions we can find The Pyromaniac’s Cook Book: The best in flaming food and drinks; What Would Jesus Eat Cook Book; or Natural Harvest: A Collection of Semen-based recipes. This brings us to the next chapter, which exemplifies how cookbooks are platforms that affect and get affected by other forms of expressions and artistic languages, in this case Hip Hop.
As you probably know, more than two million people have seen my online show Cookin’ with Coolio. A lot of people were surprised when they found out I had a cooking show. They were all like, “Why is Coolio cooking on the Internet? “Why would he want to do something like that?” Because Coolio likes to cook, and when Coolio likes to do something, he likes to do it better than anyone else. I did the only thing I know how to do: Be the best of the best and put the rest to the test.63

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In 2009, the American rapper and recently self-proclaimed “ghetto Martha Stewart”, Coolio, published his cookbook: *Cookin’ with Coolio: 5-star meals at 1-star price*. The book’s overall reviews and ratings are quite high, apparently not only because of the quality of its recipes but also because of its unique writing style. “This may very well be as much a piece of performance art as it is a cookbook,” comments Therese Oneill, contributor of Mental Floss Magazine, as she refers to this bizarre, witty and edgy piece of literature. Through his writing, Coolio has come up with a specific “ghetto” glossary and general cooking rules or “Cool-mandments” to make other people happy through his cooking.

His “Ghettalian” (Ghetto-Italian style) recipes include: *Chicken Lettuce Blunts, U Can’t See My Bass*, and *Karate Meat* which is not only called like that “because it’s got an Asian kick to it but because it will beat you up like a pigeon in prison.” Cookbooks enhance a sense of belonging and community between readers and authors, and allow a dialogue between different types of expressions and backgrounds to take place. In this case, Coolio’s raw, provoking and edgy language of rap, is filled up with jail, drug and sexual references that have engraved in his flavorful cooking. What is the result? We shall cook and see.

Cooking Books as a literary genre, transit in between fiction and non-fiction and involve the reader in a unique literary experience, as they convey agency and action. Their hybrid nature uses “instructions” and “procedures” as tools for story-telling. The outcome of each story depends on the cook, on its interpretation of the narrative, and its own personal baggage of flavours. The over-layered experience of reading, writing, cooking, and eating creates a new and combined rhetoric that is suggestive, unexpected and eventually poetic.

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Figure 8: Cooking with Coolio: 5 star meals at 1 star price. New York. 2009.
There is an indispensable relationship between writing, cooking, eating and performing. When we eat, we don’t do it only through taste, but through collaborative participation of all of our senses: An orchestral experience of perception takes place as we put food inside our mouth. The tongue, is peculiar in itself, as it is an important organ of taste, but can also be considered an organ of touch; or an internal medium of touch, as described by Aristotle in his writings.\textsuperscript{66}

When we eat, our senses collaborate with each other in un-compartmentalized way, building coherent judgments of our existence.

Smell, taste and touch allow us to explore vivid and rich sensorial experiences, providing us with an aspect of closeness and intimacy with the object of perception. According to Le Bretón, edibility presents an unavoidable cost, as it raises questions about the boundaries between “the human and the animal” and between “who eats and what is eaten”. These boundaries confront us with the emergence of an otherness.\textsuperscript{67} Taste and its interpretation affects our baggage of values and shapes the way we build new ones.

The act of eating is full of performativity. When we eat, our very body as observers becomes theatre.\textsuperscript{68} During this dramaturgy, we digest, absorb, integrate, translate and mediate the object of interpretation, its role and its significance. The experience of eating happens in present tense, nevertheless, it merges with remembrance and with involuntary memories, full of temporality and never redeemable. To eat is to translate a “dream work into the language of the awakened body”.\textsuperscript{69}

During the process of cooking and eating, there is a constant negotiation between theory and practice, and between past, present and future. Recipes are materialized memories of how we eat. An expectation of how these recipes will turn out in the future, is always present, while we are preparing them in the \textit{now}. The standardization of recipes allows the reproducibility of memory in its flavour

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\textsuperscript{66} LeBreton, 2006, p.48.
\textsuperscript{67} Novero. 2010, x
\textsuperscript{68} Ibid, xxiv.
\textsuperscript{69} Ibid, xii.
\end{flushleft}
and in its form and conserves it intact through time. Cooking from recipes implies a reproduction of procedures that will allow the outcome to be the same everytime it is cooked.

In her text, *Antidiets of the Avant Garde*, Cecilia Novero talks about the existing relationship between the performativity of eating and the performativity of writing. In addition to cookbooks, references to cooking and eating in text can be found in the works of Franz Kafka, Walter Benjamin, the Dadaists and the Futurists. In Novero’s words, it was the Futurists who “transformed some of the gastronomic principles of pleasure, taste, assimilation, and digestibility - and mobilized them to redefine art and the subject”.70

Both in eating and in writing we find a rhetorical- and performative- use of incorporation- I am specifically talking about incorporation in the sense of merging an element into a united whole. Walter Benjamin describes incorporation as an everyday practice of disruption and rupture that may allow a process of metamorphosis to occur, as a result of the expansion of our senses. This experience can also be seen as an “absorption” from our outside to our inside world, which is triggered by the presence of an abyss or “a lack of referentiality”.71

As Novero expresses in her book, words sustain cuisine and allow recipes to exist in the present and reproduce in the future, while they also remain as historical documents. Written language is a tool for maintaining a tradition and is also a tool for innovation. It circulates and, therefore, allows the culinary expression to move and communicate across different fields and geographies. In the 1930’s the sense of taste, and the act of cooking and eating were used as radical tools of expression in the high art sphere of Futurism. From being seen as “feminine” and “domestic”, cooking, eating and tasting in the avant-gardists intellectual circles of the time were used as tools to challenge and break the current values of modernism and its representation of reality. This appropriation of the culinary arts by the Futurists can be seen as one of the first crossroads between art history and the history of gastronomy.

70 ibid, xiv.
71 ibid, xxi.
During this decade, artists, poets and thinkers such as Salvador Dalí, Francis Picabia, and Pablo Picasso, between other characters from the Surrealist and Avant-Garde movements became interested in the application of food as a tool for framing art or anti-art. They participated in the writing and editing of cooking books, manifestos, and recipes of their own. They also opened restaurants and created artworks portraying food and its consequence beyond pleasure and necessity. Most importantly, they emphasized the intertwined relationship between writing, cooking and performing.
FUTURIST
COOKING
Figure 9: A model of a Futurist Restaurant. G. Fiorini 1931.
Literature has used depictions of food to communicate stories in different contexts. Political and artistic movements through history have also appropriated this theme in order to unfold their own agenda. The Futurist movement in Italy and their invention of Futurist cooking is an example of this. Futurist cooking was for many “the re-invention of the Italian man” through the transformation of his habits of eating. In the 1930s radical nationalism was crowded with Fascist ideas that were promoted through all means of expression, including cooking. Futurism occupied all kinds of spheres in Italy during its climax. Politics, art, literature, architecture and even cooking were influenced by its ideals. For the Futurists the beauty and value of modernity relied on the machine and on embracing technology as a strategy to accelerate change in society.

Remember that Italy does not need to vaunt its distant past. Its grandeur lies in the present, based above all on the creative power of its poets and artists. Galileo, Volta, Ferraris, Marconi and the first transatlantic flight by a Fascist squadron, thought up by Mussolini and directed by Balbo, assure it supremacy in machine civilization.72

During the 1930’s, several futurists thinkers started to investigate how the food habits of Italian people, affected the way nation-state and national identity were built. Dissatisfied with the relationship Italians had with food, they started to impose ideas that challenged the “blandness”, “neutrality” and “passiveness” they saw in the eating habits of the time.

In 1930, Filippo Tommaso Marinetti (1876-1944) poet and leader of the Italian Futurist movement wrote The Manifesto of Futurist Cuisine. A written condemnation of certain aspects of Italian cooking, like for example, the massive use and consumption of pasta. He described pasta as an “absurd Italian religion” full of blandness, heaviness and lack of depth. He also affirmed that nutritionally it could result in “sloth” “skepticism”, “nostalgic inactivity”, “neutralism” and “pessimism”.73

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A Manifesto was not enough for Marinetti to build a culinary revolution, so he decided to open a restaurant that would materialize his ideas. In the evening of the 8th of March of 1931, he opens the doors of The Holy Palate, the first futurist canteen in Turin. In the form of an experimental theatre, The Holy Palate was more than a restaurant, a space where the futurists could “foster” and at the same time “contain” and “regulate” their beliefs and share them with people. This was a laboratory for subversive thinking that used food as its main medium for the creation of knowledge. Nevertheless, certain rules needed to be followed and suggestions had to be taken into account, in order to enhance the experience. Even though the chefs Piccinelli, Burdese, Fillía and P.A. Saladin left no room for mistake, the flavours of the dishes were never as important as portraying the act of eating as a process of metamorphosis of thinking. Marinetti thought that food should be cooked for our modern age, for what he built the concept of Futurist Cookery.

One of the most popular aspects of Futurist cooking was the Futurist Banquet organized by Marinetti. The Aerobanchetti or Aerobanquet invited people to enjoy a dining experience of high altitude. The table was shaped like an aeroplane with two extra annexes that represented the wings, and a motorcycle under it, which worked as an engine. He also replaced the cloth on their table, with plaques of aluminium and metal. Throughout the dinner, Marinetti mentioned things such as “we’re flying at 8000 m – feel how this nourishes and favours your stomach.”

The opening of the Restaurant The Holy Palate represented for the Futurists a new kind of stage where they could spread their philosophy through the experience of eating. For them, a meal was a concept that consisted of food, sound, aroma and texture. Its intention was to be a multisensory feast that would activate people’s minds and bodies: “Eating futuristically, one uses all the five senses: The Holy Palate wanted to prepare people’s palates for the future of food.”

The interior of the restaurant was also designed in synchrony with the “futurist mind” as it was decorated predominantly with Italian aluminium to give

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75 Marinetti. 2009, p.86.
a “metallic, shining, elastic, light and serene atmosphere” to the space. This was complemented by an indirect lighting, huge posters on the walls and glass objects. The Holy Palate wanted to communicate the idea of a life in “synthesis” with a mechanical organization.  

The Futurists did not only focus on the experience of the guests but also focused on improving the working conditions of the cooks by providing them with the highest technology in their kitchens. This pushed different restaurants to start adopting electric ovens and stoves. Nevertheless, the newly introduced technology in kitchens was mainly imported from the United States, which presented a contradiction in the Futurist ideology of promoting first the Italian national industries.

One year after the opening of the Holy Palate, Marinetti published the Futurist Cook Book. An experimental literary piece, that presents, through a very particular use of language, manifestos, recipes, and political statements. Through the book, Marinetti challenged the use of anglicisms that were and still are often used in our culinary vocabulary. He translated, for example, <cocktail> as polibibita (multi-drink), he changed the word <sandwich> into traidue (between the two) and replaced the word <picnic> for pranzoalsole (lunch under the sun). Some of the recipes he included in the book were as extravagant and bold as the following:

**Aerofood:**

_The meal is served from the right side. The dish contains olives, fennel hearts and kumquats. From the left side, a rectangle made of sandpaper, silk and velvet is served. The food must be eaten directly with the right hand while the left-hand strokes the rectangle. Meanwhile, the waiters spray the back of the neck of the guests with perfume, while from the kitchen, music from Bach is heard simultaneously as the sound of an airplane motor emerges._

76 Ibid, p.65.
- **Italian Breasts in the Sunshine**: A dessert that consists on almond paste topped with strawberry and then sprinkled with fresh black pepper.

- **Immortal Trout**: Trout filled with chopped nuts, fried in olive oil and after covered with thin slices of calves.

- **Diabolical Roses**: Deep fried buds of roses in full bloom.

- **Milk in a Green Light**: A large bowl of cold mild served with a few drops of honey, great amount of black grapes and red radishes. It is suggested to be paired with a polibibita of mineral water, beer and raspberry juice.78

Around the same time, when The Holy Palate opened, Ismael Querido, another relevant figure of the Avant-Garde, created *Les Cinq Saveurs*, a particular diner with a limited menu that included only five options: sugar, a cube of aloe, a piece of cotton, a zest of lemon and a grain of salt. More forward, he also organized a weekly pyramid of flavours in his restaurant, which showed different gradients of colour -starting grey going to translucent which then ended up in the five primary colours (white, black, yellow, red and blue)-. Unfortunately, his work has not been broadly documented.

The main purpose behind the radicalism of the Futurist Cooking was “to evoke and provoke essential states of mind through the art of harmoniously combining ingredients into Futurist dishes which cannot otherwise be evoked or provoked”.79 This meant that the experience of eating was seen as a transformative one, which could not only affect our bodies, but also our minds. The Futurist values were embedded in every bite people gave to their food. The interest and effort Futurists invested in their work with food shows how much they believed that what we eat can shape “how we think”. In the depth of its own meaning, futurist cooking was part of a strong political propaganda machine that wanted to spread nationalism through every possible mean.

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78 Marinetti. 2009, p.106.
79 Ibid.
Figure 10: Filippo Marinetti in the Holy Palate (1931). The Futurist Cookbook.

Figure 11: The interior of The Holy Palate (1931). The Futurist Cookbook.
Futurist cuisine and rules for the perfect lunch

1. An original harmony of the table (crystal ware, crockery and glassware, decoration) with the flavors and colors of the dishes.

2. Utter originality in the dishes.

3. The invention of flexible flavorful combinations (edible plastic complex), whose original harmony of form and color feeds the eyes and awakens the imagination before tempting the lips.

4. The abolition of knife and fork in favor of flexible combinations that can deliver prelabial tactile enjoyment.

5. The use of the art of perfumery to enhance taste. Each dish must be preceded by a perfume that will be removed from the table using fans.

6. A limited use of music in the intervals between one dish and the next, so as not to distract the sensitivity of the tongue and the palate and serves to eliminate the flavor enjoyed, restoring a clean slate for tasting.

7. Abolition of oratory and politics at the table.

8. Measured use of poetry and music as unexpected ingredients to awaken the flavors of a given dish with their sensual intensity.

9. Rapid presentation between one dish and the next, before the nostrils and the eyes of the dinner guests, of the few dishes that they will eat, and others that they will not, to facilitate curiosity, surprise, and imagination.
10. The creation of simultaneous and changing morsels that contain ten, twenty flavors to be tasted in a few moments. These morsels will also serve the analog function [...] of summarizing an entire area of life, the course of a love affair, or an entire voyage to the Far East.

11. A supply of scientific tools in the kitchen: ozone machines that will impart the scent of ozone to liquids and dishes; lamps to emit ultraviolet rays; electrolyzers to decompose extracted juices etc. in order to use a known product to achieve a new product with new properties; colloidal mills that can be used to pulverize flours, dried fruit and nuts, spices, etc.; distilling devices using ordinary pressure or a vacuum, centrifuge autoclaves, dialysis machines.

The use of this equipment must be scientific, avoiding the error of allowing dishes to cook in steam pressure cookers, which leads to the destruction of active substances (vitamins, etc.) due to the high temperatures. Chemical indicators will check if the sauce is acidic or basic and will serve to correct any errors that may occur: lack of salt, too much vinegar, too much pepper, too sweet.”

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ALICE B. TOLKLAS AND THE ART OF COOKING

Literature, poetry, the visual arts and gastronomy have encountered each other in experimental forms of writing that have explored the aspect of taste and the act of eating as a narrative. The Alice B. Toklas cookbook, written by Alice Toklas and published in 1954, is a good example. Through personal anecdotes of the time she spent eating, cooking, and hosting American expatriate writers such as Ernest Hemingway and avant-garde painters such as Pablo Picasso, Henri Matisse, and Francis Picabia, she shows how cultural and social movements that seemed so compartmentalized, were actually projecting on each other’s condition.

During the 1940s and the beginning of the 1950s when this book was written, Alice Toklas had been living in Paris with her partner Gertrude Stein for many years. In this book she reflects on how the Second World War’s sequels affected people’s relationships to food in a fundamental way. Alice Toklas was not a cook, but she understood that the role of cooking moved beyond necessity.

She portrays cooking as an art form that touches every individual, regardless of their background. This book is evidently written in a narrative style rather than in a culinary one, as there are no clear quantities of ingredients in the recipes and its language is poetic and suggestive. For many, this book is as much as a cookbook as it is a poetry book or a mémoire. The following are examples of recipes that exemplify the character of this piece:
Break 8 eggs into a bowl and mix them well with a fork, add salt but no pepper. Pour them into a saucepan- yes, a saucepan, no, not a frying pan. Put the saucepan over a very, very low flame, keep turning them with a fork while very slowly adding in very small quantities ½ lb. butter- not a speck less, rather more if you can bring yourself to it. It should take ½ hour to prepare this dish. The eggs of course are not scrambled but with the butter, no substitute admitted, produce a suave consistency that perhaps only gourmets will appreciate.81

One day when Picasso was to lunch with us I decorated a fish in a way that I thought would amuse him. I chose a fine striped bass and cooked it according to a theory of my grandmother who had no experience in cooking and who rarely saw her kitchen but who had endless theories about cooking as well as about many other things. She recommended that it be roasted or poached in wine or cream or butter. So I made a court - bouillon of dry white wine with whole peppers, salt, a laurel leaf, a spring of thyme, a blade of mace, an onion with a clove stuck in it, a carrot, a leek, and a bouquet of fine herbes. This was gently boiled in the fish kettle for ½ hour and then put aside to cool. The fish was placed on the rack, the fish kettle covered and slowly brought to a boil and the fish poached for 20 minutes.
A short time before serving it I covered the fish with an ordinary mayonnaise and, using a pastry tube, decorated it with a red mayonnaise. Then I made a design with sieved hard-boiled eggs, the whites and the yolks apart, with truffles and with finely chopped fine herbs (...) Picasso exclaimed at its beauty. But, said he, should it not rather have been made in honour of Matisse than of me”.

CHEW
Figure 14: Chew# 56 /https://imagecomics.com/comics/releases/chew-56
Another example of alternative literary forms that explore food as a narrative is the comic book Series: \textit{Chew}. It tells the story of Tony Chu, a police detective that solves cases by tasting (and chewing) different objects or subjects in order to receive gustatory impressions of the past of each of these. Tony is a Cibopath, which means that he can take a bite of any object and know what has happened to it in the past. He can also acquire skills and abilities by chewing. Besides this unique ability, Tony, is also a Cybovoyant, and can know the future of what he bites. He uses this power to know about his potential lovers or enemies. This power doesn’t work on unanimated or dead objects.

Amelia Mintz, Tony’s girlfriend, is a food critic and writes reviews about food and restaurants. She has her own “food-related super power” as she is a Saboscrivner and can make people taste food through her vivid and accurate writing. Tony’s sister, Sage Chu, is a Cipropanthropatic, which means that she can see the memories of people that are eating the same thing as her. In \textit{Chew} also exist Cibolocutors, who can communicate through food and translate different artistic expressions, such as poetry and plays into the taste. Some other food related super powers include, Voressoph, that allows people to become smarter as they eat; Ephervendorctor, that gives the power to create mind- controlling messages in the form of foams, and Xocoscalpere, through which people can create chocolate sculptures of exact likelihood to real-life objects (some characters have sculpted weapons in chocolate that have the same deadly capabilities).

\textit{Chew} portrays the sense of taste as a deeply investigative tool in a world where people learn about their surroundings primarily through eating. This comic book portrays the main character and hero of this story as a food connoisseurs who haw skills that can be seen in the culinary field but that are taken to a supernatural level. For me, it is evident that John Layman, the writer of this piece as well as Rob Guillory, the artist and illustrator, have both made a great amount of research on the culinary field and the cognitive aspect of taste, as their descriptions, both visual and textual are presented in depth. Lyman argued in an interview that eating is the connective tissue of this story: “I had a few
different ideas and realized that some of my favorite story ideas revolved around food, so Chew is intended to be a vehicle for these sort of stories”.

This work exemplifies eating as a powerful aspect of “knowing”, “understanding” and “digesting” information. Chew’s cannibalistic narrative connects with the previously visited chapter where we talked about cannibalism as an act of consumption of meaning and as a metaphorical tool for acquiring the other’s virtues and abilities. *Tasters Choice, Space Cakes, Chicken Tenders, Blood Pudding,* and *Sour Grapes* are some of the different volume’s names, which offer an interesting first taste. The whole serie should be read, in order to get a mouthful experience of the story.

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TAST(IN)

G //EAT (IN)G //

(IN) VISUAL ARTS
Taste is our mouth’s appropriation of our world: It is our world re-invented through orality.  

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84 Le Breton. 2006, p.2.
The painting we see above is called *Breakfast of a Blind Man*, and was painted by Pablo Picasso in 1903. This is a representation of the eating experience of a subject who cannot see. His eyes are evidently blurred and his hands struggle to find their way around an empty table. The tragedy of the absence of vision is expressed in this canvas, through an overall atmospheric dimness in tones of dark blue, and through the austerity of the table he is eating from: an empty dish, a kettle without a glass, and a half-eaten bread. This work portrays the sense of sight as fundamental in the experience of eating, and suggests its superiority over the other senses, as it depicts a meal that is incomplete without it.

In the field of the visual arts, the sense of vision has had a predominant importance in the production of content. Nevertheless, through history, the involvement of other senses in the artistic experience has increased as more artists and audiences have wanted to explore artistic languages in a more direct, immersive and intimate manner. Images are not always objective, on the contrary, they are full of subjectivity. Therefore, the reliability of our vision has been increasingly questioned and the distance and lack of involvement of our eyes criticized. Currently, artists make a big effort to produce works of engagement, where they can relate with their audiences through other means than only images. In this chapter I will talk about the role of taste and the act eating in Contemporary Art, and how have they been investigated in the art world.

In 1968, the American philosopher Nelson Goodman, wrote *Languages of Art*, a book that presents different symbol types inside the art world. For him, symbols come in a diversity of shapes and forms that could speak through representation, exemplification and expression. From Goodman's perspective, these different symbolic types are interpreted as “symptoms” of the aesthetic and are valid enough to have significance and be considered by philosophical thinking.85 Carolyn Korsmeyer, applies Goodman's thought to validate food inside the realm of art by recognizing its metaphorical aspect. She argues that “an enormous amount of what we put into our mouths represents (in some sense or

another) something else”; therefore, it is highly representational. Food and taste work together in a constant dialogue of production and consumption of meaning. While food often works through symbols, taste’s role is to interpret them and reflect upon them. To acknowledge food as an art form, we have to recognize taste’s agency to work beyond pleasure and to focus on the different symbolic forms it can present.

According to Korsemeyer, culinary and visual arts have their own particular history, which marks a difference in the way they have been shaped and conceptualized. They have in the end, a different type of tradition. Art history and the history of culinary arts have a different past and have responded to different circumstances. Nevertheless, in my opinion, this doesn’t mean that their histories haven’t crossed paths and therefore haven’t influenced each other. Food might not be able to be considered art, in a traditional sense, but considering that the current lines that divide the different forms of expression in artistic practice are becoming more and more invisible, food has been able to merge itself into the sphere of contemporary art and artistic research.

Marie Antoine Carême, one of the most recognized chefs and gourmands of France’s Grand Cuisine, was one of the first cooks to emphasize food as a fine art. For him, cooking had to be considered an art not only because of the extensive amount of skill and education that it requires to be executed, but also because the art of cooking involves all of our senses. Cuisine after him, especially pastry, became a very visible bridge between different artistic disciplines that were not related in the past. Carême was highly inspired by art. He deeply admired architecture, sculpture, and painting, and wanted to explore them through food:

*Inspired by the art works of museums, specially by the works of Tertio, Palladio or Vignola, he molds temples, ruins, castles, antique statues, etc. with pork fat, bacon, icing sugar, marzipan, grounded chocolate and other ingredients, with which he creates seducing creations, for the mouth and for the eyes.*

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For Carême, pleasing the mouth was not enough. He wished to awaken all of our senses through a concept that he called “full art”. His art was not about replicating, but about applying concepts from the visual art’s aesthetics that were at that time only applied in their own field and not in cooking. In the baking and decorating of his dishes, he applied concepts such as composition, form, perspective, depth, contrast, and repetition. The sculpted constructions or *pieces montées* that Carême served in the early nineteenth century banquets recreated figurative landscapes and abstract fantasies; all of them were theatre pieces that Carême directed. He was an intellectual of his own time, deeply engaged with writing and reflecting on cooking, and how to trespass its boundaries. Carême, was already in this period of history doing artistic research. Proposing theories and designs, that later on, he would put into practice, in the Culinary Arts:

*The fine arts are five in number, namely: painting, sculpture, poetry, music, and architecture, the principal branch of the latter being pastry.*

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In the eyes of philosophy and of the fine arts, Carême’s work was seen merely as a decorative extravaganza to please the desires of his patrons. Nevertheless, beyond the ornamented surface of his work, his pieces were symbolic and representational; they carried an intention of communicating meaning about what was important for certain groups of people at the time. Carême’s work helped us re-imagine the life in the end of the nineteenth Century, and understand the cultural and historical circumstances people were living in. His cookbooks are nowadays not only a legacy for the culinary arts, but are also anthropological and historical documents that talk about art, architecture, sculpture, texture, flavour, and shape. These books are part of our cultural history and therefore connect to art history.

The Culinary Arts, or what Carême denominated “the action of cooking”, studies the role of flavor as a tool for interpretation. Through history, chefs and cooks have felt entitled to call themselves “artists” and their food “art”. For them, cooking is a craft. Even though Carême was an influential figure in the realm of cooking, some thinkers argue that he was guilty of simplifying the culinary
history that came before him, by defining it merely as “ancienne cuisine”, which for him took place in a dark and confusing era where nothing really new or exciting happened. His lack of historical consciousness made him “blind to its own philosophy and practice of history”\(^{89}\) which means that he was unaware of the value of what had happened before him. This also meant that by not acknowledging the past, he was unable to understand how he wanted to influence the future of the culinary industry.

Approaching the end of the twentieth century chefs and cooks started questioning the tradition of cooking and began deconstructing it through the use of techniques never used before in cooking. In the text: “Framing Edible Art”, Adam Andrzejewski talks about the transition of the culinary tradition from modern cuisine to avant-garde cooking. He builds a parallelism between art history’s transition from modernism to avant-garde and suggests that something similar took place in the Culinary Arts: “Revolutionary cooking shares some strategies with conceptual art, especially in regard to its revolutionary and revisionist nature”.\(^{90}\)

Mushroom foams, birch aromas, fruit oils, and spheres, speak the same language as the ready made by Fluxus, landscapes explored by Richard Long and compositions of light by James Turell. They emphasize the meaning of the work, by focusing on its concept, recognizing that we don’t live in a cultural vacuum and affirming that different fields of research can affect and should dialogue with each other. Both, cooking and the visual arts are cultural artifacts and as such they embody meaning and expression.

The significance of an art piece depends on where it was made, who made it and why: “Take for example the Brillo Box, which, according to Arthur Danto, takes on meaning and becomes art in the context of a certain artistic narrative.”\(^{91}\) Andy Warhol’s Brillo Box was considered an art work because it was built and presented inside a context of Art History and its meaning was framed by art critics, whereas the original design of the Brillo Box by James Harvey was seen as a mere graphic communication work that represented a product to the masses.

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\(^{89}\) Novero, 2010, xx


\(^{91}\) Ibid.
This means that art is understood as art depending on a specific context. Let us go through some examples of works that embody metaphor through their edible nature and taste.

A medium sized pile of cellophane-wrapped candy in the corner of a museum confronts the visitors with reflections on love and loss, pain, fear of death, and their aftermath. The pile of candy is a representation of Gonzales Torre’s partner, Ross Laycock before he died of an AIDS-related disease in 1991. This participatory installation invites the audience to eat from a 175 lb. stack of candy, which represents Ross ideal weight. The shrinking pile of candy, as it is being eaten, represents allegorically the slow painful process prior to death as Ross loses weight. The endless supply of candy, on the other hand, is continuously re-stacked into the 175 lb of Ross’s weight as a representation of the permanence of memory and its effort to counter back oblivion and its inevitability.

This work refers also to the tense political crisis regarding AIDS, and the lack of support and negligence from political leaders towards patients during the 1980s and 1990s. Gonzalez Torres’s work uses edible metaphors to trigger very important questions about what happens to the object of interpretation after it is consumed. Is it merely destroyed? Or rather internalized? Did something change inside people after they ate from the 175lb of Ross? The act of eating in itself
represents a conflict in its nature, as it nourishes existence while it destroys it. “Untitled (Portrait of Ross in L.A.)” is considered part of the Relational Art movement of the 1990s. In contrast to the politicized cultural production of the 1980s, in the 90s some artists produce works that challenge the objective and disengaged distance of vision and give a bigger agency to audiences. In order to engage them in the outcome and meaning of an art piece. In her text Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics, Claire Bishop argues that in the field of Relational Art works are “social forms” and “space for encounters” that can make possible positive human relationships. Their complexity would make the work inherently political.

In Gonzales Torre’s piece, people affect the artwork as they contribute to its disappearance and physical reduction. Poetry and meaning, therefore, emerge from the active role of people eating and consuming the piece. In his text Relational Aesthetics, Nicolas Bourriaud affirms that the role of the audiences in the Relational Art movement is to ask: “Does this work permit me to enter into dialogue? Could I exist and how? In the space it defines?” Regardless of the engaging nature of this art movement, many critics and theoreticians question Relational Art for being open-ended in its structure and statement thus risking to fall in the category of “compensatory and self-congratulatory entertainment”. This led to a change in the trends of contemporary art after the 1990s. Nowadays, there are many artists that use smell, taste, and touch in the frame of visual arts but don’t necessarily consider their practice part of the Relational Art Movement.

The use of food as a metaphorical tool in arts and design is also strongly used for archival and mapping practices, where edible products are symbolic representations that reveal realities that are sometimes not evident. The Smog Tasting Project, for example, is an initiative where a group of artists and researchers from The Center of Genomic Gastronomy in India, mapped different amounts of pollution found in a variety of neighbourhoods of New Delhi by

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93 Nicolas Bourriaud’s reflection of the work of Felix Gonzales Torres. He considered Torres one of the most relevant artists in the field of Relational Art.
“harvesting” them into egg whites. Egg whites are built of 90% air thus they absorb pollution (heavy metals and VOC’s). These egg white samples were used to bake cookies, which were then distributed among politicians of different political parties. Through this project, questions about “transparency and surveillance, citizenship and representation, expression and suppression, participation and dissent, and the enduring quest for visibility in the city” are explored. 95

The Smog Tasting Project wished to create awareness on environmental issues by making the problem of pollution tangible through its symbolic representation as an edible element. According to the researchers behind this project, these cookies are perfectly safe to eat. They state “One shouldn’t worry too much about getting sick from these cookies, we breathe this air everyday!” 96 This project invites its community to get involved and sample the air from their neighborhood into egg whites, bake cookies with them, and then build comparison maps to test the results. 97 This project took part in The New Museum’s IDEAS CITY Festival in May 2018 in New York City.

96 Ibid.
97 Ibid.
Another project that uses food metaphors to communicate environmental awareness is the *Pollution Water Popsicles*, created by Hung I-chen, Guo Yi-hui, and Cheng Yu in Taiwan.\(^9\) By collecting water from a hundred different locations in the country, freezing it and then resembling it into glycerin popsicles, a fascinating but concerning reality was revealed. The Popsicles didn’t only gather water, but amazingly big pieces of plastic, metal and other non-recyclable waste. The non-edible popsicles are beautiful to look at, seem delicious from a distance, but hide a sinister truth. Most of them have gathered waste that is potentially toxic for consumption. The project includes an individual close-up of each Popsicle describing what was found inside it and in what percentage. To put polluted water in the shape of ice cream was a playful, efficient and direct strategy of communication because it immediately makes you question: “What if that ends up inside me?”

Figure 20: Polluted Water Popsicles Hung I-chen, Guo Yi-hui, and Cheng Yu. 2017
As we have seen in the projects above, food can be used as a “statistical tool” to embody the impact certain phenomena have on our surroundings. In Finland, designer and creative, Heidi Uppa, who is currently doing her PhD under the theme *Expanding Food Understanding Through Visual Communication Design* is researching the importance of discussing food in a context of Art and Design. Her project *Helsinki Food Memories* invited people to recall a memory related to food in Helsinki, write it down and then add it to the “memory archive map”.

This project is relevant because it reactivated the idea of a city and the people who live inside it. We all eat, and we do it in our very own way. The routes people travel, the places they choose to eat and the things they eat say very much about the collective identity of a city.

![Figure 21: Heidi Uppa. Helsinki Food Memories. 2017](image-url)
In this thesis I have talked about the tradition of food, eating and cooking in different parts of the world and in the scope of contemporary art and design. It is in this context that I place my own artistic practice. This thesis has explored how taste and gustatory metaphors have been essential to humanity in different geographies and at different moments of history. Fundamentally, this research wants to show the efforts of an art world to expand its artistic limits of expression by including other senses, such as taste. In my opinion, this is the most relevant point of this thesis, to talk about an always expanding and changing art industry, which questions itself and re-invents itself.

As a visual artist with a background in culinary arts, I have often wondered how the world of images and the world of taste come together, and most importantly why they have been so widely apart. That is one of the reasons why I made this research, to argue that even though art history and the history of culinary arts have had different traditions, they have encountered and affected each other in various moments of history. Epecially today, they are merging explicitly in Avant-Garde cuisine and Contemporary Art. Tasting, eating and approaching food as a metaphorical tool opens new doors of interpretation and experience. Direct, intimate and powerful reflections on the current state of our existence.

This research emphasizes that the hierarchy of the senses, a cultural and biological construction that has defined a hegemonic way of approaching knowledge, presents our senses of vison and hearing as the most universal and objectives tools for learning. This is true to an extent, but the fact is that all of our cognitive experience works through subjective interpretation, so even “objectivity” ends up being heavily contextualized. There are other types of knowledge and other ways of learning than the ones presented by the West. What set of tools do we need to discover these?

Concretely, my investigation also wishes to layer the performativity of eating and the performativity of writing and discover what happens when we taste and write simultaneously. What form and content are shaped through this parallelism? How does this excercise of interpretation differentiates itself from the one of seeing a landscape and drawing it on paper, or hearing a conversation and writing it down? Beyond being an act of translating, it is an act of creating new narratives inspired by a flavoured item.
The next chapter concludes this research and presents the exhibition Memory Popsicles, which materializes all the theoretical background I have previously presented.
MEMORY
POPSICLES

A PARTICIPATORY EXHIBITION
Figure 23: Juan Ramírez 360 Martina Miño. Edible Installation. 2017
When I was five years old I had, what I recall, my first experience of taste. For my five year-old birthday, my mother cooked lime ice cream: a combination between a cake and a very acid, sweet and pale green ice cream, floating on top of a bed of powdered crackers. The taste of this dessert defined many things about my future. It made each birthday after that, a bittersweet experience of growing older. It brought with each future taste of it, a still image of a childhood that had been over for a long, long time. Most of my birthdays, I have been frowning, my mother often recalls. When I look at the old videos, I see it is true. I was not angry, neither I was sad. I just didn’t understand the joy of celebrating the end of one more year of age. Balloons, piñatas, cocktail sausages, and a certainly a delicious lime ice cream couldn’t cover what was already evident for me: time goes by, people grow old, people die. I die. I started to miss childhood before it was even over.

The approach of closure is for me, this lime ice-cream: The embodied experience of getting older, the permanent negotiation of accepting the passing of time, the closure of time.
HELADO DE LIMÓN DE MAMÁ JUDITH

5 EGGS
1 PACK OF DIGESTIVE CRACKERS
½ CUP OF LEMON JUICE
1 CUP OF CREAM
1 CUP OF SUGAR
50 GR OF LEMON CEST.

PROCEDURE:

1. WHIP THE EGG WHITES UNTIL “PUNTO DE NIEVE”, ADD THE SUGAR AND THE EGG YOLKS.
2. WHIP THE CREAM (PUT THE BLADES OF THE BLENDER PREVIOUSLY IN THE COLD.
3. ADD THE LEMON JUICE SLOWLY, THEN ADD THE CREAM.
4. COVER THE BASE OF A MOLD WITH THE POWDERED CRACKERS, ON TOP ADD THE BLEND AND FINISH WITH ANOTHER LAYER OF POWDERED CRACKERS AND LEMON CEST.
5. FREEZE OVERNIGHT.
6. ENJOY.
Memory Popsicles is a participatory installation that invites people to interpret and consume art mainly through their sense of taste. This exhibition can only be experienced by eating the art piece, which means destroying or transforming its meaning. This is a sharing experience and an exercise of experimental storytelling that talks through a multilayered flavored item. Memory Popsicles was born for the first time as a prototype project I built in 2016, when I started to imagine the experience and the consequence of recalling a memory. Can this process be comparable with the practice of ingesting and digesting?

Memory Popsicles consists on the designing, cooking and tasting of six flavors of popsicles that represent different memories. I want to warmly thank Vejay Krishan, Max Ryynänen, Arlene Tucker, Ksenia Yurkova, Ru Zham, and Victoria Zolotukhina for donating one of their memories to this project. Together with the participants, the narrative of each popsicle and its taste was conceptualized, based on the emotions and feelings of each memory. These six frozen memories, tell us a story of the past through their flavor.

The decision of making popsicles for this project relates to my experience of remembrance, which involves always some type of remoteness. Memories are frozen in time, they say. If we take them out of the freezer of our mind, they might as well melt and evaporate away. Memory has an aspect of “forced permanence” where we make a huge amount of effort to maintain a memory as un-touched and as pure as we can. Failing every time.

I relate this forced exercise of remembering to the amount of energy it involves to keep food frozen. We keep meals frozen so we can eat them later, and they won’t go bad. Next time we taste them, days later, weeks later, months later, years later: they won’t be fresh and they won’t taste the same, but they will be still eatable. The food won’t be warm as the first time we ate it, but at least we will be able to enjoy it again, in some other way. To store memories somewhere makes us feel safe, as we know that even though we might not own our future at least we might own our past, and once in a while, we taste different moments of it again to know that is real. That it was real.
Figure 24: Popsicle flavored with the memory: *An Encounter*
Memory Popsicles Exhibition, 2018.
In May 2018 the Memory Popsicle Lab took place in Third Space Gallery, where with the help of the memory donors, the recipes for each memory were designed and the popsicles were materialized for the first time. This flavor laboratory lasted for one week and invited a small audience to experience the first patch of memories produced for this project. This first prototype of Memory Popsicles was an essential part of my investigation, as new information about the way flavor is perceived and connected with memory was revealed.

The experience of tasting and writing gives form to a particular vocabulary of expression that is both gustatory and metaphorical. It is a new form of language. Nevertheless, the whole experience of pursuing interpretation through only the sense of taste was challenging, as it pushed other senses to intensively try to get information. As much as people focused on the taste of the popsicles, their physical appearance still affected the way their taste was perceived. Taste and smell work together, thus the lack of aroma of the popsicles made the flavours harder to decipher, giving a coherent idea of the character of a memory; it will remain always incomplete and a part of it forever absent. “I’m tasting exactitude and subtlety. A drama happened, the mind goes back to nothingness, in the end, a moment of over-sweetness. A moment of bloom and possibilities. But too soon”.

The personal historical baggage of taste that each participant possessed completely ruled its interpretation. This exercise of re-signification of memory is highly subjective. For example, many people from the audience connected the flavor of coconut milk with a “warm and tropical place”, even though that particular memory took place in Lapland under minus thirty degrees. Most of the participants who tried the popsicles tended to connect the memory they were eating with one particular personal memory of their own. “I am sick in middle of the town, and my mother gives me some medicine for the cough. He wants his last rest to be in the Caribbean with Piña Colada and coconut water. It is not possible”.

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100 Anonymous interpretation of "Blue Moment" Memory. Memory Popsicles Lab. 2018.
Figure 25: Blue Moment Memory Popsicle. Memory Popsicle Exhibition. 2018.

Figure 26: Green Phrij Memory Popsicle. Memory Popsicle Exhibition. 2018.
Figure 27: *Salty Mud* Memory popsicle. Memory Popsicle Exhibition, 2018.
Memory Popsicles Exhibition
Flavor Studio A21/ September 2018

Memory Popsicle Lab worked as a conceptual base for the final exhibition *Memory Popsicles*, which took place in September 2018 in Teurastamo's Flavor Studio A21 as part of Helsinki Design Week. This event received around sixty participants that were invited to taste the flavours of memories developed through the lab in May. One of the main goals of this project was to immerse participants into an exercise of experimental storytelling that talked through a multilayered flavoured item and explored the possibilities of communication of metaphors through taste.

This project attempted to create a poetic and metaphorical eating experience that challenged and questioned a reality that is framed mostly through our senses of vision and hearing. Compared to the Memory Popsicle Lab, the final exhibition consisted on a few more layers of experience, such as writing and reading simultaneously when tasting.

The main question that was asked to the participants while tasting the memories was: What can the taste of this memory tell us about the story? What is happening in this memory? Where does it take place? What emotions are contained inside it? As the memories were being eaten, their taste was simultaneously documented through the writing of its interpretation. This juxtaposition between written language and the language of taste exemplifies the existing relationship between the performativity of eating and the performativity of writing. What can come out from this parallel exercise of performativities?

After the tasting of the memories, the participants encountered a written fragment of a memory, printed on each popsicle stick. This message guided them into finding the original memories, presented in the publication/cookbook of the exhibition *Cooking From Memory*. But before that, their written interpretations of taste were collected and will be published as the second volume of the cookbook.
The purpose of this is to present how eating is a constant exercise of interpretation and re-interpretation of subjectivities. Can these subjectivities meet at some point? Or will they always divert to different directions?

Through the exhibition, participants were required to focus completely on their tasting experience, which is why a small group of people per hour was welcome. Visual stimulation was almost non-existent so it would not trigger expectation or pre-conceptions about the taste. *Memory Popsicles* and the *Cooking from Memory Cook book* were created to explore the complexity of layers that memory is built upon, and to also expand the scopes of communication of symbols and metaphors in contemporary art. Can we share memories beyond oral tradition and books? Can our own subjective interpretation of taste lead us to different conclusions about the stories we are consuming?

To share our memories with others means also to share a little bit of our own history and identity. What if people could have a taste of it? *The Memory Popsicle* project went not only through different stages of prototyping but also through independent methodological steps. The first step of the project was interviewing the memory donors. This interview followed a clear structure of questions, through which enough information about the emotional aspect of the memory could be obtained. The interview went in depth into discovering the translation of emotion into a taste and its connection with its historical and social context according to each participant. This interview was indispensable for the flavour design, which was a collaborative work between the participants and me. The different layers of taste of each popsicle where defined by the different layers of feelings and events that took place inside a memory.

The methodology of the interview intended to be as focused into taste as possible, nevertheless, there was one question that shaped the end result in a slightly different direction. What color does this memory have?

It was not until later in the project when I realized how much this question had shaped the end result, and in a way, diverted it from its main goal: To be focused exclusively in the sense of taste. Asking about color demands information from what we see, through our eyes, risking the translation of the memory into taste to be based on our visual perception rather than on our sense of taste. Nevertheless, the reality also is that to cook with natural ingredients, involves
color. And this aspect is inescapable unless the flavor is artificially made, which is something I didn't wish. Therefore, this was a compromise I decided to make. The colours of the popsicles were in the end defined by each ingredient used; this shaped their visual aspect.

After the interviews were transcribed, the flavour design stage started. From sketches and a lot of research on how to capture and materialize different emotions into flavour, this process took a long time and lasted until the very last moment of cooking the memories. In cooking, there is always room for improvement and for further exactitude of results. For the final exhibition, I cooked one hundred and twenty popsicles, which took me five days. The most challenging part of preparing the popsicles was to de-mould them, as some layers were water based and others cream or milk based and they defrost at different temperatures. The layers that had pieces of fruit or gaseous liquid also defrost differently.

The happening itself is a very relevant part of my future research mainly because of the feedback I acquired. Every participant and taster of memories granted me their interpretation of their remembrances to be used as a second volume of *Cooking From Memory*. Cookbooks reflect on the act of interpretation and re-interpretation of subjectivities through taste. These books are also an investigation on imagination triggered by taste. What do we imagine when we taste? Do we see images? Do we encounter abstract feelings?

I consider that my project connects in a way to Relational Art as it is an exploration of "inter-subjectivities", nevertheless it approaches subjectivity not as a whole, but as an identity that is always articulating itself, always changing and never fixed. Even though the project respects the diversity of interpretations that it acknowledges, its concept is not completely open-ended, as its goal is to re-define the ways we can communicate in Contemporary Art and recognize their value. I identify with the opinion of artist Thomas Hirschhorn and his relationship with the art he produces when he states:

*I do not want to do an interactive work I want to do an active work.*

*To me, the most important activity that an artwork can provoke is the activity of thinking. Andy Warhol's big electric chair (1967)*
makes me think, but it is a painting on a museum wall. An active work requires that I first give of myself.\textsuperscript{101}

My goal after the exhibition would be to open new doors of dialogue about ways in which taste communicates valuable and concrete meaning to us. Hopefully, in the future, more exhibitions that use mainly the sense of taste as a communicator can be curated and organized. The purpose of this thesis has also been to remark an existing bridge between the act of eating and the act of creating poetry through taste: through theory and practice.

Figure 28: Memory Popsicle Exhibition. September 2018.

Figure 29: Memory Popsicle Exhibition. September 2018.
Figure 30: Memory Popsicle Exhibition. September 2018.

Figure 31: Memory Popsicle Exhibition. September 2018.
Figure 32: Memory Popsicle Exhibition. September 2018.

Figure 33: Memory Popsicle Exhibition. September 2018.
Figure 34: Memory Popsicle Exhibition. September 2018.

Figure 35: Memory Popsicle Exhibition. September 2018.
Sueño con serpientes, con serpientes del mar,
Con cierto mar, ay de serpientes sueño yo.
Largas, transparentes, en sus barrigas llevan
Lo que puedan arrebatarle al amor.
Oh, oh, oh, la mató y aparece una mayor.
Oh, con mucho más infierno en digestión.

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I dream of serpents, serpents of the sea,
A certain sea, oh, of serpents I dream.
Long, transparent, in their bellies they carry
All that they can snatch away from love.
Oh, oh, oh, I kill one and a larger one appears.
Oh, with more hellfire digesting inside!

---Silvio Rodriguez, “Sueño con Serpientes”
REFERENCES:


Al Basrah Network


