

## Eater or Eaten: What Revolves Around Who?

David Szanto

It might be said that all things feed—whether living or not, physical or abstract—consuming others so as to construct the self. Alternately, one might understand all things as food—whether matter, meaning, or movement—each a form of appeasement for one or another type of hunger. Imagine eating this way, and a system emerges in which the lines between eater and eaten blur, hierarchies dissipate, and new questions about gastronomy arise.

This paper examines a number of experimental moments when things were eaten and things ate—in multiple senses. Together, they probe a key question about gastronomic ontologies: *When it comes to arranging food knowledge, what ordering systems make sense?* It is a question that may seem inane, imaginative, and/or irrelevant, depending on one's motives and perspectives. I believe that unpacking it might help reconfigure some of the other questions we often seek to address.

Two key notions are at play within this question, those of *scale* and *framing*, specifically as they relate to observation, analysis, and reporting within gastronomy. The conditions of these acts influence what is known and what is shown in our work, including the delimiters around such entities as 'eater' and 'eaten'. In what follows, I deploy *performance* as an approach to investigate gastronomic scale and framing, and use three research milieus as illustrations. For this text, I interpret performance in a broad sense—as a theory-practice hybrid—driven by both epistemic and ontological motives.

The three cases I write about include *Orchestrer la perte/ Perpetual Demotion*, an interactive food-and-robotics installation first presented in May 2014 at Montreal's Musée d'art contemporain; *The Gastronomer in You*, a July 2015 one-on-one performance in which actor, audience, microbes, and the temporality of humanness merged; and *Where Oû Firma?*, a February 2016 tactile performance in Singapore, focusing on the construction of home and belonging through storytelling about food.

Whether this work revolutionizes anything or simply goes in circles is for other times and places to tell. For now, however, let us ask ourselves, when it comes to the cosmos of food, what and who spin around whom and what?

### Making Space

Over history, it has sometimes been considered heretical to propose alternate explanations of how certain bodies orbit others. Figures such as Ptolemy, Copernicus, Brahe, and Galileo framed and developed—and then re-framed and re-developed—our understandings of celestial movements.

They situated the Earth first as central and, later, not central. By association, they did the same to humanity. Eventually the universe was refigured in more ecologic terms, comprising multiple, shifting centres of mass and energy, each with complex and interactive gravitational relationships.

Whether these theories endured or were contested and renovated, they opened up an important discursive space. Specifically, they implicated the question of *scale* and the critical role it plays in observing, interpreting, and then framing the dynamics of complex systems.

Reduce scale, and the resulting framework draws attention to one set of elements while obscuring others. Increase scale, and some things fade in importance, while 'larger' relationships might be revealed. Consider different *kinds* of scale—not just temporal and physical scale, but also epistemic and ontological perspectives—and other, unexpected realities emerge.

In the history of astronomy, some propositions threatened the frameworks that contained knowledge and determined a commonly held sense of truth. These ideas revealed that systems of knowledge, established and reinforced over time, simultaneously clarify the world around us while obscuring other ways of understanding it. They also revealed that those who maintain such frameworks are generally resistant to having their power challenged.

Disrupting the framings of knowledge may not be best accomplished with the dramatics of a revolution. Indeed, upheaval often simply places power in a new set of hands, re-rendering the previous system in a new form. But what about a different kind of disruption, one that loosens the very tensions that enable power to become centralized in the first place? Such a state would require activating a sequence or system of impermanent framings—by perpetually varying the scale of perception, but also by reimagining the notion of scale itself.

### G, what if...?

Following, perhaps, Copernicus and Galileo, I am interested in a non-human-centred, multi-scalar approach to gastronomy. What if human well-being, pleasure, and survival were *not* our primary goal, but on an equal footing with, say, satisfying the social and political needs of food itself? If we could do this, what might it lead to, in terms of knowledge production, enlightenment, and ethico-political action?<sup>1</sup>

I ask these questions because, in much of today's examination of food, humanity remains the central axis. Research is often about 'feeding nine billion' or elucidating the 'broader' issues of human society. (What is broader than

food?) We aim to help communities [of eaters] increase their sovereignty [over food]; we analyze culinary *tools* to learn more about their *users'* lives; we expound on human painters' depictions of foodish subjects; we investigate the meaning we place *on* and extract *from* table manners.

These are by no means wrong-headed foci for gastronomy, but because they remain anthropocentric, they might limit what can be discovered. And it is our scholarly tools that are largely to blame: they leave little room to imagine food-centred epistemic and ontological models, or even frameworks in which food, humans, and other things *share* agency. In other fields, refiguring complex systems as distributed networks has been productive; why not extend such an outlook to food?

Before continuing on, I must acknowledge that, despite proposing an experiment in decentring humans, any project about *knowledge production, enlightenment and ethico-political action* is necessarily focused on humanistic objectives. As political theorist Jane Bennett has aptly pointed out, a bit of a conundrum arises when humans try to write about non-human agency: 'How [do we] describe without thereby erasing the independence of things?' (2010, p. xiii)

---

### Scaling Food Performance

Instead of erasing either food or humans, performance engages with the scales and frameworks of power, helping to figure gastronomy as an ecology of ecologies. By attending to the many things that act, performance incorporates material and linguistic agency, the intersubjectivity of subject and object, the links between representation and perception, and the emergent, unpredictable effects of complex systems (Bennett 2009; Fischer-Lichte 2008; Szerszynski et al. 2003; Turner 1982).<sup>2</sup> Performance also hybridizes theory-and-practice, and can lead to insights about food and its systems that might help disrupt certain systems of knowledge. Like the early 'heretics' already mentioned, such disruption might come from imagining the performativity of scale itself—an agency beyond any one individual actor.

Performance ranges broadly: from 'art on a stage' to the more abstracted sense of ecological behaviours and effects. It has been framed as a collection of acts both scripted and not (Carlson 2004; Schechner 2003); as a transformational interaction (Cohen-Cruz 2015; Fischer-Lichte 2008); as both a *process* and a *product* (Szerszynski 2003); and as a means of destabilizing systems of power (Conquergood 2002; Schneider 2006). It may also be thought of as a relational moment, in which 'actants' (Latour 2005) assemble to produce effects in the world. Scale, in turn, allows these interpretations to interrelate with and elucidate one another, while also framing our understanding of what is, and is not, performing.

Consider some examples as illustration. As seeds interact with water, sunlight, and micronutrients, they perform, generating plants, fruiting bodies, and future

generations of seeds. Similarly, cooks perform manipulations of ingredients and kitchen equipment, as well as within the media structures through which we come to know them. Artists increasingly perform with and about food, as does the architecture (or lack thereof) in which they speak, gesture, and emote.

In each example, scale plays a key role in perceiving what performs. Reduce the scale of observation, and the performances of moisture and soil become evident, as well as those of recipes and kitchens and televisions, and of words, movement, and emotion. Broaden the scale, and the performance incorporates farmers and agricultural technology, TV watchers and media theory, curators, art history, and white-painted walls.

Zooming further out, the ecologies we call 'nature' and 'culture' come into view. Biogeophysical (natural) and sociotechnical (cultural) environments not only perform, they can be understood as *performing food's realities* (Callon 1986; Lien & Law 2011; Mansfield 2003; Paxson 2013). In this framing, the system performs the individuals just as much as the individuals perform the system. Seeds are thus performed by their ambient conditions; celebrity chefs by the act of spectation; gallery-goers by food installations. Performance now converges with *performativity*, that is, the entanglement of behaviours and effects, across and within scales, from individual things to complex systems.

This rather synthetic summary of performance will likely muddy its meaning, rather than clarify it. Indeed trying to *define* performance generally induces consternation. Rather than aiming at what it *is*, therefore, a more useful consideration is what performance can *do*.

---

### Performing Gastronomy

For gastronomy, performance responds to the 'lively, complex, and intersubjective' nature of food (Szanto 2015b). That is, performance engages with *changes in time and space* (liveliness), with *matter, meaning, and movement* (complexity), and with *processes of interaction* between the self and the other (intersubjectivity). Moreover, performance also absorbs such characteristics not as isolated 'actors', but as articulated parts of a unified whole.<sup>3</sup>

This differs from the kind of research in which variables are isolated from one another. Such practices aim at understanding elements of a given system by 'controlling' those that are not under specific investigation. At the same time, however, it denies that systemic elements have effects on one another—sometimes profound ones. That is, elements *perform together* the whole of the system, rather than having independent functions that are simply summed together (Homer-Dixon 2011).

Said otherwise, performance allows the researcher to participate *with* her research milieu, and allows gastronomy to become the *thinking-doing-feeling* of food. This ties together cognition, embodiment, and affect, and

---

figures gastronomic knowledge as similarly holistic, distributed throughout the corpus of the researcher and, potentially, through other participant bodies.<sup>4</sup>

Performance can also serve as a means of disseminating research outcomes. Rather than translating multisensory, multicorpus lived experience into monosensory, situated text, reporting through performance activates more of the sensorium, as well as multiple bodies. In this way it might move towards a kind of ‘postmodern ethnography’ (Tyler 2010), a rendering of lived experience that is ‘neither presentation nor representation... [and that] makes available through absence what can be conceived but not presented’ (p. 123).

Performance reporting further allows such ‘intensities’ as affect and emotion to participate (Shouse 2005), despite common resistances to allowing ‘researcher bias’ to creep in.

If performance can be understood as a method of both doing and showing research, then it also can blur the line between these two phases of scholarship. Performance thus becomes a cycle of processes—simultaneously a discovery and a communication of knowledge, a production and a consumption of meaning. It also reinforces that theory and practice are not sequentially related, but mutually productive. The philosopher Lisa Heldke, whose work often treats food, has named this as a ‘mentally manual’ integration of ‘head work’ and ‘hand work’ (1992), one that undoes the duality of mind and body.

Elsewhere, I have termed such cycles of scholarship ‘research-creation-reporting’ (Szanto 2015a), an extension of the existing practice known as *research-creation* (Manning & Massumi 2015; SSHRC 2010). Research-creation merges humanities and social science work with material-based inquiry, and parallels other constructs such as practice-based research, design-based research, and praxis/exegesis.<sup>5</sup> Importantly, research-creation-reporting (RCR) supports performance by weaving together the agencies of the researcher, her research subject, and the people conventionally identified as the ‘audience’—that is, readers, spectators, listeners, eaters.

Each of the three cases I present here took place within an RCR context. They are performance-based projects about food as material and food as system, food as meaning and food as movement. They braid together themes of technology and power, humanity and microbes, academia and art, and self and other. Food was made and eaten in the performances, but so were identity, agency, and human bodies (or parts thereof). In the aftermath, the performances of these contexts continue. Indeed, the words on this page, their moments of reading and hearing, and their interpretation are all performances at one scale or another.

---

### Orchestrer la perte/Perpetual Demotion

An ongoing collaboration with Simon Laroche, a Montreal-based digital artist, *Orchestrer la perte/Perpetual*

*Demotion* (OLP/PD) comprises a feeding robot, a series of edible pastes, a human ‘slave’, and a refrigerator. The piece is at once an installational artwork and a performance. OLP/PD addresses the multi-directional relationships of domination and nurturing that link food, technology, and humans. Each element is both performed by and performs the other two, while also resisting and accepting those influences.<sup>6</sup>

The participant experience ordinarily takes place in a gallery or exhibition setting. A tall, wooden kitchen table serves as platform for the three-armed delta robot (a polished, metal structure produced from open-source designs). Nine spoons are arranged along the front edge of the table, each filled with one of three unidentifiable pastes. Adjacent to the table is seated a human ‘slave’, with a plastic basin below her chair and a mini-fridge to one side. As a human approaches the robot, a motion sensor activates it. The robot lowers its central ‘head’ to the table, where a magnetic prong collects one of the spoons.

Facial-recognition technology, built into the mirrored hemispherical head, then locks on to the face of the human participant. The software guides the spoon to the human’s mouth. If the human allows the spoon to penetrate his or her mouth, the food can be slurped up, at which point a galvanostatic resistance sensor triggers the robot to pull the spoon away and hand it off to the slave. When the slave removes the spoon from the magnetic prong, the software then makes the robot pick up a remaining spoon and wait for the next human to approach.

When all nine spoons have been used, the slave refills and replaces them, resets the robot, and returns to her seat. The slave may not speak to the eaters, nor may she eat any of the food herself. The slave’s ostensible purpose is to serve the robot, acting as a pair of hands for removal and replenishment of the spoons. Yet the slave also serves the artists by completing an additional cycle of care/disempowerment. She further completes a ‘slave roster’: a record of food consumption, visitor numbers, and technological issues that arise. The slave also serves the installation as a key performance activator: in her silence vis-à-vis the eaters, she creates the relational gap that activates them into direct interaction with the robot.

The first installation of OLP/PD took place in May 2014 at the Montreal Museum of Contemporary Art (MAC), within the context of the Biennale internationale d’art numérique (BIAN).<sup>7</sup> What quickly became apparent was that OLP/PD was indeed very much a performance-based intervention, partly because of our initial conceptualization, partly because of the slave and her role, and partly because of the unexpected elements that started performing the ensuing outcomes.

### *OLP/PD Performativities*

One of the MAC’s institutional policies is that all artists’ materials passing through the loading bay must be photographed (largely to prevent loss of museum artefacts).

In the case of OLP/PD, this included the table, robot, spoons, refrigerator, and other equipment. When I brought in the food pastes, however, the museum coordinator was perplexed. As I explained to her, this art material would not be leaving with *me*, but in the bodies of the gallery goers. It would be impossible to photograph the food's 'exits' (in two senses). After consultations with various managers, it was determined that the pastes did not need to be photographed. While seemingly trivial, this small institutional interaction revealed the spatial-processual agencies at work within art museums, including the ways in which the agency of 'things' like food can disrupt (or actively not participate in) such patterns and structures (Brown 2001; Miller 2010).

The humans who approached OLP/PD made evident similar interference patterns among galleries, robots, food, and the act of eating. Allowing the paste-filled spoon to enter a mouth was met with resistance, accommodation, delight, disgust, confusion, frustration, curiosity, and on. Children were very willing to consume, while adults frequently stood back. Demands to know what was in the food were made to the slave, who by instruction remained mute. No disclaimer was posted, causing some visitors to express anxiety (*What if I'm allergic?*) or claim unequal treatment (*I'm kosher!*) Notably, such concerns are rarely expressed about the light, sound, vibrations, and smells coming off oil paintings and bronze sculptures. Yet when edibles are at play, what come into evidence are the broader scales at which food is a complex, articulated ecology.

Performativity also appeared in the evolution of the slave's role. Several of the BIAN installations beyond OLP/PD required human support, and a total of five people rotated among these works. Although only Simon and I had used the nomenclature *slave*, the other four assistants adopted the term as well. What is more, they held meetings amongst themselves, amassed a series of work-related complaints, shared clothing solutions for their too-hot/too-cold work environments, and documented the ironies of robot and human behaviours. The slave roster sheets, initially filled out in tidy script, later developed into a set of doodles, musings, and merciless visitor depictions and quotations. A performance that was simultaneously hidden and fully on view, the slave role was fascinatingly unpredicted yet strikingly in keeping with our original concept.

These illustrations point to the nonlinear, unpredictable nature of how assemblages perform together, including the many roles that food plays. They also demonstrate the 'metastability' that is engendered in performance—a state of potentiality that can tip into 'realness', in any one of multiple directions, when activated by other relevant agencies such as perception and interpretation (Salter 2012; Simondon 1992).

---

### The Gastronomer in You

In July 2015, I conceived a one-on-one performance within the group production, *I Thought the Earth Remembered Me*

(ITTERM), itself a part of the Capital Fringe festival in Washington DC. ITTERM comprised five pieces, including a musical number, a dance improvisation, a *caixa lambe* puppet show, a tactile story, and my own food-centred narrative, *The Gastronomer in You*. All dealt with 'rooting and belonging within living kingdoms' (banished?productions 2015), and took place indoors and outdoors, in and around the production company's workspace. ITTERM ran from July 12 to 19, constituting approximately 140 individual iterations.

*Gastronomer* grew out of an earlier installation, a memorial to my friend and colleague, Pierluigi Frassanito, who had died of stomach cancer in March 2013. At his memorial service, Gigi's mother gave out pieces of the *pasta madre* (a yeast starter for bread) that he had used for twenty years. One of those pieces eventually made it to me, becoming my own bread starter and a central actor in the July 2015 performances.

During the piece, one participant at a time sat on a cushion or low stool inside a two-and-a-half-square-meter space delimited by loose canvas walls. I kneeled directly across from the person, facing him or her. My narrative began with an offer to smell and taste some bread, and then to consider the processes and products of fermentation and their relationships with the human microbiome. Given that we incorporate and are dependent on roughly 30 trillion microbial life forms, I said, we ourselves are products of fermentation—becoming human because of it. I also noted that yeasts, bacteria, and viruses are constantly coming and going, in, on, and among our bodies.

I went on to talk about Gigi, his bread starter, and his death, while painting my left hand with a brush dipped in a pot of the starter, positioned next to me. I then held the hand of the other person, pressing it between my own, verbally communicating the physical transfer of Gigi-ness that was taking place. After releasing the hand, I invited the participant to wipe it on the canvas walls and leave a trace of his or her own microbiome in the space. A bowl of rinsing water was also available.

### *Gastronomer's Undoings*

This performance was designed to bring attention to the continuities among self and other, human and microbe, and process and product. That yeasty residues of Gigi himself were contained in the starter also undid the division between life and death, highlighting the persistence of humanity within the nonhuman. My joining of hands with the participant linked together three people's microbiomes in that moment, while the wiping-off (or rinsing) gesture created a residue of presence for the subsequent waves of participants.

Within my own experience of the performance, I came to witness destabilization of the lines between theatricality and pedagogy, artistic and academic practice, and performance and research. The rise and fall of my own emotions while telling the story was performed by the

---

combination of sensory and affective elements in around me—the noise of trains and police cars, the gaze of the person in front of me, the air temperature, my memories and words, my aching knees.

Each performance was both a reiteration of the previous one as well as distinct unto itself. This underscores a unique challenge (and benefit) of performance-based research: it cannot be faithfully represented in a single report or documentation. The realities of performance only exist in the specific moments of that performance—it ‘becomes itself through disappearance’ (Phelan 1993, p. 148).

Consequently, as reality is itself performed by the conditions in which it occurs, performance demonstrates that our past research realities are not *reproduced* using linguistic, gestural, or material forms, but are instead *translated*.

My analysis of *Gastronome* is ongoing, including consideration of the residues left not only in me, but also in the some 140 other participants. Their transformations remain largely unknown in any formal sense; no interviews or debriefs were conducted, nor was that an objective. Instead, my not knowing these residues serves as a pointer to the unknowability of performance outcomes, as well as the evolving nature of how performance performs. Such a non-explicit result is crucial: it reminds us that a given research project intervenes in but one of our subjects’ numerous ‘part-time societies’, spaces that are characterized by the ‘temporariness of [their] members’ presence’ (Lien 1997, p. 28).

With performance as a lens, we see the boundaries between food spaces as porous, the interactions and influences within one affecting those within another. Furthermore, any *report* on a research project (including documentation, analysis, and interpretation) is invariably a further performance in itself (Auslander 2012). The scales of performance expand beyond what we scholars can keep within our sights: our reports might do well to remain unassured, *infelicitous*, and perpetually ‘on the slip’ (Schneider 2006, p. 253).

---

### Where OÙ Firma?

*De donde eres? D’où viens-tu? Da dove vieni?* In nine languages and numerous inflections, friends, students, and colleagues ask me the question: ‘Where are you from?’ In response, I vocalize and gesture. Some of my movements go toward eating, some toward preparing food. Around me are 20 people, sitting at a dining room table, standing, perched on two couches, an ottoman, some stools. The air conditioning whirs in this comfortable, spacious, Singapore living room. I am wearing slightly damp grey pants and a loose linen shirt; my feet are bare. Carmen, my collaborator, operates the iPad and speaker from which the voices emanate. All of these things are enacting a short performance about food, home, and belonging.

As part of a week-long set of food-and-performance interventions in Singapore, *Where OÙ Firma?* blurred

boundaries while engaging an extended group of people in those processes.

The ostensible pivot question was *Where does belonging take place?*, yet in responding to it, the theme of the work expanded. The division between actor and audience became porous, as did that between representation and *re-*presentation, between where we have been and where we are from, and between matter, movement, and meaning. In this way, *Where OÙ Firma?* acted as all performances do, to one degree or another: it made us ask what *else* was performing.

As a Canadian, Irish, and American citizen, born in Boston to a first-generation Jewish immigrant and a fifth-generation Canadian (of Scottish-English heritage, but herself at that time an immigrant to the U.S.), and having lived in ten cities but now firmly anchored in Montreal (although working for a university in Italy), I am constantly provoked, emotionally and intellectually, when asked where I am from. If I give part of the response, I am met with some version of ‘Aha! So you are...’ If I give more of the response, I am met with glazed looks. In both cases, the answer frames one reality or another while eliding others.

The Singapore performance was aimed at portraying these multiplicities—muddying them and then witnessing what was engendered. The questioning voices were recorded and sent to me, assembled into a single audio track that was started and stopped improvisationally. I followed and improvised around a pre-written performance score: I made food (*liptauer*, a Hungarian cream cheese-anchovy-paprika spread, and *charoseth*, an apple-walnut-wine mixture served as part of the seder plate during Pesach); I uttered words (*I’m from Montreal... Why do you want to know?... Vienna, Scotland, England, New York... Uranus... I’m from here... Goyang... Lots of places... Where are YOU from?*); I ate and drank (soft bread with honey, some wine, a fingerful of *liptauer*); and I enacted gestures (an eye roll, a shrug, a fist clench, a sigh, a middle finger extended).

At a certain moment, I stopped speaking, and took the iPad away from Carmen, placing it on the couch and quieting the speaker. Carmen turned the volume back up and placed the apparatus on the bottom shelf of a small table where I stood. I ignored it, mostly. I then placed the food on the dining table, turned off the iPad, and asked Debbie (sitting at the table) where she was from. She looked a little hesitant before responding: the Earth. I asked if she wanted to try some food, explained what I had made, and went and poured myself some more wine. I asked others if they’d like a drink. I milled around. They did as well, after a moment or two, and then we ate the food and talked about different things.

### *Changing the Question*

This summary takes less long to read than the performance itself lasted. It skips over details of what happened in the house in Singapore. It has translated space and smells and emotions and movement and sounds into text on a page.

---

When I read these words out loud, they will be translated again, into other sounds.

The pivot question has now become multiple. Where did the performance begin, when did (or does) it take place, and what can be considered its end? Also, what performed? Did people perform a piece of theatre, or did a question—*Where are you from?*—perform a series of translations? Indeed, the question that triggered the ‘creation’ of a performance piece has been performed itself—enacted, responded to, integrated into a system of other things, and most of all, *transformed*.

In *Where Où Firma?*, food revealed itself as a ‘boundary object’ (Star & Griesemer 1989), an *unbounded* construct composed of discordant and changing realities. Boundary objects are exemplary of performance’s complexity, as they cannot be figured in definitive terms, only coming into being-and-knowing through our practices *with* them. In this way, food becomes one of a series of ‘tools and techniques for nondualistic thought’ (Sedgwick 2003, p.1), helping to refigure eater and eaten as *attendant, in phase with, and beside*, rather than beyond, beneath, or above one another.

---

### Coming Around Again

At one scale of things, these three examples can be considered self-contained experiments in food and performance. Each took place over a relatively short-term and for a limited audience. *OLP/PD* explored nurturing and domination, and revealed relationships among food, technology, and humans. *Gastronome* linked the micro- and macro-biome with bread and a friend’s life. *Where Où From?* exorcised (or perhaps exacerbated) one immigrant’s frustrations while teaching a few people about Jewish food traditions.

At another scale of things, the cases help destabilize common sensibilities about what and who performs in a given moment. The humans who ‘act’ are not just on stage, nor necessarily present in time and space. The ways that meaning is transmitted include spectrums of sound, movement, affect, and emotion, yet no one frequency or channel by itself carries meaning. Even the notion of ‘transmission’ is troubled by performance, and other terms are suggested—*emergence, induction, resonance*—which in turn also become troubled. And, key to this discussion, food is no mere prop or subject, but integral to what happens. Food’s complex nature enables a broader multiplying of realities—an entry point to understanding ourselves, and also to understanding that ‘we’ are not necessarily the things to be understood.

In framing them as research-creation-reporting, these projects also operate at the scale of epistemology. As a process of knowledge making, RCR is itself a performance, one that doesn’t ‘start’ with a question and then terminate at ‘results’, but is instead a continuous state of being-and-knowing in the world, an ongoing sequence of translations from words to actions to material to actions to words again. In this way,

performance, food, and scholarship belong to a common set of undelimited, metastable patterns, which come into ‘definition’ depending on the scale of their framing.

Is this revolutionary? Perhaps not in the sense of upending one system of power in favour of another, changing paradigms, or installing a new set of theories and practices in the multi-turreted ivory castle.

On the other hand, it *might* be revolutionary to think of revolutions at a different scale, one in which power, privilege, and reality are constantly in a state of rearrangement. Orbital revolutions are cyclical after all—things moving in various ellipses around other things—often coming back to a ‘starting point’ (or nearly). In that case, then, revolution might be what we are in.

Perhaps, more simply, this can be a step toward attending to scale, from the micro to the macro, the individual to the ecological, and the discursive to the material. Perhaps also it will help imagine many other kinds of scale, those that participate in the continually self-transforming performance that we call food.

---

### Notes

1. Here I am borrowing from Félix Guattari’s call for ‘ecosophy’ in *The Three Ecologies* (2008).
  2. A number of strands within other fields have already turned their attention to performance, and it is from their intersections that I draw. These include science and technology studies, art and design, complexity theory, gender studies, reflexive anthropology, political science, and actor-network theory. For more, see: Barad 2007; Bennett 2009; Butler 1988; Callon 1986; Conquergood 1989; Denzin 2003; Derrida 1977; Dunne & Raby 2013; Fry 2008; Hacking 1987; Ingold 2011; Latour 2005; Law & Hassard 1999; Orr 2004; Pickering 1993; Salter 2014; Sedgwick 2003.
  3. Despite the parsing of food into ‘temporal-spatial’, ‘material-discursive’, and ‘processual’ components, performance recognizes such deconstructions as epistemic artefacts, a residue of doing text-based reporting. By attending to specific moments of performance, however, these components can be imagined as remaining integrated.
  4. As has been demonstrated across a range of performance-based work, those who might be named ‘spectators’ in fact play a significant role in what happens (Banes & Lepecki 2007; Cage 1952; Dunn 1971; Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1999, 2012). Indeed the agency of the perceiver has been examined in many contexts beyond performance theory (Bourdieu 1993; Minh-ha 1989; Whitehead 2010), reinforcing the importance of what happens via representation, that is, in the production and experiencing of research ‘reports’.
  5. For more, see: Gustolab International ([gustolab.com](http://gustolab.com)); William Angliss Institute ([angliss.edu.au](http://angliss.edu.au)); DRLab/Berlin University of the Arts ([design-research-lab.org](http://design-research-lab.org)).
-

6. For example, humans deploy many technologies with the aim of being served by them—things such as factory machinery, handheld digital devices, and culinary tools. In turn, however, because of their integration into larger-scale operations and habits, they become icons of our own enslavement by or dependence on technology. Food can be understood similarly—a thing consumed for its nutritive, hedonic, and cultural value, but one that also inexorably shackles us to itself, through the demands of domestication, consumption, and nourishment systems.
7. The project has since travelled to a number of other exhibitions, although they are not addressed here.

---

## References

- Auslander, P., 2012. The Performativity of Performance Documentation, in: Jones, A., Heathfield, A. (Eds.), *Perform, Repeat, Record: Live Art in History*. Intellect Books, Bristol (UK), pp. 47–58.
- Banes, S., Lepecki, A., 2007. *The Senses in Performance*. Routledge.
- banished?productions, 2015. I Thought the Earth Remembered Me [WWW Document]. URL <http://banishedproductions.org/hybrids/ithoughttheearth/> (accessed 3.25.16).
- Barad, K., 2007. *Meeting the Universe Halfway*. Duke University Press, Durham.
- Bennett, J., 2009. *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things*. Duke University Press, Durham.
- Bourdieu, P., 1993. *The Field of Cultural Production*. Columbia University Press, New York.
- Brown, B., 2001. Thing Theory. *Critical Inquiry* 28, 1–22.
- Butler, J., 1988. Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory. *Theatre Journal* 40, 519–531.
- Cage, J., 1952. 4 33 .
- Callon, M., 1986. Some Elements of a Sociology of Translation: Domestication of the Scallops and the Fishermen of St Brieuc Bay, in: Law, J. (Ed.), *Power, Action and Belief*. Routledge and Kegan Paul, Boston.
- Carlson, M., 2004. *Performance: A Critical Introduction*, 2nd ed. Routledge, New York.
- Cohen-Cruz, J., 2015. *Remapping Performance: Common Ground, Uncommon Partners*. Springer.
- Conquergood, D., 1989. Poetics, Play, Process, and Power: The Performative Turn in Anthropology. *Text and Performance Quarterly* 9, 82–88. doi:10.1080/10462938909365914
- Conquergood, D., 2002. Performance Studies: Interventions and Radical Research. *TDR/The Drama Review* 46, 145–156. doi:10.1162/105420402320980550
- Denzin, N.K., 2003. *Performance Ethnography: Critical Pedagogy and the Politics of Culture*. SAGE.
- Derrida, J., 1977. *Limited Inc*. Northwestern University Press.
- Dunn, D., 1971. 101.
- Dunne, A., Raby, F., 2013. *Speculative Everything: Design, Fiction, and Social Dreaming*. The MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts ; London.
- Fischer-Lichte, E., 2008. *The Transformative Power of Performance: A New Aesthetics*. Routledge, New York.
- Fry, T., 2008. *Design Futuring: Sustainability, Ethics and New Practice*. Bloomsbury Academic, Oxford ; New York.
- Guattari, F., 2008. *The Three Ecologies*. Continuum, London.
- Hacking, I., 1987. *Representing and Intervening: Introductory Topics in the Philosophy of Natural Science*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- Heldke, L.M., 1992. Foodmaking as a Thoughtful Practice, in: Heldke, L.M., Curtin, D.W. (Eds.), *Cooking, Eating, Thinking: Transformative Philosophies of Food*. Indiana University Press, Bloomington, pp. 203–229.
- Homer-Dixon, T., 2011. Complexity Science. *Oxford Leadership Journal* 2.
- Ingold, T., 2011. *Being Alive: Essays on Movement, Knowledge and Description*. Routledge, London ; New York.
- Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, B., 1999. Playing to the Senses: Food as a Performance Medium. *Performance Research: On Cooking* 4, 1–30.
- Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, B., 2012. Making Sense of Food in Performance: the Table and the Stage, in: Banes, S., Lepecki, A. (Eds.), *The Senses in Performance*. Routledge.
- Latour, B., 2005. *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory*. Oxford University Press, Oxford.
- Law, J., Hassard, J., 1999. *Actor Network Theory and After*. Wiley-Blackwell.
- Lien, M.E., 1997. *Marketing and Modernity, Explorations in anthropology*. Berg, Oxford ; New York.
- Lien, M.E., Law, J., 2011. ‘Emergent Aliens’: On Salmon, Nature, and Their Enactment. *RETN* 76, 65–87. doi:10.1080/00141844.2010.549946
- Manning, E., Massumi, B., 2015. *Toward a Process Seed Bank: What Research-Creation Can Do*. *Media-N* 11.
- Mansfield, B., 2003. Fish, Factory Trawlers, and Imitation Crab: The Nature of Quality in the Seafood Industry. *Journal of Rural Studies* 19, 9–21. doi:16/S0743-0167(02)00036-0
- Miller, D., 2010. *Stuff*. Polity Press, Cambridge.
- Minh-Ha, T.T., 1989. *Woman, Native, Other: Writing Postcoloniality and Feminism*, 1st Edition. ed. Indiana University Press, Indianapolis.
- Orr, D.W., 2004. *The Nature of Design: Ecology, Culture, and Human Intention*, Oxford Univ. Press paperback. ed. Oxford Univ. Press, Oxford.
- Paxson, H., 2013. *The Life of Cheese: Crafting Food and Value in America*, California studies in food and culture. University of California Press, Berkeley.
-

- Phelan, P., 1993. *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance*. Routledge, New York.
- Pickering, A., 1993. *The Mangle of Practice: Agency and Emergence in the Sociology of Science*. *American Journal of Sociology* 99, 559–589.
- Salter, C., 2012. Just Noticeable Difference: Ontogenesis, Performativity and the Perceptual Gap. *INFLExions*.
- Salter, C., 2014. *Alien Agency: Ethnographies of Nonhuman Performance*. MIT Press, Cambridge.
- Schechner, R., 2003. *Performance Theory*. Routledge, New York.
- Schneider, R., 2006. Intermediality, Infelicity, and Scholarship on the Slip. *Theatre Survey* 47, 253–260. doi:10.1017/S0040557406000238
- Sedgwick, E.K., 2003. *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity*. Duke University Press. Shouse, E., 2005. Feeling, Emotion, Affect. *M/C Journal* 8.
- Simondon, G., 1992. The Genesis of the Individual, in: Crary, J., Kwinter, S. (Eds.), Cohen, M., Kwinter, S. (Trans.), *Zone 6: Incorporations*. Zone Books, New York, pp. 296–319.
- SSHRC, 2010. Research-Creation [WWW Document]. URL <http://www.sshrc-crsh.gc.ca/funding-financement/programs-programmes/definitions-eng.aspx#a22> (accessed 2.5.13).
- Star, S.L., Griesemer, J.R., 1989. Institutional Ecology, ‘Translations’ and Boundary Objects: Amateurs and Professionals in Berkeley’s Museum of Vertebrate Zoology, 1907-39. *Social Studies of Science* 19, 387–420. doi:10.1177/030631289019003001
- Szanto, D., 2015a. Making a Meal of It: Appending ‘Reporting’ to Research-Creation. *Media-N* 11.
- Szanto, D., 2015b. *Performing Gastronomy: An Ecosophic Engagement with the Liveliness of Food* (PhD). Concordia University.
- Szerszynski, B., Heim, W., Waterton, C. (Eds.), 2003. *Nature Performed: Environment, Culture and Performance, The Sociological review monographs*. Blackwell Pub./Sociological Review, Oxford ; Malden, MA.
- Turner, V.W., 1982. *From Ritual to Theatre: The Human Seriousness of Play*. Performing Arts Journal Publications, New York.
- Tyler, S.A., 2010. Post-Modern Ethnography, in: Clifford, J., Marcus, G.E. (Eds.), *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*. University of California Press, Berkeley.
- Whitehead, A.N., 2010. *Process and Reality*. Simon and Schuster.