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# Guava: A conceptual platform for art-actions

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Photo from Performance, Entrails, 2016

## Feeding/Eating the Other

*A journey through Entrails*

The following chapter is written around ***Entrails,*** a performance first held in December 2016 in Tel Aviv as part of a performance series.[46] *Entrails* is composed of a repeating biographic monologue, and while this monologue is performed, the speaker is fed lamb internal organs. The speaker, Morad Hassan, repeats his text seven times in spiral form – each time his description becomes shorter. The second performer, myself, cooks the lamb organs on stage and feeds Morad. The first spiral turn of Morad's text begins with a detailed description of his biography: where and when he was born, his occupation, his family and friends, etc. The final turn of the spiraling text reduces the details of his life into that of an anonymous citizen of no specific time or place, someone who is simply satisfied with food and beer, and does not do much thinking. This final script is in fact a quote from the short story "Basta!"[47] by Robert Walser.[48] At the end of the performance, after Morad's seven turns of his decreasing biography, not only are his identity details gone, but also there are no more entrails to cook.

The short story by Robert Walser was chosen because of its literary preciseness in its use of words, but looking into Walser's biography might perhaps trace why Morad and I found the story relevant for us. Walser was born in Biel/Bienne on the border between German and French speaking Switzerland and spoke both languages. Growing up in that area might have given him the experience of living in a land that, historically more than one nation was claiming and learned to exist as a bilingual area. In addition, his mother died when he was only 16, although not in the context of war, but he carries with him an experience of unexpected loss, something that is widely known here, east of the Mediterranean. Eventually, after years of being hospitalized in a mental care institute, Walser stopped writing, but until then, he saw himself experiencing with literature, looking for new ways to use words and literature. In this performance, Morad and I are

[46] A-Genre series, Tmuna Theatre, Jaffa - Tel Aviv, Israel, December 2016.

[47] Walser, Robert. 1996. 71.

[48] Robert Walser (15 April 1878 – 25 December 1956) was a German-speaking Swiss writer.

experiencing with the format as well, attempting to explore how food, feeding and eating can take part in our socio-political relationship.

Morad speaks the text of the performance, while I feed him silently. However, during rehearsals I experimented with talking alongside the action or in dialogue with him. I tried out speaking and clarifying the connections, distinctions, contradictions, and similarities between our biographies. But spelling these out felt unsuitable, as if it was disturbing what the performance undertakes. At one point, Morad said: “You just need to shut up and feed me… whatever you think of saying,” he continued, “is already embedded in the action of the performance”. We agreed.

The following chapter is built around the seven spiraling turns of Morad’s text, and tells the story of what was left out, what was kept silent, and what emerged as a result of the performance. The seven sections of the chapter point to the decision-making process underlying various elements of the performance, and the sections are interlaced with layered sets of questions and potential interpretations that emerge from the relations between Morad and myself.

The act of cooking, feeding and eating on stage communicated different aspects of Morad’s and my encounter. Many of these are reflective of the signifiers that are attached to who we are: Man and Woman, Muslim and Jew, and Citizen and Resident. Each section in the following chapter theorizes a different aspect of food and the activities of eating and cooking, in relation to Morad’s version of the spiraling text, to the performance's ingredients, to what was seen and what was kept hidden.

The first section of the chapter describes what the audience saw, heard, smelled and was offered to eat and drink. The second section is the performance as it would have read if my verbal parts were included. The third section considers three of the main components in the performance: Food, Feeder, Eater. Using these components, this section establishes the importance of food as one of the most basic conditions for physical life, and discusses what food symbolizes and communicates. The fourth section focuses on the dualistic effect that Morad and I bring to the performance, and offers a philosophical approach as to how food and feeding might overcome the dichotomies of dualism. The

fifth section looks at eating and feeding as a performative action. The sixth examines the connection between food and art, and reflects upon the meaning of food, feeding and eating as part of performance art. The seventh, at the centre of the spiraling chapter and performance, remains, as in the performance, the quoted opening of the short story 'Basta!'

The performance is part of the *Guava Platform*, which seeks to inquire how the region east to the Mediterranean, where I live, can be experienced as open for actual and conceptual movement. This chapter explores the possibilities of movement through ways of cooking, feeding and eating in performance. It is a study of Morad's and my relationship and interaction through food. As we put our guts on the table (he with his life story and me with the lamb entrails I cook for him), we are nourished by an interaction that undermines the main language used in the performance – Hebrew. Hebrew is the dominant (and official) language in the state of Israel. By using this language, Morad's identity is diminished, and at the end of the performance he describes himself anonymously, a good citizen that the state wishes he should be – one that enjoys his food and beer, and doesn't think much. But perhaps through feeding and eating, new possibilities emerge.

The chapter is meant to be read as a spiraling stream of consciousness; with each section of the spiral in the chapter, a different recipe with different ingredients is prepared and consumed. The different 'dishes' as well as the motion through the spiral text suggest another layer of understanding of the possibilities stacked in our interaction and relationship. It is meant, like the performance, to entice the audience to symbolically consume aspects of the relations between Jews and Palestinians that are difficult to swallow in reality.

**Turn one:**

The audience enters a dimly lit theatre, and is directed to sit on the stage, where small bar tables are set with bottles of *Goldstar*[49] beer and glasses. Everyone is invited to drink. An oblong metal table with a griddle upon it takes up centre stage. Morad sits at the head of the table with a wooden eating plate before him. I stand across from him at the other end of the table, facing a cutting board, a sharp knife and a towel. Above me a set of fresh lamb entrails, still dripping with blood, is hanging on a big metal hook: lungs, kidneys, liver, heart and spleen.[50]

The exposed lamb organs on stage confront us and the audience is face to face with the business of eating an animal. No one is permitted to hide behind meat camouflaged into more 'digestible' products such as ground meat, sausages or even steaks, all of which no longer look like body parts. This is what often keeps people from cooking/eating entrails, since they are physically 'too close' to the original, living body. At the same time, the internal organs are connected to our most intimate feelings and thoughts. In both Hebrew and Arabic (as in many other languages), these organs often serve as metaphors for human motivations and desires, for the centre of life.[51] In Hebrew, the expression 'Kidney shame' for example, stands for a feeling of remorse, guilt and regret. 'He who investigates heart and kidney' is an expression referring to God, and also to people who can see into others, read others' thoughts and feelings. In Arabic, the liver stands for the centre of the body and is a metaphor for strong feelings and affection.[52] 'My liver' is many times used to refer to one's kid or lover, and 'I feel a burning in my liver' or 'my liver bleeds over losing you' means that someone is depressed or afraid of losing someone dear. The entrails offer the most intimate and direct symbols of a person's experiences and feelings.

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[49] Goldstar is the most common and cheap Israeli beer.

[50] Using the animal's less popular parts is a more respectful choice once it is killed to be consumed, as it allows minimal waste. This approach is known in the gastronomic world as "Nose to Tail," a 21st century philosophy of eating and cooking that involves using every possible part of the animal and thus minimizing waste.

[51] Maio, Giovanni. 1999. 101-106.

[52] Menacere, Mohammed. 1992. 567–572.

While the audience find their places, standing around us on the stage and pouring themselves beer, I begin to cut up one of the hanging entrails, slice it into edible pieces and fry it on the griddle. A small microphone is attached to the back of my hand, so every cut and each sizzle is heard clearly through the speakers surrounding the stage. The smoke of burning meat travels up into the stage lighting, turning into a cloud above us. I pour Morad a glass of beer and he begins to talk. As the performance goes on more and more entrails are sliced, fried and served to Morad at an accelerating pace, so that by the end all the cuts he has not yet consumed are either on the griddle or on his plate. Morad eats, talks and drinks without stopping, trying to finish as much as he can from the plate and to get as much of it as he possibly can, not in an exaggerated way, but with enjoyment.

**Morad Hassan:** *I came into the world on May 24th 1983, at the English Hospital in Nazareth on a Thursday at 6:05 in the morning. My Zodiac sign is Gemini and my Ascendant is Gemini as well. I was brought up in the village of Mash'had, a small village of 7000 people, all Muslim, situated between Kufur Kana and Nazareth in the lower Galilee. I went to the best of school in the area, the Sisters of Saint Joseph School in Nazareth. This is a private Christian school. Usually only Christian kids are accepted, but I had very high grades, so they let me in. I am an actor, I studied acting at Haifa University, and I am also a bartender to supplement my income. In the past I worked with my brothers at the family pastry factory and shop, and I also worked with my father in construction. As for that, I have a tractor and a truck license. My name is Morad. My full name is Morad H'ir Din, Musbach abd al-Hilm, Ahmed, Hassan. Six Generations[53]. As to gender, I am a man. Straight. My ex once wanted us to try new things but I didn't like it. I was never called in by the police for an investigation. Was never caught throwing a stone or lighting up tires, even the Nakba[54] memorial[55] I initiated in the village was approved by the police. This is*

[53] The Arab name system is different than the name-surname system known in the West. Though varying in places and tradition, Arab names are usually built from five categories including family connections, religious practices and titles of profession.

[54] The 1948 Palestinian exodus, also known as the Nakba (Arabic: النكبة, "al-Nakbah", literally "disaster", "catastrophe", or "cataclysm"), occurred when more than 700,000 Palestinian Arabs fled or were expelled from their homes, during the 1948 war.

[55] The Nakba memorial is not an official memorial-day in Israel, and its commemoration is generally considered seen as a protest against the Israeli State.

*why from the state's point of view, I am a good citizen. Actually, I committed one traffic violation in 2001; I didn't have a 'New Driver' sign on my friend's, Rinat, car which I drove in Tiberias. I paid a 150 NIS fine. Concerning my station in life, I belong to the upper class*; *I come from a good family. We are the biggest family in the village. My father is a bus driver and the owner of two pastry shops, and my mom works at home. I have two brothers and one sister. Amir and Musbach run the family pastry business. My sister Rashaa is married and has three girls – Roze, Julie and Sophia – and owns a beauty salon in the village. I have three childhood friends. Wissam who is married to Nijat; he is a lawyer and she is a social worker and they have two kids, Firas (who is named after Wissam's brother who was killed in a car accident) and little Muhammad. Halil and Hadil who met during their studies, they are both social workers, and they have two kids: Yousuf, named after Halil's father, and little Rim. Ali, my third friend, just got married and came back from his honeymoon in Thailand. Among my friends, I am the only single one who is not in a relationship. They love me because I am a neat, nice and quiet friend. When we meet, we like to drink whiskey, single malt, Mcclellan 18 years old, oak, not cherry. But when I am alone, I like to drink a glass of beer, like a sensible person, I like Goldstar, Goldstar Unfiltered. It goes without saying that I am fond of eating well. I like good food. My favorite dish is grape leaves with rice and veal meat, cooked in chicken stock, the way my mom makes it. If you ask me, I have lots of ideas. Like, I think there should be one state here. One state with no borders and free movement for everyone. What one may call post-national. I think one should not vote. I do not believe in a change from inside. During the last election, I didn't even vote for the Joint List[56], my mom didn't like that. And I also think that we need to cancel the tax on fuel and cars. And there should be free public transportation and the profession of a real estate broker should be cancelled, and that's that, so Basta!*

[56] The Joint List was formed shortly before the 2015 elections, combining candidates from three Arab parties as well as from Hadash.

**Turn Two:**

**MH[57]: I came into the world on May 24th 1983, at the English Hospital in Nazareth on a Thursday at 6:05 in the morning.**

TH[58]: I came into the world on June 3rd 1979, at 2:05 in the morning in a Christian Hospital in Düsseldorf.

**MH: I was brought up in the village of Mash'had, a small village of 7000 people, all Muslim, situated between Kufur Kana and Nazareth in the lower Galilee.**

TH: I was brought up in Düsseldorf, a town in what was then West Germany, and moved to Jerusalem in the summer of 1986. In Germany, we were part of the Jewish community, but even though my family moved to Israel following my Zionist father, we hardly practiced any Jewish traditions once we arrived in Israel. Jerusalem is statistically a multi-cultural and mixed religious city of mostly Jews, Christians and Muslims, especially since Israel's occupation of East-Jerusalem in 1967. But we moved to Jerusalem during the first Intifada.[59] The Intifada drew a clear but invisible, line between the East and West parts of the City. As for that, I grew up in a very Jewish environment and met Muslim and Christian Arabs only when I began working in restaurants as a teenage waitress and bartender. The Arabs I met there were cooks and dish washers, always in the back of the restaurant and hardly ever in communication with the customers.

**MH: I went to the best of school in the area, the Sisters of Saint Joseph School in Nazareth. This is a private Christian school. Usually only Christian kids are accepted, but I had very high grades, so they let me in.**

TH: I went to a semi-private school. It was known as a very bad school in Jerusalem since most of its students were drop-outs from the "normal" school system. Although I didn't dance, act or play music, I really liked film and they decided to accept me.

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[57] Morad Hassan.

[58] Thalia Hoffman.

[59] The first Palestinian uprising against the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza. The uprising lasted from December 1987 until the Madrid Conference in 1991, though some date its conclusion to 1993, with the signing of the Oslo Accords.

**MH: I am an actor, I studied acting at Haifa University, and I am also a bartender to supplement my income.**

TH: I am an artist, I teach art at Haifa University; my practice includes various media, from video art and performance to public interventions. I am a PhD candidate at the *PhDArts* program in Leiden and work as a video editor and cook for supplementary income.

**MH: My name is Morad. My full name is Morad H'ir Din Hassan.**

TH: My name is Thalia. My full name is Thalia Katrin Hoffman, after my grandmother from my father's side.

**MH: As to gender I am a man. Straight. My ex once wanted us to try new things but I didn't like it.**

TH: As to gender I am a woman. Bi-sexual. My partner and I decided on an open relationship, but we don't really see other people.

**MH: I was never called in by the police for an investigation. Was never caught throwing a stone or lighting up tires. This is why from the state's point of view, I am a good citizen. Actually, I committed one traffic violation in 2001; I didn't have a 'New Driver' sign on my friend, Rinat's, car which I drove in Tiberias.**

TH: I was investigated twice by the police, once for keeping Hashish in high school and once for hanging an 'offensive' flag from my roof top on Israeli Independence Day. I was blamed for the corruption of national symbols, but after three hours of investigation I convinced them that the flag was a work of art and that I was willing to take it off the roof top, but that the police should hand back the art work.

**MH: Concerning my station in life, I belong to the upper class; I come from a good family. We are the biggest family in the village. I have two brothers and one sister. Amir and Musbach run the family pastry business. My sister Rashaa owns a beauty salon in the village.**

TH: Concerning my station in life we are a good family. My father was a dentist and my mother was a journalist. I have two brothers, Guy is a professor at Cornell University

researching the relationship between robots and humans, and Dani is an accountant with Israel's Ministry of the Environment.

**MH: I have three childhood friends. Wissam who is married to Nijat, they have two kids, Firas and little Muhammad. Halil and Hadil they have two kids: Yousuf, little Rim. Ali, my third friend, just got married. Among my friends, I am the only single one who is not in a relationship. They love me because I am a neat, nice and quiet friend. When we meet, we like to drink whiskey, single malt.**

TH: I have three high school friends but most of my friends entered my life later on; most of them are artists, educators or academics. Almost all of them have steady relationships and kids. When we meet we like to drink Arak[60], the local cheap brand made in Israel.

**MH: But when I am alone, I like to drink a glass of beer, like a sensible person, I like Goldstar.**

TH: But on a hot summer day, I like to drink a glass of beer, I like Goldstar.

**MH: It goes without saying that I am fond of eating well. I like good food. My favorite dish is grape leaves with rice and veal meat, cooked in chicken stock, the way my mom makes it.**

TH: It goes without saying that I am fond of good eating. I like good food and I love cooking, mostly I cook a combination of my desires and what's in the fridge.

**MH: If you ask me, I have lots of ideas. Like, I think there should be one state here. One state with no borders and free movement for everyone.**

TH: If you ask me, I have lots of ideas. Like, I think there needs to be one state here. One state with no borders and free movement for everyone. What one may call post-national.

**MH: I think one should not vote.**

**TH:** I can't vote because I don't have Israeli citizenship. If I could, I would vote for the Joint List. My mom wouldn't like that.

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[60] Arak is a Levantine distilled spirit in the anise drink family, made originally from grapes.

**MH: And I also think that we need to cancel the tax on fuel and cars. And there needs to be free public transportation, and that's that, so Basta!**

**Turn Three:**

**MH**: *I came into the world on May 24th 1983, at the English Hospital in Nazareth. I was brought up in the village Mash'had, a small Muslim village in the Galilee. I went properly to school, the Sisters of Saint Joseph School in Nazareth. I am an actor, I studied acting at Haifa University, and I am a bartender as well. My name is Morad Hassan. As to gender I am a man. Straight. Concerning the state, I am a good citizen. I only have one traffic violation from 2001, when I didn't have a 'New Driver' sign on my friend Rinat's car which I drove in Tiberias. Concerning station, I belong to the upper class, we are considered a good family, the biggest family in the village. I have two brothers and one sister. They all have jobs and are settled. I have three childhood friends. Wissam, Halil and Ali. They love me because I am a neat, nice and quiet friend. When we meet we like to drink Whiskey, single malt. But when I am alone, I like to drink my glass of beer, like a sensible person, I like Goldstar. It goes without saying that I am fond of eating well. I like good food. My favorite dish is grape leaves with rice and veal meat. If you ask me, I think there needs to be one state here. It seems like a good idea not to vote. And I also think that we need to cancel the tax on fuel, and that's that, so Basta!*

Food is considered one of the three basic needs of humans alongside clothing and shelter[61], needs without which humans cannot survive.[62] In the world that we create on stage, I am the supplier of Morad's nutritional needs. I bring my own food and my own cooking devices, and he eats what I serve him. The act of feeding Morad with entrails during the performance symbolically addresses the basic physical human need of survival.[63]

Even though the term 'basic needs' was officially introduced and put into use only in the late 1970s[64], twenty-six centuries ago, Plato already mentioned precisely these exact elements in the *Republic*, and named food the first among them: "Surely our first and

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[61] Denton, John A. 1990. 17.

[62] Measurements of minimum basic needs are used to calculate poverty in developing countries, though the strategies and amounts vary from places to place and changed during history.

[63] Inner animal parts are known as well for their high nutrition value such as B vitamins, iron, phosphorus, copper and magnesium, and are rich with the most important fat-soluble vitamins, A, D, E and K.

[64] Jolly, Richard. 1976. 31-44.

greatest need is to provide food to sustain life. Certainly. Our second is for shelter, and our third for clothes and such."[65] In the *Republic,* Plato first suggests the idea of a basic city, a place where only the essential needs of humans are answered. He claims that in this sort of place not much food is required, that people would survive on grains alone. But Glaucon, his interlocutor in this dialogue, objects and claims that a proper city cannot be founded on a diet of grains and nuts alone. “Then how should I feed these people, Glaucon? I asked. In the conventional way. If they aren’t to suffer hardship, they should recline on proper couches, dine at a table, and have the delicacies and desserts that people have nowadays.”[66] A proper meal is integral to creating proper living surroundings. The city described in the *Republic* is a place where food is not considered merely as nutrition.

In the spirit of Glaucon, I will suggest that while food is something one consumes to keep one's body going, eating has rarely been treated as a mere necessity in any culture. According to philosopher George Herbert Mead,

> The behaviour of all living organisms has a basically social aspect: the fundamental biological or physiological impulses and needs which lie at the basis of all such behaviour — especially those of hunger and sex, those connected with nutrition and reproduction — are impulses and needs which, in the broadest sense, are social in character or have social implications, since they involve or require social situations or relations for their satisfaction by any given individual organism; and they thus constitute the foundation of all types or forms of social behaviour.[67]

Though eating and intercourse are basic physiological needs, as Mead claims, their consumption entails social interaction. As a result, these become no longer merely physical, but always involve symbolic connections to how one places himself in any given society.

Feeding and eating play important roles, both physical and symbolic, in religious rituals and sacrifices, such as the communion bread in Catholicism, or periods of fasting in

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[65] Plato. 1997. 369d, 1008.

[66] *Ibid.,* 372 d-e, 1011.

[67] Mead George Herbert. 1934. 227–228.

various religions. Furthermore, people recognize themselves as part of a community through their eating habits and restrictions across many circumstances. These include Jews and Muslims who don't eat pork, or certain Hindu sects which forbid eating meat. This is true not only when it comes to formal communities such as those based on religion, but also when one identifies oneself as vegan, paleo, or as practicing any other food restriction or approach.

This section suggests that the cooking-feeding-eating interaction between Morad and myself in the performance played a symbolic role in our identities and our relationship. I decide how to fulfill Morad's need for food. He eats the food I have selected, according to the order I choose, flavored as I have chosen to flavor it, and received via my physical gestures in the act of feeding. My identity is manifested through the customs and manner of my cooking.

Philosopher Roland Barthes found in food and eating habits, that there is a wordless language, through which preferences, references and cultural identities could be defined. According to Barthes, food is a "…system of communication, a body of images, a protocol of usages, situations and behavior."[68] A food item, he claims, does not relate simply to the motivations surrounding the situation of serving or purchasing it, but is also a functional unit within a system of communication. The functional units of communication, such as taste, flavor and smell construct a system that reflects, according to Barthes, the 'spirit' of food: "This 'spirit' brings together different units (such as flavor and substance), forming a composite unit with a single signification."[69] The unit, he claims, is analogous to the units of tune and rhythm of speech in language. One applies the food units of communication to reconstruct systems of empirical use such as menus and diets. These are syntaxes and styles not merely in an empirical sense way but also in a semantic sense, allowing others and oneself to compare them. As Barthes claims, "One could say that an entire 'world' (social environment) is present in and signified by food."[70] Eating habits act as a signifier because they are a behavior that

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[68] Barthes, Roland. 1997. 29.

[69] *Ibid.,* 31.

[70] *Ibid.,* 32.

develops beyond its direct functions of feeding of the body. According to Barthes each functional unit communicates socio-economic identity, national identity, economic state, gender, physical condition, or to sum up, replaces and signals behaviors other than eating in and of itself.

In the food-cooking-eating interaction Morad and I present on stage, we communicate that which is kept silent over the performance. Morad eats the 'me' that is embodied by the food he swallows. This incorporation might be experienced as personal when considering our dual relationship on stage, but at the same time he eats my whole 'world' as Barthes would phrase it — the world I come from and communicate through the food I cook. I, a Jewish woman, while not a citizen, still represent the Jewish majority in Israeli society that we both live in. When I feed Morad, he is indoctrinated with what I offer through the food, and the 'world' I represent is incorporated in him. Through the incorporation of my so-called superiority, via the food, Morad is encouraged or tempted to abandon details of his biography, specific to his Muslim and Palestinian identity.

**Turn 4:**

**MH:** *I came to the world in May 1983. I grew up in the village Mash'had, in the Northern part of Israel. I went properly to school in Nazareth. I am an actor, I have studied acting at the Haifa University. My name is Morad Hassan. As to gender I am a man. As to state, I am a good citizen. I only have one traffic violation from 2001. Concerning station, I belong to the upper class; we are a good family. I have two brothers and one sister. They all have jobs and are settled. I have three childhood friends: Wissam, Halil and Ali. They love me because I'm a neat, nice, quiet friend. I like to drink my glass of Goldstar beer, like a sensible person. It goes without saying that I am fond of good eating, especially filled wine leaves. If you ask me ideas… I think one should not vote, but opinions are far away from me. Because I am a good citizen, and that's that, so Basta!*

The setting of the performance implies a dualistic approach: Man-Woman, Muslim-Jewish, Citizen-Resident, Eater-Cook. In many ways, Morad's monologue implies another dichotomy, indicating there is a preference for bodily pleasures over the generation of ideas and thoughts. By gradually minimizing what biographical information he shares, Morad finally reaches the conclusion that a good citizen need not think much, a good citizen eats the food he enjoys and drinks the beer he likes, and that's it. Morad's words might then be understood as referring to someone who is satisfied with bodily pleasures and gives up his mental abilities. This section suggests that by the end of the performance Morad's monologue establishes yet another dichotomy between mind and body. But at the same time, the interaction between Morad and myself offers a way to dismiss it through food.

The dualistic approach that separates mind and body, physical needs like eating and mental needs like thinking, can be found in Plato's work as well. He suggests that for philosophers or 'Truth' seekers, the body is an obstacle on the way to enlightenment and knowledge.

> And indeed the soul reasons best when none of these senses troubles it, neither hearing nor sight, nor pain nor pleasure, but when it is most by itself, taking leave of the body and as far as possible having no contact or association with it in its

> search for reality.… because the body confuses the soul and does not allow it to acquire truth and wisdom whenever it is associated with it.[71]

Taking food seriously, Plato claims, is attempting to disrupt the transcendent patterns of philosophical thinking. He recognizes human beings as inherently relational, temporal and valuing the everyday and the ordinary.

Contrary to Plato's search of truth, Morad at the end of the performance offers to become a good citizen by dismissing the needs of the mind in favor of the pleasures of eating and drinking. This suggests that a good citizen is one who is not searching for the truth, but leaves thinking and decision-making to others or to the rules of the state.[72] I would like to suggest in this section that by accepting my food and swallowing it, Morad might actually be presenting another way of using his body to reflect his thoughts, ideas and feelings.

American Philosopher Deane W. Curtin suggests that the separation between mind and body, and the preference of one over the other for the purpose of gaining knowledge, expresses Plato's determination to represent the world in exclusive dualisms, "…dualisms that answer to the dominant metaphor of the pristine brightness of the Platonic heaven versus the dim, dusty cave: mind/body, self/other, culture/nature, good/evil, reason/emotion."[73] Using the metaphor of Plato's cave, Curtin explains that *ordinary* life in the cave receives its definition only by the opposition of the *extraordinary* life outside the cave.

These dualisms, Curtin claims, refer to an ontological and a value distinction: ontological, in that the two elements of the dualistic pair are forever separate and cannot interact, meaning for example that what is good can't be evil or what is self cannot be other; a value distinction because one is claimed to be autonomous, knowable and fully real, while the other is dependent, not fully real and therefore unknowable. In Western philosophy, he continues, searches are usually for autonomous substance and knowledge, something that can remain unchanged through time, or like the 'soul'. These searches stand in

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[71] Plato. 1997. 65a+66c, 57.

[72] This can clearly be seen at the continuation of the story, "…I'm delighted to leave all straining of wits and racking of brains to the leading and legislated minds who feel responsible" (72).

[73] Curtin, Deane W. 1992. 5.

contrast to inquiries of things as the 'body' which is constantly changing and eventually dies. Substances like food, which are relational, independent and not autonomous, were as a result excluded from philosophical research during most of the Western philosophical history. Furthermore, Curtin claims that the outcome of these dualistic distinctions turned what was knowable to humans against what was unknowable, for example mind against body, reason against emotion or desires, and theory against practice.

Curtin offers the relation to food and to eating as a way to go beyond the reductions of dualistic distinctions. He suggests that when one is about to eat something one parameter of concern is that this food item will become part of oneself: "The classification of something as food means it is understood as something made to become part of who we are."[74] Humans have a prior understanding that anything they eat will become part of their bodily self, and as such, according to Curtin, food holds a special relation to the Self. Since food items enter the body and become part of it physically, eating, he claims, threatens a sense of self as absolutely autonomous. What one agrees to consume becomes part of one's own body — which means that food that has been consumed is in a different position to oneself than what is merely edible. Edibility is not the only condition one considers when eating; choosing to eat something raises the question 'am I willing to make this food item part of me?' Considering food as such "…leads to a suspicion that the absolute border between self and other which seems so obvious in the Western tradition is nothing more than an arbitrary philosophical construction."[75] This is so because food items, which are not part of one's Self and as such are Other, become part of the Self when eaten, and in this way overcome the dualistic dichotomy of self/other.

In the performance, Morad is not forced to eat what I feed him, but decides to enjoy my food. He keeps on eating throughout the performance though I am in so many ways the 'Other' to him: a woman, a Jew, a resident, a feeder. Nevertheless I, through the food I cook and offer him, am accepted in his mouth and digestive system, becoming part of who he is. Through the action of eating, Morad willingly accepts into himself whatever the food contains and signifies. By eating the Other that is incorporated in the food I serve

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[74] *Ibid.,* 9.

[75] *Ibid.,* 9.

him, he symbolically agrees to make me part of his body and a part of himself. Thus, he agrees to blur the distinction between us and agrees to dismiss the dualistic distinctions that make us Self and Other. If so, then by excepting my food, Morad not only gives up his soul for the sake of his body (preferring food over thinking), but he also suggests overcoming the divisions of our identity that were initially staged. The feeding-eating relationship developed between us during the performance allows this physical interaction between us to evolve alongside his biographic monologue.

**Turn 5:**

**MH:** *I came into the world in 1983. I was brought up in a village in the North. I went properly to school. I am an actor. My name is Morad. As to gender I am a man. As to government, I am a good citizen. Concerning station, I belong to the upper class, I come from a good family. They all have jobs. I have three childhood friends: Wissam, Halil and Ali. They love me because I'm a neat, nice, quiet friend. I like to drink my glass of Goldstar beer, like a sensible person. It goes without saying that I am fond of good eating. And if you ask me, ideas aren't for me. Opinions are unquestionably not for me. After all, I am a good citizen, and that's that, so Basta!*

In the ongoing act of feeding and eating during the performance, Morad and I create a combined unit of interaction on stage. The functional relationship of feeding and eating implies a merged existence that can easily be resisted by each of us – I could stop feeding and Morad could stop eating. Neither of us chooses to do so during the performance, so instead, we continue to dive deeper into the cooking-feeding-eating interaction: while Morad continues to part from more and more biographical details and lose the specificity of his identity, I feed him more and more entrails. This section suggests that within the image and process we act out on stage we are interdependent: neither of us can exist without the other, and since the feeding-eating loop is continuous, there is no certainty regarding who holds power over whom.

Cooking and eating are part of everyday life, claim the 20th -century French philosophers Michel de Certeau and Luce Giard. According to them, cooking and eating are everyday life practices that can serve as a way to resist ruling systems. According to de Certeau, each individual action creates a microphysics of power that becomes a cultural apparatus. This might allow for individuals to find ways of operating in counterpoint to the ruling mechanism and "constitute the innumerable practices by means of which users re-appropriate the space organized by techniques of sociocultural production."[76] De Certeau claims that everyday life practices might be used by individuals as opportunities to resist ruling orders or to "…fool this order, and make it the field of their art."[77] These

[76] De Certeau, Michael and Giard, Luce, Mayol, Pierre. 1998. xiv.

[77] De Certeau, Michael, Jameson, Frederic and Lovitt, Carl. 1980. 4.

opportunities, claims de Certeau take place within the territory of and under the rules imposed by the ruling system. Individuals can manipulate the various possibilities offered by every moment, and use them as "tricks of the *weak* within the order established by the *strong,* an art of scoring within the realm of the other…"[78] De Certeau refers to these manipulations as tactical in character: a tactic "…insinuates itself into the other's place, fragmentarily, without taking it over in its entirety, without being able to keep it at a distance."[79] Tactics are time-based opportunities that one can seize over the mechanism of which one is a part. As such, tactics do not overturn the ruling system, but use opportunities to strike at specific junctures.

In the second volume of *The Practice of Everyday* Life, an entire section is devoted to what de Certeau and Luce Giard call 'Doing Cooking' a nourishing knowledge, a combination of tastes and gestures which are "…a way of being-in-the world and making it one's home."[80] 'Doing cooking' is an everyday life practice that is rooted in one's relationship with others and oneself. Like any other animal, Giard claims, humans eat to nourish themselves qua organism, but they also distinguish themselves from other animals by practicing avoiding food for specific periods and by choosing specific things to eat of all that is edible. "Even raw or picked from a tree, fruit is already a cultured foodstuff, prior to any preparation and by the simple fact that it is regarded as being edible."[81]

In the everyday life practice of doing cooking, tactics are constantly invented and ways of operating are individualized. Cooking is a continuous combination of activated traditions such as cooking techniques and recipes, and personal inputs that take place at specific junctures. A good example of individualization is the bodily movement one might employ while cooking. Bodily techniques activate both tradition and innovation, through the practical intelligence of the one who cooks. Each gesture has a unique function but it also consists of errors and prejudgments the particular cook brings into the practice of

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[78] *Ibid*., 8.

[79] *Ibid*., xix.

[80] De Certeau, Michael, Giard, Luce and Mayol, Pierre.1998. 154.

[81] *Ibid.,* 167-8.

cooking. According to de Certeau and Luce Giard, food, cooking and eating have two contrasting attributes at one and the same time: they are both unifying and individualizing. Cooking and eating unify relational groups by communicating identity elements through traditions. At the same time, they amplify individualization when cooking and eating practices are particularized.

The cooking-feeding-eating interaction Morad and I create on stage is not merely a reflection, communication or result of the indoctrination of the 'worlds' we represent, but also an expression of our individualizing tactics. Each of my physical gestures, the order of serving, the different parts used, and manner in which every bite is sliced and served up, become particular and distinct. Morad uses similar tactics while eating: he sets the pace of swallowing as well as the order and amount, just as it is his choice which parts and details to discard in each section of his monologue. Throughout our specific and personalized cooking and eating tactics during the performance, we do not only serve the systems, communities or societies we represent, but we also become the initiators of a particular relationship performed on the stage.

The everyday practice of cooking and eating allows Morad and me to use the occasion of the interaction to find ways to rebel against the ruling systems of which we are part. Thus, even though Morad loses details of his identity over the course of the performance, we gain a personal and individualized way to communicate. This opportunity operates as a counterpart to the surface representation: the performance allows us to construct individualized tactics of being, or in de Certeau's words a "practical science of the singular."[82] The feeding-eating relationship between Morad and me is personal; it is distinct from all what each of us might stand for, like our religion, gender or nationality. By choosing to continue to cook-feed-eat in the merged interaction of the performance, we manipulate what seems to be a reflection of systems, communities or societies. Instead of distancing ourselves from each other and withhold from interacting— as ruling systems that signify our differences promote— we insist in the performance to interact in a particular and individual dialogue that has the ability strike back at those systems.

[82] *Ibid*., 256.

**Turn 6:**

**MH:** *I came into the world in one of the days in the 80's. I was brought up in a certain village in the North. I went to school as expected. I am an actor. I am called Morad. As to gender I am a Man. As to government I am a good citizen. Concerning station, I belong to the upper class. I have three friends from childhood, they love me because I'm a neat, nice, quiet friend, and I don't think much. I like to drink my glass of beer like a sensible person. It goes without saying that I am fond of good eating. And if you ask me, then, I am a good citizen, and that's that, so Basta!*

*Entrails* is an art-action where the audience is invited to step onto the stage with us and take part in our performance. This section will look into the food-feeding-eating interaction as a performative art practice. It will ask what the connection between art and the food proposition might be when the two operate together, and how these juxtapositions may affect the audience watching our cooking-feeding-eating performance.

Plato's *Republic,* offers a surprising connection between art and food. In the dialogue, after Glaucon opposes the idea of a minimalist city where only the basic needs of men are addressed, Plato yields and begins to speak of the luxurious state. The luxurious city appears in the text at the very moment art and food are linked: "We must increase it in size and fill it with a multitude of things that go beyond what is necessary for a city—hunters, for example, and artists or imitators, many of whom work with shapes and colors, many with music."[83] In the *Republic*, hunters and imitators, artists and feeders are correlated when the city is transformed from one wherein food is a mere necessity to a city where food is connected to pleasure.

The proximity of food and art in the imagined life of the citizens in the *Republic* is also manifest in the resemblance governing how both are to be utilized and restricted. Art does not promote the city's educational values and therefore should be censored. Only mediocre art that will not challenge civil values should be promoted. "Whenever anyone

[83] Plato. 1997. 373b, 1012.

says such things about a god, we'll be angry with him, refuse him a chorus[84], and not allow his poetry to be used in the education of the young, so that our guardians will be as god-fearing and godlike as human beings can be."[85] Plato decides to censor the good artist and opts for mediocre ones, who can be controlled. The only art allowed in the *Republic* is art which serve the ruler's values and promotes them: "But, for our own good, we ourselves should employ a more austere and less pleasure-giving poet and storyteller, one who would imitate the speech of a decent person and who would tell his stories in accordance with the patterns we laid down when we first undertook the education of our soldiers."[86]

Like art, food in the *Republic* should be controlled. The city should feed its guardians only that which will keep their body fit, rather than food consumed for enjoyment. Sweets, cakes or delicious meals are not recommended for the city's guards. Plato believes that enjoyment, whether of food or art, is not healthy for one's body and mind:

> I believe that we'd be right to compare this diet and this entire life-style to the kinds of lyric odes and songs that are composed in all sorts of modes and rhythms. Certainly. Just as embellishment in the one gives rise to licentiousness, doesn't it give rise to illness in the other? But simplicity in music and poetry makes for moderation in the soul, and in physical training it makes for bodily health[87]

In the *Republic*, body and mind are controlled through food and art. However, if one can control society via those elements, food and art can also be manipulated into resisting the very same systems. In contrast to Plato's restrictions on food and art, *Entrails* brings the connection between them to the fore, so as to raise ideas and feelings that can undermine the ruling system. In this section I will argue that this undermining is made possible by considering food-feeding-eating as performative acts.

Sociologist Pierre Bourdieu claims that performance is an inherent part of food making and eating, and constitutes central elements in the identity of the feeder and eater. Food

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[84] I.e., deny him the funding necessary to produce his play. (Editor's Note).

[85] Plato. 1997. 383a, 1022.

[86] *Ibid*., 398b, 1022.

[87] *Ibid*., 404d-e, 1041.

consumption and taste are commitments to stylization, which “tends to shift the emphasis from substance and function to form and manner”[88] and deny the material reality of the act of eating. Alongside the nourishment of eating and drinking, Bourdieu claims the performance and gestures that are part of cooking, feeding and eating represent and constitute who one is. It is not the food itself but the performance and gestures that surround it that come to portray the one who eats or cooks.

During the performance, I hold a chef’s knife to slice the inner organs, while Morad eats with his hands. The knife in my hands grants me the option to hurt or control Morad. All he has are his bare hands and control over his own body. My focus and gestures during the performance are aimed at making him the tastiest entrails and as many of them as possible: I am engaged with tempting him, wanting to give him parts of myself. Morad is eating, drinking and telling me his story, again and again, while enjoying each bite: he wants to continue to eat, and he is not being forced to eat, or obliged to let my food into him. On the one hand, we play at representing Israeli society as it is, where the Jews have the option to hurt and control Muslim citizens (like Morad) who only have their body with which to resist. But, through the specific cooking-feeding-eating interaction we create on stage, we are both entering an agreement of trust and cooperation that underlies the words of his monologue. The performance is based on a willingness to eat/feed what we are and so willingly create a significant interaction between us.

Working with food in an art performance brings out new questions that challenge the dichotomy between art and life. It aspires to encounter the audience/viewer using additional senses, and it also attempts to penetrate the audience's body as well as their mind. By inviting the audience to join us on stage, we make them a part of our cooking-feeding-eating interaction; they drink the same beer Morad drinks, and smell the same frying entrails.

Art historian Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett claims food performances offer a unique position: “It is a particular kind of attention that cooks the raw, making it both edible as

[88] Bourdieu, Pierre. 1984. 190.

food and recognizable as art, without ceasing to be life."[89] She adds that food and performance intersect conceptually at three junctures:

1. To perform is to do: "…to execute, to carry out to completion, to discharge a duty - In other words, all that governs the production, presentation and disposal of food."[90]

2. To perform is to behave: "to behave appropriately in relation to food at any point in its production, consumption, or disposal, each of which may be subject to precise protocols or taboos."[91]

3. To perform is to show: "As a sensory experience, taste operates in multiple modalities - Not only by way of the mouth and nose, but also the eye, ear and skin."[92]

When it comes to food, one's pleasure and survival is dependent on sensory cues. Smell, sight, touch and even sound are all at work before one decides to put something in one's mouth and taste it.

When food is used in performance all senses are put to work, taste and smell are no less important than sight and sound. Whereas with most art works, the viewer remains separate from the art object, in food-related art "the distinction between object to be viewed and viewer does not apply."[93] Smell and taste operate inside the body.

The audience of *Entrails* is part of the cooking-feeding-eating interaction Morad and I create in the performance. During the performance, we don't serve the audience food: instead our feeding-eating relationship is manifested to the audience through cooking – the sound, sight and smell of food production. These elements, which enter the audience's bodies act as temptations, entice them to take part in our inner exchange and to ponder the possibilities our interaction brings with it.

When taste and smell enter the artwork, boundaries are crossed and the distance between the work and viewer is narrowed down. Taste and smell enter the body of the

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[89] Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, Barbara. 1999, 26.

[90] *Ibid*., 1.

[91] *Ibid*., 2.

[92] *Ibid*., 2.

[93] *Ibid*., 10.

viewer directly with a strong, visceral connection to their innermost feelings and memories. Roland Barthes described food and eating as provoking internal sensations: "…inside the body, enclosed in it, not just beneath the skin, but in that deep, central zone, all the more primordial because it is soft, tangled, permeable, and called, in a very general sense, the intestines."[94] *Entrails* seeks to affect the audience/viewer of the performance from the inside, to evoke and work with the audience's viscera.

Even though the food in the performance was not cooked for the audience, after almost every performance, a majority of them rushed to the remains of the entrails. The audience were acting as though they are trying to get a bite of what we left behind. By eating our leftovers, they digest and incorporate all that we have performed. If control can be gained via food and art as Plato believed, then the other way around may be possible as well. The leftovers and the responses they evoke become part of the performance, the audience's part. By tempting the audience to eat our food, their body is now penetrated with our layered interaction. When the audience chooses to eat the leftovers and physically incorporate the remains of our performance, they become the main characters: they agree to accept the terms of citizenship that Morad describes in his text and they agree to become like the citizen who enjoys good food and doesn't think much. But at the same moment, they affirm the tactics of the rebellion we suggest through our interaction and submit their body (and mind) to the possibility of performing resistance to our ruling systems.

[94] Barthes, Roland. 1985. 63.

**Turn 7**

**MH:** *I came into the world on this or that day. Was brought up in this or that place. Went properly to school. I am something or other. I am called so and so. And don't think much. As to gender, I'm a man. As to government, I'm a good citizen. And concerning station, I belong to the upper class. I'm a neat, nice, quiet member of the society of man. A so called good citizen. Like to drink my glass of beer like a sensible person. And don't think much. It goes without saying that I am fond of good eating. Just as it goes without saying that ideas aren't for me. Clever thinking is clearly not for me. Ideas are unquestionably not for me. That's why I am a good citizen. For a good citizen doesn't think much. A good citizen eats his food and that's that, so Basta!*[95]

[95] Walser, Robert, 1996. 71.