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Title	Staging food: An autoethnographic approach to understanding food in theatre and performance
Author(s)	McMahon, Jp
Publication Date	2022-06-28
Publisher	NUI Galway
Item record	http://hdl.handle.net/10379/17236

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Staging food: An Autoethnographic Approach to Understanding Food in Theatre and Performance

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2021

**This thesis is submitted to the National University of Ireland, Galway in part fulfilment of the
requirements for the degree of Ph.D.**

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Abstract

This Practice-as-Research (PaR) thesis examines the staging of food through postdramatic playwriting. Using an autoethnographic methodology, it investigates how this staging affects those involved in the production (from the actors to the audience and production crew) and how food makes meaning on stage. Furthermore, it examines the conflicts that arise when food is presented on stage and how this differs from its presentation in a restaurant or as performance art. This thesis, which draws on my professional capacity as a theatre practitioner, chef, and food writer probes food through these avenues to present a possible new ecology of the theatricality of food wherein food's ontology is seen as performatively linked to its specific space of representation.

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Acknowledgements

This thesis would not have been possible without the help of many people, both in NUI, Galway and further afield. However, special thanks go to the following people:

Professor Patrick Lonergan, for his supervision and guidance.

Dr. Ian Walsh, in whose class the first iteration of *Irish Food. A Play* was developed.

Dr. Charlotte McIvor, in whose class the play *Irish Food. A Play* was workshopped and first performed.

Dr. Miriam Haughton, for her advice.

Mike O'Halloran, for making me realise a dead duck in a theatre and a dead duck in a restaurant are not the same thing.

Marianne Ní Chinnéide and Máiréad Ní Chróinín in whose class *Dante.Beckett.Lobster* was developed, produced, and staged.

The masters' class of 2018, in particular, Fiona Wiedmann, Sarah Jane Woods, and Sinéad O'Donnell-Carey who helped me realise the play and produce it in Galway and Dublin.

My father, for his proof-reading, critical suggestions, and his academic mind that has guided me over the years.

My mother, for her subtle tenderness, nurturing, and her love of reading.

Drigín and my children, Heather, and Martha, for their constant support and love.

My staff, at our restaurants Aniar, Cava Bodega and Tartare, for allowing me time away to pursue my continuing education. All food is performance.

Introduction: Towards an Autoethnography of Food

0.1 Introduction

Food serves as a sign not only for themes, but also for situations; and this, all told, means a way of life that is emphasized, much more than expressed by it. To eat is a behaviour that develops beyond its own ends, replacing, summing up, and signalling other behaviours, and it is precisely for this reason that it is a sign. What are these behaviours? Today, we might say all of them: activity, work, sports, effort, leisure, celebration – every one of these situations is expressed though food (Barthes "Toward a Psychosociology of Contemporary Food Consumption" 28).

The motivations for this Practice-as-Research project (henceforth PaR) are complex but ultimately stem from the researcher's interest in the multifaceted aspects of performing and staging food: in the theatre, in the space of the restaurant, and as part of performance art. Often, in our daily lives, these spaces are physically separated and conceptualised as mutually exclusive. Their institutional division in our society makes manifest the ways in which we imagine their categorisation, and the stories they tell, to be "international, transhistorical [and] transcultural" (Barthes "An Introduction to the Structural Analysis of Narrative" 237). We go to theatres to *experience* drama unfolding; we go to restaurants to *eat* food and *drink* wine; we go to art galleries to *see* paintings, sculptures, videos, and other art installations *in situ*. However, despite the separation of these discourses, in academic departments the world over, there exists much contemporary and historic cross-fertilisation among them in the fields of theatre, performance, and fine dining. Chefs such as Ferran Adria and Grant Achatz have practiced at this intersection for more than two decades (Davis 147). Both their restaurants, as well as many others such as René Redzepi's NOMA and Rasmus Monk's Alchemist in

Copenhagen, and Albert Adria's *Enigma* have transformed the ways in which restaurants, chefs and diners interact with food at all levels in the twenty-first century.¹ For Ferran Adria:

Taste is not the only sense that can be stimulated; touch can also be played with [...] as well as smell, sight, whereby the five senses become one of the main points of reference in the creative cooking process [...] decontextualization, irony, spectacle and performance are completely legitimate, as long as they are not superficial but respond to, or are closely bound up with, a process of gastronomic reflection (Hamilton and Todoli 280-1).

Though not a new revelation, Adria's articulation of the stimulation of the other senses has transformed the possibilities of food in the restaurant and in performance. Restaurants that involve drama and theatricality wherein chefs place a "key focus on the architectural and scenographic" while plating and presenting their food through "the lens of the theatrical" are now commonplace around the globe (Abrams 7).² Food performances in art galleries have a rich history in the later part of the twentieth century. For example, artist Rirkrit Tiravanija's serving of Thai curry in the Paula Allen Gallery in New York in 1990 was a performance that not only brought people together to eat but was also an theatrical event that critiqued the ways in which aesthetic objects in galleries exclude their everyday "anthropological" status (Birnbaum and Tiravanija 164).³ Finally, and perhaps most presciently, the long history of "dinner theatre" demonstrates that theatres are not only for dramatic performances for us to see: eating can also be a form of theatre which can "illuminate and

¹ Albert Adria, Ferran's younger brother, was the pastry chef in *El Bulli* and subsequently opened five restaurants in Barcelona, all of which investigated the ways in which food is a performative act. *Enigma* was perhaps the best example of this activity with multiple dining rooms which changed according to what the diner was eating. Though subtle, these rooms demonstrated how the presentation of food is linked to its serving, or rather its theatrical performance.

² My own restaurant *Aniar* in Galway, Ireland, which holds a Michelin Star since 2012, is one such example of this practice where the terroir of the food meets the theatricality of its performance. The serving of the food is carefully choreographed to maximise the diners' experience of the dramaturgy of the meal. We strive to allow diners to taste the landscape of the west of Ireland while eating various dishes on our 19-course tasting menu.

³ Rirkrit Tiravanija's work is conceptualised as an example of "relational aesthetics" by French art historian Nicolas Bourriaud. Works of relational aesthetics are "A set of artistic practices which take as their theoretical and practical point of departure the whole of human relations and their social context, rather than an independent and private space" (Bourriaud, Nicolas. "Relational Aesthetics. 1998." *Trans. Simon Pleasance and Fronza Woods with the participation of Mathieu Copeland. Dijon: Les Presses du réel, 2002.*): 14.

interrogate the relationship between theatre and the theatricality of food” (Blake 420). It is the argument of this PhD thesis that food, theatre, and performance are interlocking spheres and an investigation of their intersection is a worthy subject for detailed academic research. This investigation draws on my own embodied experience and expertise as a chef, restaurateur and playwright and theatre practitioner to illuminate the complex connection that exist between the three spheres. The embodied practice of theatrical performance and my professional experience as a playwright and chef foreground this PhD research and its exploration of dramatic form to express food on stage and in performance.

Food cuts across boundaries, from academic fields of food studies and culinary history to the social sciences and the humanities: “information relating to food and diet can be found in the literature of almost any field” (Duran and MacDonald 234). Regarding the field of food in performance and theatre, books such as Dorothy Chanksy and Ann Folino White’s *Food and Theatre on the World Stage* (2016) draws attention to the long legacy of how food in theatre and performance has dramatized famine, feasting, class consumption and activism. Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett’s “Making Sense of Food in Performance: The Table and The Stage” (2006), which appeared in the book *The Senses in Performance* (2007), attempts to rewrite theatre history through the lens and medium of food, especially in performance. Her work was pivotal for the framing of my practice and research and understanding the lost legacy of food in theatre and how to return sense perception to the arena of auditorium. Lastly, the new *Routledge Companion to Literature and Food* (2018), edited by Lorna Piatti-Farnell and Donna Lee Brien, includes many essays regarding playwrights and theatre practitioners engaging with food on stage and in performance, such as Elizabeth Blake’s essay “Dinner Theatre/Dinner Theatricality”. The publication of this volume demonstrates the important nature of food in academic studies such as literature, theatre, and performance. I engage with all these texts, and more, through this thesis and my work aims to build on the development of their propositions, namely the centrality of performance in food presentation and representation.

The contribution of my thesis is to bring my PaR into the conversation regarding food on stage, in the restaurant and in performance. Despite all the academic investigations across multiple fields, the subject of investigating food through playwriting has yet to be explored. My thesis examines the complex processes and intersections of playwriting and staging food in the context of the theatre, the restaurant, and the site of performance. It asks how we can perform food to explicate its widest possible interrelationships with theatre, drama, and performance, while also upholding the inherent theatricality of all food presentation, from the domestic to the dramatic. This research is important because the staging of food affects all of us in our daily lives. My PaR investigation directly affects the perception of food in theatre studies. Therefore, my practice and research are interwoven directly and indirectly into the field of theatre and performance. The theatricality of food is knitted deep into everyone's food culture, from a simple bowl of cereal in the morning to an elaborate fine dining meal under the ocean.⁴ This thesis seeks to unweave the various strands that make up the complex ecology of food in the theatre and performance, showcasing food's signifying systems through different discursive fields. By ecology, I am drawing on Jane Bennett's understanding of how food functions as "an interconnected series of parts" in a constantly mutating system of human and nonhuman activities (Bennett *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things* 97).⁵ Bennett's distinction is important for my research as it shifts one's focus towards the interconnection of subjects and objects, as opposed to those subjects and objects in their own right. As my PaR cuts across different academic fields, from performance to food studies, I shall engage with the relevant literature of each field in its corresponding section but aim to make a primary contribution to the field of theatre studies, and especially to practice-based research involving playwriting as its primary motivator. The success of my PaR was measured from the numerous iterations that were successfully mounted and the questions they raised to build this thesis. While

⁴ The restaurant UNDER in Norway is situated under the ocean. A large glass window in the dining room allows diners to watch the sea as they consume seafood, shellfish, and other food stuffs from the ocean.

⁵ These moving parts "are not a fixed order of parts, for the order is always being reworked in accordance with a certain "freedom of choice" exercised by its actants" (Bennett *Vibrant Matter A Political Ecology of Things* 97).

this PhD is an interdisciplinary project with a multitude of different objectives which draw on playwrighting, performance and postdramatic theatre studies, food studies, philosophy and autoethnography, the culmination of my PaR is grounded in the realm of professional theatre practice. My central research developed directly out of the practice in an immersive and iterative process that produced a number of plays, one of which was produced professionally at The Dublin Fringe Festival.

This dissertation argues that the origins of food on stage or the staging of food reside not in the realm of theatre but rather in the realm of art. *The Futurist Cookbook* (1932) and their restaurant *La Taverna del Santopaloto* completely uncoupled the idea of food from the idea of eating, or rather, from the idea of only eating. Food for the Futurists was a potential powerhouse of forms that could highlight the inherent theatrical nature of food. As Kirshenblatt-Gimblett observes:

What would theatre history look like were it written backwards from the Futurist banquets and Dali dinners and performance art? Canonical histories of theatre take as their point of departure that which counts as theatre in the modern period—namely, theatre as an autonomous art form (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett "Making Sense of Food in Performance: The Table and the Stage" 71).

Futurists aside, throughout the majority of twentieth century, drama attempted to keep the reality of food, and the cultural environments it creates, from the theatrical space: seeing it as a mode of representation rather than something itself. Food and the autonomy of the theatrical experience did not sit well together. Of course, there are notable exceptions such as Gertrude Stein's *Turkey and Bones and Eating and We Liked it* (1922). Though Stein's focus was less on food but on the domestic situations wherein it is served, she recognised that "the dinner party is a space in which the performativity of everyday life is heightened and transformed" (Blake 421). Both the Futurists and writers such as Stein set the stage for two types of "dinner theatricality" that contributed to my understanding of food on stage.

The first is dinner theatre, in which the audience eats while it watches a play, and the second is the dinner party, in which characters on a stage gather together around a table to eat, drink and talk, and tell stories about themselves to each other, and thereby the audience (Blake 422).

In attempting to put food front and centre, I attempted to fuse these two types of dinner theatricality together to create a new ecology of theatre that would move beyond the closed space of the black box and towards a more open postdramatic experience that allowed the environment and performance of food to enter the discourse of theatre. As I discuss in more detail below, while the audience sat around tables, to eat and drink, the actors moved through their space, telling stories about Irish food, and enacting the drama that springs from its experience. The play aimed to engender an “event or situation whose uniqueness and validity do not derive from re-presentation of reality” (Jürs-Munby et al. 5). Rather, the play sought to create a situation that “theatre as such is able to constitute” on its own terms, that is to say, a play whose patterns don’t form out of pre-existing reality (Lehmann ““Postdramatic Theatre”, a Decade Later” 35).

My objective in this opening section is to offer contextual information about this dissertation, rooting my research in my other professional and artistic activities. The section also articulates the research question that motivates the dissertation and proposes the original contributions to knowledge that this work can offer, primarily to theatre studies but also to food studies and other fields, such as philosophy and aesthetics. Finally, this section also reviews some of the key studies of food in performance, explaining how they have informed this dissertation; a further review of relevant literature will then be provided in sections regarding my methodology of autoethnography and in my genealogy of practice for the creation of the four iterations that I produced as part of my PaR. Other areas that I engage with, such as affect studies and performance art, are dealt with in their relevant chapters below. While this research project aimed to create several plays and performances that question how food is staged, it also intended to critically assess

those constructions in relation to the field of theatre and performance. My research question revolved around the staging of food through the practice of playwriting, specifically the postdramatic, asking how food affects its audience and how its signification alters with the change of context. It is these areas that bracket the conceptual scope of this thesis.

As a PhD student of the Drama and Theatre Department (NUI, Galway), a playwright, a professional chef and restaurateur, a food columnist for the *Irish Times*, and founder and symposium director of the international conference *Food on the Edge* (www.foodonthedge.ie), I have engaged in research that spans many disciplines and the often opposing fields of drama, theatre and performance art.⁶ I am currently the owner of three award winning restaurants in Galway, Ireland; one of which holds the award of one Michelin star from the Michelin Guide since 2012. I have also written a 500-page definitive guide to Irish food, published in February 2020, that mixes history with recipes, autobiography, stories, and myths, as well as creating a database of wild foods and seaweeds used in Irish cooking (McMahon *The Irish Cook Book*). I have often struggled to integrate these aspects of my life into my PaR, my work in the theatre and my playwriting. As with the discursive and departmental divisions I noted above, bringing these fields together is no easy feat. Often, the fields simply don't talk to each other or ever meet each other. Food and theatre, it seems, live on opposite sides of the ocean. Though "applied theatre" is one way of bridging this gap, with its intentions to "benefit individuals, communities and societies" and its strong connection to "educational, therapeutic and community setting" which often downgrades its status as theatre has forced me to uncover other areas to connect the continuum of theatre and food (Nicholson 3, 6). Regrettably, I continually question how *Food on the Edge*, my *The Irish Food Cook Book* (2020), my weekly *Irish Times* column, and my career as a successful and internationally known chef relates to

⁶ On the opposition between these three fields, see Schechner, Richard. *Performance Theory*. Routledge, 2004. Schechner sees "theatre as only one node on the continuum" of performance (xvii). He asks "Why are the seams, which traditionally held the four elements drama, script, theatre, and performance together, now being explored in ways that break them apart? The attention of the spectators is redirected to those structural welds where the presumed unified event is broken open (72-73).

my practice as a theatre maker and playwright.⁷ What is the connection between these elements? What is the connection between theatre and food? Or what resides between theatre and food? To a certain degree are they separate fields, or rather fields than have been separated. It is not that we cannot conceptualise my practice as a chef and food writer; it is that most contemporary discourses, structured by university departments, and indeed daily life, cannot accommodate it.⁸ However, this is not to say that my own practice cannot interfere with or open the discourse of performance and drama by bringing my professional food practice into the space of the theatre to suture their divisional lines. My practice outside the theatre is what the French philosopher Jacques Derrida calls “that dangerous supplement” (Derrida *Of Grammatology* 141). It can both show the limits of theatrical discourse and extend its reaches into other areas, other fields: “the supplement adds itself, it is a surplus, a plenitude enriching another plenitude (Derrida *Of Grammatology* 144). In my case, food, as a sign, challenges the limits of representation, for its operational status in the restaurant and on the stage is antagonistic. In the restaurant, food, as well as being a sign of “activity, work, sports, effort, leisure, celebration” as Barthes observed above, is something to *eat*. Contrastingly, on stage, food is part of the performance; it is to be played with; it represents everything except itself: that is, its status as something to be consumed. Food on stage is always the representation of food. As Derrida writes:

The theatre itself is shaped and undermined by the profound evil of representation. It is that corruption itself. For the stage is not threatened by anything but itself. Theatrical representation, in the sense of exposition, of that which is placed out there [...] is

⁷ I am also well versed in the discipline of art history, having taught it at university level (UCC) for 10 years and undertaking a PhD for six years on the work of performance and conceptual artist Vito Acconci. This research involved examining the ways in which the artist’s work, produced between 1967 and 1974, used language and the body in poetry, performance, body art, video art, and installation. It is these performative aspects that I bring to theatre and food studies to further comprehend its affects.

⁸ To a certain degree, we are still bound up with the one-dimensional thinking which Herbert Marcuse details as inculcating “the repression of all values, aspirations and ideas which cannot be defined in terms of the operations and attitudes validated by the prevailing norms of rationality” (Marcuse, Herbert. *One-Dimensional Man: Studies in the Ideology of Advanced Industrial Society*. Routledge, 2013.): xii.

contaminated by supplementary re-presentation. The latter is inscribed in the structure of representation, in the space of the stage (Derrida *Of Grammatology* 304).

The space of the stage or of the performance cannot escape the act of representation. Holding a lobster up to the audience does not *only* reveal it as food but rather acts as a sign of something within the dramatic structure. However, its status as a prop is deeply porous and is “born out of the rift” between “presented and represented” (305). It cannot stop being food, or indeed, a living animal. It is this supplementary status that makes food a powerful force for theatre and performance and informs my argument regarding how food exposes the limits of how we talk about it when it is staged. Is eating a lobster in a restaurant and eating a lobster on stage the same thing, particularly if it has been killed in front of you? Is killing a lobster as a piece of performance art, as I did in my short performance *Killing Lobsters* (2020) ethical? Can it be instructive towards understanding our own ecology on this planet? These are in no way glib remarks and push beyond simple questions of ontology and epistemology. Indeed, they form the backbone of my PaR. As a lobster is a living thing, the killing and consumption of a it (or any other animal) on stage raises specific theatrical and ethical issues that simply do not arise in a restaurant. Indeed, in his play *Incident: Kill to Eat* (2005/2007), Rodrigo García (with his ensemble La Carnicería Teatro) a lobster is killed and eaten on stage. When this twenty-minute wordless play was staged in Italy in 2007, police were called to stop the performance. Milan's assessor for animal rights, Gianluca Comazzi, stated “There is a law here which forbids exposing audiences to animals experiencing drawn out and useless stress [...] I know this goes on in restaurants, but there it is not turned into a spectacle” (Kington). While the idea of the spectacle and suffering of the lobster is explored at length in chapter two, particularly how it affects actors, audience, directors, and stage managers, I draw attention to it here to demonstrate how food ruptures the fourth wall of the theatrical black box. Is the lobster tank in a restaurant also not part of the performance of its killing, its death? We cannot keep food out of our environment; or rather, food can allow the specific ecology, that is its network, of the local environment on to the stage or into the performance.

For these reasons, the purpose of this dissertation is to propose that, by injecting my professional practice as a chef and food writer on to the stage, in the form of a food-focused postdramatic iterations which interrogate the form of representation “inherent in the model drama”, I can challenge theatrical norms, new and old that leave food in a uncritical quagmire (Lehmann *Postdramatic Theatre* 22).⁹ It is hoped that the four iterations of my PaR can find a new space for food and provide meaningful insights into the meaning of its staging and its new knowledge regarding the relationship between theatre, performance and food. A further aim of this dissertation is to present the conclusion reached through four iterations that I undertook over the course of my PhD research, whereby I arrived at an understanding that food takes place in a semiotic triad. That is, my practice operated amongst and between the discursive spaces of the restaurant, the theatre, and performance art.

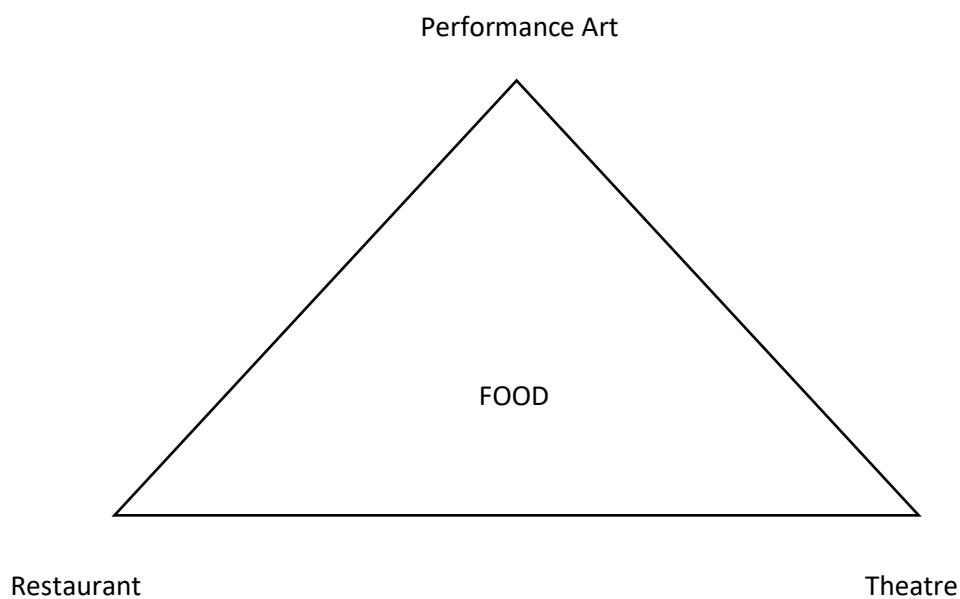


Figure 1: Diagram of the discursive space of my PaR.

⁹ Of relevance is the new theatrical paradigm of ‘consent’. This has emerged in the last number of years in theatrical performances and production. In my case, as we shall see later in this thesis, asking actors to ‘perform’ with a lobster was not always met with affirmation. This caused great difficulty in pursuing the ideas behind my PaR and bringing them to material fruition.

All these aspects fed off each other in each iteration and consequently informed the next. Each was a porous component, the instability of which punctured the boundaries that we, as individuals and institutions, put in place to bracket them from each other. This includes, for example, the stage-manager of my second iteration, who did not want the lobster to die, or the restaurant that must abide by conventions and customer expectations and limit its theatricality of food in case it offends its guests or breaks the invisible convention of dining by attempting to feed the guests their food.¹⁰ The conflicts of these contexts are another key nodal point that emerged from my PaR and they are put forward as an original contribution to knowledge in chapter three in terms of the ecology of the theatre, restaurant and space of performance art.

The purpose of my PaR work is to propose that food operates among the elements of the above triad. These coordinates emerged from my own sensibility, my own autobiography: from my work as a chef and my interest in theatre and performance art, to my present concerns with the theatrical implications of performing food in the restaurant and on stage as a method of staging Irish food culture to both a national and international audience. Autobiography, in the form of “personal writing” can, according to Marjorie DeVault, “explore the unexpected” and illuminate “ordinary experience that [is] typically obscured” (DeVault 226). It is among the above triad of ingredients that my PaR takes place, locating food and theatre in the dramatic, culinary and academic worlds in order to offer new knowledge, or “substantial new insights” into the fields in question (Nelson 25). These new insights include a consideration of the interdisciplinary motivation for my PaR, which opens these fields to each other to allow my findings to affect change in the ways each area conceptualises its own identities. This type of “two-fold thinking” which Nelson sees as a hallmark for PaR projects promotes the interdisciplinary as a practice for change (Nelson 76). In essence, it aims to bring the fields of food, theatre, and performance together to strengthen the emerging culture of Irish food

¹⁰ Feeding guest their food, or certain courses, resides at the limit of avant-garde dining and is a feature of several restaurants, such as DiverXo in Madrid, where, for example, waiters spoon feed the guests one of the courses in an elaborate twenty course tasting menu.

and our understanding of food in general. Configuring food in this manner is not unlike Richard Schechner's mapping of performance in his *Performance Theory* (1977/2004).

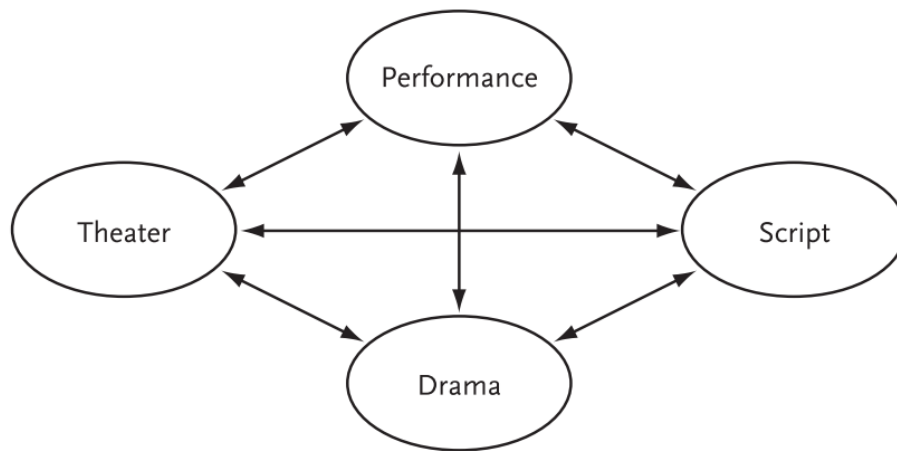


Figure 2: Richard Schechner's mapping of performance in his *Performance Theory* (1977/2004).

The modern conceptualisation of food as art, performance and theatre stretches back to the formation of the Futurists (20th February, 1909), and was elaborately documented with the publication of the founder F.T. Marinetti's cookbook (1932).¹¹ As Gunter Berghaus writes, it was Marinetti's conception of "art as action" that sought to transform the aesthetic nature of the food as an object and a vehicle for performance (Berghaus 3). Though my main concern is not with the artistic value of food, but more with what food means on stage and how it affects actor and audience, the debate concerning the aesthetic nature of food is a pertinent one, particularly when food is staged. The Futurists exemplified the aesthetic staging of food to "down the barriers between art and life which had been undertaken in the 1910s and 1920s", in contrast to the staging of food in earlier theatrical work, where food was seen as only a part of the performance (Berghaus 8). One could argue that once food is staged, performed, or served it becomes subject to aesthetic

¹¹ Artists Mimi Oka and Doug Fitch have staged "feasts" as part of live performances that drew inspiration from Marinetti's cookbook. Their work examines the cultural context of food, from consumerism to consumption.

evaluation, whether we want that to be the case or not.¹² This is the case in the theatre as it is in a fine dining restaurant. However, for Yael Raviv “the slippage between food as artistic medium and food as culinary medium is most pronounced in live performance” (Raviv 1).¹³ Many artists, especially performance artists of the late twentieth century, such as Judy Chicago in her work *The Dinner Party* (1974-79), explored the meaning of food or the act of eating in performance, both as an aesthetic object and as an object worthy of social scrutiny in an politicised artistic/performance setting (Gerhard).¹⁴ What unities these artists is their use of food as a vehicle for cultural creativity: all use food as a medium for their art to explore the possibilities of its performance.

There are parallels here with my own work, particularly as I use food as a medium to affect the audience/guests as well as viewing food as something to eat, celebrate and reflect upon during the performance. Perhaps the biggest difference between food as medium and food as sustenance is that the work of these artists is performance-based and mine is a theatrical performance; that is to say, it is a devised performance following a script on a stage or staged setting produced in the context of the theatre. Of course, there are many ontological and epistemological pitfalls when it comes to separating performance art and dramatic performances (especially when they are improvised and devised). This is especially the case when it comes to using food: food is a temporal and contingent medium with a “material vibrancy” that produces similar effects and affects in both artistic and theatrical spaces (Bennett *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things* xiv). To a certain

¹² This is also the case regarding the politics of food. Food is always political once staged or presented in a restaurant, even if we occlude these aspects of it. See introduction in Watson, James L. and Melissa Caldwell, L. *The Cultural Politics of Food and Eating: A Reader*. Blackwell, 2005. For Watson and Caldwell, the representation of food is always “a window on to the political [...] food everywhere is not just about eating” (1).

¹³ However, we could argue that this slippage also occurs in a restaurant as well, particularly in fine-dining or haute cuisine. The boundaries between the food as aesthetic and culinary object are blurred so much that often “this scenography of surprise produces an active engagement for the diner, who becomes a co-producer in the dramaturgy of the meal”. Abrams, Joshua. “Mise En Plate: The Scenographic Imagination and the Contemporary Restaurant.” *Performance Research*, vol. 18, no. 3, 2013, pp. 7-14, doi:10.1080/13528165.2013.816464..

¹⁴ Ironically, Chicago’s *The Dinner Party* does not include any real food stuffs. All the settings at each seat consist of embroidered runners, gold chalices and utensils, and china-painted porcelain plates with raised central motifs. In this sense, the dinner being served is entirely symbolic.

degree, playwrights and theatres have lagged behind other areas such as performance art when it comes to exploring food on stage. Of course there are some notable examples, such as Tina Howe's play *The Art of Dining* (1979), wherein food is the main vehicle for the action of the performance.



Figure 3: Lucy Walsh and Danny Siegel; Raven Bowens, Jade Ramirez Warner, and Gloria Avizar in *The Art of Dining* (Gloria Gifford Conservatory, LA, USA, 2019).

The play is set in a restaurant and showcases the bizarre relationships three groups of characters have with food. The food they eat is cooked during the show and this has often impeded its production due to the elaborate nature of the ways in which the food is served through the play.

Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett has demonstrated that all food is performance, no matter what the space. She writes of food being “removed” from the theatre, particularly in relation to an aspect of modernism that saw the theatre as autonomous from other forms of art (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett "Playing to the Senses: Food as a Performance Medium" 1). Of course, this is not the case with surrealism; we only need think of Meret Oppenheim's *Object (Breakfast in Fur)* (1936), a fur

covered cup, saucer, and spoon, to know that many Surrealists understood the performative value of food and the ways in which the changing of its presentation or context, as in my own works, reveals the instability of its signification.



Figure 4: Meret Oppenheim, *Object (Breakfast in Fur)* (1936): fur covered cup, saucer, and spoon. Collection, MOMA, New York.

Yet, we could certainly argue that much theatre from the late nineteenth century onwards has placed drama in a black box in front of an isolated and disembodied observer (Carlson 33). This has affected how food is perceived or can be perceived in the space of the theatre. The theatricality of food stems from the home to the gallery and the theatre: it is always multi-sensory. For Kirshenblatt-Gimblett the medieval and renaissance banquet represents the apogee of theatricality

when it comes to food. Is it that, over time, we have banished food from the experience of the theatre? The banquet took in all aspects of the arts (painting, poetry, architecture, design, etc.).¹⁵ This idea of theatre “a space being designed to summon the phantasmatic charge of the immaterial” limited the material and environmentally contingent aspects of food, reducing them to props or a vehicle for the action of the play (Phelan *Mourning Sex: Performing Public Memories* 2). Keeping the audience at arm’s length, the space was positioned as something to be seen, not inhabited:

The black-box came to represent the void, an immaterial space out of which performance materialised. Its emptiness as a spatio-temporal phenomenon was the interval, the pause, silence, and suspension. Within its shadows emptiness did not represent a lack, but rather the void; an overwhelming excess of meaning (Hannah 32).

It is precisely this limitation that my own PaR pushes up against to bring food into the theatre/performance space as a material, embodied thing, as something ‘living’ and part of the ecological sphere of the theatre, to see how it affects audience, actor, and the current ways that we conceptualise the space of performance. In turn, this performative treatment of food feeds in the space of the restaurant and towards a more theatrical and “mimetic” manner of cooking and serving food.¹⁶

The following sections establish the parameters of my research and a methodology for the investigation of my staging of food. They also detail the conception and composition of my play *Irish food. A Play* (2018). Though my PaR involved other iterations concerning food and its staging (some of which I shall discuss in the subsequent chapters), *Irish Food. A Play* was the main thrust of my

¹⁵ It is worthwhile to note that the Renaissance painter Leonarda Da Vinci not only worked as a cook in his early life but went on to design banquets and even plan several weddings. For the wedding of the Duke of Milan (1491), Da Vinci created the menu, entertainment, and decoration, also designing what guests would wear, including their hats. The dining room layout, one long table with diners all sat on the same side, would be an idea he revisited later when he painted *The Last Supper*, which incidentally decorates the dining hall of the Santa Maria delle Grazia.

¹⁶ For a discussion on the “mimetic turn” in contemporary cooking see Hunt, Kristin. *Alimentary Performances: Mimesis, Theatricality, and Cuisine*. Routledge, 2018. We shall return to this idea in chapter three regarding how food affects both audience and diner.

practice. Other smaller iterations grew out of this play, such as *Dante.Beckett.Lobster* (2019) and *Killing Lobsters* (2020). These other iterations focus on problems that arose in the main iterations, mining them further to reveal their manifest orientations regarding food as performed and further probing my research question regarding the affective value of staging food and its shifting context. This type of thinking, which sees each iteration bring forth other unknown problems which lead in turn to a new iteration is endemic to the PaR model. This process of discovery was pivotal for my practice and my research. As Freeman observes:

Because a Practice-as-Research methodology that is dynamic finds ways in which the constituent elements of performance can be usefully deployed beyond the known, it is likely that the process of discovery will evidence flexibility, awareness, responsibility, ethical consideration, creativity and experimentation (Freeman 129).

My own PaR has taken me to places that I could not have foreseen, particularly regarding the ethics of staging food, its subsequent affects and the ways in which food's signification depends on its context. It has also made me reconsider how food operates in the space of the restaurant. These issues arose from the "substance of practice", a process which needs practice to articulate their concerns (Freeman 129). My PaR was an "iterative process of 'doing-reflecting-reading-articulating-doing,'" as Nelson so eloquently observes (Nelson 32). Often, I did not know where I was going. As I have already intimated, these alimentary utterances also caused me to reflect on my own professional practice as a chef, restaurateur, and symposium director. At times, it was difficult to know where one began and the other ended. The open-ended nature of PaR and the ways it challenges the separation of different fields establishes what Baz Kershaw calls "creativity at the heart of research implies a paradigm shift, through which established ontologies and epistemologies of research in arts-related disciplines potentially could be radically undone" (Kershaw "Practice as Research through Performance" 105). This radical undoing of disciplines became the focus of my PaR the more it developed through its subsequent iterations. Bringing forth ideas from the restaurants of

Albert Adria and mixing them with the theatre of Rodrigo García, my PaR challenged our everyday idea of food as a banal vehicle for sustenance and nutrition. It posited staged food as an interactive and processual object worthy of critical investigation. Food “is never simply a biological process” but rather a multitudinous statement spread across different interlocking spheres (Watson and Caldwell 1).

The practice part of this PhD thesis comprised four practice-based iterations. These iterations took place between 2018 and 2019. The first two iterations involved the staging of my play *Irish Food. A Play*. This play was written in 2017 and was subsequently staged twice, first at NUI Galway (December 4th, 2018) and then professionally during *The Dublin Fringe Festival* (September 15th, 2019). A third staging was due to be occur in Aniar Restaurant (March 30th, 2020) but the outbreak of Coronavirus made this impossible.¹⁷ Furthermore, a stage version was prepared for performance at the Black Box theatre in Galway. It is hoped that this might be performed in the future. However, for the purposes of the research findings of this dissertation, I restrict my analysis to the first two stagings of *Irish food. A Play*. While the purpose of the rest of this introduction is to lay the foundation for understanding the play, and expressing its genesis through my genealogy of practice, the subsequent chapters will address the central questions which arose from the two performances and the other two iterations which grew out of them; namely *Dante.Beckett.Lobster* (April 1st, 2019) and *Killing Lobsters* (September 23rd, 2020). All the scripts for these plays are included in the appendix of this thesis. These playscripts represent the textual aspects of my playwriting practice and support the theatrical and performative phases of each iteration. Their inclusion contextualises my research, complements my research question, and is evidence of the execution of my practice. Photographic documentation appears throughout the thesis, as well as in the appendixes, which also include other extraneous material.

¹⁷ I have included the playscript for the third iteration in the appendix as it showcases the developments of the play from a PaR perspective. The developments of this iteration are discussed in chapter two.

Though the focus shifted over course of my research from composition to rehearsal to production, the key research questions about the performative value of food remained. Food, in my play, was, to use Austin's terminology, a "performative utterance" that did something on stage (Austin 5). It performed upon the audience and was performed upon in turn. The dynamic interplay of this affect was perhaps most interesting given the food that was served resisted the fixity of meaning we often impose on it. Indeed, it altered my own understanding, as chef and restaurateur, of food. This altering was key to the utilization and justification of an autoethnographic approach. For example, in the play, a potato crisp sandwich, an odd example of the paltry nature of Irish food in the 1980s became suffused with joy, melancholy and amazement and even built international bridges with audience members from other European food cultures who also remembered eating such a sandwich in their youth.

The first chapter of this thesis examines the rehearsals and the performance of both staging's of *Irish food. A Play*. I have separated these iterations due to the different approaches of their rehearsal and staging and also due to the ways in which the findings impacted my own practice and research. I acted in and directed the first iteration and therefore had more control over the result. As part of the project design, I determined that the second iteration should operate differently: I advised on and cooked the food that was served to the audience, which made it more difficult to weave my questions and concerns into the play, but which allowed me to better consider the impact of the research questions upon the actors, directors, and other theatre-makers. The director and the actors had their own ideas which I had to negotiate, providing an important opportunity for learning, and testing my ideas, albeit that the result was sometimes frustrating for all. The principal conflict that arose in this iteration is discussed at length in chapter two, particularly around the issue of including a live lobster in the performance. While examining my own investigations of food in my play, I also situate my practice in terms of our historical relationship to food on stage. Why do we stage food? What is its social and theatrical significance? Why at this juncture in Irish history is its worthwhile examining food on stage? What does this mean to my own

practice as a chef and restaurateur and how did my own iterations fit within this framework? And finally, how does my consideration and presentation of food differ from other Irish plays that contain food? These and other questions motivate that discussion and pushed my PaR into other realms and other iterations. This chapter also examines the various different drafts of the *Irish Food. A Play* critically analysing the reason the scripts changed. Each alteration of the script occurred due to the rehearsal of the play in an ensemble environment. Thus, analysing steps is important as they show the evolution of my practice and research and how they influenced each other. The various drafts were not in some more postdramatic than the previous ones. Rather each iteration adapted to its circumstances in time and place. The structural differences in the scripts are not only dramatic but also offer consideration for our understanding of food history, or rather, its presentation within Irish society. For much of my PaR, I was writing the definitive cookbook of Irish food and history. The writing of this cookbook informed each iteration of *Irish food. A Play* and this chapter will explicate the interaction of the cookbook and play. Thus, this chapter offers close reading of differing sections, highlighting the inclusion of personal details of my own food stories as well as reflecting on the themes of gender and religion. In addition, I also consider the professional production choices of the director and the performers and how this impacted the various iterations in terms of acting styles and script changes by the director.

In the second chapter, I discuss how food affected the audience when it was staged in both performances. When staged, food affects the audience through different channels, such as the body, language, props, and the food that was served (in the second iteration) throughout the performance. This chapter also investigates the consequences of staging animals, specifically referring to my own practice as a chef and theatre maker but also offering findings that are relevant to this matter more broadly. The issues of staging a lobster, which became a central preoccupation in the second iteration, demonstrated the ethical and theatrical aspects of animals appearing on stage. What are the ethics of using lobsters in performance or on stage? Is this different from using a lobster in a restaurant? If so, how, and why? Can lobsters be theatrical; that is, can their intentions

chime with the purposes of the performance or can they only be themselves? Are they actors or only acted upon? In investigating this in relation to my own practice as a chef, I found it fascinating. To kill twenty lobsters a night in a restaurant brings no drama (pardon the pun) whatsoever. However, to kill one lobster on stage or to ask an actor to hold the lobster brought many difficulties, some unforeseen.¹⁸ These hardships spread off stage and became a problem for the stage manager, designer, and producer, all of whom had a differing opinion on the lobster and how it should figure in the show. Aside from the theatrical issues concerning the lobster, practical questions (“could it jump?”) and ethical concerns (“would it feel sad?”) constantly came to the fore in the second performance. I hope that my analyses below address these conundrums and has at the very least provided some additional critical insight and new knowledge into the way food and animals make meaning in performance and on stage in an embodied manner.

Lastly, and perhaps most presciently, the third chapter assesses how the spaces of theatre, performance and the restaurant interact in terms of their specific ecologies. That is, the section considers how they differ from each other and how this difference teaches us about their limits. My PaR uncovered an often-implicit conflict of context that exists between the three. As I mentioned above, the lobster played an important role in this discovery. Yet, the food placed on the table during the first performance and served in the second was a relevant vehicle with which to probe the limitations and the similarities exist between the two. Specifically, it was useful in considering how they generate a performative environment for the customer/audience. Regarding this aspect, I will situate my own practice as a chef and my PaR among international and national examples of the interaction of these fields, from performance art that deals with food, to galleries that turn into pop up restaurants and finally, restaurants that adopt a hyper-theatrical mode of performance during their dinner service, such as Albert Adria’s restaurant Enigma or Heston Blumenthal’s The Fat Duck. While not exclusively limited to fine dining, the last examples tend towards a higher end of dining,

¹⁸ This was also the case in Rodrigo García and La Carnicería Teatro’s *Incident: Kill to Eat*, which was shut down in both Italy and Poland due to a lobster being killed on stage.

though examples exist in the more casual dining arena too. Most relevant in terms of my own restaurant Aniar is how the theatricality of our way of serving, weaving narrative (Irish poetry), and food performance (serving tableside) together chimes with my PaR.

In terms of the integration of food studies into theatre studies, my approach spans the academic and the culinary and seeks to create new insights into what food means in the context of performance. Though food has long been found on stage, from ancient Greek comedy in Aristophanes *The Knights* (424 BC) to Shakespeare's *The Tempest* (1610-11), it has only recently, since the beginning of the twenty-first century, secured a foothold in academic departments as a serious cultural consideration (Counihan and Van Esterik).¹⁹ Since its publication in 1997 Carole Counihan and Penny Can Esterik's *Food and Culture: A Reader* has become a touchstone of the wide range of food studies.²⁰ With the rise of food studies since the 1990s, food has become a serious subject of consideration in and off itself as opposed to being a vehicle for other forms of discourse. As Marion Nestle observes in her essay "Writing the Food Studies Movement" (2010), although "food studies has deep roots in foodways and other aspects of the humanities and social sciences [...] it was only in 1996 that this collective term began to describe a legitimate field of academic study" (Nestle and McIntosh 162). Indeed, since the year 2000 approximately, books examining food in relation to wider societal, literary, archaeology, philosophical, environmental, and cultural issues have appeared in significantly greater numbers. From popular books on how to eat better in an ever-industrialised world from Michael Pollan, such as *The Omnivore's Dilemma: A Natural History of Four Meals* (2006) and *In Defence of Food: An Eater's Manifesto* (2008); to academic treatises concerning how best to build a food studies program, such as Leigh Gantner & Lutchmie Narine's, "Building a Food Studies Program: On the Ground Reflections from Syracuse University" (2012). It would be difficult to argue now that food is not a major vehicle for examining how societies function in the

¹⁹ For food in ancient Greek comedy see Wilkins, John. *The Boastful Chef: The Discourse of Food in Ancient Greek Comedy*. Oxford University Press, 2000. *Oxford*.

²⁰ A third expanded edition of *Food and Culture: A Reader* was published in 2013.

West. As Leo Coleman writes in her introduction to the collection of essays that make up *Food: Ethnographic Encounters* (2013), food is “part of any attempt to understand social life and relationships” (Coleman 10). We can now examine food as a cultural experience to understand the values we place on it in relation to many different disciplines. It is the intention of this PhD research to situate my creative practice as a playwright and my research within the broader social context of food studies and theatre studies, drawing on theories of semiotics, phenomenology, and affect studies to explicate the meaning of food on stage and in performance.

In my PaR, the production, consumption and staging of food offers critical insight into how food shapes our own identities in the private and public sphere, specifically on the island of Ireland. The legacy of food on stage is detailed at large in Dorothy Chansky and Ann Folino White’s *Food and Theatre on the World Stage* (2015). In their introduction they examine the complex relationship of food and theatre from the Sophocles to Brecht and beyond. They lament how little the staging of food has been given in the academic world of theatre and drama (as opposed to its’ treatment in literature and film studies), considering “theatre’s equal dependence on symbolic language and live sensate bodies”, both of which arose in my PaR (Chansky and White 2). They argue that food and theatre share a multitude of concerns. Food, like theatre, travels, cuts across boundaries, divisions, and disciplines:

Just as food commodities travel circuitous routes in their symbolic becoming, often ending their journeys as indicators of cultural identities (and staples of diets) in lands and bodies quite distant and distinct from their native soils, so too have theatre artists and their performance practices (Chansky and White 5).

The staging of food performs many functions, from articulating individual concerns to the interests of the community at large. Staging food changes our relationship to it and offers us new insights into seeing food as a wider network that affects us emotionally and politically. It is these changes and

new insights that my PaR pursued to firmly establish food, theatre, and performance as a viable and conscious network.

0.2 Defining PaR

I would argue that the PaR project is a process of creative evolution. It is not progressivist, building towards a finality; nor is it mechanistic in the sense that it knows what it is searching for before it begins searching. It begins with energy (an impulse, an idea, an intuition, a hunch) that is then channelled, durationally, through repetition, in variable and indeterminable directions; a series of unexpected and often accidental explosions that in turn lead to further explosions. It expresses itself through a repeated, though flexible and open-ended, process of ontogenesis (Fleishman "The Difference of Performance as Research" 44).

As a method, PaR aims to solve a problem or answer a question through practical as opposed to just theoretical means. Regarding my own work, it was the writing and staging of my plays, in the context of my work as a chef and restaurateur, that sought to answer questions regarding the meaning of food. It was a process of "creative evolution" that was both "flexible and open-ended" that sought to bring new insight to food on stage and in performance. According to Haseman, PaR occupies a third species of research, aligned with but separate from established quantitative and qualitative research traditions (Haseman 98).²¹ Haseman presents PaR as performative research and thus as a potential third classification. He describes it as a multidisciplinary method led by practice and

²¹. For Haseman, practice is primary in PaR (he calls it "practice-led-research") and not an optional extra: "it is a necessary pre-condition of engagement in performative research" (103).

expressed in non-numeric data, and in forms of symbolic data other than words in discursive text (Haseman 98-106). Haseman's conceptualisation of PaR was important for my own practice as it allow me to construct a space that bridged my work in the theatre and the restaurant, as a chef and as a playwright. It was through this space that my PaR passed its in various investigations. For Linda Candy research through practice:

Is an original investigation undertaken in order to gain new knowledge partly by means of practice and the outcomes of that practice? In a doctoral thesis, claims of originality and contribution to knowledge may be demonstrated through creative outcomes in the form of performances. Whilst the significance and context of the claims are described in words, a full understanding can only be obtained with direct reference to the outcomes (Candy 1).

The question in my PaR revolved around the outcomes of staging of food, in terms of its identity and in relation to the question of how to represent the ways in which people situate themselves, as actors and/or audiences, in relation to its meaning in performance. For Candy, PaR allows for "a continual reflection upon that practice and on the resulting informing of practice" (4). Of course, there were many intersecting elements in my PaR. For Robin Nelson, PaR "is located at the confluence of different, but interlocking spheres" (Nelson 23). Though for Nelson these spheres are the "the arts world", the "mediasphere" and "the academy", in my own use of the method I perceived the subject of food as revolving around different material spheres, such as history, memory, embodiment and religion. The interlocking spheres of engagement provided a rubric for the investigation of my PaR through the practice of playwrighting.

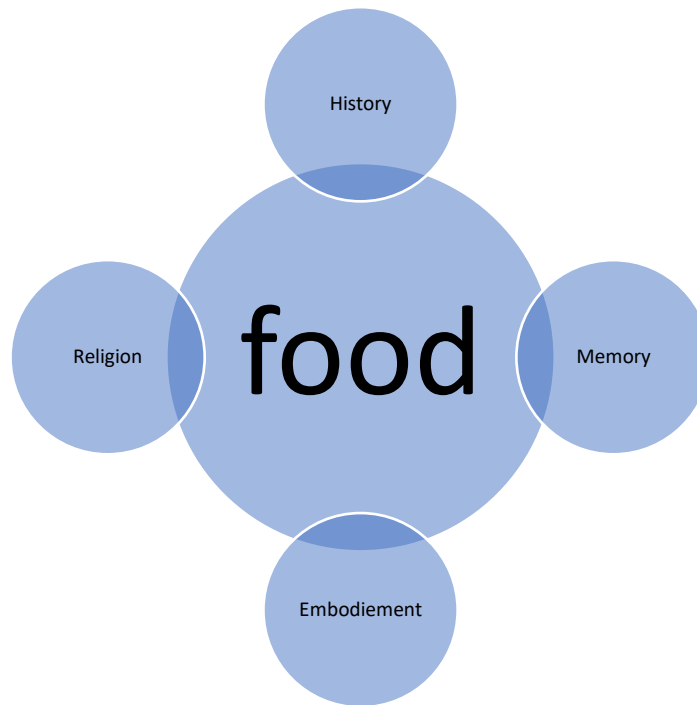


Figure 5: Interlocking spheres of food in my PaR

This conception helped crystallise my thought process around the ways in which I wanted to investigate the idea of food through drama and performance – in essence, writing a play that would articulate the experience of Irish food culture on the island of Ireland. I also situated my PaR, as the Figure 1 demonstrates above, in a triangulation of theatre, restaurant, and performance. As I noted above, PaR should offer “new knowledge” or “substantial insights” into the area of enquiry. I argue in this thesis that my PaR offered both, in terms of the ways which I fused my own personal food history with verbatim accounts of Irish people’s experience of food, particularly in *Irish food. A Play*. The play was a complex layering of memory, nostalgia, violence, politics, and religion in terms of the Irish food experience. It challenged one grand narrative of Irish food, namely that the Irish people have no food culture *per se*, showing how minor narratives exist through subjective, regional and local voices (Adams 331). The specific geology of any place gives forth its own food genealogy. Mapping this genealogy through voice, food, and performance demonstrates the quantitative

dimension towards an Irish food culture. Making this culture theatrical embeds its affect in the audience's qualitative experience.

In his essay "The Difference of Performance as research" (2012), Mark Fleishman argues that PaR "is posited as a series of embodied repetitions in time, on both micro (bodies, movements, sounds, improvisations, moments) and macro (events, productions, projects, installations) levels" (Fleishman "The Difference of Performance as Research" 28). These repetitions, in the different iterations of *Irish Food. A Play*:

Engaged in attempting to resolve a set of problems arising from the idea of performance as a mode of research, problems that are both ontological and epistemological. These include issues of knowledge types, aesthetic values, contextual responsiveness, practice/theory problematics, questions of how to best present PaR in conference contexts, debates about different types of reflexivity appropriate to PaR, and so on (Fleishman "The Difference of Performance as Research" 29).

My PaR begins at this "micro" level of writing, of distilling what I know about the culinary and theatrical worlds and using those "knowledge types" to shape a piece of theatre that represented the "macro" level of Irish food, questioning what it means to stage food in and through performance "attempting to resolve a set of problems". The set of problems that I brought to the stage generated other additional problems that found themselves woven into the following iterations. In this way, the practice itself generated conditions that affected the narrative flow of each new performance. Thus, each new performance responded to the last through critical practice generating further new knowledge and debate. The interwoven fields that my PaR brought together allowed the questions of their division to come to the fore.

0.3 On Autoethnography as a Methodology

The logic of autoethnography is that the act of writing about the self will always contain more than the self (Freeman 183).

Though PaR provided a model to structure my practice and to probe it in terms of the correct line of questioning, methodologically speaking I drew on autoethnography to illuminate different aspects of my own experience and bring together a more complete genealogy of practice that looked beyond theatre to understand the staging of food. As Freeman observes above, autoethnography always includes more than just the writing self. It encapsulates the culture in which that self is written. The reason I choose this methodology was that it allowed me to draw on my own personal experience to probe into the fields of theatre and food studies. There is much correlation between PaR and autoethnography as modes of enquiry. Indeed, as a qualitative practice, autoethnography provides a justifiable cultural grounding for PaR. For Norman Denzin, autoethnography represents a “turning of the ethnographic gaze inward on the self [...] while maintaining the outward gaze of ethnography, looking at the larger context wherein self-experience occur” (Denzin 258). Autobiography is crucial and critical for any autoethnographic investigation. To frame my PaR, I used an autoethnographical methodology which allowed me to draw on my own professional background as a chef, restaurateur, and food writer. It allowed me to fold the world of food into the world of theatre. The “self-narrative” of these activities informed how I contextualised my findings from the different iterations of my performance work. Placing the “self within a social context” is a key aspect of autoethnography and vital for capturing the experiential knowledge of one’s PaR and validating its findings (Etherington 139-40). Thus, my findings shed new light on how to perceive food in the space of the theatre, the restaurant, and the site of performance, while also identifying the discursive gaps that exists between all three. Autoethnographic writing can reveal how the self-interacts “with

others in the context of researching lived experience” (Spry 720). It is the embodied knowledge that my PaR offers as a substantial insight into staged food attempting to capture its corporal affects through an autoethnographic enquiry.

Autoethnography is a qualitative method that gives voice to personal experience for the purpose of a wider cultural understanding in terms of advancing new knowledge or insights in a particular discipline. Autoethnography can also be used to examine issues such as objectivity in relation to representation and ethics, particularly in relation to academic studies. In this case, my own PaR assesses the representation of food and ethics of animals on stage. Autoethnography calls into question the supposed objective and impartial investigations of various subjects, challenging ontological and epistemological foundations (Ellis et al. 273). Autoethnography offers value-centred stories (as opposed to supposed value-free theories) that cut across disciplinary boundaries (Bochner 21). Consequently, autoethnography acknowledges how subjectivity, emotionality, and the researcher's influence affect the product of the research. Thus, my own professionalism in the culinary sphere informs my theatrical practice and vice-versa. They are not mutually exclusive and the gap between the two modes blurred during the different iterations, from the ordering of the food for each performance through the restaurant and using food prepared and served in the restaurant (such as our potato and seaweed soup) in the actual performance. Though this blurring of boundaries was not apparent to all members of the audience (though some did observe it), it affected me both emotionally and cognitively as the food moved from one space to the other. Each iteration was a working through of the autobiographical and ethnographic limitations that I realised can be established to separate the space of the theatre and the space of the restaurant. In the end, the performance took place in a kind of liminal space, located somewhere among the triad illustrated above. I discuss the liminality of this experience in chapter three, showing how the imaginary and cultural boundaries that are placed between the field of theatre, performance and the restaurant are always shifting. By using food as a core aspect of my enquiry, I was able to demonstrate the rupture in their lines of communication. This rupture is not at all a negative quality

but rather a positive potential space that can bring about a better understanding of how food operates in different spaces. As a practice based creative project, my PaR asks how can autoethnography expand theatrical representation of food to engage dialogically with aspects of the theatre and the restaurant to communicate the multiple layers of food to an audience?

As a method, autoethnography combines the two fields of autobiography and ethnography with an emphasis on “the etymological claims for research-validity of ‘ethnography’ as opposed to the storytelling of ‘biography’ (Freeman 181). In my own case, an autoethnographic approach is useful when using autobiography as a critical element to write and devise performances that puts food on stage, that is, conceives of food in its theatrical representation. The ethnographic side of my PaR seeks to put this position into play with the other aspects of my career to date, from teaching art history and performance art, cooking, food writing and writing plays. By aligning these aspects, I hope to situate their signification in a wider cultural and historical field of theatre and food studies. While the purpose of autobiography is to reflect on one’s own lived experience, ethnography takes a deeper look at the cultural values, propping its constitutive parts, from the language that it used to the artefacts that it produces (Geertz). Autoethnography brings together the two fields of biography and ethnography in order convey new insights to the cultural field the subject finds themselves in, merging one’s own experience with a cultural experience:

When researchers do autoethnography, they retrospectively and selectively write about epiphanies that stem from, or are made possible by, being part of a culture and/or by possessing a particular cultural identity. However, in addition to telling about experiences, autoethnographers often are required by social science publishing conventions to analyse these experiences (Ellis et al. 273).

An autoethnographic account frames the subject culturally: in my case it frames my understanding of food in relation to performance and food studies while also situating my dramatic research in

relation to the restaurant industry due to my professional capacity as a food writer, chef, and restaurant owner.

To give shape to the narrative of the iterations, I drew on different autobiographical and interpersonal strands. According to Govan et al., the autobiographical performance “heightens an awareness of the presentation of the self and this is intentionally made explicit to the audience” (Govan et al. 66). Furthermore, this action in the performance pushes the audience to consider their own self, to witness the narrative unfold and become an “active listener” in the context of the performance (68). This is certainly the case when in *Irish Food. A Play* the articulation of certain food stuffs evokes memories and feelings of nostalgia, such as “brown bread” or “pandy”. Displaced autobiography, whether fact or fiction, allows the audience to “engage in a two-way communication” that is both “personal and intimate” (69). This communication was explicit in both iterations of the play in the ways in which the audience reacted and related to the language of the play and the food served during the play.

In autoethnographic terms, the iteration that I wrote and produced for my PaR were specifically Autoethnographic Performances [AEP] in that, I put myself into them in order to “carve out new possibilities for achieving cultural understandings” (Shoemaker 520). In the first iteration of *Irish Food. A Play* the insertion was physical: I acted in and directed the play. Though I only advised in the second iteration, I did cook the food that was served in the play. As I observed above, the cooking of the food for the play, which was staged in a restaurant in Dublin, broke down the barriers between the two aspects of my life. AEP allowed me to observe how food makes meaning in relation to my own practice in the food industry as a chef and writer and to the wider role of food in Irish society and history. Coupled together with the writing of the play, in which I fused verbatim accounts of Irish food with my own personal and historical position within Irish food, I embedded myself into the very fabric of the performance. For example, by combing my own and other

memories of Irish food in *Irish Food. A Play*, I was able to investigate both private and public aspects of Irish food:

F my dad came from a farming background and meat was very important to us
Sundays consisted of a fry for breakfast a fabulous roast dinner around 2pm and
then a 'cold' tea of roast chicken and ham

SJ my mother was a great cook but a plain eater so no sauces and no spices and no
garlic we never had rice or pasta for family meals however us children would
sometimes be allowed a treat of Findus savoury pancakes

F (*excited*) Findus savoury pancakes

SJ (*with relish*) chicken and leek

F it's the late 70s or early 80s (McMahon *Irish Food. A Play*)

While the first two parts of this text (read by F and SJ) were verbatim transcriptions from the survey I conducted, the subsequent parts are from my own food memories growing up in the 1970s and 1980s. The reason for this dual approach was to combine autobiographical and ethnographic elements to broaden the experience of the audience, allowing them to be physically affected by the language of the play. The process also gave me freedom to engage with my own relationship to food in a critical and creative manner.

In this way, my PaR reaches across my food life and my writing life, occupy a space in-between, not that dissimilar to how Brian Massumi theorises the concept of affect as residing between the physical and the virtual, as a "two-sidedness as seen from the side of the actual thing, as couched in its perceptions and cognitions" (Massumi "The Autonomy of Affect" 96). This conception is not only relevant to how I position myself in relation to my work, but it was vital for framing the question of how staged food affects the actors and audience, which is discussed in chapter two. As the affect occurs somewhere between the physical and the virtual realm, it is both inside us and

outside us, “its autonomy is its openness” (96). This “openness” is the key to moving food and theatre forward towards new spaces, such as the ecological, wherein we can see their effects/affects outside their own discursive realms. Indeed, ecological considerations of food and theatre can demonstrate the lack of awareness towards our local, global, and historical food system. For Erika Munk, dramaturgy should be informed by “the ecological problems as the perceived world, which is part of the environment” as both are related to each other; theatre should operate in a spirit of openness somewhere “between the ecology of the outside world and the internal ecology of dramatic form” (Munk 5-6). Munk’s and Massumi’s idea of openness stands in direct relation to earlier thinkers on autonomy, such as German philosopher Theodor W. Adorno who argues that, “Artworks detach themselves from the empirical world and bring forth another world, one opposed to the empirical world as if this other world too were an autonomous entity” (Adorno 1). Food denies this launch away from our empirical world and keeps theatre among the senses; it keeps theatre attached to its own material conditions and asks it to deal with the concerns which it brings forth in an attitude of ecological openness. This attitude of openness is why food can lend itself to an autoethnography and postdramatic enquiry.

Because autoethnographic work can cut across different disciplines, it was useful to create a bridge to connect food, theatre, and performance. By disrupting these hegemonic discourses (cutting across food and theatre); modes of representation (“am I allowed to eat this or is it a prop?”); inspiring new forms and insights into the way qualitative research is done (turning the restaurant into a theatre and investigating the results); conflicts of context and borderlands, I hoped to push out into new terrain, cutting through what Fleishman calls the “hegemony of the text”, moving away from language into food and the body (Fleishman "The Difference of Performance as Research" 30). Autoethnographic work attempts to get to the body, or rather, to the ways in which things affect the body. In the case of my PaR, the body affects were the bodies of actors and the audience. The actors negotiate the food, sometimes playfully; often they struggle to understand the political dimension or want to take it out, resisting is as something that is *added* to food after the

fact. The actors often wanted food to be one thing: to let it roam around the valley of nostalgia or as hunger. That is why politics, ethics and sexuality keep pushing and colliding into food in the play: because these are the things that that actors/audience do not want to see.²² The director asks why they are there, as if they were not already there. For Shoemaker: autoethnographic “writing/performance has offered me critical and cultural spaces in which to theorize the racism, classism, sexism, heterosexism, and homophobia that I grew up with” (Shoemaker 519). The AE aspect of my performance allowed me to push food into ways that I cannot in the restaurant. It allowed me to challenge the orthodox model of thinking about food. The iterations are always about pushing food to another place. The performance provides a roadmap to interrogate food by shifting its context from the restaurant to the theatre via the medium of performance. If AE is a way to get at “representation, power, and subjectivity” of the subject (in my case food), it can be used to untangle these three aspects of it (Gingrich-Philbrook 299). Food as representation: in terms of identity and in terms of what people see when they look at it: they may see the cultural network as opposed to the thing. A whole salmon on stage may therefore suddenly represent more than its own objecthood. But it is not yet art. The audience sees the salmon tied to the framework of its production, through the words that the actors emit. In Ireland, food is still tied to land and agriculture in our consciousness even though most of us do not think about it this way any longer. Indeed, as Patrick Lonergan writes in *Theatre and Globalization: Irish Drama in the Celtic Tiger Era* (2008): “nationality is now defined conceptually: to be Irish is to identify oneself as part of an ‘Irish nation’ that is related to but separate from physical territory [...] the word ‘Irish’ has become deterritorialized: it may be used to refer to a physical territory, but it also acts as a brand: a commodified abstraction (Lonergan *Theatre and Globalization: Irish Drama in the Celtic Tiger Era* 21, 28). This separation, this deterritorialization, has further removed people link to the land. The Great

²² The ways in which the politics of food is often naturalised is a feature of much food analysis on stage. See for example Beach, Cecilia. "A Table: The Power of Food in French Women's Theatre." *Theatre Research International*, vol. 23, no. 3, 1998, pp. 233-41. In this essay, Beach argues that “food is an essential element in the feminine dramatic aesthetic, stemming from both women's contemporary social reality and from their privileged access to the matricidal” (239).

Irish Famine (Great Hunger/Irish Potato Famine/An Gorta Mór) of 1845-1849, as we shall see, still affects Irish people's understanding of food.²³ In his essay, "Recognizing food as part of Ireland's intangible cultural heritage", food historian Máirtín Mac Con Iomaire recognises Irish food as part of "intangible" heritage that is difficult to grasp over the long history of this island. He does acknowledge though that the island could be:

Approaching a 'Celtic' food revival, with a flowering of award-winning Irish chefs, restaurants and artisan food producers drawing inspiration from the new Nordic food aesthetic by engaging with and re-imagining their indigenous food culture and traditions (Mac Con Iomaire "Recognizing Food as Part of Ireland's Intangible Cultural Heritage" 115)

Food in Ireland has yet to become a nationalistic signifier, though it strives to obtain this position, as my own PaR, and the work of many other practitioners involved in food, demonstrates. My PaR positions Irish theatre's relationship alongside this "food revival" to assess how each discourse understands the other and how they can grow together. Thus, autoethnography matters as a methodological mood of enquiry to investigate how we can better understand food in the realm of the theatre and the theatre in the realm of food production, consumption, and its ever-evolving histories on this island.

Practice does not come from thought. It is a physical encounter with the world.

This is the key characteristic of practice – it is not reflective, it is active. Attempts to modify the primitive and intuitive nature of practice (by attributing it with reasoning or rational thought, for example) will always fail, because whatever arises from such changes may well be of interest but it will not be practice. The

²³ It is worth observing that in Irish "The Great Famine is translated as "The Great Hunger" (An Gorta Mór). This was because Ireland produced more food during the famine than any other time in previous history. Unfortunately, the majority of it was exported. See Woodham-Smith, Cecil. *The Great Hunger: Ireland 1845-1849*. Penguin, 1991. As Woodham-Smith remarks, "Throughout the famine years the 'native produce' of Ireland was leaving her shores in a 'torrent of food'" (75).

creative process is a matter of being lost one minute and suddenly finding yourself 'in the clearing' the next: and that about it (Edwards n.p.).

While the above quotation may suggest that the only success for PaR is failure, this is not to say that we cannot at least attempt to conceptualise the decisions we make in practice and reformulate them as thoughts. As Freeman observes, autoethnography is a way to challenge the dualistic thought that Edwards suggests in the above quotation.

The relationship between playwrighting and autoethnographic enquiry was an important aspect of my PaR, allowing me to situate my own theatre practice within a cultural sphere that could accommodate both the discourses of food studies and theatre studies. As I observed above regarding AEP, the practice of playwrighting through an autoethnographic lens permitted an exploration of what resides between these two knowledge formations. Many theatre practitioners, performance artists and playwrights have used autoethnography as a way to understand their own plays and performances in relation to the wider world. In "Autoethnographic playwrighting and performance for self-healing and advocacy", Rogério Meireles Pinto, observes how autoethnographic playwrighting and performance can be used as "research pursuits in social work" to "engage in self-healing" and "advance social change" (Pinto 45). Pinto draws on the theories of drama therapy pioneer Renée Emunah who conceptualises "self-revelatory performance" as a "form of drama therapy and theatre" (Emunah 71). My own PaR used playwrighting as a kind of "self-revelatory" medium for my own food memories and experiences to draw attention to the ways in which food structures our relationship to society and to the way in which Irish people have struggled to assert an identity through food due to the traumatic legacy of the famine. For Elizabeth Anne Walley, trauma can be performed and understood through an "autoethnographic approach to the representation of personal trauma in a theatrical setting" (Walley 11). The ways in which Walley situates herself and her trauma in her work *Trauma Project* demonstrates how autoethnography can be used as a methodology that bridges the conceptual gap between self and other. Playwrighting

allowed my PaR to activate food spaces, both mental and physical, that I could not have accessed through my own standing in the industry as a chef and restaurateur. It is the creative openness of postdramatic playwrighting that permits one to challenge the ways in which food stories are told, shifting instead to a represent food narrative in a “non-hierarchical” manner with a degree of “simultaneity” to carve out other spaces (Lehmann *Postdramatic Theatre* 86-87).

Autoethnographic writing allow personal memories to become cultural artefacts in an effort to turn “remembered fragments into narrative” and revealing the “human in humanity” (Pelias 34). The fragments of *Irish Food. A Play* dig deep into Irish food culture from a private and public standpoint to allow its story to unfold, the unspoken intricacies of the author’s and the audience’s embodied experiences of food, from the nostalgic to the traumatic.

0.5 Genealogy of Practice of Postdramatic Playwrighting

A genealogy of values, morality, ascetism, and knowledge will never confuse itself with ‘origins’, will never neglect as inaccessible the vicissitudes of history. On the contrary, it will cultivate the details and accidents that accompany every beginning (Foucault 144).

Regarding a specific lineage of practice that framed my PaR, I drew on various playwrights, practitioners, theorists, and philosophers who have engaged with what Hans Lehmann calls the “postdramatic”. This section aims to explain and justify the decision as to why I felt this mode of playwrighting would adequately fit my research question and lend itself to an autoethnographic mode of enquiry. While many predate the conception of that term (Lehmann’s book was published in German in 1999), theatre-makers whose work is described by that term have in common the fact

that they challenge the traditional dramatic model of theatre in various ways, from rupturing narrative and disjointed dialogue, to using an immanent performance space that fuses the body of actor/actress with the space of the audience.²⁴ While the term “postdramatic” is an open and contested term, it did provide my playwrighting with a scaffold from which to work and adopt the material I collected in order to write the play and investigate its outcomes. It allowed me to sidestep the creation of a “fictional world that aligns all dramaturgical element into a synthetic whole” (Fuchs "Postdramatic Theatre and the Persistence of the “Fictive Cosmos”: A View from America" 63). Many of the central tenants of the postdramatic have their origin outside the space of theatre in the many “happenings” that took place in the US in the 1950s and the 1960s, from musician John Cage’s *Theatre Piece No. 1* (1952) to Allan Kaprow’s *18 Happenings in 6 Parts* (1959). It was Kaprow who defined the movement in his many writings, which sought to break down the space between artist/actor/performer and audience and create a more organic environment in which to perform. This wholistic “environmental” approach created “events” which “rarely occur[ed] in the conventional theatre (Kaprow 19). It was Richard Schechner who first labelled happenings as “postdramatic” in his monumental book *Performance Theory* (1988). For Schechner, the task and chance orientated efforts of Kaprow’s Happening events avoided any sort of “characterisation” and pushed the frame of the performance to its limits (Schechner 18). Lehmann adapts and builds upon Schechner’s idea of the postdramatic, expanding into the realm of “theatre aesthetics” and provides a way to understand theatrical practice in latter half of the 20th century all the while firmly grounding the prehistory of the postdramatic in the early twenty century European Avant and Neo-Avant Garde (Lehmann *Postdramatic Theatre* 21). These aesthetics move beyond the primacy of the text and dramatic action to a theatre-as-event that vies to “interrupt the real” by breaking down the “closed fictive cosmos” of the traditional dramatic world (Lehmann *Postdramatic Theatre* 99). The

²⁴ To a certain degree, the postdramatic form is a material articulation of French philosophers Jacques Derrida’s idea of *différance*. The terms *différance* carries connotations both of “difference” and “deferral”. The term can be read spatially, (differences among co-existing entities) or temporally (deferrals from past to future). Many postdramatic performances folds space and language back on themselves in order to rupture any chronological continuity of theatrical realism.

latter, which blurs the boundaries of our world, and the world of the play is perhaps the most pertinent with regard my PaR, wherein “real” food is eaten on stage or in the space of the performance, and a lobster is killed (albeit off stage) and eaten by the audience.²⁵ For Lehmann, the word “postdramatic” signifies:

A theatre that feels bound to operate beyond drama, at a time ‘after’ the dramatic paradigm in theatre. What it does not mean is an abstract negation and mere looking away from the tradition of drama. ‘After’ drama means that it lives on as a structure – however weakened and exhausted – of the ‘normal’ theatre: as an expectation of large parts of its audience, [...] or perhaps only a deviation and playful exploration of what is possible beyond that horizon (Lehmann *Postdramatic Theatre* 27).

Coupled with my own autoethnographic experience of food alongside my interest in twentieth-century performance art, the postdramatic proved a suitable vehicle to explore the dramatic and narrative experience of Irish food on stage. The postdramatic was necessary for my PaR to move food away from a simple dramatic mode of realism and towards a space whereby its material and affective value were moved to the foreground. For Jen Harvie:

Postdramatic theatre focuses on theatre [rather than drama] emphasising the visual (for our media age) and sacrificing a sense of coherent narrative synthesis [...] cognisant of how movement, rhythm, architectonics, aural elements and so on all contribute to the fabric of the event. [...] A significant, repeating feature of postdramatic theatre is that it encourages (or even necessitates) synaesthesia, the audience’s gradual recognition and pulling together of correspondences across the work. [...] Dispersed and multiple processes of creation

²⁵ Interestingly, regarding the ethics and morality of “interrupting the real”, Lehmann mentions Peter Brook’s staging of his Vietnam revue *US* wherein a real butterfly was burnt on stage. The burning of this animal caused a furore in much the same way the lobster in my performance affected the ensemble.

become constitutive of the work in more ways than one – they are its process of making, and they remain in its product (Harvie and Lavender 12-14).

The purpose of the postdramatic in the case of my PaR was to attempt to push Irish theatre into a space that accommodated food as something more than a prop or minor feature within dramatic experience: that is to say, to move beyond the cucumber sandwiches of Oscar Wilde, the brown bread of J.M. Synge, and the carrots and radishes of Samuel Beckett.²⁶ I also wanted the audience to become more engaged and immersed in the experience of the food as they would in a restaurant or a piece of performance. I wanted food to speak on stage and for it to contribute to the embodied experience of the audience in an attempt to “break out of the straightjacket of *re-presentation*, which is to say, of the obligation to reproduce an already written story” (Jürs-Munby et al. 4) Because the dramatic frame of reference is “deconstructed, perverted or completely absent”, the postdramatic allows the audience more “freedom to wander and see themselves” in the narrative/action of the play (Bleeker 36). In *Irish Food. A Play*, the audience were able to engage with food directly, through smelling, tasting and eating it as the ways the actors enact a “story” of Irish not weighed down by the obligation to represent a “fictive cosmos” through “psychological motivation, causal connection and coherent conceptual meaning” (Jürs-Munby et al. 5). This allowed the audience to experience food outside their ordinary habits of thinking as they encounter it in their daily lives.

Over the course of my research the play *Irish food. A Play* went through five distinct iterations, each one developing out of the other and the interaction of the text with the physical space of the performance and the actors. This is not to say that each iteration was somehow more postdramatic than the previous ones. The changes in each iteration were rather dialectically connected to the space of the performance and the ensemble that crafted them. Success is difficult

²⁶ These food stuffs occur respectively in Wilde’s *The Importance of Being Earnest* (1895); Synge’s *Playboy of the Western World* (1907); and Beckett’s *Waiting for Godot* (1953).

to measure in the context of postdramatic theatre other than the culmination of the show or an assessment of the audience's response to the play. Though my aims were didactic, which is to say, I wanted to engage the audience with regards to Irish food and the ways in which it is represented (or not), I felt that a postdramatic approach was the best suited for the intentions of my autoethnographic exploration. The postdramatic allows an "irruption of the real" into the performance space which in turn permits a shared space of presence and representation, an active communicative engagement with the audience, and a process that can keep on changing as it moves from space to space (Lehmann *Postdramatic Theatre* 101). Each iteration was unique to the time and place of its performance, a careful balance of information through a personal and verbatim play text regarding Irish food with the energetic impulse of the actors as they moved around the performance space engaging with both food and the audience.

Principally, my conception of playwrighting, and in particular the writings associated with my PaR, arises out of the plays of Samuel Beckett, Heiner Müller, Peter Handke, Caryl Churchill, Thomas Bernard, and Sarah Kane, among others. Both the structure of their plays and the ways they were written inform how I use language and attempt to enact it on the material space of the performance. For Lehmann, playwrights such as these establish the "reality of the new theatre [...] with the fading away of [the] trinity of drama, imitation and action" (Lehmann *Postdramatic Theatre* 37). From Beckett's dramatic writings, I developed a minimalist approach to a zero form of theatre with an attention to short dialogue that create a sense of the spectral as the text often undoes itself. Beckett's work, for S.E Gontarski, is "reluctantly [...] autobiographical" which labours to "undo that traditional dramatic form and realistic content [though] he never wholly does so" (Gontarski 2). It was this postdramatic balance of undoing character and dramatic form which appealed to me in the writing of the autoethnographic *Irish Food. A Play*. From Müller's strange play text, I used his open dramatic form of space which fuses differing spatial and temporal realities in order to rupture the space of my own performance: for Müller "if art does not threaten reality, then it has no function" (Müller xx). Though an extreme pronouncement, I wanted my project to create other realities for

Irish food as opposed to just representing previous ones, especially the image of Irish food tied to the legacy of the Famine. In the first iteration of the play, my own, and the two other performers, vocal interjections over the recorded dialogue sought to fuse two different spacetime realities: pushing food into the realm of religion, violence, and the domestic space. Peter Handke's play *Offending the Audience* (1966) provided me with a model to aggravate the audience in terms of bringing them into the space of the performance through language and the materiality of the food on stage: the lifting of the lobster off the table and gesturing with it to the audience to demonstrate its living nature was a case in point. Thomas Bernhard's complete absence of punctuation in his absurdist plays, such as *A Party for Boris* (1970) influenced the way I wrote the text of the play. The text flows between actors like a collective stream of consciousness. Caryl Churchill's dinner scene in act 1 of her play *Top Girls* (1982) gave me a dramatic framework with which to theatricalize food. Though food and drink in the opening of *Top Girls* are less important than both the dialogue and the exposition of her characters, her situating the opening of the play in a restaurant where characters drawn from history meet to share a meal, contributed to my idea of situating my play about food around a table, in the first iteration, and in an actual restaurant, in the second iteration. Though it was not until the second iteration that the play was performed in the restaurant, the first iteration of the play used the prop of the dinner table to situate the actors and the audience on stage. Though the idea of using this table only emerged after several rehearsals it was felt that the idea of the table, pointing towards the concept of the commensality (sharing) of food, would engender a dramatic situation that would both evoke food memories in the audience and affect them on an emotional and intellectual level. The idea of sharing is also important for Lehmann regarding the postdramatic due to the ways in which it allows audience and actors to interact and merge: it is an experience "more shared than communicated, more process than product, more manifestation than signification" (Lehmann *Postdramatic Theatre* 85). Commensality, literally the sharing of food, has an "almost magical properties in its ability to turn self-seeking individuals into a collaborative group" (Belasco 19). By using the table in the first iteration, several of the audience were able to sit on the

performers around the table. Thus, the table collapsed the space between performance space and audience. The actors encircled the table listening to their pre-recorded voices. In her work with on communal eating among adults in Santiago, Chile, the sociologist Claudia Giacoman identifies three important features of commensality: interaction, symbolic, and normative.

First, mealtime has an interactional dimension, as members of a group gather together with their peers at a designated place and time, and these members interact and develop shared, reciprocal actions. Second, this practice holds a symbolic dimension, as it is charged with meaning for those participating in it, benchmarking their feelings of belonging to a group. Third, eating together has a normative dimension, as it entails the staging of norms carried out by diners and the control over those norms. Through these three dimensions, the interviewees came to understand that the existing union was strengthened among the group members sharing a meal. However, the field has also demonstrated conflicts in each of these dimensions, which can undermine the attachment of the group (Giacoman 463).

It was these three elements that the first iteration brought together to engender a collective attitude between actor, food, and audience. They offered the “possibility of manifesting a collective body that assumes a relationship to social phantasm and desires of fusion” (Lehmann *Postdramatic Theatre* 130).

In order to sidestep the idea behind much dinner theatre, namely, the audience eat dinner while watching a play on stage, I drew on the writings of Antonin Artaud, specifically in relation to the ways in which he challenged to the idea of theatre as “mere entertainment”.²⁷ It was important to avoid the reduction of food as a vehicle of theatrical entertainment, as in many plays where food is staged. It was not that I did not want food to be celebrated. I just did not want the audience to sit back and enjoy the show in some sort of sleepy nostalgic stupor or to be reminded of the food of

²⁷ For Artaud, “a real stage play upsets our sensual tranquillity, releases our repressed subconscious, drives us to a kind of potential rebellion (since it retains its full value only if it remains potential), calling for a difficult heroic attitude on the part of the assembled groups (*The Theatre and its Double* 19).

their childhood or that they simply associated with Ireland. I wanted something more critical and engaged where food would become the subject and object of diverse thought. For Lehmann, this theatre of a logic of the double is precisely what Artaud wanted to exclude. In this, in any case, postdramatic theatre follows him: it wants the stage to be a beginning and a point of departure, not a site of transcription/copying” (Lehmann *Postdramatic Theatre* 32). The reason for this is that I wanted to push past the surfaces effects of food and get to something deeper still. That is to say, I wanted the food in the play and its language to activate the space and speak its own language. Indeed, I also hoped for the language of the text to become a sort of food in which I could feed the audience. In the essay “Production and Metaphysics” (1932), Artaud formulated his theory of the physical and material stage:

I maintain the stage is a tangible, physical place that needs to be filled and it ought to be allowed to speak its own concrete language. I maintain that this physical language, aimed at the senses and independent of speech, must first satisfy the senses. There must be poetry for the senses just as there is for speech, but this physical tangible language I am referring to is really only theatrical in so far as the thought it expresses escape spoken language (Artaud *The Theatre and Its Double* 27).

Drawing on Artaud’s theory, the food that was placed on the table during the first iteration (a whole salmon, a dead duck, mussels, a live lobster, brown bread) in the centre of the stage aimed to speak its own concrete language. Of course, it represented something for the audience, but it was also something itself: a concrete language that could be touched or smelled, particularly by those audience members seated around the table. The physical materiality of the food cut through the stage as a site of representation and applied itself to the senses of the audience. To a certain degree, it involuntarily provoked their senses in a “visceral” manner and affected their bodies in a myriad of

different ways (Di Benedetto 89).²⁸ Though the affective value of food splintered into different realms, depending on the audience's own attitude towards food, its sensual aspects remained paramount to the achievement of my aims. In this manner I attempt to bridge what Lehmann refers to as the "afformative" aspects of theatre and the performative aspects food in the restaurant and performance art. For Lehmann, drama always resides in the "realm of fiction", therefore it cannot be performative (Lehmann *Postdramatic Theatre* 180). It can attempt to go beyond appearance and get as close to the real as possible, but it always remains a site of representation. In the restaurant and in performance art, food *does* something whereas in the theatre, drama *represents* something. By bringing together afformative and performative modes of enquiry, my PaR attempt to fuse how food operates in the theatre, the restaurant, and the site of the performance.

Several performances of the Wooster Group and Forced Entertainment helped me craft an idea of the space of the stage and its relation to the audience: specifically, the "non-theatrical" performances of Forced Entertainment, such as *Speak Bitterness* (1994) provided a model of a durational model of acting that could be indifferent to the audience's feelings and emotions; it could be serious and absurd: "*Speak Bitterness* endlessly complicates its position, appearing to be serious, then shifting to absurdity and impossibility, stretching the seriousness until it breaks, and then picking it up again, more serious than before" (Etchells "*Speak Bitterness: Our Catalogues of Confessions*" n.p.).

Lastly, the theatrical writing of French philosopher Jacques Rancière coloured my conception of the value and purpose of the performance regarding the activation of the audience. Rancière's conception of theatre seeks a liberation that:

²⁸ In his book *The Provocation of the Senses in Contemporary Theatre* (2010), Stephen Di Benedetto uses cognitive neuroscience and phenomenology to examine how and why contemporary performance affects the senses. Focusing on the visceral impact that theatre has on our senses, Di Benedetto argues that the brain and body connect through our experience of the visual, aural, tactile, and aromatic. Performance can accentuate our senses to make us engage more with the performances to hand.

Requires spectators who play the role of active interpreters, who develop their own translation in order to appropriate the 'story' and make it their own story. An emancipated community is a community of narrators and translators (Rancière 22).

It was the idea of appropriating the story of Irish food that forced me to consider how to allow the audience to embody the text and space of the performance. By allow audience members to eat oysters (and other food stuffs) at the opening of our performance for the Dublin Fringe Festival, I established a bond between audience members. Their sharing of food symbolised a potential community of sorts, working towards their inscription of a forgotten food culture.

My use of the postdramatic, in terms of writing my play and producing it with the ensemble was not without its difficulties or limits. While I discuss some of those difficulties and limits in the next chapter, specifically with regard to the practical application of the postdramatic, it is sufficient to articulate here some of the concerns that other writers on the postdramatic have acknowledged. This in no way cancels the efforts or the energy of a postdramatic approach of this PaR thesis but rather it aims to understand the ways in which the postdramatic too has become a historical category in its own right fraught with its own complications of its dialectical approach. My own difficulties with the implementation of the approach in an attempt to dispel the "fictive cosmos" of Irish food justifies this critical examination. For Elinor Fuchs, despite the powerful impulse of the postdramatic "a return by whatever circuitous route to the embrace of narrative [...] invades much contemporary postdramatic work" (Fuchs "Postdramatic Theatre and the Persistence of the "Fictive Cosmos": A View from America" 66). That is to say, can theatre escape representation, with or without drama? Or rather "can the "fictive cosmos" be shattered and embraced at the same time?" (66). In truth, as my PaR, demonstrated the postdramatic is not a pure approach, but rather an attitude that can upend drama convention but it cannot reduce it to nothing. The desire of the director in the second iteration of *Irish Food. A Play* to establish some sort of characters for my spectral voices was not without its merits, especially in terms of its practical intent. Despite the

“death of character” heralded by postmodern theatre almost forty years ago, its utility continues particularly in terms of learning lines and producing a coherent production (Fuchs *The Death of Character: Perspectives on Theatre after Modernism* 170). While I as the writer may have desired a postdramatic approach, a striving towards “the moment of the performance itself” the ensemble desired something different, something that kept the fictive cosmos of traditional coherent and cohesive representation of a fictional world, plot, and characters (Primavesi 49). Though the end result was somewhere in-between the dramatic and the postdramatic, the outcome of my PaR demonstrated the ineluctable modality of the dramatic in performance. The future of the postdramatic resides then both inside and outside the dramatic sphere. As Fuchs notes, “a fictive cosmos is a hard thing to kill” (Fuchs “Postdramatic Theatre and the Persistence of the “Fictive Cosmos”: A View from America” 71). Interestingly, Lehmann also observes:

Perhaps in the end postdramatic theatre will only have been a moment in which the exploration of a “beyond representation” could take place on all levels. Perhaps postdramatic theatre is going to open out onto a new theatre in which dramatic figurations will come together again, after drama and theatre have drifted apart so far. A bridge could be the narrative forms, the simple, even trivial appropriation of old stories and (not least of all) the need for a return of conscious and artificial stylization in order to escape the Naturalist glut of images. Something new is going to come (Lehmann *Postdramatic Theatre* 144).

Can my own PaR be postdramatic and at the same time preserve the organizing principle of the “fictive cosmos” for the actors and directors who need it for practical purposes? What then does the audience encounter? What then happens to the postdramatic? It may be that the dramatic engulfs the experimentation of the latter twentieth century and something new emerges, something altered, a synthesis of old and new. Or perhaps the two forms can coexist, teaching each other to engender a new form to explicate our twenty first century predicament.

0.6 Writing *Irish Food. A Play*

Though food was removed from the theatre as the theatre became an autonomous art, the table and the stage continued to have a shared history (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett "Making Sense of Food in Performance: The Table and the Stage" 72).

This section of the introduction outlines the writing of first draft of the play *Irish Food. A Play*. To write the play *Irish Food. A Play*, I created an online survey with *SurveyMonkey*. *SurveyMonkey* is an online survey development cloud-based software as a service company, founded in 1999 by Ryan Finley. Their services include data analysis which was of interest to my PaR as I wanted to not only accumulate data on what people considered "Irish food" to be, but I also wanted to analyse this data to understand the historicity of this position, in terms of my playwrighting and the writing of *The Irish Cook Book*. By folding these two aspects together, I hoped to articulate a certain vision of Irish food that I could use to craft a play with autoethnographic and verbatim elements. After constructing the survey based around ten questions on Irish food, I uploaded it to their site. The 10 questions were as follows:

1. What is your first memory of food in Ireland?
2. Describe your personal experience of Irish food, i.e., childhood memories, food traditions, family meals, restaurants?
3. Do you have any knowledge of the history of Irish food? If so, please elaborate.
4. In your opinion, how does Irish food relate to religion?
5. In your opinion, how does Irish food relate to culture?
6. In your opinion, how does Irish food relate to the Famine?
7. In your opinion, how did colonisation by England affect Irish food?

8. In your opinion, what is the relationship of Irish food to the land, i.e., farming, the potato, beef, dairy, etc.?
9. In your opinion, what is the relationship of Irish food to the sea, i.e., fishing, seafood, the seaside, etc.?
10. In your opinion, what is the future of Irish food? (McMahon *Experiencing Irish Food. A Survey*).

With these ten questions, I hoped to gather insights into the ways in which Irish people considered the relationship between food, themselves, and its link to wider societal issues. The survey was created on 9/11/2017 and closed on 3/15/2018. 342 individual responses were collected. From their answers, I began crafting my play. Methodologically speaking, I drew on verbatim theatre and my own ethnographic background as a chef and food writer to create some sort of collective cultural response regarding Irish food, specifically trying to capture an “oral history” of Irish food in order to demystify its muted history (Paget 326). I did this by adapting their words and placing them in the context of a postdramatic piece of theatre that would allow the audience to “hear” what Irish food sounds like, outside the realm of character, race, and social politics (even though these attributes would arise internally in the play). A postdramatic approach allowed me to “destabilize the spectator’s construction” of their food identity (Lehmann *Postdramatic Theatre* 5). It was this “othering” of Irish food that my play sought to address. As I observed above, it was through the process of postdramatic playwrighting that I sought to engage with the theme of Irish food. For the template of the play, I constructed a scene around each question. Because of the volume of the responses, I had to choose which replies to use. Furthermore, not all replies lent themselves to the play. The task I set myself was to write a forty-minute play, drawing mostly on the first four questions, while cherry picking different responses to the other questions. As the play aimed to inform and challenge audiences’ idea of what Irish food is, I wanted to represent the diverse and multifaceted picture of Irish food in the twenty-first century. For example, the play opens with an explosion of food memoirs:

M dinner

W at our grandmother's

M lamb and mint sauce

W mashed potato and gravy

M we called it pandy

Pause.

W bacon and cabbage

M soda bread

W (*excited*) fantastic brown crab cakes in a lovely little pub west of Dublin

Pause.

M lamb's liver

W and onions

W our grandmother's Sunday roast and apple pie

M and warm brown soda bread

W there was always something

M a constant hub of nourishment (McMahon *Irish Food. A Play*)

As if creating a diary, I attempted to “build a memory out of paper, to create archives from lived experience, to accumulate traces” (LeJeune 107). In order to explore the historical context of the play, I drew on current scholarship regarding Irish food and its renaissance, as well as my own research in the field which led to the publication of my *The Irish Cook Book* in 2020. In his essay “Contextualizing the Irish Food Renaissance”, food historian Máirtín Mac Con Iomaire situates the

renaissance of Irish food as “coinciding with the Celtic Tiger years (1994-2007)” and growing during the “subsequent recession (2008-2014). Mac Con Iomaire locates the reasons for this growth in a multiplicity of factors, such as:

Greater educational provision, better mentoring opportunities both nationally and internationally, international initiatives such as the Dublin Gastronomy Symposium, the Ballymaloe Litfest, and Food on the Edge; the nurturing of young chefs and food producers by Euro-Toques; and the work of state agencies such as the national food board, Bord Bia, and the national Tourism agency, Failte Ireland, in promoting the country for its food as a destination for food tourism (Mac Con Iomaire "Contextualizing the Irish Food Renaissance" 60).

My own event, Food on the Edge, is situated as an element in the ongoing renaissance of Irish food, particularly in relation to food tourism. Indeed, food tourism could be seen as the lynchpin that drives the current renaissance forward particularly in terms of its “experiential” quality (Quigley et al.).²⁹ The experiential quality of this food tourism carries inside it a performative dimension that has influenced my own thinking about the Irish food renaissance in dramatic and culinary terms. Indeed, the renaissance of Irish food is not confined to the culinary but in how the culinary as a cultural experience interacts with other fields, such as drama, theatre and performance, the case of my own PaR. As I observed above, Mac Con Iomaire argues for “food as intangible cultural heritage” with links to “mythology, topography, literature, archaeology, food history, folklore, cookbooks and women’s magazines” (Mac Con Iomaire "Recognizing Food as Part of Ireland’s Intangible Cultural Heritage" 94). It is this heritage that my own PaR engages with and seeks to explore in dramatic form the complex story of Irish food and its relationship to theatre and performance studies.

²⁹ As a Failte Ireland Food Ambassador, I undertook several international benchmarking trips to learn about the tangible effects of food tourism for key players from farmer to restaurants. It was this work, alongside my participation in events such as Terroir and Cook it Raw, that led me to create Food on the Edge.

As mentioned above, the initial text of the play engaged with the genre of verbatim theatre. The reasons for my engagement with this genre was to capture the historical and cultural aspects that exist in people's personal narratives. Due to the importance of the personal for an autoethnographic methodology, I felt this approach chimed with my aim of combining my own "self-narrative" with the narrative of others in order to reach beyond my own cultural position (Hayler 42). The societal and historical conditions of these individual food stories are often forgotten in mainstream accounts of Irish food. By using verbatim theatre, I could explore these overlooked aspects of Irish food and produce a more complex picture of our shared food culture. Verbatim theatre, according to Will Hammond and Dan Steward, consists of a play in which:

The words of real people are recorded or transcribed by a dramatist during an interview or research process or are appropriated from existing records such as transcripts of an official enquiry. They are then edited, arranged, or recontextualised to form a dramatic presentation, in which actors take on the characters of the real individuals whose words are being used (Hammond and Steward 9).

Verbatim theatre brings with it questions of veracity and an ethics of theatrical representation. Is what the audience are hearing more authentic than something the playwright constructs from his or her imagination? For Hammond and Steward, the dramatist must "abide by some sort of ethical code" (10). Yet the playwright needs to give the piece form, which thus could possibly change the meaning of the words that he or she collected. For David Hare, "There is absolutely no difference between the writing of a good documentary play and the writing of a wholly imagined play, because it's about the same thing, which is wanting to create something in the space between what the audience is feeling and what's going on the stage" (Hammond and Steward 59). The issue of veracity is compounded when the playwright asserts that there have been times where the words or meaning were changed for the sake of theatricality.

But do I ever cheat? Is there ever a tension between being truthful to the interviewees and creating something that I know is going theatrically? The answer is yes – but not a lot. To expand on this admission. I would say that it depends on what is meant by being truthful: literal or truth in spirit. A literal truth would rely on an exact replication of the research in its entirety – a tiresome and practically impossible undertaking. My sense of “truthfulness” to the interviewee puts the emphasis on representing them truthfully in spirit. I might make small changes to the text for the sake of clarity or fluidity, but I take pains to preserve the sense, tone, and trust of the interviewee’s words (Hammond and Steward 41).

As this dissertation will explain, the biggest challenge I encountered was to give my responses theatrical form, to make them interesting and engaging. In the initial writing process, I did this by often repeating the responses to give added weight or effect to the speaker’s words. I also added interrogative words to introduce dynamism between the characters by having a questions and answer type energy, as well as ping-pong dialogue (a rapid, hard-hitting back-and-forth of ideas between characters). For example:

M there is something when we come home from school

W on cold and wet days

M a crisp sandwich

W on white bread

M with butter

W yellow golden butter

M crunchy salty crisps

W they were called Tayto

M I put it in my mouth and eat it up

W I lick the butter off the bread (McMahon *Irish Food. A Play*).

This point is important for my own project, and the above quote by Hammond and Steward demonstrates the tensions that exist in verbatim theatrical pieces. I do not believe that this changed the “spirit” of the piece, and these small changes were for “the sake of clarity or fluidity”. The changes also brought a certain distancing to the text. In truth, after several drafts, I could no longer remember whose words were whose. This attitude to language is typical of how ensembles such as Forced Entertainment operate:

Working in performance they were always tempted to think about writing (or even speaking) as a kind of trying on of other people’s clothes –a borrowing of power. I speak for a moment like my father. I assume the language of a teacher. I speak for one moment like they do in some movie. I borrow a phrase from a friend, a sentence construction from a lover. A writing that’s more like sampling. Mixing, matching, cutting, pasting. (Etchells *Certain Fragments: Contemporary Performance and Forced Entertainment* 101)

I determined that the project might provide a broader understanding of the multiplicity of meanings of Irish food if my own writing was indeed “more like sampling”, riffing off different and diverse identities associated with Irish food, creating a matrix of ideas that the audience could piece together.

Initially, the format of the text was inspired by Philip Ridley’s *Tender Napalm* (2011) for the way in which it crafted dialogue without the establishment of setting or character. In the play, there is no description of character or any sense of where the play takes place. It opens simply with the following dialogue without any establishment of setting:

Man Your mouth

Woman What about it?

Man It’s such a . . . wet thing (Ridley 7).

I wanted to craft a play that did not get tied down to traditional dramatic structures of development, and the psychological agency of character, but which would instead give audiences the opportunity to think about food in new ways. In this context, it was important for the words to carry the weight of conveying the meaning: hence my use of verbatim. This is not to say I was not interested in stage space or the theatrical image that my play created. But I wanted those features to emerge out of the dialogue. In the play, there is no character or plot. There is also no dialogue, *per se*. This is typical of a postdramatic approach whereby “in the absence of an autonomous characterization ha[s] to be understood as ‘vehicles of a discourse’” (Lehmann *Postdramatic Theatre* 32). The drama arises from the words spoken by each actor, from the tension that was created by how the words interact with each other. In the first iteration, this turned out to be a combination of voiceover and textual interrogation from the actors. This added another layer of spoken text to the performance. Though the text was only one element of the performance, it was the springboard or the nucleus for direction of the performance. This is not to say that the physicality of the performers’ bodies did not in turn change the text. This did happen considerably in the second iteration as the director mixed choreographed scenes with my aleatory dialogue. As I discuss below, this did not often work as the director wanted to impose a character onto the actors. My articulation of a postdramatic aesthetic unfortunately was problematic. The actor found it difficult to learn their lines. This in turn caused the director to shape the play in terms of character and realism. I discussed this failing of the postdramatic and its limitation in terms of its practical application for the didactic aspect of PaR is above and I shall return to it again in the next chapter returning a specific analysis of the second performance of the play.

The strength of the first draft resided in the first two scenes. I think this was because the questions, based around first memories and direct experiences, were easily crafted in snappy phrases that the characters could bounce off each other.

M raw milk

- W** brown bread
- M** aunt Anna's apple tart
- W** shepherd's pie
- M** fish and chips in beshoff, Dublin
- W** rain glistening off the cobbled streets on Grafton Street
- M** it's the 1950s
- W** our mother's cooking
- M** mashed potato and gravy
- W** we called it pandy (McMahon *Irish Food. A Play*).

Because the phrases flow together, they created what seems to be a dialogue between the characters. The second scene, which deal with first experiences of Irish food also operated in a similar manner. The conclusion of the second scene demonstrates how the form and the content of the piece work together:

- W2** all meals were family meals
- W1** we rarely went to restaurants
- W2** even on special occasions
- W1** everything was made at home
- W2** my mother was a terrible cook
- W1** we never went to restaurants
- W2** all meals were family meals
- W1** good meals

W2 family meals

W1 Tragic meals of regret

W2 dry meat

W1 veg boiled so much they became transparent and tasteless

W2 no matter how bad the meal, the company, rural & farm upbringing has meant

W1 the meal itself

W2 was less important than the company

Gradual fade out of light.

Silence. (McMahon Irish Food. A Play)

In all, I was particularly pleased with the first two scenes of the play as they best represented what I was trying to achieve. While I was not interested in presenting vulgar, shocking, or confrontational material, I was interested in using its strategies to involve the audience and affect their understanding of Irish food. The limitations I encounter were mainly associated with the amount of material I gathered and the time of the play (40 minutes) that I had to represent this material. Given more time, I would like to have crafted a longer play of at least 90 minutes but maybe even longer. I had thought of using all 341 survey replies and creating a durational dramatic installation where all answers would be read out. This would take several hours if not days to complete. In this type of thinking, I was inspired by a type of theatre that would go beyond the traditional length of any given stage piece. Both Peter Brook and Jerry Grotowski have discussed this type of performances in their work, as well as Forced Entertainment who have mounted many durational pieces over the course of the history of their ensemble.

The other limitation in transposing the answers to the text of a play was that several of the sections did not lend themselves to the form of the play that I had chosen (word driven and

postdramatic). This was because they were answered in more elaborate manner. To combat this, I cut up several of the responses and spread them across different speakers and repeated key words or phrases. For example:

M2 I know a little bit about potatoes

W2 it's how Irish people survived during the 19th century

M2 survived

W2 eating the potato

The dialogue of M2 and W2 are part of the same response in the survey, while their subsequent responses highlight their initial statements and were not part of their survey. This causes internal problems considering the verbatim aspects of the play, but I felt it did make the piece work better, both dramatically (as a text) and theatrically (as a piece of performance).

Overall, the first draft of the play provided a position in which to further interrogate Irish food from the position of an autoethnographic methodology through postdramatic playwrighting. Writing the play began a journey that would culminate, over the course of two years, to the professional production of the play at the Dublin Fringe Festival. Through its difficulties, it engendered further iterations which examined staged food and food in performance and what the effects and affects of these matters mean to an audience and to the actors and ensemble who showcase them.

0.7 Conclusion

By suggesting that performance constitutes an alternative way of knowing I am not suggesting in some naive way that PaR will or should simply replace other forms of scholarship. Too often in the past practitioner–researchers have jumped reactively

to defend the discontinuities between what we do and what they do, between embodied practice and traditional textual scholarship. Such a response is often framed as a contest between epistemes: the particularity of performance as a way of knowing and its place vis-a-vis dominant and hegemonic forms of knowing in the academy (Fleishman "The Difference of Performance as Research" 29).

This introduction has sought to map out and establish a framework for my PaR. By outlining and defining PaR and the methodology of autoethnography alongside a postdramatic approach for playwrighting, I have tried to create suitable conditions with which to analyse the main directions that my PaR took in terms of the performative iterations I undertook regarding the staging of food. From the staging of food to its performative examination of its affect and its ever-shifting context, the following chapters will offer a detailed examination of the outcomes of my research. What began as a written text culminated in a performance in a restaurant that highlighted not only the circumstantial nature of food but also the resistance to apply a postdramatic lens to the performance of that food. The effect of this iteration was to open my thinking towards a new ecology and ethics of food in terms of performance and to question the limits of performance in a theatrical setting in a new age of consent. The conclusion of my thesis proposes a series of concrete considerations for theatre practitioners and artists to consider when representing or working on food in the space of theatre and performance. If PaR is to fulfil its position of being an embodied research tool it must give rise to awkward representations that it itself cannot contain. By "probing more deeply" into its own mechanisms and the affective value of their presentation, new significance will possibly arise through the staging of food (Ingold 11).

The success of my PaR is measured in the ways my plays probe more deeply into the conception of food on stage and attempts to find new ways in which to frame food on stage. This new signification of food, which travels through practical iterations to raises concerns regarding the

affective value of food and its shifting context in turn generates new thinking regarding the ethics and ecology of food in the twenty first century. As Fleishman observes above this journey is not one of “contrasting epistemes” but rather one whereby food and its staging flows between different discursive fields to enrich the other. My PaR allows theatre studies and food studies to flow together through the medium of postdramatic playwriting and the method of autoethnography to better understand staged food in theatre and performance.

Chapter 1: Staging Food

1.1 Introduction

Theatre that incorporates food not only deploys its hierarchies, but it must also negotiate visceral audience responses from disgust to desire and distraction, responses that can eclipse political claims. At the same time, theatre artists and producers must take into account practical concerns such as the labour involved in daily food prop preparation, the health and tastes of actors who must consume the same food performance after performance, the compression of stage time against the actual time it takes to eat, and even injunctions against allowing audiences to eat food prepared onstage in the absence of legal approval for its public consumption (Chansky and White 6).

This chapter explores the rehearsing and staging of the first two iterations of my PaR, namely the play *Irish Food. A Play* as well as analysing the play scripts. Though these scripts began as texts, it was their realisation through performance that ultimately shaped the direction of my research. The questions which arose from the production of these iterations engendered further questions regarding food, its staging, and the affect it had on the audience. As I outline in my introduction, this play explored the ways in which food acts for and on Irish audiences, as a memory and a physical reminder of our necessity of it for our continuing survival. Though famine, hunger, and failure haunt the Irish food experience, its recent renaissance gives us cause to celebrate it; and it was these two poles I wanted to capture in the play. It is my contention that Ireland's food consciousness, or rather our consciousness of food as a cultural phenomenon, has only just awoken from its long slumber. We can now begin to think about food in Ireland in relation to cultural institutions, particularly in the

theatre and, through performance, in other spaces, such as restaurants. It is the theatrical articulation of food in space that teaches us about our relationship to food in both our private and public sphere. Though this theatricalization can be contested, fetishized, and abused commercially, all eating, as Carlo Petrini, the founder of Slow Food observes, is a “cultural act” (Peace 37).³⁰ My thoughts on the staging of food begin and end in my practice, in the many iterations that I have completed over the last few years but also in my other work with food, such as how I stage food in our contemporary Irish restaurant and through my 2018 cookbook. The staging of food is inextricably linked to its eating, whether in a theatre, restaurant, or any other social space. However, due to space, this chapter shall focus on the staging of food in my play *Irish Food. A Play* as opposed to my restaurants or my cookbooks. I draw this demarcation between this work due to the different ways in which my playwrighting and their other (my restaurants and my cookbooks) operate.

To a certain degree, Irish theatre has failed food; it has failed to incorporate it into its ecological and performative system. This is not the case in the UK or mainland Europe, where many companies explore the meaning of food on stage and through performance in postdramatic settings. Is it the lack of ability to speak of food culturally that inhibits its exploration in Irish theatres? *Potato Soup* (1999) by Agora Theatre, a company based in the Flemish-speaking part of Belgium, is one example of using food to reveal its environment through narrative. Robert Soans’ verbatim play *The Arab-Israeli Cookbook* (2010) is another example of how food creates community through a narrative of performativity to “overcome even the most rigid and vitriolic of historical and religious beliefs” (Chansky and White 9). Given the shared history of Irish and British people on the Island of Ireland, postdramatic food projects could build bridges between fractured communities, particularly in Northern Ireland. Staging food in this manner can showcase how communities perceive themselves by and through food.

³⁰ For Peace Slow food is “political theatre” for the “neo-tribes of postmodern period. Though I would strongly contest his argument, I think it is useful to conceptualise food symposiums, such as my own Food on the Edge, as a form of political theatre.

Why stage Irish food? Or to be more precise, why stage food in Ireland now? It is not so simple a question. What does it mean to write food into a play; to bring it on stage in as part of a devised dramatic performance; to show it to the audience to elicit some physical reaction? Food often appears innocuous: secondary to the essential elements of dramaturgy. Regularly, it seems like a vehicle for something else, for some other action, more significant. It does not jump out at us. However, nothing could be further from the truth. Food in drama/performance acts as a complex motivator. It hovers between symbol and referent, while addressing the lived experience of the audience. It can act as allegory. Food speaks both to our intellect in reading the text of the play and then to our bodies during the dramatic performance. Food, as Charlotte Boyce and Joan Fitzpatrick argue, is “often part of the bigger story”, elucidating key moments in the text or drama, operating as “potent and multifaced-symbols (Boyce and Fitzpatrick 3). Food in drama and performance is rarely itself, of rather, is it never to be something that is just eaten: it carries weight and significance (Boeninger 451). Though its literal manifestation on stage may stimulate the audience’s appetites through its affect, food often acts a vehicle for something else, as a conduit or sign pointing to other thematic aspects of the dramatic work, such as social, cultural, or ethical aspects. Performatively, food compels as well as propels the action and dialogue of the drama, acting as a visual signifier of the contests that play out the stage (Sammells 116-18). What is more, food, or its possibility, can be living or dead (as happens with the lobster or duck in the play). This creates another dynamic that pushes actor and audience into several different directions: for example, the ethical, ecological, and historical aspects of what this food might mean in each time and place, both on stage and off.

Since the Famine (or The Great Hunger as it is called in Irish), Ireland has had a difficult relationship with food. Indeed, while Irish theatre has flourished since the nineteenth century, food has, until its renaissance at the beginning of the twenty-first century, fallen foul of the social,

economic, and religious prejudices that existed in Ireland (Clarkson and Crawford).³¹ For food writer Colm Andrews:

No sane person ever questioned the quality of Irish stout or whiskey but that apart from Irish stew and soda bread, most outsiders did not know what the Irish ate. National stereotypes of Irish cuisine were apparent in jokes, such as that a seven course dinner in Ireland was a potato and a six pack of Guinness (Andrews 19).

Though feasting, and even state banquets, have been part of Irish food culture for centuries, this knowledge seems to have been fallen from the general knowledge of a population scarred by the Famine. Even Eamon De Valera (the politician who dominated Irish political life for much of the twentieth century) who projected an air of meagre frugality to the Irish people as a way of clean, simple living did not shy away from appropriating the Throne Room in Dublin Castle for lavish diplomatic state banquets in the early years of the newly established Irish Free State (Mahon 132).³²

For Ian Miller, even the period after the famine witnessed a continual decline in nutritional standards in food with “post-famine optimism about the potential for a new Irish diet” quickly fading. Almost at every turn, food was deprived of its possible cultural significance, or its cultural voice remained muted by those in power (Mintz). Power plays a key in foodways, through both coercion and influence. As Carole Counihan writes in *The Anthropology of Food and the Body: Gender, Meaning, and Power* (1999):

Coercion is attained through control of might and essential resources that can be denied to others. [...] [Influence] accrues not through force and the ability to deny but through giving,

³¹ Even in 2002, journalist Kevin Myers described “Irish Cuisine” as an “oxymoron”. See Meyers, Kevin. “An Irishman’s Diary.” *The Irish Times*, 7th February 2002.

³² For William Derham, this act of appropriation was part of De Valera using the throne “as a stage for his own brand of majesty” (286). See his essay “(Re)Making Majesty: The Throne Room at Dublin Castle, 1911-2011”, in McGarry, Marion. “Making Majesty: The Throne Room at Dublin Castle, a Cultural History.” Taylor & Francis, 2018.

through the obligations created by giving, and through the influence wielded in the act of giving (Counihan 46).

There were however moments of respite in Ireland during the long twentieth century where food and its culture shined. Chefs, cooks, and food writers such as Maura Laverty (1907-1966), Monica Sheridan (1912-1993), Theodora Fitzgibbon (1916–1991), and Myrtle Allen (1924-2018) the godmother of modern Irish cuisine and a Michelin starred chef, all demonstrated the cultural significance of food through their books. Fitzgibbon's *A Taste of Ireland* (1968) combined historic recipes with geography, cultural history, and photography. Laverty, who was also a playwright and a screen writer, beautifully captured the ways in which food was both a personal and a cultural experience through her three cookbooks *Kind Cooking* (1944), which was illustrated by the artist Louis le Brocquy, *Feasting Galore - Recipes and Food Lore from Ireland* (1952) and her magnum opus *Full and Plenty* (1960).³³ In her first novel *Never No More* (1942), she details how her grandmother made yellow meal bread (a bread which emerged during the famine due to the importation of Indian corn) directly among the glowing coals of the hearth:

She scalded the Indian meal with the salted boiling water, made it onto a dough, rolled it thinly and cut it into little scones. A bed was made on the hearth by raking amongst the ashes on all sides. Each scone was rolled in a cabbage leaf and placed on a bed of hot ashes piled on top and left until cooked. The scorched leaf was then turned back to disclose fragrant little cakes which were delicious with rasher gravy and egg yolk (Laverty 86).

Despite these writings the cultural significance of food remains largely neglected from Irish scholarship and critical discourse. The significance of this absence can be traced back to both colonialism and the Famine, but these are not only reasons. Writing in his 2019 assessment of Irish drama since the 1950s, Patrick Lonergan observed that "Irish drama must be understood in the

³³ Laverty's multifaceted life and writings were the subject of a recent play entitled *Maura Laverty – This was Your Life* (2019) by Bairbre Ní Chaoimh and Yvonne Quinn.

context of the island's histories" (Lonergan *Irish Drama and Theatre since 1950* 64). This seemingly innocuous observation draws attention to the ways that scholars, journalists, and other commentators have on many occasions bracketed off theatre from its societal contexts on this island. It has been separated from other cultural spheres and denied its existence in the "relational total field" of its production and ongoing reception (Kershaw *Theatre Ecology: Environments and Performance Events* 16). Ironically, Irish people have made the same error with food, removing it from the milieu in which it is made and consumed. Irish society appears to have striven at all costs, until recently before this project began in 2016, to separate food from its communal and cultural context, unlike other European notions, such as Italy and France, for example. Food was not a focus for theatre and theatre was not a focus for food. If, as Martin Esslin writes in his treatise *An Anatomy of Drama* (1977), "The theatre is the place where a nation thinks in public in front of itself", the question must be asked: where was the discussion of the important relationship between food and farming, two central production practices of post-independent Ireland in 1922 (Esslin 101)? Irish theatre strove to make food other from itself, or to reduce it to very little, almost nothing: a stage property. For the most part, Irish theatre-makers of the twenty century appear not to have wanted food to speak to Irish audiences, culturally or emotionally. This conception of food as mute object on stage echoes Chris Morash and Shaun Richards' argument that while "the dominant space on the Irish stage [was] the metonymic representation of the nation – the cottage kitchen" it was a space "largely devoid of markers of either modernity or antiquity, a space that could provide the setting for a play located in any time over the past century or more" (Morash and Richards 21, 23). How did this space function with an absence of consideration for the cultural value of food?

In his paper "Recognizing food as part of Ireland's intangible cultural heritage" (2018), Mac Con Iomaire has tried to untangle the lack of iconicity in Ireland foodways mapping them as a form of intangible heritage. For Mac Con Iomaire:

Culinary traditions are among the many other forms of intangible heritage, which includes language, literature, music and dance, games and sports, rituals and mythologies, knowledge and practices concerning the universe, know-how linked to handicrafts, and cultural spaces. Intangible heritage is seen as a repository of cultural diversity, and creative expression, as well as a driving force for living cultures (Mac Con Iomaire "Recognizing Food as Part of Ireland's Intangible Cultural Heritage" 93).

Food is treated not as "knots in the biospherical net" but rather as some autonomous thing worthy only of giving us sustenance (Naess 95). This refusal to allow food to take its place as a cultural experience undoubtedly stems from the ways in which the spectre of the Famine left its mark on future generations. Irish playwright Tom Murphy's observation regarding the Famine is a case in point, demonstrating the ways in which Irish audiences have failed to see how the famine has affected them, even to the late 1960s, when Murphy wrote about this subject:

On reading books about the Great Irish Famine of 1847, I found that I was not so much interested in the crisis as a historical fact, but that I identified with it and was peculiarly involved in that age. The catastrophe has stopped the Irish race in its tracks, (as nothing else has done) and in the nineteen sixties I was suffering a hangover that lasted over a hundred years. The tangible facet of famine, physical hunger, had been removed, but other "poverties" remained. Poverty of thought; wild wisdom and native cunning stalemating a 20th century need to open out and expand (Murphy).

Silence and shame have been part of the legacy of the famine and the religious associations that clung to food in a newly independent Ireland. That silence revolved around food and its enjoyment as part of a cultural experience. Food was not to be enjoyed but rather to be treated as sustenance for the Catholic majority in a newly independent Ireland. This echoes De Valera's concealment of lavish state banquets of "Irish diplomatic dining" which, as mentioned above, took place in Dublin

Castle in the 1930s which presented “haute cuisine and the influence of the French culinary tradition” as opposed to the “meagre repasts” of Irish country cooking (Mahon 132).

“Who fears to speak of the Great Irish Famine?” asks historian Diarmuid Ferriter, reviewing the 2018 National Gallery exhibition *Coming Home: Art and the Great Hunger* but raising a question that has been equally valid for much of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries (Ferriter). The impact of the famine on the Irish food culture of the nineteenth century were similarly stark. In his well-known essay “The Food of the Irish” (1854), William Wilde (Oscar’s father) observed that the tragedy of the Famine undoubtedly took place due to an absence of culinary knowledge in the indigenous population. “The potato was”, for Wilde, “admirably suited to the genius of the Irish people—lazy, indolent, prolific, and rebellious against all instruction upon their domain” (Wilde 142). For Wilde, famine was unimaginable in cultures that had a sophisticated gastronomy, such as the French or Anglo-Irish classes. Though Wilde was incorrect in his assumption regarding the potato-eating Irish, there is a direct connection between his attitudes and still current assumptions regarding Irish food culture being nothing more than variations on the potato.³⁴ The spectre of the denigration of potato eating in the nineteenth century is here brought forward via Murphy’s comments on the long hangover of the famine on other aspects of Irish culture. The “material hunger” of the nineteenth century, plays a divisive role in present-day thinking regarding the Irish food experience (Boyce and Fitzpatrick 7). Though ethical, pleasurable, and alimentary concerns have returned to the Irish food experience since the Celtic Tiger, Irish attitudes to food are still crafted from past concerns such as a fear of food waste. As Cecil Woodham-Smith wrote in 1962:

The famine left hatred behind. Between Ireland and England, the memory of what was done and endured has lain like a sword. Other famines followed, as others had gone before, but it

³⁴ This is something I discovered when writing my own account of Irish food, particularly because the book was intended for an international audience. Contracted to supply 450 Irish recipes, I was told (albeit jokingly) by executives of the New York publishing house that there were probably only about “four or five” Irish recipes. I subsequently supplied them with 900 recipes, of which only half were used. Though this is only anecdotal, it goes some way to illustrating the deep-seated international attitudes towards the idea that food is absent from Irish culture.

is the terrible years of the Great Hunger which are remembered, and only just beginning to be forgiven (Woodham-Smith 412).

An unintended context for the design and delivery of this project was the impact of Brexit and its effect on issues of food security (most of the food imported to Ireland comes through Britain) – so perhaps the final price of the Famine has yet to be determined. As an island, Ireland is physically isolated from mainland Europe, and this affects how it accesses food and how food contributes to Irish identity. Indeed, many still attest to an absence of food culture in Ireland. In his podcast “Chicken Fillet Rolls”, BlindBoy BoatClub (David Chambers), an Irish satirist and comedian, spoke of the struggle to find a food culture in contemporary Ireland, using the overprocessed chicken and cheese roll sold in petrol stations around Ireland as an example of a lack of authentic food culture (BlindBoy).

When considering the history of food on the Irish stage, its representation may seem like a paltry affair, mirroring perhaps the ambiguous attitude in Ireland towards the wider social function of food. Irish plays of the twentieth century, or those written by Irish playwrights at other times, often treat food as an ancillary thing. Food in drama is rarely itself, of rather, is it never something that is just eaten. Though its literal manifestation on stage stimulates audiences’ appetites, food often acts as a vehicle for something else, as a conduit or sign pointing to other thematic aspects of the dramatic work. It compels as well as propels the action and dialogue of the drama, a visual signifier of the contest of the stage. Food appears in modern Irish drama multiple times, always acting as a vehicle for the action: think of Pegeen Mike’s soda bread in *The Playboy of the Western World* (1907), the lobster in W.B. Yeats’ *The Player Queen* (1902), Captain Boyle’s sausage in Sean O’Casey’s *Juno and the Paycock* (1924), or the blackened potatoes of Tom Murphy’s *Famine* (1968).

Though my own PaR draws on the creative dynamic of these plays, my own theatrical effort was an attempt to see what happens when food is staged: for the actors, for the audience, for all those involved in the production. This effort would allow for a certain eruption of the real inside the

theatre. Little did I realise when I brought a whole salmon, a dead duck, and a live lobster into the theatre space in the first iteration that the secure space of the theatre would break down, cause conflict between me, the actors, the directors, the stage manager, and the audience. This eruption showed me that the theatre itself is full of holes and it not a sovereign entity, and this absence of sovereignty would teach me much about attitudes towards food and theatre and its performative capabilities. Why this sovereignty has prevailed longer in Ireland than in other countries is another question that needs to be addressed. Sovereignty conjures what Nick and Nicolas Mansfield call the “drama of recognition” (Mansfield and Mansfield 130). We want food to affirm identity. This affirmation can take place in a restaurant or the theatre. However, when this recognition is challenged, the sovereignty of these spaces’ collapses. The collapse of sovereignty, which owes itself to the ideas of Jacques Derrida, demonstrates the porous nature of any category of space and the way in which it will always contest itself. As Derrida writes in *The Beast and the Sovereign*:

The choice is not between sovereignty and nonsovereignty, but among several forms of partings, partitions, divisions, conditions that come along to broach a sovereignty that is always supposed to be indivisible and unconditional (Derrida *The Beast and the Sovereign*, Volume I 76).

These issues of theatrical sovereignty, which I elaborate upon below, will re-emerge in chapter two when it comes to the ethics of using food/animals as part of the theatrical experience and again in chapter three when I discuss the ecology of the environments for both food and theatre. This breaking and remaking of discursive, as well as physical boundaries, is a key aspect of performance-based autoethnography according to Dwight Conquergood: performance is a “caravan: a heterogenous ensemble of ideas and method on the move” (Conquergood "Of Caravans and Carnivals" 141). In turn, AEP impacts the way in which staging Irish food rejects an isolated sovereignty when performed and looks out into the world and away from the closed spaced of past theatrical practices that failed to observe the environment that they were created in. The plays in

which I created as part of my PaR question both the way in which we recognise food and how we delimit its sovereignty.

1.2 Rehearsing the Play

AEP [autoethnographic performance] has transformed my own understanding of, commitment to, and love of performance work that moved me away from the traditional conservatory theatre practices [...]. AEP offered me new maps for creating performances that matter in the world (Shoemaker 531).

Punctuated between services in the restaurant, the rehearsal of the play opened the ways in which the space of the theatre and the space of the restaurant reflected and refracted each other through performance. It also brought together my own practice as a professional chef and a theatre-maker. As Deanna B. Shoemaker's quote observes above, from an the autoethnographic point of view, the practice of staging food outside the restaurant "offered me new maps for creating performances" in different spaces (531). The rehearsal of the play was the first point where my actions became the object of research: where I began to accrue a "tacit knowledge" that would direct the efforts of my PaR (Noë 181). I began to think more about how food fits into the space of the theatre as opposed to the restaurant. Hitherto, my PaR had been confined to the language games of the playscript that I had created over the previous few years since 2016, which was an echo-chamber to a certain degree. The rehearsal space engendered itself as an opening that created a bridge between the culinary and the academic/dramatic aspects of my PaR. Rehearsal bought a certain vulnerability and self-reflective nature to my own position regarding food as if I had stepped into a parallel universe of

food and its meanings. The space of practice introduced a relational shift towards more aesthetic and performative questions around food and animals and how to represent them “embodying principles of non-hierarchical connection and heterogeneity” (Shoemaker 531).

As would become apparent through the rehearsal process, the theatricality of food was a unifying feature that connected the restaurant and the theatre, in terms of the ways in which they bring the materiality and the narrative possibilities of food together. The rehearsals were able to “recover the aesthetic impulse” of food that is often constrained by both the culinary and the dramatic worlds (Gingrich-Philbrook 302). Food in the rehearsal space was liberated from its context and allowed to become more multi-faceted. Its identity could shift from symbol, prop, and plaything within the one scene, as was the brown soda bread, for example. We moved beyond the constraints of the existing playscript and used both the rehearsal space and the physical bodies of the actors to integrate food into the performance space.³⁵

Rehearsals took place over several weeks and, in all, we met eight times as a group.³⁶ The difficulty of rehearsing was compounded by the fact that no-one had been designated director at the beginning of the process. Though I ultimately decided to direct the piece, the first iteration may have been stronger in terms of its theatrical image if directed by someone who could view the text more objectively; however, as discussed later, I had the opposite problem in the second iteration of the play when the director sought to impose meanings upon the text that were different from those I had intended. This difference demonstrated the diversity of views that exist in relation to Irish food, even within our ensemble. Just as I discovered writing *The Irish Cook Book*, there is no one narrative about Irish food that can be agreed upon, even in a theatrical context, due to the contested nature of food on the island of Ireland. In terms of devising for this specific iteration of the

³⁵ Though this way of rehearsing is in keeping with Lehman’s understanding of the postdramatic, it also aligns itself with Timothy Wiles “performance theatre” where “meaning and being [is] in performance, not in literary encapsulation” (117). See Wiles, Timothy J. *The Theater Event: Modern Theories of Performance*. University of Chicago Press, 1980.

³⁶ The full schedule is outlined in Appendix 2 and details how the script changed with subsequent readings. Chapter two looks specifically at the reasons why certain changes and insertions were made to the script.

play, I drew on the strategies from Anne Bogart and Tina Landau's *Viewpoints* (2005), Bogart's *A Director Prepares*, *The Frantic Assembly Book of Devising Theatre* (2009) and, as outlined above. Hans-Thies Lehmann's *Postdramatic Theatre* (2006). Bogart's focus on the body in performance proved useful to stage food in the performance. Her focus on thematic considerations helped shape the conceptual dimension of the performance. For Lehmann, the postdramatic "wants the stage to be a beginning and a point of departure, not a site of transcription/copying" (Lehmann *Postdramatic Theatre* 32). This affected how I treated the text once it entered the space of the rehearsal. The text was just "one element, one layer" of the performance: it was not the master of the end result (32). I wanted to offer it to the ensemble and see what happened to the language and voices of the play in real time, testing the belief that this approach would make apparent a diversity of views about Irish food rather than imposing my view alone. This point was also important for allowing my own culinary experiences into the play from an autoethnographic standpoint. Though I had written many food memoirs into the verbatim text, my own culinary experiences remained outside the realm of the script, except insofar as those experiences might have shaped my editorial decisions about how to organise the material.

Performing the culture of my culinary world, mapping it out on to the stage through the play, allowed me to see it differently, and at times as transgressive. For example, I did not foresee the significance of placing the whole salmon or dead duck on the table on stage for the actors, stage manager and audience. This simple act caused consternation and seemed to push the boundaries of possibility in terms of the theatrical space. Were animals, alive or dead, allowed on stage? The disjunction between the respective "everyday cultural practices" of the two fields I drew from would ultimately create much of the key interests of analysis in my PaR (Conquergood "Communication as Performance: Dramaturgical Dimensions of Everyday Life" 24). For example, I take for granted the handling of dead animals, gutting them and deboning them. The sights, sounds, and haptic quality of these animals on stage did indeed cause great perturbation in the first performance and I struggled to get the actors to touch/use them during the rehearsals. What I would gradually come to realise

over the course of the two performances is that an invisible violence exists around animals. The theatre highlights this violence whereas in the restaurant this violence remains unsaid or hidden. Food is prepared in the restaurant to be consumed; food in a theatre occupies a much more nebulous space even if it is consumed. It is almost as if because theatre is wrapped up in the act of representation that when food enters its space, it must become metaphor or representative for the actors and audience.

The exploration of devised autobiographical theatre among the conditions of our little ensemble presented difficulties that ultimately contributed to the creative and dynamic possibilities for the participants. Ensemble practice has a complex history which originates in the early twentieth century and bridges both traditional and experimental forms of theatre (Britton). Autobiographical theatre offers “an individual’s private stories” for “public consumption”, blending personal fact and fiction, and asks the audience to bear witness to the process unfolding in terms of its representation (Govan et al. 59). In blending fact and fiction, autobiographical theatre demonstrates that there is no “mere” autobiographical work, that is, a work that showcases some supposed “monologic” subject who is whole and complete (Heddon 5). As I iterated above, in the play I combined autobiographical sentences with responses (other autobiographical sentences) from the survey. For example, in the extract below the memories of “shepherd’s pie”, “my mother’s cooking” and “brown bread” are from my own experience. These memories are woven together with other people’s memories to create a tapestry of involuntary memory:

- W** fish and chips
- M** unpasteurised milk
- W** bread
- M** Aunt Anna’s apple tart
- W** shepherd’s pie

- M** beshoft, Dublin
- W** my mother's cooking
- M** bread
- W** brown bread
- M** fantastic brown bread
- W** with mashed potato and gravy
- M** we called it pandy (McMahon *Irish Food. A Play*).

This combination not only created a schism between “me” and the responses of others, but also gave me more freedom to use responses in the context of a devised approach when it came to directing the play. This collusion of self and other create a rich theatrical tapestry that contributed to the food experience in the play.

Devising pushes against a rigid text-based practice and seeks non-verbal epistemologies in order to craft a more complete performance that takes in the material practices of an embodied “ensemble way of working” (Radosavljevic 103). For us, we crafted a piece around one phrase “it’s just a butter knife, nothing sinister”. We devised in twenty-minute blocks, recording the process, and then watching it back. As Charlotte McIvor and Siobhán O’Gorman observe, devising “encompasses work that resist [...] the hierarchical organisational structures usually associated with institutional theatre (McIvor and O’Gorman 2). No one individual in our group took control, though we did negotiate over certain parts that we believed create a dynamic piece of performance. This type of collaborative practice is in keeping with McIvor and O’Gorman’s conception of what devising means:

An umbrella term that describes a range of collaborative methodologies of creation that are characterised by collective dramaturgical input into the generation of new ‘work’, whether

original text, work of dance theatre or even adaption of a known work (McIvor and O'Gorman 2).

Devising also embraces the possibility that the place wherein the performance is to happen is already laden with meaning, that is, considering its architecture, social function, and other elements, such as the historic context of the work. For Govan et al. observe that “in such work, place becomes an important element within the artistic encounter and there is recognition that a space is not empty but full of meaning” (Govan et al. 120). Our act of devising created different montages, or several narratives that layered themselves on top of each other. For Hans-Thies Lehmann, this type of thinking positions the performance on a different dramatic level: “Montage dramaturgy [...] on which the reality level of character and events vacillates hazily between life and dream and the stage becomes a hotbed of spirits and quotes outside any homogenous space and time” (Lehmann "Heiner Müller's Spectres" 88). In the context of the autobiographical in our theatre making, it allowed me to fuse my own stories with the stories of others, or rather blend our own facts with other's fictions.

My dramaturg Kathy Donelan sat in on all the rehearsals (see Appendix 2) and contributed to the analysis of the script and the ways in which we all were crafting the performance as an ensemble. Though the role of the dramaturg is a relatively new one in the English-speaking world, European theatre has long upheld the tradition of the dramaturg as making an important contribution to the production of the play and its interpretation on stage (Luckhurst 9). The job of the dramaturg (among many others) revolves around the production of the live performance, in terms of “critiquing the script, completing historical/background research, monitoring unity in rehearsals and production meeting” (Irelan et al. xi). The dramaturg is an essential observer to the process of production, though ultimately his or her work may not be clearly seen in the final performance: in this sense it is almost a “ghost light” that shines throughout the work (Chemers 79). As well as contributing to the development of the script (in terms of editing different drafts) Kathy also researched around the performance, regarding its specific genealogy of practice. These learning

brought a further diversity to the production and the narrative than we were shaping collectively. Kathy prepared a bibliography of the performance which drew my attention to the relevance of the work of The Wooster Group and Forced Entertainment. I might have not drawn in the latter company so early had it not been for her wonderful dramaturgy, demonstrating again how a diversity of approaches to the subject of Irish food produced new knowledge, first in me, and then in the composition of the play. These new insights crafted new modalities of presentation. In this sense, the dramaturg contributed to many of the experimental aspects of the show: our vocal reaction to the text as if it were not ours, as if we were ghost figures in a forgotten drama on Irish food. The influence of the Wooster Group turned out to be a powerful force in our exploration of the text and the performance space. The Wooster Group regard the theatre “space as a field of revelation (social, political, or spiritual)” which creates a “tension between nature and culture and the relationship between inside and outside”: actors are “figures of speech” as opposed to “characters” (Marranca 1/5). I drew on all these ideas to explore what the script I had written could do in the physical and public arena of performance. I wanted the actors to embody the language of the play in a figural sense, to sidestep any attempt to impose characterization upon the lines, bringing the risk that audiences would see the views of Irish food being described as belonging to individual characters rather than an expression of something more communal.

Regarding rehearsals, we drew upon the strategy of the “pre-show” to open the play. This is a Frantic Assembly technique which allows the performers to manipulate the audience from the moment of their entry into the space (Graham and Hoggett 21), and it seemed appropriate for this play because audiences were being asked to approach this play without the interpretative strategies that they would normally use to determine plot, characterisation, etc. We decided to place a table with food (a salmon, a live lobster, brown bread etc.) in the centre of the performance space and invite the audience to sit amongst us. There were ten seats, of which four were taken by me, the two actors, and the dramaturg, and the other six left vacant for an audience to occupy. During the performance this “theatre of shared space”, as Lehmann refers to it, made the “body of the

spectator [...] a constitutive part of the staging (Lehmann *Postdramatic Theatre* 124). The idea of embodiment was also relevant to allowing the food (as props) affect the audience. It also brought chance elements into the performance because we could not predict what the audience around the table would do during the performance (this is, would they pick up the live lobster or eat the bread) Splitting the audience also gave two different spectator perspectives on the performance. Lighting was also an aspect of the “pre-show” as we were already seated on stage with lights up when the audience arrived. There was no curtain or darkness to separate our respective spaces.

In need of scaffolding for the movement of the piece, I drew on Bogart’s “Viewpoints”. Though we discussed many, three stood out in terms of trying to bring coherency to the rehearsals, namely “Tempo” (“how fast you perform an action”), “Repetition” (movement [...] determined by repeating someone else”) and “Kinaesthetic Response” (“your spontaneous physical reaction to movement outside yourself”) (Bogart and Landau 40-43).³⁷ We tested these “Viewpoints” physically and mentally, working the grid while simultaneously talking about what we were doing. We tried to respond physically and emotionally to each other by using eye contact and other aspects of touch. The most important was “Kinaesthetic Response”: not only in terms of our relationship to each other, but also to a voice over that was played as part of the performance. We responded to both kinaesthetically to bring greater meaning and signification to the performance.

In all, the rehearsal process opened the script to the material process of the performance. It also introduced the physical process of allowing food on stage. The imposition of food into the later rehearsals did initially cause an interruption into the actor’s movement, particularly the lobster. Though I discuss this at length in chapter two, the lobster became a particular focus point in the first iteration, due to the fact it was the only living prop (all the other food was either dead, such as the

³⁷ For Bogart and Landau, viewpoints are a philosophy translated into technique for (1) training performers; (2) building ensemble; and (3) creating movement for the stage. Viewpoints is a set of names given to certain principles of movement through time and space; these names constitute a language for talking about what happens onstage. Viewpoints is points of awareness that a performer or creator makes use (Bogart and Landau 7-8).

salmon or processed, such as the brown bread). The practice of the rehearsal contributed greatly to my PaR, creatively and analytically. Though the rehearsals were indeed extremely physically active, it did cause us to reflect, physically as well as mentally. The working through of the script, in terms of catering to its culinary and historical nuisance—to embed food in the theatrical practice—opened the creative process to the body, that corporeal aspect of theatre than is perhaps closer to the food that lay in front of us, of which we were trying to find a theatrical language to accommodate it.

1.3 The First Performance

The place of performance in relation to food practices is formative of numerous theatrical traditions (Chansky and White 3).

Though seemingly self-evident, the interrelationship of food with theatre and performance belies the complex material marriage between the two parties. Within every food act, whether the act of farming or consumption, for example, resides the possibility of its performance. In this sense, food is inherently performative in nature, adapting to its context to produce different meanings and modes of signification. Food on a farm does not mean the same as it does in a restaurant. Nor does food in a restaurant act in an equivalent manner. Food is contingent on its environment. The performance of *Irish Food. A Play* brought my thinking around food and theatre to a new realm, that of the stage. Bringing the play to the stage and the script to the performance transformed the idea of food as an abstraction into a material thing.

Due to my profession as a chef, the material signification of food was radically different to both actors and audience. My experience of food did not align itself with theirs, from the simple act of how the actors handled it in rehearsals to how the audience engaged with it on stage. In this

regard, there was a pedagogical aspect to the staging of food and to the language the play used. The actors/audience were not used to encountering food on stage, whether as a dead duck or a live lobster. Indeed, during the performance, I was the only one to touch the live lobster and the dead duck. This phenomenon exposed the artificial boundaries of otherness that food and animals often evoke but also the limits to using certain types of food in the theatre. In phenomenological terms, food on stage, “that object itself”, points not only to the private and public “context from which it emerges” in daily life but also evokes the “power structure, culture [and] system of signification” that manifests from its staging (Grant 9). This phenomenological aspect shall be considered more in chapter two regarding the affective capacity of food. However, it is sufficient to note how food function is a fluid manner on stage. “There are no universal values in theatre”, writes Rustom Bharucha; “there are only personal needs which get transformed into social and political actions, rooted in the individual histories of theatre” (Bharucha 68). Food codifies these personal needs, each actor, audience member brings with them an unconscious personal history of food that only arises when the object is uncovered.

The performance of the first iteration added another theatrical layer to the piece. This was due to the addition of many factors, such as stage lights, the audience, and the live props. All the practitioners that I have discussed above in my discussion of my lineage of practice observe how the audience add another dimension to the devised piece. For Bogart in particular:

An audience in the theatre should be engaged by the events but also slightly distressed about what is happening. The interactions, the words and the actions onstage have to be fresh and untamed and undismisable (Bogart 55).

We wanted to make the audience feel that they were a part of this performance. It was not something that they were watching, but rather something they were a part of, immersed into. The request by Kathy (my dramaturg) to invite six audience members to sit amongst us on the dinner table that we had set up (and then sit down herself and record the show with a tablet) was a direct

interjection by us, intended to break down the space between performer and audience and allow them to be within touching distance of the food. It also set the tone and “prepare[d] the audience for what is about to come” in the performance: namely, that the audience would be a part of this piece and that its viability? depended on their interaction. (Graham and Hoggett 47). As Grotowski observes, there is no performance without an audience, even if it is only one member, and the audience always contribute to the meaning of each performance (Grotowski 32). By placing several audience members on the table, we made the audience explicitly a part of the show and immersed them further into the play and to the food stuffs that were scattered around the table. The purpose of this decision was to shift the audience from a state of passive observation in their relationship with the food on stage to a heightened awareness of how the staged food affected them directly.

This interplay between audience, performance space and the body of the performer created a volatile energy which brought elements of performance art to the show and blurred the lines between the gaze of audience and what elements were part of the show. The decision to pre-record the script and interact with the text of the play (Appendix 5) and our own voices created a compelling spectral quality to the play and allowed us to focus on the food on stage and the audience who were seated around the table.



Figure 6: Recording the script of *Irish Food. A Play* in Aniar Restaurant, Galway on December 3rd 2018. From the left Fiona Wiedmann, Sarah Jane Woods (actors) and Cathy Donelan (Dramaturg). The session was recorded by Przemek Brosz (Sound Engineer).

Perhaps the most powerful aspect of this arrangement was the ways in which the physical and material conditions of food on the table and around the stage played a part in decentring the audience. Though we moved around the table and responded to our own pre-recorded voices, the food was a constant fascination for them. I had hoped to have a pig's head on stage, but this was not possible in the end due to availability. Pigs' heads are delivered to the restaurant once a week and the performance occurred the day before the delivery. My intention was to bring this physically grotesque object into the arena of the theatre to highlight the reality of food that we ignore or do not see in our daily lives. In the end, I had to suffice with covering my own face with a plastic pig's mask. This referred to the fact that we are akin to these animals in more ways than one and would become a central theme of investigating animals on stage and in performance.³⁸ This mask was also

³⁸ Our DNA is extremely close to that of the pig. Wild pigs organise their habits very early like hunter-gathers.

an intertextual reference to Pat McCabe's *The Butcher Boy* (1992), where the main character had a morbid fascination with pigs and their slaughter and ultimately transfers this process to people.



Figure 7: Pig's mask used in the performance of *Irish Food. A Play* (December 4th, 2018).



Figure 8: The author seated on the table just before the performance of *Irish Food. A Play* began.

Regarding the food on the table, the stage directions listed:

Possible props on table or in vicinity:

- Wild game
- Salmon
- Crab
- Lobster
- Seaweed
- Oysters
- Mussels
- Potatoes

- Flour
- Butter
- Soda bread
- Old bowls with kitchen implements
- Any other food stuff the text mentions (McMahon *Irish Food. A Play*).

The stage directions were kept vague because we did not know how many of those items we could source. The first challenge was using the dead duck. The stage manager, Mike O'Halloran, was rightly anxious about having a dead animal in the theatre due to health and safety reasons. I was surprised by his reaction as I had imagined that because it was a postdramatic performance we were seeking to challenge the boundaries and identity of theatre as well as liberate food from the experience of the restaurant and its everyday considerations. Consider Alan Read, *Theatre and Everyday Life: An Ethics of Performance* (2003):

The question I begin with is therefore an ethical one. Can theatre have value divorced from everyday life? Everyday life is the meeting ground for all activities associated with being human —work, play, friendship, and the need to communicate, which includes the expressions of theatre. Everyday life is thus full of potential—it is the 'everyday' which habitually dulls sense of life's possibilities. Theatre, when it is good, enables us to know the everyday in order better to live everyday life. Theatre is worthwhile because it is antagonistic to official views of reality (Read 1).

I was taken back by how theatrical administration (Where will the duck be? Who is going to touch it? How will you sanitise the area after you are gone?) took precedence over the performative possibilities of using a dead duck in the show. Indeed, we were instructed that the blanket that the duck lay on during the show was to be discarded after the show because of "possible contamination". When I look back on my production notebook entry for the night, it reads:

"What are you going to do with that?", the stage manager asks me. "Nothing, it's dead", I say. "I still want to know what going to happen with it", he replies. I imagined bringing food on stage would have been a more commonplace affair. But it's not. It's like I have been brought back to before the days of Alfred Jarry. Why can't a dead duck lie around on the theatre floor and do nothing. Is it not *allowed* to be a prop? Why can't crisps and oysters sit together? In my own world, they are far apart.

This initial conflict demonstrated that lack of understanding and the apprehensive nature that people have towards using animals on stage. It also illustrates how stage managers and other administrative individuals involved in the background of a play may fail to consider the performative possibilities of the play in the way that directors and playwrights do; and often see it in a much more utilitarian manner. This is not a criticism per se but an acknowledgement of the ways in which theatre often function is a fragmentary manner. The stage manager was right to ensure the protocol of the theatre even if delimited the potential of the piece, separation human from animal. This type of thinking regarding the separation of humans and animals is not confined to the theatre but dominates daily life. As philosopher John Gray writes:

For much of their history and all of prehistory, humans did not see themselves as being any different from other animals among which they lived. Hunter-gatherers saw their prey as equal, if not superiors, and animals were worshipped as divinities in many traditional cultures. The humanist sense of a gulf between ourselves and other animals is an aberration. It is the animist feeling of belonging with the rest of nature that is normal (Gray *Straw Dogs: Thoughts on Humans and Other Animals* 17)

After we had agreed where the duck would be located during the show (even though I did move it during the show, banging it violently on the table mid performance), we then argued about the inclusion of a live lobster. Asked what the lobster would do, I told the stage manager I did not know, as it was alive, and it could move freely. I think he imagined that it could run fast or jump as he

seemed visibly distraught. I found the stage manager's, the actors' and subsequently the audience's distinction between mussels, oysters, and the lobster most telling from a dramatic point of view. Even though the first two of those animals were also alive, they were disregarded because they could not move or that they were living creatures. This dichotomy characterises how audiences react to food in terms of organic/non-organic, human/non-human, raw/processed, or even living/dead. I will return to the affective quality of food in chapter two, but is it sufficient to say here that although all food has what Jane Bennett calls "vibrant materiality" audiences' own cultural background cuts through this materiality (Bennett *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things* ix). As Warren Belasco writes "food is so vague in our culture in part because, thanks to processing, packaging, and marketing, it is an abstraction" (Belasco 5). Perhaps it is the purpose of theatre to re-enchant our attitude towards food, towards a place where "the world comes alive as a collection of singularities" (Bennett *The Enchantment of Modern Life: Attachments, Crossings, and Ethics* 5). Indeed, there was much enchantment towards the food on the table, both in terms of the memories it evoked for the audience but also its singular materiality on stage.

In drafting the programme (Appendix 5), the actors and dramaturg insisted that we needed to include a warning regarding the animals in the show. It read: "Note: This performance may contain animals. No animals were harmed in the creation of this performance (McMahon "Irish Food. A Play (Programme)"). I resisted the inclusion of this remark as I felt it undermined the performative elements of the food and animals we include on stage and reduced the challenging impact that we were aiming to have upon the audience. If we told the audience that the play includes live and dead animals (as well as other food items) then the element of surprise would be lost. We debated the merits of this among ourselves, but regrettably our dramaturg concluded that due to safety and respect we should let the audience know what they were letting themselves in for in attending the performance. Due to my background in performance art, I felt that we were muting the most important theatrical elements of the play. If play programmes can be understood in and

conceptualised as a “placard” or a “public notice”, I felt we were using the programme to alert the audience to an aspect of the show that was important to retain as a surprise (Gowen 3-4).

The contested status of live animals and other food stuff would become an ongoing preoccupation with each new iteration, both in rehearsals and performance. I shall return to the ethical aspects of this in chapter two, but it is sufficient to say here that the actors were happy to include a duck that was already shot but not a duck shot for the performance. Though this distinction may appear at first to be a matter of semantics, it is an important facet of the production and of the problems that surround the issue of staging food. In ensuring no animals were harmed in the production of the play, the show relieved the audience of any responsibility towards the food in the performance. I may have wanted a physical engagement from the audience but most simply sat back and watched the show. This illustrates how the notion of audience responsibility revolves around trust. As Tim Etchells of Forced Entertainment writes:

I get excited by theatre and performance work that is brave enough to surrender control – trusting its audience to think, trusting that they will go useful places when they’re let off the leash of dramaturgical control, or even trusting that a trip through ostensibly not so useful places (boredom, drifting, free-association) can be more useful or constructive in the longer run. Trusting audiences, and opening space for them – its more than one kind of door that needs opening after all (Brine and Keidan 28-29).

Perhaps it was my own inexperience as a writer and director that prohibited me from letting go of the need to challenge the audience. It is curious how the gap between theatre and performance seems to be most prominent when it comes to animals on stage, particularly when it comes to anything that might be considered shocking. Though the focus of my PaR was not on the ontological differences that separate theatre and performance art, food and animals certainly weighed heavily on the threshold that separates their respective worlds.

In the end, though only four pages long, the programme, as well as listing the individuals involved in the production, and presenting several images and quotations from the play, contained a note from the dramaturg introducing the show:

Irish food. A Play originated with a questionnaire about food and the existing preconceptions of Ireland's history with food. The problems around this very issue trace back to ~~our lack of~~ ~~culture~~ troubled colonial past and attitudes towards food after the famine. Food became enriched into ~~to be enjoyed~~, to endure as a basic need, not something to savour and take pleasure from (McMahon "Irish Food. A Play (Programme)").

The dramaturg's use of the strikethrough underlined the difficulty of representing food in Irish history as well as leaving the audience to question their own attitude towards the idea. It also playfully captured the process of debate that had animated the development of the play in rehearsal. The dramaturg also included a quotation from Lehmann's *Postdramatic Theatre* as we felt it was important for the audience to understand the kind of theatre they would encounter:

The ~~dramatic~~ undramatic structure of the postdramatic has a significant influence over this performance. The work itself is immersive, the spectator will cross the boundary of the stage and sit among the performers (McMahon "Irish Food. A Play (Programme)").

While the information directed those audience members who chose to read it to the relevant aspects of the production, it may have detracted from the physical and material conditions of the play by too narrowly focussing the audience's interpretation of what they were seeing.

Following the first iteration, several core themes emerged through my PaR that I wanted to explore further in a second production. These issues became a core feature of my research that I worked through an autoethnographic lens that cut across food, drama, performance, theatre, and my own writing practice. In attempting to answer the question "why stage food in Ireland now?", my research touched on five primary aspects of the relationship between food and performance.

1. Interrogate our historical relationship to food on stage and its social significance.
2. What does it mean to stage food in Ireland?
3. Examine how food affects an audience when staged.
4. Investigate the consequences of staging animals, specifically the ethical and theatrical.
5. Assess how the spaces of theatre, performance and the restaurant interact, how they differ with each other and how this difference teaches us about their limits.

It was these five aspects of the first iteration that I carried towards the second, hoping to better clarify, or rather understand, the relationship of food on stage and its connection with the actors and audience.

The reaction to the show was mostly positive. Of course, the lobster did generate much post-performance discussion which subsequently coloured the further iterations. Most audience members registered reactions of nostalgia and indicated that the show evoked many food memories for them, particularly when place names were mentioned. Several did not understand the religious, historical, or political references in the play and felt they were unnecessary and distracted from the food narrative of the play. Others still saw it as a celebration of food. One audience member felt the play was unnecessarily provocative and was not about food at all but rather the audience's reaction to it – in that, food was the vehicle, and the reaction was more important. It did not help that this audience member was vegan, and they did not agree with the decision to include the animals on stage. They argued that the show aimed only to shock. While the inclusion of the lobster was certainly aiming at trying to shake people up slightly regarding their attitude towards food by making visible the fact that all food consumed by humans were once living, the effect of the entire show was an attempt to portray a certain vision of food in relation to my own practice and research. It was food “done through [...] by means of performance” as opposed to being about a play only food and our historical and contemporary eating habits (Richards n.p.). Nevertheless, the ethical objections

registered by this audience-member deserve consideration and are discussed in more detail in the subsequent chapters.

At the end of the performance, I concluded that another production to investigate food on stage was required to test the findings, especially those derived from the audience reaction. Though we were not in agreement regarding the direction of this production, we did agree that another attempt at the play was required to probe its inner intricacies. The other individuals involved in our company (subsequently named Turf productions) wanted to focus more on food as a “mad memory machine” that the actors would create for the audience (in a spirit of celebration and fun) while I wanted to further explore the signification of staging food and animals, looking at the more macabre overtones underlying our food history on the island of Ireland. My inclusion of a reference to the infamous 1642 massacre on Rathlin island by Covenanter Campbell soldiers of the local Catholic MacDonalds (they threw scores of MacDonald women and children over cliffs to their deaths on rocks below) testified to my own vision for the play:

- 2 soda bread is not a bread
- 3 it’s a fucking cake
- 2 a British man said that to me
- 3 on Rathlin Island
- 1 long before seaweed farms
- 2 they massacred everyone
- 1 men women and children
- 2 colonialism and famine (McMahon *Irish Food. A Play*)

The mixture of colonialism, famine, seaweed farming, and the argument regarding the status of soda bread all stem from my own involvement with food. Rathlin island is now home to a productive

seaweed farm called Islander Kelp run by Kate Burns. Seaweed production as food has a difficult history in Ireland and its failure to feed people during the famine is a notably anomaly in terms of our ability to feed ourselves during the period of British colonialism. Finally, a British baker once said to me that soda bread was not really a bread and was a symbol of “poverty” blind to the knowledge that his countries legacy has contributed to that poverty. Themes such as these were important to weave into the play in order to foment some type of historical consciousness of Irish food through playwrighting.

As I discuss below, the second rehearsal and production of the play would be characterised by the antagonisms produced between the two poles of food as memory and pleasure and food as historical and material things. The conception that food is embroiled in conflict does not sit easily in a theatre (or a restaurant for that matter). But again, a key finding derived from this conflict was that the representation of food inevitably involves contestation, partly because it evokes personal memories (nostalgia), partly because of ethical considerations (such as the objections of the vegan audience member), but also because of how food signifies so many things other than itself. The findings regarding the conflict that food produces in the theatre, the restaurant and the site of performance are discussed in chapter three.

1.4 Rehearsing the Play (Again)

We know nothing about a body until we know what it can do, in other words, what its affects are, how they can or cannot enter into composition with other affects, with the affects of another body (Deleuze and Guttari *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* 257).

The decision to stage *Irish Food. A Play* a second time arose from my desire to probe further the use and meaning of food on stage and to allow more interaction with the audience. As I indicated above, this was not the direction that the whole company wished to take. I also realised that we could not control the ways in which different foods would signify for different audience members – but that this was an important aspect of the play’s meaning-making. In his writing on theatre, Barthes writes that theatre can be seen as a “cybernetic machine” (Barthes *Critical Essays* 261). Once the curtain comes up, the play before a variety of simultaneous messages, from setting, costume, lighting to the actor’s positions and actions, their words, and gestures. Barthes’ statement foregrounds the “polyfunctionality of the theatrical sign” and the ways in which the audience receive and interact with these signs (Besbes 17). Due to the many ways food might mean, how could we assess what it meant for the audience, let alone the actors, director, and other company members? An observation from my rehearsal notes reads:

We begin with the script, but we do not stay there. We come together as an ensemble, even if slightly broken. We can’t hear each other. We’re pulling the play in different directions. I want there to be no characters. Irish theatre is so character driven. I want the actors to be ghosts, for the voices to come out of them with intonation. But this proves difficult. They keep slipping into accents that fill the room with nostalgia. Farming accents, rural accents. It makes the play sound like a parody of itself. I try to get them to do it without affect. To let the words just speak. But it’s impossible. All I hear is Boucicault. In a way that is what the audience want, desire.

How do we tackle nostalgia while remaining critically distanced from its soporific power? If memory is, as Walter Benjamin observes, not a way of surveying the past but “its theatre”, how can that be explored theatrically? (Benjamin xi). How can theatre force us to facilitate a different conception of the past regarding Irish food? My PaR attempted to answer this question in the form of creative iterations in playwrighting.

Since the rehearsals took place in Dublin, I could not be there as much as I wanted. The direction of the performance began to move in a trajectory that I felt I could not control. Though we had agreed that the play would be staged in a restaurant and the audience would be seated in the dining area with the action of the play taking place around them, the role of food shifted slightly. In the previous iteration we had not fed the audience. Now we decided we would feed the audience at certain intervals in the text. The intention of this feeding was to further cement the presence of food in terms of the audience's minds and bodies – while also heightening the audience's sense of complicity in the consumption of food. It was through that the embodied experience of eating would bring the play to the next level regarding its exploration of staging food. The second iteration was produced professionally, as part of Dublin Fringe Festival. This placed it in a milieu in which people were paying for tickets and subjected the play to nationwide attention. This second iteration marked a shift from the experimental first iteration. SJ Woods who acted in the first iteration produced the show. She picked the director and did the casting. Another difficulty, as I have already intimated above, was with the vision of the director, Romana Testasecca who continually attempted to place a dramatic structure on the play. It was hard to sidestep this conflict and although the play would never become a realistic depiction of Irish food, the director began to shape the text as if it had a beginning, middle and an end, as well as to attempt to mould the actors into distinct characters. They can be seen in the ways in which she divided the text into sections (Appendix 6). This caused problems with me and other company members but due to our time constraints (and the distance between myself and the rehearsals) they were difficult to resolve. Initially, I conceived of the job of the actors as being task-based. This type of practice is quite common in postdramatic theatre productions:

A lot of the work is driven by task, not driven by character psychology as the sheer fascination of watching the animal activity on stage is what's often so much more appealing. So, knowing that these people have got tasks, a sense of purpose is really crucial. What's true of so many shows is that there's an intention in performance which is very direct. It's

not about flannel, it's not about psychology, it's not about wrestling with internal motivations, it's a very real practical solution being delivered in the moment (Crossley and Yarker 174).

The lobster was also side-lined from the show, and I had to argue strenuously that it must be included. The actors were refusing to hold the lobster and the director wasn't sure of its role in the play. She also imagined that it could jump at people and believed it to be a danger to the audience. Lastly, the stage manager was an "ethical vegan" (this was how she described herself) and believed that the practice of including animals in performance was not only cruel but also served no theatrical purpose other than to shock and offend. I did despair at all this and felt that my research questions were being thrown out. All I could do was meet with the actors and try and direct them towards what I believe to be the salient themes/purposes of the play. The result of this meeting attest to the difficulty of PaR through performance due to the fact it involves so many people, while also showing the tensions that exist between PaR dedicating exclusively towards research and performance that is part of a ticketed professional theatre event. While I imagined I did get through to the director and the actors, the subsequent results did not demonstrate any learning on their part. The actors kept falling back into imagined characters and the director continue to pursue to encapsulate the play in a more traditional dramatic structure.

Starting to despair regarding the fragmentary nature of the play and the conflict between our troupe, I created a survey to assess or at least document the audience's feeling, thoughts, and reactions about the show. This survey, which was conducted on *SurveyMonkey*, included the following five questions:

1. What is your own experience of Irish food?
2. What were your expectations of the play? Did they differ from the actual performance?
Has the play changed your attitude towards Irish food?
3. How did the use of food in the performance affect you?

4. What affected you more: the food in the play, the actor's performance, or the language of the play?
5. How was your experience of eating during a theatrical performance? Did you find it unusual?

At least I imagined, if the show was going in a direction I could not control, I could still assess the impact of staging food on the audience for my PaR. These questions subsequently informed the direction of my PaR in terms of forcing on the affective value of staging food and the conflict that occurs when you take food out of the restaurant and place in it a theatrical space. Ultimately, the need to control my work (as a playwright, researcher, and theatre practitioner) was challenged. However, this was not necessarily a negative outcome. What does it mean to surrender authorial control? What can we learn from that regarding how playwright and ensemble interaction? The director's desire to shape the work and the actors' desire to have characters show how they ultimately wanted to put a narrative around food to make it (no pun intended) more palatable to the audience. This is an important finding here as it demonstrates the challenges to postdramatic theatre currently cascading through theatre productions. As Fuchs observes above, the return to the dramatic in theatre is already well under way. Though character driven drama has never entirely faded from sight despite the theatrical experiments of the twentieth century, the desire for its return in the direction of my play forced me to reconsider my own theatrical genealogy. However, from the actor's point of view I understood why they wanted structure and agency, as it would be easier to learn the lines and allow themselves to become embodied in the play. This failure, or failing, of the postdramatic, is indeed one of its biggest challenges going forward into the twenty first century. Though Lehmann argues that the "dramatic mode of theatre [...] is very unlikely to be reanimated in the future", my PaR demonstrates that the demise of the desire of psychological agency from actors and directors is far from over (Lehmann "'Postdramatic Theatre', a Decade Later" 43).

1.5 The Second Performance

Dublin is as ever only more so. You ask for a fish & they give you a piece of bog oak

(Beckett *The Letters of Samuel Beckett. Volume 1: 1929-1940* 240).

The second iteration of *Irish Food. A Play* took place on September 15th, 2019, as part of the Dublin Fridge Festival. We converted one of the dining spaces in Taste, one of Dylan McGrath's restaurants on Georges Street, into a makeshift performance area. There would be no separate stage space, as the first iteration. Rather there would be the singular space of the restaurant where the actors would perform, and the audience would be seated. The act created an immersive atmosphere, as the actors literally performed around and through the audience. This act of immersion was important to create a sense of togetherness and a connection between actor and audience. "Immersion" often gives an audience a sense of "investment" and an "extension of agency" (Westling 73). Placing the audience in the performance space also positioned them in close proximity to the food that was included in the play (as well as the food they would eat). This collapse in terms of a spatial distinction between actor and audience is quite typical of a postdramatic strategy, whereby "the work's relationship with the audience seems to be more important than they previously pursued hierarchy between text and performance" (Radosavljevic 23).

It was decided that we would have food on the table as patrons arrived and then we would serve food in between the first and second act. We wanted the audience to share the food to create a common pact with each other. We also wanted the audience to sit face to face (as opposed to sitting face forward looking at a stage). The act of sharing food, that is, the concept of commensality, was an important feature to try and engage with in this iteration. This was because we could not explore it in the first iteration due to the format of the play in a more traditional black box setting. This exploration of commensality led to my interest in the concept of feasting, an idea that is a

bridge between the experience of eating and the theatrical experience itself. I shall return to this idea of feasting at the end of this section as it impinged upon other aspects of the second iteration. Regarding the idea of commensality, another food play *TableTalk*, (December 2nd, 2016) written and developed by Ana-Christina Acosta Gaspar de Alba and Danielle Laurin, used the idea to structure a series of scenes between two characters in different locations:

In *TableTalk*, a multi-location one-act play in development, my creative partner Danielle Laurin and I explore this concept by having two characters who are in a long-distance relationship regularly eat dinner together via Skype. This is dramatized by having each performer in a separate performance location (A and B) with a separate audience. Like their characters in the narrative, the performers experience the unique challenges of a long-distance relationship by acting against a partner who is virtually rather than physically present. Likewise, each audience group encounters one performer who is physically present and one who is virtually present (de Alba 32).

By getting the audience to sit and eat together, we sought to create a sense of togetherness amongst them. This sense of togetherness was further established by their ability to discuss both the food and the play during the intervals as food was served. For Bert O. States, theatre is an act of “equivalences”, a way in which to sidestep “our ontological isolation from the things of the world” (States *The Pleasure of the Play* 29). But does this happen when we stage food? To a certain degree, yes. When people entered the theatre/restaurant for our second performance of *Irish food. A Play* food already lay before them. And though they were spatially “equivalent” to that food, many did not know if they could eat it. We had to tell the audience that they could eat it. This is understandable given the audience’s own trepidation. Was this food part of the show? Was it just a prop? Or was it more than that? What is more than a prop in relation to theatre? In her own food orientated play *Cake* (2003), Sarah Woods involved the act of baking a cake within the play. Writing of her experience of the production of the play, she spoke of the audience’s reaction to the play:

“On stage, activities like making food [and] eating ... become voyeuristic and make us think about ourselves. As a writer you’ve got to allow for people’s reactions (Hemming 15). I encountered a similar effect as the audience seated down facing each other in front of their food. In writing the second versions of the play, I had overlooked how the role of food would play out during the performance. I suppose I transplanted my idea of how food plays out in the restaurant and assumed it would follow a similar principle. Again, this is a key learning that arose from my PaR and is discussed in chapter four. For Chanksy and White, Woods’ play “expresses the tension between the story and the prop, the potential rupture of an audience’s willing suspension of disbelief by an all-too-real aspect of the mise-en-scène” (Chanksy and White 1). By placing the food into the performance space before the audience arrived, we allowed the audience’s interest to fluctuate between the symbolic and theatrical signification of the food and its embodiment as a material thing. This conceptual food triad can be visualized as seen in fig. 9. The embodied exploration of this triad was visible as audience members negotiated the food in front of them.

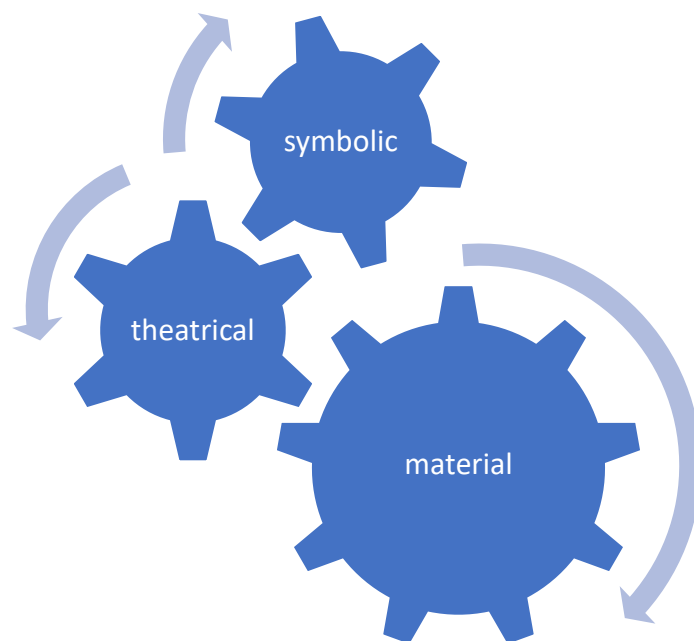


Figure 9: Conceptual triad of staged food



Figure 10: Audience members eating and interacting at the beginning of the performance of Irish Food. A Play (September 15th, 2019).

For the duration of the performance, I situated myself in the kitchen to ensure the food was ready on time and that the standard was satisfactory.



Figure 11: The author preparing pineapple and cheese in the kitchen of the Restaurant (15th September, 2019).

The food in the show causes a little confusion, as certain members of the audience imagined that they would be having a tasting menu akin to the one in our Michelin-starred restaurant. As can be clearly seen the food was quite simple. The intention behind this choice of presentation was due to a number of factors. Firstly, there was the issue of cost and labour. By all means, the food could have been more complex given the time and the staffing to achieve this in the context of the play. Secondly, I wanted to alienate the audience slightly by making the serving of the food both sincere and absurd.



Figure 12: A sample of food for the second performance of Irish Food. A Play (September 15th, 2019)

Several members of the audience assumed that they were in a restaurant space and asked for napkins and a change of cutlery. This led to several members of the audience being irritated (because we had collapsed the boundaries between the restaurant and the theatre creating conflict in the minds of the audience) but also upset the assumed conventions of everyday dining. The collapse of these conventions drew my attention to the ways in which context plays an important part in the experience of eating as well as the embodied knowledge of preparation, delivery, and consumption of that food. Though we accommodated the wishes of a number the audience at the beginning of the play by giving them napkins and knives and forks to match the food that they were eating, we soon abandoned this practice, not only due to technical concerns but due to the fact, as the stage designer remarked, that “we were not in a restaurant” (even though we were, we weren’t). This conflict of context, which I explore in chapter four, emerged as one of the key cruxes of these iterations of my PaR. It led me to reconsider the separations that our upheld in our daily lives between different spaces such as restaurants, theatres, and galleries: all of which can contain

food, both as an aesthetic object and as something to eat in terms of nourishment. Why do we separate these cultural spaces so much?

The menu (Appendix 8) included food mentioned in the play as well as staples of Irish country cooking, such as bacon and cabbage, potato soup, and brown soda bread and butter. Having to add allergen information to the menu was an interesting process. Though this is something we do in the restaurant, I somehow (wrongly) imagined that these procedures would not be necessary for the theatre. The proscription of this process did take away from the playful approach of the production though it demonstrated that there are cross overs in terms of how food is encountered in the theatre and the restaurant. Food safety is paramount in both the theatre and the restaurant. As we included shellfish in the show, it was imperative that we made sure the audience knew this in case someone had an allergy. Improvisation has its limits when it comes to food, particularly in the realm of a spontaneous performance, involving a possible food product that may make an audience member sick. This was an important finding regarding the use of food in theatre and performance.

It was not until the final dress rehearsal that I realised the script had been changed slightly by the director. The play had been divided into named sections and the ending had been modified. I also realised that the lobster had been completely left out of the show. After numerous discussions, it was decided that the lobster would be left on a gold colour blanket at the top of the show and then removed just before the actors entered the performance space.

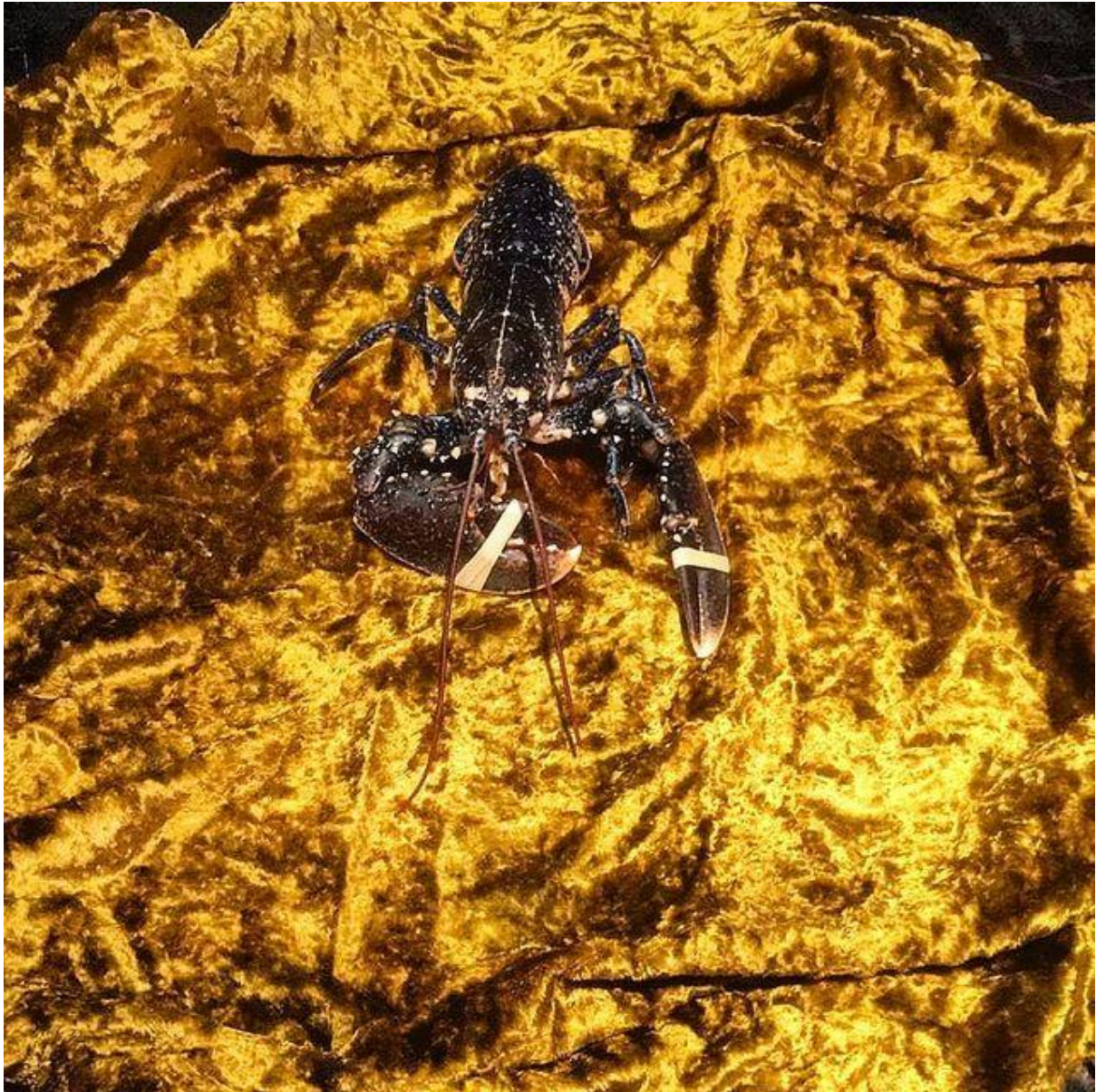


Figure 13: Lobster in *Irish food. A Play* (September 15th, 2019)

Though I was not happy with this outcome, I did not want to sacrifice the show for the sake of the lobster. The fear that the lobster instilled in the director and actors was unnerving and made me question not only my own position of using a lobster in the show but also their own position of ignorance regarding the capabilities of the animal. The attitudes of actors and directors demonstrated a dysfunctional attitude towards food. In truth, I had not asked the actors, director, or stage manager to sign contracts regarding what was required of them, though this would become a

requirement of the third iteration of the play that was intended to take place in March 2020. The fact that a vegan stage manager ended up in a show about food and sought to impose their views on it was detrimental towards the performative possibilities of the play, though again highlights the contested nature of the subject matter. In retrospect, the conditions of the production and what the team have a right to say once they have taken on the job should have been discussed in the hiring process.

As the quotation from playwright Samuel Beckett which opens this section states, cutting through the symbolic view of food in Ireland is a difficult process. However, engaging in a literalist or materialist view of food is also awkward. While the literal use of food in the first iteration was solely my decision, attempt to use animals in this production met with the scorn of the director, stage manager and actors. It is strange how when we encounter animals that we see their mortality in terms of our morality. "Morality", writes philosopher John Gray, "is not a set of laws or principles. It is a feeling" (Gray *Straw Dogs: Thoughts on Humans and Other Animals* 42). This feeling in turns affects the ways in which we contrast or conceptualise the space of the theatre. That the affectivity of food should alter our idea of what the theatre can achieve will be considered in the chapter three.

Many audience members were taken aback by the political dimension of food in the play. As one character in *Irish food. A Play* observed: "I was a house wife. A fucking house wife" (McMahon *Irish Food. A Play*). This explicit statement challenges the audience's idea of the silent domestication and engendering of food in Ireland in the 1970s and 1980s where women were often expected to stay at home and provide (i.e., cook and clean) for their family. Furthermore, the fact that Catholics and Protestant ate different foods is often completely neglected in cultural histories. Politics and food are something that have mostly ignored in Ireland if not as a whole in western society. From my production notebook:

Why is there so much politics in your play, an audience member asks me? What has food to do with politics? Everything! We don't want to see the politicization of food. But it's in our blood. Since the famine. And long before – "To Hell or to (barren) Connacht".

The role of woman in Irish society was also topical in the post-performance discussions of the play. The play mentions the infamous 1937 Irish constitution which situates women in the home. This was a veritable imprisonment of a whole section of society who were stigmatised if they worked. Article 41.2 reads:

1° In particular, the State recognises that by her life within the home, woman gives to the State a support without which the common good cannot be achieved.

2° The State shall, therefore, endeavour to ensure that mothers shall not be obliged by economic necessity to engage in labour to the neglect of their duties in the home.

Due to the ways in which we structured the audience space (so that they were facing each other) and allowed them to share to food, another issue which arose from the second iteration revolved around the idea of feasting. Food, or rather the act of eating, is inherently political: though it may not appear to be so. As archaeologist Katheryn C. Twiss observes, "politics is one of the most commonly discussed topics in the archaeology of food" (Twiss 98). Though the political manifestation in the play was both in the text and in the way that we organised the seating of the audience, nearly all audience members failed to realise the implicit political nature of facing each other and sharing food. "Feasts are inherently political" observes Michael Dietler in his book *Feasts: Archaeological and Ethnographic Perspectives on Food, Politics and Power* (2001). Through the theatrical nature: "We become something other when we eat, we transform into what we want ourselves to be, as well as to try and elevate ourselves" (Dietler 172). The oysters in the show played this role. Eating oysters is an elemental experience as the diner/audience-member is eating something that is alive, that is still living. But there is also a status attached to the eating of the oyster. There is a cultural and symbolic capital wrapped up in its eating: the prestige attached to

“knowing” how to eat it; or what Pierre Bourdieu refers to a “habitus” that links class and taste (Bourdieu 170). Though we imagine the theatre as a classless space, class contaminates the theatre and was one of the reasons why the consumption of food gradually disappeared from theatres in the late nineteenth and twentieth century. Referring to a *New York Times* article from 1867, Christine Woodworth and Amy E. Hughes observe:

The author’s description of the audience’s eating habits suggests that the lack of food consumption served as a sign of refinement and class. His disdain for these ill-mannered, intellectually inferior spectators is communicated through his description of the “crunching” of peanuts under their feet and their “furtive sucking of oranges” (“Cheap Amusements” 24 Oct. 1867). Moreover, the writer implies that people who eat (or sleep) during the entertainment do so because they lack the capacity to “[savour] complication in dialogue or plot.” In other words, lower-class spectators eat because they cannot digest the play (Woodworth and Hughes 258).

These class constructions regarding the consumption of food continues to this day in most major theatres around the world. However, this distinction does not exist in the cinema where food is sold to patrons and is consumed on site.

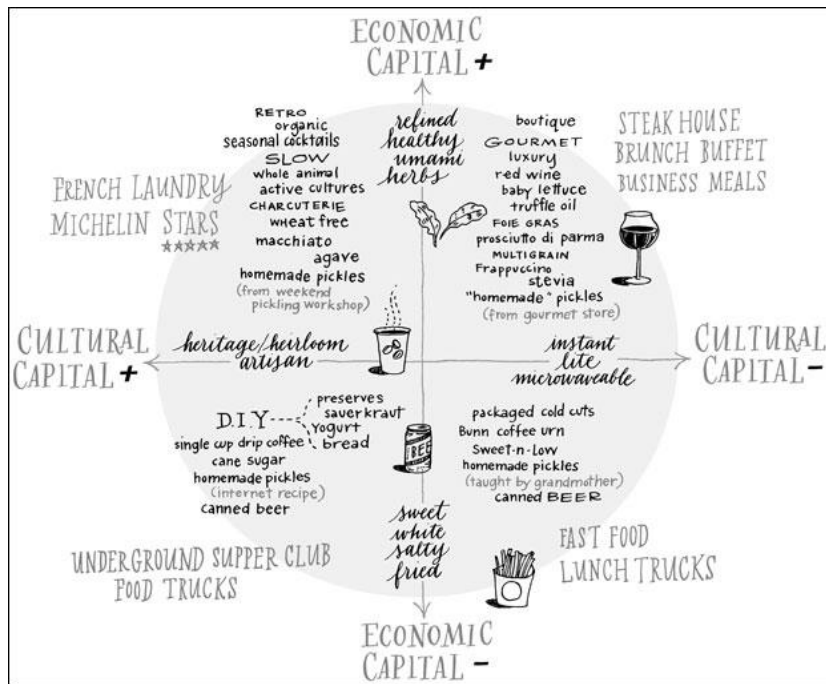


Figure 14: Chart adapted from Bourdieu's *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* (1979), showing the taste of food against economic capital and cultural capital. © Gastronomica.

One audience member exclaimed “where is my oyster” at the beginning of the show even though we had not given an oyster to everyone, just laid them on the table. Feasting requires consent, as does theatre. Both build consent and forge subjects.

In the aftermath, the core issues that hampered the second performance were the inclusion of the lobster (in terms of the ethics of using it, but also the company’s ignorance of its capacities) and the conflict with the director (in terms of her imposition of authorial intention in a postdramatic script). In the end, communication broke down between the director and me regarding the use of the lobster in the performance and in terms of the meaning of the food in the performance and in the text, to the point where I resigned the battle. Both issues, which are considered in subsequent chapters, revolve around limitations of theatre revolve around ethics, in terms of the affect and expectation of both actors and audience. Theatre is not performance art as my PaR visibly demonstrated. If performance art confronts the audience with the “physical presence of the artist in

real time and [...] ceases to exist the moment the performance is over” then the procedural nature of theatre delimits its ability to transcend representation (Goldberg 19). Despite the myriad of attempts to combine or align the two, the invisible procedures that operate under each produce different means and ends. Of course, given different conditions, the show could have gone in different ways. Perhaps it was the loss of ambivalence in the production that generated the conflict between the production crew, actors, and me.

This tension, between contemporary theatre and performance art, is not an unusual feature. I could not get actors to tear the arms off a lobster to “represent” something, or even to hold it. I could not feed the audience against their will. The act, in this case, is the thing itself. Or rather, it collides with itself. This cuts through the boundaries that we have erected from theatrical performance. Actual food on stage, on in and among the audience, cuts through symbolizations. It is no longer just representation, or rather it goes beyond representation. It is no longer a prop and hovers somewhere between an idea and a material thing. As the audience eat, the food on stage affects that difference and impinges upon their sensibility, their memory. It breaks the “distraction of the real” (Hurley 38). This act encompasses the intentionality of the event which happens on stage. Food on stage ruptures the silent accord that resides between actors and audience.

1.6 Conclusion

By acknowledging that the very process of transposition of reality onto the stage will throw up its own limitations and potential accusations on the groups ‘manipulation of facts’, it is possibly more honest to once again seek to stay faithful to the language of the theatre which renders the real life story into a metaphorical framework, rather than to maintain a claim to complete authenticity (Radosavljevic 137).

If one of the objects of theatre, according to Baz Kershaw, is to produce a “performance commons” then this commons is certainly antagonistic by an application of the post-dramatic and an introduction of food into the performance space (Kershaw *Theatre Ecology: Environments and Performance Events* 14). Notions of acceptability do not share the same criteria: actors, directors, and audience (as well as other stagehands) do not harbour some type of collective objectivity in all cases. Regarding my PaR, I did not foresee encountering issues regarding the staging of food through a postdramatic lens. Indeed, I was shocked to witness reactionary judgement regarding the language of the play and the way in which it was presented. Even those audience members who mistakenly associated the play with my work in the restaurant, were deeply confused regarding the violent language and the use of the food in the play. Food is a deeply personal and cultural experience for all, but for many it must remain as a prop or metaphor: that is, it should be kept at a distance and not folded into cultural politics or private spaces. Like language, food is a shared social practice of closely knit communities. To paraphrase Wittgenstein regarding language, food “has no single essence, but a vast collection of different practices each with its own logic” (Grayling 67). Of course, my PaR attempted to cut across these practices. But little did I realize that the theatre is not some utopian engine that can administer the cure. Not only can theatre hardly accept the many motivations of performance art, that is, its ephemeral and physically transgressive nature, but turned into a quasi-restaurant, confusion sets in. The space of performance alters out attitudes to food while also harbouring our deep seated cultural and habitual codes.

Covid-19 further displaced subsequent iterations of *Irish Food. A Play*. As I noted in my introduction, a production planned for March 2020 had to be cancelled. This production was to tackle ongoing concerns which arose from the second performance. However, two other iterations grew out of the play, specifically looking at the staging of lobsters and then tension between performance art and theatre. These subsequent iterations are discussed in chapter four regarding

how staged food affects us differently than in a restaurant and how animals, specifically a lobster in the case of my own iterations, causes much conflict to the context that you find it in, whether that is a restaurant or a theatre.

Chapter 2: Food on Stage

2.1 Introduction

What difference would it make to public health if eating was understood as an encounter between various and variegated bodies, some of them mine, most of them not, and none of which always gets the upper hand? (Bennett *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things* ix).

What if we were to consider the act of eating, as Bennet argues, as act between “various” bodies: our own and others? Would this alter the ways in which food affects us? The pursuit of staging food in the two iterations of *Irish Food. A Play* led me to focus on two central avenues of investigation: that is, the signification and affective value of staging, and the question of how staged food creates a conflict of context in the ways in which it makes meaning depending on the space in which it is presented. Both these avenues were important for framing the autoethnographic study of my plays. It was these questions that allowed me to frame my “personal histories” of food in the “larger socio-cultural frameworks and to take steps to make [my] own experiences a lens through which other experiences can be pulled into focus” (Freeman 181). This chapter considers how food makes meaning on stage for the audience, actors and those involved not only in the production of my food-oriented plays but more generally and argues that this process of making meaning in turn produced affective states which contribute to our understanding of how food operates in a theatrical space. The affective level of food is linked to a multitude of theatrical signification systems, from the language of the play to the props, lighting, and the presentation of the food in temporal and spatial terms. How food affects the whole theatrical ensemble, that is, everyone involved in the production, is deeply tied to the ethics of its representation, to the question of how it is prepared and displayed. Staged food cannot sidestep cultural codes of food representation. If anything, it exposes those

codes and produces conflict in terms of the ways the audience interact with both the actual food and any language about food used in the play. These ethics cannot be reduced to any one set of guidelines; they are deeply cultural and contingent on the specific context of the show.

Food and theatre affects its audience in similar ways, in terms of evoking everything on a broad spectrum from nostalgia to action and aspiration: both allow guests and diners “to travel without moving, experiencing other places and times, and in some cases entirely new worlds, through the embodied exercise of their mental, sensory, and affective mimetic faculties” (Hunt 141). Whether this happens at a conscious or subconscious level, we cannot deny that food operates to an extremely affective degree in terms of its impact on feeling. In the theatre, or any space that highlights either the affective or aesthetic aspects of food, such as a restaurant or gallery, these affective qualities are brought to the fore by means of highlighting the object, often in isolation. Affect, according to Nicolas Ridout, is the “drive that seems to be the basis of theatre” (Ridout 158). Theatre is an affect-machine that focuses on our feelings and other neurological impulses, such as desire and memory. Food plays into these impulses by activating not only memories and desires but also the immanent feelings that audiences receive when confronted with food. For Gilles Deleuze, affect is that which operates on the level of immanence or becoming, producing an affect for both thought and experience. For Daniel Smith affect is “actualised at every moment [but is] nonetheless in constant variation” (Smith 62). In *Irish Food. A Play*, I explored immanence in two different ways: firstly, feeding the audience, and secondly by inserting food into the performance. Plays which engage in their own “immanent theatricality” in terms of the performance space and its audience make up part of the what Lehmann calls an “alternative dramaturgy” (Lehmann *Postdramatic Theatre* 6). Thus, affect and the postdramatic are closely aligned in terms of my PaR. My argument in this chapter, then, is that the postdramatic quality of *Irish Food. A Play* lent itself to an immanent approach due to the absence of characters and a concrete setting, which in turn allowed the food to be more directly affective to the audience. The success of the play resided in its ability to engage the audience and stimulate their minds and bodies regards the food served and discussed in the play.

This affective encounter is always an ethical one because of the ways in which we affect objects and are in turn affected by them: it does not depend on some external sphere but on the affective body “by its organs and its function” (Deleuze and Guttari *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* 257). Affect blends the personal and the impersonal, the intimate and the foreign producing undesired intensities. Food on stage operates in a similar manner as it is both personal and impersonal. For Patricia T. Clough, Deleuze and Guttari “conceptualize affect as pre-individual bodily forces augmenting or diminishing a body’s capacity to act and who critically engage those technologies that are making it possible to grasp and to manipulate the imperceptible dynamism of affect” (Clough 207). Food staged in front of the audience member will activate the senses in a direct manner. It may also bring about conflict and contradictions. Should they eat it? It is part of the show, or just ancillary? Are they allergic or disgusted by the food in front of them? Could this disgust ruin their appreciation of the play? Are there religious traditions that debar them from partaking? These, and other conflicts, emerged multiple times over the course of the two iterations of *Irish Food. A Play*, and clearly reveal the cultural underpinnings that determine the performance of food. For Rustom Bharucha, writing in *Theatre and the World: Performance and the Politics of Culture* (1993/2003), it is only in thinking about our “own collisions of culture, the shock of these moments, the lessons learned from them, the transformations possible through them [...] that we can begin to search for what is *real* in theatre” (Bharucha 250). Though we may not be agreed on which reality is at stake in the theatre, and the reality of food is deeply multiple depending upon where people reside in its industry, the collisions and shocks of staged food create transformations that ultimately teach us more about how food operates in the wider cultural sphere, in particular the cross-fertilization of food between theatre and the restaurant. It is the findings of these questions that demonstrate the contribution to new knowledge that this thesis offers regarding food in the theatre.

The first section of this chapter investigates phenomenological and semiotic models of drama to illustrate how food operates on stage. As food affects the audience as both a sign and in an embodied manner, it is important to delineate this occurrence and place my own PaR in relation to

different semiotic and phenomenological models of theatre and performance. There is a multitude of investigations using these methodologies to examine the theatrical experience and the experience of food in and off themselves, but very few that examine the two experiences together.³⁹ The second section of this chapter builds on these models and investigates how food, and its language affected the audience in *Irish Food. A Play*. To answer this question, I draw on affect theory, engaging with the work, among others, of Brian Massumi and Eve Sedgwick, specifically in relation to theatrical practice and performance art. When staged, food that is served throughout the performance affects the audience through different channels, from the body and language: it creates “space, mobilizations of heat and energy, a series of choreographed gestures, a distinctive assemblage of affective propulsions. (Bennett *The Enchantment of Modern Life: Attachments, Crossings, and Ethics* 12). Staging food is full of moments of surprise, moments that both reflect and transform the audience and performers’ lived experience of food in their daily lives. Food forces bodies to react in ways that cannot easily be controlled. It places people, and therefore the actors and audience, into in-between states. Audiences bring memories and desires about food into the theatre, and those memories and desires are in turn affected and altered anew. The aim of these theoretical discussions is to situate my own practice in the wider discourse of theatre as well as elucidating the findings of my PaR. By exploring the ways in which food can affect in performance, we can utilize these learnings to understand how it signifies in other environments such as the restaurant, the gallery, or the site of performance art. The learnings that these two methodologies offer contribute to the overall methodology of autoethnography in this thesis as they allow for a greater understanding of how food operates in my own practice as a chef and restaurateur. If as Freeman argues that “the logic of autoethnography is that the act of writing about the self will

³⁹ On Theatre and Phenomenology, see for example Daniel Johnston, *Phenomenology for Actors: Theatre-Making and the Question of Being* (Intellect Books, 2021); Stanton Garner, *Bodied spaces; Phenomenology and Performance in Contemporary Drama* (Cornell University Press, 1995/2019) and Bleeker, M., Sherman, J.F. and Nedelkopoulou, E. eds. *Performance and Phenomenology: Traditions and transformations* (London, Routledge, 2015). On Theatre and Semiotics, see for example M. Carlson, *Theatre semiotics. Signs of Life* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1990) and Erika Fischer-Lichte *The semiotics of theatre* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1992).

always contain more than the self” then any investigation into writing my own food practice into the theatre will reveal more than just the sum of my practice (Freeman 183). The inward investigations of my PaR thus articulate outward demonstrations that reflect cultural bias and how the affective value of food is understood in a dramatic situation.

This chapter concludes with an examination of the consequences of staging animals, analysing the ethical and theatrical aspects in relation to my PaR but also pointing ways forward for other forms of research. I ask, what are the ethics of using lobsters in performance or on stage? Is this different from using a lobster in a restaurant? Can they be theatrical; that is, can their intentions chime with the purposes of the performance? Are they actors or only acted upon? Or can they only be themselves? In investigating this in relation to my own PaR, I also draw on two others of my own plays, performed as part of my PhD, namely *Dante.Beckett.Lobster* and *Killing Lobsters*. These ideas in these other iterations grew out of *Irish Food. A Play* and represent a further questioning on the idea of staging food in the context of a postdramatic environment and how this alters our understanding of its representation in the space of the restaurant and an autoethnographic understanding of animals. For Nicolas Ridout, there are “no theatrical dynasties of animals” (Ridout 97). When we go to the theatre, we usually expect to see humans, not animals.⁴⁰ But this is not altogether correct. If anything, animals, and the food they turn into, are that “dangerous supplement” that Derrida writes off, regarding theatre. It demonstrates its potential limits. Perhaps a new era of animals can bring about a new ecological condition of theatre: a theatre more in tune with ethical and sustainable issues regarding food and its environment: how we produce it, present it, and ultimately consume it. Theatre needs to let the outside in as opposed to merely representing it.

⁴⁰ Though both Ridout (2006) and Tait (2015) list the circus as a theatrical experience where people expect to see animals, they both acknowledge that the parameters for audience expectations of the circus ultimately make it a different experience to that of the theatre.

2.2 Food as Phenomenon and Sign

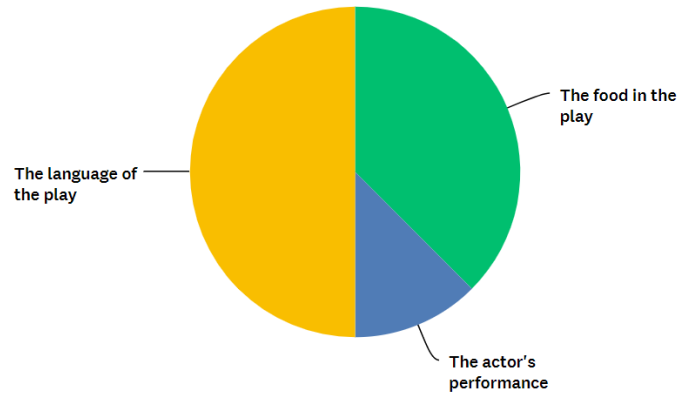
Phenomenology's primary concern is with the engagement in lived experience between the individual consciousness and the real which manifests itself not as a series of linguistic signs but as sensory and mental phenomena – the 'world' as encountered in perception and reflection rather than the 'earth' as things in themselves. In this way, the emphasis is on the presence of unconcealing of the world for consciousness rather than its absence through language, and therefore the interplay with the real rather than its inevitable deferral. Phenomenology is concerned with truth, no matter how mediated, provisional and revisable (Fortier 32).

The conflict between phenomenological and semiotic models of theatrical production chimes neatly with the ways in which actual food and its linguistic equivalent battle it out for our bellies and minds both in the restaurant and the theatre. As Fortier's comment demonstrates above, the difference between embodied phenomena and the way in which they are mediated is a crucial point for phenomenologists in their search for truth. This conflict has subsided in recent years with work from scholars such as Chiel Kattenbelt looking for ways in which to combine elements of both where "meaning reveals itself in experience rather than in an isolated object" (Bleeker et al. 4). For Kattenbelt, theatre (and thus performance) operates "as the stage of intermediality"; that is, not as a composite or dramatic art but as something which pulls different media together in order that we may comprehend its signs and materiality (Chapple and Kattenbelt 38). Staged food is positioned well to work itself between these two poles. In my own play many of the audience were spilt over which affected them more: the food in the play or the language of the food in the play. The graph below shows that 50% of the audience members who responded to the survey were affected by the

language of the play, most of which is about food, while 37.5% were affected by the food served during the play and used in the performance.

What affected you more?

Answered: 16 Skipped: 1



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
▼ The food in the play	37.50% 6
▼ The actor's performance	12.50% 2
▼ The language of the play	50.00% 8
TOTAL	16

The reason for this difference might point to the way in which food in the text of the play was wrapped around the political, cultural, and traumatic episodes of Irish history. In the post-show discussion, many of the audience remarked how they failed to comprehend what Catholics and Protestants, Eamon De Valera and the suicide of a housewife had to do with food. Take this passage from the play for example:

- 2 Catholics and Protestants
- 1 food and religion
- 3 there is a goose at Christmas cooked over a turf fire
- 1 with potato stuffing
- 2 though never with breadcrumbs

- 1 that's a British thing
 - 2 so are fry-ups
 - 3 with sausages and rashers and black pudding and beans and toast and hash browns
- (McMahon *Irish Food. A Play*).

The language of the play was often at odds with the materiality of the food that was on offer to the audience member. The food satiated the gustatory impulses of each member of the audience, while the language of the play often jarred with their conception of food as a neutral or nostalgic matter. It is not common for food or its language to upset people. Indeed, this is only possible through performance and theatre as few would go into a restaurant to either be disgusted or to be negatively affected by their food or its presentation.⁴¹ This type of gustatory disgust is more common in performance art, such as in the work of Áine Philips, whose performance *Sex, Birth and Death* (2002-2004) included a cake in the shape of an aborted foetus. Live performances such as these, in Philips' own words, "operate[s] beyond perimeters, breaks down borders, and expands into new territories of meaning and action, exchange and communication" (Phillips 8). Performance art pushes food to unseen places in ways that most theatres or restaurants fail to do. As Deborah R Geis remarks in her essay "Food, Feminism, and Performance Art":

Performance art, though, goes one step further [than narrative drama]. Since performance art challenges the boundaries between "lived" and the "performed" food in the works of performance art—though still usually "framed" by the parameters of a designation as performance piece still (again, usually) presented before "consumers" or spectators—is somewhat liberated from its role as novel mode of disrupting the fictional/narrative milieu (Geis et al. 218).

⁴¹ Certain restaurants, such as Alchemist in Copenhagen certainly challenges its guests to think about their food, where it comes from and how habits influence our sense perceptions of eating. However, one could not say that it aims to disgust its guests.

To understand the differences between food on stage and in performance, it is vital to analyse how food signifies, particularly when it is staged in a theatrical or performance setting. Though for some phenomenologists and semioticians, there is a clear separation of “the real which manifests itself not as a series of linguistic signs but as sensory and mental phenomena”; it is difficult to separate these components regarding the theatricality of food (Fortier 32). Indeed, in his essay “The Law of the Genre”, Derrida cautions against any such division in discursive or methodological formations: “you may be tempted by at least two types of audience, two modes of interpretation, or, if you prefer to give these words more of a chance, then you may be tempted by two different genres of hypothesis” (Derrida "The Law of Genre" 55). When audiences look at food on stage, what do they see? We cannot easily separate in our minds the materiality of food from its sign. From the moment the audience enter the space of *Irish Food. A Play*, each table was adorned with a variety of food, from the historical to the farcical: potato crisps, soda bread, cheese and pineapple and seaweed. Staged food presents audiences with elements of their own lives. As we experience food throughout our lives, we will always encounter either a personal or cultural reference when we encounter food. Food is part of our lived experience. Food is also a deeply cultural commodity and this aspect of it is often overlooked in Irish cultural studies. Take for example, the reference to carrots and turnips in Samuel Beckett’s *Waiting for Godot* (1955):

ESTRAGON *(violently)* I'm hungry!

VLADIMIR Do you want a carrot?

ESTRAGON Is that all there is?

VLADIMIR I might have some turnips.

ESTRAGON Give me a carrot. *(Vladimir rummages in his pockets, takes out a turnip and gives it to Estragon who takes a bite out of it. Angrily.)* It's a turnip!

VLADIMIR Oh pardon! I could have sworn it was a carrot. (*He rummages again in his pockets, finds nothing but turnips.*) All that's turnips. (*He rummages.*) You must have eaten the last. (*He rummages.*) Wait, I have it. (*He brings out a carrot and gives it to Estragon.*) There, dear fellow. (*Estragon wipes the carrot on his sleeve and begins to eat it.*) Make it last, that's the end of them (*Beckett *The Complete Dramatic Works of Samuel Beckett* 21*).

The Beckettian characters' consumption of turnips, radishes and carrots draws directly on the wartime experience of hunger in France.



Figure 15: Ian McKellen holding a carrot in *Waiting for Godot* (Theatre Royal Haymarket, London, 7th Feb 2010).

Radishes dominated the black food market in wartime Paris as often the vegetable allowance per person was only five hundred grams and these sweet radishes were in high demand (Bobkowski 559). As Lawrence Harvey, one of Beckett's first critics, observes, "He reduces our gourmet delicacies to carrots, black radishes, and that staple of the starvation time under the German occupation, the lowly turnip" (Harvey 139). For Beckett, these vegetables were a literal manifestation of the

materiality of post-war hunger, not some vague abstractions to point to the pointlessly and misery of being. On returning to Ireland, following World War II, Beckett was “painfully aware of the contrast between the food shortages and deprivations” in France and the luxury of food in “affluent county Dublin” (Knowlson 312). For Alys Moody:

The hunger that is at stake in the Beckettian aesthetic is governed neither by taste nor by appetite. It is not a ravenous hunger that effaces the palate, but nor is it the Enlightenment hunger into taste that elevates desire to discrimination. It has less to do with consumption than with the deferral of or resistance to consumption. It is not desire, but an absence of desire, a form of revelry in the cognate experiences of privation, rejection, disgust, and starvation. In this sense, it provides both a corrective to a conceptualisation of aesthetics that has for centuries been founded on a metaphor of taste, and a new aesthetic mode founded on a schema of experiential starvation (Moody 56).

The ability of Irish people to encounter food still suffers due to legacy of the Famine. Though food offers Irish people the possibilities to eat, it also allows them to see themselves and reflect how it appears to them in consciousness. It is not only sustenance but story too: a story wrapped up in a long history of privation and starvation.

Regarding the phenomenological abilities of staged food, there is a paucity of research into the field. This is despite lengthy book length investigations regarding phenomenology, theatre, and performance. Two recent collections of essays, namely *Performance and Phenomenology: Traditions and transformations* (2015) and *Performance Phenomenology: To the Thing Itself* (2019) fail to even consider food in their treatment of any aspect of theatre or the body in performance. Even Bert O. States, seen as founding father of phenomenology in theatre, fails to mention food in his book *Great Reckonings in Little Rooms: On the Phenomenology of Theatre* (1985). Though Peta Tait does discuss the use of animals (both alive and dead) in performance in the former collection, and I discuss her analysis in relation to my own use of a live lobster and dead duck and salmon, food does seem to

hover outside the realm of the discourse of theatre phenomenology. Perhaps it is phenomenology's obsession with the body on stage that has caused it to overlook food; considering food is vital for the body's movement and articulation this is troubling. The work of Philip Zarrilli is a case in point which constructs a "phenomenological analysis of the lived body" with a focus on the body of the actor in performance (Zarrilli 661). The phenomenological problem of the absent body in performance, or rather the ways in which performance often considers the body as an "object" rather than a "process" could well be taken as a metaphor for the lack of any consideration for food in the field of theatrical phenomenology. If the body is "a constantly shifting tactical improvisation modulating betwixt and between one's *bodymind* and its modes of engaging its own deployment in the score" of the physical and textual space of the play, then surely we can theorise food in a similar manner (Zarrilli 666). Another case in point is Colette Conroy's short book *Theatre and the Body* (2010) wherein the body is conceptualised as a "form of experience that occurs only in the moment of performance" (Conroy 52). Food's absence in the construction of this experience on stage demonstrates how theatre privileges the body as an object and process over the act of eating or a consideration of how to conceptualise food on stage. The body is literally composed of food. Food's absence therefore remains problematic in staging the body in phenomenological terms.

The absence of a phenomenology of staged food in theatre and performance is mirrored with regards to phenomenology per se, which also fails to demonstrate an interest in how food relates to our body in space and time. In her essay "The Phenomenology of Food" (2015), Carolyn Steel argues:

Phenomenology has never addressed the question of food directly; perhaps because, when one is dealing with the nature of being, its presence must be assumed. Perhaps it is only now that the groundwork has been done that the metaphysics of food can be seen. Food is necessary to life, and the act of eating links us physically and symbolically with the natural world. Food, like architecture, shapes our language and culture, and articulates the spatial

and temporal order of our lives. The situations of food are among the most powerful and resonant we create. In the absence of a phenomenology of food, we can still explore ways in which the metaphysics of food can shed light on the practice of contemporary life. I call this approach *sitopia* (from the Greek *sitos*, food + *topos*, place). *Sitopia* describes the world as it is shaped by food (Steel "The Phenomenology of Food" 331).

Steel's book *Sitopia* (2020) further develops her enquiry regarding how food shapes bodies, homes and ultimately politics, landscape, and climate. I shall examine her work below in relation to food, phenomenology, ethics, and ecology. It is sufficient to say here that the phenomenology of staged food remains open to further enquiry, particularly regarding the way in which PaR can teach us about its how it affects audiences and the performing ensemble.

Food reveals the "thickness" of the theatrical event (Rayner 4). It stops us in our tracks due to its presence but also due to the way it impacts upon our senses. It is the apple in the actor's hand, a handful of flour thrown into the air: we cannot ignore it. Writing in *To Act, To Do, To Perform – Drama and the Phenomenology of Action* (1994), Alice Rayner observes that:

We say, for example, that babies and dogs can perceive motion but do not necessarily know what it is that is moving; yet once the baby or dog learns by experience that one particular motion ends up meaning *food*, it is more difficult to perceive the motion or the sound in itself without the association with its meaning (Rayner 24).

This observation shows that food is a multi-sensory event. It appeals to our bodies as well as our minds. We cannot escape it, particularly when it is placed in front of each audience member. This was the purpose of having the food already on the tables when the audience arrived. It was there as a sensory pretext to the play before the actors arrived. The aim was to break, or rather disrupt the associative meaning that the audience would generally have in their mind when they encounter food. The food appeared strange, so how out of joint, as though its regular habitual or symbolic meaning has been temporarily pushed aside. Regarding phenomenology, as outlined by Stanton

Garner in his book *Bodied Spaces: Phenomenology and Performance in Contemporary Drama* (1995) theatre is orientated towards the perceiving body: “It is through the actor’s corporeal presence under the spectator’s gaze that the dramatic text actualises itself in the field of performance” (Garner 1).

In *Irish Food. A Play* it was the “corporeal presence” of food that stopped the “spectators’ gaze” and actualises the text in the “field” of the restaurant. By removing a stable context from the food, we allowed the audience to build new associative meanings that arose from its staging and their encounter with it. The ways in which the staging of food momentarily upsets its context echoes the way in which early Husserlian phenomenology aimed to bracket off experience to “get to the things themselves”. For Maaïke Bleeker, Jon Foley Sherman, and Eirini Nedelkopoulou:

The operative assumption is that, if the Husserlian phenomenological approach invites us to take a distance from direct involvement with the world, this same distance will replicate the purported distance between what happens on stage and audience members. Accordingly, theatre presents a staged version of the *epoché* because they both involve perception apart from the quotidian (Bleeker et al. 2).

Though this type of reduction was discounted by those phenomenologists that followed Husserl, such as Maurice Merleau-Ponty who insisted we must “plunge into the world instead of surveying it”, it remains a useful approach to understand the ways which material meaning often sidesteps our everyday associative meaning, particularly when staged food ruptures its everyday context (Merleau-Ponty 38-39). Theatre remains an ideal place to perform this rupture due to the ways in which it can separate food from its habitual context: in a way, it can upturn Bourdieu’s classic diagram on “The Food Space” and allow food to sidestep its deep seated habitus (Bourdieu 186). In this context, an audience can retrieve their sensory connection to food that is so deeply compromised in their everyday lives.

For Jacques Derrida, the phenomenological method was “a scene, a theatre stage” (Derrida *Speech and Phenomena, and Other Essays on Husserl's Theory of Signs* 86). It separated things from everyday judgements. But can we suspend judgement when we see food on stage or encounter it in a play? Is it possible to reduce it to sustenance or as a base part of our lived experience? Though what knowledge we have of food is often bracketed out by the context of the play, it is impossible to bracket it off completely. Think of the audience smelling fried bacon at the beginning of Sam Shepard’s *Curse of the Starving Class* (1977). They cannot separate the representation of this event from the actual impact it has on their bodies. Regarding the phenomenology of dance, Mark Franko observes “The very operations of reduction and bracketing could be those of the proscenium stage itself” (Franko 1). However, no proscenium is needed to activate dance, or food in our case, just an acknowledged site of performance. Vestiges of food’s meaning enfold and remain hovering over anything in the performance space. The meaning of food is difficult to delineate because all food comes with prior knowledge. We cannot get back to some pre-reflective state. Take for example, the potato. It is probably not possible to stage a potato without the audience bringing their own experience with them. This is particularly important for an Irish audience, though several international members of the audience at *Irish Food* also reflected on the potato’s formative role in their cultures. Food on stage is a construction but its temporal flow oscillates between brute materiality (as for example the dead duck in the play) and something deeply associative, such as brown soda bread or *Tayto* potato crisps. To approach food as a phenomenological presence is to presuppose nothing before its enactment on stage. To have it on the table as the audience enter is to illuminate the vital immediate encounter with food. To perform a phenomenological approach to food to staged food is to see it as a performed object for the subject, both characters and audience. Performance and phenomenology:

Propose that the world is fundamentally mysterious as well as the site of all that we can know. They are modes of thinking and embodied engagement with the world that invite ambiguity instead of identification, and that locate the stakes of grasping that world in our

urgent and inconclusive contact with others. Both performance and phenomenology engage with experience, perception, and with making sense as processes that are embodied, situated, and relational (Bleeker et al. 1).

A phenomenology of food must describe how food appears on stage as a lived thing rather than a prop to move the drama. But is this possible? Must a phenomenology of food always be linked with the semiotic: food as experience and as sign system? Not for David Goodman who argues, in his critique of food studies in sociology (2001), for food as an “ontologically real and active, lively presence” (Goodman 183). How we attain this “real and active” presence is a matter of debate depending on how the food is staged and in what context.

For the French semiotician Roland Barthes, food was far more than just a vehicle for hunger or “lively presence” but also an “attitude, bound to certain usages, certain protocols” (Barthes “Toward a Psychosociology of Contemporary Food Consumption” 23). Food cannot only assert its material presence or be pinned down to one meaning due to its signification resting on its context and situation. This “polysemia” of food – that is, the fact that the object of food has many meanings – defines modernity according to Barthes (28). As well as being an object, food has “ a constant tendency to transform itself into a situation” (29). The situational character of food owes much to its use in creating myth and cultural identity. In my own play, I constantly wove food into different regional identities, showing how it is both substance and symbol simultaneously:

- 1 blackberries from the mountains of county Down

- 3 picked in the rain with soaking wet hands

- 2 tarts the size of towns with lashings of whipped cream and jam

Pause.

- 2 creamed rice on the way to the mart

- 1 with muddy shoes

- 2 there are cows everywhere
- 3 flapping and shitting and whipping their tails
- 2 (*with disgust*) the smell
- 3 the sights and sounds
- 2 of the cows
- 3 farting and shiting
- 1 licking and sucking
- 2 Catholics and Protestants
- 3 the smell of shite
- 1 on a Monday morning (McMahon *Irish Food. A Play*).

The juxtaposition of food, geography, religion, and identity aimed to demonstrate to the audience the multifaceted aspects of food. For many people, in their daily lives, food operates only on an individual level: a level that must meet their own physiological needs. Beyond this biological moment, food articulates its position in a complex cultural sign system that showcases its social and cultural significance. A number of essays in Barthes' *Mythologies* (1957) concern themselves with how food achieves its connotative status and operates culturally, as well as considering how food gets wrapped up in mythic status and becomes bound to a false essence of "universalism, the refusal of any explanation, an unalterable hierarchy of the world" (Barthes *Mythologies* 154). It was precisely this hierarchy that my own PaR sought to upend, to showcase the ambiguous nature of food signification. However, the tension between the material reality of food (or animals) and its status as a sign constantly came to the fore throughout the play. It was almost as if the audience were suspended between these two ways of seeing, caught between these two affects: desiring machines betwixt body and language.

The semiotics of food differs from the semiotics of food in performance as the first treats food as a cultural sign, whereas the latter treats it as both a cultural sign and a theatrical one. To bring food into a theatrical space changes or rather charges it with additional meaning. Staged food offers itself as a more open signifier due to the ways in which the stage draws attention to the object that are placed upon it. The cucumber sandwiches in Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest* (1895) not only denote actual cucumber sandwiches; they tell us about the excessive and eccentric appetite of the character Algernon, his class and position in society. Furthermore, they tell us about the role of the cucumber, originally from India, played in nineteenth century colonial Britain. The ability to grow cucumbers in England was facilitated through glass houses which were heated by coal. Thus, the cucumber in England was a sign of the strength of the industrial revolution.



Figure 16: Eating cucumber sandwiches in the film of *The Importance of Being Earnest* (1952).

For Umberto Eco, writing in "Semiotics of Theatrical Performance" (1977), food plays a double role in its theatrical signification:

In 1938, the Soviet folklorist Bogatyrev, in a fundamental paper on signs in theatre, pointed out that signs in theatre are not signs of an object but signs of a sign of an object. He meant

that, beyond their immediate denotation, all the objects, behaviours and words used in theatre have an additional connotative power. For instance, Bogatyrev suggested that an actor playing a starving man can eat some bread as bread-the actor connoting the idea of starvation, but the bread eaten by him being denotatively bread. But under other circumstances, the fact of eating bread could mean that this starving man eats only a poor food, and therefore the piece of bread not only denotes the class of all possible pieces of bread, but also connotes the idea of poverty (Eco 116).

Food is never just food in our daily lives; however, in the theatre it takes on greater signification due in part to its staging. The staging of food is an act of doubleness: it is simultaneously itself and a prop, particularly if the audience are invited to eat it. Regarding my own PaR, we could argue that food takes on a third role, when it is simultaneously part of the text and the audience's immersive experience. In this third space, food becomes a theatrical intertext that unites actor and audience, forming a bond between the two. In their essay on food and theatre in Japan, Lorie Brau and David Jortner observes how: "Food is not only a significant semiotic element in the classical Japanese theatre. In the modern and contemporary theatres, food is a key property with its own discursive formations" (Brau and Jortner 73). However, despite drawing attention to the semiotic potential for food to link consumption and national identity, the authors' essay is rather a broad review and not a particular investigation regarding the semiotic capacity of staged food. Dror Harari's essay, which appears in the same book on food and theatre, goes a little further in using a semiotic model to examine Tamar Raban's *Dinner Dress—Tales about Dora* (1997). For Harari Raban's play: "is a complex, multi-layered and multi-sensory "performance theatre" event served to twenty-four participants (diners—spectators) who consume it as food, fragments of recollections, sights, and sounds" (Harari 243). Raban applies the semiotic theories of Roland Barthes and Julia Kristeva to the play, in particular Kristeva's "dialectical modalities, essential for signification: the semiotic and the symbolic". For Kristeva, the semiotic takes its meaning from its etymological origin in Greek; that is, a "distinctive mark, trace, index, precursory sign, proof, engraved or written sign, imprint, trace,

figuration” (Kristeva 35). This is unlike the Saussurean use of the term “semiotic” which established a sematic hold on reality through language. Kristeva’s semiotic establishes a “de-semanticized materiality” (Harari 251). The space regarding the semiotics of staged food possesses potential to further understand the specific way staged food differs from the ways in which we encounter food in our everyday experience and produce new signification for food stuff that we either ignore or take for granted. For Erika Fischer-Lichte new meanings or associations can arise in a performance setting due to how the staged object can:

Interweave unique subjective experiences with inter-subjectively valid cultural codes.

Moreover, the same associations might appear as sudden intuitions, new ideas, or thoughts and thus surprise the perceiving subject more than any other type of association (because they cannot fathom how association and perception interrelate (Fischer-Lichte *The Transformative Power of Performance: A New Aesthetics* 143)).

This type of “associative meaning” allows staged food in performance to appear as “instance of emergence” and cause the audience to confront positive and negative elements throughout the performance (143). In my own PaR, I found that these negative elements, such as how we disassociate food from religion or from the darker aspects of our food culture come to the fore and antagonise audience members. It is this antagonism that helps us realise the untapped potential of staged food in terms of our daily subjective experience.

What counts for the audience is not what it actually sees on stage, but rather what it is supposed to perceive based on what the actors say. If the stage is an empty space that the actor states is a forest and subsequently refer to as a place, a room, a dungeon, then this empty space becomes the forest, palace, room or dungeon in the eyes of the audience (Fischer-Lichte *The Semiotics of Theatre* 20).

When food is staged in an “empty space” it can appear to further asset its brute materiality. A lobster on a darkened stage, lit only by one light, can appear as something alien, something which

the audience's own physical bodies might shudder against. However, when food is staged theatrically in a restaurant for a specific performance, as in my own PaR, its meaning alters. Its symbolic status comes to the fore and the lobster is seen "through [its] conventions" and the audience understand it "as standing for something other than [itself]" (Elam 27). This is the one of the fundamental problems of staging food and the reason for the tension between phenomenological and semiotic ways of conceptualising food in performance. Food on stage is both itself and something other than itself simultaneously. For Bert O. States:

What the text loses in significant power in the theatre it gains in corporeal presence, in which there is extraordinary perceptual satisfaction. Hence the need for rounding out a semiotics of theatre with a phenomenology of its imagery—or, if you will, a phenomenology of its semiology (States *Great Reckonings in Little Rooms: On the Phenomenology of Theater* 29).

Regarding my own PaR, the "rounding out" of the way in which food shifts between its materiality and its sign, led me to consider how affect theory could bridge this gap: a gap which considers food as "conative bodies vying alongside and within another complex body (a person's "own" body)", a complex entanglements of things, staged or otherwise (Bennett *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things* 39). This rounding out allowed me to propose a combination of the three discursive formations to further comprehend the staging of food in a multiplicity of theatrical and performative situations.

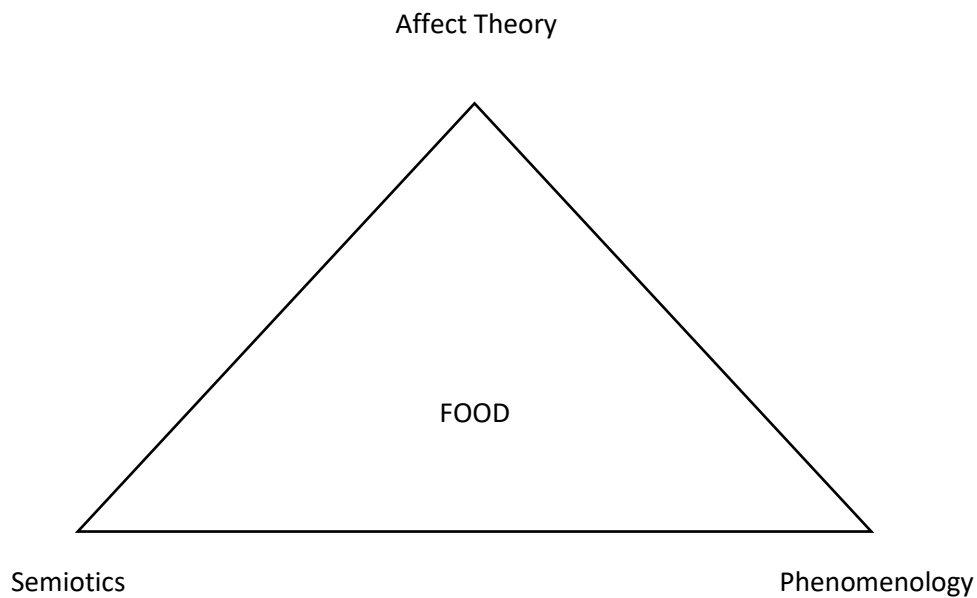


Figure 17: Understanding the operation of staged food

This triad allows us to understand the potential of staged food in a myriad of different forms and contexts. All three aspects are needed if we are to uncover the full capabilities of food in a theatricalised setting. From understanding food as a material and linguistic sign, we now turn towards analysing its affective state in relation to the eating subject. Coupled together with an autoethnographic enquiry, this investigation into affective states of the encountering and eating of staged food will show us how the context of presented food not only affects its embodied and material status but also the fluidity of its meaning.

2.3 Food as Affect

Affect, at its most anthropomorphic, is the name we give to those forces—visceral forces beneath, alongside, or generally *other than* conscious knowing, vital forces insisting beyond emotion—that can serve to drive toward movement, toward

thought and extension, that can likewise suspend us (as it is neutral) across a barely registering accretion of force-relations, or that can even leave is overwhelmed by the world's apparent intractability (Gregg and Seigworth 1).

On the table, there resides a lobster. But the audience seated around the table are not aware that the lobster is alive. Suddenly, the lobster moves, darts backwards. Those around the table, with clammy hands, shudder and pull back. It is something they were not expecting. Their whole bodies recoil. One member of the audience seated around the table screams. Another audience member sweats visibly. They can no longer see the actors or hear the text of the play. Their whole being is coterminous with that of the lobster. This is its affect. Is this an emotional response to the lobster in performance, or is it something more? Is it merely cultural ignorance of what a lobster can do or is it something deeper still: some vague bodily intensity, the upsurge of an "awkward materiality" of the lobster (Highmore 119)? The lobster is more than what it is; its being reaches out beyond itself and affects that audience in seemingly inexplicable ways. The body of the lobster and the body of the guest are coextensive with each other. Affect links them like an invisible material network. Staged food reaches out and wraps itself around the audience like a coil.

In attempting to explain the concept of affect in his introduction to Deleuze and Guattari's *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (1987), to which much of affect studies owes its origins, Brian Massumi writes as follows:

"AFFECT/AFFECTION. Neither word denotes a personal feeling (sentiment in Deleuze and Guattari). L'affect (Spinoza's affectus) is an ability to affect and be affected. It is a prepersonal intensity corresponding to the passage from one experiential state of the body to another and implying an augmentation or diminution in that body's capacity to act. L'affection (Spinoza's affectio) is each such state considered as an encounter between the affected body and a second, affecting, body (with body taken in its broadest possible sense to include

"mental" or ideal bodies)" (Deleuze and Guttari *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* xvi).

For Deleuze, the idea of affect is seen as something prepersonal, as something that operates below the idea of personal feeling or emotion. Feelings are personal and biographical, emotions are social, and affects are prepersonal. But how do we understand this in relational to staged food or food in performance? And how does language reside among these coordinates? For the audience, in the first iteration of *Irish Food. A Play*, affect was that moment when the lobster moved, and they reacted to its movement; it was a transformation of the performance environment when neither the materiality of the lobster nor its status as a sign mattered any longer. Momentarily, the audience hung in an affective state, stuck somewhere between the two poles of food: affect is the ability to affect and to be affected. It is a way of bringing bodies and mind: both my own and others together in a single ecology. Affect arises "in the midst of in-between-ness"; it is an "impingement or extrusion" (Gregg and Seigworth 1). As Brian Massumi observes in his essay "The Autonomy of Affect" (1995), an essay which kickstarted the infiltration of affect studies into literary, philosophical, cultural and theatre studies:

What is being termed affect [...] is precisely this two-sidedness, the simultaneous participation of the virtual in the actual and the actual in the virtual, as one arises from and returns to the other. Affect is this two-sidedness *as seen from the side of the actual thing*, as couched in its perceptions and cognitions. Affect is *the virtual as point of view*, provided the visual metaphor is used guardedly. For affect is synesthetic, implying a participation of the senses in each other: the measure of a living thing's potential interactions is its ability to transform the effects of one sensory mode into those of another (tactility and vision being the most obvious but by no means only examples; interoceptive senses, especially proprioception, are crucial). Affects are *virtual synesthetic perspectives* anchored in (functionally limited by) the actually existing, particular things that embody them. The

autonomy of affect is its participation in the virtual. *Its autonomy is its openness*. Affect is autonomous to the degree to which it escapes confinement in the particular body whose vitality, or potential for interaction, it is. Formed, qualified, situated perceptions and cognitions fulfilling functions of actual connection or blockage are the capture and closure of affect. Emotion is the intense (most contracted) expression of that *capture*- and of the fact that something has always and again escaped (Massumi *Parables for the Virtual: Movement, Affect, Sensation* 35).

For Massumi, affect is equated with intensity. It is the intensity that links human and non-human, audience member and lobster. It was possibly the intensity of affect that contributed to the actor's refusal to hold the lobster in the second iteration of *Irish Food. A Play* or the refusal to show the video of my performance *Killing Lobsters* live to the audience as part of the project *Visioning the Future* (September 24th, 2020).⁴² It was a rejection of those experiences by the ensemble, production crew, and conference organisers that demonstrates the powerful and raw (no pun intended) nature of affect and its ability to impact the moving and feeling body in performance in ways that could not be adequately controlled.

Affect is not the same as emotion or sensation, though they are often conceptualised together. They are bound together in a triad or sorts that contribute to the subject's/audience's corporal reaction to the food on the stage and the language that evokes it. Though the physical effect of staged food in a theatre and restaurant may have a similar affect, it is the context that surrounds the graph below that gives more precise meaning to the food in question.

⁴² This was the fourth iteration of my PhD which consisted of a three-minute performance that was part theatre, part performance art. It is discussed below

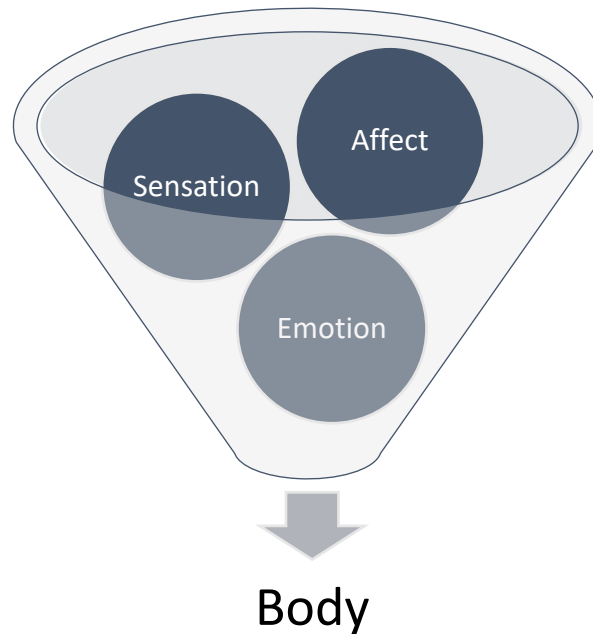


Figure 18: How sensation, affect, and emotion, can be conceptualised in relation to the body.

In her book *Theatre and Feeling* (2010), Erin Hurley observes how “affect, sensation, emotion, [and] mood” are as the ways in which theatre “traffics” feeling: “feeling is the primary reason for theatre’s existence (Hurley 4). Affect makes itself known more through “autonomic reactions” of the body; it is the body’s shakes and shudders; hence its relationship to adrenaline (13). From the moment the lobster moves, affect kicks in. Before the audience know how to feel or think, they react to the moving lobster. Whether in terror or fear, or anguish or excitement, the affect they feel is psychobiological. According to Silvan Tomkins, an early pioneer of affect theory, these “innate affects” are neural firings that are part of our evolutionary make up. Tomkins graph below outlines how these affects are:

The primary motivational system because without its amplification, nothing else matters, and with its amplification, anything else *can* matter. It thus combines urgency and generality. It lends power to memory, to perception, to thought, and to action no less than to the drives (Tomkins 164).

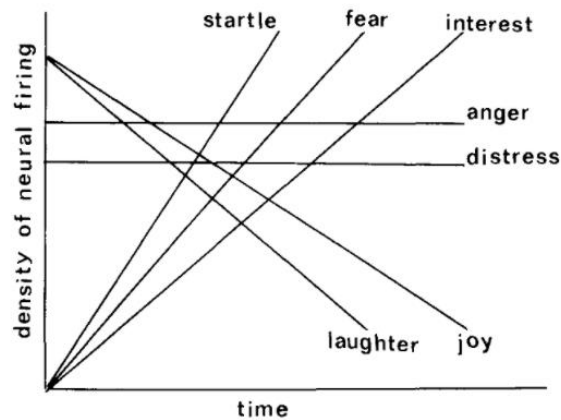


FIG. 7.1. Model of the innate activators of affect.

Figure 19: Tomkins' model of Innate Activators of Affect.

According to Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick in her book *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity* (2003), the important value of Tomkins' work resides in the way that it articulates a theory of affect that does not tie specific affects to object: "any affect may have any object" as Tomkins articulates. Affect has no single output, but rather operates across a system of its own validation:

It is these specifications that make affect theory such a useful resistance to teleological presumption of the many sorts of historicalyl embedded in the disciplines of psychology. The force of what comes to seem [...] accrues at least partly from the highly complex, highly explicit layering of biological and machine models in this understanding of the human being (Sedgwick 100).

The affect of food then has no object, or rather it has no precise object and depends on the fluid circumstance of its staging, its presentation, and its theatrical context. It is, so to speak, a process whereby the embodied subject encounters its circumstances. Thus, as we shall see in the following chapter, context is paramount when it comes to assessing the affective value of food on audience and diners.

Affect arises from situations and encounters and cuts across discursive categories. In relation to food, we can consider it a “feeling-technology” that motivates theatrical exploration (Hurley 28). For Hurley, feeling-technologies in the theatre are, for example, elements that affect the audience’s senses in a manner that they cannot control. Feeling plays a part here: “the feeling body is theatre’s focus: theatre requires a perceiving person to be” (Hurley 36). Between feeling and the body resides food: the cognitive act and its affect. The smell of food exceeds the audience’s ability to encounter it, as for example the smell of boiled eggs in *Irish Food. A Play*. This smell happens beyond their will, and they cannot control its presence in the performance environment. The sight of the dead duck is another example of how these feeling technologies affect the audience. Staged food produces affective encounters that can alter the environment of the theatre and make us reflect on our own understanding of food’s place in constructing our environment. A dead duck in a restaurant is not a dead duck in a theatre. The former will be eaten; but what will happen to the dead duck during the dramatic action is not clear. This creates an ambiguity, even a sense of unease in the audience as they do not know what is going to happen. A fully feathered dead duck is not a regular or habitual encounter anymore for most people in their daily lives. Death is sanitised in the form of packing and prepared food looks like “food”, not a dead animal. The resulting subjective response of the actor or audience member contributes to the embodied emotional experience. For Hurley:

Affect exceeds us thrice over. First it exceeds us in the sense that it is beyond our control. Second it is not unique to the individual but is common to the species: increased adrenaline will always sharpen our minds and focus our attention [...]. And third affect exceeds us in the sense that it may be communicated via emotional display (Hurley 18).

The affective value of staged food is vital in understanding the non-human and how a new ecology of theatre, both of which are discussed below, can help us better understand our own food environment. Food is always other, just as our emotions can be felt as if they are beyond our control. But it is another that is also inside us, in the sense that without it, we would die. Food is a messy

entanglement, something that resides between its literal manifestation, its nutritional content, and its metaphoric value. It is both matter and affect, and its staging helps us comprehend its activation. For Jane Bennett food is always a process of becoming, a way of uniting outside and inside:

If the eaten is to become food, it must be digestible to the out-side it enters. Likewise, if the eater is to be nourished, it must accommodate itself to the internalized out-side. In the eating encounter, all bodies are shown to be but temporary congealments of a materiality that is a process of becoming, is hustle and flow punctuated by sedimentation and substance. [...] A carrot as it first enters the eater's mouth is a full-blown entity, with a distinctive taste, colour, odour, texture; once swallowed, however, its coherence gradually dissipates until, if one were to continue to observe it via a tiny camera inserted into the gut, the difference between carrot and eater vanishes altogether (Bennett *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things* 49).

We struggle to grasp its meaning. It is in front of us. We can see, touch, and smell it. It affects us. But we need words to articulate how it affects us. Without language, we are just lost bodily experiences; our bodies just another type of food stuff staged in relation to other similar edible anomalies. It is not that language has a privileged position, only that it is the coherent conduit to express our relationship with staged food.

Language offers us a way of transforming the way we may define and disrupt boundaries to our identity and our relationship with food. Food has shifting identity because of its changing context, its cultural heritage, and people's individual attitudes to it. The act of eating is a performative one; it shapes us as much as it surfeits us.

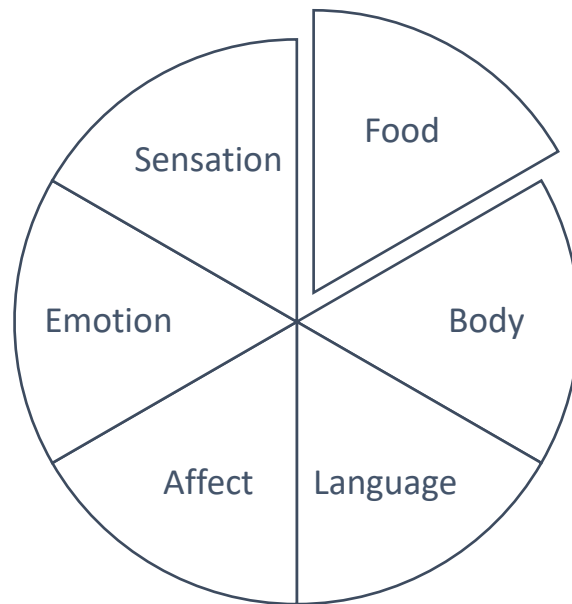


Figure 20: Role of food in relation to its performative value.

Language, as a performative utterance, plays an important role in how we are affected. Both the materiality of food and its linguistic sign play a dual role in determining how the audience react. Language must be conceptualised as one element amongst the other in relation to understanding food. The performative aspect of language is the way in which the identity of food resides in its articulation and how this articulation establishes different situations. This types of utterances, as Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick writes, are performative in the sense of being “theatrical” in that they conjure an linguistic act that is not itself confine to language but rather spans the “polarities of nonverbal and verbal action” (Sedgwick 7). It is in this gap that staged food surfaces as a site of meaning. Language exposes the affective values of food, allowing us to articulate the ways in which play their part in revealing to us our emotional relationship to their continuities. Food, and animals as we shall see below, has no “fixed referent” and is constantly in a unstable equilibrium of flux (Ahmed 123). There is no dualism between food on stage as itself or as language. The space between them is immanent. As Deleuze and Guttari write:

No ontological dualism between here and there, no axiological dualism between good and bad ... We invoke one dualism only in order to challenge another. We employ a dualism of models only in order to arrive at a process that challenges all models. Each time, mental correctives are necessary to undo the dualisms we had no wish to construct but through which we pass. Arrive at the magic formula we all seek – PLURALISM = MONISM – via all the dualisms that are the enemy, an entirely necessary enemy, the furniture we are forever rearranging (Deleuze and Guattari *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* 20)

From food we move to animals, producing in reverse, in much the same way that the rehearsal precedes the performance.

2.4 Animals on Stage

There are no theatrical dynasties of animals (Ridout 97).

When audiences go to the theatre, they usually expect to see humans, not animals. As the above quotation demonstrates, the legacy of animals on stage is difficult to define. To say that there are no “theatrical dynasties” is perhaps a bit farfetched, given the role of animals in the circus, which is an immensely theatrical experience (Tait *Wild and Dangerous Performances: Animals, Emotions, Circus*). Moreover, feasting, and fine dining are inherently theatrical: both included animals (alive and dead) as modes of presentation and are deeply interconnected. As Abrams observes in his essay “Mise en Plate: The scenographic imagination and the contemporary restaurant” (2013):

While ancient and medieval banquets might be usefully read through choreographic lenses, the patterns for service and the understanding of the contemporary relation between setting and meal, like the theatre, draw strongly from the developments of the early

nineteenth century. Over the past twenty-five years, contemporary high-end restaurants have returned to a key focus on the architectural and scenographic; this has been considered by chefs in ways that might be usefully explored through the lens of the theatrical (Abrams 7).

However, staged animals, or animals on the dramatic stage, are much rarer, and still pose a challenge that the world of theatre and performance art are still coming to grips with, despite theatrical attempts in the first half of the twentieth century to bridge the gap between our food, where it comes from, and how we can articulate this on stage. While the movements of Futurism, Dada and Surrealism aimed to break down the barriers between humans and food in fantastical ways, plays such as *Saint Joan of the Stockyards* (1929-31) by Bertolt Brecht raised the role of food and animals in society as a theatrical issue.⁴³ This play attempted to critique the industrial production of meat in America and draw attention to the “confluence of human and animal flesh” (Buckner 123). Despite this confluence, Brecht did not have animals or their carcasses on stage to make his point regarding the ways in which human and animal often dissolve into the same space. Thus, Brecht’s critique of animal production took place in the absence of animals. The type of theatrical performance that includes animals would have to wait at least another thirty years, when Austrian artist Herman Nitsch together mounted his *Orgies Mysteries Theatre*, ritualistic performances which included slaughtering and religious sacrifice of animals as well as crucifixion. The performances were also accompanied with music, dancing, and active participants. In his first *Orgies Mysteries Theatre* (1962) performance, Nitsch used animal carcasses, entrails, and blood to evoke a ritual of disgust and catharsis in the audience. Inspired by Artaud’s *Theatre of Cruelty* (1933), Nitsch aimed to create performances that evoked, in his words, a “philosophy of intoxication, of ecstasies, enchantments [...] where pleasure, pain, death and procreation are approached and

⁴³ Brecht’s utilisation of food in this play differs from previous displays of food in the western dramatic canon because of the way in which it explicitly links food with production and consumption. This is not to say that he was the first to put food on stage but rather than first to posit the idea that food is an animal or organic substance which sustains an industrial system.

permeated” (Warr and Jones 216). Though the aim of Nitsch’s work differs from my own PaR, his concept of disgust, regarding his use of carcasses and blood, provided a suitable vehicle with which to assess the impact of the lobster (and other animals) in my own plays and to frame my understanding of the genealogy of food in performance. Indeed, the dead duck and dead salmon in the first iteration of the play provoked a strong sense of disgust not only among my own ensemble, but also in the audience members who sat around the table. This biological affect, of turning away from dead animals is conceptualised as the “yuck” factor by Jane Desmond. For Desmond, when taxidermized dead animals are displayed the audience:

Are not confronted with the messy organicism of death, with its leaking body fluids, sloughing skin, and sunken eyes. In a sense, the process of death is erased, because death normally leads to the putrefaction of organic matter, to decay, to loss of bodily integrity and shape, to dehumanization (Desmond 371).

The rejection of any dead animals in the second iteration of the play demonstrates theatre’s fear of the messy organic nature of using and displaying dead animals in the theatre. For most of us, dead animals are meat or some by-product, such as leather. We have perhaps doubly lost the enchantment of animals, both as having “magical functions, sometimes oracular, sometimes sacrificial” and as beings in their own right (371). In the daily lives of many people, animals are merely food, or simply a part of nature separate from themselves.

What does it mean to place a live lobster on stage? Is it a symbol of conflict? Of violence? Or is it rather a mirror, however cracked, that is held up to the audience, wherein which they may consider their own position as an animal, as something akin to the organism which they encounter? The affective value of their encounter for the audience cannot be understated. For Deleuze and Guattari “to become an animal is to participate in movement ... to cross a threshold ... to find a world of pure intensities where all forms come undone, as do all significations, signifiers and signifieds, to the benefit of an unformed matter (Deleuze and Guattari *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature* 13). The

lobster has a long history of use both in Irish food and in avant-garde theatrical performances. It provides the principal income for many a fisherman in Connemara, due to their value abroad. As Kevin O'Sullivan writes in *The Irish Times* regarding the importance of the lobster to west of Ireland:

The clawed lobster, *Homarus Gammarus*, is an important economic resource. It trades at about £12 per kilo and is worth over £6 million a year on the domestic market, more if exports are factored in. The total haul is about 700 tonnes [...] along a huge stretch of coastline stretching from the south coast to Connemara and it amounts to a vital part of the rural/coastal economy in many locations (O'Sullivan n.p.).

Regarding the historic avant-garde, many artists took a shine to the lobster, both in terms of painting, sculpture, and performance. The French Romantic poet Gerard de Nerval liked to take his lobster for a walk around the streets of Paris (Engstrom 33). The uncanny correlation between what occurs in Connemara and the historical avant-garde interests me deeply and I wanted to physically work through some of these ethnographic themes in the performances for my PaR. Furthermore, I wanted to investigate and engage with the long history of lobsters and humans in society as well as literature and theatre. As Townsend observes in her *Lobster: A Global History*:

Humans and lobsters have a long history together. Long before we knew much about this crustacean, lobsters found their way into artistic creations as a revered shellfish, symbol, status or otherwise. Spiny lobsters adorn a fifteenth-century Egyptian temple in an aquatic scene depicting new, fascinating animals and plants from an expedition down the Red Sea and along the coast of East Africa. As early as the first century, spiny lobsters appeared in a mosaic floor in the dining room of ancient Pompeii and in Virgil's *Aeneid*, as Palinurus, the helmsman of the Trojan fleet. They are part of a mosaic floor in the dining room of a Pompeian house depicting how the floor would look after the diners had finished – leaving the inedible shells and bones 'dropped under the tables' (Townsend 9).

However, putting animals on stage is not as simple as it sounds. For Nicolas Ridout, theatre is inherently a human activity. Animals have no place in the theatre and are not part of its historical tradition. An animal on stage is an anomaly, as well as an ethical concern: “The worries tend to be about exploitation. In the specific case of animals, there is an uneasy sense that the animal on stage, unless very firmly tethered to a human being who looks like he or she owns it, is there against its will, or if not its will, at least its best interests” (Ridout 97). Yet, if we do not put animals on stage we are failing to present the ways in which theatre can cross the ecological divide that exists between humans and animals. In his essay “Art for Animals” (2010), Matthew Fuller argues that:

Art works for animals make art step outside of itself and make us imagine a nature in which nature itself must be imagined, sensed, and thought through. At a time when human practices are rendering the earth definitively *unheimlich* for an increasing number of species, abandoning the human as the sole user or producer of art is one perverse step towards doing so (Fuller 20).

In my own plays, I struggled to get the ensemble to agree to put the lobster in the performance as well as getting the actors to hold and touch it. Though the concerns were the same for both iterations of *Irish Food. A Play*, the outcomes differed. For the second iteration of the play, even after we agreed it could play a small part in the play, none of the actors wanted to touch it. In addition, as I mentioned above, the director believed the lobster could jump and the stage manager was an ethical-vegan and refused to be a part of a show which seemingly exploited live animals. Why was this so? Why did the lobster affect the ensemble in this way? Was it biological? A pure affect? How do they articulate this fear, this trembling? Purely by blankly refusing to engage with the animal on stage. Indeed, this fear and trembling also extended to the dead duck and salmon. While both were a feature of the first iteration, they were absent from the second because of opposition from the ensemble. Whether living or dead, staging animals gives rise to many difficult questions. For Peta Tait, we need to acknowledge “The perceptual disordering provoked by the presence of dead

animals in live performance. The contrasts between liveness and deadness and between the human and the nonhuman threaten to conceal the political implications of privileging human experience” (Tait "Fleshing Dead Animals: Sensory Body Phenomenology in Performance" 111). In the two decades since the beginning of this century, there has been a shift away from an anthropocentric point of view, or at least an undercutting of that concept with an acknowledgement that we now live an era of the “Anthropocene” (Carrithers et al. 661). This has brought about a re-evaluation of the relationship between animals and humans, in particular the distinction between the two in terms of ethics, utility, suffering – and as a species: as Carrithers et al argue “the idea, that a biological species is analogous to a human person” (661). While this conceptual shift has been ongoing in performance art of the twentieth and twenty-first century, it has only emerged in theatre since the turn of the twenty-first century as a visible trend, as can be seen with the introduction to theatre and performance of the “crucial category” of the “nonhuman” (Parker-Starbuck xi). John Gray also draws explicit attention to this privileging of human consciousness over animal consciousness in his book *Feline Philosophy: Cats and The Meaning of Life* (2020):

René Descartes (1596-1650) hurled a cat out of window in order to demonstrate the absence of conscious awareness in non-human animals; its terrified screams were mechanical reactions, he concluded. Descartes also performed experiments on dogs, whipping one while a violin was being played in order to see whether the sound of a violin would late frighten the animal, which it did. [...] Descartes believed his experiments proved non-human animals were insensate machines: what they actually showed is that humans can be more unthinking than any other animal (Gray *Feline Philosophy: Cats and the Meaning of Life* 5).

Carole Schneeman’s *Meat Joy* (1964), which took place in Paris, involved participants rolling around in an orgiastic happening with raw fish, chicken carcass, paint, and rope, among other things. For Schneemann, writing in *More Meat than Joy* (1979), the event was a “celebration of flesh as material

[...] shifting and turning between tenderness, wildness, precision [and] abandon” (Warr and Jones 60).

In my own experience as a chef, a lobster is the easiest food stuff to show people that living entities must die for humans to live. While one can argue that a vegan diet entails nothing being killed, this is not the case, as 1) everything is alive, sentient or not, and 2) the plantation of many vegetables and grains destroys the natural eco-system, causing the deaths of many insects and small animals. As Carolyn Steel glibly remarks “Whenever we eat, we make an implicit value judgement: that human life is worth more than that of, say, a leek” (Steel *Sitopia: How Food Can Save the World* 27). The important point is the framing of this dying. In the restaurant, we kill lobsters every day, often without time to consider the act as deeply as the actors in the second iteration did. The lobster is food for paying customers. Aside from its status as a sign of wealth (due to the expense of lobsters in restaurants), the lobster is killed to be consumed. Once this act or event is transposed to the theatre it takes on new significance, even if the lobster is not killed during the performance. During the first iteration of *Irish Food. A Play*, the lobster on stage caused visible fear to certain members of audience, particularly those seated around the table with the actors. For one audience member, the whole play became only about the lobster because of its material presence on the table. She was literally transfixed on the lobster as an alien object, not knowing what it might do. To others, seated in front of the stage, there were mixed expressions of disgust and awe. In terms of disgust, one or two vegetarian and vegan audience members commented on the cruelty of the act of putting a live lobster on stage for show. What is interesting about this observation is the level of anthropomorphic qualities these members of the audience lend to the lobster. They imagine it as a person who has been placed on stage against their own will for entertainment or enjoyment. Would they feel the same about a fly? Or ants crawling over the stage? Where does our threshold of awe or cruelty lie?

For Ridout, the uncanny quality that animals contribute to theatre revolves around several issues. Firstly, the space of the theatre is a place “about humans coming face to face with other

humans [...] the animal clearly has no place in such a communication”; secondly, the animals is “not capable of performing theatrically”; that is, it cannot engage with the audience; and lastly, the animal may “run amuck at any moment and spoil everything” (Ridout 63-64). It was the last issue that surfaced multiple times in the iterations of *Irish Food. A Play*. From questions from the stage manager, such as “what is it going to do?” to the director and stage designer asking, “what if it ruins the show by distracting people?”, this issue never seemed to leave the rehearsal space. However, Ridout’s other assertions hovered over the show and framed the ways in which we tried to resolve the issue of the animal on stage. As an ensemble, we seemed to be incapable of resolving the position of the lobster on stage. For Michael Peterson, writing in “The animal apparatus: From a theory of animal acting to an ethics of animal acts” (2007), the action of the animal on stage means nothing inherently:

The presence of live animals introduces a non-(or even anti-)intentional force (at least as far as human intention is understood), which lends itself both to the perception of difference and to an encounter with the “uncanny”. [...] The perception of animals is not (at first) textual; animals are not “read” in performance unless considerable effort is made to reduce them to signs. In performance, the disturbing presence of an animal could perhaps be framed, repeated, distanced, abstracted—ideally, silhouetted—until it became one sign among many. But of course, no theatre person in their right mind would do such a thing. Reduced to a sign, an animal contributes nothing to performance but expense and inconvenience (Peterson 35/43).

However, animals on stage do contribute to theatrical action, if even only to displace it. Their material signification constantly shows us the limit of what theatre can do, or what it needs to do, if it is to transcend or transgress its own parameters. They are, as food, that “dangerous supplement” of which Derrida writes, constantly poking holes in drama’s own discursive formations. Thus,

Peterson's claim can be challenged. Animals can contribute to a performance in particular to bridge the gap between human and non-human in the theatre.

Due to the ontological, epistemological, and theatrical difficulties which arose in trying to make the lobster a part of the performance in both iterations of *Irish Food. A Play*, I subsequently explored the issue in two other iterations namely *Dante.Beckett.Lobster* and *Killing Lobsters*. In the following paragraphs, I shall discuss the former while I shall keep my discussion of the latter to the next chapter in relation to the conflict of context that food and lobsters produce. As *Irish food. A Play*, my performance *Dante.Beckett.Lobster* sought to further develop the idea of staging animals and reflect upon the ways in which it was treated on stage as part of my PaR.



Figure 21: Fiona Wiedmann rehearsing in *Dante. Beckett. Lobster*.

While *Irish Food. A Play* drew on a shared collective experience on food (the script was based on 331 interviews), *Dante.Beckett.Lobster* was more of a private consideration of the meaning of food in

terms of my practice. Ultimately, I wanted to investigate the relationship between the material objects of the performance and its affect upon the audience. The piece had five main aims:

1. Investigate the relationship between material objects of performance (lobster, books, bodies, etc.).
2. Examine elements of the autobiographical in a devised ensemble.
3. Look at how politics and ethics surface in text and devised adaptation in terms of food.
4. Place piece in the context of the postdramatic theatre.
6. Assess the impact of how a live lobster effects/affects the audience.

Despite the private considerations of this performance, in terms of my own genealogy of practice, it did not make it any less socially relevant in terms of our understanding of Irish food and its relationship to contemporary forms of drama and performance. Ultimately, what united both iterations were the presence of one, or more, lobsters. While the lobster had been an incidental detail in *Irish Food. A Play*, it became the focus for my second work. Principally this came about for two reasons: the potency of the lobster as a food symbol, and its relevance to the work of Irish writer Samuel Beckett, whose short story "Dante and the Lobster" in *More Pricks than Kicks* (1934) details its preparation and death as an allegorical or metaphorical factor in the story's central themes of piety, pity, and sacrifice.

The uncanny correlation between lobsters, the culinary world and literature interests me deeply; thus, I wanted to physically work through some of these ethnographic themes in the performance. It is these incongruous interests that informed several of the autobiographical elements in the devised ensemble of the performance: one of which was handing out dried seaweed to be eaten at the start of the performance. This was a parody of Catholic communion which was designed to activate, and affect, the bodies of the audience. This was a valid assumption on my part given the cultural specificity of Irish audiences, most of whom would have gone through Catholic

education even though most are not formally practising that religion.⁴⁴ One other element involved pulling the cooked lobster out of a pot of seawater and seaweed.



Figure 22: The cooked lobster in seaweed from the *Dante. Beckett. Lobster.*

The pot was placed in the middle of the audience. To achieve this, I had to physically walk through the audience and retrieve the lobster and try to use it as a phone. To talk into a lobster may seem preposterous, but it does have precedence in the historical avant-garde, especially in the work of the artist Salvador Dali, namely his famous *Lobster Telephone* (1938) (Frazier).

⁴⁴ According to the Central Statistics Office in Ireland, observes that in the last Census (2016) over 3.7 million Irish people identified as Roman Catholic: see <https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/ep/p-cp8iter/p8iter>.



Figure 23: Salvador Dalí, Lobster Telephone (1938): Steel, plaster, rubber, resin, and paper. Collection, Tate Modern, London, England.

Reflecting on this piece, Dalí observed:

I do not understand why, when I ask for a grilled lobster in a restaurant, I am never served a cooked telephone; I do not understand why champagne is always chilled and why on the other hand telephones, which are habitually so frightfully warm and disagreeably sticky to the touch, are not also put in silver buckets with crushed ice around them (Dalí 271).

All these acts were designed to affect the audience. While I shall address these autobiographical issues more substantially below, it is enough to state for the moment that they raise important political and ethical issues in terms of using food in a devised performance. In my own case, the alternative dramaturgy dealt with three lobsters (one dead and two living) and analysed how their presence and movements, coupled with the interactions of the actors, affected the audience. It

should be noted that the lecturer would not allow me to kill the lobster on stage so I had to kill it off stage and then place it in the pot with the seaweed water in the middle of the audience.

In the context of theatre and performance, food plays a complex role, and its meaning shifts from play to play, and from stage to stage. A lobster, in my case, can mean several different and contradictory things in different performances (or even in different parts of the same performance, depending on whether it is alive or dead, moving or still, being read to or taken for a walk). What the semiotics of food tells us is that given the situational nature of food, it is a deeply embodied and cultural activity. In this sense, as well as being a sign (of something), food is also a physical object and thus the subject of phenomenological interest with regards to any performance that uses food as a signifying element. As an object of touch (whether handing seaweed to the audience to feel, smell and chew, or holding a lobster to my head and pretending it's a phone), food draws the audience's attention to the material reality of their own experience in the performance. For Bert O. States, actions such as these bring the audience "into phenomenal contact with what exists"; food is a living thing that ties the stage to the reality of external world, "in the sense of belonging to immediate existence" (States *Great Reckonings in Little Rooms: On the Phenomenology of Theater* 37). The taste and smell of the seaweed; the smell of the lobster (living and dead), the sound of the lobster being dragged on a leash for a walk: all these material elements affect the audience in different ways, from the emotional, to the ethical, to the absurd. For Ridout, reflecting on States, this affect is particularly pointed when it comes to animals. An animal on stage (in my case, a lobster) generates a physical feeling in of "shock" in our bodies:

In the case of the animal on stage our economic and political entanglement with the animal is something that is not simply registered intellectually but felt in the body. [...] The intensity of the affect derives from the way in which the material body of the animal, for example, penetrates the membrane between its own 'realness' and its signification. What is released when this membrane is penetrated (during the shudder) is an as yet untheorized sense of

what ties the two registers together: namely the labour of the animal at the service of a dominant humanity (Ridout 125).

The animal (and food) resides between object and sign. The purpose is not to capture the meaning of a particular action around food, but rather to let a multiplicity of meanings confront the audience to place them in a position of indeterminacy. This was perhaps the central idea behind creating three distinct triptychs within one performance, alongside the audio of a 1953 jazz song called “Tale of an African Lobster” by Shorty Rogers. Incoherency, or its effect, was privileged to work on the nerves of the audience.

To give shape to the narrative of the piece, the ensemble drew on different biographical and interpersonal strands. Some of these we decided as a group beforehand, others arose during the process of devising. In the context of my own performance, I drew on both my culinary as well as my literary/theatrical/philosophical knowledge. The objective was to try and fold these distinct fields together to experience their immanent effects. The collision of a 1980’s tape recording of Beckett’s short story “Dante and the Lobster” read by Barry McGovern for the Abbey Theatre; a soundtrack of 1950’s jazz; a reading of Ciaran Carson’s “Irish” version of Dante’s *Inferno* (2002); a lobster being used as a telephone receiver, all served to confound. However, from an autobiographical standpoint all made sense, in that they drew on my own genealogy of practice; that is to say my plurality of interests from Beckett to Dante to Jazz, food, and surrealism.



Figure 24: Texts from *Dante.Lobster.Beckett*.

According to Govan et al., the autobiographical performance “heightens an awareness of the presentation of the self and this is intentionally made explicit to the audience” (Govan, Normington and Nicholson 66). Furthermore, this action in the performance pushes the audience to consider their own selves, to witness the narrative unfold and become an “active listener” in the context of the performance (68). Displaced autobiography, whether fact or fiction, allows the audience to “engage in a two-way communication” that is both “personal and intimate” (69).

Aside from the literary and musical allusions, the geographical and historical allusions hung over the performance, though perhaps in a more subtle, if even invisible, way. Geographical speaking the lobsters (and the seaweed) were from Connemara, in the sense that they originated

form that location. To bring them into the space/place of the performance is to transform an aspect of one community into another. This is not to say that the devised performance could be classified in terms of a collaboration with the community of Connemara, but it certainly evoked the possibility of such an association. In this sense, the meaning of the performance also depends on the audience watching the play. This was noted in the discussion afterwards, particularly because one of the class was vegan and admitted to viewing the performance as an unethical breach of the animal's rights. However, this was one of the points of the performance. Where do we draw the line between something living and something dead? Is a lobster still a lobster when it is in a performance? Is it not then an object of the performance and thus no longer food? A fisherman from Connemara might view the performance as a waste of three lobster (because of their economic value). While my consideration of place was playful, there are serious issues surrounding the differing significations that the lobster accrues during the performance and in relation to the audience. The fluidity between these semiotic and phenomenological possibilities demonstrates the force behind the moral and ethical issues of using "food" on stage.

Theatre, for Antonin Artaud, was to be like a plague, to be resolved only by "death or a cure". It was to be more real than representation, or rather it was to be a play that broke down or destroyed representation:

A real stage play upsets our sensual tranquillity, releases our repressed subconscious, drives us to a kind of potential rebellion (since it retains its full value only if it remains potential), calling for a difficult heroic attitude on the part of the assembled groups (Artaud *The Theatre and Its Double* 19).

By bringing down the mimetic wall of false representation, theatre could, according to Artaud, create a new reality, an "unprecedented eruption of a world" (Artaud *Selected Writings* 155)).

During my performance of *Dante.Beckett.Lobster* a phone in the audience rang four times. The first time, I went into the audience and pulled the lobster out of the pot (it was situated in the middle of

the audience) and “answered it”, holding it to my face and mouth. It was not revealed who was calling. But they rang three more times, all the while asking me which lobster was the next to go. I talked to the voice (using the dead lobster as the phone) and pleaded for more time in which to decide. I looked at the two other living lobsters. I (and thus the audience) had to decide which lobster was to die. The performance was to end with the phone ringing and me holding one of the lobsters over a pot of boiling water, while the recording of Beckett’s story ran to its final lines:

“Have sense” she said sharply, “lobsters are always boiled alive. They must be.” She caught up the lobster and laid it on its back. It trembled. “They feel nothing” she said.

In the depths of the sea, it had crept into the cruel pot. For hours, in the midst of its enemies, it had breathed secretly. It had survived the Frenchwoman’s cat and his witless clutch. Now it was going alive into scalding water. It had to. Take into the air my quiet breath.

Belacqua looked at the old parchment of her face, grey in the dim kitchen.

“You make a fuss” she said angrily “and upset me and then lash into it for your dinner.”

She lifted the lobster clear of the table. It had about thirty seconds to live.

Well, thought Belacqua, it’s a quick death, God help us all.

It is not (Beckett *More Pricks Than Kicks* 21).

How food functions is more than just a simple affair of the gut. Though in daily life food often acts as a vehicle for the relief of hunger, on stage or through devised performance, it becomes a complex act of signification. Its relationship to the body is paramount in our understanding. Food always speaks of itself and of something else. For Boyce and Fitzpatrick:

When authors refer to food, they are usually telling the reader something important about narrative , plot, characterization or motives; we can also explore significant current issues

that are connected to food in subtle ways, for example, gender, religion, poverty and empire (Boyce and Fitzpatrick 4).

By examining food in the space of the performance, we can better appreciate the relationship between the play and the social structures that it embodies. Because of the physical nature of food, especially during its dramatic performance, it appeals to the cultural identity of the audience and to their understanding of food in their surroundings, both inside and outside the space of the performance. As observed above, famine and the failure of food haunt the Irish imagination. The material conditions of food on stage, be it lobsters or seaweed, bring about a hunger, in more ways than one. The uncovering of this trauma, or rather these traumatic experiences of food, can bring about, according to Miriam Haughton, is “fundamental to its narrative arc and ethical dissemination in the public sphere” (Haughton 13). Staging is a working through of these food shocks and suffering. As Haughton writes:

The reception of staging trauma constitutes a political act by those in attendance, regardless of intentionality. The efficacy of this performance encounter, however, depends on the relationship of trust that occurs between the performance and audience within the scope of the event. [...] What the staging of trauma can do is plural and deeply reliant on its process of rehearsal and conditions of production (Haughton 31).

As we play out food and animals on stage or in performance, we can begin to unravel the traumas that come with its history and culture and accept better how our own identities are tied to food traumas and to those of animals. It is, after all, the erroneous separation of human and animals that has led to the ecological crisis we now face as a species.

If we carefully consider the life a man leads, I find nothing to distinguish it from the life an animal leads. Both man and animal are hurled unconsciously through things and the world; both have interludes of amusement; both daily follow the same organic itinerary; both think nothing beyond what they think, nor live beyond that they live. A cat wallows in the sun and

goes to sleep. Man wallows in life, with all its complexities, and goes to sleep. Neither one escapes the fatal law of being who or what it is (Pessoa 147).

The separation of human and non-human is a fallacy perpetuated by theatre and drama to maintain control over the animal world.

2.5 Conclusion

The ethically motivated desire to resist making meaning out of animals on stage involves, I shall suggest, a suppression of affect and an evasion of political engagement based upon an ontological distinction between human and non-human that is not sustainable in practice (Ridout 110).

We have constructed theatre as a separate space: separate from the world in every sense. This separation is more profoundly felt in terms of food and animals. Theatre reflects human activity, not natural or animal activity. Perhaps this is one of its failings: a failing to both reflect upon and construct an alternative vision for our faltering environment in the Anthropocene era. If we are to engage with Ridout's claim above and sustainably question the interaction of human and non-human we must continually investigate the ways in which theatre delimits itself through a "suppression of affect" and an "evasion of political engagement".

This chapter has considered food signification on stage and how it affects actors and audience, among others. As well as outlining the ways in which food signification both as a material object and a sign, it also points towards the ways in which staged food escapes signification, operating as a physical and bodily affect instead that goes beyond its linguistic representation. This meeting of animal and audience on stage is perhaps the most difficult challenge for theatre in the

twenty-first century, particularly given the ways in which the industrial food system is affecting our environment—an environment that theatre must at least respond to if it is to continue its project of representation. The effect of this encounter, between audience member and animals should at minimum give us a future model for a more ethical theatre between human and non-human.

Reflecting on Brecht's *Saint Joan of the Stockyards*, Jocelyn L. Buckner writes that:

This strategy of defining moments of “meeting and meating” between the audience, onstage laborers, and animal bodies they encounter is an affective materialist dramaturgy that makes it impossible to ignore our own implication in the food supply chain. It demands the recognition of a collective humanity, a personal connection to, and ingestion of, the labour of other human beings, and the ways food consumption—from basic dietary needs to more sophisticated epicurean consumerism—is sustained by human and nonhuman sacrifice (Buckner 120).

We are shocked because it is something we cannot control. That it is not theatre as we know it. To a certain degree, the food and animals shows us the limits of theatre, that is, what can and cannot be done in the realms of theatricality. The next chapter shall consider the conflict that food caused which its context shifts and how, ultimately, we can learn more about food and its environment to create a better theatrical ecology.

Chapter 3: Food as Conflict

3.1 Introduction

The city is a model of dynamic relativism – a space where everything means more than one thing – a nondescript doorway, invisible for some, is for others the gate to a magical garden, a place or work, worship, or otherwise (Harvie xii).

For many people living in the Western World, the city is where they encounter food. They encounter food in its most processed form, even when it appears in its most self-evident form, as for example an apple or a leek sitting on a shop shelf. The city gives us food readymade for human consumption. It gives us food ready to eat, absent from the conflict of its natural environment, as we wander around the supermarket. In the supermarket, food is staged to appear “natural” though that very act of staging arises from the act of being processed, as for example in the case of vegetables that are dumped rather than sold because they don’t look like “natural” vegetables. In this space, the death and destruction that makes food production possible is largely concealed. Cities, “created from the yearning for a settled existence”, have reduced people’s ability to recognise their own local environment and their awareness of where food comes from and the conflict that is produced in order to bring it into the city (*Gray Straw Dogs: Thoughts on Humans and Other Animals* 172). The city is a vast performance space where the staging of food is deeply regulated to hinder people’s awareness of the conflict which befalls the natural world. People might imagine that their food comes from the “countryside” and is part of some bucolic site where no conflict occurs. As Carolyn Steel observes in her essay “The Phenomenology of Food” (2016):

Cities are set to dominate the future, yet living in them presents a dilemma, since their food must come from elsewhere: a place we persist in calling 'the countryside', although the images conjured by the term bear little relation to the realities of modern food production. This dilemma, which might be called the 'urban paradox', reflects our dualistic needs as humans. To fulfil our potential, we need the company of others; yet the closer we cluster together for the sake of society, the further removed we become from our sources of sustenance. This paradox can be traced back to the invention of agriculture around 10,000 to 12,000 years ago. In place of the wandering existence necessitated by hunting and gathering, our farmer forebears began to settle next to their fields, building the settlements that would eventually become cities (Steel "The Phenomenology of Food" 323).

This "urban paradox" means that food arrives conflict-free, coupled with an image of its staged naturalisation. Food here is performed to doubly sustain consumers: giving sustenance to their bodies coupled with guilt-free images of its utopian production. However, despite this neutralisation of food in the city as it is presented in the supermarket, there are spaces that allow the interrogation of food: where it comes from, what its staging means, and how this staging affects us. The space of the theatre, the restaurant, and the site of performance allow for an investigation of how food performs in different contexts. Furthermore, these sites allow us to understand how the meaning of food is not fixed but contingent on its situation in the city. These spaces showcase what food means to us in the twenty-first century.

The chapter discusses the role and function of food in relation to the space of the theatre and to other performance spaces, such as restaurants and galleries. It investigates how the theatrical nature of food disturbs the understanding of how theatre relates to both its environment and to its ecology, arguing that food and animals produce a conflict of context. What happens to food when it is performed? Does its meaning change in each performance setting? What is the difference between a food performance in a restaurant and a theatre setting? To establish the link between

food in drama/performance/theatre and food served in the restaurant we could appeal to Grotowski's idea of "paratheatre" which encapsulates the idea of theatrical experience outside the theatre itself (Schechner and Wylam 207).⁴⁵ Alan Ackerman and Martin Puchner have also made this connection with early modernist theatre than sought to produce "new theatrical and para-theatrical forms" to challenge the outmoded theatre of the 19th century (Ackerman and Puchner 9). We could also look to chefs of the late 20th century who have theatricalised the food experience in the restaurant, from the graphic to bucolic, in order to demonstrate that food's outside also represents a paratheatrical space worthy of investigation.

Food punctures the supposed ecological autonomy of theatre and demonstrates how its nature is interlinked with the biosphere of food and the wider nexus of the world. A lobster, for example, upsets the ways in which we configure theatre to be in the twenty-first century. Through my own PaR, I have (as discussed in the other chapters in this thesis) used lobsters to call into question the problem of animals appearing on stage. Food and animals on stage bring the geography of our local landscapes into direct view. The audience are asked to critically consider the use of an animal from an ethical and aesthetic point of view and think deeply about its ontology. To a certain degree, theatre has failed food, or rather, has failed to incorporate it into its own ecological system. This is despite the eruption of the real inside the theatre space that occurred at the midpoint of the twentieth century.

In the latter half of the twentieth century, the importance of life outside the theatre became part of a realist epistemology that wed the politics of the day to the idea that theatre could and should stage 'the real' — with words, costumes, sets, props, or place. The appreciation of knowledge gleaned from real experience facilitated new approaches to all aspects of

⁴⁵ Grotowski's idea of paratheater revolves around a number of different key theatrical configurations, such as 1) attempting to overcome the division between participants and spectators; 2) working towards a suspension of social roles and instead finding the human dimension of one's existence in action and experiment; and 3) encounters involving humans and nature. Grotowski believed paratheatrical work could lead to fundamental transformations in culture. As part of the counterculture movement in Europe in the early 1970s, Grotowski's paratheatrical work could be framed as an exercise in utopian theatre.

making theatre, but not with realism as a style. Theatre of the real was influenced by two major streams of practice. One stream, with antecedents in popular culture, flowed from radical rethinking of all aspects of creating theatre: acting, directing, playwrighting, and sets/environments. The changes resulting from this reconsideration of how to make theatre were informed by the realist epistemology that emerged in the context of the theatricalization of public and private life. The other stream came from playwrights who began to build their work from interviews, depositions, tribunal records, and other documents [such as] verbatim and documentary playwrighting (Martin 22).

Martin's arguments regarding the "Theatre of the real" highlights the precedent for bringing food and animals into the theatre – to assert a "realist epistemology" as opposed to a realism as a "style" to show how food and animals operate in private and public life. My PaR aimed to engaged with these ideas. When I brought a whole salmon, a dead duck, and a live lobster, into the theatre this eruption of the real occurred. However, this real was much more "real" than these earlier interruptions. The secure space of the theatre broke down, caused conflict between me, the actors, the directors, the stage manager, and the audience. The eruption showed that the theatre itself is full of holes regarding its own rules of representation despite a "postdramatic dramaturgy" which allows for the breaking of its own rules by highlighting "the performers' corporeal and concrete stage presence" with a "self-sufficient and self-referential form and process, practicing a semantics and rhetoric of form proper which conjoins both performers and spectators as active participants" (Kaynar 391-92). Dead and living animals, as well as other food stuffs, puncture theatre's ability to define itself.

As we saw in the last chapter, the meaning of food on stage continually resides beyond itself. Conflicts of context occur inside and outside the theatre. That is, it considers how they differ from each other and how this difference teaches us about their limits. Food is a relevant vehicle with which to probe these limitations but also to consider how similarities exist between the two,

specifically in how they generate a performative environment for the customer/audience. These questions are framed in terms of an ecology “of human and nonhuman elements” relating to the context and expectation of my own iterations (Bennett *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things* 115). Regarding how food is staged and performs in restaurants, I will analyse international examples of the interaction of these fields, particularly exploring restaurants that adopt a hyper-theatrical mode of performance during their dinner service as well as performance art that deals with food, and galleries that turn into pop-up restaurants to stage certain aspect of food’s political economy. This chapter will also draw on the performative aspects of my own fine dining restaurant and will argue for how this work has informed my theatre practice. The collision of these fields creates new insights into our understanding of food and its relationship to our own environments. Food, as any discursive system, alters in signification as its context changes and it adapts to our own “too” human consideration. To assess how food changes, we first need to examine its performativity, that is, how its meaning is made from its variable staging.

3.2 Food Performativity

Performativity must be differentiated from performance. Performance presupposes a subject, while the idea of performativity is meant to combat the very notion of the subject, stressing instead the ways in which subjectivity is constituted in particular histrionic moments as the effects of certain linguistic or cultural acts (Protevi 446).

Around the same time that J.L. Austin was putting pen to paper and sketching out his theory of the language (first delivered in 1955 in Harvard for the William James Lecture series and subsequently published as *How to do Things with Words* in 1962), the Kellogg’s company were altering food and

the ways in which we would think about breakfast cereal forever. In the words of Mark Bittman, Kellogg's Sugar Frosted Flakes, which were 29% sugar, transformed "dessert into breakfast" (Bittman 200). Though these two events may seem only tangentially related, they reveal much about how food and language operate, in the ways in which they both perform and affect each other. Like language, food performs in different ways depending on its context and the ways in which it is produced. Probably the most salient aspect of Austin's theory of language focused on what he called "performance utterances". These types of utterances "do not 'describe' or 'report' or constate anything at all, are not 'true or false'; and B. the uttering of the sentence is, or is a part of, the doing of an action, which again would not normally be described as, or as 'just', saying something" (Austin 5). For Austin, language is at its most performative when it is linked to action, when, for example, someone declares "'I name this ship the Queen Elizabeth' when smashing the bottle against the stem" (Austin 5). Though Austin would later dismiss his own idea of the performative as "marginal" his theory of language has proved fertile ground for at least two generations of theorists, from Jacques Derrida to Judith Butler and Eve Sedgwick to challenge how language operates (150). All three have demonstrated how all language is performative "most of all when it isn't even embodied in words" (Sedgwick 6). For Derrida, "the problematic of the performative" resides in the absence of any singular unified context to which to ascribe a complete meaning:

Every sign, linguistic or non-linguistic, spoken or written [...] can be cited, put between quotation marks; thereby it can break with every given context and engender infinitely new contexts in an absolutely nonsaturable fashion. This does not suppose that the mark is valid outside its context, but on the contrary that there are only contexts without any centre of absolute anchoring (Derrida *Margins of Philosophy* 320).

Building on Derrida's anti-essentialism, Judith Butler applied the idea of the performative to gender and identity, arguing that we must conceptualise gender and identity as performative, that is as a

theatrical act. We materialise through our own and others acts and enunciations, as Judith Butler maintains in *Gender Trouble* (1990). It is not something which exists before the act:

As a public action and performative act, gender is not a radical choice or project that reflects a merely individual choice, but neither is it imposed or inscribed upon the individual, as some post-structuralist displacements of the subject would contend. The body is not passively scripted with cultural codes, as if it were a lifeless recipient of wholly pre-pen cultural relations. But neither do embodied selves pre-exist the cultural conventions which essentially signify bodies. Actors are always already on the stage, within the terms of the performance. Just as a script may be enacted in various ways, and just as the play requires both text and interpretation, so the gendered body acts its part in a culturally restricted corporeal space and enacts interpretations within the confines of already existing directives (Butler 526).

While Derrida's and Butler's conception of the performative sought to untangle and expand Austin's initial idea and allow it to flow into all areas of academic discourse, queer theorist Eve Sedgwick attempted to go further still and expand its application into new areas of embodiment concerning emotion and physical touch. To the category of the performative, Sedgwick introduced the class of "periperformative utterances": that is, utterances which derive their efficacy from their spatial relationship to performative utterances. Though not performatives *per se*, they stood beside them, if only to poke holes in their ability to make meaning stick:

The localness of the periperformative is lodged in a metaphoric of space. Periperformative utterances aren't just about performative utterances in a referential sense: they cluster around them, they are near them or next to them or crowding against them; they are in the neighbourhood of the performative (Sedgwick 68).

It was the spatial nature of the performative that Sedgwick highlighted that proved most useful to my own PaR and to the ways in which food creates a conflict of context between the spaces of the

theatre, restaurant, and the gallery. To paraphrase Austin, the journey of my PaR was to move from a space of “how to do things with words” to a space, or spaces, of “how to do things with food”: it was a moving beyond the language of the playscript and towards the physical space of the food on stage, or rather staged food. Food moves around and its meaning is not fixed, as we saw in the last chapter. The limitations of food and theatre were new to me at the outset of my PaR, coming from a position of the postdramatic, performance art and running a restaurant. I didn’t realise that switching the context inevitably risks causing conflict. Theatre is not performance art. The restaurant is not a theatre. The art gallery is not a theatre. For example, Rasa Todosijevic’s performance *Drinking Water* (1974), a performance which involved the artists removing fish from a tank and repeatedly drinking the water from the tank while trying to breath as the suffocating fish lay on the gallery floor, created a conflict between the artist and his environment. When artists and theatre makers allow the different discursive spaces to bleed into one another, they expose the limitations of the medium that they play with, in this case, the actual space (which was a restaurant pretending to be a theatre). The category of the performative circles around doing as opposed to being, and therefore it proves useful to examine the tension between the spaces that my PaR engaged with through its different iterations. The category of food performativity allows us to understand foods and animals’ complexity, not as singular things, but as multifaceted objects.

What happens when audiences and theatre-makers bring food into the theatre? What happens when chefs bring theatre or performance art into a restaurant? What does food do? Or rather, what else can food do, when it enters these realms? If the performative is a “doing” as opposed to a “being” or “saying” how then does food become performative, or rather, how does it enter the space of the possible where its performativity showcases the imitations of contemporary discursive formations? “When is saying something doing something? And how is saying something doing something?” as Sedgwick and Parker write in their introduction to a collection of essays on the relationship between the performative and performance (Parker and Sedgwick 1).

One could argue that food has long been performative in the context of theatre and theatrical spaces. Feasting practices in medieval and renaissance culture demonstrate the inherent theatricality of food presentation and performativity. Food in the theatre of the same period also demonstrates much about how “eating and drinking encode economic circumstances, social aspirations, national identity, physical health, and self-worth” (Fitzpatrick 1). Perhaps we merely removed food from a performative space to limit its potential signification just as we pushed theatre into a black box of autonomy to separate it from its environment. Though the roots of the staging food as a medium of performance reside in the historic avant-garde, among the movements of Futurism and Dada, for Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett food is inherently performative:

The materiality of food, its dynamic and unstable character, its precarious position between sustenance and garbage, its relationship to the mouth and the rest of the body, particularly the female body, and its importance to community, make food a powerful performance medium. Indeed, it could be said that food and the processes associated it are performance art *avant la lettre* (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett "Playing to the Senses: Food as a Performance Medium" 13).

Though long practised, the performative possibilities of food in restaurant and theatre have yet to attract sufficient academic inquiry. For Leda Cooks, the symbolic status of food is deeply powerful and performative:

Because it is a necessity for survival and because it is no longer a widely (locally) accessible and equally produced resource. Because food is an absolute necessity in a commodity-driven market, it serves as a central and tangible trace of the dominant ordering of social relations. In the industrialized west, where food slips into image, into the imaginary, it becomes necessary for lifestyle, rather than sustaining life. As the means of producing food and the value assigned to its production are increasingly split off from consumption, food becomes less and less about its substance and the relation of that substance to subsistence and

becomes more available for signification. In a saturated capitalist economy that signification of food, identity, and resistance must be controlled by market forces precisely because of its importance to everyday life (Cooks 95-96).

Food performativity, according to Cooks, establishes “the invisible connections that form the body as a site of cultural struggle” (95). It is this struggle that my PaR uncovered: struggles that necessitate a conflict which seeks resolution. If we, as scholars and/or theatre practitioners, are to create a space for food in the theatre, for these struggles to blossom, then we must examine the reasons why food causes such a conflict in the dramatic space. Between necessity and image, food wavers over our theatrical impulse, slighting it and causing unease.

3.3 The Theatre

In the past two decades [1990-2010], food has claimed a new place in theatre. No longer only prelude, accompaniment, interlude, metaphor, metonym, post-performance indulgence, employee reward, performer sustenance, occasional prop, or even alternative to playgoing, it has become the very *raison d'être* for a complement of productions arising in the midst of an upswing in food politics and the ubiquity of food programming on television (Chansky and White 6).

Whether it is between the characters on stage or between the actors and the audience, conflict sustains the narrative arc of drama. Conflict in theatre is both internal and external: internal in the sense of the collision of dramatic action that occurs on stage and in the theatre, and external in that it can set up opposition between the way audiences perceive

and experience the world and the way the performance is framed in terms of different ideologies and ecologies. As Wallace Heim observes:

Conflict exists as a mode of relation; it is ubiquitous in the repertoire of human experience. Its character exceeds the adversarial stand-offs or dialectical progressions that can define it. Each situation has a particularity, an uneven temporal passage, degrees of inflammation, distress, and denial. It can be considered as a condition of life, one that can prompt social change, establish human identities, and terminate prospects. Human conflict has been the matter of theatre for thousands of years, not only for the tragic, but through comedy, irony, the absurd, allegory, the epic, naturalism, Brechtian and post-Brechtian theatre, and the many inventive, contemporary hybrids of performance praxis. Human conflict is not simply the device driving a plot structure, but a substance of the theatre imagination, expressed in diverse forms (Heim 290-91).

As Heim argues, conflict is a fundamental relationship in life, both in the human and the non-human world. Theatre cannot sidestep conflict as it is integral to life. Though postdramatic theatre seems to sidestep the central role of conflict in drama, and according to Lehmann achieves a “renunciation of the traditions of dramatic form”, much postdramatic theatre still operates through conflict (Lehmann *Postdramatic Theatre* 26). Indeed, in my own postdramatic iterations, conflict abounded through a multiplicity of forms, between actor and audience, actor and animal, and audience and performance. We cannot sidestep conflict even if we remove traditional dramatic structures. The liveness of theatre will inevitably engender conflict and strife due to the processes that occur on and off stage.

There was a multiplicity of points of conflict in my PaR in relation to the relationship between food and theatre. Though I have outlined many of these above in terms of the

staging of the different iterations that made up the project, I would now like to analyse why these caused possible conflicts in terms of each iteration's theatrical production. I shall discuss the lobster last as it probably caused the most conflict between actor, audience, and ensemble. Though food is my focus in this section I shall also discuss the language of food in the play as this also caused conflict with the audience. Many of the audience members of *Irish Food. A Play* were not used to having food be used as a vehicle for political or social commentary in such a direct manner. When one audience member remarked that she didn't understand the correspondence between food and politics, I could see there existed a large lacuna in some audience members' everyday attitudes towards food. For many, food is never more than its "material reality" and its "social significance" whereas food as a "system of communication" is an ideology that they can just ignore (Carruth 9).

For most people in the Western World, Wendel Berry's famous statement that "eating is an agricultural act" is an attitude to be avoided due to the politics of land and business of industrial food production: both of these aspects evoke strong emotions that should affect people deeply (Berry 152). Despite cultural claims of the Irish people's connection to the land, many citizens of that country still want to see its industrial food network through the lens of a "pastoral trope" (Carruth 12). These tropes, as Carruth observes, dominate contemporary discourse around food primarily through marketing campaigns that offer "georgic motifs to articulate a green vision of technology" (Carruth 15). One could argue that as a nation Ireland, through its various government agencies such as Bord Bia, Failte Ireland, and Tourism Ireland are guilty of this technological "green washing". Language is the battleground for food in theatre, for its history and its future and it is important we explain why certain language games that occurred during the play caused more conflict than others.

Dead animals were not always prohibited from the theatre. Many past productions have featured dead animals on stage to reinforce the reality of their productions. At the 2020 Druid production for Lady Gregory's *Hyacinth Halvey* (1906), they included a fake sheep carcass hung on stage. After consultation in the Abbey Archives at NUI Galway, it seems that the first production (and subsequent productions) used a real dead sheep (as well as a real live bird in a cage) which hung from a hook on the stage.

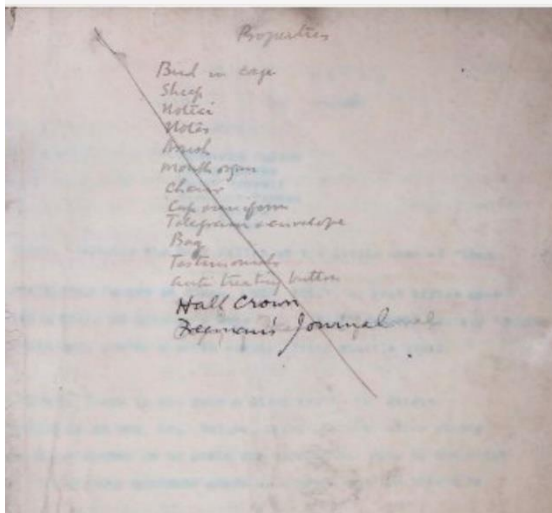


Figure 25: Prop list for Lady Gregory's *Hyacinth Halvey* (1906). From The Abbey Theatre Digital Archive at James Hardiman Library, NUI Galway.

Indeed, the irony of the fake lamb in the Druid production of this play is that another Gregory play that featured as part of the same event included a loaf of real soda bread. Seated in the audience, in the middle of the quadrangle in NUI Galway, I wondered why Druid's performance appeared to be so afraid of dead animals, while seemingly appreciating the use of real bread and butter. Would plastic bread and butter not do as well? Would a real sheep not be more affective? At least to demonstrate to the audience that theatre and its environment are an interconnected experience. These were real concerns that my own PaR came up against. The use of dead animals in theatre and performance, according to Peta Tait, "conceal the political implications of privileging human

experience" (Tait "Fleshing Dead Animals: Sensory Body Phenomenology in Performance" 111). Dead animals are not merely inanimate objects. They were, until a very short time before the performance began, living things, just as the audience are. Their use in the theatre seems to risk evoking some type of sensory shock: a shock that makes the audience question the very foundation of theatre and their own humanity. During the first iteration of *Irish food. A Play*, the stage manager was visibly distraught that a dead duck and a dead salmon were being used in the theatre. As already discussed, some of his fear was caused by relevant practical concerns such as the issue of hygiene: "what was the duck going to touch?" he asked. However, the other aspect of the fear arose from the ways in which death, even in animals, produces an affective shock that cannot be put into words. Even the actors struggled to grasp how to position themselves on stage with the dead animal. As Tait observes:

The use of dead animals in live performance can compel the spectator's sensory engagement not simply owing to any imagined species barrier or anthropomorphism, but because it can stage movement common to the dead material and the spectators. Sensations ranging from visceral shock to aural discomfort may offer a body-based driver that cuts through pre-existing patterns conditioned by socio-political frameworks. Our own connection to death is not through our mortality but through our investment in the movement of life, a movement that death continues and does not end (Tait "Fleshing Dead Animals: Sensory Body Phenomenology in Performance" 119).

Often, the use of dead animals' cuts through any semiotic system of understanding the world and affects us on a more neurological level. Audience members are simply confronted with the material and physical reality of the body of the animal (it is interesting to note that in the English language, we do not use the word *corpse* for animals that are being prepared for food). Explaining this fact

does not help the actor or audience to cope with these challenges. It is rather a deep-seated affect that crosses a boundary that ordinarily audiences do not have to encounter in their daily lives—or indeed in the theatre.

In this sense, affect is a contagious and excessive (though not transcendent) kind of force; another name for that which disorganizes subjects and destratifies voices [...] Affect is not synonymous with human emotion, for Deleuze and Guattari; rather, it 'crosses species boundaries that are normally ontologically policed' passing between bodies of differing species and drawing them into 'unnatural participations' and 'unholy alliances' (Maoilearca 136).

Theatre keeps death at bay; it keeps it "ontologically policed" and impedes the crossing of species in the performance space. The introduction of dead animals on stage draws them into "unnatural participations" and "unholy alliances" with actors and audience (Deleuze and Guattari *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* 241). The space of the theatre, historically a human-space, becomes contaminated and allows audiences to see the world anew, turning anthropocentric ecology on its head towards the non-human. The nonhuman, be it animals, insects or food, forces theatre actors and audience that there is another world view which has hitherto been ignored. As Peta Tait argues in her essay "Enveloping the Nonhuman: Australian Aboriginal Performance" (2019)

For some time, I have been asking what theatrical performance can add to existing scientific and cultural forms of communication about environmental and climate concerns and species survival. This questioning happens within the context of rethinking humanity's relationship with the nonhuman world, which has become urgent in the twenty-first century due to scientific data about global warming and its impact. The philosophical rethinking that unravels the nature/culture binary looks for ways to reverse the indifference and "hyper-separation" from the natural environment and atmospheres (Tait "Enveloping the Nonhuman: Australian Aboriginal Performance" 347).

For Tait, the introduction of nonhuman elements into the performance space brings actors and audience closed together and forces them to acknowledge the “human-centric” attitudes that govern theatre (348). “Performance” for Tait, must “begin to decentre human prominence” and find ways to “manifest connections with species and environments [through] embodied performances” These performances, as the iterations of my own PaR, communicate connections between the human and nonhuman environment dispelling “ideas of separation and generate an enveloping effect through spectator perception of affect and emotional feeling” (348).

At the end of the first iteration of *Irish Food. A Play* I packed my dead duck and dead salmon (as well as mussels, oysters, lobsters, and brown bread) into a crate. The blanket on which the dead duck had lain (so it would not touch the stage floor) was left in the centre of the performance space. The stage manager told me to “take it with me” as it was “good for nothing now”. I pondered these words, thinking how death contaminates, makes us afraid. The dead duck went back to the restaurant, to be processed and subsequently eaten. But the spectre of that duck remained in the theatre, a shimmering ghostly sign of the limits of that space to encapsulate animals, death, and how we audiences and theatre-makers conceive theatricality in the 21st contemporary period century. As Derrida observes in *Spectres of Marx* (1994):

The one who has disappeared appears still to be there, and his apparition is not nothing. It does not do nothing. Assuming that the remains can be identified, we know better than ever than the dead must be able to work. And to cause to work, perhaps more than ever (Derrida *Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning and the New International* 120).

As the dead animal on stage, the spectre of Derrida is both “the real and the unreal, the actual and the inactual, the living and the non-living, being and non-being” (7). The dead animal is the spectre of theatre itself. Regrettably, the second iteration of the play did not include the dead duck. The director decided against its inclusion, fearful of its capacity to distract the audience and to

contaminate the actors' hands. Though I do not believe this fear to be legitimate (in terms of a health risk), it is difficult to ask actors to hold dead animals if they have had no experience touching an animal before the performance. Unsuccessful in trying to include at least one dead animal in the production, I at least acknowledged the troubling nature of dead animals on stage. These considerations fed into my PaR and contributed to understanding the autoethnographic nature of my practice in terms of the restaurant and the theatre and forced me to consider why animals cause such problems for theatre in the twenty-first century.

Certain audience members found the language of the play more affective than the actual food or animals on stage. For those, it was the language of food, or the words we associate with it, that produced more conflict in their consideration of the place of food in theatre and the wider world. Usually, food is encountered without the multitude of its material associations in audiences' daily lives. It is a reasonable assumption that consumers usually do not associate the chicken breast that they purchase with the industrial food system of human and animal suffering. Moreover, the politics and religion of food are entirely absent in the act of everyday eating. Much of my research for *The Irish Cook Book* and the questionnaire that people completed for the play pointed towards a different diet for the Catholic and the Protestant population of Ireland from the 18th century onwards. Still, certain audience members found the references to Irish politics, to "Catholics and Protestants" baffling:

- 3 I am five
- 2 I am six
- 3 father is taking a salmon from the river with his hands
- 2 we watch it as it tries to wriggle free
- 1 he finishes it off
- 3 he hits it across the head with a hammer

- 1 Protestants and Catholics
- 3 wriggling to be free
- 2 its eyes go blood red
- 1 history and religion
- 2 blood red
- 3 or orange
- 1 Protestants
- 3 oranges don't grow in Ireland
- 2 food and religion and history and wanting to kill your neighbour
- 1 having to kill your food
- 3 taking a hammer to it
- 2 it's dead anyways
- 3 well dead (McMahon *Irish Food. A Play*)

In the post-show discussion, several audience members asked, “what food had to do with Catholics and Protestants?”. When I glibly replied “everything”, an air of confusion hung over their faces. Little did they know (or simply failed to consider) that religion in Ireland often influences people’s diets and their attitude towards food in general. The research of Dorothy Cashman into Anglo Irish manuscript collection testifies to this culinary separation (Cashman). As I observed above, while researching *The Irish Cook Book* (2020), I discovered that many people who grew up Catholic, Protestant, or Jewish in Ireland, encountered food in completely different ways. The legacy of the landed Protestant aristocracy is one case in point: access to game animals such as venison, mallard and pheasant were not part of the diet of most Catholics even after independence. The same could

be said for river fishing. It was almost as if this food was associated with a type of Britishness and therefore not part of Irish food culture. The language of the play in the theatre was able to highlight this phenomenon and showcase the conflict and performative nature of food depending on the environment that individuals found themselves in in Ireland. Irish food historians such Dorothy Cashman have argued for an acknowledgement of the role that British food culture contributes to Irish food culture and be recognised as part and parcel of the history of eating in Ireland since the Norman invasion. However, this deep-seated divide continues, especially in Northern Ireland. The English novelist W.M Thackeray recognised this in his *Irish Sketchbook* (1842):

To have 'an opinion about Ireland' one must begin by getting at the truth; and where is it to be had in the country? Or rather, there are two truths, the Catholic truth, and the Protestant truth. The two parties do not see things with the same eyes (Thackeray 363).

Though for some audience members "this has nothing to do with food", the theatre occupies a unique position to draw attention to certain foodways. As "food is a sign expressing sociocultural identity and a system of communication", theatre can showcase the tensions inherent in this system (Stano 20). Theatre does this better than a restaurant as people who dine out rarely want to be confronted with the ideologies and biases in their food system. Contemplating food, as Carolyn Steel writes:

is something we rarely do in the modern world: industrialization has done its best to obscure the origins of what we eat. Thinking about what food really is can make us feel uneasy, since it brings us uncomfortably close to examining the nature of our own being (Steel *Sitopia: How Food Can Save the World* 25)

The fractured post-dramatic language of *Irish Food. A Play* offered a way to figure uneasy thoughts in the minds of its audience, to push them to consider the many ways in which food operates and affects their world. Despite theatre's embrace of food, despite "the

fundamental role food has played in theatre-making”, the theatre, as an institution, still needs to find strategies to distil the conflict inherent in our contemporary food system, finding ways in which to show how and what food means to its audiences.

To a certain degree, a live lobster undermines the fundamental principles of theatre, in the sense that it can only be itself: it cannot be anything other than what it is. In his book *Theatre Ecology: Environments and Performance Events* (2007) Baz Kershaw observes the “foundational contradictions of theatrical performance” is that the events that take place on stage in performance are simultaneously real and not real, that is, a performer in a role is “not-herself and not-not-herself” at the same time (Kershaw *Theatre Ecology: Environments and Performance Events* 25). How do we unify this conception of theatricality with the food performances or with theatre performances that include food or animals, especially a live lobster which moves around according to its own logic and stimuli? If we apply Kershaw’s logic of the “foundational contradictions” where things on stage always exist in an “ontologically subjunctive mode”, a relationship that is “both ephemeral and durable”, then how do we reconcile the lobster on stage? The presence of the lobster put drama in, what Kershaw calls, a “double bind” (13). The living lobster occupies a position of betweenness in relation to actor and audience. Of course, for many the lobster will become a “human” player in the drama; becoming an anthropomorphic object that will not disturb the central tenets of the theatre. “Animal bodies became enveloped in human emotions” as Peta Tait observes: we cannot but help turn living things into a mirror of ourselves (Tait *Wild and Dangerous Performances: Animals, Emotions, Circus* 1).

However, if theatre is to escape its current ontological deadlock and realise it is another object in the world’s ecology, it must create a new space in which humans and animals can interact. If we can conceptualise events such as “11 September 2001 in New York as a performance [and] the Earth’s ice-caps speedily melting as part of the same performance” we must acknowledge the role of animals in theatre, allowing Kershaw’s “double bind” to play itself out to reveal new ways of theatre making where animals exists on the same level as their human counterparts (Kershaw *Theatre*

Ecology: Environments and Performance Events 13). As Félix Guattari observed in his book *The Three Ecologies* (2000), though we try, we cannot separate nature from culture: the ecology of the mental, social and environment must be conceived of as interrelated and inseparable: “we must learn to think transversally” (Guattari 54). This type of thinking, of which my own PaR pursued, aims to help us resolve the binary blockages in our intellectual system. As the philosopher John Gray acknowledges in his *Straw Dogs: Thoughts on Human and Animals* (2002):

Humans think they are free, conscious beings, when in truth they are deluded animals. At the same time, they never cease to escape from what they imagine themselves to be. [...]
We think we differ from other animals because we can envision our deaths when we know no more than they do about what death beings. Everything tell us that it means extinction, but we cannot begin to imagine what that means (Gray *Straw Dogs: Thoughts on Humans and Other Animals* 120/30).

The death of lobster on stage affects us dearly: not only because the animal has just died, but because it demonstrates that our own deaths may occur similarly, that is, completely out of our control, subject to the whims of others.

Different modes of theatre do not solve the problem of food and animals on stage. Though sub categories of theatre such as “Performance theatre” where the “meaning and being [of the work is] in performance, not in literary encapsulation”, the problem around food and animals still arises. (Wiles 17). Though Chanksy and White (2015) attest to the “new place in theatre” which food occupies there is much work to be done regarding the conflictual aspect that staged food proposes. If food, as much as popular theatre, aimed to entertain on stage, then there is little discordance or conflict between it and the actor and spectator. If theatre is to challenge audiences’ conception (or the absence of their conception) of food, it needs to develop ways in which to incorporate animals (living and dead) into its framework. In Irish theatre, artists and audiences alike have used food as

everything except itself. Perhaps the time has arrived to allow food to “do” things on stage so that audiences can witness its effects and affects.

3.4 The Restaurant

Over the last two decades the explicit consideration of scenographic constructedness of the restaurant experience has come into balance with the attention to gustatory pleasure. Through reinventing the overall experience as *Gesamtkunstwerk*, high-end chefs truly claim their place, as Carême articulated, in the pantheon of great artists. The collision of a scenographic imagination with the intimate distance and questions of taste, appetite and desire posed by food’s revealing the human body as porous and fundamentally connected to the environment help us to re-cognize the relation of the human body in space, like all great art, challenging us to consider the place of the human (Abrams 14).

In contrast to drama, conflict is not the driving force behind a restaurant’s operation. Indeed, the operation of a food service in a restaurant attempts to erase conflict from both the food and its presentation. However, this does not overlook the fact that the restaurant is also a site of representation. We usually conceive of theatre as a site of being *something* else and the restaurant as being itself: that is, as a site where people go to eat food. Yet, the restaurant itself is a complex sign system and not all restaurants are created with the intention of only serving food. Many restaurants blur the boundaries between theatre and the act of eating, utilising what Abrams calls the “scenographic imagination” to produce a type of conflict in the diner, be it emotional or intellectual (14). These restaurants attempt to pursue the condition of theatre, theatricalising food for their

guests. I say pursue the condition of theatre as their goal is not to become a substitute for the theatre merely make our dining experience theatrical. My own Michelin starred restaurant Aniar utilises several of these strategies to dramatize the story of the food to evoke the terroir of the west of Ireland. These strategies push the restaurant to a more experiential event “that draws the attention to the food and both its staging and the act of engaging with it as performance”, than simply an act of eating (14). One dish in Aniar that demonstrates this theatricality is the oyster ice-cream dish. The dish is made from oysters, milk, and cream. The mixture is heated and churned to make a savoury ice-cream. It is meant to evoke the landscape of the west of Ireland, in particular its seascape. The taste as one customer put it, was like “dipping your ice-cream into the sea and eating it”. The dish is designed to affect the customer on an olfactory and neurological level, as the effect of eating an oyster ice-cream producing a feeling of estrangement since the customer would normally eat ice-cream and oysters separately.



Figure 26: Oyster ice-cream with sea lettuce. As part of the Tasting Menu at Aniar Restaurant.

It could be argued that all restaurants fulfil this function, even though they may do so very implicitly or subtly. Restaurants are inherently theatrical and experiential and contain much drama and performance, and constantly approach the same possibilities of theatre: chefs and waiters are in some ways like actors, playing roles for a guest. We conceive of restaurant as fixed places, but they are always fluid, a conflation of material and abstract ideas. They are, as Brian Massumi writes of the idea of affect, “the simultaneous participation of the virtual in the actual and the actual in the virtual, as one arises from and returns to the other (Massumi *Parables for the Virtual: Movement, Affect, Sensation* 35). Food is always a sign and symbol, and never simply itself, even as an agricultural act. However, diners often fail to experience these aspects of food’s conceptualisation. As Carole Counihan observes:

Food is a product and mirror of the organization of society on both the broadest and the most intimate levels. It is connected to many types of behaviour and is endlessly meaningful. Food is a prism that absorbs and reflects a host of phenomena. [Food] reveals much about power relations and conceptions of sex and gender, for every coherent social group (Counihan 6).

Our perception of food is deeply dependant on the context in which it occurs and the people who gather to consume that food. If this context is altered, as it was in my PaR, then conflict occurs; that is, there is a rupture between the guests/audience expectations. These expectations in turn generate different affective values for food. Of course, it did not help that we staged the second iteration of *Irish Food. A Play* in a popular restaurant in Dublin. This location of the play certainly contributed to the “the blurry boundaries between food in culinary settings and its use as an artistic medium” (Raviv 8). Some of this confusion arose from the fact that some audience-members knew me as a chef and restaurateur and, as I observed above expected our tasting menu at Aniar, which while no means less theatrical, has a completely different emphasis to the role of food. Even though our food in Aniar also makes certain food offering strange, such as our oyster ice-cream with sea

lettuce, the food in the play took food to a different level of strangeness: drawing perhaps more on Brecht's "alienation" or "distancing" effect, using food as site of resistance against our everyday conception of its normative value of sustenance and nutrition (Willett 238). This is undoubtedly due to the ways in which theatre and performance can highlight different aspects of food outside the habits of our daily lives. Our engagement with food is deeply habitual and any alteration of those habits changes our reaction towards that food and the way in which we conceptualise in the world at large. As Abrams remarks:

This mediation of the encounter between diner and meal, between chef and diner across time, produces a scenography of the personal. Few encounters are simultaneously as intimate and as social as eating, by drawing focus to taste through a Brechtian process of making strange alongside a conscious engagement with the visual arts of design (Abrams 11).

This making strange of food unites what Abrams calls "scenographic" restaurants and postdramatic theatre which concerns itself with food. However, the difference in my own PaR was that food in the play was more multi-dimensional in terms of its physical and conceptual reach. Consider the lobster in both the play and the restaurant. Many of the audiences appeared not to be used to seeing live lobsters on stage. They reported afterwards that it seemed almost like a person to them: a thing that can jump up, feel, or bite them. They perceive the lobster as "looking at them". As John Berger observes, we fail to conceive of animals in most situations as observing us: "animals are always the observed" for us humans (Berger 267). This is where Ridout's argument comes into play: the lobster has no intentionality. It is what it is. It cannot be something else. However, to the audience the lobster is *something else* because of its presence on stage. It is never *only what it is*. It is looking at them in the restaurant, it is completely different. The distinction between food in the restaurant and in the theatre caused me to reflect on the ways in which the food it presented and prepared. It required moving beyond Ridout's conceptualisation of animals on stage. In my notebook after the first iteration, I wrote:

I never realised how the meaning of a lobster would change so radically in the theatre. In the restaurant, it's hard to conceive of it in the same way. On a busy night we have 20 lobsters which will serve 40 people. I must go quickly to process them. I can't even think about the lobster anymore. Knife in head. Take off arms. Cut body in two. It's messy. But I work through it. Do I forget they are alive? Not quite. A living thing never allows you to forget that it is alive. We cook it and serve it to the customers. They eat it, enjoy it, revel unconsciously in its luxurious connotations. In the theatre it is an alien, a threat. A rupture in the lines of communication between audience and actor. The lobster doesn't act, or rather it does: it just doesn't know it.

This rupture in the lines of communication marks out the point where the theatre and the restaurant fail to accommodate the space of the other. As noted above, this failure was noticeable during the second iteration because we staged the play in an actual restaurant. This staging discombobulated several audience members who related to me in the post-performance discussion that they thought the show would have been a play and a meal, akin to the "dinner theatre" of the 1950s or the "dinner party" play, not the postdramatic fluidity of actor and food (Blake 422). The second iteration of *Irish food. A Play* was neither of those things and was far more akin to work by the Futurists and other playwrights of the early twenty century such as Gertrude Stein and Thornton Wilder whose food plays, often performed in intimate spaces, "denaturalised the conventions of drama, posing challenges to conventions of staging, scripting, and characterisation" (422). All these elements made up aspects of my play, which contributed to a subtle alienation of the audience: were they in a restaurant, a theatre, in both, and neither? Were the actors' characters in the story of Irish food, or just ghostly voices, puppets for a myriad of differing positions out of 10,000 years food history? Instead of waiters, the actors who served them food spoke forth on Irish food in a multitude of different shifting voices and perspectives, combining food memories with stories of Irish foodways. Audience members were deliberately not given adequate cutlery or napkins to consume their food (only one or two complained) precisely because we wanted to denaturalise the space of the

restaurant and allow the space of the postdramatic to fall over the restaurant to allow our experiment in food take place: we sought to produce conflict where generally there is none. Diners go to restaurants to relax, to eat for entertainment as opposed to necessity; not to be forced into situations with live lobsters and dead ducks where they must make ethical decisions. The second iteration of *Irish food. A Play* was more an example of what Elizabeth Blake calls “dinner theatricality”, that is a

Performance practice that illuminates the relationship between theatre and the theatricality of dinner itself [...] Dinner theatricality exposes the workings of that process, confirming it even as it expands our sense of what, exactly, constitutes pleasure (Blake 420-21).

Irish food. A Play attempted to bring food from one restaurant to another restaurant thinly veiled as a theatre to investigate the potential and the limits of such a staging such food to draw attention to the ways in which food’s signification alters when the context is changed. The assumption is that food remains stable when moved from place to place; but this is not the case at all. Food is “a language that is never closed upon itself” (Deleuze and Guattari *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* 7). It can bring new questions to the table regarding its role in our society. As Blake recognises:

By denaturalizing the boundaries of the stage and drawing attention to the theatricality of the dinner party, they open out questions about the line between theatricality and performance in everyday life, and what it means to move between the two in space as intimate as a dining room. Moreover, understanding dinner theatricality as a mode of performance, rather than simply a recurring theme, emphasizes the ways these questions reverberate beyond the theatre (Blake 427).

By understanding the ways in which food on stage and food in a restaurant differs, we can use these differences to exploit audience and guest expectation and perhaps draw attention to the wider discourse of food, its theatricality, and its merit as a vehicle for creativity and innovation. Many chefs

of the last twenty years, such as Ferran Adrià of El Bulli in Spain, Grant Achatz of Alinea Restaurant in Chicago, and Heston Blumenthal of The Fat Duck in Bray in England, have pushed food into places where its value stems from not only its nutritional and aesthetic value on the plate but also its theatrical value and the ways in which it engenders a participatory element between chef, food, and diner. As Raviv observes in *Eating my Words: Talking about food in Performance* (2010):

Certain “conceptual” chefs [...] have contributed to a public perception of food as a creative medium by positing food as works of art as well as merely dinner. As the chef became more like an artist and the restaurant became a site for unexpected surprises and multi-sensory experiences, artists who used food began exploring the medium with new insights and interests (Raviv 10).

The ways in which these chefs use food as a vehicle for theatricality and perception is an example of what Kristin Hunt calls “mimetic cuisine”: a type of cooking that seeks to push food towards the reality of its production as opposed to eliding it. In his *Alimentary Performances: Mimesis, Theatricality and Cuisine* (2018), Kristin Hunt argues that mimetic cuisine is “a diverse set of culinary practices in which chefs and artists treat food as a representational medium” (Hunt 12). Though this type of cooking is often labelled “modernist”, “molecular”, or “techno-emotional”, Hunt prefers the term due to the way in which it demonstrates how food can mimic natural phenomena to play on the guests’ senses and emotions. I am thinking here of Ferran Adria’s spherified olives which are made of olive juice and look like real olives until they pop in your mouth and the sphere bursts. Adria’s mimetic olives challenge our perceptions and our conception of reality. As Hunt observes:

Adrià’s [...] spherical olives rely on mimesis as a source of pleasure through a purposefully incomplete mimetic process. In each sensory element but one, the olives resemble their traditional counterpart. They taste like olives, look like olives, and are made from olives. However, the texture of the dish surprises through its contradiction of expectations created by the mimetic work of the chef. Furthermore, in both of these cases diners willingly and

purposefully experience these dishes with an attentiveness to mimetic recognition (Hunt 37).

Though my own PaR did not include any of these methods of food manipulation, these are practices that we use in the restaurants and their use informed certain aspects of the ways in which food was presented in the play. Mimetic cuisine relies on the manipulation of guest expectations as well as playing on their emotions through multiple senses to produce a conflict in the experience of the guest. Sound and smell play a large part in making these theatrical features work. Blumenthal's dish "Sound of the Sea" best represents how theatre and food can merge to affect the guest in a restaurant setting. Blumenthal makes the act of eating performative by forcing consumers to recognise that the act of eating is also an experience that can be built upon with sounds, smells, and haptic qualities as opposed to something that is just placed in front of them with its meaning wholly present. For Hunt, Blumenthal:

Makes auditory sensation a primary focus of "Sound of the Sea." In conceiving "Sound of the Sea," Blumenthal conducted experiments that indicated listening to specific sounds while eating could sharpen one's sense of taste. In this case, he found that listening to the sound of waves enhanced the taste of oysters in test subjects. The resulting dish is a mimetic representation of the sea made visually compelling by the aforementioned foam, along with tapioca, breadcrumb, and crushed eel sand topped with seafood and edible seaweed. But Blumenthal takes the experience further, providing the diner with an iPod that allows her to listen to the sound of crashing waves while eating. This drive toward verisimilitude confirms both Blumenthal's self-professed theatricality as well as his willingness to use technology as an aid to the accomplishment of culinary representation (Hunt 109).

Though British food writer Rose Prince accuses Blumenthal of creating "culinary opera", of making food too intellectual and theatrical, Blumenthal's performative strategy demonstrates the ways in which food breaks out of its historical autonomous role in the restaurant (Prince). Ironically, Prince's

critique of Blumenthal's work resides in her understanding of the separation of food and theatre. It is in this context that Prince finds problems in relation to his food. Theatre should remain in the theatre according to Prince; music should not accompany the eating of food – or at least not music that alters our conception of eating. This modernist conception of the separation of the artistic spheres, of the autonomy of each category of the arts, championed by figures such as Theodor Adorno, restricted food's ability to find its place on stage. It is interesting to note that Prince finds it problematic to listen to the sound of the sea as she eats her seafood dish. Adorno too believed that music "betrays" art due to the ways in which it can affect or influence the emotions of the audience:

Music betrays all art. Just as in music society, its movement, and its contradictions appears only in shadowy fashion – speaking out of it, indeed, yet in need of identification – so it is with all other arts (Adorno 226).

It is precisely this conflict that theatricalised food allows into the space of the restaurant. The diner cannot resist the auditory application of Blumenthal's dish; they cannot retreat into some intellectual sphere: sounds ground the eating body. The grounding possibilities of food stand in direct contrast to food as simply a site of nutrition and pleasure. Indeed, they upend the mind-body split (which positions eating as a lower order sense). In his PhD thesis *The performativity of food: an exploration and analysis of the work of Heston Blumenthal* (2013), Paul Geary argues that Blumenthal should be recognised as a "performance artist" due to the "performativity of his food": "the former through the performances around and through his food, the latter through the performativity of the food" (Geary 11).

Lisa Heldke, among many others, makes an important intervention in the Platonic tradition of cooking as a domestic routine bereft of physical or intellectual ability. Her conception of cooking as a "thoughtful practice" and as part of a "food centred philosophy" undoes the old Platonic split between mind and body that has persisted in some elements of European thinking (Heldke 204). Indeed, the relegation of physical sense to "lower cognate facilities" persists in relation to the

handling, preparation, cooking, and consumption of food. The introduction of food into the theatre is still seen by many as a form of applied art, of bringing one discipline into another. As Kirshenblatt-Gimblett argues:

Canonical histories of theatre take as their point of departure that which counts as theatre in the modern period—namely, theatre as an autonomous art form—and search for its "origins" in fused art forms of the past (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett "Making Sense of Food in Performance: The Table and the Stage" 23).

There is a genuine distrust of food that is excessively theatrical or flamboyant, and which is therefore seem as somehow less authentic. To a certain degree, as my own incursion into food and theatre in the space of a contemporary restaurant demonstrated in my PaR, the theatricality of food still resides uneasily in restaurants, just as much as it resides uneasily in the theatre. Perhaps, it is only the site of performance that can give food what it wants, or rather, what it needs to actualise itself in the realm of contemporary ecological spheres in order to produce a "politics of the gut, as much as the mind, orientated more towards ethos than eidos" (Highmore 136).

3.5 The Site of Performance Art

When I later tried to understand why the comment disturbed me, I realized it embodied many of the questions I had regarding the discussion and analysis of food in the context of artistic performance. The slippage between food as artistic medium and food as culinary medium is most pronounced in live performance, particularly performances involving actual consumption. This ambiguity calls into question the tools we currently use for the analysis of these performances: whether we use terminology borrowed from the culinary world or from the art world, we seem to lose an important part of the work in the process of description and analysis (Raviv 8).

As the theatre, the space of performance art allows us to think about how food affects us and how its meaning can be constructed in a multitude of different ways. However, unlike the theatre, the space of the performance art, which allows for food-based performance art, allows additional creative freedom regarding its expression and enquiry. This is due to the ways in which performance art, according to Fischer-Lichte, challenges our conception of space and time:

Instead of the fiction of theatre, they [the performance artists] put qualities of real-space and real time of the performance, instead of the role-playing of the actors 'real-presence' of the performer and the authenticity of his actions (Fischer-Lichte *The Transformative Power of Performance: A New Aesthetics* 158).

The presence of food in performance makes this attitude towards "real space" even more pronounced and it blurs the lines between what is part of the performance and what is not. In the second iteration of *Irish food. A Play*, we attempted to blur this line even more by leaving food on the table before the guests arrived. This food was left without instruction and therefore caused confusion among certain audience members about whether they could eat it or not. To a certain degree the performance aspect of the play became about acts of eating: the audience eating, the actors eating, the audience exchanging stories *about* food, the actors delivering stories *about* food. If we consider that all food (including ourselves) is flesh, the performance of the play was all about flesh. As Amelia Jones writes, with reference to the philosophy of Merleau-Ponty, "We are embodied, particularly in our identifications; we are flesh and part of the flesh of the world. As such we *change* things we encounter" (Jones and Stephenson 44). While we may imagine that we have somehow transcended performance artist Marina Abramovic's famous opposition between the space of theatre and the site of performance, we are still wrestling with its after-affect:

To be a performance artist, you have to hate theatre. Theatre is fake: there is a black box, you pay for a ticket, and you sit in the dark and see somebody playing somebody else's life.

The knife is not real, the blood is not real, and the emotions are not real. Performance is just the opposite: the knife is real, the blood is real, and the emotions are real. It's a very different concept. It's about true reality (Ayers n.p.).

In truth this opposition never rests and indeed its anatomy is more cyclical, ecological, and geographic as the iterations of my own PaR indicated. Theatre and performance art bleed into one another. "Nothing will die in this room", as one of my lecturers observed before the performance of *Dante.Beckett.Lobster*. This was theatre: death could be signified, not articulated with the force of reality. This withholding of the present moment of performance is a central concern which divides the discursive lines of performance and theatre. As Jon Erickson argues in *The Fate of the Object* (1998):

'Presence' in the theatre is physically in the present that at the same time is grounded in a form of absence. It is something that has unfolded is read against what has been seen, and presently observed in expectation as to what will be seen. It means that the performer is presenting herself to the audience but at the same time holding something back, creating expectation [...]. In other words, not only does the notion of presence in performance imply an absence, but that absence itself is the possibility of future movement; so paradoxically presence is based not only in the present, but in our expectation of the future (Erickson 62).

To be present in performance allows one to let the subject of that performance guide the performance as opposed to following a specific script which controls the present articulations of the actions of theatre. For the most part theatre follows a mimetic order, whereas performance attempts, at least, to present an order away from mimetic presentation. Food complicates this representational order. For artist DeVonn Francis, the artist/founder of Yardy NYC, a community-oriented food, media and events company, food can produce a performance that is not mimetic but rather driven by the production of relations. In his work *Hey Sis* (2012), the artist staged a meal using the "theatre of a dinner table" to bring people together using food as a "vital anchor for community

building, justice work and healing” (Sergant 3). In *Dante.Beckett.Lobster*, the lobsters were not mimetic but rather representative of a process that theatre could not accommodate.

Though we improvised much of *Dante.Beckett.Lobster*, I was aware (while being inside the performance) that I could not break the rules of theatre from that present moment. The use of lobsters in the performance challenged the mimetic potential of the performance because once the lobster was dead, it was dead. In the end the lobster was killed outside the room and brought in dead, even though there were two live lobsters in the performance. To paraphrase Rebecca Schneider, the lobster was the “explicit” food in performance which caused conflict to the “social” boundaries erected between theatre and performance (Schneider *The Explicit Body in Performance* 2).

The critical and clinical bulwarks that one might imagine are no longer in place can often gently rise again, like the ebbing tide. Perhaps the most interesting and successful work is that which works between the margins of performance and theatre, such as the work of Forced Entertainment.. Because food is both mimetic and material it can cut across the boundaries. Its presence is its possibility. I am not arguing, however, that the present possibility of performance is its authentic ontological mode. For Peggy Phelan, “Performance’s only life is in the present. Performance cannot be saved, recorded, documented, or otherwise participate in the circulation of representations of representations: once it does so, it becomes something other than performance” (Phelan *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance* 146). Though for Phelan performance cannot enter the economy of representation without compromising its “visibility”. In truth, as Rebecca Schneider argues, we should rather think of “performance as a medium in which disappearance negotiates, perhaps becomes, materiality. That is disappearance is passed through. As in materiality” (Schneider "Performance Remains" 108).

The conception of food as performance or rather as a “culinary performance” challenges our conception of theatre as a distant observable site. The performance of food embeds the body of the

guest in the space. From the site of the restaurant, with its emphasis on the theatricality of the dinner, we move to the site of performance, where food becomes more radicalised, more out of joint with the act of eating. For Kirshenblatt-Gimblett food and performance converge at three important junctures:

First, 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 and their staging. [...] Second, to perform is to behave. This is what Erving Goffman calls the performance of self in everyday life. [...] Third, to perform is to show. When doing and behaving are displayed, when they are shown, when participants are invited to exercise discernment, evaluation, and appreciation, food events move towards the theatrical and, more specifically, towards the spectacular. It is here that taste as a sensory experience and taste as an aesthetic faculty converge. (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett "Playing to the Senses: Food as a Performance Medium" 2-3).

In a theatre or in a restaurant, does everyone present silently agree, or unconsciously concur about, what food can and cannot do, what it should and should not do? If anything can break through this final culinary curtain, is it the site of performance, both live and mediated, where food becomes much more than it already is, and can be, something that exists alongside us in space and time. Doing, behaving, and showing: all three elements show how the medium of food can be used in performance art to further explore the possibilities of food.

The fourth iteration of my PhD, entitled *Killing Lobsters*, was a three-minute performance that was part theatre, part performance art. Developing ideas from *Dante.Beckett.Lobster*, it was a short, recorded video performance which featured me killing, cooking, and eating a lobster while wearing a pig mask. The video (included with playscript in chapter four) featured traditional Irish music and a voice over of a philosophical discussion of whether lobsters feel pain. As I observed above, the refusal to show the video of my performance *Killing lobsters* live to the audience as part

of the project *Visioning the Future* (September 24th, 2020) demonstrated the limits of performance but also the deep schism that exists between food in performance and food in a restaurant. This point revolves around the value we ascribe to the performance. People are willing to consent to the suffering of a lobster if they are in a restaurant and aim to eat it, but not if the death happens in the context of a staged performance. However, I did eat the lobster at the end of the performance. This division possibly arises because in restaurants the lobster already has a special status as a celebratory or luxury food and is often presented very theatrically: including often in the form of being shown live to the diners before it is cooked. Notably though, diners don't usually see it being killed.

The performative nature of this presentation marks the status of the lobster as “cultural capital”, in that the understanding of the performance is bound up with the position, or at least the pretence, of class (Bourdieu 53-54). The recent ban on boiling lobsters alive in Switzerland in 2018 adds a further dimension to the act.⁴⁶ As Elizabeth Townsend writes in her book *Lobster: A Global History* (2011):

Divorced from the primal experience of killing our dinner, we are in danger of losing the connection between the food we ingest and its origin. The idyllic experience of eating a freshly boiled lobster on a coastal dock may become extinct. [...] Will we even remember what lobsters symbolize – summertime leisure on the rockbound coast, eating exquisite seafood with friends provided by independent fisherwomen and men braving the elements to bring in the catch? What happens to the experience of ‘eating a lobster’? (Townsend 8).

The refusal to show the performance without a consensual warning made me question this division. What's the difference between the spectacle being staged in performance and the spectacle being staged in the restaurant? Undoubtedly, the answer revolves around the context and the consent of

⁴⁶ Boiling lobsters alive is also illegal in Norway and New Zealand. See <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/feb/11/is-it-wrong-to-boil-lobsters-alive>

the participants. The performance could not be shown unless consent was given by the audience. However, did that not undermine the possibilities of performance, in terms of its challenging our personal and social perspectives on lobsters? Ultimately, the acceptance of the death of a lobster in front of diner guests (and not in front of audience of theatre and performance practitioners) demonstrates an unwillingness to alter our ethical and ecological attitudes in contexts that are less dissimilar than we at first presume.

The performance of *Killing Lobsters* and its visual refusal in a conference on performance demonstrates the moral issues that are indicative of how many western societies promote forms of alienation from the natural world. People are often encouraged to see themselves as separate from the animal kingdom. As Gray observes:

If humans differ from other animals, it is partly in the conflicts of their instincts. They crave security, but they are easily bored; they are peace-loving animals, but at the same time they hate and fear the unsettlements thinking brings. There is no way of life in which all these needs can be satisfied. Luckily, as the history of philosophy testifies, humans have a gift for self-deception, and thrive in ignorance of their natures. Morality is a sickness peculiar to humans; the good life is a refinement of the virtues of animals. Arising from our animal natures, ethics needs no grounds; but it runs aground in the conflicts of our needs (Gray *Straw Dogs: Thoughts on Humans and Other Animals* 116).

Where do people think their food comes from? In that respect I think it is important for the performance that you/the performer eat the lobster at the end, taking us back to the distinction that many people consider hunting animals acceptable if it is for food but not if it is for sport. Again, the idea that food cannot be for 'mere' entertainment is implicit. What I am arguing here is that the refusal to show the video of the performance demonstrates a blurring of categories. At what point does a living lobster obtain the status of food? If I took off the mask and put an introductory slide

that said "cooking lobster with JP McMahon" why would it be more palatable? Is it purely a question of context that produces their moral and ethical conflict?

Performance strains the possibilities of theatre and the restaurant. We may imagine that theatre and the restaurant can somehow transcend the mimetic potential of food and animals, but it is limited by its own contexts and the expectation of the guests and audience that enter its discursive fields. The prospect of performance can unleash the possibility of a new ethics or ecology of food, but this possibility is also hampered by gatekeepers of institutions and other organisations, as well as the expectations of customers. If we are to accept our place in the world (as flesh and as food) then we must embrace a new attitude toward resolving the conflicts that the three zones of performance enact.

3.6 Conclusion

Theatre is conflict, struggle, movement, transformation, not simply the exhibition of states of mind. It is a verb, not an adjective. To act is to produce an action, and every action produces a reaction – conflict (Boal 39).

Perhaps the most radical restaurant – in terms of conflict, theatre, and performativity – currently resides in the outskirts of Copenhagen. It is named Alchemist and it mixes fine dining with ecological messaging, multi-media, music, performance, and theatre. Many of their dishes carry an explicit ecological message and are often accompanied by visual effects (the roof of the restaurant is a digitised dome on which is constantly presented moving images in time with the serving of the food). This is food as conflict par excellence. It is food that enacts its environment. It combines elements of theatre, the restaurant, and performance art. At one point in the meal, you are led into a pink room to eat the following course and dance to music with a server dressed almost like a

macabre doll. How many of the guests walk away with the ecological message pressed into their minds in unknown. Indeed, the music and extreme visual nature of the space push the whole towards the site of entertainment: after all, it is still an experience of eating in an expensive restaurant. This is not to say the ecological messaging is futile, but that is bracketed by entertainment. The journey of the guest at Alchemist could be conceptualised as such:

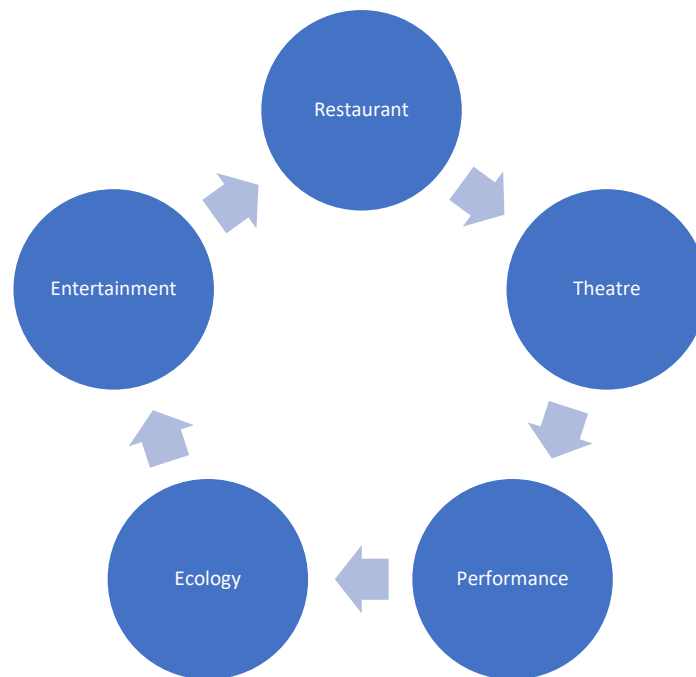


Figure 27: Conceptualisation of guest's journey at Alchemist

Is this racial theatrical journey as far as food can go in our present environment? Is it possible to transcend the space of entertainment and push on through to a site where we can at least comprehend food's true affective value in all aspects of its production and consumption?

This chapter has analysed the performative nature of food and how it depends on its context for its meaning. It has shown how an alteration of this context produces a conflict both in the audience and the guest receiving the food. What can the shifting nature of food and its conflict teach us about its value? Firstly, food is predominately divorced from its natural setting: we experience it through a myriad of different lenses in our daily lives. These lenses shape the ways in which we

experience food. Though we experience food predominantly through habit, restaurants, and theatres and performance which involve food, allow us to break out of our own habitual food concerns and see food anew; or at least from a different position than we began. This breaking of habit is fundamental if we are to better understand how food operates in society.

Conclusion: Towards a New Ecology of Food in Theatre and Performance

A history of the theatre in relation to the senses—and specifically the interplay of table and stage, the staging of food as theatre, and the theatrical uses of food—remains to be written (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett "Playing to the Senses: Food as a Performance Medium" 23).

Where do we go from here? Can food staged contribute to our understanding of the role of food in the theatre – and thus in our lives and in society more broadly? Ethics, ecology, and memory, all play a part in how food defines us: the space of the theatre and the drama of food demonstrate the vital necessity in weaving the discourse of food in the ongoing dialogue of how to define the dramatic space of the theatre and the restaurant. The success of the second iteration of *Irish Food. A Play* demonstrates the desire on the part of the public to willingly engage with food in a dramatic and critical manner; to try and see it otherwise, as something more than just sustenance. Food can be an historic and cultural experience that teaches us the important role of the production and consumption of food. The renaissance in Irish food is both a reaction and a development of globalization with chefs seeking out more local and seasonal food *because* of the predominance of almost all possible food being available in the supermarket at any time of the year.

At the outset of this research, my intention was to write a play, both for creative purposes and for the purposes of analysing food on stage, its effects and affects. *Irish Food. A Play* is not yet finished, in the sense that each new iteration brings fresh questions. Each performance leaves traces and engenders others. *Irish Food. A Play* is a private and public remembering, a trace of the many

moments of Irish food, some real and some imagined since people have populated this Island more than 10,000 years ago. As theatre practitioner Mark Fleishman observes regarding his own PaR:

A remembering that must be worked at, brought into being, creatively imagined, re-invented, collectively sustained, argued over each and every time. A remembering that is never complete, never stable, never fixed once and for all (Fleishman "For a Little Road It Is Not. For a Great Road It Is; It Is Long': Performing Heritage for Development in the Cape" 243).

My PaR has demonstrated that the ethics of food bleeds into the ethics of theatre (animals, actors, ecology): "the whole problem of health in soil, plant, animal, and man as one great subject" (Wendell Berry, 1971). Thus, the problem of theatre cannot be understood without reference to the world outside the theatre, in our case, the ecology of food. We eat to act, and we act to eat. New ecology pushes people to act, to become participants rather than only spectators: As Berry observes "To be interested in food but not production is clearly absurd (Berry, 2002). If "eating in an agricultural act", as food activist Wendell Berry famously wrote, what happens when that act, or the consideration of that act, takes place in the theatre? Can food "emancipate" actors and audiences so as to make them "active participants" (Rancière 11) Does food then shift from being an ecological issue to merely a theatrical consideration? Can food on stage, or eating in a theatre, tell us about more than just the inherent theatricality of food? Can food act as an "enchantment", as "a state of wonder" where "the distinctions of this state is the temporary suspension of chronological time and spellbound" (Bennett *The Enchantment of Modern Life: Attachments, Crossings, and Ethics* 14).

Regarding the findings of the thesis and further research implications, the use of postdramatic techniques of playwrighting and producing can act as a way of showing audiences how food works in different contexts; namely that the signification of food is not singular. Postdramatic techniques can act as a method that can be further applied to other features of our existence outside theatre studies, such our relationships with animals, fossil fuels, and the affect our way of

eating has on the earth. We encounter many of these issues as acculturated processes, that is, we see as “natural”, but they are in fact cultural experiences. The category of the postdramatic function well to show how the theatricality of the non-human (of food and animals) needs to venture into food studies to break our habitually dead humanistic eyes. As Lehmann argues, the postdramatic is “by no means synonymous with the decline of the theatrical”:

On the contrary: theatricalization permeates the entire social life, starting with the individual attempts to produce or feign a public self – the cult of self-presentation and self-revelation through fashion signs or other marks designed to attest to the model of a self. [...] Alongside the external construction of the individual there are the self-presentations of groups and generation-specific identities that represent themselves as theatrically organized appearances, for want of distinct linguistic discourses, programmes, ideologies, or utopias. If we add advertising, the self-staging of the business world and the theatricality of mediated self-presentation in politics [...] are tied to commodities or more precisely their consumption and possession (and not to a discourse) (Lehmann *Postdramatic Theatre* 183).

Postdramatic techniques can help us understand how the consumption and possession of food are deeply tied to our cultural experience and their theatrical articulation is central to formulate a way in which we can better comprehend the affective value of food and its impact on our planet.

As well as developing postdramatic techniques of playwrighting, the process of my PaR also taught me much about the act of playwriting. As I playwright, I never considered the ways in which your work needs to change in the rehearsal space to become a play. Though this may appear as self-evident, it is the physical enactment of the play which makes it a play: up until that point it is merely a playscript. The move from directing in the first iteration to being directed in the second produces a resultant loss of control. This is something that all professional playwrights take for granted but which it is very different from the dynamics that exist in a restaurant. In the restaurant, control is paramount to the way in which the meal is conducted. The experience of the guest needs to be

curated and crafted particularly in the context of a Michelin-starred experience. The loss of control that I suffered as a playwright made me realise that the ensemble of a play functions in much the same ways as the staff of the restaurant. Of course, there may be a chef patron or head chef (who functions like the playwright) but ultimately they must hand over control to the brigade for the service to work as a performance.

The learnings of my PaR influenced the ways in which I operate and structure my kitchen and restaurants seeing the experience of the guest in performative terms and the staff as an ensemble acting and improvising to craft the experience of the guest. The shift from amateur to professional productions in *Irish Food. A Play* demonstrated the ways in which productions are viewed ultimately affects the ways in which the ensemble crafts them. The conflict with the director in the professional production demonstrated that agendas are much more a part of professional productions. It is worth considering this in relation to tackling a research question in the context of PaR in a professional setting. I felt more success was achieved in the amateur production in terms of the goal of my research, albeit the conflict of the second iteration led to subsequent iterations which pushed the research question into different areas and uncovered new insights regarding food and the theatre. This is, at least, one of the purposes of PaR: to go to new places through practice. Another interesting finding, which as necessitated by the coronavirus pandemic of 2020 and 2021, was that live performance were impossible. The fourth iteration *Killing Lobsters* was produced on video with no audience. The journey of this process reflects the ways in which PaR shifts during the process of its practice and is itself not a stable mode of inquiry.

The cross-disciplinary approach of this thesis was another important finding which demonstrated that we must loosen the categorical divisions between different disciplines such as food studies and theatre studies. They fields enrich each other, and we need to promote more cross fertilization. Further research is also needed to investigate the deeply theatrical and performative aspect of food in restaurant and what they may mean to theatre and performance studies in

general. As Abrams observes the performative space of the restaurant “helps us as individuals to reimagine the basic needs and definitions of what it means to be human” (Abrams 14). Eating is always a theatrical event and theatre studies needs to strongly consider the role of food in theatre and further afield if it is to examine itself in this new ecological era of the twenty first century.

The theoretical approach of this PaR PhD necessitated a deep dive into postmodern theory and ecological readings such as Jane Bennett’s and John Gray’s. This exploration opens the possibility that postmodern approaches can allow us to deconstruct our understanding of the “natural” and thus open a less homogenous approach to food. We can learn to see food as difference as opposed to a multitude of sameness around the globe. Each time we eat we enunciate different cultural and historic experiences. My PaR articulated these moments of eating, capturing the stories of Irish food through performance. PaR was critical in achieving my goals due to the way it can weave different strands together to produce alternative ways of thinking and knowing. As Fleishman observes regarding the purpose of PaR:

Performance involves acts of storying, sounding, moving, feeling, and related that are all embodied and constitute alternative ways of knowing that are non-representational, experimental, and potentially political, both in the sense transforming knowledge in the academy but also as a means of creating voice in marginalised communities (Fleishman "Knowing Performance: Performance as Knowledge Paradigm for Africa" 126).

The “means of creating voice” in my own PaR was to create plays and performance that sought to articulate food and animals and people’s relationship to them both culturally, historically, and sociologically.

The value of a PaR approach for exploring my research question through playwrighting and the creation of theatre and performance demonstrated the ways in which we can expand our often-narrow theoretical focus. With the shift of my practice into the space of the restaurant, my PaR allowed me to bridge two different aspects of my own world: one the one side my life as a chef,

restaurateur, and food writer, and on the other, my life as a playwright and theatre practitioner. I do not believe I could have achieved my aims in a PhD with “more traditional approaches”. PaR allowed me to use my practice as a key method of enquiry over the course of my PhD research and confirmed the need for a “broader range of skills to engage in a multi-mode research inquiry” when undertaking a Practice based PhD (Nelson 9). PaR allowed me to “contribute to new ways of thinking about interdisciplinary [...] of making something and studying it” (Elkins 145). The success of my PaR was measured in the many findings and their application to the wider theatrical community. My PaR allowed me to bridge academic and non-academic spaces together to create new insights regarding the gaps that exist between them. The major contribution of this thesis is the fusion of the culinary world and the world of theatre studies through playwrighting. PaR made this possible. It is not that the world of theatre studies have never considered food and theatre, they just have not been brought together through postdramatic playwrighting by a chef and restaurateur. Theory and practice fuse together through a food performance on the restaurant floor.

Regarding a new ecology of theatre that this thesis proposed regarding staged food, food in performance and animals in the theatre. The following are a series of ten concrete considerations for theatre practitioners, performers, and artists to consider when working with food for the space of theatre and performance. They present a possible new ecology of the theatricality of food wherein foods ontology is seen as performatively linked to its specific space of representation:

Towards a New Ecology of Theatre and Performance

1. Performances should promote an investigation of food through a cross-fertilization of theatre, restaurants, and other food related sites.
2. Theatre should attempt to workshop and stage performances with animals that break down the anthropomorphic discourses that structure drama and performance.
3. Theatre and performance should stive to communicate the gap between human and non-human in an effort to understand their external environment.

4. Theatre and performance must create a space in which humans and animals can interact.
5. Theatre should aim to re-enchant our relationship between food and the landscape from which it originates.
6. Actors should consider their own role in the food system and weave this into their theatre work as active agents.
7. Restaurants should create working partnerships with theatres, actors, and ensembles in order to examine the links between the three fields.
8. University departments of theatre, drama, and performance should actively pursue an interdisciplinary approach with ecology and food studies to establish a best practice for theatrical work in the Anthropocene.
9. Food studies should consider the inherent theatricality of food and establish working groups that further investigate the possible cross-fertilizations of their discipline.
10. Site-specific and historical works of theatre and performance should be carried out by ensembles to further explore the multifaceted narratives of national and regional food stuffs.

The further exploration of Ireland's history and its relationship to food was another discovery of this thesis. Coupled with my research for *The Irish Cook Book* it showed Ireland to have a long history of food as a cultural experience dating back ten thousand years. Writing about Ireland's relationship to theatre and performance and constructing "alternative ways of thinking" in his book *Theatre and Ireland* (2010), Lionel Pilkington observes:

Theatre in Ireland is a cultural phenomenon that is not restricted to professional, urban, building-based theatre. What this means in practice is that any discussion of plays presented on Irish stage cannot be separated from consideration of these plays' relationship to alternative and competing traditions of popular drama and performance or indeed, from

consideration of other contemporary, non-institutional forms of theatrical expression or 'counter-theatre' (Pilkington 9-10).

The theatrical is close, so Pilkington rightly attests, to the core identity of the Irish, with their penchant for performative modes in many aspects of their daily lives. This mode of performative behaviour seeks to construct itself in the moment of the performance, shaping itself as it appears before us, through words and actions. The performative, so attuned to many Irish histrionic habits, such as the act of oral storytelling or mounting a wake, undermines the position that there is some sort of static subject of performance beforehand, but rather an agent who asserts and enacts their position in the discourse as they speak. This ideas of the performative are vital for understanding theatre's relationship to food and of the restaurant's relationship to theatre. Drama is the factor that links both components together. The finding of my PaR in relation to Irish food hopefully will help people see our deep-seated relationship to food in a different light. On the international stage, it may help many see beyond the long shadows cast by the Irish potato famine and colonisation.

Lastly, my PaR has shown that a new ethics of theatre in relation to food and animals in the performance is possible, albeit not without difficulty. Theatre and performance can show how these two things exist in both cultural and ecological spheres and their representation in theatre is vital to better understand the experience of food in the twenty first century. Food is performance and its consumption is an act of theatre that tells us much about ourselves. If theatre is to tackle the "non-human" it needs to consider how food and the animal on stage are to be presented. As Gray argues:

If we believe that humans are animals, there can be no such thing as the history of humanity, only the lives of particular humans. If we speak of history of the species at all, it is only to signify the unknowable sum of lives. As with other animals, some live happy, some wretched. None has a meaning that lies beyond itself (Gray *Straw Dogs: Thoughts on Humans and Other Animals* 48).

The lobster may not know the difference between a restaurant and a theatre, but we do: albeit not in the same manner. Acknowledging this difference and producing a performance that showcases what these differences signify can help us further understand our place, and the lobster's, in this world. The past may be a foreign country of sorts, for food and for theatre in Ireland; but both their futures must be reimagined together. As Mark Fleishman observes:

And the theatre is, I would suggest, an ideal space for such a reckoning because it is well versed in producing the kinds of spaces in which haunting flourishes: heterotopic spaces, strange and other spaces, in which the previously unrelated, the incompatible and incommensurable, are juxtaposed; spaces in which it is difficult to hold things together, spaces characterised by fragmentation, ambiguity, disorder and dissolution, disturbance, and anxiety, reminiscent of the postcolony itself (Fleishman "Remembering in the Postcolony: Refiguring the Past with Theatre" 206).

The theatre, as Fleishman suggest, is an "ideal space" for a great reckoning on food's place in performance; a heterotopia of sort that brings together distinct objects and fields of discourse in order to produce new spaces for food in all its figurations, so that they may be seen, heard, tasted and experienced through our well-lived bodies.

Appendixes

They should be read in conjunction with the research outcomes as they represent the “practice” part of the PhD thesis. As my research question investigated the staging of food in performance through postdramatic playwrighting, they represent the artistic and creative aspect of my PaR.

Appendix 1: First draft of play

Scene 1

“Wherein first food memories of Irish food are performed, presented”

The piece should be energetic and choreographed to a degree, a food dance of sorts. Actors should wear minimal or non-descriptive clothing for this first scene.

Silence.

Slow fade up of light.

Voices begin in the darkness.

M dinner

W at my grandmother’s

M lamb and mint sauce

W mashed potato and gravy

M we called it pandy

Pause.

W bacon and cabbage

M soda bread

W fantastic brown crab cakes in a lovely little pub west of Dublin

Pause.

M lamb’s liver

W and onions

M my grandmother's Sunday roast and apple pie

W and brown soda bread

M there was always something

W a constant hub of nourishment

M brown bread

W soda bread

M there was always something

W bacon and cabbage

M lamb's liver and onions

W fantastic brown crab

M oysters

W fantastic brown crab

M I'm four

W or five

M we're sitting at the counter

W watching my mum bake an apple tart

M an apple tart!

W a fantastic apple tart!

M there is always something

W always something

M always

W something when we come home from school

M on cold and wet days

Pause

W fish and chips

M unpasteurised milk

W bread

M aunt Anna's apple tart

W shepherd's pie

M beshoft, Dublin

W my mother's cooking

M bread

W brown bread

M fantastic brown bread

W with mashed potato and gravy

M we called it pandy

Pause

W Close your eyes

M closes his eyes

W we're making brown bread with granny, when it's baked we have a wedge of it with butter

M butter!

W with her blackcurrant jam

M butter!

W and a cup of milky tea

M milky tea!

W yes!

M opens his eyes

M yes!

W a cup of milky tea

M to wash it all down

W granny's brown bread with butter and black currant jam

M and a cup of milky tea

W to wash it all down

Pause

M bread...and brown bread...and brown soda bread

W with fantastic crab and aunt Anna's apple tart

M } yes!

W } yes!

M spuds

W my mother's cooking

M homemade beef stew

W there was always something

M the aga on

W on wet and cold days

M coming home from school

W we're four

M or five

W the oohs and ahhs

M eating a cuckies negg

They laugh

W A cuckies negg

Pause.

M dad's at the door

W he has a live turkey

M it's Christmas time

W there's always something happening

M mum's going crazy

W the turkey disappears

M we don't see it again, until we all are sitting down eating the Christmas dinner

W that was food

M that was real food

They smile with satisfaction.

Pause.

W I am three

M I am making brown bread with my mam

W I am three

M I am taking a salmon from the river

W the egg

M its dark orange yolk

M } we ate a lot of eggs a lot of the time

W } we ate a lot of eggs a lot of the time

M the salmon tries to wriggle free

W father finishes it off

M we cook it on a fire

W there

M on a lake somewhere near Galway

W I can't remember

M I always can't remember

W these are the memories

M that made us

Pause.

M potato soup

W with fresh chopped parsley

M and bread

W brown soda bread

M we drink milk

W we eat porter cake

M and apple tart

W creamed rice on the way to the mart

M there are cows everywhere

W flapping and shitting and whipping their tails

M the smell

W the smell is everywhere

M the mart on a Monday morning

W as we walk to school

M dreaming of food

W we have the best meat growing up

M we were always dreaming of food

W wild moments in the wood

M picking mushrooms with my mother

W listening to birds' cry

Pause.

M I am on my grandfather's knee

W I am sipping stout

M I am a toddler and he gives me little sips

W little sips, three little sips

M sitting on his knee

Pause.

W suddenly

M we are out in the field

W picking field mushrooms again

M foraging with my family

W they are everywhere

M they are the cleanest firmest most delicious things ever

W I devour them

M I eat them

W we fry them in butter with fresh thyme

M in a wood

W on brown bread

M there is always brown bread

Pause.

W suddenly

M back at home

W we cook them

M with butter and salt in a hot pan

W suddenly

M there are gone

W half an hour after they are picked

Pause.

M my father was fish mad and he would get bags and bags of herring from Killybegs

W he taught me how to clean and grill them

M the roe was great

W and the neighbours collecting periwinkles

M in Dunnes Stores bags

W we pickled periwinkles for salad

M and herring

M everything in bags

W in Dunnes Stores bags

They laugh.

W tearing with the weight of all we collected

M Do you remember he had a gas burner at the back of this house and we would boil a big pot
of water and throw them all in

M } delicious!
W } delicious!

W he was a builder

M and we gave us each a long shiny masonry nail

W we pried them out

M after a minute or two

W using the nail to pick the meat from the shell

M sitting around in his back garden

W That was 1985

M long before foodies

M and foraging

W and NOMA

M NOMA!

Pause.

W there is a restaurant in Aughnacloy

M there is a restaurant in Carlow town

W there is a restaurant in Donegal

M there is rhubarb in my grandmother's garden

M it shoots

W it grows

W there is turkey and ham

M there is brown bread

W there is always brown bread

M there is curry

W there is seaweed

M and oysters

W there are blackberries

M from the hedges

W there is chicken in the rough, running amuck

M my father with a hurl taking the fucking head of it!

W fry ups!

M fry ups!

W sugar and jam sambos

M and porridge

W and warm milk straight from the cow

M there is soda bread lathered in butter

W boxty straight off the range

W with lashings of butter

M } lashings, lashings of butter

W } lashings, lashing of butter

M there are sloes

W and digging potatoes

M there are tantrums if I don't get cheese in my scrambled eggs!

W there was no cheese

M turns out it was just the yolk

W not fully whisked before

M now it was

W then it was

M now it is

W now it was

Pause.

They chant, crescendo.

M brúitín

W Cally

M brúitín

W cally

M brúitín

W cally

M brúitín

W cally

Pause.

M oysters

W getting eggs for the chickens

M new baby potatoes and purple sprouting broccoli

W Dublin coddle

M hotel food in Ennis

W raw milk!

M the smell of overcooked cabbage on a Sunday morning

W there was always overcooked cabbage

M that and brown bread

W in the evening

M in granny's

W brown bread

M there is always brown bread

W grandmother's

M being in my grandmother's house (in Raheney) and eating giant sausages

W drop scones

M in granny's

W grandmother's Irish stew

M I licked the plate clean!

W grandmother's bacon and cabbage

M I licked the plate clean!

W at granny's house

M the smell of overcooked cabbage

W at granny's house

Pause.

M baking at home with my mum

W my mother's dinners

M tea and fried fish - not together, of course!

W eating crab claws on Achill Island

M making toast on an open fire

W my mother's chocolate pudding

M Sausages and rashers on Saturday mornings (the smell of no school!)

W rich and honest

M seafood in Killorglan

W rural Ireland farming communities

M the land and the sea

W back in the 1950s

M we are pork or bacon at least four times a week

W frying kidneys to an Elizabeth David recipe

M back in the 1950s

W Digging potatoes at home and eating them with butter

M Eating my father's home grown kerrs pinks

W brown bread

M and oysters

W and cabbage

M overcooked cabbage

Slow fade out of light and voices.

They continue to repeat the last few lines, like a refrain, a chant, a dirge.

Darkness.

Scene 2

“Wherein we perform history, the food traditions of Irish food, childhood memories, traditions”

Slow fade up of light.

Two women on stage.

They talk to each other, to the audience, to themselves.

Pauses should be natural, not forced.

The sentences should flow into each other, like a long sonata.

W1 boiled potatoes, cabbage, joints of meat

W2 in the West, we ate a lot of great seafood.

W1 getting brown bread on vegetable stew on the Aran Islands

W1 bacon and cabbage, Irish stew

W2 my grandfather owned a house in the West of Ireland (near Tullycross) and we used to go with family for a week or so during the summer. I remember going down to the rocky beach and picking mussels, which we'd bring back to the house and cook within hours of picking them. One time my dad came with us and we all went to the small harbour as the fishing boats were coming in, he bought a bag of crab claws and two lobsters for dinner that evening. At Christmas, my dad does most of the cooking (and delegating!) and he's made a corned beef a few times, which he really enjoys... the rest of us 'like' it... but thinking of Christmas and I can almost smell the mix of spices for the beef as well as the roasting turkey and the cloves and sugar melting over the ham in the oven it taste so great it all taste so great

W1 my father grew tomatoes and marrows in the greenhouse made from bits of glass skimmed from skips, the smell of tomatoes always brings me back to there

W2 back to there

W1 my parents weren't big into food

W2 we pressured them to purchase Pop Tarts and fought over the toys at the end of the cereal box. I loved treats and summer holidays...bbqs, trips to the sweet shop, "30p mixture of sweets please". I hated pork chops, incinerated by my mother, not out of a lack of care, but a general disinterest in food and cooking.

W1 cooking was a chore.

W2 No pleasure was taken in it for my parents. By contrast, I enjoy the labour of cooking

W1 food was basic plentiful and tasty. You could recognise all ingredients. The men always got a larger portion. Families always ate together or waited until dad came home. Eating out was a great and usually for a big celebration

W2 a big celebration

W1 Childhood memories....ham and coleslaw, roast chicken and roast potatoes, beef stew, delicious homemade brown bread with lots of butter and ham or honey. White fish on Fridays. Too much mashed potatoes. Potatoes with every dinner. Christmas...overcooked turkey, ham, stuffing too dry and bland, mashed carrots and parsnips, cranberry sauce to save the day. Moist Christmas pudding, custard from a pack, trifle, and Christmas cake until everything else was eaten....didn't eat out except for Holy Communions and Confirmations...too many kids, too expensive, and not very good anyway. Did I mention mashed potatoes?

W2 I love mash potatoes

W1 always a cause for celebration

W2 mash potatoes

W1 always a cause for celebration

W2 we always had great homemade food in abundance. My dad came from a farming background and meat was very important. Sundays consisted of a fry for breakfast, a roast dinner around 2pm and then a 'cold' tea of roast chicken and ham. My mother was a great cook, but a plain eater, so no sauces, no spices, no garlic, rice, or pasta for family meals. However, us children would sometimes be allowed a treat of French bread pizza and Findus savoury pancakes!! Late 70s early 80s. Mum baked fairy cakes, shortbread and crumble made with tinned pineapple. She served Ritz crackers with cheese and pineapple (no cheese on her own crackers!!) I grew up in Cork and spent many weekends in west Cork, bringing home Clonakilty Black Pudding from the small butcher shop in Clon. We ate in Kinsale for Sunday lunch or dinner often too. Jimmy Edwards was where we usually went. The Chicken Maryland there was fantastic. Food traditions in our house included stuffing made with mashed potato and not breadcrumbs, and homemade Chicken Mary land for the kids' birthdays

W1 Kebabs

W2 pub shite

W1 pre-packaged rubbish

W2 My mother was a terrible cook. The saving grace was the desert, cake, tart, or whatever sweet thing she was good at making that came afterwards. Restaurants were only for really big occasions, like a notable wedding anniversary. Family meals were a non-event, the cooking was so poor

W1 it was always that bad

- W2** in the 1980s
- W1** the 1950s
- W2** the 1960s
- W1** Irish food was a communal experience sitting around the table, potatoes from the garden, freshly baked bread with buttermilk from the farm, tarts, blackcurrant jam made from the garden. Nothing was bought, it was about using what was around us: simple, seasonal & organic. That was the way it was
- W2** all meals were family meals
- W1** we rarely went to restaurants
- W2** even on special occasions
- W1** everything was made at home
- W2** my mother was a terrible cook
- W1** we never went to restaurants
- W2** all meals were family meals
- W1** good meals
- W2** family meals
- W1** Tragic meals of regret,
- W2** dry meat
- W1** veg boiled so much thy became transparent and tasteless.
- W2** no matter how bad the meal, the company, rural & farm upbringing has meant
- W1** the meal itself

W2 was less important than the company

Gradual fade out of light.

Silence.

Scene 3

“Down into history”

Slow fade up of light.

The performers are all seated, facing the audience. There are four of them. Two men and two woman. Ages irrelevant.

W1 no

M1 unfortunately no

W2 no

M2 unfortunately no

W2 not

W1 I'm really into sustainability and wanted for a long time to create an eco-centre where people could learn how to produce their own food. I've read up about what Irish people traditionally ate (before famine times) and I know that keeping a pig was very common, so ham & pork was popular. Most small holdings had a bee hive (and produced mead) and people ate a good mix of veg & fruit (potatoes, strawberries)

M1 no

W1 unfortunately no

M2 not

M1 no food history

W1 unfortunately no

M2 a bit. Nothing which your average person wouldn't know anyways. I live in rural Mayo and we have our own words for certain stuff for example calling “champ” “call” instead. I've

heard of poor families around us being fed mashed potato mixed with buttermilk and eggs and having that as a meal when they were kids (1950s/60s era I might add- fuck knows how that's history related). Famine still lives on in terms of raised beds and stuff being prevalent all around us and folks being unwilling to plant stuff on them. The whole idea that local restaurants use the word "champ" instead of "cali" still pisses us off btw

W1 no

M1 unfortunately not

W2 poor history

M1 not really no

W2 to be honest

M1 I was a housewife

M2 a fucking housewife

W1 pointless

Pause.

M1 to be honest I don't, although I do know that bubble and squeak was originally made with beef although I think it was originally an English dish

W1 a poor history

M1 potatoes

M2 seaweed

W2 they were cultivated in the past

W1 potatoes were a staple crop, we all ate potatoes

M1 fucking potatoes

M2 fucking brown bread

M1 there was always brown bread

W2 we have a history of foraging

W1 of wandering through the woods like Angus

W2 not really

M1 we do

W1 we did

M2 we never did

W1 it's fucking lies

W2 we've a poor history

M1 unfortunately

W1 I'd know a fair bit about who is who and who they worked for around Dublin. Also, about Jamet in Dublin being the start of Haute Cuisine in the Capital.

W2 I've some knowledge around farming and bread. I know about the use of wheaten bread (Norman's) and the use of ale barm for leavening and that I believe was followed by heavy usage of potatoes in bread but this must have been pre famine. I don't know if this was when soda came into play also but know around famine times was when wheaten breads increased again

Pause.

W1 we forgot everything

- M2** it's all gone
- W1** gone
- M1** colonialism, famine, and religion
- W2** that halted and destroyed the progression and development of Irish cuisine, we ate to survive for too long
- M1** no
- W1** if you pick an Irish wild herb or seaweed is that a cuisine or produce, talking about Irish cuisine is like kicking a dead horse
- W2** pointless
- M1** a dead horse
- W1** accept this, move on
- M1** a dead horse
- M2** I know a little bit about potatoes
- W2** it's how Irish people survive during the 19th century
- M2** survived
- W2** eating the potato
- M1** there was nothing
- W2** we had food we just didn't know how to cook it
- M2** poor history
- W1** no not really
- W2** colonialism, famine, and religion

W1 it all halted and destroyed the progression and development of Irish cuisine

M1 we ate to survive for too long,

W2 if you pick an Irish wild herb or seaweed is that a cuisine or produce, talking about Irish cuisine is like kicking a dead horse

M2 pointless

W2 I was a fucking housewife

M1 accept this move on and put the energy towards cooking with constraints

W1 constraints

M1 a dead horse

M2 a dead fucking horse

W2 I was a housewife

M1 a horse

W2 a fucking housewife

W1 } pointless

W2 } pointless

M1 } a dead horse

M2 } a dead horse

W1 a dead fucking horse

W2 Irish food

Pause.

W2 No I don't

M1 We have always had food (just no spice), famine, food but still not huge quantities and many families had limited meat, kids had very limited sweets, crisps biscuits. Influx of money, influx of new Irish and hence new food origins

M2 all that

M1 not much

W1 food grows naturally

W2 I'm sure of that

W1 I have very little

M1 unfortunately no

W1 Much less than I would like

W2 unfortunately no

Sudden fade to black.

Silence.

Scene 4

“Where we discuss food and religion”

Slow fade up of light.

We find M and W down stage right, in conversation.

They are seated across from each other, at a small wooden table. They both speak with a pronounced Northern Irish accent.

Silence.

M Sweet fuck all

W penal laws and oppressed Catholics

M protestants

W wankers

M we fucked it up ourselves

W nothing

M They became dependent on spuds due to not being able climb the social ladder in order to attain more money and therefore food.

W Apart from that, I can't see how it really does

M doesn't

W really

M protestants

W apart from that

M I can understand why there's be an overlap, but I genuinely don't see how it's intrinsic or anything like that to it

W I mean

M it's a

W I think this is a dying link, apart from people abstaining on good Friday etc. It doesn't have much of a connection for me

Pause.

M lent

W I don't believe Irish food relates to religion, but rather the unequal sharing of resources during times of religious conflict leads for certain populations to have to learn to adapt and become more imaginative with cheaper and less exotic ingredients

M of course

W I was raised in a non-religious household, so my knowledge of food and religion isn't that extensive, but I feel that food like everything in Ireland was so closely influenced by religion that Irish people are completely unaware of how their own eating habits have been influenced by religion. By this is mean that people may eat or not eat a food product because 'that's just what we do' rather than making an individual decision to choose a certain product

M I understand

W Maybe in the past it would have i.e., no meat on Fridays or on certain religious festivals. Nowadays I would think there is little connection

M I don't have enough cultural knowledge of Ireland to be able to answer that

W fasting

M protestants

W Not sure

M wankers

W fucking Catholics fucking us the land

M Is there

W use to

M sweet fuck all

W It used to before, I think it has changed though I wouldn't bat an eye lid eating a Burger of a Friday now

M The cross in the soda! I can't relate much more but I would say the experience of food and family values of sharing and community would all be very much Christian values

W Haven't seen any signs that there's a relation!

M no relation

W nothing

M unfortunately not

W it used to but not anymore

M religion halted its development, made us narrowminded and confined to a set of rules.
Religion destroyed the development of Irish food

W no idea

M I think that religion has had a negative effect on the consumption of fish. I love that my chickens are in full egg production at Easter

W eggs!

M I love eggs

W it doesn't!

M people can choose what to eat they're not born into it!

W Protestants

M Catholics

W certainly it is related to history,

M but I can't say is entirely related to religion

W of course

M surely not

W No idea

M it doesn't!

W no relationship

M not at all

W nothing

M inner and outer nourishment, all interconnected

W Abstinence

M good Friday

W Spy Wednesday

M festivities like Easter and Christmas

W not forgetting the feast of Samhain

M Samhain?

Pause.

W I don't think it does anymore

M fish on a Friday still creeps into conversation every now and then

W significantly I'd say

M historically at least

W specific foods relating to specific religious events

M like Christmas

W Easter

M no eating before mass or communion

W Lent and the observance of sacrifice of food

Pause.

M Mandarin oranges are for Protestants

W To the Catholic religion it is fading away sure as fish on Fridays and three meals on a fast day
but to other religions we are getting more knowable

M sausages

Pause.

W perhaps during a much more Catholicised Ireland there was more of a direct link between religion and eating habits. Now although feast days are observed, the weekly fish on Friday habit has fallen out of habit. With other religions existing in Ireland, their own customs surrounding food can be observed in today's Ireland along with the predominant Catholic ways

M Fish on a Friday, don't eat before mass,

W No

M previous answer is relevant here. It relates somewhat to religion, if by religion you mean Catholicism. But it has much stronger relations to a range of other factors too, and more so in some cases.

W fish on Friday seen as penance, Good Friday with one main meal and 2 cold collation, fasting before Communion. Lots of connections!

M Fish on Friday

W I don't know

M Not sure

W none what so ever

M horsehite

W pointless

M a lot of info we have about Irish food is from reference in manuscripts and reference by saints and in manuscripts of brehon laws with food references

Pause.

W my parents were strict Catholics so Fish on Friday, fasting on some Catholic festival time, which I cannot remember, Sunday was day of rest. Fry after Mass, then big dinner & always a 'sweet'. Turkey at Christmas & again at Easter

M fasting was a big element of my parents' weekends - my mother used to faint from hunger at mass

W the only reason we ever ate fish was because we had too on a Friday no deserts in Lent always simnel cake at Easter

M doesn't

W obliquely if at all

M hmm, well the place of women in Irish society relates to religion so yes, there is a relationship there. I wonder if Ireland's low rate of breastfeeding relates to a kind of prudishness we've inherited from Catholic conservatism. Rituals such as fish on Friday, fasting during Lent, Christmas celebrations all have a strong relationship with Catholicism. With regard to other religions, it's funny to consider the development of Irish production of Halal beef

M doesn't

W obliquely if at all

M like whipping a dead horse

W the two are very much entwined in particular with Catholicism

M Sunday a day of rest and good food after going to mass

W crudely speaking, catholic=poor=peasants=diet of potatoes, bread, and milk.
Protestant=rich=varied diet, more exotic influence, and opulence

M I don't see that connection

W horsehite

M I don't see much actual connection. I personally don't know anybody who adheres to the Catholic "fish on Friday" rule, and I see no other relationship either

W fish on a Friday and on specific holy days

M fish on Fridays

W and on specific holy days

M fish on Fridays

W and on specific holy days

M fish on Fridays

W and on specific holy days

M fish on Fridays

W and on specific holy days

Long pause.

M gets up, wandering downstage, talking.

Half way through dialogue, lights begin to fade, until black for last few sentences.

M this had a major influence on fish as part of the diet. Also, that Catholic sense of guilt and shame and meagreness did not help things either. Fasting during lent, observations of holy days, Lough Derg and penance of black tea and dry bread, wine was for priests and the alter not for the plebs in the seats. Whiskey and beer was their drink. Uncivilised and barbaric. Is it religious that we don't eat horse meat? Not really but it is symbolic of the nation. We had horses on our national coins, an animal we are proud of and never eat. Hares were also on

our old coins and we don't eat them either as it is bad luck to do so here. Mr. Salmon was on our old 10p coin but we loved to eat it, our folklore connection to the Salmon of Knowledge perhaps. The church in Ireland were the lapdogs of the British and then of De Valera after that. His moronic agricultural and trade policies around the time of the Free state set Ireland on a collision course for economic wilderness. Were the church influential in this? But perhaps we should separate church and religion there. Catholics and Protestants ate the same foods, and there were few or no taboos about what one ate Vs the other. Not being able to eat one hour before taking communion was another thing. And the pledge to not drink alcohol after your confirmation. The host communion is referred to as the bread, daily bread, the wine is the blood. But we couldn't have the wine. Now we need gluten free communion because the world is just a little bit messed up.

End.

Appendix 2: Meetings with Dramaturg for First Performance of *Irish Food. A Play*

1. Reading of script.

Need to shorten script. Only have 20 minutes. Decide to take out sections. Reduce four to one. Girls voices exceptionally good.

2. Second reading of script.

We decide to set script around a table with two performance each side. Not happy with movement at all. Seems unnecessary. Can't get movement right.

3. Third reading of script.

Script is now a lot more personal, a lot more of my own food history. Also, my family: Christmas – food and celebration; food and misery.

4. Fourth reading and movement rehearsal of script.

We watch Wooster Group *Route 1 and 9*. Absolutely in awe. Movement, metaphor, identity. It's everything I want our performance to be. Reading on Wooster Group.

5. Fifth reading and movement rehearsal of script.

Breakthrough in terms of using voice over. We record voices on phone. I contemplate getting rid of actors. Kathy says no. We watch girls perform with voice over. I put Kathy sitting into rehearsal area. It's still not working. I add myself. At one moment in text, I bang table and scream. Everyone is jolted. We're on to something.

6. Reading and rehearsal.

Great rehearsal with another draft of script. Kathy shows me video of *Speak Bitterness*. I love it. It's so non-theatrical. I try and inject elements into the actors. Too much drama, too much performing. Don't think, just do it as it I didn't matter.

7. Reading and rehearsal.

Pig mask on. Kathy remarks about *The Butcher Boy*. I like the intertextual element. There is already so much Beckett in the text. Now McCabe. Mask creates a macabre atmosphere.

Absurd, funny, horrific. I think of Bernhard's *A Party for Boris* were a character wears a massive pig mask. Making theatre is making theatre.

8. Final rehearsal of *Final script for First Performance*.

Table, chairs, food, and mask. So many more elements. I decide to bring live and dead animals on to the stage, because they cut through representation. Kathy shows us final programme. It includes quotes form *Irish Constitution* (1937), due to the repetition of the "housewife" in the text. It's just another element, like the food on stage. No doubt it will lead the audience astray. I want them to feel slightly disgusted, nauseated: perhaps like Artaud's Theatre of Cruelty. It that not food, after all.

Appendix 3: Second draft of play

Scene 1

“Wherein first food memories of Irish food are performed, presented”

The piece should be energetic and choreographed to a degree, a food dance of sorts. Actors should wear minimal or non-descriptive clothing for this first scene.

Silence.

Slow fade up of light.

Voices begin in the darkness.

M dinner

W at my grandmother’s

M lamb and mint sauce

W mashed potato and gravy

M we called it pandy

Pause.

W bacon and cabbage

M soda bread

W fantastic brown crab cakes in a lovely little pub west of Dublin

Pause.

M lamb’s liver

W and onions

M my grandmother's Sunday roast and apple pie

W and brown soda bread

M there was always something

W a constant hub of nourishment

M brown bread

W soda bread

M there was always something

W bacon and cabbage

M lamb's liver and onions

W fantastic brown crab

M oysters

W fantastic brown crab

M I'm four

W or five

M we're sitting at the counter

W watching my mum bake an apple tart

M an apple tart!

W a fantastic apple tart!

M there is always something

W always something

M always

W something when we come home from school

M on cold and wet days

Pause

W fish and chips

M unpasteurised milk

W bread

M aunt Anna's apple tart

W shepherd's pie

M beshoft, Dublin

W my mother's cooking

M bread

W brown bread

M fantastic brown bread

W with mashed potato and gravy

M we called it pandy

Pause

W Close your eyes

M closes his eyes

W we're making brown bread with granny, when it's baked we have a wedge of it with butter

M butter!

W with her blackcurrant jam

M butter!

W and a cup of milky tea

M milky tea!

W yes!

M opens his eyes

M yes!

W a cup of milky tea

M to wash it all down

W granny's brown bread with butter and black currant jam

M and a cup of milky tea

W to wash it all down

Pause

M bread...and brown bread...and brown soda bread

W with fantastic crab and aunt Anna's apple tart

M } yes!

W } yes!

M spuds

W my mother's cooking

M homemade beef stew

W there was always something

M the aga on

W on wet and cold days

M coming home from school

W we're four

M or five

W the oohs and ahhs

M eating a cuckies negg

They laugh

W A cuckies negg

Pause.

M dad's at the door

W he has a live turkey

M it's Christmas time

W there's always something happening

M mum's going crazy

W the turkey disappears

M we don't see it again, until we all are sitting down eating the Christmas dinner

W that was food

M that was real food

They smile with satisfaction.

Pause.

W I am three

M I am making brown bread with my mam

W I am three

M I am taking a salmon from the river

W the egg

M its dark orange yolk

M } we ate a lot of eggs a lot of the time

W } we ate a lot of eggs a lot of the time

M the salmon tries to wriggle free

W father finishes it off

M we cook it on a fire

W there

M on a lake somewhere near Galway

W I can't remember

M I always can't remember

W these are the memories

M that made us

Pause.

M potato soup

W with fresh chopped parsley

M and bread

W brown soda bread

M we drink milk

W we eat porter cake

M and apple tart

W creamed rice on the way to the mart

M there are cows everywhere

W flapping and shitting and whipping their tails

M the smell

W the smell is everywhere

M the mart on a Monday morning

W as we walk to school

M dreaming of food

W we have the best meat growing up

M we were always dreaming of food

W wild moments in the wood

M picking mushrooms with my mother

W listening to birds' cry

Pause.

M I am on my grandfather's knee

W I am sipping stout

M I am a toddler and he gives me little sips

W little sips, three little sips

M sitting on his knee

Pause.

W suddenly

M we are out in the field

W picking field mushrooms again

M foraging with my family

W they are everywhere

M they are the cleanest firmest most delicious things ever

W I devour them

M I eat them

W we fry them in butter with fresh thyme

M in a wood

W on brown bread

M there is always brown bread

Pause.

W suddenly

M back at home

W we cook them

M with butter and salt in a hot pan

W suddenly

M there are gone

W half an hour after they are picked

Pause.

M my father was fish mad and he would get bags and bags of herring from Killybegs

W he taught me how to clean and grill them

M the roe was great

W and the neighbours collecting periwinkles

M in Dunnes Stores bags

W we pickled periwinkles for salad

M and herring

M everything in bags

W in Dunnes Stores bags

They laugh.

W tearing with the weight of all we collected

M Do you remember he had a gas burner at the back of this house and we would boil a big pot
of water and throw them all in

M } delicious!
W } delicious!

W he was a builder

M and we gave us each a long shiny masonry nail

W we pried them out

M after a minute or two

W using the nail to pick the meat from the shell

M sitting around in his back garden

W That was 1985

M long before foodies

M and foraging

W and NOMA

M NOMA!

Pause.

W there is a restaurant in Aughnacloy

M there is a restaurant in Carlow town

W there is a restaurant in Donegal

M there is rhubarb in my grandmother's garden

M it shoots

W it grows

W there is turkey and ham

M there is brown bread

W there is always brown bread

M there is curry

W there is seaweed

M and oysters

W there are blackberries

M from the hedges

W there is chicken in the rough, running amuck

M my father with a hurl taking the fucking head of it!

W fry ups!

M fry ups!

W sugar and jam sambos

M and porridge

W and warm milk straight from the cow

M there is soda bread lathered in butter

W boxty straight off the range

W with lashings of butter

M } lashings, lashings of butter

W } lashings, lashing of butter

M there are sloes

W and digging potatoes

M there are tantrums if I don't get cheese in my scrambled eggs!

W there was no cheese

M turns out it was just the yolk

W not fully whisked before

M now it was

W then it was

M now it is

W now it was

Pause.

They chant, crescendo.

M brúitín

W Cally

M brúitín

W cally

M brúitín

W cally

M brúitín

W cally

Pause.

M oysters

W getting eggs for the chickens

M new baby potatoes and purple sprouting broccoli

W Dublin coddle

M hotel food in Ennis

W raw milk!

M the smell of overcooked cabbage on a Sunday morning

W there was always overcooked cabbage

M that and brown bread

W in the evening

M in granny's

W brown bread

M there is always brown bread

W grandmother's

M being in my grandmother's house (in Raheney) and eating giant sausages

W drop scones

M in granny's

W grandmother's Irish stew

M I licked the plate clean!

W grandmother's bacon and cabbage

M I licked the plate clean!

W at granny's house

M the smell of overcooked cabbage

W at granny's house

Pause.

M baking at home with my mum

W my mother's dinners

M tea and fried fish - not together, of course!

W eating crab claws on Achill Island

M making toast on an open fire

W my mother's chocolate pudding

M Sausages and rashers on Saturday mornings (the smell of no school!)

W rich and honest

M seafood in Killorglan

W rural Ireland farming communities

M the land and the sea

W back in the 1950s

M we are pork or bacon at least four times a week

W frying kidneys to an Elizabeth David recipe

M back in the 1950s

W Digging potatoes at home and eating them with butter

M Eating my father's home grown kerrs pinks

W brown bread

M and oysters

W and cabbage

M overcooked cabbage

Slow fade out of light and voices.

They continue to repeat the last few lines, like a refrain, a chant, a dirge.

Darkness.

Scene 2

“Wherein we perform history, the food traditions of Irish food, childhood memories, traditions”

Slow fade up of light.

Two women on stage.

They talk to each other, to the audience, to themselves.

Pauses should be natural, not forced.

The sentences should flow into each other, like a long sonata.

W1 boiled potatoes, cabbage, joints of meat

W2 in the West, we ate a lot of great seafood.

W1 getting brown bread on vegetable stew on the Aran Islands

W1 bacon and cabbage, Irish stew

W2 my grandfather owned a house in the West of Ireland (near Tullycross) and we used to go with family for a week or so during the summer. I remember going down to the rocky beach and picking mussels, which we'd bring back to the house and cook within hours of picking them. One time my dad came with us and we all went to the small harbour as the fishing boats were coming in, he bought a bag of crab claws and two lobsters for dinner that evening. At Christmas, my dad does most of the cooking (and delegating!) and he's made a corned beef a few times, which he really enjoys... the rest of us 'like' it... but thinking of Christmas and I can almost smell the mix of spices for the beef as well as the roasting turkey and the cloves and sugar melting over the ham in the oven it taste so great it all taste so great

W1 my father grew tomatoes and marrows in the greenhouse made from bits of glass skimmed from skips, the smell of tomatoes always brings me back to there

W2 back to there

W1 my parents weren't big into food

W2 we pressured them to purchase Pop Tarts and fought over the toys at the end of the cereal box. I loved treats and summer holidays...bbqs, trips to the sweet shop, "30p mixture of sweets please". I hated pork chops, incinerated by my mother, not out of a lack of care, but a general disinterest in food and cooking.

W1 cooking was a chore.

W2 No pleasure was taken in it for my parents. By contrast, I enjoy the labour of cooking

W1 food was basic plentiful and tasty. You could recognise all ingredients. The men always got a larger portion. Families always ate together or waited until dad came home. Eating out was a great and usually for a big celebration

W2 a big celebration

W1 Childhood memories....ham and coleslaw, roast chicken and roast potatoes, beef stew, delicious homemade brown bread with lots of butter and ham or honey. White fish on Fridays. Too much mashed potatoes. Potatoes with every dinner. Christmas...overcooked turkey, ham, stuffing too dry and bland, mashed carrots and parsnips, cranberry sauce to save the day. Moist Christmas pudding, custard from a pack, trifle, and Christmas cake until everything else was eaten....didn't eat out except for Holy Communions and Confirmations...too many kids, too expensive, and not very good anyway. Did I mention mashed potatoes?

W2 I love mash potatoes

W1 always a cause for celebration

W2 mash potatoes

W1 always a cause for celebration

W2 we always had great homemade food in abundance. My dad came from a farming background and meat was very important. Sunday's consisted of a fry for breakfast, a roast dinner around 2pm and then a 'cold' tea of roast chicken and ham. My mother was a great cook, but a plain eater, so no sauces, no spices, no garlic, rice, or pasta for family meals. However, us children would sometimes be allowed a treat of French bread pizza and Findus savoury pancakes!! Late 70s early 80s. Mum baked fairy cakes, shortbread and crumble made with tinned pineapple. She served Ritz crackers with cheese and pineapple (no cheese on her own crackers!!) I grew up in Cork and spent many weekends in west Cork, bringing home Clonakilty Black Pudding from the small butcher shop in Clon. We ate in Kinsale for Sunday lunch or dinner often too. Jimmy Edwards was where we usually went. The Chicken Maryland there was fantastic. Food traditions in our house included stuffing made with mashed potato and not breadcrumbs, and homemade Chicken Mary land for the kids' birthdays

W1 Kebabs

W2 pub shite

W1 pre-packaged rubbish

W2 My mother was a terrible cook. The saving grace was the desert, cake, tart, or whatever sweet thing she was good at making that came afterwards. Restaurants were only for really big occasions, like a notable wedding anniversary. Family meals were a non-event, the cooking was so poor

W1 it was always that bad

- W2** in the 1980s
- W1** the 1950s
- W2** the 1960s
- W1** Irish food was a communal experience sitting around the table, potatoes from the garden, freshly baked bread with buttermilk from the farm, tarts, blackcurrant jam made from the garden. Nothing was bought, it was about using what was around us: simple, seasonal & organic. That was the way it was
- W2** all meals were family meals
- W1** we rarely went to restaurants
- W2** even on special occasions
- W1** everything was made at home
- W2** my mother was a terrible cook
- W1** we never went to restaurants
- W2** all meals were family meals
- W1** good meals
- W2** family meals
- W1** Tragic meals of regret,
- W2** dry meat
- W1** veg boiled so much thy became transparent and tasteless.
- W2** no matter how bad the meal, the company, rural & farm upbringing has meant
- W1** the meal itself

W2 was less important than the company

Gradual fade out of light.

Silence.

Scene 3

“Down into history”

Slow fade up of light.

The performers are all seated, facing the audience. There are four of them. Two men and two woman. Ages irrelevant.

W1 no

M1 unfortunately no

W2 no

M2 unfortunately no

W2 not

W1 I'm really into sustainability and wanted for a long time to create an eco-centre where people could learn how to produce their own food. I've read up about what Irish people traditionally ate (before famine times) and I know that keeping a pig was very common, so ham & pork was popular. Most small holdings had a bee hive (and produced mead) and people ate a good mix of veg & fruit (potatoes, strawberries)

M1 no

W1 unfortunately no

M2 not

M1 no food history

W1 unfortunately no

M2 a bit. Nothing which your average person wouldn't know anyways. I live in rural Mayo and we have our own words for certain stuff for example calling “champ” “cali” instead. I've

heard of poor families around us being fed mashed potato mixed with buttermilk and eggs and having that as a meal when they were kids (1950s/60s era I might add- fuck knows how that's history related). Famine still lives on in terms of raised beds and stuff being prevalent all around us and folks being unwilling to plant stuff on them. The whole idea that local restaurants use the word "champ" instead of "cali" still pisses us off btw

W1 no

M1 unfortunately not

W2 poor history

M1 not really no

W2 to be honest

M1 I was a housewife

M2 a fucking housewife

W1 pointless

Pause.

M1 to be honest I don't, although I do know that bubble and squeak was originally made with beef although I think it was originally an English dish

W1 a poor history

M1 potatoes

M2 seaweed

W2 they were cultivated in the past

W1 potatoes were a staple crop, we all ate potatoes

M1 fucking potatoes

M2 fucking brown bread

M1 there was always brown bread

W2 we have a history of foraging

W1 of wandering through the woods like Angus

W2 not really

M1 we do

W1 we did

M2 we never did

W1 it's fucking lies

W2 we've a poor history

M1 unfortunately

W1 I'd know a fair bit about who is who and who they worked for around Dublin. Also, about Jamet in Dublin being the start of Haute Cuisine in the Capital.

W2 I've some knowledge around farming and bread. I know about the use of wheaten bread (Norman's) and the use of ale barm for leavening and that I believe was followed by heavy usage of potatoes in bread but this must have been pre famine. I don't know if this was when soda came into play also but know around famine times was when wheaten breads increased again

Pause.

W1 we forgot everything

- M2** it's all gone
- W1** gone
- M1** colonialism, famine, and religion
- W2** that halted and destroyed the progression and development of Irish cuisine, we ate to survive for too long
- M1** no
- W1** if you pick an Irish wild herb or seaweed is that a cuisine or produce, talking about Irish cuisine is like kicking a dead horse
- W2** pointless
- M1** a dead horse
- W1** accept this, move on
- M1** a dead horse
- M2** I know a little bit about potatoes
- W2** it's how Irish people survive during the 19th century
- M2** survived
- W2** eating the potato
- M1** there was nothing
- W2** we had food we just didn't know how to cook it
- M2** poor history
- W1** no not really
- W2** colonialism, famine, and religion

W1 it all halted and destroyed the progression and development of Irish cuisine

M1 we ate to survive for too long,

W2 if you pick an Irish wild herb or seaweed is that a cuisine or produce, talking about Irish cuisine is like kicking a dead horse

M2 pointless

W2 I was a fucking housewife

M1 accept this move on and put the energy towards cooking with constraints

W1 constraints

M1 a dead horse

M2 a dead fucking horse

W2 I was a housewife

M1 a horse

W2 a fucking housewife

W1 } pointless

W2 } pointless

M1 } a dead horse

M2 } a dead horse

W1 a dead fucking horse

W2 Irish food

Pause.

W2 No I don't

M1 We have always had food (just no spice), famine, food but still not huge quantities and many families had limited meat, kids had very limited sweets, crisps biscuits. Influx of money, influx of new Irish and hence new food origins

M2 all that

M1 not much

W1 food grows naturally

W2 I'm sure of that

W1 I have very little

M1 unfortunately no

W1 Much less than I would like

W2 unfortunately no

Sudden fade to black.

Silence.

Scene 4

“Where we discuss food and religion”

Slow fade up of light.

We find M and W down stage right, in conversation.

They are seated across from each other, at a small wooden table. They both speak with a pronounced Northern Irish accent.

Silence.

M Sweet fuck all

W penal laws and oppressed Catholics

M protestants

W wankers

M we fucked it up ourselves

W nothing

M They became dependent on spuds due to not being able climb the social ladder in order to attain more money and therefore food.

W Apart from that, I can't see how it really does

M doesn't

W really

M protestants

W apart from that

M I can understand why there's be an overlap, but I genuinely don't see how it's intrinsic or anything like that to it

W I mean

M it's a

W I think this is a dying link, apart from people abstaining on good Friday etc. It doesn't have much of a connection for me

Pause.

M lent

W I don't believe Irish food relates to religion, but rather the unequal sharing of resources during times of religious conflict lead for certain populations to have to learn to adapt and become more imaginative with cheaper and less exotic ingredients

M of course

W I was raised in a non-religious household, so my knowledge of food and religion isn't that extensive, but I feel that food like everything in Ireland was so closely influenced by religion that Irish people are completely unaware of how their own eating habits have been influenced by religion. By this is mean that people may eat or not eat a food product because 'that's just what we do' rather than making an individual decision to choose a certain product

M I understand

W Maybe in the past it would have i.e., no meat on Fridays or on certain religious festivals. Nowadays I would think there is little connection

M I don't have enough cultural knowledge of Ireland to be able to answer that

W fasting

M protestants

W Not sure

M wankers

W fucking Catholics fucking us the land

M Is there

W use to

M sweet fuck all

W It used to before, I think it has changed though I wouldn't bat an eye lid eating a Burger of a Friday now

M The cross in the soda! I can't relate much more but I would say the experience of food and family values of sharing and community would all be very much Christian values

W Haven't seen any signs that there's a relation!

M no relation

W nothing

M unfortunately not

W it used to but not anymore

M religion halted its development, made us narrowminded and confined to a set of rules.
Religion destroyed the development of Irish food

W no idea

M I think that religion has had a negative effect on the consumption of fish. I love that my chickens are in full egg production at Easter

W eggs!

M I love eggs

W it doesn't!

M people can choose what to eat they're not born into it!

W Protestants

M Catholics

W certainly it is related to history,

M but I can't say is entirely related to religion

W of course

M surely not

W No idea

M it doesn't!

W no relationship

M not at all

W nothing

M inner and outer nourishment, all interconnected

W Abstinence

M good Friday

W Spy Wednesday

M festivities like Easter and Christmas

W not forgetting the feast of Samhain

M Samhain?

Pause.

W I don't think it does anymore

M fish on a Friday still creeps into conversation every now and then

W significantly I'd say

M historically at least

W specific foods relating to specific religious events

M like Christmas

W Easter

M no eating before mass or communion

W Lent and the observance of sacrifice of food

Pause.

M Mandarin oranges are for Protestants

W To the Catholic religion it is fading away sure as fish on Fridays and three meals on a fast day
but to other religions we are getting more knowable

M sausages

Pause.

W perhaps during a much more Catholicised Ireland there was more of a direct link between religion and eating habits. Now although feast days are observed, the weekly fish on Friday habit has fallen out of habit. With other religions existing in Ireland, their own customs surrounding food can be observed in today's Ireland along with the predominant Catholic ways

M Fish on a Friday, don't eat before mass,

W No

M previous answer is relevant here. It relates somewhat to religion, if by religion you mean Catholicism. But it has much stronger relations to a range of other factors too, and more so in some cases.

W fish on Friday seen as penance, Good Friday with one main meal and 2 cold collation, fasting before Communion. Lots of connections!

M Fish on Friday

W I don't know

M Not sure

W none what so ever

M horsehite

W pointless

M a lot of info we have about Irish food is from reference in manuscripts and reference by saints and in manuscripts of brehon laws with food references

Pause.

W my parents were strict Catholics so Fish on Friday, fasting on some Catholic festival time, which I cannot remember, Sunday was day of rest. Fry after Mass, then big dinner & always a 'sweet'. Turkey at Christmas & again at Easter

M fasting was a big element of my parents' weekends - my mother used to faint from hunger at mass

W the only reason we ever ate fish was because we had too on a Friday no deserts in Lent always simnel cake at Easter

M doesn't

W obliquely if at all

M hmm, well the place of women in Irish society relates to religion so yes, there is a relationship there. I wonder if Ireland's low rate of breastfeeding relates to a kind of prudishness we've inherited from Catholic conservatism. Rituals such as fish on Friday, fasting during Lent, Christmas celebrations all have a strong relationship with Catholicism. With regard to other religions, it's funny to consider the development of Irish production of Halal beef

M doesn't

W obliquely if at all

M like whipping a dead horse

W the two are very much entwined in particular with Catholicism

M Sunday a day of rest and good food after going to mass

W crudely speaking, catholic=poor=peasants=diet of potatoes, bread, and milk.
Protestant=rich=varied diet, more exotic influence, and opulence

M I don't see that connection

W horsehite

M I don't see much actual connection. I personally don't know anybody who adheres to the Catholic "fish on Friday" rule, and I see no other relationship either

W fish on a Friday and on specific holy days

M fish on Fridays

W and on specific holy days

M fish on Fridays

W and on specific holy days

M fish on Fridays

W and on specific holy days

M fish on Fridays

W and on specific holy days

Long pause.

M gets up, wandering downstage, talking.

Half way through dialogue, lights begin to fade, until black for last few sentences.

M this had a major influence on fish as part of the diet. Also, that Catholic sense of guilt and shame and meagreness did not help things either. Fasting during lent, observations of holy days, Lough Derg and penance of black tea and dry bread, wine was for priests and the alter not for the plebs in the seats. Whiskey and beer was their drink. Uncivilised and barbaric. Is it religious that we don't eat horse meat? Not really but it is symbolic of the nation. We had horses on our national coins, an animal we are proud of and never eat. Hares were also on

our old coins and we don't eat them either as it is bad luck to do so here. Mr. Salmon was on our old 10p coin but we loved to eat it, our folklore connection to the Salmon of Knowledge perhaps. The church in Ireland were the lapdogs of the British and then of De Valera after that. His moronic agricultural and trade policies around the time of the Free state set Ireland on a collision course for economic wilderness. Were the church influential in this? But perhaps we should separate church and religion there. Catholics and Protestants ate the same foods, and there were few or no taboos about what one ate Vs the other. Not being able to eat one hour before taking communion was another thing. And the pledge to not drink alcohol after your confirmation. The host communion is referred to as the bread, daily bread, the wine is the blood. But we couldn't have the wine. Now we need gluten free communion because the world is just a little bit messed up.

End.

Appendix 4: Final Script of First Performance

Silence.

Slow fade up of soft light.

Sounds.

*Centre stage, a long table. There are two chairs beside each. Seated on the chairs **F** and **SJ**. There are facing each other. There are other seats. These are for members of the audience.*

Possible props on table or in vicinity

- Wild game
- Salmon
- Crab
- Lobster
- Seaweed
- Oyster
- Mussels
- Potatoes
- Flour
- Butter
- Soda bread
- Old bowls with kitchen implements
- Any other food stuff the text mentions

Voices after a few moments.

F dinner

SJ at our grandmother's

F lamb and mint sauce

SJ mashed potato and gravy

F we called it pandy

Pause.

SJ bacon and cabbage

F soda bread

SJ (*excited*) fantastic brown crab cakes in a lovely little pub west of Dublin

Pause.

F lamb's liver

SJ and onions

F our grandmother's Sunday roast and apple pie

SJ and warm brown soda bread

F there was always something

SJ a constant hub of nourishment

F something to warm our hearts

SJ something to nourish us

Pause.

F our grandfather owned a house in the West of Ireland

SJ near Tullycross

F we used to go with the family for a week or so during the summer I remember going down to the rocky beach and picking mussels which we'd bring back to the house and cook within hours of picking them one time our dad came with us and we all went to the small harbour as the fishing boats were coming in

SJ he bought us a bag of crab claws and two lobsters for dinner that evening

F (*remembering*) fantastic brown crab

SJ we're four

F or five

SJ or six

F we're sitting at the counter

Sounds.

SJ watching our mum bake an apple tart

F a beautiful apple tart

SJ (*excited*) a fantastic apple tart

F she rubs the butter into the flour with her fingers

SJ I can see her rings

F there is always something

SJ something to warm our heart

Pause.

F my dad came from a farming background and meat was very important to us Sunday's consisted of a fry for breakfast a fabulous roast dinner around 2pm and then a 'cold' tea of roast chicken and ham

SJ my mother was a great cook but a plain eater so no sauces and no spices and no garlic we never had rice or pasta for family meals however us children would sometimes be allowed a treat of Findus savoury pancakes

F (*excited*) Findus savoury pancakes

SJ (*with relish*) chicken and leek

F it's the late 70s or early 80s

SJ Queen are on the radio

F we live in a small house in Clondalkin

SJ mum bakes fairy cakes and shortbread and a fruit crumble made with tinned pineapple

F (*affected*) she serves Ritz crackers with cheese and pineapple

SJ though no cheese on her own crackers

Pause.

F though I grew up in Cork I spent many weekends in west Cork bringing home Clonakilty Black pudding from the small butcher shop in Clon we ate in Kinsale for Sunday lunch or dinner often too

SJ Jimmy Edwards was where we usually went the chicken Maryland there was fantastic

F our father made black pudding out the back in the yard his hands steeped in pigs blood that was real food

SJ eating brown bread with blood crusted fingernails

F those were real times

SJ real food

Pause.

F there is something when we come home from school

SJ on cold and wet days

F a crisp sandwich

SJ on white bread

F with butter

SJ yellow golden butter

F crunchy salty crisps

SJ they were called Tayto

F I put it in my mouth and eat it up

SJ I lick the butter off the bread

Pause.

F we're in Donegal town

SJ eating fish and chips

F keeping an eye out for Protestants

SJ do you think religion and food are connected

F a woman told me that a woman told her that she saw a woman who saw a woman who made ale from potatoes

They laugh.

Pause.

F raw milk

SJ brown bread

F aunt Anna's apple tart

SJ shepherd's pie

F fish and chips in beshoff, Dublin

SJ rain glistening off the cobbled streets on Grafton Street

F it's the 1950s

SJ our mother's cooking

F mashed potato and gravy

SJ we called it pandy

They laugh.

Pause.

F I never thought Protestants ate the same as us

SJ William Paddy Hitler

Pause.

F close your eyes and listen

SJ we're making brown bread with granny

F when it's baked we have a wedge of it with butter

SJ yellow golden butter

F with her blackcurrant jam

SJ and a cup of milky tea

F (*excited*) milky tea

SJ its drips from our mouth

F (*erotically*) yes

SJ (*ditto*) yes

F a cup of fucking milky tea

SJ } dripping from our mouth

F } dripping from our mouth

SJ to wash it all down

F (*bitter*) to get rid of it

SJ (*ditto*) to get fucking rid of it

F all that pain all those memories all that food

SJ it never ends

Pause.

F I've read up about what Irish people traditionally ate before famine times

SJ I was surprised to learn we had a food culture beyond the potato

Pause.

To each other, playful and goading.

F granny's brown bread with butter and black currant jam and a cup of milk tea

SJ yes

F we sit there and sup it up and eat it up until it's all gone down

SJ yes

F (*laughs*) William Paddy Hitler

SJ Catholics and Protestants

F grey days and stone walls and freezing cold mornings on the way to school

Pause.

SJ brown bread and soda bread and

F fantastic brown crab and aunt Anna's apple tart in the summer evening as the sun is going down

SJ there was never a grey day

F } yes

SJ } yes

Pause.

F we're four

SJ or five

F or even six

SJ the ooohs and ahhs

F eating a cuckies negg

SJ (with laughter) a cuckies negg

Pause.

F dad's at the door

SJ he has a live turkey

F it's Christmas time

SJ he says its time

F I've never seen something killed before

SJ Catholics and Protestants

F history playing itself out before our eyes

SJ mum's going crazy

F the turkey disappears

SJ we don't see it again

F until we are all sitting down eating the Christmas dinner

SJ that was food

F real food

Pause.

SJ I am five

F I am six

SJ father is taking a salmon from the river

F we watch it as it tries to wriggle free

SJ he finishes it off

F he hits it across the head with a hammer

SJ Protestants and Catholics

F wriggling to be free

SJ its eyes go blood red

F or orange

SJ Protestants

F food and religion and history and wanting to kill your neighbour

SJ having to kill your food

F taking a hammer to it

SJ its dead anyways

F well dead

SJ we cook it on a fire

F on a lake somewhere near Galway

SJ outside Oughterard

F looking out at the mountains

SJ with the snow on them and hardly any leaves on the trees

Pause.

F I can't remember

SJ I can't forget

F my mother took her own life

SJ she used to make the brown bread

F these are the memories

SJ that made us

F that break us

SJ that make us

F food and religion and history

SJ I want to get out

Screams.

Longer pause.

They return to memory, happy.

F potato soup

SJ with fresh chopped parsley

F and watercress

SJ the monk's ate that

F with barley bread

Pause.

SJ we drink milk

F eat porter cake

SJ we drink milk

F eat apple tart

SJ fucking milk

F fucking apple tart

SJ creamed rice on the way to the mart with muddy shoes

F there are cows everywhere

SJ flapping and shitting and whipping their tails

F the smell

SJ the sights and sounds

F of the cows

SJ farting and shiting

F licking and sucking

SJ Catholics and Protestants

F the smell of shite

SJ on a Monday morning

Pause.

They reflect.

F are we real people

SJ dreaming of food

F wild moments

SJ foraging in the wood

F the leaves falling all over our faces

SJ picking mushrooms

F with our mother

Slight pause.

SJ (*excited*) magic mushrooms

F listening to the birds

SJ the blackbirds

F (*annoyed*) those fucking birds

SJ I've read we ate them in the middle ages and children would trap them and then roast them

F if a bird was caught on the land owned by a commoner he was entitled to one-fifth of the flesh

SJ we go home and drink magic mushroom tea the whole family falls asleep and dreams

F we make love

SJ over and over again

F food and love

SJ mushrooms and love

F it's all in our minds

SJ } magic mushroom tea

F } magic mushroom tea

Pause.

SJ I am on my grandfather's knee

F he has my hand in his hand

SJ I am sipping stout

F I am a toddler

SJ he gives me little sips

F little sips

SJ three little sips

F dancing delicately on my tongue

SJ I am a lucky girl

F (*poetic*) light of my life

SJ a very lucky girl

F (*ditto*) fire of my loins

SJ sitting on his knee

F (*ditto*) my sin

SJ (*ditto*) my soul

F taking three little sips

SJ a trip upon our tongue

F licking

SJ and sipping

Pause.

F } (*screaming*) mammy
SJ } (*screaming*) mammy

Longer pause.

F suddenly

SJ we are out in the field

F it is dawn

SJ we are picking field mushrooms

F foraging with the whole family

SJ the black the greys the oranges the yellows as the night goes down and the sun comes up

F Catholics and Protestants

SJ the mushrooms are everywhere

F they are the cleanest firmest most delicious things ever that I

SJ held in my hand

F soft and wet and juicy and white

SJ we fry them in butter with fresh thyme the fire spits and crackles we put them in our mouths

we will never forget this taste we will never forget

F as the sun comes up

SJ William Paddy Hitler

F we devour them

SJ Catholics and Protestants

F swallow them

SJ William Paddy Hitler

F licking and sucking

SJ Catholics and Protestants

F sitting in the wood

SJ sipping and licking

F sitting in the wood

Pause.

SJ food

F fucking food

SJ food

F a roast chicken

SJ is a beautiful thing

F when you cook it in the wood

SJ I hate all this all this food all this remembering the cows the Catholics the Protestants the priest the salmon the holy communion on my tongue

Pause.

F suddenly

SJ back at home

F we are cooking oysters

SJ in a black metal pan with butter and salt

F with chopped parsley

SJ and mushroom ketchup

Pause.

F my father was fish mad and he would get bags and bags of herring from Killybegs

SJ he taught me how to gut and grill them

F the roe was great

SJ basted in lashings of butter

F (*sexually*) lashing of butter

Pause.

SJ our neighbours collected periwinkles

F picked them off the rocks and out of the seaweed

SJ they put them in Dunnes Stores bags

F they broke under the weight of all they collected

SJ periwinkles and razor clams and cockles and mussels and oysters and lobsters

F that was food

SJ real food

Pause.

F do you remember grandfather had a gas burner at the back of this house

SJ he was a Catholic

F he would boil a big pot of water

SJ and throw all the shellfish in

F } delicious
SJ } delicious

F he was a builder and he built half of Dublin on a boiled egg

SJ it never did him any harm a boiled egg and a cigarette he cycled everywhere down from
Armagh to Dublin with his brother eating ham sandwiches along the way

F you can tell a lot about a country by the types of sandwiches they make

SJ ham and cheese

F egg salad

SJ ham and cheese

F our grandfather

SJ he was as hard as nails

F as tough as fuck

SJ as hard as nails

F he gave us each a long shiny masonry nail

SJ to pry the periwinkles out

F Catholics and Protestants

SJ to pry them out

F Catholics and Protestants

SJ cycling all the way from Armagh to Dublin

F that was 1934

SJ ham and cheese sandwiches on batch bread with country butter and relish

F all the way

SJ from Dublin to Armagh

Pause.

F there is a restaurant in Aghnacloy

SJ there is a restaurant in Carlow town

F there is a restaurant in Donegal

SJ it is the 1960s

F it is the 1970s

SJ it is the 1980s

F there are restaurants everywhere

SJ there is an abundance of food

F real food

SJ there is turkey and ham

F there is curry

SJ there is turkey and ham

F there is lobster straight off the boats in the evening

SJ there is seaweed

F dillisk crisps out of brown paper bags

SJ in Waterford town

F my father munches on them and he drags us up and down town

SJ to the sounds of the angelus

F the cows moaning to be milked

Pause.

SJ there are oysters

F there is always oysters

SJ fresh juicy ones

F that dribble

SJ off your tongue

F as you bite into them

Giggling.

SJ my father grew tomatoes and marrows in the greenhouse made from bits of glass skimmed
from skips he was a great man

F the smell of tomatoes always brings me back to there

SJ to that garden

F his old wrinkled hands

SJ holding those tomatoes

Pause.

F blackberries

SJ from the hedges

F in buckets

SJ our little black fingers

F chickens in the rough

SJ Catholics and Protestants

F running amuck

SJ there is an old woman at the end of the lane who ate mutton on her wedding day

F there is a man who takes the hurl to chickens for a pound

SJ to kill them

F to eat them

SJ to kill them

F Catholics and Protestants

SJ food and religion

F there is a goose at Christmas

SJ with potato stuffing

F though never with breadcrumbs

SJ that's a British thing

F so are fry ups

SJ with sausages and rashers and black pudding and beans and toast and hash browns

F at Christmas our father does most of the cooking

SJ he makes corned beef which he really enjoys

F the rest of us hate it

They make retching noises.

SJ but thinking of Christmas

F I can almost smell the mix of spices for the beef as well as the roasting turkey and the cloves
and sugar melting over the ham in the oven it tastes so great it all tastes so great father does
the whole lot in his pyjamas they're blue from Dunnes Stores

SJ there are dark days and dark nights

F there is sugar and jam sambos for our lunch at school

SJ there is porridge

F there is always porridge

SJ fucking porridge

Disgust.

F with warm yellow milk straight from the cow

SJ ours mouths

F under its udder

SJ } sucking
F } sucking

SJ sucking and fucking and food

Pause.

F there is boxty

SJ straight off the range in Longford

F with lashings of butter

SJ } lashings and lashings of butter

F } lashings and lashing of butter

SJ there are sloes for gin

F and digging potatoes in Maynooth

SJ for next to no money

F (*feigned anger*) there are tantrums if I don't get cheese in my scrambled eggs

SJ Catholics and Protestants

F religion and history

SJ tragic meals of regret

F there is neither bread nor oysters just porridge fucking porridge for breakfast dinner and tea

Pause.

They chant.

SJ brúitín

F cally

SJ brúitín

F cally

SJ brúitín

F cally

SJ brúitín

F cally

Long pause.

SJ lamb and barley stew

F oh ye

SJ getting eggs from the chickens in the early morning

F oh ye

SJ Dublin coddle

F hotel food in Ennis

SJ Did De Valera stay there

F sitting on the sofa saying the rosary

SJ sucking fox's mints

Pause.

F I live in rural Mayo and we have our own words for certain stuff

SJ Irish words

F real words

SJ for example calling champ calí instead

F can you imagine how much food knowledge is lost

SJ when a language disappears

F I've heard of poor families around us being fed mashed potato mixed with buttermilk and seaweed and eggs and having that as a meal when they were kids

SJ } yuck
F } yuck

SJ I might add fuck knows how that's history related

F famine still lives on in Mayo in terms of raised beds folks are unwilling to plant stuff on them

SJ the whole idea that local restaurants use the word champ instead of calí still pisses me off

F what the fuck happened to us we lost all our own Irish memories

SJ I think De Valera fucked up food for us

F Catholics and Protestants

SJ Irish stew

F and dropped scones

SJ griddle bread in grandmother's house in Raheney

F giant sausages with the cheapest tomato ketchup she could find

SJ we licked the plate clean

F licked it

SJ gas and aluminium and metal those were the tastes I remember

F Catholics and Protestants

SJ bacon and cabbage

F overcooked cabbage

SJ it would make you want to vomit

F to puke

SJ licking the plate clean

Pause.

F eating crab claws on Achill Island

SJ basking in the sun

F making toast on an open fire

SJ watching the flames and they rose up into the sky

F smelling the sky

SJ licking it

F taking three little sips

SJ we're forty

F or fifty

SJ (*pretence*) I've some knowledge around farming and bread I know about the Norman's use of wheaten bread and the use of ale barm for leavening and that I believe was followed by heavy usage of potatoes in bread but this must have been pre-famine I don't know if this was when soda came into play also but I know around famine times was when wheaten breads increased again because of the plight do you know what I mean

F puffins and auks

SJ and other seabirds like herons

F take one hundred herons and chop their heads off and gut them

SJ then boil them in some vinegar with nutmeg and mace and pepper and salt and put them in a clean jar and keep in a cool place

F frying kidneys to an Elizabeth David recipe

SJ back in the 1950s

F is was all great then

SJ I was a housewife

F a fucking housewife

SJ my mother took her own life

Pause.

F we shot wild ducks out of the sky

SJ and I stood on their necks

F to make sure they were dead

SJ father told me to he said it was the only way

F to kill the ducks

SJ he plucked them and roasted them with oranges and other spices

F that was a lovely meal

SJ we had everything

F ducks and eels and our own vegetable garden

SJ Catholics and Protestants

F my mother was a terrible cook

SJ she was a housewife

F a fucking housewife

SJ she couldn't boil an egg

F we never went to restaurants

SJ even on special occasions

F that was only for Protestants

SJ wankers

F with their ducks and their guns and their walks into our countryside to get their food

SJ family meals

F good meals

SJ tragic meals of regret

F our father lying in the bed depressed up to his eyeballs not wanting to cook or eat

SJ fuck off with your fancy food you dirty Protestant

Pause.

F lying in bed

SJ on the Aran Islands

F looking up and the sky

SJ smelling vegetable stew

F with dried dillisk

SJ and sea lettuce

F our parents weren't big into food

SJ we pressured them to purchase pop tarts and fought over the toys at the end of the cereal box

F I loved treats and summer holidays trips to the sweet shop

SJ 30p mixture of sweets please

Pause.

F I hated pork chops incinerated by my mother not out of a lack of care but a general disinterest in food and cooking

SJ father in bed

F cooking was a chore

SJ father in bed

F a fucking chore

SJ I was a housewife

F I took no pleasure in it

SJ a fucking housewife

F I took my own life

SJ after making the brown bread

F the labour of cooking

SJ the love

F the celebrations

SJ Spy Wednesday

F not forgetting

SJ the feast of Samhain and fish on Fridays

F the men always got a larger portion and families always ate together and waited until dad came home

SJ Christmas

F father in his pyjamas

SJ he puts the goose in a black bag

F its struggles

SJ but we have no food

F we're so fucking poor

SJ } Catholics and Protestants

F } Catholics and Protestants

Sounds.

SJ the goose is dead

F and he brings it in and tosses it to our mother and says

SJ pluck that fucking thing

F I can't stand the sight of dead things looking at me

Long pause.

SJ kebabs

F pub shite

SJ pre-packaged rubbish

F curry chips

Pause.

SJ Irish food was a communal experience back then

F sitting around the table with potatoes from the garden freshly baked bread with buttermilk from the farm apple tarts and blackcurrant jam nothing was bought it was about using what was around us simple seasonal and organic it was so good

SJ no matter how bad the meal

F the meal itself

SJ was less important than the company

F oh shut up with your fucking food memories

SJ my rural farm upbringing has meant we had a food history

F we had no food history

SJ we shot duck and fished for brown trout

F we were Protestants

SJ I love that my chickens are in full egg production at Easter

F it's all gone

SJ we've forgotten everything

F De Valera fucked it all up for us

SJ dancing on the crossroad

F with bottles of raw milk in our hands

SJ the whole country dying of consumption

Pause.

F do you remember pulling in on the side of the road and buying Wexford strawberries from some random lad with blue jeans

SJ I kissed him

F and he put a strawberry in your mouth and you sucked it and he put his arm around you and that felt so good

SJ strawberries

F from Wexford

Pause.

SJ Protestants

F Catholics

SJ bony miserable fish that made you want to choke and die

F Christmas time as father roasts the turkey between bouts of depression

SJ eating nothing for days just the odd Lucozade to keep his sugar levels up

Pause

F (*matter of fact*) soda bread is not a bread

SJ it's a fucking cake

F a British man said that to me

SJ on Rathlin Island

F long before seaweed farms

SJ they massacred everyone there

F men women and children

SJ colonialism and famine

F Irish stew

SJ religion and history

F making brown bread with our mother feeling her rings and love and knowing we were ok

SJ lapdogs of the British and then of De Valera and then of the nuns and the priests

F fucking Catholics and Protestants

Pause.

SJ if you pick an Irish wild herb or seaweed

F is that a cuisine or just produce talking about Irish cuisine is like kicking a dead horse

SJ or a dead housewife

F we should have eaten the babies

SJ mash potatoes and dead babies

Pause.

F (*angry*) I was a fucking housewife

SJ making brown bread and apple tarts

F and making the kids happy they sat on my lap at intervals and I gave them little sips of stout

little sips for their little mouths sure then whole thing was pointless I was breaking down

falling apart the fucking brown bread going stale

SJ having no food having no money having no history just being a fucking housewife

Pause.

F nothing grows naturally in Connemara

SJ sweet fuck all

F except penal laws

SJ and oppressed Catholics

F protestant wankers

Pause.

SJ (*excited*) but the seafood in Killorglan

F I can smell it

SJ I can taste it

Pause.

F fish on Fridays

SJ and on specific holy days

F Catholics and Protestants

SJ and on specific holy days

F licking and sucking

SJ and on specific holy days

F bacon and overcooked cabbage

SJ and on specific holy days

F father depressed and mother taking her own life

SJ and on specific holy days

F de Valera and housewives and babies and priests and the dead children of all the ages and
overcooked turkey with overcooked cabbage and a horse or a salmon on our coins and
brown bread

SJ there is always brown bread

F fucking brown bread

SJ there was always something

F to give us nourishment

SJ to warm out hearts

Darkness.

End.

Appendix 5: Programme for First Performance

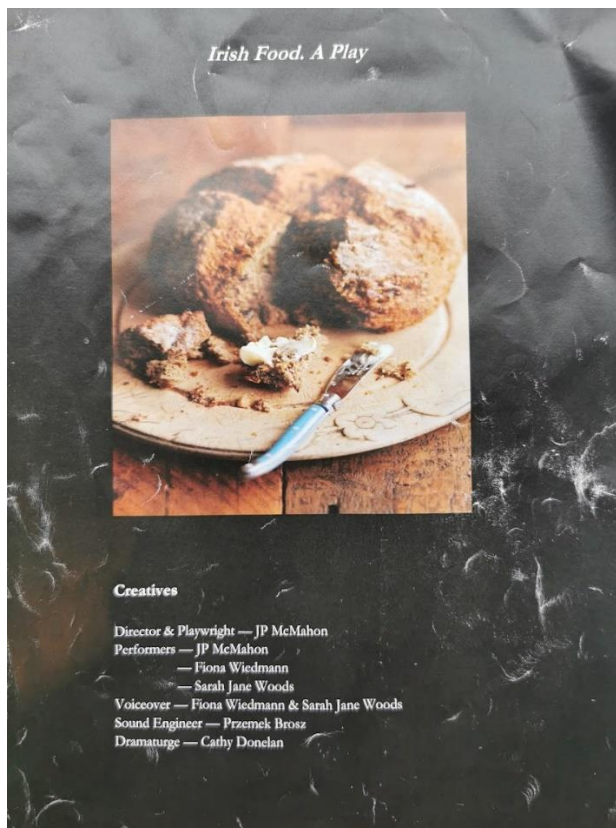


Figure 28: Cover for the programme for first performance for *Irish Food. A Play*

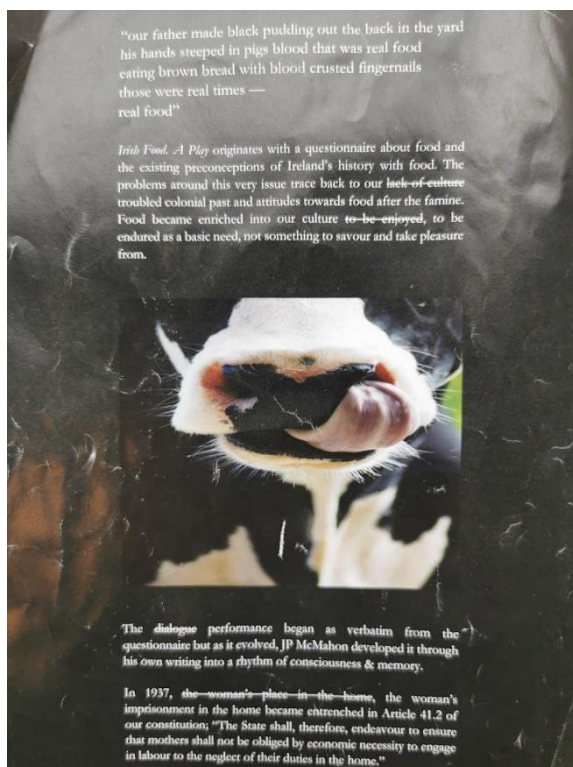


Figure 29: Inside page of the programme for first performance of *Irish food. A Play*

Appendix 6: Final Script for Second Performance

ACT 1

Food is set on tables...

Section 1 "Grandmother"

M Dinner!

T at our grandmother's

C lamb and mint sauce

M mashed potato and gravy

T we called it "pandy"

M bacon and cabbage

T soda bread

C fantastic brown crab cakes in a lovely little pub west of Dublin

M lamb's liver

T and onions

C our grandmother's Sunday roast and apple pie

T and warm brown soda bread

M there was always something

T a constant hub//

C ..of nourishment

T something to warm our hearts

M something to nourish us

Beat.

Section 2 "Grandfather"

T Our grandfather owned a house in the West of Ireland

M near Tullycross

T we used to go with the family for a week or so during the summer //

C I remember going down to the rocky beach and picking mussels which we'd bring back to the
house and cook //

T within hours of cooking them//

C one time dad came with us and we all went to the small harbour as the fishing boats were coming
in //

T he bought us a bag of crab claws and two lobsters for dinner that evening

M fantastic brown crab

C we're four

T or five

C or six

T we're sitting at the counter watching our mum bake an apple tart

C a beautiful apple tart

T a *fantastic* apple tart

M she rubs the butter into the flour with her fingers

T I can see her rings

C there is always something

T something to warm our heart

Pause.

T my dad came from a farming background and meat was very important to us Sundays consisted of
a fry for breakfast //

C a fabulous roast dinner //

T yes around 2 pm and then a 'cold' tea of roast chicken and ham

C my mother was a great cook but a plain eater so //

M no sauces! No spices! No garlic!

C we never had rice or pasta for family meals

T however us children would sometimes be allowed a treat of Findus savoury pancakes

C Findus savoury pancakes!

T chicken and leek

M it's the late 70s or early 80s

C Queen are on the radio

M we live in a small house

T mum bakes fairy cakes and shortbread and fruit crumble made with tinned pineapple

C she serves Ritz crackers with cheese and pineapple

T though no cheese on her own crackers

Pause.

Section 3 "School Food"

M Though I grew up in Cork I spent many weekends in west Cork, bringing home Clonakilty Black

 Pudding from the small butcher shop in Clon //

T We ate in Kinsale for Sunday lunch or dinner often too

C Jimmy Edwards was where we usually went, the chicken Maryland there was fantastic

T our father made black pudding out the back yard

M his hands steeped in pig's blood, that was real food

C eating brown bread with blood crusted fingernails

M those were real times

T real foods

Beat Change.

T there is something when we come home from school

C on cold and wet days

M a crisp sandwich

T on white bread

M with butter

C yellow, golden, butter...

M crunchy salty crisps

T they were called Tayto

M I put it in my mouth and eat it up

C I lick the butter off the bread

Beat Change.

M we're in Donegal town

T eating fish and chips

C keeping an eye out for protestants

T do you think religion and food are connected?

M a woman told me, that a woman told her, that she saw a woman who saw a woman who made

ale from potatoes

Beat Change.

C Raw Milk

T brown bread

C aunt Anna's apple tart

M Shepard's pie

T fish and chips in Beshoff, Dublin

M rain glistening off the cobbled streets on Grafton Street

T it's the 1950s

C our mother's cooking

M mashed potato and gravy

C I never thought Protestants ate the same as us?!

T we called it 'Pandy'

C William Paddy Hitler

M What?!

Section 5 "Milky Tea"

T Close your eyes and listen

C we're making brown bread with Granny

M when it's baked we have a wedge of it with butter

C yellow, golden, butter...

T with her blackcurrant jam...

M and a cup of milky tea!

C (*excited*) milky tea

T it drips from our mouth

M yes!

C yes!

M a cup of fucking milky tea

C & T dripping from our mouth!

T to wash it all down

C to get rid of it

M to get fucking rid of it.

T all that pain..

M all those memories...

C all that food..

C, M & T it never ends.

Section 6 "Grey days and Stone Walls"

T I've read up about what Irish people traditionally ate before famine times

M I was surprised to learn we had a food culture beyond the potato

T keeping a pig was very common, therefore ham and pork was popular.. and people also kept bees
and ate a good mix of vegetables and fruit...

Beat change.

C (*changing the subject*) granny's brown bread with butter and blackcurrant jam and a cup of milky
tea

T yes

M we sit there and sup it up and eat it up until it's all gone down

T yes

C William Paddy Hitler

M Catholics and Protestants

T grey days and stone walls and freezing cold mornings on the way to school

Beat change.

M brown bread and soda bread and //

T fantastic brown crab and //

C aunt Anna's apple tart in the summer evenings as the sun is going down

T there was never a grey day

M & C Yes

Beat change.

Section 7 "Orange Protestants"

C we're four

T or five

C or even six

M the oohs and the ahhs

C eating a cuckies negg

T a cuckies negg

Beat change.

C dads at the door

M he has a live turkey

C it's Christmas time

T he says it's time

C I've never seen something killed before

M Catholics and Protestants

T history playing itself out before our eyes

C mum's going crazy

T the turkey disappears

M we don't see it again

C until we are all sitting down eating the Christmas dinner

M mashed carrots and parsnips

T cranberry sauce and turkey & ham

C moist Christmas pudding

M that was food

T real food

Beat change.

C I am five

T I am six

C father is taking a salmon from the river

T we watch it as it tries to wriggle free

M he finishes it off

C he hits it across the head with a hammer

M Protestants and Catholics

C wriggling to be free

T its eyes go blood red

C or orange

M Protestants

T food and religion and history and wanting to kill your neighbour

M having to kill your food

C taking a hammer to it

T its dead anyways

C well dead

M we cook it on a fire

T on a lake somewhere near Galway

M outside Oughterard

C looking out at the mountains

M with the snow on them and hardly any leaves on the trees

Section 8 "Food& Religion & History"

Beat change.

C I can't remember

M I can't forget

T my mother took her own life

Pause.

C she used to make the brown bread

M these are the memories

T that made us

C that break us

M that make us

T food and religion and history

M I want to get out

Section 9 "Potato Soup"

M potato soup

C with fresh chopped parsley

T and watercress

M the Monk's ate that

C with barley bread

Beat change.

T we drink milk

M eat porter cake

C we drink milk

T eat apple tart

M fucking milk

C fucking apple tart

T creamed rice on the way to the mart

M with muddy shoes

T there are cows everywhere

C flapping and shitting and whipping their tails

T the smell

C the sights and sounds

T of the cows

C farting and shiting

M licking and sucking

T Catholics and Protestants

C the smell of shite

M on a Monday morning

Beat change

*****1st SERVING OF FOOD HAPPENS HERE*****

Perhaps this poem as a song here

ACT 2

M are we real people?!

T dreaming of food

C wild moments

M foraging in the wood

T the leaves falling all over our faces

C picking mushrooms

T with our mother

Beat change

Section 10 "Magic Mushrooms"

M magic mushrooms!

C listening to the birds

T the blackbirds

M those fucking birds

T I've read we ate them in the Middle Ages and children would trap them and then roast them

M if a bird was caught on the land owned by a commoner, he was entitled to one-fifth of the flesh

C we go home and drink magic mushroom tea, the whole family falls asleep and dreams

M we make love

T over and over again

M food and love

C mushrooms and love

M it's all in our minds

M, C & T magic mushroom tea

Beat change

Section 11 "Incest"

C I am on my grandfather's knee

M he has my hand in his hand

C I am sipping stout

T I am a toddler

C he gives me little sips

T little sips

M three little sips

C dancing delicately on my tongue

Pause

C (continued) I'm a lucky girl.

M light of my life

C a very lucky girl

T fire of my loins

M sitting on his knee

C my sin

M my soul

C taking three little sips

T a trip upon your tongue!

C licking

T and sipping

PAUSE

C mammy?

T mammy!

PAUSE

Section 12 "Out in the field"

T suddenly

C we are out in the field

M it is dawn

C we are picking field mushrooms

T foraging with the whole family!

M the black, the greys, the oranges, the yellows as the night goes down and the sun comes up

T Catholics and Protestants

C the mushrooms are everywhere

M they are the cleanest, firmest, most delicious things that I ever //

T held in my hand

C soft and wet and juicy and white

M we fry them in butter with fresh thyme and fire spits and crackles, we put them in our mouths, we
will never forget this taste

C (echoing M) we will never forget

Beat change

T as the sun comes up

C Queen Maeve of Connaught

M we devour them

T she was killed by a lump of cheese!

M swallow them

C Queen Maeve of Connaught

M licking and sucking

T Catholics and Protestants

C sitting in the wood

M sipping and licking

C sitting in the wood

Beat change

T food

M fucking food

C fucking killed by a lump of cheddar!

Beat change

M a roast chicken

C is a beautiful thing

T when you cook it in the wood

C I hate all this, all this food, all this remembering, the cows, the Catholics, the Protestants, the priest, the salmon, the holy communion on my tongue...

Beat change

M suddenly

T back at home

C we are cooking Oysters

M in a black metal pan with butter and salt

T with chopped parsley

C and mushroom ketchup

Beat change

Section 13 " Fish Mad"

T My father was fish mad and he would get bags and bags of herring from Killybegs

C he taught me how to gut and grill them

T the roe was great

M basted in lashings of butter

C (sexually) lashing of butter

Beat change

M our neighbours collected periwinkles

T picked them off the rocks and out of the seaweed

C they put them in Dunnes Stores bags

M they broke under the weight of all they collected

C periwinkles and razor clams and cockles and mussels and oysters and lobsters

T that was food

M real food

Beat change

T do you remember grandfather had a gas burner at the back of this house

C he was a Catholic

M he would boil a big pot of water

T and throw all the shellfish in

M, T & C Delicious

T he was a builder and he built half of Dublin on a boiled egg

M it never did him any harm

T a boiled egg and a cigarette

C he cycled everywhere down from Armagh to Dublin with his brother eating ham sandwiches along the way

Section 14 "Sandwiches"

M you can tell a lot about a country by the type of sandwiches they make

C ham and cheese

T egg salad

C ham and cheese

M sausage sandwich

C ham and cheese

M chicken fillet roll

T our grandfather

M he was as hard as nails

C as tough as fuck

M as hard as nails

T he gave us each a long shiny masonry nail

M to pry the periwinkles out

T Catholics and Protestants

C to pry them out

T Catholics and Protestants

C cycling all the way from Armagh to Dublin

M that was 1934

C ham and cheese sandwiches on batch bread with country butter and relish

T all the way

M from Dublin to Armagh

Section 15 "Restaurants Everywhere"

Beat change

M there is a restaurant in Aughnacloy

T there is a restaurant in Carlow town

C there is a restaurant in Donegal

M it is the 1960s

T it is the 1970s

C it is the 1980s

T there are restaurants everywhere

M there is an abundance of food

C real food

M there is turkey and ham

T there is curry

M there is turkey and ham

C there is lobster straight off the boats in the evening

T there is seaweed

M dillisk crisps out of brown paper bags

C in Waterford town

T my father munches on them and he drags us up and downtown

C to the sounds of the angelus

M the cows moaning to be milked

Section 16 "Oysters"

C there are oysters

T there is always oysters

C fresh juicy ones

M that dribble

C off your tongue

T as you bite into them

Beat change

T my father grew tomatoes and marrows in the greenhouse made from bits of glass skimmed from

skips

C he was a great man

M the smell of tomatoes always brings me back to there

C to that garden

T his old wrinkled hands

M holding those tomatoes

Beat change

C blackberries

T from the hedges

M in buckets

C our little black fingers

T chickens in the rough

M Catholics and Protestants

C running amuck

M there is an old woman at the end of the lane who ate mutton on her wedding day

T there is a man who takes the hurl to chickens for a pound

C to kill them

M to eat them

C to kill them

Section 17 "Christmas"

T Catholics and Protestants

M food and religion

C there is a goose at Christmas

M with potato stuffing

T thought never with breadcrumbs

M that's a British thing

T so are fry-ups

C with sausages and rashers and black pudding and beans and toast and hash browns

T at Christmas our father does most of the cooking

C he makes corned beef which he really enjoys

M the rest of us hate it

T I can almost smell the mix of spices for the beef as well as the roasting turkey and the cloves

C and sugar melting over the ham in the oven

M it tastes so great

C it all tastes so great

T father does the whole lot in his pyjamas, they're blue from Dunnes Stores

M there are dark days and dark nights

C there is sugar and jam sambos for our lunch at school

T there is porridge

C there is always porridge

M fucking porridge

C with warm yellow milk straight from the cow

T our mouths

M under its udder

T, M & C sucking

M sucking and fucking and food

Beat change

Section 18 "Boxty"

C There is Boxy

T straight off the range in Longford

M with lashings of butter

T & C lashings and lashings of butter

M there are sloes for gin

T and digging potatoes in Maynooth

M for next to no money

C there are tantrums if I don't get cheese in my scrambled eggs

T Catholics and Protestants

M religion and history

C tragic meals of regret

M there is neither bread nor oysters just porridge, fucking porridge for breakfast, dinner, and tea

PAUSE.

T bruitin

C cally

T bruitin

C cally

T bruitin

C cally

T bruitin

M cally

Beat change

M lamb and barley stew

C oh yeah

T getting eggs from the chickens in the early morning

C oh yeah

M Dublin coddle

C oh yeah

T hotel food in Ennis

C did De Valera stay there?

M sitting on the sofa saying the rosary

C sucking fox's mints

Beat change

T I live in rural Mayo and we have our own words for certain stuff

M Irish words

T real words

C for example calling champ cali instead

T can you imagine how much food knowledge is lost...

C when a language disappears.

M I've heard of poor families around us being fed mashed potato mixed with buttermilk and seaweed and eggs and having that as a meal when they were kids

C & T Yuck!

T famine still lives on in Mayo in terms of raised beds, folks are unwilling to plant stuff on them

C the whole idea that local restaurants use the word champ instead of cali still pisses me off

M what the fuck happened to us? We lost all our own Irish memories

T (I think De Valera fucked up food for us)

C Catholics and Protestants

M Irish stew

C and dropped scones

T griddle bread in grandmother's house in Raheney

M giant sausages with the cheapest tomato ketchup I could find

T we licked the plate clean

C licked it

M gas and aluminium and metal, those were the tastes I remember

T Catholics and Protestants

C bacon and cabbage

T overcooked cabbage

C it would make you want to vomit

M licking the plate clean

Section 20 "Achill Island"

Beat change

T Eating crab claws on Achill Island

M basking in the sun

C making toast on an open fire

T watching the flames as they rose up into the sky

C smelling the sky

M licking it

C taking three little sips

M we're forty

C or fifty

T I've some knowledge around farming and bread, I know about the Norman's use of wheaten bread and the use of ale barm for leavening and that I believe was followed by heavy usage of potatoes in bread but this must have been pre-famine... I don't know if this was when soda came into play also but (*M&C starting to get impatient*) I know around famine times was when wheaten breads increased again because of the plight... You know what I mean?

PAUSE.

M & C look at T

C puffins and auks

M and other seabirds like herons

C take one hundred herons and chop their heads off and gut them

M then boil them in some vinegar with nutmeg and mace and pepper and salt and put them in a clean jar and keep in a cool place

T frying kidneys to an Elizabeth David recipe

M back in the 1950s

C it was all great then!

M she was a housewife

C a fucking housewife

T my mother took her own life

PAUSE.

FOOD BEING SERVED** possibly singing this poem as a song

"To what meals the woods invite me

All about!

There are water, herbs, and cresses,

Salmon, trout.

A clutch of eggs, sweet mast, and honey

Are my meat,

Heathberries and whortleberries for a sweet.

All that one could ask for comfort

Round me grows,

There are hips and haws and strawberries,

Nuts and sloes.

And when summer spreads its mantle

What a sight!

Marjoram and leeks and pignuts,

Juicy, bright."

ACT 3

Section 21 "Congrats"

C we shot wild ducks out of the sky

M and I stood on their necks

T to make sure they were dead

C father told me to, he said it was the only way!

T to kill the ducks

M he plucked them and roasted them with oranges and other spices

T that was a lovely meal

C we had everything

M ducks and eels and our own vegetable garden

T Catholics and Protestants.

Beat change

C My mother was a terrible cook

T she was a housewife

M a fucking housewife

C she couldn't boil an egg

T(*disappointed*) we never went to restaurants

M even on special occasions

T that was only for protestants

M wankers

C with their ducks and their guns and their walks into our countryside to get their food

T family meals

C good meals

M tragic meals of regret

T our father lying in bed depressed up to his eyeballs not wanting to cook or eat

M fuck off with your fancy food

Section 22 "Pork Chops"

M lying in bed

T on the Aran Islands

C looking up at the sky

M smelling vegetable stew

T with dried dillisk

C and sea lettuce

T our parents weren't big into food

C we pressured them to purchase pop tarts and fought over the toys at the end of the cereal box

T I loved treats and summer holiday trips to the sweet shop

C 30p mixture of sweets please

Beat change

C I hated pork chops incinerated by my mother not out of a lack of care but a general disinterest in food and cooking

T father in bed

M cooking was a chore

T father in bed

C a fucking chore

M she was a housewife

T I took no pleasure in it

M a fucking housewife

T she took her own life

C after making the brown bread

M the labour of cooking

T the love

M the celebrations

C spy Wednesday

M not forgetting

T the feast of Samhain and fish on Fridays

M the men always got a larger portion and families always ate together and waited until dad came home.

Beat change

Section 23 "Dead Goose"

C Christmas

T father in his pyjamas

M he puts the goose in a black bag

C it struggles

T but we have no food

M we're so fucking poor

C, M & T Catholics, and Protestants

Sounds.

C the goose is dead

T and he brings it in and tosses it to our mother and says

C pluck that fucking thing

M I can't stand the sight of dead things looking at me.

Section 24 "Kebabs and Pub Shite"

Pause.

T Kebabs

C pub shite

M pre-packaged rubbish

C curry chips

M prawn cocktail on open brown Guinness bread

C I enjoy making things from scratch

M the smell of fresh bread out of the oven

C it fills the whole house

T Fresh sushi!

M...the Japanese influence!

C there are so many restaurants now

T they're everywhere! Sometimes 4 or even 5

C even on the same street

M fresh sushi rolled in rice and seaweed

C with a combination of spice that stings the nose

M the presentation

T the ritual

M when cooking at home the ritual is more important than the presentation

C the Italian influence!

M around the dinner table with the pressure to say something

T garlic bread

M garlic, coriander, and lemon

C garlic on your fingers

M knife scrapes plate

C we always leave the crust

Beat change

M Irish food was a communal experience back then

T sitting around the table with potatoes from the garden, freshly baked bread with buttermilk from the farm, apple tarts and blackcurrant jam, nothing was bought, it was about using what was around. Simple, seasonal, and organic, it was so good....

C no matter how bad the meal

M the meal itself was less important than the company

C oh shut up with all your fucking food memories

T my rural farm upbringing has meant we had a food history

M we had no food history

C we shot duck and fished for brown trout

M we were Protestants and Catholics

T I love that my chickens are in full egg production at Easter

C it's all gone

M we've forgotten everything

C De Valera fucked it all up for us

T dancing on the crossroad

C with bottles of raw milk in our hands

M the whole country dying of consumption

Section 25 "Strawberries"

Beat change

C do you remember pulling in on the side of the road and buying Wexford strawberries from some random lad with blue jeans?

M I kissed him

T and he put a strawberry in your mouth and you sucked it and he put his arm around you and that felt so good

M strawberries

T from Wexford

T (continued) Protestants

C Catholics

M bony miserable fish that made you want to choke and die

C Christmas time as father roasts the turkey between bouts of depression

M eating nothing for days, just the odd Lucozade to keep his sugar levels up

Beat change

M Soda bread is not a bread.

C It's a fucking cake

T a British man said that to me, on Rathlin Island

M long before seaweed farms

T they massacred everyone there

M men, women, and children

T colonialism and famine

C one million dead

M one million gone

C the land and the sea

M digging potatoes at home and eating them with butter

T Irish stew

M our mother's chocolate pudding

Section 26 "Religion and History"

C religion and history

M ham and coleslaw

C white fish on a Friday

T making brown bread with our mother, feeling her rings and love, and knowing we were ok

C lapdogs of the British and then of De Valera and then of the nuns and the priests

M fucking Catholics and Protestants

Beat change

M if you pick an Irish wild herb or seaweed

T is that a cuisine or just produce?

Beat change

C making brown bread and apple tarts

T with whipped cream!

M she was a fucking housewife!

T the fucking brown bread going stale

M having no food, no money, just being a fucking housewife

Beat change

T nothing grows naturally in Connemara

C sweet fuck all

M except penal laws

T and oppressed Catholics

C protestant wankers!

Beat change

T (*excited*) but the seafood in Killorglan

M I can smell it

C I can taste it

Beat change

M fish on Fridays

T and on specific holy days

C Catholics and Protestants

T and on specific holy days

C licking and sucking

M on specific holy days

C bacon and overcooked cabbage

M and on specific holy days

T father depressed and mother taking her own life

M and on specific holy days

C de Valera and housewives

M priests on specific holy days

T I feel that food like everything in Ireland was so closely influenced by religion like sex and food and animals we don't even eat goats' Irish people are completely unaware of how their own eating habits have been influenced by religion because common superstitions in the Middle Ages was that goats whispered lewd sentences in the ears of the saints AND popular Christian folk tradition in Europe associated Satan with goats!

C oh shut up!

C overcooked turkey and overcooked cabbage

M and a horse or salmon on our coins

C and brown bread!

Beat change.

M don't be eating before your communion!

T God will know!

M he'll roast you like a goat!

C specific foods relating to "special" religious events that kept you in line

T and bony floured fish on Friday

M Catholic sense of guilt and shame

C why can't I eat meat on Fridays?!

M don't eat before mass!

C there was always something

T big long hard fat burnt sausages on a Sunday

M and beans

C that tasted of aluminium

M de Valera fucked it all up for us

T but there was always dessert on a Sunday

M and roast potatoes

C fucking potatoes

T they only arrived 400 years ago

M oysters, scallops, mussels, herrings

C wild garlic, watercress, myrtle berries

M all kinds of wild birds and wild animals

T that's what the first settlers ate when they arrived in 8000 BC

C Queen Maeve of Connacht

M I want to be her

T yellow bubbling milk

M a lump of cheddar

C in a sling

T that's what got her in the end

C at the top of Knocknarea in Sligo

M Lough Derg to repent

T that's where mother went

C not that she had anything to repent

M we kill our food

T we always have

M paying for what sins?

T Eve ate the apple!

M so the apple should be damned, not us!

C something has to die for us to eat, to survive

T barbaric killings over lands

M we don't eat horses

C or dogs or cats or goats

T why is a sheep so different from a goat?

M it's the eyes

C the eyes are beautiful

T catholic sense of guilt and shame and meagreness

C and sorry this

M and sorry that

T I walk into the wall and apologise to it

C & M (as they pray) catholic sense of guilt and shame and meagreness

M you're boasted in the centre, too

C and wet and soapy soil you grew

T but I am thankful still to you

M for hints of history given

C there's something lonely far away

T in what you symbolize today

M For me – the half that went astray

C of life, the uncompleted

T but up brown drills new pink buds start

M with truer truth than truth of art

C ignoring last crop's broken heart

T and a generation defeated

M Oh, here is life

C without a wife

T half-potato. Eat it

Beat change.

M Dinner!

T at our dead grandmother's

C catholic and mint sauce

M mashed potato and protestants

T we called it "paddy"

M bacon and cabbage

T soda bread

C disgusting brown crab cakes in a horrible little pub west of Dublin

M lamb's liver

T and onions that made you cry

C our grandmother's burnt Sunday roast and apple pie

T and stale brown soda bread

M there was always something

T a constant hub//

C ..of noise

M crudely speaking

C crudely speaking

M catholic

C equals

T poor

C equals

M peasants

C equals

T diet of potatoes! Bread, Milk

M protestants

T equals

C rich

T equals

C varied diet

M more exotic influence and...

T OPULENCE!

M I don't see the connection

(Between M & C)

C horseshite!

T I don't see much. I personally don't know anybody who adheres to the catholic "fish on Friday" rule.

C & M start slow and then become faster and louder as T start his speech (a few lines in)

C fish on a Friday

M and on specific holy days

C fish on a Friday

M and on specific holy days

C fish on a Friday

M and on specific holy days

C fish on a Friday

M and on specific holy days

C fish on a Friday

M and on specific holy days

C fish on a Friday

M and on specific holy days

C fish on a Friday

M and on specific holy days

C fish on a Friday

M and on specific holy days

C fish on a Friday

M and on specific holy days

T (speaking slowly, like a politician)this had a major influence on fish as part of the diet.....also the catholic sense of guilt and shame and meagreness did not help things either... Fasting during lent, observations of holy days, Lough Derg and penance and black tea and dry bread, wine was for priests and the alter not for plebs in the seats. Whiskey and beer were their drinks.

C&M (cutting through) uncivilised and barbaric

T Is it religious that we don't eat horse meat? Not really but it is symbolic of the nation . We had horses on our national coins, an animal we are proud of and never eat. Hares were also on our old coins and we don't eat them either as it is bad luck to do so here.

C&M what about all the other animals?!

T Mr Salmon was on our old 10p coin but we loved to eat it

C&M our folklore connection to the salmon of knowledge perhaps...

At the church in Ireland were the lapdogs of the British

C&M and then of De Valera after that!

T his moronic

C & M MORONIC!

T (*without stopping*) agricultural and trade policies around the time of the Free State set Ireland on a collision course for economic wilderness

C & M (*journalist-like*) were the church influential in this?!

T perhaps we should separate church and religion there. Catholics and Protestants ate the same foods and there were few or no taboos about what one ate VS the other. Not being able to eat one hour before taking communion

C & M why?!

M and the pledge to not drink alcohol after your confirmation. The host communion is referred to as the bread, daily bread, the wine is the blood.

C & M but we couldn't have the wine.

T it's all just a little bit messed up.

Pause.

M Elderflower and Lavender

T wild Kale and Meadowsweet

C picking mushrooms and digging potatoes

M Foraging with the whole family...

C something to pass the time

T communion

(They feed each other bits of food in a ritualistic way)

M something to nourish us

ALL something to warm our heart

Curtain.

Appendix 7: Programme for Second Performance



Figure 30: Programme cover for the second performance (September 15th, 2019)

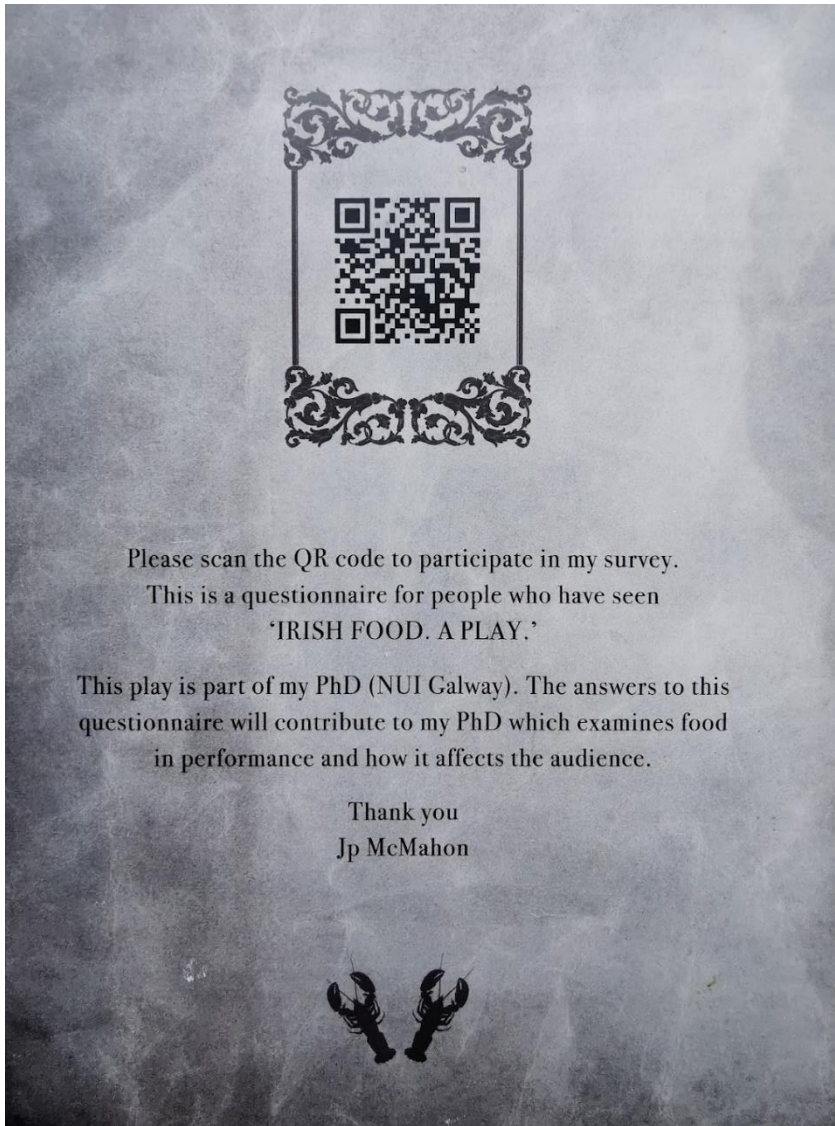


Figure 31: Back page of programme for second performance which includes QR code for questionnaire.

Appendix 8: The menu for the second Performance

To start

Brown soda bread and country butter

Crackers with cheese and pineapple

Seaweed

Tayto crisps

Boiled eggs

To Continue

Fried mushrooms

Oysters

Mussels and dillisk

A selection of sandwiches

Potato soup

Bacon and cabbage

To finish

Apple tarts with cream and blackcurrant jam

Sugar sandwiches

Appendix 9: Promotional poster for Second Performance

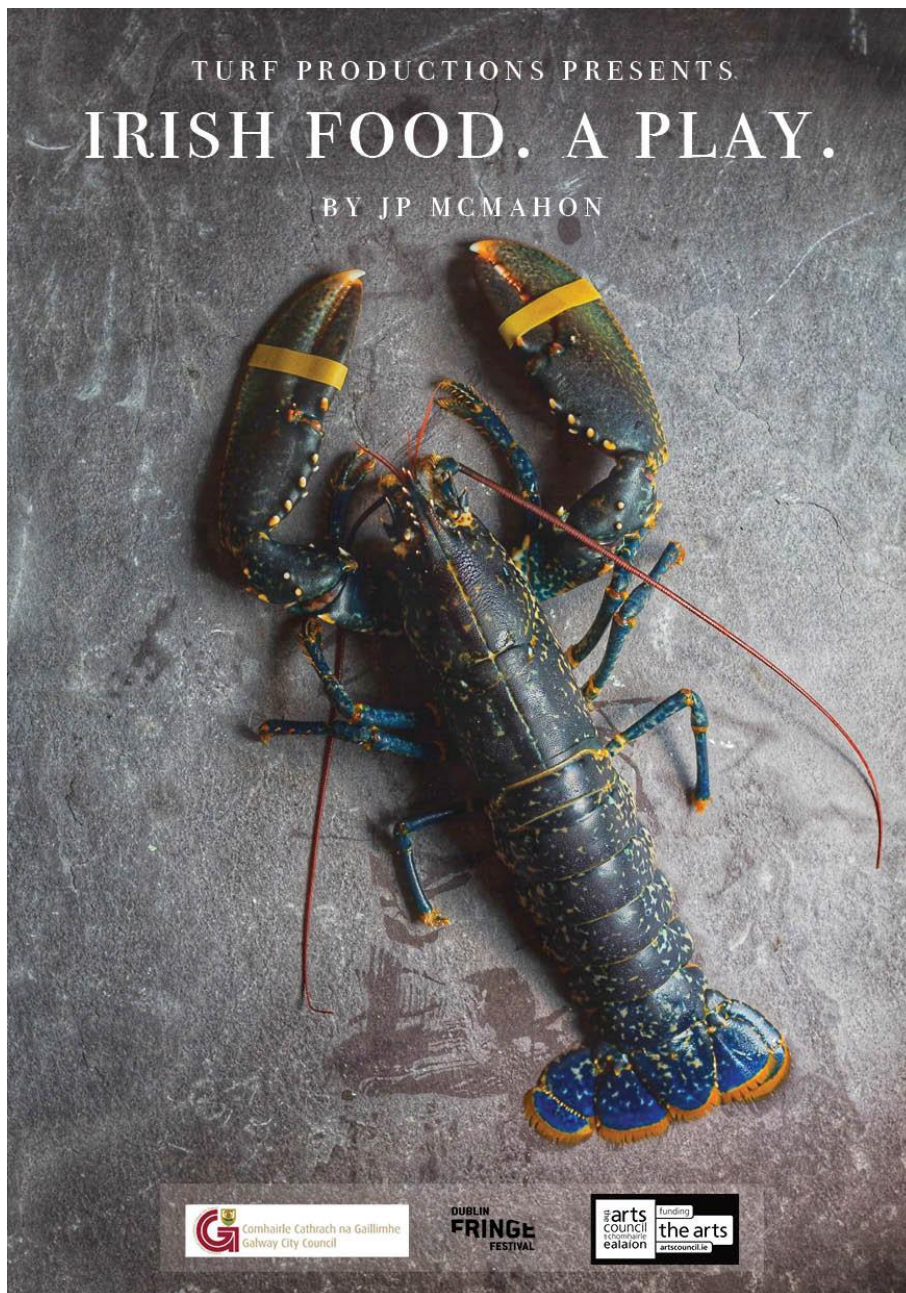


Figure 32: Advertising poster for *Irish Food. A Play* for Dublin Fringe Festival.

Appendix 10: Images from Second Performance



Figure 33: Tom Duffy in *Irish Food. A Play* (September 15th, 2019).



Figure 34: Meg Healy in *Irish Food. A Play* (September 15th, 2019)



Figure 35: Tom Duffy in *Irish Food. A Play* (September 15th, 2019).



Figure 36: Clodagh Mooney Duggan in *Irish Food. A Play* (September 15th, 2019)



Figure 37: All three characters read the menu in *Irish Food. A Play* (September 15th, 2019).



Figure 38: Actor Tom Duffy serving food and drinks during *Irish Food. A Play* (September 15th, 2019)



Figure 39: Actor Meg Healy serving food and drinks during *Irish Food. A Play* (September 15th, 2019)



Figure 40: Actor Clodagh Mooney Duggan serving food and drinks during *Irish Food. A Play* (September 15th, 2019).

Appendix 11: Final Script for Third Performance

This version of the play was due to be performed in Aniar Restaurant, Galway, March 2020.

However, due to the Covid pandemic it was cancelled. The script was modified based on several issues that occurred in the first and second performances, namely, the actor's refusal to handle the lobster, the inclusion of the dead duck, and the presence of the lobster in the play. We had begun rehearsal readings and had commissioned original music for the play. This playscript is included here as it demonstrates the direction of my PaR. It is hoped that this play will be performed in 2022 to further investigate the affective value of food and further understand the contextual nature of staged food and food in performance.

IRISH FOOD. A PLAY

Jp McMahon

A NOTE OF THE PERFORMANCE

This is a postdramatic piece of theatre. There are no characters. The piece is made up of a multitude of voices about Irish food. Some come from verbatim transcription, other from memory or imagination. *Pause* indicate a shift in tone or position while *silence* mark a break in the section, similar to a beat change. The significance of this change is up to the discretion of the director. While the food served is somewhat flexible, it is vital the lobster is in the performance, as its presence represents a key question of the purpose of the play. Often the tone of delivery of certain lines is marked. If the tone is not marked it is up to the director or the actors to get the feel of the line. The poems that break up the text should be delivered with some aspect of irony, perhaps a parody of a Yeatsian aloofness. This play was written as part of my PhD in drama in NUI Galway. The research addresses five main questions regarding the performance of food:

1. Interrogate our historical relationship to food on stage and its social significance
2. What does it mean to stage food in Ireland?
3. Examine how food affects an audience when staged
4. Investigate the consequences of staging animals, specifically the ethical and theatrical
5. Assess how the spaces of theatre, performance and the restaurant interact, how they differ with each other and how this difference teaches us about their limits.

ACT 1

Food is set on tables: oysters, crab with brown bread, cheese & crackers, ham, and cheese sandwiches, etc.

There is a live lobster on a golden blanket on the floor in the centre of room.

The audience sit down and share the food before them.

A stagehand removes the lobster by dragging the blanket off stage.

After a few moments, the actors emerge, suddenly.

1 dinner

2 at our grandmother's

3 lamb and mint sauce

1 mashed potato and gravy

2 we called it pandy

1 bacon and cabbage

2 soda bread

3 fantastic brown crab cakes in a lovely little pub west of Dublin

1 lamb's liver

2 and onions

1 oysters

3 our grandmother's Sunday roast and apple pie

2 warm brown soda bread

Pause.

- 1 there was always something
- 2 a constant hub of nourishment
- 3 something to warm our hearts
- 1 something to nourish us

Pause.

- 2 something when we come home from school
- 1 on cold and wet days

Pause.

- 2 our grandfather owned a house in the West of Ireland
- 1 near Tullycross
- 2 we used to go with the family for a week or so during the summer
- 3 I remember going down to the rocky beach and picking mussels which we'd bring back to the house and cook

Pause.

- 2 within hours of cooking them we were back out on the beach
- 1 smelling the sea air
- 2 fishing for mackerel of the end of the pier

Pause.

- 3 one time dad came with us and we all went to the small harbour as the fishing boats were coming in

2 he bought us a bag of crab claws and two lobsters for dinner that evening

3 lobsters

1 fantastic brown crab

2 with soda bread

Pause.

3 we're four

2 or five

1 or six

2 we're sitting at the counter watching our mum bake an apple tart

3 a beautiful apple tart

2 a fantastic apple tart

1 she rubs the butter into the flour with her fingers

2 I can see her rings

Pause.

3 there is always something

2 something to warm our heart

1 to nourish us

Pause.

2 my dad came from a farming background and meat was very important to us

1 Sundays consisted of a fry for breakfast

3 a fabulous roast dinner around 2 pm

1 then a cold tea of roast chicken and ham

2` my mother was a great cook but a plain eater so

1 (*with intent*) no sauces no spices no garlic

3 we never had rice or pasta for family meals growing up

2 however us children would sometimes be allowed a treat of Findus savoury pancakes

3 (*excited*) Findus savoury pancakes

2 (*ditto*) chicken and leek

Pause.

1 it's the late 70s or early 80s

3 Queen are on the radio

1 we live in a small house in Clondalkin

2 mum bakes fairy cakes and shortbread and fruit crumble made with tinned pineapple

1 (*with relish*) tinned pineapple

3 she serves Ritz crackers with cheese and pineapple

2 though no cheese on her own crackers

1 (*with disgust*) tinned pineapple

Pause.

3 Though I grew up in Cork I spent many weekends in west Cork bringing home Clonakilty
black pudding from the small butcher shop in Clon

2 We ate in Kinsale for Sunday lunch or dinner often too

3 Jimmy Edwards was where we usually went

1 the chicken Maryland there was fantastic

Pause.

2 our father made his own black pudding out the back yard

1 his hands steeped in pig's blood

3 that was real food

1 eating brown bread with blood crusted fingernails

2 those were real times

3 real food

Pause.

2 there is something when we come home from school

3 on cold and wet days

1 a potato crisp sandwich

2 on white bread

1 with butter

3 yellow golden butter

1 crunchy salty crisps

2 they were called Tayto

1 I put it in my mouth and eat it up

3 I lick the butter off the bread

Pause.

1 we're in Donegal town

2 eating fish and chips

3 keeping an eye out for protestants

2 (*inquisitive*) do you think religion and food are connected

1 (*poetic*) a woman told me that a woman told her that she saw a woman who saw a woman
who made ale from potatoes

They laugh.

Pause.

3 raw milk

2 brown bread

3 Aunt Anna's apple tart

1 Shepard's pie

2 fish and chips in Beshoff, Dublin

1 rain glistening off the cobbled streets on Grafton Street

2 it's the 1950s

3 our mother's cooking

1 mashed potato and gravy

2 we called it pandy

Pause.

3 warm brown soda bread

2 I never thought Protestants ate the same as us

1` William Paddy Hitler

Silence.

2 close your eyes and listen

3 we're making brown bread with Granny

1 when it's baked we have a wedge of it with butter

3 yellow golden butter

2 with her blackcurrant jam

1 and a cup of milky tea

3 (*excited*) milky tea

2 it drips from our mouth

1 (*erotically*) yes

3 (*ditto*) yes

1 a cup of fucking milky tea

3 & 2 dripping from our mouths

2 to wash it all down

3 to get rid of it

1 to get fucking rid of it

2 all that pain

1 all those memories

3 all that food

All it never ends

1 starving on every crossroads for eternity

Silence.

2 I've read up about what Irish people traditionally ate before famine times

1 I was surprised to learn we had a food culture beyond the potato

2 keeping a pig was very common, therefore ham and pork was popular

3 people also kept bees and ate a good mix of vegetables and fruit

1 but that was in the old days

Pause.

2 granny's brown bread with butter and blackcurrant jam and a cup of milky tea

3 yes

1 we sit there and sup it up and eat it up until it's all gone down

2 yes

3 *(laughing)* William Paddy Hitler

2 what a lovely man

1 Catholics and Protestants

2 grey days and stone walls and freezing cold mornings on the way to school with the muck on
the shoes and the rain on your face

Pause.

1 brown bread and soda bread and

2 fantastic brown crab and

3 Aunt Anna's apple tart in the summer evenings as the sun is going down

2 there was never a grey day

3 in the old days

2 never a grey day

3 in the old days

1 & 3 Yes

Silence.

3 we're four

2 or five

3 or even six

1 the oohs and the ahhs

3 eating a cuckies negg

2 (*laughs*) a cuckies negg

Pause.

3 dad's at the door

- 1 he has a live turkey
- 2 his hands are the size of spades
- 3 it's Christmas time
- 2 he says it's time
- 3 I've never seen something killed before
- 1 Catholics and Protestants
- 2 history playing itself out before our eyes
- 3 mum's going crazy
- 2 the turkey disappears
- 1 we don't see it again
- 3 until we are all sitting down eating the Christmas dinner
- 1 mashed carrots and parsnips
- 2 cranberry sauce and turkey & ham
- 3 moist Christmas pudding
- 1 that was food
- 2 real food
- Pause.*
- 3 I am five
- 2 I am six
- 3 father is taking a salmon from the river with his hands

- 2 we watch it as it tries to wriggle free
- 1 he finishes it off
- 3 he hits it across the head with a hammer
- 1 Protestants and Catholics
- 3 wriggling to be free
- 2 its eyes go blood red
- 1 history and religion
- 2 blood red
- 3 or orange
- 1 Protestants
- 3 oranges don't grow in Ireland
- 2 food and religion and history and wanting to kill your neighbour
- 1 having to kill your food
- 3 taking a hammer to it
- 2 it's dead anyways
- 3 well dead
- 2 (*gestures towards the kitchen*) like the lobster
- 1 we cook it on a fire
- 2 split it in half with an old bronze knife
- 3 as the ancient Irish

2 on a lake somewhere near Galway

1 outside Oughterard

3 looking out at the mountains

1 with the snow on them and hardly any leaves on the trees

2 (*proud*) we are Gaels

1 (*ditto*) proud Gaels from ancient stock

Silence.

3 I can't remember

1 I can't forget

2 my mother took her own life

Pause.

3 she used to make the brown bread

1 these are the memories

2 that made us

3 that break us

1 that make us

2 food and religion and history

1 I want to get out

3 (*disgust*) the smell of boiled dinners

1 and tepid tannic tea

3 in Bewley's on Graffon street

1 all the queers hiding in there sipping their chamomile tea

2 and long dead lobsters

3 washed up on the beaches of Boston

1 and Galway Bay

2 (*with disgust*) the stench of death

1 of re-birth

2 I was a gay man and I ate gay food!

1 I was lost

2 I was in the garden

3 and father's hands the size of turnips

1 shit coffee that tasted of tar

2 old cigarette smoke and sugar spoons

3 eating was cheating

1 sugar sandwiches on cold wet days at school soaked to the bone afraid of everything of the tinkers taking your food

2 is your mummy there

Pause.

All (*screaming*) I want to get out

Silence.

1 potato soup
3 with fresh chopped parsley
2 and watercress
1 the monks ate that
2 a sheep's head with parsley sauce
3 and barley bread
2 wild salmon
1 fresh from the river or the lake
3 (*reflective*) we have none of that now

Pause.

2 we drink milk
1 eat porter cake
3 we drink milk
2 eat apple tart
1 fucking milk
3 fucking apple tart
1 blackberries from the mountains of county Down
3 picked in the rain with soaking wet hands
2 tarts the size of towns with lashings of whipped cream and jam

Pause.

2 creamed rice on the way to the mart
1 with muddy shoes
2 there are cows everywhere
3 flapping and shitting and whipping their tails
2 *(with disgust)* the smell
3 the sights and sounds
2 of the cows
3 farting and shiting
1 licking and sucking
2 Catholics and Protestants
3 the smell of shite
1 on a Monday morning

Pause.

From now until the end of the act there is a change in tempo. Everything slows. Poetic delivery, lofty and parodic.

1 the fort we reached was beautiful
3 with works of custards thick
2 beyond the loch
1 new butter was the bridge in front
3 the rubble dyke was wheaten white

2 bacon the palisade

1 stately, pleasantly it sat

3 a compact house and strong

2 they went in

1 the door of it was dry meat

3 the threshold was bare bread

2 cheese-curds the sides

1 smooth pillars of old cheese

3 and sappy bacon props

2 alternate ranged

1 fine beams of mellow cream

3 white rafters real curds

2 kept up the house

1 this was the vision they sang to King Cathal Mac Finnguin

3 who was cursed with the demon of gluttony

2 that lived in his throat

Silence.

Actors exit.

Lights up.

Food is served: potato and leek soup; bacon and cabbage; mussels, beef cheeks and potatoes, lobster, etc.

ACT 2

Enter actors.

1 are we real people

2 dreaming of food

3 wild moments

1 foraging in the wood

2 the leaves falling all over our faces

3 picking hazelnuts

1 or mushrooms

2 with our mother

Pause.

1 magic mushrooms

3 listening to the birds

2 in this ancient wood

1 covered with wild garlic

3 the blackbirds

1 (*annoyed*) those fucking birds

2 I've read we ate them in the Middle Ages and children would trap them and then roast them

They recoil with disgust.

1 (historical) if a bird was caught on the land owned by a commoner, he was entitled to one-fifth of the flesh

2 blackbird and elderberry pie

1 pickled heron

2 pigeon and Guinness

Pause.

3 we go home and drink magic mushroom tea

2 the whole family falls asleep and dreams

1 we make love

2 over and over again

3 magic mushroom tea

1 food and love

3 mushrooms and love

2 food and sex

3 food and religion and history and

1 mushrooms and love

3 we melt into each other

1 it's all in our minds

3 the trees the leaves the mushrooms our fathers' hands

They all look at their hands and then at each other.

- All** singing and dancing lobsters
- 1** on the beaches of Galway Bay
- 2** shipping out to Boston
- 3** on boat made of seal skin and vellum

Pause.

- 2** the dead voices all of generations
- 1** calling for food
- All** (*with excitement*) magic mushroom tea

Silence.

- 3** I am on my grandfather's knee
- 1** he has my hand in his hand
- 3** I am sipping stout
- 2** I am a toddler
- 3** he gives me little sips
- 2** little sips
- 1** three little sips
- 3** dancing delicately on my tongue

Pause.

- 1** I'm a lucky girl
- 3** (*poetic*) light of my life

1 a very lucky girl

2 (*poetic*) fire of my loins

1 sitting on his knee

3 my sin

1 my soul

3 taking three little sips

2 a trip upon your tongue

3 licking

2 and sipping

1 and sucking

Pause.

3 (*suddenly afraid*) mammy

1 (*ditto*) mammy

Silence.

2 suddenly

3 we are out in the field

1 it is dawn

3 we are picking field mushrooms

2 foraging with the whole family

1 the black, the greys, the oranges, the yellows as the night goes down and the sun comes up

3 elderflowers and elderberries

2 Catholics and Protestants

3 the mushrooms are everywhere

1 they are the cleanest, firmest, most delicious things that I ever

2 held in my hand

3 soft and wet and juicy and white

1 we fry them in butter with fresh thyme and fire spits and crackles

2 we put them in our mouths

3 we devour them

2 we will never forget this taste

1 as the sun comes up

2 we will never forget

3 Queen Maeve of Connaught

2 she was killed by a lump of cheese

1 we devour them

2 William Paddy Hitler

3 we swallow them

2 Queen Maeve of Connaught

1 licking and sucking

2 Catholics and Protestants

- 3 sitting in the wood
- 1 sipping and licking
- 2 Queen Maeve of Connaught
- 1 warm brown soda bread
- 3 sitting in the wood
- 2 food
- 1 fucking food
- 2 real food
- 3 (*in disbelief*) killed by a fucking lump of cheddar

Pause.

- 1 a roast chicken
- 3 is a beautiful thing
- 2 when you cook it in the wood
- 3 over an oak fire
- 1 (*assured*) that is a beautiful food memory
- 3 I hate all this all this food all this remembering the cows the Catholics the Protestants the priest the salmon the holy communion on my tongue
- 2 all this food
- 3 this fucking food

Silence.

1 suddenly

2 back at home

C we are cooking oysters

1 in a black metal pan with butter and salt

2 with chopped parsley

3 and mushroom ketchup

Silence.

2 My father was fish mad and he would get bags and bags of herring from Killybegs

3 he taught me how to gut and grill them

2 the roe was great

1 basted in lashings of butter

3 (*sexually*) lashing of butter

Pause.

1 our neighbours collected periwinkles

2 picked them off the rocks and out of the seaweed

3 they put them in Dunnes Stores bags

1 they broke under the weight of all we collected

3 periwinkles and razor clams and cockles and mussels and oysters and lobsters

1 and scallops and limpets and barnacles and

2 (*picking up a lobster*) did you ever kill a lobster

3 that's food

1 real food

2 (*ditto*) pushing the knife through their head and then boiling it and eating it

He places the lobster on a table.

1 (*excited*) lovely

3 frankly I can't stand the way they look at me

1 I refuse to eat anything with eyes

3 (*aside*) it's actually an allergy

1 until its dead that is

3 then she'll eat anything

They all laugh. 3 removes lobster from the table and takes it off stage.

Pause.

2 do you remember grandfather had a gas burner at the back of this house

3 he was a Catholic

1 he would boil a big pot of water

2 and throw all the shellfish in

All delicious

2 Dublin Bay prawns

3 not from Dublin

2 simmering in salted water

1 we eat them with lemon, breaking them heads off with our hands

3 (*pretends to have a prawn head in hand*) did you every suck out the brains

1 Maura Laverty loved that

Pause.

2 Granddad was a builder and he built half of Dublin on a boiled egg

1 it never did him any harm

2 a boiled egg and a cigarette

3 he cycled everywhere down from Armagh to Dublin with his brother eating ham sandwiches
along the way

2 (*corrects*) ham and cheese sandwiches

1 you can tell a lot about a country by the type of sandwiches they make

3 ham and cheese

2 egg salad

3 ham and cheese

1 tuna and sweetcorn

3 ham and cheese

1 chicken fillet roll

2 (*with excitement*) rollóg bhricfeasta

Pause.

2 our grandfather

- 1 he was as hard as nails
- 3 as tough as fuck
- 1 as hard as nails
- 2 he gave us each a long shiny masonry nail
- 1 to pry the periwinkles out
- 2 Catholics and Protestants
- 3 to pry them out
- 2 Catholics and Protestants
- 3 cycling all the way from Armagh to Dublin
- 1 that was 1934
- 2 before the war
- 1 before the chicken took over
- 3 ham and cheese sandwiches on batch bread with country butter and relish
- 2 all the way
- 1 from Dublin to Armagh
- 3 on a fucking cheese sandwich

Silence.

- 1 there is a restaurant in Aughnacloy
- 2 there is a restaurant in Carlow town
- 3 there is a restaurant in Donegal

- 1 it is the 1960s
- 2 it is the 1970s
- 3 it is the 1980s
- 2 there are restaurants everywhere
- 1 there is an abundance of food
- 3 real food
- 1 there is turkey and ham
- 2 there is potato curry
- 1 there is turkey and ham
- 2 there are boiled dinners for tea
- 3 coddle with warm brown soda bread
- 2 there is lobster straight off the boats in the evening
- 1 (*with relish*) lobster
- 2 there is seaweed
- 1 dillisk crisps out of brown paper bags
- 3 in Waterford town
- 2 my father munches on them and he drags us up and downtown
- 1 hours of walking with so little food
- 2 with his one wonky leg and the two of use trailing behind
- 3 to the sounds of the angelus

1 the cows moaning to be milked

Silence.

3 there are oysters

2 there are lobsters

3 there is always oysters

1 fresh juicy ones

2 that dribble

3 off your tongue

2 as you bite into them

Pause.

2 my father grew tomatoes and marrows in the greenhouse made from bits of glass skimmed
from skips

3 he was a great man

1 the smell of tomatoes always brings me back to there

3 to that garden

2 his old wrinkled hands

3 as large as turnips

1 holding those tomatoes

Pause.

3 blackberries

2 from the hedges

1 in buckets

3 our little black fingers

A recording of Seamus Heaney's reading "blackberry picking" comes on. It is the poet's voice. They listen to it until it ends.

Pause.

2 chickens in the rough

1 Catholics and Protestants

3 running amuck

2 ever since 1641

3 16fucking41

2 our day will come

3 *(sarcastically)* no it won't

Pause.

1 there is an old woman at the end of the lane who ate mutton on her wedding day

2 there is a man who takes the hurl to chickens for a pound

3 to kill them

1 to eat them

3 to kill them

Silence.

2 Catholics and Protestants

1 food and religion

3 there is a goose at Christmas cooked over a turf fire

1 with potato stuffing

2 thought never with breadcrumbs

1 that's a British thing

2 so are fry-ups

3 with sausages and rashers and black pudding and beans and toast and hash browns

Pause.

2 at Christmas our father does most of the cooking

3 he makes spiced beef which he really enjoys

1 the rest of us hate it

They make retching noises.

3 but thinking of Christmas

2 I can almost smell the mix of spices for the beef as well as the roasting turkey and the cloves

3 and the sugar melting over the ham in the oven

1 it tastes so great

3 it all tastes so great

2 father does the whole lot in his pyjamas

1 they're blue from Dunnes Stores

2 there are dark days and dark nights

3 there are sugar and jam sambos for our lunch at school

2 there is porridge

3 there is always porridge

1 fucking porridge

3 with warm yellow milk straight from the cow

2 our mouths

1 under its udder

All sucking

1 sucking and fucking and food

Silence.

3 there is Boxty

2 straight off the range in Longford

1 with lashings of butter

2 & 3 lashings and lashings of butter

1 there are sloes for gin

2 and digging potatoes in Maynooth

1 for next to no money

3 there are tantrums if I don't get cheese in my scrambled eggs

2 Catholics and Protestants

1 religion and history

3 tragic meals of regret

1 there is neither bread nor oysters just porridge fucking porridge for breakfast dinner and tea

Pause.

They chant, crescendo.

2 bruitin

3 cally

1 bruitin

2 cally

3 bruitin

1 cally

2 bruitin

3 cally

1 bruitin

Silence.

1 lamb and barley stew

3 oh yeah

2 getting eggs from the chickens in the early morning

3 oh yeah

1 Dublin coddle

3 oh yeah

2 hotel food in Ennis

3 did De Valera stay there

1 sitting on the sofa saying the rosary

3 sucking fox's mints

2 we had no fried food in our house because granny had a heart attack

Silence.

2 I live in rural Mayo and we have our own words for certain stuff

1 Irish words

2 real words

3 for example calling champ cali instead

2 can you imagine how much food knowledge is lost

3 when a language disappears

Pause.

1 I've heard of poor families around us being fed mashed potato mixed with buttermilk and seaweed and eggs and having that as a meal when they were kids

3 & 2 Yuck

1 I might add fuck knows how that's history related

Pause.

2 famine still lives on in Mayo in terms of raised beds, folks are unwilling to plant stuff on them

3 the whole idea that local restaurants use the word champ instead of cali still pisses me off

1 what the fuck happened to us

3 we lost all our own Irish memories

2 I think De Valera fucked up food for us

3 Catholics and Protestants

2 woodcocks and buttermilk

1 Irish stew and grouse

Pause.

3 dropped scones

1 warm brown soda bread

2 griddle bread in grandmother's house in Raheny

3 pollan fished fresh from lough Neagh

1 giant sausages with the cheapest tomato ketchup granny could find

2 we licked the plate clean

3 (*erotically*) licked it

1 gas and aluminium and metal

3 those were the tastes and smells I remember

1 in the little house in Bray

2 the sausages burnt to fuck and the beans cooked so much

1 and granny lighting a cigarette off the gas burner

3 and everything tasting like the pot it was cooked in

1 that was food

3 real food

Pause.

2 Catholics and Protestants

3 bacon and cabbage

2 overcooked cabbage

3 it would make you want to vomit

1 licking the plate clean because we were so hungry and there was nothing else to eat

Silence.

2 eating crab claws on Achill Island

1 basking in the sun

3 making toast on an open fire

2 watching the flames as they rose up into the sky

3 smelling the sky

1 licking it

3 taking three little sips

1 we're forty

3 or fifty

1 we are in a field the centuries have ploughed

2 (*pretence*) I've some knowledge around farming and bread I know about the Norman's use of wheaten bread and the use of ale barm for leavening and that I believe was followed by heavy usage of potatoes in bread but this must have been pre-famine I don't know if this was when soda came into play also but (*M&C starting to get impatient*) I know around famine times was when wheaten breads increased again because of the plight of the tenant farmers and the peasants of course you know what I mean?

Pause.

1 & 3 look at **2**.

3 puffins and auks

1 and other seabirds like herons

3 take one hundred herons and chop their heads off and gut them

1 then boil them in some vinegar with nutmeg and mace and pepper and salt and put them in a clean jar and keep in a cool place

3 take one seal and club it to death

1 roast on a beach over smouldering hay and turf

Pause.

2 frying kidneys to an Elizabeth David recipe

1 back in the 1950s

3 it was all great then

1 she was a housewife

3 a fucking housewife

2 my mother took her own life

Silence.

Actors exit.

Lights up.

Food is served: apple pie, sugar sandwiches and various other sweet things.

ACT 3

Enter actors.

They begin, lofty.

1 to what meals the woods invite me all about

2 there are water herbs and cresses

3 salmon trout

1 a clutch of eggs sweet mast and honey

2 are my meat

3 heathberries and whortleberries for a sweet

1 all that one could ask for comfort

2 round me grows

3 there are hips and haws and strawberries

1 nuts and sloes

2 and when summer spreads its mantle

3 what a sight

1 marjoram and leeks and pignuts

2 juicy bright

Silence.

3 we shot wild ducks out of the sky

1 and I stood on their necks

2 to make sure they were dead

3 father told me to he said it was the only way

2 to kill the ducks

1 he plucked them and gutted them and roasted them with oranges and juniper

2 that was a lovely meal

3 we had everything

1 ducks and eels and our own vegetable garden

2 Catholics and Protestants

Pause.

3 my mother was a terrible cook

2 she was a housewife

1 a fucking housewife

1 she couldn't boil an egg

2 (*disappointed*) we never went to restaurants

1 even on special occasions

2 that was only for protestants

1 wankers

3 with their ducks and their guns and their walks into our countryside to get their food

2 family meals

3 good meals

1 tragic meals of regret

2 our father lying in bed depressed up to his eyeballs not wanting to cook or eat

1 fuck off with your fancy food

Silence.

1 lying on the beach

2 on the Aran Islands

3 looking up at the sky

1 smelling vegetable stew

2 with milled dried dillisk

3 and fresh sea lettuce

Pause.

2 our parents weren't big into food

3 we pressured them to purchase pop tarts and fought over the toys at the end of the cereal
box

1 I lived for those toys

3 they were the best thing about being young

2 I loved treats and summer holiday trips to the sweet shop

1 30p mixture of sweets please

Pause.

3 I hated pork chops incinerated by my mother not out of a lack of care but a general
disinterest in food and cooking

- 2 father in bed
- 1 cooking was a chore
- 2 father in bed
- 3 a fucking chore
- 1 she was a housewife
- 2 I took no pleasure in it
- 1 a fucking housewife
- 3 I loved a cup of milky tea in the morning
- 1 tea will kill you
- 3 it causes depression
- 2 (*obtuse*) evidence is overwhelming that food now partaken of by the people thought of more refined quality and more in accordance with modern ideas is not nearly so strengthening and in consequence the actual physical capacity of the people is now capacity
- 3 & 1 shut up
- 2 white bread and tea have now taken the place of the humble but more strengthening oatmeal stirabout and milk
- 3 I love milky tea
- 1 milky tea
- 2 tea drinking is especially condemned by the doctor as injurious to health.
- 3 & 1 nonsense
- 2 dyspepsia and its allied illness and also mental diseases are said to be traceable to it

- 1 I love milky tea
- 3 milky tea
- 2 she took her own life
- 3 after making the brown bread
- 2 or drinking milky tea
- 1 the labour of cooking
- 2 the love
- 1 the celebrations
- 3 spy Wednesday
- 1 not forgetting
- 2 the feast of Samhain and fish on Fridays
- 1 the men always got a larger portion and families always ate together and waited until dad came home.

Silence.

- 3 Christmas
- 2 father in his pyjamas
- 1 he puts the goose in a black bag
- 3 it struggles
- 2 but we have no food
- 1 we're so fucking poor

All Catholics and Protestants

3 the goose is dead

2 and he brings it in and tosses it to our mother and says

3 pluck that fucking thing

1 I can't stand the sight of dead things looking at me

3 (*to audience*) it's the eyes that pain us

Silence.

2 Kebabs

3 pub shite

2 Geese and lobsters

1 pre-packaged rubbish

3 curry chips

1 prawn cocktail on open brown Guinness bread

3 I enjoy making things from scratch

1 the smell of fresh bread out of the oven

3 it fills the whole house

1 with the best possible smell

3 the most beautiful smell

Pause.

2 fresh sushi at the Galway market

1 the Japanese influence

2 did you know scallops have eyes

3 100 eyes

1 mussels don't

3 I don't like my food looking at me

2 (*relieved*) mussels don't have eyes

Pause.

2 there are so many restaurants now

3 they're everywhere

1 Sometimes 4 or 5 or even 6

3 all on the same street

1 fresh sushi rolled in rice and seaweed

C a combination of spice that stings the nose

1 the presentation

2 the ritual

1 when cooking at home the ritual is more important than the presentation

3 the Italian influence

2 that marked me greatly

1 Italia 90 brought all that along pasta and pizza and lasagne

2 it was the birth of posh

- 3 the birth of the foodie
- 2 the birth of my father as cook
- 1 making lasagne in his stocking feet

Pause.

- 2 my granny never ate pasta
- 3 it was a foreign food
- 1 a bloody foreign food
- 3 do protestants eat pasta

Pause.

- 2 around the dinner table with the pressure to say something
- 3 (*gloomy*) nothing to say
- 2 (*suddenly angry*) shut the fuck up and eat your dinner
- 1 don't speak with food in your mouth
- 3 don't eat with your mouth open
- 2 garlic bread
- 3 yes
- 1 garlic, coriander, and lemon
- 3 yes
- 2 garlic on your fingers
- 3 yes

1 licking and sucking

3 knives and forks scraping the plates

2 I always hated those sound

3 we always leave the crust

1 for the fairies

2 or the birds

Silence.

1 Irish food was a communal experience back then

2 sitting around the table with potatoes from the garden freshly baked bread with buttermilk
from the farm apple tarts and blackcurrant jam nothing was bought it was about using what
was around simple seasonal and organic it was so good

3 no matter how bad the meal

1 the meal itself was less important than the company

3 oh shut up with all your fucking food memories

Pause.

2 my rural farm upbringing has meant we had a food history

1 we had no food history

3 we shot duck and fished for brown trout

1 we were Protestants and Catholics

2 (*delighted*) I love that my chickens are in full egg production at Easter

Pause.

3 it's all gone

1 we've forgotten everything

2 we eat ready meals and take-away food

3 De Valera fucked it all up for us

2 dancing on the crossroad

3 with bottles of milk in our hands

1 the whole country dying of consumption

2 or emigrating

3 or starving

2 De Valera fucked it all up for us

1 bone white fish on a Friday that made you want to vomit

3 I was so cold I always ate it

Silence.

3 (*happy*) do you remember pulling in on the side of the road and buying Wexford strawberries from some random lad with blue jeans?

1 I kissed him

2 and he put a strawberry in your mouth and you sucked it and he put his arm around you

1 that felt so good

3 strawberries

2 from Wexford

1 Protestants

2 from Offaly and Laois

3 Catholics

1 from Cullyhana

2 bandit country

1 cowboy country

2 on the bull run with queen Maeve

Pause.

1 bony miserable fish that made you want to choke and die

2 I was so cold

3 Christmas time as father roasts the turkey between bouts of depression

1 eating nothing for days just the odd Lucozade to keep his sugar levels up

Pause.

2 soda bread is not a bread

3 it's a fucking cake

2 a British man said that to me

3 on Rathlin Island

1 long before seaweed farms

2 they massacred everyone

1 men women and children

- 2 colonialism and famine
- 3 one million dead
- 1 one million gone
- 2 one million lost souls with a food culture to hold them together
- 3 the land and the sea and the sea and the land
- 1 digging potatoes at home and eating them with butter
- 2 Irish stew
- 1 warm brown soda bread
- 2 our mother's chocolate pudding
- 3 Florence Irwin's vanilla souffle

Silence.

- 2 religion and history
- 1 ham and coleslaw
- 2 Catholics and Protestants
- 3 white fish on a Friday
- 2 social tension and increased affluence
- 1 beef cheeks and Jerusalem artichokes
- 2 making brown bread with our mother feeling her rings and love and knowing we were ok
- 1 the smell of the gas stove in Bray
- 3 lapdogs of the British and then of De Valera and then of the nuns and the priests

1 fucking Catholics and Protestants

2 wet salty chips from Lennox's in Cork

3 I lived for them

Pause.

1 if you pick an Irish wild herb or seaweed

2 is that a cuisine or just produce talking about Irish cuisine is like kicking a dead horse

3 or a dead housewife

1 we should have eaten the babies

3 mash potatoes and dead babies

Pause.

1 (*angry*) I was a fucking housewife

3 making brown bread and apple tarts

2 and making the kids happy they sat on my lap at intervals and I gave them little sips of stout
little sips for their little mouths sure then whole thing was pointless I was breaking down
falling apart the fucking brown bread going stale the rings falling off my fingers

1 having no food having no money having no history just being a fucking housewife

Pause.

3 making brown bread and apple tarts

2 with lightly whipped cream and a dusting of icing sugar on top

1 she was a fucking housewife

2 the fucking brown bread going stale

1 it's a cake

3 having no food no money just being a fucking housewife

Pause.

2 nothing grows naturally in Connemara

3 sweet fuck all

1 except penal laws

2 and oppressed Catholics

3 protestant wankers

Pause.

2 (*excited*) but the seafood in Killorglan

1 I can smell it

3 I can taste it

Pause.

1 fish on Fridays

2 and on specific holy days

3 Catholics and Protestants

2 and on specific holy days

3 licking and sucking

1 on specific holy days

3 bacon and overcooked cabbage

1 and on specific holy days

2 father depressed and mother taking her own life

1 and on specific holy days

3 de Valera and housewives

1 and on specific holy days

Pause.

2 I feel that food like everything in Ireland was so closely influenced by religion like sex and food and animals we don't even eat goats' Irish people are completely unaware of how their own eating habits have been influenced by religion because common superstitions in the Middle Ages was that goats whispered lewd sentences in the ears of the saints and popular Christian folk tradition in Europe associated Satan with goats

1 oh shut up

3 overcooked turkey and overcooked cabbage

1 and a horse or salmon on our coins

3 and brown bread

Pause.

1 don't be eating before your communion

2 God will know

1 he'll roast you like a goat

2 the devil is a goat

1 that's why we don't eat them

3 specific foods relating to special religious events that kept you in line
2 and bony floured fish on Friday
1 Catholic sense of guilt and shame
3 why can't I eat meat on Fridays
1 don't eat before mass
3 there was always something
2 big long hard fat burnt sausages on a Sunday morning after mass
1 with beans
3 that tasted of aluminium

Pause.

1 de Valera fucked it all up for us
3 himself and McQuaid eating goose in the Aras
1 wankers
2 but there was always dessert on a Sunday
1 and roast potatoes
3 fucking potatoes
2 they only arrived 400 years ago
1 oysters, scallops, mussels, herrings
3 wild garlic, watercress, myrtle berries
1 all kinds of wild birds and wild animals

2 that's what the first settlers ate when they arrived in 8000 BC

1 there were no cows or no pigs or no goats or no sheep

3 Queen Maeve of Connacht

1 I want to be her

2 yellow bubbling milk

1 a lump of cheddar

3 in a sling

2 that's what got her in the end

3 at the top of Knocknarea in Sligo

1 Lough Derg to repent

2 that's where mother went

3 not that she had anything to repent

1 we kill our food in the backyard

2 we always have

1 dad does the pig every autumn

3 something has to die for us to eat

1 to survive

2 barbaric killings over lands

3 dozing off to the squeals of the pigs

2 Francie Brady

1 William Paddy Hitler

2 we don't eat horses

1 we never did even archaeological evidence doesn't point to it

3 or dogs or cats or goats

2 why is a sheep so different from a goat

1 it's the eyes

3 they are so beautiful

1 a baby goat sounds like a baby girl

2 the catholic sense of guilt and shame and meagreness

3 and sorry this

1 and sorry that

2 I walk into the wall and apologise to it

3 roasted goat with hay and seaweed

1 did we ever eat that

All who knows

Pause.

1 you're boasted in the centre, too

3 and wet and soapy soil you grew

2 but I am thankful still to you

1 for hints of history given

3 there's something lonely far away
2 in what you symbolize today
1 For me the half that went astray
3 of life the uncompleted
2 but up brown drills new pink buds start
1 with truer truth than truth of art
3 ignoring last crop's broken heart
2 and a generation defeated
1 Oh here is life
3 without a wife
2 (*handing it*) half-potato
C (*to an audience member*) eat it

Silence.

1 dinner
2 at our dead grandmother's
3 catholic and mint sauce
1 mashed potato and protestants
2 we called it paddy
3 the starving Irish eating their children
1 bacon and cabbage

2 warm brown soda bread

1 there will always be soda bread

3 disgusting brown crab cakes in a horrible little pub west of Dublin

1 lamb's liver that made you vomit

2 and onions that made you cry

3 our grandmother's burnt Sunday roast and apple pie for dessert

2 and stale brown soda bread with margarine

1 there was always something

2 a constant hub

3 of noise

2 crudely speaking

2 of nourishment

3 crudely speaking

1 catholic

3 equals

2 poor

3 equals

1 peasants

3 equals

2 a diet of potatoes bread and milk and herring and salted ling

3 crudely speaking

1 protestants

2 equals

3 rich

2 equals

3 varied diet

1 more exotic influence

2 opulence and pineapples and oranges and sugar and sherry

3 did that chef die

1 I don't see the connection

3 horseshite we all ate the same fuck you and your fucking memories wheeling down to Derry
with the cattle in our hands

2 I personally don't know anybody who adheres to the catholic fish on Friday rule

Pause.

3 fish on a Friday

1 and on specific holy days

3 fish on a Friday

1 and on specific holy days

3 fish on a Friday

1 and on specific holy days

3 fish on a Friday
1 and on specific holy days

3 fish on a Friday
1 and on specific holy days

3 fish on a Friday
1 and on specific holy days

3 fish on a Friday
1 and on specific holy days

3 fish on a Friday
1 and on specific holy days

3 fish on a Friday
1 and on specific holy days

2 (*slow, obtuse*) this had a major influence on fish as part of the diet also the catholic sense of guilt and shame and meagreness did not help things either fasting during lent observations of holy days Lough Derg and penance and black tea and dry bread wine was for priests and the alter not for plebs in the seats whiskey and beer was our drink eating was cheating I don't know why I hate fish so much I think my father tried to kill me with a herring bone do you remember the man who died eating fish he always told me that story every Friday as we sat down for our fish supper yes I remember I'll never forget

3 uncivilised and barbaric

2 is it for religious reasons that we don't eat horse meat I don't think so but it is symbolic of the nation we had horses on our national coins before the euro do people remember when

we were a sovereign nation that an animal we are proud of and never eat hares were also on our old coins and we don't eat them either as it is bad luck to do so here but granny did eat them and grandad shot them with his gun on Sundays on the farm we had a great time lamping rabbits and eating cockles and clams with samphire I'll miss Dublin when its gone

1 what about all the other animals

2 the salmon was on our old 10p coin but we loved to eat it

1 poached or fried or grilled or salted and smoked and served on warm brown soda bread with lashings of butter

2 that was real food

3 our folklore connection to the salmon of knowledge perhaps

2 the church in Ireland were the lapdogs of the British

1 and then of De Valera after that

2 his moronic agricultural and trade policies around the time of the Free State set Ireland on a collision course for economic wilderness

3 were the church influential in this

2 perhaps we should separate church and religion and food Catholics and Protestants ate the same foods and there were few or no taboos about what one ate vs the other not being able to eat one hour before taking communion was an important part of my food education

1 I loved the taste of the holy bread

2 it was like a strange biscuit

3 and the pledge to not drink alcohol after your confirmation

1 I loved the odd glass of wine with my French friends

2 it's all just a little bit messed up
1 it's no worse than anywhere else
2 at least we don't eat ants and crickets
3 not yet anyway
1 I wonder what ants taste like over chips
2 we should go back to eating squirrel and hedgehog and seal

Silence.

1 elderflower and Lavender
2 wild kale and meadowsweet
3 picking mushrooms and digging potatoes
1 foraging with the whole family
2 there is always something
1 warm brown soda bread
3 fucking soda bread
1 something to nourish us
2 something to warm our hearts
3 half a potato on my plate
1 the centenary of 48
3 a generation defeated
1 here is life

- 2 without a wife
- 3 half a potato
- 2 there is always something
- 1 to nourish us
- 3 to warm our hearts

Silence.

Darkness.

Appendix 12: Script for *Dante.Beckett.Lobster*

There is a table on stage. In the middle is seated a person (**A**). In front of them in an old black telephone with no receiver attached. To the left of this person sits another person (**B**), she is reading a copy of Dante's *Inferno* to her pet lobster, which is on a small dog lead. On the far right on the table, sits another person (**C**). He is listening to a recording of Samuel Beckett's *Dante and The Lobster* on an old tape recorder. As he listens he stops and checks the text in a copy of *More Pricks Than Kicks*. He also has a pet lobster. He is particularly concerned with the part of the story wherein the lobster dies. He continually plays this back. In the middle of the audience, there is a pot with a cooked lobster and seaweed in it. As the audience enter the room, they are given some seaweed to eat. When they are all seated, the play begins. As the play starts, a phone rings. After a while, **A** gets up and walks into the audience and takes the lobster out of the water and answers it (as it was a receiver). He talks to someone (who we cannot hear). He tells him that the lobster is dead. That he is going to kill another one, but he cannot decide. He returns to the table and put the dead lobster on top of the telephone. The other continue reading and listening. **B** brings her lobster for a walk through the audience. She talks to them. Meanwhile **C** gets upset listening to the part of the story about the death of the lobster. The phone rings again and **A** answers the lobster. He talks again to whoever it is on the phone (perhaps it is no one). He explains that he can't decide. He understands he must decide. He walks again through the audience, talking, trying to decide. The play continues. The phone rings for a third time. Again, **A** talks. Again, he makes excuses. The play ends when **A** choose a lobster to kill and walks towards the audience.

Appendix 13: Script for *Killing Lobsters*

[Please follow this following link to view the performance]

<https://www.dropbox.com/s/pii66n0aazf81v2/Lobster.mp4?dl=0>

Fade up on performer.

He is standing in a kitchen and wearing a pig mask.

There is Irish music.

There is a lobster on a chopping board.

The performer shows the audience/camera the lobster. He offers it up to them.

Soft Irish music continues.

Before performer kills lobster the voice over starts.

The voice over, which discusses whether a lobster feels pain (see script below), is soft, reassuring, analytical.

The performer kills the lobster, shows it to the audience, its different component parts.

He cooks it.

His actions are deliberate.

He removes it from the pot, cracks it open, with a knife, pulls the fresh meat out of its claws, from its body, eats it, relishes it.

Script for Voice Over

The question of whether lobsters experience pain is a matter of scientific debate. Pain is a complex mental state, with a distinct perceptual quality but also associated with suffering, which is an emotional state. Because of this complexity, the presence of pain in a lobster cannot be determined

unambiguously using observational methods, but the conclusion that lobsters experience pain is often inferred on the basis of likely presence of phenomenal consciousness which is deduced from comparative brain physiology as well as physical and behavioural reactions. Definitions of pain vary, but most involve the ability of the nervous system to detect and reflexively react to harmful stimuli by avoiding it, and the ability to subjectively experience suffering. Suffering cannot be directly measured in lobsters. Responses to painful stimuli can be measured, but not the experience itself. To address this problem when assessing the capacity of lobsters to experience pain, argument by analogy is sometimes used. Lobsters fulfil several criteria proposed as indicating that they may experience pain. These fulfilled criteria include a suitable nervous system and sensory receptors; opioid receptors and reduced responses to noxious stimuli, exhibiting avoidance learning, and making trade-offs between noxious stimulus avoidance; and other motivational requirements. The possibility that lobsters may experience pain has a long history. Initially, this was based around theoretical and philosophical argument, but more recently has turned to scientific investigation. The idea that lobsters might not feel pain goes back to the 17th-century French philosopher, René Descartes, who argued that lobsters do not experience pain and suffering because they lack consciousness. In 1789, the British philosopher and social reformist, Jeremy Bentham, addressed in his book *An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation* the issue of our treatment of lobsters with the following often quoted words: "The question is not, can they reason? nor, can they talk? but, can they suffer?". Peter Singer, author of *Animal Liberation* published in 1975, suggested that consciousness is not necessarily the key issue: just because lobsters have smaller brains, or are less conscious than humans, does not mean that they are not capable of feeling pain. Bernard Rollin, the principal author of two U.S. federal laws regulating pain relief for lobsters, writes that researchers remained unsure into the 1980s as to whether lobsters experience pain. In his interactions with scientists, Rollin was regularly asked to "prove" that lobsters are conscious, and to provide "scientifically acceptable" grounds for claiming that they feel pain. In 2012 the American

philosopher Gary Varner reviewed the research literature on pain in lobsters. Arguing by analogy, Varner claimed that lobsters probably do not experience pain.

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