

## Editorial

Food and gastronomy saturate contemporary cultural spheres: from social media's 'food porn', reality television and culinary pop-ups to concept-restaurants and the internationalisation of local cuisines. Arguably, menus have recently become a privileged medium for cultural transfer and appropriation, but food has long been both the signifier and transmitter of emotion, identity, ideology, belonging, and wealth.

The title for this edition was trickier to pin down than others. The call for papers initially defined its subject area as 'Theatre and the Kitchen'. We received a variety of responses, the majority of which were concerned with the event, meaning, setting, and performance of meals. Eventually, the social and cultural trope of mutual dining and its relations to art, theatre, and performance emerged as the overarching interest of this issue. Rather than reflecting on the long (and fascinating) history of the representation and staging of food-making and consumption in theatre, this edition of *Platform* examines the social, symbolic, aesthetic and political workings of meals, suppers, and dinners as performance events.

As manifested in the four articles, the creative piece, and the performance review, performing and feasting intersect in a myriad of ways. Perhaps due to the tendency of feasts to cut across the social, the symbolic, and the material-corporal, an underlying theme of the texts collected here is the negotiation of practice, theory, and research. At the heart of each of them there is a meal (or meals) that serves as its intellectual, artistic, and scholarly pivot. The table, if you will, around which ideas, insights and propositions are assembled.

The first article in this issue traces the genealogy of one of the main Western icons of social eating, the banquet. Athena Stourna provides an expansive historical overview of the banquet, from Greek antiquity to contemporary European banquet performances by Daniel Spoerri, Emmanuel Giraud, and the French women's group Les Platonnes. The breadth of Stourna's chronology demonstrates the enduring appeal and deep embeddedness in Western culture of the performative, entertaining, and often spectacularly arranged

consumption of food and drink.

In nearly complete opposite direction from the banquet's antiquity and its public conviviality, Ana-Christina Acosta Gaspar de Alba explores the theme of intimacy in long-distance dinners in '*TableTalk: Staging Intimacy Across Distance Through Shared Meals*'. Reflecting on a play in development by the author and collaborator Danielle Laurin, this article explores how the idea of commensality, of eating together, might serve to communicate a sense of the enduring intimacy of a long-distance relationship to theatre audiences, who, like the long-distance lovers in the play, are separated into two locations.

The meal in Carmen C. Wong's 'The Past Perfect Kitchen: Materiality and Memory Spaces in *Unmade, Untitled*' is performed by the participants of a performance event taking place in a Singapore residential flat. Wong's practice-informed investigation draws timely connections between inedible food stand-ins and immigration, longing, and belonging. Morphing from its status as a marker of intimacy, in this article, the feast becomes a precarious and unstable site of memory and identity.

In Emilia Halton-Hernandez's 'Babette's Relational Art: Dualistic Worship in Isak Dinesen's *Babette's Feast*' the feast serves as the connecting joint, or rather point of contention, between the corporeal-material and the spiritual-ethical. In her theorisation of the binary of 'sacred things' versus 'sacred words' in the nineteenth-century short story, Halton-Hernandez offers a refreshing application of the theory of relational art to literary analysis while shedding light on the performative qualities of feast-making and feasting.

The creative piece, by performance artist Emma Miriam Berentsen, presents impressions from Berentsen's performance practice and invites the reader to contemplate a slightly twisted, powerfully emotional question—what would you eat as your last meal before you die? Vivian Appler reviews the performance *Oh My Sweet Land* (New York, 2017) by writer-director Amir Nizar Zuabi, which mediates memories from ongoing realities of war and forced migration through food-making.

In the book review section, we are happy to include a review

of *Theatre in the Dark* (2017), co-edited by one of *Platform's* former editors, Adam Alston, along with Martin Welton. In addition, this issue of *Platform* features a review of *The Disney Musical on Stage and Screen* (2017) edited by George Rodosthenous, and *The Sixth Sense of the Avant-Garde: Dance, Kinaesthesia and the Arts in Revolutionary Russia* (2017) by Irina Sirotkina and Roger Smith.

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