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**Eating into Elsewhere:
Performing Belonging in Migrant
Food-Making**

by

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Parts of this dissertation contain revised work: in Chapter 1, I discuss a project and include excerpts of a 2014 interview with Michael Rakowitz conducted for an unpublished MA thesis (University of Arts in Belgrade and the University of Warwick); elements of Chapter 3 has undergone publication for *Journal of Arts Writing by Students (JAWS)* and *Platform* (both published in 2019). All of these writings have received substantial rewriting and revision since and I thank Mr. Rakowitz, the editors (JAWS/Platform), and the reviewers who have gifted me with insights into my writing process and social arts practice research.

DECLARATION

I, Carmen Wong, declare that this submission is my own work, and has not been submitted for any other academic award. The practice-as-research conducted and presented to an audience is also my own work insofar as I conceptualised, facilitated and performed in it. Owing to the participatory nature of performance practice the research was dependent on and emerged under collaborative working circumstances. All design collaborators in this process were aware beforehand that its outcomes would be presented as doctoral research in my name and agreed to this being the case. Their contributions have been given appropriate credit in the acknowledgments section of the thesis. The use of all materials from sources other than my own work has been properly and fully acknowledged.

ABSTRACT

My thesis posits food as essential, polysemic and affective material within which humans in displacement do, tell, and performatively shape their belongings. It begins by asking: Can we eat our way home?, but theory and practice have complicated this original research question. I seek to draw out the complexities of this interplay between displacement, estrangement and belonging through practice-as-research, which has resulted in two participatory performances with food: *Breakfast Elsewhere*, and *Unmade, Untitled*.

In the written component of the thesis I describe how I weave together theories of listening, sensory ethnography (in particular the tool of the cook-along interview), and narrative inquiry, with performance-making and participant feedback in this practice-as-research. This amalgamation of practice and theory enables me to look more closely at everyday kitchen gestures as choreographies that meld uncertainty, repetition and improvisation in migrant narratives as in migrant food-making. I employ the term food-making (including processes such as growing, shopping, preparing, cooking, and even ways of eating, or commensality) to indicate sites of active knowledge transference, a translation of memory of previous ways in which materials are transformed into sustenance, meaning and significance.

Seen through a performative frame, I hypothesize that these quotidian gestures of food-making in displacement could be listened to as a type of embodied archive. These embodied archives of food belongings are always in the making, being inscribed with new narratives and adaptations to cater to new practices, ingredients, or changing tastes. I propose that an embodied attentiveness to how and why this is done is key to understanding the extent to which this successfully recreates the sense of homeliness and belonging.

INTRODUCTION: 'Can we eat our way home?'

This disarmingly simple research question, one that is affectively and quickly understood by many people I have posed it to, has undergone a great deal of fracturing. It began life in my research bearing an irritatingly self-conscious whimsy, but then demonstrated its legitimacy when I realised that many around me, within and outside of my academic institution, had important things to tell me about their flavourful performativities of 'home' in the context of the gastronomic. Inside this seed of a question, a sprout of 'belonging' began to form, which I began to tend as it reached and wrapped its way around 'identity' and 'migration'. In due course, other plumules followed: estrangement, surrogacy, participation, hauntology, (g)hosting, diffraction, and to end roughly where I began, a return to uncertain belongings.

And this is how an elemental question kick-started what has become a diffractive practice-as-research that was seeded in my self-reflexive experience as a curiously hungry migrant. Central to that question, unnamed but critically incorporated, is food, and how in its making we are made. Food as edible material stuff contains cultural and historical narratives to link the eater laterally and temporally to origins, traditions, community, and identity. In creating interventions with cooking meals, I was able to attend to ordinary yet imaginative practices with this everyday edible stuff, and catch glimpses of the elusive theme of belonging. I attempted attunement by listening to these food-ethnographies, by following 'doing-cooking', a term by Luce Giard (1998: 155) that ascribes a keen attending to a segment of women's work that is seemingly pedestrian and insignificant.

This method turned out to be a helpful way to construct boundaries in my research within the vast realm of the everyday as it meets the density and

specificity of food and its accompanying semiotics. It allowed me to focus on these quotidian food-making choreographies and food-based ethnographies, specifically in migrant cooks' experiences, and in how migrants might culinarily perform belonging upon arrival to a new place. Choreography can be understood here as 'other than or additional to the arrangement of bodily movement' and what comes out of the combination of movement and documentative writing (Allsop and Lepecki 2008) that can be a means to observe and read the body set in the domestic everyday.

My usage of the term 'choreography' when applied to the research has foundations in what Lepecki, following Deleuze and Guattari, has parsed out as 'not only a mode of composition, not only a register, or archive', but also, an "apparatus of capture" (2007), one which preserves, even repeats the gestures and significance of food-making in the body, oftentimes linking these everyday movements to place, or the memory of place. I used a combination of methods to begin the process of setting up my research, which began with sensory and performance ethnography to investigate how this home-in-becoming might be embodied and emplaced within food-making practices.

A period of practice-based fieldwork, which has been named *Elsewhere in Coventry* (2015), covered cook-along sessions with five migrant women in Coventry, asking them to share a dish that they might make for a family dinner. This method of go-along approaches participation through the dimensions of knowledge, action and consciousness, and has been associated with social movements that mobilize the 'voices of those who are excluded' from knowledge production (Gaventa and Cornwall 2008); in this case, I am interested in mobilizing migrant knowledge of food-making as part of belonging to a place. As part of my practice in developing a performance, I have paired this method with narrative inquiry of food-as-material, in essence

collecting migration food micro-ethnographies during food-making interviews. I have chosen the term *food-making* (which includes processes such as growing, shopping, preparing, cooking, and even ways of eating, or commensality) to indicate an active knowledge transference, a translation of the memory of previous ways in which materials are transformed into sustenance, meaning and significance.

Aligning with the migrant food-making research conducted by food scholars such as Fabio Parasecoli and Krishnendu Ray, my work returns theory and philosophy back to the body through participatory performance as diffractive device and intervention. I make a translation of these early fieldwork 'dives' with my artistic practice into two participatory performances, which became a way to test the resonance and repeatability of these findings. These performances invite participants to examine for themselves the sensory experience of everyday food-making gestures, and how this may be for them interlinked with the imagination, as sense perceptions, narratives, or gestures trigger individual and particular memories or affects.

The two resulting works are *Breakfast Elsewhere* and *Unmade, Untitled* – separate works that come together for the purposes of the research as a double bill, soliciting the participation of audiences, and their post-experiential reflections thereafter. Both works feature the re-performance of these imaginative micro-adaptations and micro-ethnographies that stage migrant food-making as an entangled performance of belonging within (or perhaps despite of) the feeling of estrangement in displacement. These food-making narratives of the body, performed imperfectly away from home or in displacement, nevertheless produce the possibility of imaginative emplacement as a movement through space and place, memory and materials (following Massey 2005, intertwining with Ingold 2008, 2015).

These particular theories, meeting the catalyst of my performance practice, have agitated and complicated my original research question, 'can we eat our way home?', picking at some of the suppositions lying beneath. While they helped to show the complex traces of stories, lines, and how places and events come together to form a 'constellation of processes rather than a thing' (Massey 2005: 141) they also add obfuscation and complications. A trio of problematics quickly bubbled up: firstly, the assumption that the desire to return to this now-displaced/elsewhere home (whether through a physical or social distancing) is sought after in the first place; secondly, that if such a longing for return exists, the consumptive practice of food-making is a path to restoring or fulfilling these desires for past belongings in the present or for the future; finally, that such a re-assembly of practice with, or the re-enactment of embodied knowledge of food can lead to diametrically opposed results: either an affirmative route 'home', or not (if there is an absence or misstep).

These points paralysed the analysis of my research for a good while, until I began to notice that I was in a losing battle wrestling with cause and effect, in trying to prove how/whether food could lead to the effect of belonging (or not belonging). I retraced my steps back to the kitchen, this time with the company of a friend and fellow academic also from Singapore, and a few props:

- A bag of Sainsbury's stir-fry vegetables.
- A can of 'smuggled' preserved pork.
- Curry powder mixed with five spice powder.
- Fried shallots.
- A wok and soy sauce (of course!)
- Long chopsticks to create a vortex of rehydrated rice noodles in hot water.
- Some string - in a tangled mess.
- Music from 1990's Singapore.

We met in her home kitchen in London, and engaged in observing each other's gestures and movements in making Singapore noodles three ways: the first was a recreation of the popular Chinese take-out noodles (that did not originate in

Singapore), a second near-identical version cooked with string instead of rice noodles, and the third a homely noodle dish based on a family recipe.



Figure 1: Bee Hoon: a dialogue/experiment in cooking 'home' with rice noodles and string

Adelina and I haunted each other when we told each other of our Singapore wayfarings that came close to intersecting (by way of mutual friends, and common places), but did not, in our twenty years of mutual time-place-matterings on that island near the equator. I noticed how we both embodied this elsewhere home differently in the present moment, how our bodies were coming to tell quite different stories, movements, memories, voices, and affects from the same place, in the same period. We had in essence, integrated our own great fondness, nostalgia, and rue — two bodies existing as different 'states of nature cultures' (Barad 2007: 89–90). In this fortuitous London

experiment I understood 'homeward' food-making as choreographed worldings that were not linear, but dynamic, simultaneous and tremorously intimate¹.

The reactivity when research question meets practice reveals that there is still much to be understood about how *differential becoming* occurs in food-making. As a researcher in performance studies, I have found that my quick steps into sociology, social geography, and anthropology have helped me to grab at the seams of my argument, as I try to slide the tablecloth off from under a fully-laid table, to attempt to show mastery over my unruly and tangled topic. In spite of (or perhaps because of) the mess of spilled ideas, objects, theories, my practice-as-research has brought about a realization that the multiple and condensed materialities and meanings of food finds context when viewed as what Doreen Massey has termed 'thrown-togetherness' (Massey 2005), where encountering or connecting with others via materials and geographic space resists the orderly coding that research so often insists on.

There is an inkling of the performative in Massey's social geographic term, approaching 'the event of place' (ibid: 149), where everyday murmurings are enmeshed with more chaotic, forceful actions. Tim Ingold's focus on the more material aspects in the meshwork in life echoes Massey's theory: as we move, emplace, and story ourselves and our realities, we form lines or trails of becoming that flow or run amidst without beginning or end (Ingold 2008:

¹ I use the term worldings to signal to how we might fashion, construct or imagine worlds that we inhabit affectively and relationally, gesturing toward Lauren Berlant's belief in how 'intimacy builds worlds; it creates spaces and usurps places meant for other kinds of relation' (1998: 282). Worlding in this sense is in cosmological intimacy with the multiplicities of other beings with whom we discover and build feelings and relationships, in ways that to a degree is connected with Heidegger's existentialist notion of *Welten*, and Deleuze and Guattari's postmodern schizophrenic's ability to invent new worlds. Ben Highmore is helpful insofar as he attends to Raymond Williams's cultural 'structures of feeling' to glimpse a vista 'to the way feelings and tastes are an activity of 'worlding' that renders life as this life and not another' (2016: 146).

1805). Places, as such, according to Ingold, occur in these 'life paths of beings' (ibid: 1808). Viewed in this lens I imagine displacement to be a line traced far away from one of these initial occurrences, linked despite distance, perhaps with less visible but pronounced entanglements.

I begin to see how integrating my own displaced body within this research has demonstrated the performative nature of Karen Barad's description of diffraction: a concept Barad establishes as steeped in feminist and physical lineage. Diffraction is not a mere metaphor of interference within (socio)material entanglement, rather a practice that 'troubles dichotomies', queers binaries (Barad, 2014: 168) and brings new (post-colonial) ontology to the Derridean concept of difference. Barad's usage and definition of diffraction as a 'cutting together-apart (one move) in the (re)configuring of spacetime-mattering' (ibid: 168) digests the feminist diaspora discourse of Trinh Minh-ha and Gloria Anzaldua, such that the 'material multiplicity of self, the way it is diffracted across spaces, times, realities, imaginaries' is brought to light (ibid 175). Diffraction as rapturous rupture that brings to (brief) visibility the existence of the difference within, the elsewhere whilst here, the complex, fractal multiplicity that is 'identity' or 'self' that is perhaps better understood as 'superimpositions' rather than oppositions, constantly changing, and always in emergence. This concept has helped me understand that things and bodies such as food and migrants do not move to one place after another; rather, enfolded and ever-unfolding, and animating un/doing, always linked, in fact, enmeshed. It unsettles the normativity of how we construct and understand identity, and therefore belonging to places simultaneously 'here' and 'elsewhere', it helps to defer meaning in order to marvel at the futility of cause-effect-conclusion.

How my research contributes to knowledge is by investigating the performative concept of 'belonging' — an elusive yet enormous topic indeed — through the ordinariness and *différance* of food diffracted² by place, time, and bodies which may be practicing memory, imagination, knowledge, and other human agencies that produce choice. Belonging, when seen as a conceptual arrangement of specific materials and conditions, moves between, amongst, and beyond experiences and memories of reassuring assimilation and alienating marginality. In my research food is what I follow to look at the performativity of belonging: a material with which we-I practice what Barad has referred to as onto-epistemology, where 'knowing is a material practice of engagement as part of the world in its differential becoming' (2014: 168).

My contribution shows, through a participatory practice, the diffracted patterns I have collected in my research on everyday food-making in displacement (and which become further diffracted through the memories and makings by audience participants). It does so by considering how food (an apparatus, and arbitrary centre point), and its displaced food-makers are engaged in an intra-active ecology from within. Food-makers, then, are constantly changing, co-influencing their entangled relationships amongst other food-makers, ingredients, previous and current places of belonging, materials used in food production, eaters, and the politics that appear to govern some of these imagined communities (Anderson 1991) and perhaps also our scholarly discourses around food, and performance.

² In *Meeting the Universe Halfway*, Barad cites Donna Haraway's description of diffraction as physical phenomenon: 'diffraction has to do with the way waves combine when they overlap and the apparent bending and spreading of waves that occurs when waves encounter an obstruction' (2007: 74). Barad explains that diffraction, employed as an analogy by Haraway and other theorists, works in contrast to the optics of and metaphor for reflection, whereby 'reflexivity as a critical method of self-positioning...remains caught up in geometries of sameness' and that critically, 'diffraction attends to the relational nature of difference', a tool to attend and respond to the entangling effects of difference (ibid: 72).

I have opted to stay with the ambiguity offered by the term *displacement* to include circumstances wherein one uproots oneself from a place of home, whether in forced or economic migration, or in refuge- or asylum- seeking conditions, or sometimes never moving yet displaced when sociabilities or environments change dramatically and become unfamiliar. While it might come with a sense of adventure and new beginnings, especially if the movement is freely willed, this change in spatialities can nevertheless be fraught. Darko Suvin provides a metaphor and considered typology for displacement, especially of 'undeclared exiles' who move without certain return as 'the sense of feeling alien and out of place, a widespread unease... that seems so intrinsic to other experiences of modernity' (2005: 107–108).

In choosing to foreground this ambiguity, I make a choice not to prioritize which states of displacement are more deserving of attention. The ambiguity of displacement, its discontents and its effects, however, have enabled me to contemplate the notion of unbelonging alongside that of belonging, which I understand to be a migrant's existential dilemma, one which Suvin captures in a telling aphorism: 'To belong: what to, how, at what price? This is the central problem for the immigrant' (ibid: 117). The cost of belonging is that its purchase is unbelonging: the cure for displacement may be even more displacement, but instead of framing the process as purely that of loss, it could help to consider how we might cut the concept together-apart, if we follow Barad's suggestion (2014), and consider the sum total of un/belonging in migrancy. When I use the shorthand of 'un/belonging' (particularly in Chapter 3), I refer to the co-existence of both the sense of identity, socially- and spatially-located affinities, and its counterpart of detachments, emancipations and unsettledness from displacement. A return (from absence to a once-home) does not restore lost longings, rather, brings us closer to past hauntings as well as renewed narratives of belonging.

This apparent paradox in un/belonging becomes fertile and open with possibilities when we consider in what ways we participate in locating and embodying belongings. Sruti Bala's detailed examination of the gestures of participation is a key driver for my arguments in noting that 'the gesture is simultaneously an expression of an inner attitude as well as a social habitude [...] It therefore offers a possibility for critically linking the legacies and aesthetic debates on participatory art to larger issues of citizenship, democratic praxis, collective action and social justice' (2018: 15). Like Bala, while I remain open to the 'subversive potential' of participatory practices, my invitation to participants to contribute their individual memories within the performance asks for a closer attending to how participatory art might fluctuate 'between art's aesthetic and sociopolitical dimensions, and the intersections between individual and collective forms of embodiment' (ibid: 16-17).

My project of seeking belonging in a place that seems most homely and reassuring — the hearth of the kitchen — could be a fairly obvious choice. Still, instead of relying on the measured analytics of eating methods (which are addressed in the research conducted by Mary Douglas in the late 1960s and '70s), I have chosen to analyse food-making choreographies in the frame of performances and performativities of belonging³. I have framed my performances as artworks in their own right but also as experiments that seek to provide a participatory and imaginative snapshot of kitchen as homely site, and

³ While this thesis does not focus on theories of the performativities of food, the following scholars and texts in food performativity and food aesthetics have framed my subsequent research in migration and the everyday, and advanced this PaR's consideration of embodiment, and surrogacy in performances of belonging: Barbara Kirschenblatt-Gimlett (whose 1999 article "Playing to the Senses: Food as a Performance Medium" kickstarted Richard Gough's edited issue, *On Cooking for the Performance Research* journal, and initiated my tumble into the food performance field, along with "Making Sense of Food in Performance: the table and the stage" in Sally Banes and André Lepecki's invaluable edited collection *The Senses in Performance* (2007)); Stephen Di Benedetto (2010); Richard Gough (2017); Eileen John (2014); Carolyn Korsmeyer (2008); Ron Scapp and Brian Seitz (eds) (1998); Elizabeth Telfer (1996), and Margaret Visser (1986).

which describe by inscription on the body how these food-making gestures are archived, adapted, and transmitted by the body to and with other bodies. Beyond the practice element, which itself is a formal experiment in what happens when we stage everyday cooking in order to perform belonging (in doing so, tracing the boundaries between what is aesthetic and not, and, conversely, how we can experience or participate in discovering the artistic in the everyday), I am curious about the extent to which the paradox of un/belonging is itself a performative gesture that requires the participation of the displaced, their immediate environments, the socio-political and other actants (to use a term by Latour) participating without being seen. I am interested in the translations and transformations that start within the kitchen, and unfold into an essay on defining belonging and its processes. Belonging, then, becomes not a sense of merely being in place but also a process in motion, with bodies and ideas 'conjuring relations of alliance' (Gotman 2016: 18). I follow Kelina Gotman's lead in thinking through translation as performative practice and how we move between what she terms radical uncertainty to describe the experience of affective returns and movements that become a strategy for emplaced survival, and a 'challenge to complacency' for both newly arrived and resident populations (ibid: 19).

From the vantage of the specific locality of the home kitchen, we can produce active (both pre-determined and evolving) narratives of belonging-in-spacetime mattering between emplaced migrant and food-makings of elsewhere, which is what each of my practice-research performances attempt to observe, do, tell, and show. These snapshot narratives depict the relational inter-being between the materials of food stories, the inhabitants of the places of belonging, and the researcher engaged in taking the snapshot in her efforts to tease out the formations behind the constellations, as she self-consciously questions her positionality and intentions in doing so. I have embodied, immersed myself in, participated in, gestured toward, entangled the thoughts,

words, ingredients, documentation that is demanded of me in this research, each action an intervention that produces patterns readable both as text (this written thesis) and as an embodied experience (the performance component, and also, 're-experienceable' in the performance scores I write), in an ever-wandering (nomadic) deferment of meaning-making.

Thesis structure and guide to appendices

The thesis, as such, is written with interruptive asides, with text tasked with performing itinerancy and wayfaring, and a way of interpreting 'cutting together-apart' of the chapters. They serve to add theoretical segues, a moment for disembarking from argument to a soft provocation prompting a pausing, observing, feeling. These fragmented asides include, for instance, performance scores written post-fact, and scattered throughout, which serve as the conditions and observations that have accompanied my research from fieldwork to performance; quick dives into theory. The reader who is prone to happenstance is invited to read the thesis as the pages are placed, chancing upon the errant traces of these asides as the leaves turn, or skip past them to follow the flow of the chapters⁴.

These asides may be identifiable as moving marginalia (like the portion of text in space you are now reading), words pushed roughly off the main pages, sometimes to make room for images, sometimes rudely inserting themselves at inopportune moments,

⁴ Their form and structure have been inspired primarily by Kathleen Stewart's sketches of moments of atmospheric attunements (2005, 2007, 2008, 2011), and in part by Matthew Goulish's *39 Microlectures* (2002).

irritating, interrupting. I hope they find their delightful emplacement in a way that offers the reader some productive associations with what was just read or what is to come, or at the very least, a visual respite from my idealistic attempts at knowledge contribution, a place to make yourself at home, to pause, recall, imaginatively ponder, exhale sighs of frustration (which I accept in solidarity), a space for the odd scribble, coffee ring, or food stain (this is a challenge dear reader!).

The first chapter in the written component of my thesis will introduce how performance theory meshes with a hybrid methodology of autoethnography, sensory ethnography, narrative inquiry, attentive listening and somatic attunement practices that have informed the research and creative process. The central strands of belonging in an age of displacement and migrancy; participation in the everyday; and repeating/translating/transmitting food-making are interwoven in Chapter 2, which provides a detailed description of *Breakfast Elsewhere*, and Chapter 3, which is dedicated to *Unmade, Untitled*. These two chapters textualize the corresponding practice-research project, providing key details of how the projects come to be, thick descriptions and analysis of the performances which solicited the participation of audiences and their post-experiential reflections and responses thereafter (in an emailed survey, or in post-show conversations).

Chapter 2 in particular sets the foundation for participation and translation and how this constitutes a simulacrum of a migrant food-making experience in the everyday. I introduce Rola (a cook-along interviewee), and her Syrian recipe for

tese'yeh (تسقية) – an Arabic breakfast dish made of chickpeas atop soaked flatbread. The making of this dish is central to the performance of *Breakfast Elsewhere*, and encapsulates Rola's musings on migration and food adaptation. Working as a creative team with Rola, a recodist and a project consultant, I recorded Rola's spoken directions and narratives of home which became the driving text for *Breakfast Elsewhere*, spoken out loud by an audience volunteer in a role I term 'surrogate speaker'. I link the performance back to elements of how food may be read and translated, tracing how the work of collaborative and sensory food-making can trigger our own mnemonic contemplations of home and belongings.

Chapter 3 pulls us to an island near the equator that I used to call home. I introduce my estranged home of Singapore, the ghostly character that haunts the performance of *Unmade, Untitled*. This chapter is written in a more performative and reflective style, in an effort to tease out the diffractions of un/belonging in this auto-ethnographic work. The wandering migrant, in reckoning with the ghostly residues of belonging which have disappeared along with places that were once home, is estranged, a stranger hosting strange habits. Here, I call on Svetlana Boym's splendid work on nostalgia and Derridean theories of hauntology with the idea of (g)hosting to lend temporary form and tangibility to un/belonging, absence, and the unfinished nature of what Iain Chambers has labelled 'impossible homecomings' when one embarks on migration. I draw also from examples from contemporary art that work in similar modalities, to review how the work speaks *via negativa*, through subtractions, omissions, and holes.

The practice component of the thesis can be found in the attached DVD, and has been collaboratively documented and edited by moving images artist Carol Breen and photographer Tarla Patel, and as such evidence other collaborative practices in their constitution. This documentation features video snippets and

still photography of both *Breakfast Elsewhere* and *Unmade, Untitled* that more fully demonstrate elements of the practice than a static full-length video documentation could. Both internal and external examiners attended (separately) performances on June 11, and June 13, 2019, and were provided with a written context for performance. This culminating set of performances experienced by the examiners will be used primarily in the analysis in each of the two chapters.

Hauntings and fragments for a conclusion

The process of making participatory performances that prompts the workings of embodied knowledge of how to obtain, grow, prepare, cook, and eat food in places that may be unfamiliar has itself required a wholly different set of methods and training. In writing up about these various research and practice methodologies, what began to show up as a common determinant was the theme/skill/practice of listening with care. I provide a description of these methods as applied, and an analysis of their efficacy and ethics in thinking through my somatic listening in the making of my project.

I link belonging to participation, and participation to listening, as an exercise of response-ability. I consider in particular, the method of what Dee Heddon has termed 'entangled listening', one that we can utilize in our participation with our wider, more-than-human ecologies (2017). Heddon's foray into listening is applied to the work of Adrian Howells, which puts forward an invitation to participants to attend, to listen as part of the practice of participation (ibid: 19). Engaging with both Jean-Luc Nancy and Gemma Corradi Fiumara, Heddon describes how '[l]istening in its entangled form is a dialogical listening which stretches a radical openness towards interconnections' (ibid: 37). I venture, with my projects, to participate in such a 'listening with' that takes place with generosity and within a relational space. I ask whether we can acquire a

capacity to listen out for stories of belonging that may not yet belong to us, for their newness or strangeness, as they begin to nestle into place, into our gutty viscera, imaginations and memories.

As news headlines continue to frame displacements caused by political upheavals as refugee crises, and migration as something to be stymied by walls, borders, and stricter legislation, I argue that studying the gestures and stories of the exilic displaced through the medium of food and the method of participation perhaps brings a finer sense of embodied listening in our humanity. In doing so I do not seek to undermine the trauma, violence, and suffering that often accompanies forced displacement, but rather to attune myself to subtler forms of exile, where return is not always feasible, or rather, takes enacted effortful repetition and improvisatory participation in the everyday. Un/belonging, then, can be reframed as a diffractive, imaginative, improvisatory strategy for survival — where the displaced is agential in how she chooses to depart and arrive figuratively and physically, in her entangled becomings, and complex belongings.

CHAPTER 1: Eating elsewhere

When human beings convert some part of their environment into food, they create a peculiarly powerful semiotic device... a marvelously plastic kind of collective representation.

(Appadurai 1981: 494)

Food's everydayness as well as its polysemic qualities make it a thick material, easily overlooked because it is so necessary and ordinary. And yet it brims with permutations and indeterminate meaning that can quickly reveal who we are because of what and how we make with this material of sustenance. Appadurai points out in his essay on gastro-politics how food is a 'highly condensed social fact', containing multiple messages that are encoded in material and gestural semiotics (1981: 494). The 'semiotic virtuosity' of food is derived, Appadurai speculates, from its nutritive necessity and 'capacity to mobilize strong emotions' (ibid). Beyond the macro forces of environment, politics, and culture that trickle into practices within agricultural, market, and regional (or religious) cuisine, our personal tastes and commensal practices can shape — sometimes conflictingly as citizens of complex modern belongings — how we identify, crave, and construct our sense of belonging to the physical localities and embodied habits that we call home.

I am interested in addressing how this affective quality of food comes to be, and to what extent emotions, memory, narratives and knowledges archived in the body provide entry points and translations for this language of belonging. Performance and performativity become a helpful way to pick at this condensed semiotics of food, as evidenced by Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett's argument for the three ways food and performance converge (1999). First, performance meets food in the 'doing' or carrying out of food-making, or serving up what has been made. Second, both intersect in the governances,

rituals, and habits around how and what we eat. Thirdly, the first two aspects of doing and behaving invite those involved to exercise 'discernment, evaluation, and appreciation [demonstrating the function of] taste as a sensory experience and taste as an aesthetic faculty converge' (ibid: 2).

Philosopher Carolyn Korsmeyer points to the 'uses' of food and drink and how this process of doing and sharing with food 'clearly foster[s], even force[s], reflection upon the meaning of the event taking place, its location in culture and history, as well as its personal emotional import' (2008: 138). Our gustatory patterns and boundaries reveal how we participate affectively in systems of inclusion and exclusion in what constitutes and is worthy of belonging. I am interested in finding out how displacement — with its shifts in landscape, and necessary reassembling of notions of home and belonging — affect migrant food-making practices. Additionally, I am curious to apply my performance-making practice to understand to what extent these adaptive methods of doing, behaving, and showing food-making can amplify or reverberate the nuanced notion of belonging in the migrant experience.

This idea of post-national identities is something that Appadurai would later expand on in *Modernity at Large* (1996). Here, he establishes convincingly that individuals living in an epoch powered by migration and technology inhabit 'imagined worlds', a term he adapts from Benedict Anderson (1991) to mean 'the multiple worlds that are constituted by the historically situated imaginations of persons and groups spread around the globe' (ibid: 33). These worlds are formed of intersecting cultural flows that cluster in five interconnected spheres described as ethnoscapes, technoscapes, finanscapes, mediascapes and ideoscapes (ibid: 33-37). To Appadurai's deterritorialized global concept, I overlay Nira Yuval-Davis' study on belonging, which analyses how belonging is situated socially; how belonging is formed of identifications and emotional attachments; and accordingly, how belonging is constructed of

shared ethical and political values (2006, 2010). The performative and participatory elements of belonging are key in my research, which zooms in on how the repetition of specific food-making practices (existing in a specific social and cultural sphere), 'link individual and collective behaviour, [and] are crucial for the construction and reproduction of identity narratives and constructions of attachment' (Yuval-Davis 2006: 203)⁵.

Appadurai also introduces what I consider to be a complexity of spatiality and orientation faced by this modernity, when he calls into question the unruly nature of locality as a site of lived experience. As we adapt to shifting notions of homes, belongings and identities, we simultaneously engage with the 'duration, passage, and loss that rewrite the lived histories of individuals, families, ethnic groups, and classes' (1996: 77). With increased mobility, our culinary grammar may be expressed in unexpected ways as we begin to push outwards from our gastronomic boundaries of habits or custom - rewriting our lived experiences by enfolding previous or newly-distilled knowledges and ever-evolving taste into the making and eating of meals.

By looking at food as material substance and as affective social and cultural symbols with which migrants can translate, inhabit, participate, or localize within new cultural practices in order to grapple with landscapes of globalization, we can observe and situate the tensions and complexities in translative, displaced food practices. The choreographies of grocery shopping, communal meal-preparation or meal-sharing, wielding specialized kitchen utensils, finding a combination of close-enough substitutes for a single ingredient that is only worth sourcing from 'home' (worth being measured in either freshness, tastiness, or price) are gestures that this research is interested in re-enacting in

⁵ See also: Antonsich (2010), Bell (1999), Lahdesmaki et al. (2016) and Lovell (1998) who provide an analytical overview of how the term 'belonging' is defined and used in contemporary research.

its attempt to follow the lines of food's entanglements and situatedness from the personal realm to wider and collective practices of belonging to places and people in the everyday.

In the following sections of this chapter I discuss food and displacement, starting from a consideration of food and migrancy in the framework of sociology and anthropology, and I begin to frame key concepts in embodied performance, memory and the body as archive, and how these practices of worlding may be captured, sometimes metaphorized in food and food-making. I introduce my method of ethnographic cook-alongs used in *Elsewhere in Coventry*, a practice-as-research and performance development process which led to the creation of *Breakfast Elsewhere*. The cook-along interview method is my main sensory ethnographic tool, adapted from sociologist Magarethe Kusenbach's go-along method of multi-sited ethnography. I stumbled on such performance research in 2010 when I practiced a farm-along (quite by accident) and cooking interviews during an artist residency in Finland, and I have since developed the cook-along as a means of dialoguing with community members in my artistic practice. For the last section I trace participation as a performance aesthetic, by focusing on contemporary art projects with food as a medium, reflecting on how such performances are a form of presentational research of the everyday in and through practice.

1.1 Strange things in belongings

To open a discussion of belonging and how this happens in the condition of movement and displacement, I begin with William Safran's attempts to fine-tune an earlier definition (by Walker Connor) of diaspora for the first issue of a journal dedicated to the subject. Connor's broad-ranging definition, 'segment of a people living outside the homeland', becomes qualified by Safran's

typological mission and the six features he draws up for 'diaspora', the first three of which are: the condition of actual displacement from an originary centre; the continuation of a collective memory of an original homeland; and the emigrants' feelings of alienation against their host society (1991: 83). The last three features speak in conjoined fashion about the notion of return to origins: that diasporas are defined also by a desire to physically return to a homeland, which they additionally feel responsible for restoring to wellness, and that a development of 'ethnocommunal consciousness and solidarity' regarding these efforts makes their identity adhere further to this elsewhere homeland (ibid: 83-84). I turn my focus on the first three features of Safran's definitions, and, for my project on performing belonging via food, handle them as an entanglement of displacement, memory, and alienation. I leave Safran's latter three features wrapped in their ambiguous trifold, these ghosts of imagined returns which may manifest in actual returns, feelings of nostalgia, or simply as hauntings (to be gingerly unravelled in Chapter 3).

Nira Yuval-Davis provides a helpful distinction between belonging as an affective subject of study and the politics of belonging, and provides a means of understanding the interplay of the two:

People can 'belong' in many different ways and to many different objects of attachments... in a concrete or abstract way; belonging can be an act of self-identification or identification by others, in a stable, contested or transient way. Even in its most stable 'primordial' forms, however, belonging is always a dynamic process, not a reified fixity, which is only a naturalized construction of a particular hegemonic form of power relations. (2010: 199).

Yuval-Davis believes that a simple concept of belonging might be constructed on three analytical levels: that of social locations (eg: kinship group, gender, race, nationality, age), affective attachments (which qualify the strength of one's

feelings of belonging), and ethico-political value systems (which govern the boundaries on who is included or excluded) (ibid: 199-204). These levels enable unexpected combinations of belonging to converge and their historicities to be observed, and for these combinations to be scaled across times and societies. The separation that they cast makes it possible to view belonging intersectionally, as narratives of identity are in constant motion, being written and re-written at each turn.

These ideas are also evident in Elspeth Probyn's assertion that the heterotopic aspects of belonging draw our attention to its movement (almost always starting with movement in space - or displacement), so that belonging is a kind of state of desiring or longing for being and becoming (1996: 11). This desire and ability to move (alluded to by Appadurai's concept of global cultural flows that arise with the realities and fantasies of migration), becomes matched with a desire to attach oneself to another way of being. Probyn identifies this as a strange queerness and magical everydayness found within belonging, and believes that our postmodern desire to belong speaks of 'a milieu in which different modes of belonging fold and twist the social fabric of life, so that we find ourselves in unexpected ways using desires for belonging as threads that lead us into unforeseen places and connections' (ibid: 20).

Certainly, while our attachments to place may stem from a combination of autobiographical, relational, cultural, economic or legally-enacted immigration factors (Antonsich 2010: 647), it is probably evident by now that these 'places' of belonging defy mere geographic or collective rootedness, and point to psychological, affective, and perhaps imaginative, existential dimensions. Belonging is also a reaching towards feelings of stability, centeredness, safety, restfulness, or toward a homely place. Rebecca Solnit describes how a homeward desire 'is a desire to be whole, to know where you are', a place where one can comfortably choose 'to cease to speak and be perfectly

understood' (2007: 167). How one attempts to recreate this feeling in the space of displacement and alienation is a curious working of body and memory, caught in a performative grasping of and balancing act between 'home' versus 'away'.

In Sara Ahmed's essay, 'Home and Away', she critiques the romanticism of migrancy (in particular nomadism), which ignores the conditions that govern which bodies are permitted movements and how such movements impact these displaced bodies. Belonging in migrancy, she argues, is embodied, often in othering strangeness, that is, within the body's very state of multiple displacements. Ahmed describes this as a disjointedness between body, memory, and place in the experience of migrancy, whereby '[t]he experience of leaving home in migration is... always about the failure of memory to fully make sense of the place one comes to inhabit' (1999: 343). The migrant's subsequent grappling in order to (re)inhabit unfamiliar spaces and, more importantly, this rehabilitation of the 'migrant body', is further textured by a process of belonging which Ahmed identifies as 'uncommon estrangement' (ibid: 344). She explains that

(m)igrant bodies... cannot be understood as simply on one side of identity or the other, or on one side of the community or the other: rather, it is the uncommon estrangement of migration itself that allows migrant subjects to remake what it is they might yet have in common (ibid: 345-46).

This process of 'remaking' belonging that Ahmed refers to can certainly be observed in acts of migrant food practices, and in ways which, I argue, are mnemonic, 'multi-local', material as well as narrativized. Grappling with food-making in unfamiliar places or conditions of displacement can be seen as a becoming. We might learn to 'do cooking' as part of how we 'do identity': to cultivate, prepare, cook, eat, from old and new forms of embodied knowledge transmitted from those that have shown or told us how food-making is done.

On one level, it requires the gaining of new knowledge and competencies over one's new environments, and over the available materials this new place yields. On another level, this exposes a vulnerability in the ways one can be shaped by what is incorporated into one's body, whose identity itself may come into question, given its new context, due to its dislocation.

According to Fabio Parasecoli, the gesture of eating can be truly vulnerable and 'intimate to the point of becoming, at times, uncomfortable or even invasive, because the positions of the Self and Other involved are fundamentally different in terms of sociopolitical power, cultural capital, and sheer economic clout' (2014: 418). This can be seen in how some migrants display suspicion, negotiate with or resist the food practices of their new homes, and I encounter some of these instances in my fieldwork conversations. The scholarship on food in diaspora and how migrant food-making become mixed into the mainstream reveals the difficult ruptures from displacement and complexity in the integration and formation of multiculturalist practices, as well as the opportunities for reinventive agency⁶. These food-in-diaspora ethnographies flesh out the discomforts of inclusivity and exclusivity in migrant food practices that are steeped in simultaneous emplacement and displacement, and point to how migrant food embodies multiple (sometimes contradictory) meaningful reachings: into sensorial memories of practices from past places, and into future bodily placements through foods that connote aspirational belongings.

To view migrant food-making as gesture of belonging, it is important to hold these complexities in food and the practices enacted by memory and

⁶ See also: Abarca (2001, 2004), Cook and Crang (1996), Duruz (2005, 2011), Flowers and Swan (2016, 2019), Hage (1997), Highmore (1999, 2008), Narayan (1995), Ray (2004, 2016), Roy (2002), Seremetkis (1993), Sutton (2001, 2013), Vallianatos and Raine (2008) and Wise (2011).

participatory mnemonic repetition, for and by the displaced cook. These gestures of embodied knowledge are repeated with subtle shifts in different places, and results in what can be regarded as a performative and patient *durational cooking up* of belonging. This framing attempts to appropriate Claude Levi-Strauss' culinary triangle of how culture is created from the manner in which we transform the raw into the cooked (2008: 37), and in migrant and diaspora food practices, it may lead to instances of food creolizations, and other bricolages⁷.

In order to trace these fascinating entanglements between food-making, place-making, and meaning-making, I have developed, in my practice with food and performance, an ethnographic research method of the cook-along. The cook-along is a semi-structured interview with persons (within specific demographics pertinent to my research), usually in sessions at interviewees' homes or an agreed-upon space where we would cook together and chat. I have found that the cook-along interview has afforded me the ability to harness the interview as a co-constructed narrative, 'an active text, a site where meaning is created and performed. When performed, the interview text creates the world, giving the world its situated meaningfulness' (Denzin 2001: 25). In listening to, observing and myself participating in cooking, I could come to a subtler understanding of how interviewees associate with or differentiate their food practices against an abstracted, ambiguous, 'British Other'. This intimate but task-focused method of the cook-along interview blended sensory ethnography and narrative inquiry as I followed along in their shopping, assisted them in their cooking, and learned through their responses about their food practices, both before they arrived to Coventry and at present.

⁷ Ashley et al (2004) in particular, Chapters 2 and 6, provide a helpful frame to understand national food bricolages and mixing.

In the next section I outline my research methods, unpacking some of the materials, theories and ethnographic tools employed in cook-along interviews. I focus on food-making as a means of embodied worlding, and on food as material and medium with which to construct and stage home, identities, and meaning. Cross-cultural eating that shows up on the family table or on the plate bears marks of improvisation and hybrid traces of heritage, convenience, availability and taste preferences. Overall, these materials and choreographies demonstrate a hybrid habitus, wherein the movement of bodies in service to the gestures of making forms a repertoire from an archive of embodied knowledge and memories to perform new culinary emplacements and belongings.

1.2 Conversations in migrant food-making

In 'Listening to the Food Voice', Lucy Long provides a way to ask sequential questions that opens up the significance of embodied practice in food-making, demonstrating how transmitted food knowledge, and spoken-out memories can be highly relevant data in research. In emphasizing that '[f]ood speaks. It tells of memories, relationships, cultural histories, and personal life stories. It reflects not only who we are, but also who we were in the past and who we want to be' (2004: 119), Long's scholarly contribution gives a practical understanding of food in a way that echo concepts by Barthes on the psychosociology of food (1997) and Bourdieu on taste in habitus (1984, 1996). Their ideas describe how social class, culture, and politics can be encoded and decoded in the food choices of a culture or milieu; however, Long's method of gentle questioning and dialoguing reclaims these constructs in an approachable and lived context.

Soyini Madison's description of the ethnographic encounter as a potential site of the 'dialogic performative' (2006a: 320), arising from the exchange within the tool of the interview, is very much relevant in my practice. For my fieldwork, I consulted Long's dialogical questions, which view recipes and foodways as 'expressions of identity and carriers of memory' (ibid: 118) to attune and respond to the various voices that I sought within what I have termed the cook-along interview. The term 'cook-along' is borrowed from Margarethe Kusenbach's articulation of the go-along method (2003), which brings a phenomenological approach to how place is experienced in the everyday. Kusenbach describes how her systematic method, when used as an ethnographic tool, makes 'visible and intelligible how everyday experience transcends the here and now, as people weave previous knowledge and biography into immediate situated action' (ibid: 478).

This facet of everyday knowledge within the go-along method as well as its egalitarian and intimate dynamic between interviewer and interviewee appealed to me, in its blend of participant observation, talking interview and an activity done together. Whereas the go-along emphasizes movement through spatialities in order to uncover knowledge about place (and while there is something of this in my 'shop-along' to purchase the groceries or specific ingredients required to make the meals we would be cooking together), I quickly found in preliminary interviews that many of the women would refer me back to their homes, kitchens, recipes and dishes, and were eager to tell those stories, rather than of the places in Coventry which they visited out of practicality. This corresponds to my hypothesis that considers the place of home and belonging to be formed in the abstract, an elsewhere that is out of bounds in the go-along.

I decided to focus on the food-making choreographies within the home kitchen, and I would be taken on go-alongs of the memory by many of my

interviewees. Keen attention is given to embodied knowledge, sensory memories, and imagination in Sarah Pink's method of doing sensory ethnography (2015 [2009]: 34–40), and this became central to my adaptive use of the two methods. When sensory ethnography is applied to migrant food-making, the ways in which cooking tends to be transmitted in (gendered) socialised embodied knowledge becomes even clearer, and its links to sensory memory and sensorial imaginations for translation more essential. The cook-alongs unveiled more tangibly that 'doing cooking' is an integral part of a complex performance of 'doing self', involving hybrid skills needed to prepare, cook, eat, and cultivate habits from embodied habitus and knowledges transmitted from those that have shown or told us how this is done.

While place is still an important interrelated factor in Pink's principles, her understanding of how the senses interconnect and are reflexively engaged in emplacement was compelling and useful in reflecting on the process in the cook-along (and later, in the performance-making), as I sought ways to identify and translate the performative linkages between bodies, materials, and places. During cook-alongs, I was able to utilize my own embodied culinary knowledge and sensory perception to competently assist on cooking tasks, which improved the conversational flow in the interview. This mode of learning-by-doing brought about an ease to the activity, where I was able to attempt to copy the actions of a task (eg. rolling out small discs of dough), and notice whether and how I matched my interviewee's practiced gestures. I might ask questions on how they perceived whether an ingredient was ready for use, and feel or sample in real time the textures or tastes that were being sought. All these activities were guided by a close experience of the senses, a form of embodied knowledge that is often overlooked.

1.3 Cooking along: details of fieldwork

I had started crafting and practicing a similar go-along interview method quite by happenstance during my first artist residency in Helsinki in 2010, when a local organic farmer and his wife agreed to my request to be their farmhand for two days. In between harvesting and preparing for market the next day, I prepped and ate meals with them, asked them questions about the food landscape in Helsinki, and answered their questions about my food-performance practice in the US. I have since developed this food-centric go-along method of interviewing community members in order to co-create projects that reflect the food stories of residents in Anacostia, DC, and subsequently for another commission in a small neighborhood called Banglatown in Detroit, MI.

The bridges between food-making and belonging in migrant cooking developed quickly in my PhD fieldwork, *Elsewhere in Coventry*. Over a period of two months, I engaged in cook-along interviews with five migrant women in Coventry, intending at first to create different performances based on each food story. Due to the limited availability of some of these interviewees, I would eventually collaborate more closely with Rola N; this was toward the creation of the first PaR participatory performance *Breakfast Elsewhere* (in Chapter 2). The goal of this fieldwork was to locate and listen to these migrant food stories, and observe everyday food-related choreographies and creolisations before applying socio-political and aesthetic frameworks to the next part of the practice-as-research.

I engaged a production development collaborator, Olivia Furber, who supported the cook-along interviews by joining in, assisting with photo-documenting, and, critically, by being there to be part of an witness our activities, which enabled us to have fruitful debriefs that guided each step of

the performance-making process. Olivia's extensive experience working in community-based performance projects was crucial as we could both approach the interviews with sensitivity and yet with openness, allowing interviewees some agency in driving the cook-along dialogue and process according to their available time, and building trust such that they were comfortable sharing their stories and other biographical information. I have gathered these concise cooking biographies in Appendix B (which also includes a list of questions which loosely guided the structure of the cook-alongs), as a document of these shared micro-ethnographies of food-making and negotiations with belonging, which are narrativised, cited and performed in material and immaterial ways.

Before embarking on the search for interviewees, I undertook a period of scoping, speaking initially with various figures in Coventry who served or worked alongside migrant communities via the Coventry Refugee and Migrant Centre, and organizers with the Positive Images Festival in Coventry. Given time, logistical and budget constraints (to hire multiple translators, and a communal kitchen that would serve as a central cooking location), it was quickly determined that cook-along participants would have to be comfortably conversant in English, and could welcome me and Olivia into their home kitchens to cook. Whilst we ruled out group cooking settings which would not enable us to pay as much attention as needed, we did consider paired cook-alongs in case any of the participants felt more comfortable cooking with a friend. This requirement for specific persons and circumstances made it more suitable for us to locate and secure participants via word of mouth instead of an open call, and several of our local informants pointed us to Sue Sampson at Carriers of Hope as someone who could facilitate our search for cooks.

Carriers of Hope is a charity 'dedicated to helping asylum-seekers, refugees and Eastern European migrants in the Coventry area' (Carriers of Hope 2019) via the running of a receiving and distribution house for furniture and

household donations and other activities that directly support women and children. Sue and other key organizers were warm and open to helping us find a few cooks in their midst who might be interested in doing cook-along interviews, encouraging us to make ourselves familiar by volunteering on distribution days when we could. In listening to my description of the project, Sue recommended that we approach the volunteer group, an international and varied group, many of whom had become more established since their arrival to Coventry, and had formerly been recipients of the services provided by Carriers of Hope. We were able to pitch our project and make a call for voluntary cooks in this smaller network, and recruited four of the five cook-along interviewees from this group.

Over the course of this fieldwork, Olivia and I eventually met, cooked along with, and ate meals with five women as part of the cook-along interview: Gracie, Lydia, Rola, Simona and Agnes (from China, Ghana, Palestine/Syria, Romania, and Zimbabwe respectively). Pre-interview meetings either at Carriers of Hope or organized at convenient public meeting spots briefed interviewees of the process of the cook-along, which would include a shop-along so that I could purchase the necessary ingredients of their selection, and about the consent form they would have to sign before we began the interview. Given the intimate nature of the work, it felt important at the time that we should take care not to seek narratives of vulnerabilities, and it was assumed that self-selecting participants would be willing to share their time (approximately six hours on average, from first meeting, shopping and cooking to eating). Cook-along participants could determine in advance which dish they chose to cook, and share why this was significant for their migration story or how it generated a sense of home for them or their families.

I tried to systematize documenting the cook-along by capturing only food-making gestures, mainly within the kitchen, and sometimes during shopping,

especially if a product was pointed out to me. I sought to capture only images that interviewees would feel comfortable with, in one case avoiding facial photographs and focussing on hand gestures in the process of food-making. I experimented with audio recordings (some of which have been transcribed), and with writing short reflective field notes after each session to document the process. Additionally, because Olivia was present at most of the cook-alongs, I could debrief with her, where we could reflect, either immediately or later, on what had transpired during the session. This was helpful when trying to digest and grapple with some of the affective moments during the interview, such as one case when an interviewee shared a touching story about catering to the dietary needs of a new partner, which impacted her own preferred ways of eating and added ever more dishes to family meals to suit everyone's tastes.

All the women interviewed had children living with them, between the ages of 6 and 14, and two of them had adult children, one of whom was still living at home. In one home there was an multi-generational setting with visiting grandchildren who had noticeably different meal times, and I noticed that the children (whether second- or third-generation) tended to consume food different to what we had prepared. The cook-alongs saw us making Chinese dumplings from scratch with Gracie, (who was the only interviewee who asked to cook outside of her home); Ghanian Red-Red (red beans cooked in tomato) with fried fish, plantains and jollof rice with Lydia; Shish barak (Arabic 'tortellini' in yogurt sauce), chicken stew, tabbouleh, and dessert harissa with Rola; Romanian paprika chicken, pork and beans, salad and mashed potato with fried turkey cordon bleu with Simona; and Zimbabwean sadza (a corn-based dough), fried fish, and boiled okra with Agnes.

Post-score I

A series of performance scores pepper this writing in

order to point to, capture, and collage the moments in which I am reflexively aware of my own entangled situatedness, and authored constructions in this research process. These scores are a way to poietically summarize by means of performative written statements, reinsert voice, and bring to light potentially hidden processes beyond the performance-making, and the analytical writing of the thesis.

Invite yourself to dinner

1. Locate and connect with enthusiastic migrant cooks within your locality.
2. Introduce yourself as a fellow migrant, a food artist, and story-(re)teller of food stories.
3. Ask if they wouldn't mind sharing their food story by having you cook a meal with them in their home.
4. They decide what dishes they share (suggest a regular family meal, for ease, and to capture an unfussy everydayness).
5. Go along to shop for ingredients to learn by embodied means what is freshest, ripest, or most useful material state for this dish.

6. Locate the movement of localities.

One Rule: Provide as much of the materials for this dish as possible (supporting yet destabilizing the host/guest meal dynamic).

During the cook-along, I became interested in the micro-adaptations that inform how each dish has changed with displacement, and what parts of it might signify a hybridity of previous and present cultures, in a practice of remembrance and continuity. For the most part, ingredients were quite readily available but occasionally of a different quality or freshness (never superior to those from home). For two of the women who worked part-time jobs, what mostly required adaptation was the pace of life; so, convenience food was relied on, whether it was take-away meals, prepared sandwiches, or quick meals sourced from corner supermarkets and hastily put together at home. In answering a question about comfort food, Lydia revealed to me that while she occasionally made convenience food for her children as a 'once in a while' treat (their tastes, she believed, inclined them to crave chicken and chips, for example), she would prepare for herself a simple gruel or a quick fufu of potato starch and instant mashed potato flakes, a childhood comfort food that reminded her of her home region, and is as quick as it is satisfying.

Every cook-along was accompanied with many of these food stories, often animated, lively oral narratives of memories of foods made and eaten in past homelands, at other times detailing how the participants acclimatized to food or their adaptive use of ingredients in England. These culinary 'narrative fragments, enacted in storied moments of time and space, and reflected upon and understood in terms of narrative unities and discontinuities' (Clandinin and

Connelly 2000: 17) tell quiet stories of arrivals, and of the common threads of uncertainty, and subsequent creative improvisation in migrant cooking. Literary scholar Meredith Abarca, whose research employs similar culinary chats, or 'charlas culinarias' with Mexican-American diaspora, argues that personal culinary touches or 'twists' (chistes) 'represent moments of asserting acts of agency' (2004: 4). These narrated twists and touches of one's culinary practice bring an originality to traditional cookery that overrides the tenuous (and easily appropriated) concept of food authenticity.

In intertwining gastro-politics to everyday adaptive foodways and the practice of oral narrative in migrant food-making, Abarca also notes how such a language of food 'is spoken in public kitchens and in private ones; it is a language spoken by many women... who speak the language of everyday cooking to express artistic creation, manifestations of love, self-assurance and economic survival' (2001: 120–21). Many of the food-related micro-ethnologies shared during the cook-alongs reflected pride of expression and resilience. Gracie, for instance, would insist on how easy it was to adapt the dumpling she was making to taste, or even economic necessity, repeating how anything goes (any flour for the skins - gluten free if needed, and any filling according to preferences or to budget, which she has to manage). Of course these adaptations, easy for her, were in fact a skill developed over years of familiarity and experience over the materiality of ingredients, and resulting from a mastery over the craft and form of dumpling-making. These gestures accompanying the telling, critically contain more skill and embodied knowing, another dimension of how this language of food is voiced without words.

It became important to notice, listen to, and reflect on how the women in the cook-alongs engaged with such gestures, and with other sensory aspects of their own cooking. During the cook-alongs, Olivia's calm disposition and enthusiastic chatter often put interviewees at ease, giving me a chance to

attend more closely to some of the more elusive and inconspicuous qualities of their everyday food-making. I made it a point to note the women's deployment of technical skills (e.g. if they shared tips on specific cooking techniques, or short-cut methods); how ordinary versus specific tools were used, what ingredients they would always have on hand, and how they moved in, laid out, and used their kitchen space.

Within this home setting, these generous migrant cooks played host to my academic and artistic curiosities, and answered my questions. I asked them about their food habits both in their previous homes and now in Coventry, a question that usually expanded the interiority of their food-making practices into larger realities and notions of authenticity, globality, and locality. I found myself drawn to the narratives shared during the interview, communicated through spoken words, gestures, and materials. In listening to their food ethnographies and observing the kitchen choreographies enacted during the interview process (which might include a shop-along in addition to the cook-along), the macro-politics as well as the personalized, micro-gestures of belonging are seen to be interwoven rather than mapped.

Our conversations gave me an insight into the women's work of feeding the displaced family in ways that negotiate their cultural, economic and political realities past and present. Uma Narayan expounds on the 'problematic roles assigned to women in immigrant Indian communities, as these communities struggle with the task of balancing forms of assimilation with attempts to preserve cultural identity', arguing, in the case of Indian communities in Britain, that these roles have roots in Indian nationalism in a post-colonial confrontation with western modernity (Narayan 1995: 64–74). While almost all the women in the cook-alongs believed that food from their native cuisine is 'better' (providing subjective comparatives to indicate their beliefs that food from their ethnic or home cuisine is more healthful, fresher, tastier, or a compound of all

these qualities), only a few were cognizant of their own brands of nationalism and post-coloniality, or recognized the various degrees of assimilation and displacement they embodied. These women indicated to me that the national-cultural identity in food was something they were actively pursuing when they tried their best to cook 'their' ethnic food for their families, in particular their children, for them to know and remember their roots in these elsewhere homes.

1.4 Repertoires of alternate authenticities

Parama Roy's essay on gastropoetics and culinary writing casts migrant food as a method of national participation, a material 'tenaciously tethered to economies simultaneously and irreducibly national and moral' (2002: 472).

Migrant women can be seen as performing ties to a homeland by participating in the continuity of customs, rituals and other traditions surrounding food and commensality. Exploring Appadurai's notion of 'armchair nostalgia' within reproductions of culture, and the location of authenticity, Roy claims somewhat cynically that: '[w]hat authenticates such a product [of commercial nostalgia] is precisely the long memory of the non-modern and self-effacing line of female forebears that has nourished and disseminated down a female line a sophisticated culinary lore without the aids of formalized recipes, precise measurements, and modern kitchen equipment' (ibid: 486).

Roy frames well-known Indian cookbook author Madhur Jaffrey's insistence that 'private homes alone can provide Indian food that satisfies the palate and the taste for the real thing' as a shrewd yet paradoxical exercise of ethnic or migrant cooking that is an 'autonomous, unique, and secret pleasure' imbued with Benjaminian 'aura' (ibid. 485-88). During the cook-alongs, I became highly self-conscious of my position as a kind of culinary tourist, in search of tales of

authenticity, or perhaps of 'authentic adaptations' from other migrants in Coventry. Lucy Long defines culinary tourism as the 'intentional, exploratory participation in the foodways of another – participation including the consumption, preparation, and presentation of a food item, cuisine, meal system, or eating style considered to belong to culinary systems not one's own', and demonstrates that a culinary tourist does not necessarily have to be an outsider to a culinary culture they are engaging with (2010: 21).

Indeed, this is something that Kusenbach warns about in the go-along as a method which 'intentionally aim[s] at capturing the stream of perceptions, emotions and interpretations that informants usually keep to themselves. The presence and curiosity of someone else undoubtedly intrudes upon and alters this delicate, private dimension of lived experience' (2003: 464). The suggestion, taken from Pink's sensory ethnographic method, to attend to my own senses and memories that the cook-along would ignite helped me immensely to re-focus my positionality away from playing researcher-tourist. This attunement to my own sensory, embodied or emplaced experience during and after the cook-alongs allowed me to engage with the subjectivities of embodied knowledge in migrant food-making as what Diana Taylor has defined as an 'ephemeral repertoire' of embodied practice (2003: 19). Repertoire in this case is a 'place where alternatives may be proposed, new meanings made,' according to Colin Counsell, who believes that it is in this 'comparatively unregulated realm of the repertoire that non-hegemonic views may be postulated' (2009: 8).

In engaging daily with such adaptive food-making gestures, from the re-telling of food stories to the re-making of familiar culture-specific tastes in unfamiliar places (perhaps using unfamiliar ingredients or tools), the migrant cook can be seen to embody and enact their hybridizing repertoires of self-made belonging. David Sutton's essay on the ecological and mnemonic approach to food

scholarship describes how skilled practices of the kitchen involve the mind and body working with 'constant and shifting use of judgment and dexterity within a changing environment', and how the transmission of these skills is often enculturated 'through the sensuous and sensory engagement' (2013: 302–3). Enculturation can be seen as an incorporeal copying or conversion of instructions (usually contained in recipes, transmitted verbally, or in written form) into bodily behavior, and developing these sensory kinaesthetic skills is key in improvised migrant cooking (ibid: 304-5).

Sutton observes in his case study (a cook-along of a dish made by a Greek migrant living in the US) how "'tradition" isn't static, but rather constantly adaptable' in these kitchen choreographies (ibid: 311). My field research certainly mirrors the conclusions of Sutton and Abarca, whereby in all the cases, the women knowledgeably 'made do' and improvised with 'close-enough' ingredients, with flourishes that demonstrated skillful expertise over material. Perceived lack, in fact, often encouraged creative improvisations that made participants' dishes both nourishing and original through these adaptive touches. In this way, everyday migrant food-making reveals itself as a skilled practice that imbricates one's memory, embodied experiences, sensory perceptions and imagination in ways that link positively to a hybridity of places, of old homelands and newly forged homes.

In this relational participation over practices of 'close-enough' cooking, it became relevant that I, too, was a migrant twice-removed, now living in Coventry, coping with the multiple localities within the city, and trying to reconcile with my own hybridizing (and nomadic) identities through my research topic. While I embarked on this method with great curiosity for the adaptive changes to my interviewees' approaches to food-making since their arrival to Coventry, I found myself slipping into the synchronicities in narratives, gestures, and associations during the cook-along, into a recollection of the sensorium of

my grandmother's kitchen: a mnemonic archive of my own kitchen choreographies performed away from home. The study of performativity, especially when it blends with memory, 'courts an interanimation of competing or interacting ways of knowing [and] engages in a certain slipperiness and imprecision' (Schneider 2006: 257).

The slippage continues when I overlay Taylor's description of repertoire (2003) with Andre Lepecki's argument for the body as archive for kinetic formations and transformations (2010), to see that the body is constantly generating re-enactments of food-making gestures by transforming associated memories into meals that encode identity, culture, and place. In my reflexive self-observation during the cook-alongs (and also, I would discover, in performances), I found that my process of doing emplaced food-making through memory and mimesis was actually one that required a keen and acute listening process. This discovery found me seeking a less theatrically-dominating approach in my practice to suit the quietness of this undertaking in attending to quotidian habits around food.

Cooking-along revealed that following these personal mnemonic and mimetic impulses were valid and valuable means of considering the body as both archive of migrant food knowledge, memories, and choreographies, and the accompanying repertoire in re-enacted or surrogate practices of food. From this standpoint, it seemed to me that participation would be a suitable critical method to convey a connective listening to and reflexivity amongst bodies. In the next section, I provide a background for my practice of working in this modality of participation, and the subjective medium of everyday food, by outlining a few other examples of participatory artworks that put food at the centre of a discourse on migration and displacement. I unpick how these performances utilize performative slippages offered by the everydayness of

food, and how bodies, spatialities, and mobilities contribute to the dialogues that participants are invited into.

It is perhaps prudent to note here how I approach participation, and my reasons for doing so. By framing the aesthetics of the invitation as imperative to participatory works, Gareth White (2013) sets forth the ethics and politics of such a request for bodies to enter into performances that offer a co-authorship of an experience. On one level my performances invite the audience-participants to be similarly engaged in these fascinating processes of listening-doing of the improvised kitchen choreographies translated/transmitted to me by my interviewees, to experience for themselves the entanglements between memory and body in migrants' everyday food-making. Behind this invitation is a subtler request that they find or create their own translations in performing this choreography wherein objects, edible materials, feelings, and actions contain and deploy memories and sensory perception of their own experiences of home and away. I explore these ideas further in Chapters 2 and 3 when detailing the PaR projects.

1.5 Fluxing food participations

In Sruti Bala's *Gestures of Participation* (2018), she expands on the well-trodden curatorial and scholarly debates (by theorists such as Claire Bishop, Nicolas Bourriaud, and Shannon Jackson) surrounding participation in art by considering the performativity of the gesture within the inherent intersubjective interaction. Bala discusses the economic-political (and theological) etymology of the term 'participation', and how the word mires its constituents in positions of 'taking', 'giving' and 'having' (ibid: 4). In the sense of taking or 'having a part or share', participation connotes a form of entitlement or 'assertion of belonging to a greater common social entity' (ibid). The act of participating,

when applied to the arts, realigns the relationship between artmakers and their 'recipients' into a model crafted ostensibly towards a shared, dialogical and empathetic practice (ibid: 5).

Viewed through this lens, the cook-alongs I conducted can be seen as a shared act of co-authored participation, even before the next steps of translating them into formalized participatory work. On my request, the cook-along interviewees authored a food-making experience for me by picking the dishes they wished to share stories about, thereby generating data both qualitative and quantitative for the practice-as-research process. My role as story recipient and participant within Rola's domesticity was in turn a participation in a larger project of understanding belonging by way of food-making and other micro re-enactments of place and culture. My process of cooking along, and the subsequent performances can be categorized as a form of participatory project grounded in applied, socially-engaged art (known as 'social practice' in the US), yet, interestingly, slip into resembling similar events that espouse a new type of culturally pluralistic table-activism.

In briefly considering the latter case, I allude to the rise in the past decade of food projects driven by a blend of activist entrepreneurship, which appear to take definite steps beyond mere food adventuring (Heldke 1992) through their active engagement and dialoguing with the migrant cooks producing this food. Many of these ventures provide diners with a chance to support efforts aiding what has been labelled our contemporary migration crisis, with food as conciliatory or gastro-diplomatic tool. These projects recruit migrants who are then trained and employed as gastro-ambassadors from their country of origin. Many of these organizations have 'culinary solidarity' as their end goal (Kaminer

2019)⁸. Offering migrant-made meals in pop-ups, supper clubs or restaurant settings, as deliverable catered lunches or take-aways, through culinary tours, or cooking lessons, these dinners and food offerings have been enthusiastically welcome as a (delicious) way to support migrants' entrepreneurship or social enterprises that provide services such as English lessons or business skills.

While hugely positive in being able to bring both the established and the newly arrived to the same table, the advocacy impact of such table activism is still being determined⁹. One may apply the caution of geographers Ian Cook and Phil Crang, who suggest that 'world on a plate' conceptualizations may lead to participation in commodity fetishism (1996). Food parochialism in table activism may well feed into new forms of food imperialism by way of commodity fetishism, whereby the supply of knowledge about the food served alongside ethnic meals (ie. methods of making, terroir of ingredients, and even associated food memories) add value to them as commercial, cosmopolitan commodities, whilst erasing more critical factors such as the 'structural inequalities and unpleasant material realities that often form the contexts in which 'ethnic food' is produced and consumed' (Narayan 1995: 78).

Even if, as sociologist Amanda Wise attempts to argue, inter-cultural eating spaces potentially welcome the 'hopeful encounter' in the convergence of

⁸ These projects arise from a plethora of non-profit social enterprises, one-off charitable events, or entrepreneurial ventures and include League of Kitchens, Eat Offbeat, Sanctuary Kitchen, and Emma's Torch in the US; Welcome Dinner Party in Australia; and Border Kitchen in Cyprus - to name a few that I have encountered in passing. In the UK, Stories on Our Plate, Conflict Cafe, Syrian Supper Club London, Mazí Mas, and Arabian Bites in Coventry are just a few examples of the rising popularity of migrant-produced meals.

⁹ Flowers and Swan make the case that the images and media language used to cover press reviews of the Australian Welcome Dinner Party project can be re-semiotized with the negation of non-white bodies, which serve to both reassure food adventurers, and superficially connote a 'collective fantasy of domesticity and "family cohesion" which in turn fuel a fantasy of a nation which prides itself on its multiculturalism despite having some of the harshest legislation on refugees (2019: 99–107).

different bodies (eg: in food courts, restaurants run with pro-migrant missions of culinary solidarity), I wonder to what extent these cultural anxieties towards difference can be negotiated when consumption takes place without criticality (Wise 2011: 107). While Uma Narayan believes that while 'a willingness to eat the food of Others seems to indicate a growing democracy of the palate' (1995: 76), she sees the overall lack of consideration of structural disenfranchisement in our cosmopolitan food realities as requiring even more questioning, heightened criticality in order to decolonize our cosmopolitan plates. Narayan challenges food adventurers to go beyond knowledge of migrant food culture, which may fuel fetishisms. Such a post-colonial pedagogy of responsible eating requires of eaters 'attention to and reflectiveness about the material and political realities of food production and consumption, [which] would help counter the passive and unthinking eating of "ethnic foods" that partially constitutes "food colonialism"' (ibid: 78).

This sort of criticality, attention and reflection that Narayan calls for to accompany our easy access to inter-cultural eating and depoliticized foreign food can easily fall outside the situation of everyday eating. Here, I refer to contemporary artworks that attempt to draw our focus on the inherent complexities in our food systems, spanning the personal and the political in everyday ambits, social justice and food sovereignty, politico-legislative issues, and environmental concerns. The examples I examine are of projects that explore migration and displacement through the vector of participation with food as cultural, metaphoric and mnemonic material. In providing a brief overview of participatory gustatory artworks, I trace the lineage of my own participatory performance practice with food in specific realms of social practice art. I consider how passive consumption is challenged (or not), and whether attentive reflexivity is achieved in these projects through modes of dialogical or relational participation, spatialities of eating, and positionalities of participants.

In Fanny Singer's overview of food-themed art exhibitions in recent years (2014), she acknowledges the thematic and aesthetic breadth of *Feast: Radical Hospitality in Contemporary Art* which was held at the Smart Museum of Art at the University of Chicago in 2012. Inspired by the playful exuberance of Italian Futurist cuisine, *Feast* surveyed the works of over 30 artists 'who had transformed the shared meal into a compelling artistic medium' (Smart Museum 2012). Dedicated to the performative food-as-medium genre of 'artist-orchestrated meals', the exhibition demonstrated the spectrum of food-as-medium within relational art practices that seek public/spectator collaboration, first popularized in the 1960s and '70s by artists such as Suzanne Lacy, Alison Knowles, Gordon Matta-Clark, and Allan Kaprow, all of whom tapped on food's materiality and everyday accessibility to forward their avant-gardist contemporary art ambitions (ibid).

Food as quotidian material was a material favored by these postwar American conceptual artists, some of whom were active members of, or influenced by the Fluxus or Situationist movements that sought to deinstitutionalize the art world by radically aestheticizing events and objects of the everyday. Sally Banes, writing about this generation of artists who come from working-class families, describes them as

ordinary people, and, in turn, they made art that putatively anyone could understand. To watch people walk, run, work, eat, sleep, make love, tell stories and smile, and to see objects that closely resembled food, clothing, furniture, games, bathroom fixtures and other familiar items - or that actually were food, clothing, furniture, games and so on - now seemed the most worthwhile thing an artist could help a spectator to do. (Banes 1993: 122)

Banes' description gives us an idea of how the everyday seeped into the artistic imaginary of the milieu, which urged first for the art viewer's attentiveness to

the banal details of life, and would eventually invite or demand their physical or affective participation. Her words help us imagine enfolded some of the imperatives behind this shift towards audience participation in art which Janet Kraynak (locating this in the pre- and post-war avant-garde) argues was motivated by Marxist and post-structuralist ideals that destabilized the notion of authorship, subject and objects, and inspired ideologies in collectivism and anti-institutionalised art (Kraynak 2003: 24). Some of the more interesting use of food in this period was by feminist artists who challenged the semiotics, function, and methods of consumption of food, often in ways that challenged or rebuked food's gendered associations¹⁰.

Claire Bishop speaks of participation as 'a paradigm of physical involvement [that] sought to reduce the distance between actors and spectators' (Bishop 2006: 11). I find this description fitting when applied to participatory works with food, whereby the reduced distance disappears when food as agentic part of the art enters the body and is consequently incorporated, becoming translated from mere nutritive substance into meaning-making material. The importance of this criterion allows the participant eater to consume 'with attention and discernment food which repays attention and discernment' (Telfer 1996: 57). Curator Yael Raviv shares in my struggle trying to separate food used in culinary settings from food as artistic medium, suggesting that food 'can serve as an example of the need to rethink our ideas about what constitutes art, how we assign value, and how we form a division between art and life, and between artistic medium and craft' (2010: 9).

¹⁰ Notable works include Fluxus artist Alison Knowles' *Make a Salad* (1962-present), *Identical Lunch* (late 50's-present); Bonnie Ora Sherk's *Public Lunch* (1971); Barbara T. Smith's *Ritual Meal* (1969) and *Feed Me* (1973); Martha Rosler's parodic performance film *Semiotics of the Kitchen* (1975); Judy Chicago's *The Dinner Party* (1974-1979) and Suzanne Lacy's *International Dinner Party* (1979).

While the work of New York-based Thai artist Rirkrit Tiravanija is often cited when one locates food as working in cahoots with relational aesthetics, I am more interested in whether glistening hot fried noodles or piquant green curry soups require particular cultural translations that elicit the kind of thoughtful attentiveness in consuming participatory food art, or, as Bala asks, whether the work is demonstrative of 'Kantian 'purposiveness without a purpose', so often regarded as the defining characteristic of the aesthetic realm' (5). Tiravanija's *Untitled (Free)* (1992), which has been reperformed in various settings, features the artist serving visitors food such as soup, curry, or pad thai within the confines of the exhibition space, or more recently, in a recreation of his New York studio space. The work continues to challenge the conventions of the gallery space, in that his art has received critical responses on whether, as a form of social sculpture, it actually subverts participation (Rebentisch and Hendrickson 2015), is a form of micro-utopic sociality (Bourriaud 2002 [1998]), or whether participating by receiving this gift of food made by the artist (or his proxies) brings up certain obligations and liabilities (Kraynak 1998, 2003) within the eater.

Art scholar Francis Maravillas echoes my ambivalence to the lack of translation to the topic of displacement as applied to food in Tiravanija's *Unmade (Free)* and similar works, even if he acknowledges the important precedent set by Tiravanija's use of the participatory and relational modes. Maravillas offers Mella Jaarsma's public art work *Pribumi Pribumi* (1998) as a contrasting example of food-based participatory art, one that addresses the complexity of how food can engender both difference and belonging in situations of displacement (Maravillas 2014: 164). Dutch-born Jaarsma arranged for several foreigners to cook with her on the streets of Yogyakarta as a means to engage local Indonesians in a dialogue in the wake of recent systematic violence against ethnic Chinese Indonesians. Their offering of the Chinese delicacy of fried frog legs, is considered an 'impure' (Douglas 2002) food by Javanese

Muslims. A food to some, and repugnant to others, these frog legs can be seen as crossing the border beyond the purposes of nutrition in this gesture where 'art and life can exchange their properties', whereby one's abject is perceptible, and a subject for contemplation in the realm of aesthetics (Rancière 2002: 137).

In this act of one-on-one commensal intervention, participation (even as a spectator) becomes a joint effort in reflection on the proceedings. The public staging of cookery (outside the Presidential Palace, no less) by a line of identifiable foreigners is a visual curiosity that may at first draw spectators, who ostensibly bring their questions into the relational space that the work invites before choosing whether to participate. Bala notes in some of her case studies on participatory art how the 'visceral aspect of participation is complemented by the reflection and observation of one's own participation' (2018: 133). The eating of a frog leg, or the refusal to, sparks conversation about why it might be construed as disgusting, and can be a similar indication of reflexivity.

The frog legs discreetly refer to the author's origins too, as Maravillas points out that Kikkerland, a self-deprecative Dutch nickname for the Netherlands, translates to 'land of frogs' (2014: 164). The frog legs (and subsequent projects featuring frog skins) become a metonymy for Jaarsma's 'complex diasporic relation to the Netherlands' implicating herself in Indonesia's colonialist history as well as to the contemporary issues of indigeneity, race, religion and outsider-ness. Whether one cringes at the thought of placing an unclean food in one's mouth, savours it, or refuses to participate, Jaarsma's work finds a means of 'getting under the skin' even before any physical exchange. This is not just about soliciting a response for the abject, however, and Jaarsma's offering is not merely of food but really of a chance to connect and listen, to respond to a larger debate on a violence that may be more repugnant than unclean food. Maravillas elaborates on the affective and intimate quality of this performance: 'Significantly, the experience of inhabiting the "skin of the other" through the

exchange and ingestion of food, in Jaarsma's work, renders one's body open to the orchestration of affective intensities, that range from the affordances of vulnerability, discomfort and anxiety to those of carnality and intimacy' (2014: 164).

This recomposition of author-audience subjectivity and considered care taken to invite eater and food-maker into positions that engender the sharing of their personal and experiential histories of displacement can also be found in the works of Michael Rakowitz. Rakowitz, an Iraqi Jewish social practice artist whose family migrated to the United States in the 1940s, had done a series of personal heritage projects and food workshops with youths, elements of which coalesced in *Enemy Kitchen (Food Truck)* (2012). The project weaves some of the artifacts, recipes, stories, and people that Rakowitz has engaged with to examine the impact of migration and of US military conflicts on everyday food.

Enemy Kitchen took to the public sphere of the open streets, serving food at pre-announced times (as part of the SMART Museum's *Feast* exhibition).

Although Rakowitz encountered considerable challenges (described in our 2014 phone interview) in obtaining licenses and operating within city codes, the project turned the trendy food truck phenomenon – complete with Twitter updates on its exact location – into a work of mobile street art, activating a dimension of mobility to the themes of displacement and transitory presence. The work slipped between an everyday reality in Chicago by offering a food of an 'enemy' culture in an art context: a site to be contemplative between bites, and an opportunity to dialogue with the the key storytellers who dish up the food of/with their once-'enemies'.

Food from *Enemy Kitchen* was catered by a local Iraqi eatery, prepared by key participant-collaborators brought together by Rakowitz for the project: American veterans of the Iraqi war, as well as Iraqi immigrants living in Chicago.

The veterans, working in the truck, take food 'orders' from the dining audience, and also from their Iraqi co-workers who are the authoritative cooks/recipe authors. In doing so, the chain of command is shifted to create 'an inversion of the power dynamic... veterans taking orders from the Iraqis' (quoted in our 2014 interview and reiterated in an online video). Food and drink collectively shaped and served by the hands of those who had been previously been regarded as 'the enemy', helps to defines this new participatory, conciliatory community, put together for the duration of an artistic project.

Following Astrid Breel's methodology for examining the aesthetic experience in participatory work (2015: 375), there is another level of interactive participation in the customers of the food truck, who contributed in the project's clearly defined invitation to order, eat, and dialogue, if they chose, or ask questions about the project's many design details. Claiming no other agenda than to generate critical conversations within alternative social platforms, Rakowitz planted the truck's pop-up locations near art institutions and military academies or recruitment centres, where the project's co-creative participants (pacifist veterans and Iraqi immigrants) could engage in open conversations with youths who were considering enlisting in the military and other members of the public (phone interview with Rakowitz). Crystal Colon, a veteran who participated as a food server in the truck, describes the work as a diversion from mainstream, conflicting discussions of war, focusing instead on 'conversations on the personal aspects of war and how every individual is affected by it' (2012: 18).

In all these works considered, artists take advantage of the slippage that food affords when it crosses over to the realm of participatory art. I notice, however, that food when used merely for its socio-lubricative function for participation in an artwork is stripped from its potential for poetry. Food as everyday object bears what Rancière considers a new 'hermeneutics of signs' that artists decipher in terms of history or politics, and plate up for display and for

intercorporation. Works by Jaarsma and Rakowitz clearly meet Narayan's call for attentiveness and criticality through a social invitation and intervention of commensal eating, and become part of an aesthetic revolution, which Rancière believes is tasked with

making society conscious of its own secrets, by leaving the noisy stage of political claims and doctrines and sinking to the depths of the social, to disclose the enigmas and fantasies hidden in the intimate realities of everyday life. It is in the wake of such a poetics that the commodity could be featured as a phantasmagoria: a thing that looks trivial at first sight, but on a closer look is revealed as a tissue of hieroglyphs and a puzzle of theological quibbles (2002: 145).

Writing about the materiality of food being a powerful and performative medium particularly within a participatory or process practice, Kirshenblatt-Gimblett states how an artist's 'extreme attentiveness, contextualization, framing, arbitrary rules, and chance operations' (1999: 12) in creating events and their resulting leftovers can bring out the aesthetic impact of this intervention within everyday life. In my own practice of enlivening and perhaps elevating everyday food-making or eating to the realm of art-making, I have found that much of the work lies in crafting and extending a genuine invitation for audiences to trust in the process of (playfully) noticing, listening and attending to the puzzles and quibbles presented by food as aesthetic medium: that it contains a multitude of stories, places and temporalities, and that food can divide as much as it brings together.

Translating some of the common characteristics within collected food stories from the cook-alongs into a performance concept was a curious challenge that gained traction with the concept of participatory sensemaking, and mutual incorporation, concepts explored by cognitive psychologists Hanne De Jaegher and Thomas Fuchs in their research on enactive intersubjectivity (2009). Within

participation, there is a negotiation of participants' implicit relational knowledge (a skill typically learnt since infancy), a 'process of generating and transforming meaning in the interplay between interacting individuals and the interaction process itself' (Fuchs and De Jaegher 2009: 466). This co-created meaning is the result of mutual incorporation, which 'opens up potential new domains of sense-making' that is always mutually affecting and being affected by others within the interaction (ibid: 477). This enactive, intersubjective participation was what I sought to recreate within my PaR performance experiments.

In the next chapter I provide detailed descriptions of my cook-along sessions with Rola, whose Syrian breakfast *tese'yeh* dish is collectively made in the performance *Breakfast Elsewhere*. I analyse the role of the surrogate speaker, who simultaneously provides a physical representation of Rola's absence from the performance and (therefore) of displacement. In staging *tese'yeh* as a dish that describes Rola and her family's migration story, I attempt to locate the sensory and affective overlaps, and the imaginative alternatives to commonly known values and symbols in the ingredients used, in ways that enable participants a sensory means 'to investigate how as individuals we inhabit the present: how we eat into cultures, eat into identities, indeed eat into ourselves' (Probyn 2000: 2).

In a Navel of Elsewhere: Coventry

In describing the habitus of Coventry, Martyn Lee embarks on an enticing project that applies Pierre Bourdieu's concept of habitus to cities, in what he calls city habitus, and the city's specific cultural, physical, and social

characteristics and responsive predispositions of place (1997: 127)¹¹. Lee builds on Doreen Massey's arguments to imagine place as constellations of relationships, such that locations themselves do not themselves matter; rather, more meaning can be gleaned from the way these relationships weave and intersect (ibid: 131-32). A more productive viewing of local history is afforded by grasping how it is a 'movement of the city habitus through time,' wherein the city, its habitus and other conditions such as natural resources and geographic position are constantly responsively informing how they are shaped (Lee 1997: 134).

Brushing aside the mythologizing narrative of Coventry as a pragmatic city rising out of its post-war devastation, Lee locates Coventry's geographic centrality and 'open city' accessibility to information and natural resources as a contributing element to its rise in a variety of trades and

¹¹ For Bourdieu, '[c]onstructing the notion of habitus as a system of acquired dispositions functioning on the practical level as categories of perception and assessment or as classificatory principles as well as being the organizing principles of action meant constituting the social agent in his true role as the practical operator of the construction of objects' (Bourdieu 1990: 13).

industries (textiles in particular, at the start of the 12th century), and its fairly well-sustained historical prominence as a centre for distribution and exchange of commodities and knowledge (ibid: 136-38). Some might say it is a hustler's city and Lee demonstrates how this 'enterprising', 'flexible', 'open' city developed 'a disposition which in many ways was perfectly attuned to the rapid cognition of and response to the requirements of contemporary capitalism' (ibid: 137).

According to Lee, Coventry's need for highly specialized forms of labour since mediaeval times to keep its manifold industries running has resulted in a 'utilitarian' demographic and a migrant population intertwined with the various waves of industrial developments (ibid: 138). Central to his argument is the likelihood that historically, people inhabiting Coventry might not regard the place as 'home', a sentiment that may be well embedded into the city's enduring behaviour or habitus of location. This may still ring true if we overlay Lee's sketch of Coventrian habitus with the 2018 census report, wherein the growth in population in Coventry has been widely attributed to the growth of internationals:

university students enrolled in what could now be regarded as a neo-liberal education industry. Lee claims: 'For many of its inhabitants, Coventry does not represent 'home', for home is somewhere else, the place that one has temporarily left for work and one day will be returned to.

CHAPTER 2: Breakfast, Elsewhere

In a small blackbox studio in Millburn House, six people standing around a table gingerly open a small brown faux-leather suitcase on a makeshift kitchen counter. There is a gasp of surprise to see it filled to the brim with cornflakes, and an amused laughter tinged with thick questioning as they collectively figure out and are prompted to explore the suitcase further. Giggling as their hands root and rustle in a suitcase in search of ingredients and tools hidden within, there is often a care in the naming, showing, and examination of items fished out. They are passed around, as cornflakes tumble to the ground, crunched underfoot.

I remember the moment of embarrassment when we had to find the ingredients in the suitcase. At the beginning no one wanted to put their hands there together, maybe afraid of physical contact. (Millburn Participant TM)

...the suitcase full of cornflakes as an emblem of travelling & perhaps packing items that are not going to be useful at your destination but you don't know that yet, or they seem important to take anyway. Really enjoyed the recorded story playing over our heads, felt that it set a scene and some kind of shared experience, perhaps shared empathy. (Millburn Participant GM)

Participants were asked to collectively make *tese'yeh*, an Arabic breakfast dish so named in Syria, but more widely known a version of *fatteh hummous* throughout the middle east. The directions for making this breakfast dish had been provided by Rola, and were spoken out loud by a self-elected surrogate speaker from the group of audience participants. For this particular performance, Rola was present in the studio, seated a few meters away from the theatrically lit centrestage action, watching with laughing eyes. This was the first of several invitations she accepted to attend to watch the performance that she has collaborated on.



Figure 2: Millburn House audience in *Breakfast* (2016) with Rola present

Breakfast Elsewhere has been performed in several contexts since this performance in October 2016 at Millburn House at Warwick University, which was preceded by a home kitchen version in Deptford, London. It began touring more confidently at Journeys Festival (in Leicester and then Manchester), then in various academic conferences and events in 2017-present (see Appendix A for production details). Voluntary participant feedback (via post-performance surveys) from these performances are provided with some analysis in the upcoming sections. In its travels, it has been performed in kitchens that vary in degrees of its makeshift qualities and that result in a variety of ambiances, and has settled well in residential kitchens, hosted by the person(s) living there. This choice of the home kitchen as a venue reflects a circling back to the start when I visited five migrant cooks in their homes for cook-along interviews, which was how I came to meet and cook with Rola. (See Appendix B for a summary and the cooking biographies)

I elected to continue working closely with Rola, who was exceedingly welcoming as a host and generous with her stories¹². She showed curiosity in the unusual nature of the project of cooking as art and as theory, and albeit amused, was warmly supportive, even motherly. Coming from several homes before her current one in Coventry, Rola's roots in Palestine, Saudi Arabia, and Syria brought forth a variety of dishes from her kitchen that had their regional specificities. Each dish or ingredient had a link back to an encounter or experience that had sparked ordinary memories, a culmination which produced attachments to place. In her lively elaborations, she took me and my artistic collaborators on journeys through stories of heritage and culture, which were punctuated by offers to take us to these actual places, god-willing, so we could experience the sensation and practices of these locations ourselves: Damascus, Aleppo, Jaffa, Saffuriya formed a litany of places where we would be warmly welcomed.

I became drawn to the idea that the performance would somehow recreate this experience of journeying through remembrance of heritage places without leaving the kitchen, to the different homes Rola spoke most feelingly about in her reminiscing. David Crouch has likened the experience of visiting heritage sites or attending heritage events to an experiential journey:

[J]ourneys are frequently inter-subjective in absence and presence. Journeys occur in and among instants and moments,

¹² Beyond this genuine enthusiasm of Rola (and also her family who were happy to be included in cook-along interviews and the recording at their home), this collaboration was also bolstered by other networks of support, primarily by my production development collaborator Olivia Furber who supported the cook-along interviews not only while they were unfolding but also in the debriefing discussions afterwards. Her interest in Arabic cultural traditions and growing grasp of the language helped generate a mutual appreciation which has continued even after her involvement with the project concluded. Equally crucial was the support of my housemate and friend Ibrahim Almakky, a fellow PhD academic in Coventry from Damascus who offered occasional translation at later cook-alongs and interviews. Ibrahim also provided further cultural context of some of the dishes that Rola cooked (when they are eaten, how prepared, and common variations).

but act relationally with time. Our pasts are mutually enveloped, unevenly and awkwardly enfolded in this mass of convolutions: challenged, affirmed, questioned. Moments in journeys are not isolated, but prompt and are prompted by other loops and re-loops, temporary suspensions, threads of that commingling of space and time as the spacetime of life. (2015: 178)

This journey of cooking with Rola clarified for me Doreen Massey's term of a collection of simultaneous 'stories-so-far' to describe how we inscribe meaning to place (2005: 130), with each telling grafting on nuance and significance. Ingredients, tools, bodies, voices, gestures, and homely places became points of storied moments to attend to and observe for these very translative conversions of place to food, food to memory, and how the body arrives to the complexities of belonging. The concept for *Breakfast* firmed up over three separate cook-along sessions with Rola and her family in their home, before we stumbled on *tese'yeh* – a hearty breakfast dish made of chickpeas and soaked flatbread. The cook-alongs, creative process, performance and feedback collectively highlighted the key themes of (1) sensory attention, (2) entangled listening and translating, and (3) failure and improvisations, which I will unpack in subsequent sections. In my practice, I ask what sort of performative translations and repetitions/re-enactments of Rola's food ethnography could work as vicarious gestures activate from the body's archive one's own repertoire of food memories of home or being away.

These ideas, juxtaposed with the notion of improvisation and imagination discussed earlier brings me to question the very notion of authenticity in a cultural and culinary sense. In seeking to implement the attentiveness and reflexivity called for by Uma Narayan for a decolonized commensality, I reach further into the type of 'atmospheric attunement' that Kathleen Stewart puts into affective language and describes as attending to 'rhythms of living' that are 'palpable and sensory yet imaginary and uncontained, material yet abstract'

(2011: 445). I attempt a careful listening to and translation of a particular set of moments in Rola's kitchen and her home-making as they happen in everyday life for the performance, a gesture that reaches towards a relinquishing of authorship, but only to a degree. I give a reflexive account of the processes in constructing and performing the piece, noting where these translations fall short, and how this authored representation carefully advances through ordinary moments of attunement as well as through critical creative failures.

In this spirit of attuned listening, I pay particular attention throughout this chapter to sensory experiences, seeking post-performance feedback of audience participants by asking them to share their experiences in this respect. I include selected comments that connect to some of the ideas discussed, some of which tease out the performativity of food and the affective and mnemonic subjectivities that are entwined with place and identity. Many of these intimations describe an interior imagining and a recall of previous individual experiences of food-making and eating in displacement. They are accounts where the displaced self confronts difference, including its own painful otherness, now sited in a different environment from the main motifs of memory and home (-making, -leaving, -coming). I contemplate the form of participation, and the various methods of listening that are deployed in order to make attuned participation more available. To close the chapter, I reflect on the extent to which inauthenticity as a form of improvised resilience is a way of making daily imaginative and agential choices in the face of indeterminate futures and uncertainties inherent in a migrant's slow journey toward belonging.

2.1 Telling, sensing home

Breakfast begins by inviting its audience into participation with a simple hand washing ritual as soon as attendees are gathered, welcomed to the

performance, and ready to begin. Through a demonstration on how to pour scented warm water from an ochre-yellow glass jug over hands held above a basin, participants are asked to introduce themselves and share what they had for breakfast. This gesture is repeated around the room such that everyone washes another person's hands, laughter interspersing over breakfast anomalies, or murmuring comments over what sounds particularly delicious.

This icebreaking interaction, albeit gently imposing and awkward, establishes by way of micro-storytelling a convivial intimacy among a group of people, mostly strangers, who have come together for the purposes of participating in what they understand to be a food performance. This task nudges a portal open for participants to listen and share in a snippet of each other's everyday eating habits. Albeit a somewhat private banality, it has the effect of establishing a safe openness and ease among the group, neutralizing any initial participation anxiety and bringing separate entities together who come to feel a sense of community by the end of the performance.

Here, Gillian Rose's application of Nancy's 'inoperative community' (in her study of community art practitioners) helps to establish how community may be performative and, being 'unworked', is continually and spontaneously constructed (1997). This loose and morphing clustering of 'singular beings [...] constituted by sharing' (Nancy 1991: 25) can come about for a number of reasons. It doesn't merely lie in figuring out how to collectively share tasks, but also in shared moments of unsettledness. In *Breakfast*, community is centred around 'uncertainty and hesitation' described in an earlier audience reflection, and echoed by another participant:

The washing hands of hands was a moment of my body arriving in the space and with the people. I was in such a rush when I came, but the smell and feeling of water and looking my partner in the eye really centered me. [...] The tension of being a guest and invading/inhabiting another's home, facilitated our bonding

in the performance. I felt that *Breakfast Elsewhere* was an arrival that requires negotiation, invasion and bending adjustment. (Maudslay participant JP)



Figure 3: Washing hands in prelude of *Breakfast* in New York (2017).
Photo by Ayo Okunseinde, used with permission. See also **00:00-01:31** in documentation video.

These tactile beginnings that eased participants into *Breakfast* offered the possibility to feel one's way to arriving, and to meet the unspoken invitations to sense one's way through the work. This required micro-adjustments within how participants engaged, and whether they could feelingly negotiate their autonomy and efforts within a group collaboration, informed by subjective individual experiences:

I am glad we didn't know anything beforehand - it allowed me to fully immerse in the experience. I didn't feel the need for any translation/ explanation - it evolved, we somehow knew we were in safe hands and that we would get there. [...] I felt joy, happiness, curiosity and a feeling of togetherness. I felt part of something very special. [...] The washing of our hands felt very intimate but not at all uncomfortable as I thought it might be when we were first asked to do it. (Maudslay participant MS)

I felt quite tired when I arrived because I had quite a busy and physical day [...]. However, this feeling disappeared once the performance started with the hand washing, and I left the

performance feeling quite alert. I remember feeling a bit awkward when having my hands washed, as it felt quite an intimate experience with someone I had just met. I remember the dry crunchy cornflakes feeling quite nice in my hands, and curiosity in finding out what was inside. (Maudslay participant MM)



Figure 4: Discovering implements and ingredients to be used in *Breakfast*.
Photo by Ayo Okunseinde, used with permission. See also **02:10-02:42** in video documentation.

The questions behind *Breakfast* as practice-as-research is rooted in the fractals formed from my initial research question, which I put forward to participants after their handwashing ritual in later performances (in 2018 onward):

As we become increasingly mobile, what is it like to come from many homes?

How do we arrive to a place, what do we do, or notice?

And how do we arrive at belonging to these places we find ourselves inhabiting?

I found suggestions of answers to these inquiries scattered and tucked in Rola's migration stories that she shared with me during our cook-along and follow-up

interviews. In observing, recording, repeating and transcribing these tellings and doings in the kitchen, I grew aware of my involvement in recording a narrative thus far of the distinct diasporic experiences being lived by her and her family. In listening to and re-reading one of my transcripts of a recorded conversation with Rola and her husband about the project, I noted my anxiety as I told them about how this project would be about the ways in which food is tied to the details of their migration journey and tentatively sought their permission to tell this story. During the audio editing process in particular, I was acutely aware of my attempts to avoid any inaccurate depictions or readings of Rola's story, wary that some of her home cities are closely associated with forced migration, an experience she did not personally go through. Despite my best efforts, I knew that the texts spoken within performance would be read, interpreted and performed in ways that I could not always anticipate. This is why I included the frame of experimental inquiry prior to the performance and took care to root participants in their own living experiences and memories of eating or tasting home even during the smallest of displacements.

In *Doing Sensory Ethnography*, Sarah Pink describes how the interviewer might ask questions around the five senses to engage sensory responses of the interviewee in how they describe an experience or engage in an everyday task (in her case study, that of doing laundry) (2015: 92). While some of these sensory prompts did initiate from my questions, my conversations with Rola flowed in that direction naturally, when she gives instructions on how to toast almonds in oil to garnish a rice dish ('until they are red and smell'), or in her recollection of the high temperatures in Damascus (a description of the hot air entering the aircraft cabin, and of melted chocolates that were brought as gifts) when the family made a month-long visit in 2012 before political troubles unfolded in Syria.

Rola's generous description of arrivals to place, and what she remembers of new contexts and conditions of home, is always linked to her personal experience having lived in multiple places. She believes this has helped her resilience in having to set up home in a vastly different culture in England. She describes these small shifts of getting used to new social cultures, norms, and language with a simile: 'like getting used to the weather'. This metaphor of change in environment akin to changes in meteorological conditions helped her to speak of how it affects the way one dresses, or moves through public spaces. These consequent adaptations and adjustments might be understood as translations-in-place in how migrants begin to lead culturally legible lives in new places.

Rola's sensory descriptors often flowed easily from memory; akin to Bachelard's notion of a topoanalytical 'study of the sites of our intimate lives' to clearly understand how we store sensory information in our memories of intimate places such as home (1994: 8). I detect a slight difference in the tones of familiarity Rola has with her descriptions and hierarchies of home, drawing clear distinctions in homely locality between her characterizations of Dammam (her native home) and Damascus (where she worked, married, and started her family) versus Saffuriya (which she defines as her originary home). This 'sensuous interrelationship of body-mind-environment' (Howes 2005: 7) and the approach to intimacy within the everyday domestic was an element I sought to translate through embodied and narrative metaphors in the performance, a way to express through the body a poetry of emplacement, always becoming.

As such, a number of sense-evoking techniques utilized within what I have come to term the prologue of *Breakfast*: the hand washing ritual (with scented water for washing), the feel of hands in cornflakes seeking out ingredients, utensils, and a packet of holiday photos, all work to heighten the keen sensory engagement that leads to auditory listening in participants and how this brings

about a more kinetic and tactile listening. As they discover and pass around the found photographs, participants hear a prologue over planted speakers that opens with Rola's voice singing along to a song by Arabic songstress Fairuz, whose voice would populate morning radio airwaves.

Rola's story begins like many stories, with determined temporality: 'One day we said...now we can go and visit Palestine...'. This prologue, based on an anecdote that Rola related to me in our second cook-along interview, recounts a planned family trip to Palestine that she wasn't able to make due to visa technicalities for her two younger daughters. Instead of cancelling the entire trip for the family, Rola forgoes the journey to stay in the UK, while her husband and their two older children went on this memorable summer holiday. The trip becomes a surrogate homecoming for Rola, when she asks them to visit Saffuriya, where her parents lived before being forced to leave. With careful listening to the prologue, participants might catch quick political references to the Palestinian occupation and detect the undertones of her nostalgia for a home she has never set foot in and feels exiled from.

This story was how I began to understand Rola's definition of and relationship to home, amongst the many ideological constructs that exist. Edward Relph's definition of home as the 'dwelling place of being' and 'centre of significance' in the formation of individual and communal identity (2008) is helpful to understand how Rola and other generationally exiled Palestinians experience this centre. Distance from this elsewhere home-as-place has not reduced its significance, and for Rola, 'home is where my parents and where our roots come from. This [Palestine] is my home. I don't know Palestine, never seen Palestine but I'm from there, what I can do then?' (from *Breakfast Elsewhere* prologue).

Displacement and the *felt* intimacies of belonging are a conjoined theme subtly introduced alongside the many imaginations of home. Rola staunchly believes in her belonging to Palestine, a physical geographical homeland where she feels the pang of collective generational exile and statelessness. An article by Elena Fiddian-Qasmiyeh provides similar first-hand accounts and reflections by Palestinian exiles on the political condition of statelessness with one such narrative declaring: '[i]n our case, the term stateless should mean that we are not on our land...what matters is the relationship to the land. Where one comes from. We are stateless because we are not on our land of origin and not because our state did not emerge' (2015: 196).

Rola and her family's relationship to the actual land of Palestine is one that reflects the dispossession that is experienced by many Palestinians across generations, even if they are born in, or are granted nationalities from other countries. The project of living in a place that would afford their children the right papers to travel back to this foundational place of significance, no matter if only fuelled by emotive imagination and loyalty is impressed with an urgency based on Rola's belief that 'if you don't have home you feel you are lost in this world. You lost something very important. This is my feeling about the home...[of her children] this passport helps you to move anywhere to see all the world' (transcribed from cook-along interview).

The souvenirs Rola requested from Saffuriya demonstrate a material attachment to what she deems is their ancestral land: water from the fountain El Castell that has since been poured into glass bottles as well as rocks and earth that she keeps in a Ferrero Rocher box. This unassuming collection of natural objects, of earth, rocks and dried olive leaves (which I'd spotted sitting quietly in a plastic chocolate box by the living room sofa during our first cook-along interview), forms a subtle but powerful memorial of this homeland. It was only during our

second cook-along that I enquired about them, and Rola shared this story about her family's trip, which becomes the narrative backdrop of the prologue.



Figure 5: Palestine in Coventry, in stones and other organic materials

Through material memory, proxied re-tellings and re-membrances, Rola vividly puts together the subject of belonging to a place she has never been and, to date, has not yet returned to. She not only draws significance for this geographic home from the oral history of her parents and extended family who decided to leave to pursue better living situations, but also through virtual relationships made in a Facebook interest group dedicated to people connected to Saffuriya, whether currently living there or, like her, having familial and emotional ties to the place. These social exchanges conduct conviviality and exchanges of emotional capital across space, and foster feelings of continued belonging into the present. Real-time online chats may be held with mutual acquaintances from this home to facilitate exchanges of gifts and receive other products from Palestine, such as olive oil pressed from family-owned groves. All of these demonstrate how one's sense of belonging might move through what Appadurai has described as the intersecting -scapes of modern migration, through dispersed ethnoscapic networks, connected

through information exchanged and reinforced through fluid technoscapes, mediascapes and ideoscapes, and with gift or remittance economies, forming the financescapes or flow of capital (1996: 30–36).

In recent years, Rola has had ever-greater access to ingredients to make home-cooked Arabic dishes. I note how the fluidity of capital and flow of products aids this connectivity when she shares how ethnic grocers in Coventry have begun stocking foods from specific regions that, when she first arrived, she would never have been able to get without a trip to London or via convivial food courier exchanges within her social channels. She also traces how some of the dishes she makes have undergone phases of culinary modes and fusion over the years. In an anecdote, she attributes this to the large influx of migrants and refugees arriving from Syria and settling in Lebanon, Turkey, or other parts of Europe. These ingredients, turned into nourishment, bear the same significance that point to originary roots, as the vibrant materialities of rocks and water brought back from the source that is Saffuriya, all thrown together to speak the same language of habitual home-in-the-making.

2.2 Tactile listening

From our cooking interviews, I noticed and reflected back Rola's tendency to do things 'by hand' and 'by feeling', acquiescing only rarely to time-saving kitchen technologies such as the garlic press or the food processor. This was most clear in the way she showed me how she preferred to cut fresh molokhia (mallow leaves which can be used fresh when seasonably available, or else frozen or dried) by hand, bunching them up in one fist and using serrating motions with the knife held in the other hand, the blade stopping short of hitting her palm's flesh.

Sitting by a muted television, her cutting action made a pleasing, almost inaudible susurrus, interrupted by the warbling chirps of Pikachu the family parakeet, or the high pitched beep of the smoke alarm system. Rola would check her work by running her hand through the cut pile, gauge with her fingertips their fineness of texture. This repeated squeezing, slicing, and rubbing produced a product that felt more like soft yielding moss than slimy leafy greens had they been chopped with a downward motion by knife. Our easy lulling conversation during this task brought on a sharing of how cooking links her to memories of happier times in Syria before the unrest:

And after the troubles happened in Syria my family moved to Germany and now they are in Germany. Lovely, and now we do that to take all the...from my hand (she gestures scraping the stuck bits of leaves off her hand). Most of my family, my uncles, my aunties...this is why we have good memories when I do this kind of food, I think about every moment there. It's really really nice, yea. And now, we lost these memories. We don't know if we can meet again or not. This is why we are sad. Hope when everything is finished in Syria. When I want to go I will take you with me.



Figure 6: Rola cutting molokhia
'This is what my Mum do, exactly this. She finished with the knife [more quickly]. That's it. Now we are going to cook our molokhia. Beautiful. Well done.'

When done, Rola pondered her hands, showing me the oxidized stains that the leaves have left on her fingernails and even on the knife, where they would remain for the next few days.

Lisa Heldke describes how culinary 'hand-work' reveals how we might attend to everyday embodied knowledges and memory within cooking, stating: 'I know things literally with my body, that I, "as" my hands, know when the bread dough is sufficiently kneaded, and I "as" my nose knows when the pie is done' (1992: 218). Cutting molokhia with Rola as she shared memories of her family, revealed to me the potentialities of memory linked to materials and to the repeated doings performed by the body. In listening to this narrative, a complex amalgam of thoughts and feelings emerged for me during our cook-along: on a cognitive and political level, I was linked to the countless stories on migrant border crossings and escapes from danger, indignant at the many injustices and dangers faced on such journeys; on another level, as I mimicked Rola's sawing and grasping gestures with my two hands, the muscles in my hand brought a memory of a childhood meal of rice, dark soy sauce and cooked fish mixed and squeezed together by my hand, forming oblong rice cakes ridged with finger imprints.

This is perhaps how two disparate thoughts and memories begin to intertwine, and form associations beyond a singular space-time event, evoking multiple narratives of home or belonging encountered when participating in the work. In considering the project as an enmeshment of repeated mnemonic and gestural practices, or what Diana Taylor has framed as 'doing' and 'telling' in order to make meaning and transmit narrative (2003: 35–37), participants' re-enactment of Rola's gestures of food-making guided by her storytelling of *tese'yeh* have a two-fold effect. The first is of engaging with resonant parts of her story in a cognitive and affective way that conveyed Rola's personality and narrative.

Many participants reported that they could immediately connect with her warm and evocative storytelling:

I was really interested in her story, although it took me a short while to engage with it. Once I had, I really enjoyed hearing her thoughts. [...] I found her language and observations really poetic and I loved the way she described things. Her narrative really made the experience for me. (FabLab participant SC)

I was sharing in someone else's life that I would not have had the opportunity to do if I hadn't been there and after the event I felt that lots of what I heard and felt resonated deeply - although we are from different cultures there was an element of overlap as human beings. (Maudslay participant MS)

...the part of narration, prior to the execution of the recipe reminded me of friends that I haven't seen for a long time and who are immigrants from Palestine. That was almost an overwhelming emotion. I imagine they would have uttered the exact same words if they were asked to describe their experience as immigrants. [...] The recorded voice was quite soothing and the fact that the person had an accent was making it feel real for me. (Maudslay participant DI)

In addition to the cognitive and affective ways of engaging with her story mentioned above, a second effect shows us the links between kinetic gestures and the texture of memory, demonstrating perhaps that 'a body may have always already been nothing other than an archive' (Lepecki 2010: 34). Yet in this vicarious re-enactment of an everyday action, what is being referred back to are the (multiply) original moments or gestures experienced in the body for participants, who shared how certain sensate gestures would bring up individual memories:

The sound of sizzling oil poured on top of dish reminded me of my mom putting oil over steamed fish at home. (FabLab participant SW)

Certain things in the kitchen are so natural to me that I feel the urge to do them when I see the tools and the ingredients. [...] Culinary gestures evoke very fond memories for me. (Swarthmore participant WH)

Rola's absence from the performance was not only a pragmatic consideration of her time, interests, and duties, it was also a specific choice to engage participants as mnemonic, embodied archives of food-making within a collective. There is a sensate listening beyond the instructions to the collective impulses, for instance whenever participants hesitated, or waited, not wanting to be the first to act even though they knew this would propel the performance. This enhanced attentiveness is a common occurrence in the first half of the performance, particularly since participants are often strangers among a diverse curated group of invited guests. It may be said to unlock a performed empathetic effect similar to when one arrives to new countries or cultures. In such a state of embodied sensitivity, audience participants might discover and embody an 'active or generative nature of the affective response', which James Thompson states as 'a capacity for action and to a sense of aliveness, where it is that vitality that prompts a person's desire to connect and engage (perhaps with others or ideas)' (2009: 119).

I quickly felt a strong connection with everyone in the team. I was happy to do a bit and take a back seat a bit. We seemed to share the roles pretty equally and be supportive of each other in the pursuit of the task. I liked watching how we went about it and how two tasks were going on simultaneously and naturally. (FabLab participant SW)

I did relish hearing the memories & associations of people, places, landscapes, smells, tastes etc as recalled by the woman who told us her story over the headphones: this was the most meaningful part of the whole performance for me and gave the whole dish and our part in creating it a sense of connection and belonging to her history and memories. (Millburn participant JS)

2.3 Participation and collective affect

Citing Belenky et al's 1986 work *Women's Ways of Knowing*, Grant Kester highlights how for dialogical works listening builds on consensual knowledge and is 'central to connected knowledge...as active, productive, and complex as speaking' and a way to 'redefine self: to both know and feel our connectedness with others' (Kester 2004: 114). This inward, occasionally ludic, movement towards the shifting of the self, while still in relation to others, generates a web of possible ways in which the performance tugs at the embodied imagination and affective connectivity of the participating audience. It asks them to pay more attention to the spoken words of the surrogate speaker for story and instructions, to each other, to their own memories, and to the sensory and improvisatory skills in 'doing-cooking'.

Breakfast progresses via concerted collective effort and micro-encouragements, sometimes via facilitators, but often amongst the participant group. It is the participants who recognize the bottles of spices by their smell, or who know which tools to use with which ingredients, that comfortably take charge of specific duties, listening out for the next steps. The more tentative participants are often pulled into the action by being handed a task, creating a flurry of activity and criss-crossing of too-many hands on a single dish. Recorded sounds from Rola's making *tese'yeh* in her kitchen simultaneously underscores the event, in some ways orienting, spatializing and helping participants to re-enact the event. The thin metallic clink of wire against glass played over the speakers would often induce a participant to swap the spoon they were holding and use the suggested implement to whisk together tahini, hummus and hot chickpea water.

The spoken track was key, obviously, but it was really nice to also have the track with background noises, the timing of it all was very good: I remember when someone put the pine nuts on the hob, worrying that they would burn and just before he took them off of their own accord, she [Rola] told us to do so! (Leamington participant IK)

The sound effects played in the performance space assist by situating us within the domestic architecture of Rola's kitchen before speculatively displacing us aurally to the many other elsewheres she refers to. We get to hear noisy, dusty traffic when she describes the sounds and smells of Damascus (timed to match participants opening a container of cumin); or the sound of quiet rain as she speaks of the smell of wet winter earth in Coventry. These evocative interplays between the senses effect a kind of spatial kinetic-synaesthesia: the busy streets of Damascus blend with Rola's description and our auditory memory of London traffic, just as the sound of waves breaking in Dammam's Gulf sea triggers a smell of salt in the air, which fades into a patter of rain in Coventry. Sonically transported to other cities and places we may or may not have sensory knowledge of, we are guided by our listening to spatialize these imagined places, coloring them in with our experiential memory of other similar environments. Places become malleable space, and according to a few participants, the performance space itself in varying degrees became displaced, and allowed a sense of being transported, of arriving to a common, alluded imaginary:

I found the audio-experience enchanting. I think it worked really well with the theme of belonging/ displacement as the sounds were there but not really there. I felt like they helped make the process feel ritualistic. (Maudslay participant TI)

Everything (sound, smell, taste, looks) was so in transporting that I felt like I had physically traveled to a different place. So in a sense, everything was 'out of place' but in a good way because I

did not expect to be transported to such a different place in one afternoon. (Millburn participant JM)

These examples demonstrate that the sonic and tactile elements in performance request and invite a more attuned participation, which Gareth White points out is an authored process, a way of 'making the audience participant more productive of signs and affects, more complex as a site of perception and action' (2013: 195). This moves beyond mere interactivity, as the sensory nature of the performance demanded not merely focus and attention, but planted seeds that supported participants in contemplative and embodied listening. Attending to this complex element of embodied listening might help us discern the nature of why and how we relate within such interventions which ask us to immerse our private selves and thoughts beyond visual spectatorship into temporary, performative, and imagined spheres. Participation, following Bala, 'becomes the concept with which the philosophical problem of the subject-object distinction is rethought, namely the distinction between the artwork and experience' (2018: 132). One participant's feedback captures this quite vividly:

I had a storm of memories and emotions. The sight and the smell of these ingredients not only reminded me of my grandma; I almost felt like I was with her in her garden. [...] I was also feeling tension. Everything was over-emotionally charged. The food, the smell, the sounds. I also felt quite disoriented and confused. I wasn't certain where I am. Obviously if I was asked, I would answer, straightaway, that I am in Coventry. But at the same time, I caught myself eager to believe that I am back home and to be honest I was trying to stop it. I didn't want to surrender to this illusion. (Maudslay participant DI)

Attuning: listening between

The practice of listening deeply, as cultivated and theorised by sound artist Pauline Oliveros, works beyond the mechanism of hearing: '[t]o listen is to give attention to what is perceived acoustically and psychologically'; to listen deeply for Oliveros, 'is learning to expand the perception of sounds to include the whole space/time continuum of sound'. She suggests that this expansion indicates that 'one is connected to the whole of the environment and beyond' (2005: xxii–xxiii). Listening in this way is an active and imaginative exercise in perception based on experience. It is culturally mutable and constantly in flux. Roland Barthes in his essay on listening constructively defines three kinds of listening, which he deems is a 'psychological act': (a) indexical listening, which is an animal-like alertness that helps us orient; (b) deciphering listening, whereby signs are 'heard' and read as code; and (c) intersubjective listening, whereby listening can be construed psychoanalytically, and leads us to the signification of who is choosing to listen, who is asking to be listened to (Barthes 1991: 245–6).

The application of listening has taken root in the ecological thought of performance studies. Writing of her experiences of touch/touching performances by Adrian Howells, as well as in workshops on art-based experiential methods, Deirdre Heddon describes this embodied attunement as 'resonant listening – a listening which depends on touching...a participatory listening; listening is part of the practice of participation' (2017: 19). Heddon's definition of what she calls 'entangled listening' expands on the philosophical musings of Nancy (2007) and Fiumara (1990). Through Heddon's reading of Howells' work, we begin to see listening as a series of multiplying, exchanging resonances that resists distinction between subject and object in a particular and audible ecology (following Fiumara); 'listening in its entangled form is a dialogical listening which stretches a radical openness towards interconnections

(Heddon 2017: 37). Heddon borrows the term 'listening with' from Nancy's description of the ontology of 'being-with-one-another', which enfoldes an ethics that 'resists both unification and appropriation' (ibid: 27, citing Nancy's *Being Singular Plural*).

Nancy's understanding of resonant listening which registers 'on the edge of meaning' and a return to presence beyond the self (2007: 7, 12) is described in one participant's response in how their listening went beyond the physical function of hearing. This listening gave aural, musical quality (timbre) to texture, echoing Heddon's description of 'listening - or the body/being as ear' (2017: 35) in so far as listening beholds the resonances of other senses:

I felt we had to listen not just through aural senses but with touch, as she [Rola] gave specific descriptions of the textures and timbres of the sauces for example being thick or creamy. [...] I remember specifically whisking the ingredients together and then when the voice said "you can try it if you want and dip your finger in" specifically this brought back memories of when I was younger, making cakes or biscuits beating eggs milk etc, then trying the batter. (FabLab participant BS)



Figure 7: Whisking sauces and listening.
Photo by Ayo Okunseinde, used with permission.

'Listening thus involves an encounter with radical alterity that disrupts our everyday understandings and habits of thought', Lisbeth Lipari states in her take on listening as a polysensory process that is for her an ethical stance (2010: 350). In the everyday improvisatory field of the kitchen, our listening experience might be formed of resonant habits, a 'knowing' from experience when our toast is sprung, or whether the sauce is thick from its bubbling reduction. What *Breakfast* proposes and supports from this starting point, is an unspoken contemplative embodied listening, which prompts a listening and moving in participation with Rola's sensory pleasure in cooking and easy reminiscing of past homes. Participants attune in an everyday register with other human participants and other-than-human materials, knowing how to work a cut lemon with a lemon juicer, how to practice attunement with Rola's surrogate-spoken narrative, and with themselves, listening across time and into memory, theirs and not theirs.

Embodied, entangled listening that brings an awareness to our multiplicity and mutuality as beings can take us beyond mere content or text, to an embodied event. As they listen, participants vibrate with resoundings such as Rola's humming a tune by famed Arabic songstress Fairuz, of khobez being torn by their own hands, and the satisfying glug from a tahini bottle being shaken. *Tese'yeh* may not directly reflect our experience of belonging but listening to and doing-*tese'yeh* carves a place where we can move both inward into memory and stretch outward beyond an individual self, resonating together. Attuning while attending to active hand-work, we are drawn closer to the subtext of longing and multiple belongings within this humble breakfast dish. Our physical connectedness to each sensory description (verbal or auditory) requires a form of affective translation: a process of embodied listening that transforms the concepts and ingredients of *tese'yeh* into a dish that triggers our own memories, associations and embodied experiences.

In the next section, I turn my attention to the listening of the surrogate speakers, who played a more definite role in listening and translating, and who transmit sound and affect by embodying attunement and holding attention. This was highlighted by a surrogate speaker when asked what the role was most demanding of:

Attention. I was thinking all the time of these words that Walter Benjamin uses in a text on Kafka, he is quoting a mystic called Malebranche who says that 'attention is the natural prayer of the soul'. [...] I think it was all about attention as a way of making space –and making food- for Rula's memories and the actualization of her tradition. [...] I listened the hardest to the instructions. I paid a lot of attention to the memories, the names, but the names (of places) I could not communicate as I was afraid I didn't know how to say them or didn't quite make out what she said. (FabLab surrogate speaker TG)

2.4 Surrogacies & proxy participations

Laughter was the loudest. And then the sounds of the city. I was listening all the time. I was standing straight and listening. There were only a few times when I thought something was going wrong or the team was confused, only then did I move my hand or point something out. I forgot to help out. It was like listening and only listening was my first and most important task. And speaking but like a vessel, like listening-speaking. (FabLab surrogate speaker TG)

For most groups in the many performances of *Breakfast*, there is a gradual hush as the other participants physically lean in to listen intently to the surrogate speaker, whose voice from amongst the group at first overlaps (so we hear both the live and recorded voices), then continues Rola's narrative, with a bit of a matter-of-factness: 'Now...I try to present something nice for you...*tese'yeh* is a traditional dish, most Syrian people like it...'



Figure 8: Listening in to surrogate speaker in *Breakfast in London* (2016).

Rola's musings on her arrivals and discoveries of places and past homes, and the key cooking directions on how to make *tese'yeh* given the ingredients she has found in Coventry, are given voice, inflection and character by the performance's surrogate speaker: an audience participant who volunteers to listen/speak out loud the recording to the other participants so the dish may be assembled and the narrative recounted. Surrogate speakers in *Breakfast*, on whose performance the work relies, do this by speaking out loud a recorded track of Rola's narrative that they hear over headphones. They cannot rewind the recording and there is no proper rehearsal (except a short practice session they go through after they express their interest, which allows me to brief them on the task at hand, and address any questions or concerns they have).

In listening-speaking Rola's recorded words live to their fellow participants, the surrogate speaker performs a proxy presence for Rola on a presentational level. They enact her brisk assigning of cooking tasks that mobilize other participants to help make the dish by tearing up the *khobez* (flatbread), squeezing lemons, pressing garlic, snipping parsley, or cracking open a can of hummus. This

presence of a live body performing cooking that has been audio-recorded, effects a 'liveness' as described by Philip Auslander. He observes how live performance might cast uncertainty in embodied authenticities, whereby 'the live now derives its authority from its reference to the mediatized, which derives its authority from its reference to the live, etc' (Auslander 1999: 39)¹³.

Surrogate speaking in the performance aims to reveal the limits of authenticity and memory in lived experience. In particular, it attends to the (re)telling of personal, everyday narratives that are overlooked in preference to the typical migrant narratives of long-suffering endurance at best, or else the target for any political scapegoating. The term "surrogate" is meant to echo Joseph Roach's description of how colonized cultures practice surrogation in collectively remembering and forgetting events in the process of creatively generating new social memory (1996). In Roach's analyses of substitutions and surrogacies in Circum-Atlantic cultural practices, identity is perpetuated and cultural memory is reproduced with the aid of surrogates and substitutes, inserted 'into the cavities created by loss through death or other forms of departure' (1996: 2). Roach points out that the surrogacies can raise doubt and counter-memory (ibid: 30), and this is perhaps the key feature in the role of surrogate speakers in this project: that their spoken repetition of memory within mediated words is a stark embodiment that "repetition is change" (ibid)¹⁴.

¹³ I experimented in a few performances with omitting the request for a surrogate speaker, such that participants solely followed the running audio track that would have been heard by the surrogate speaker. This I noticed, yielded a different, more languid dynamic of participation, but perhaps one that commanded more listening to Rola's recorded voice of authority.

¹⁴ This is a concept that Roach also attributes to Peggy Phelan's work *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance* (1993) affirming further that 'representation without reproduction' is not only possible, but in fact inevitable in the context of surrogation (Roach 1996: 30).

While Roach's fleshly effigies perform 'a set of actions that hold open a place in memory' (36) which might perpetuate a seamlessness of origins, surrogate speakers in *Breakfast* (and to a greater degree in *Unmade*, described in Chapter 3, section 4) critically unsettle, disassemble, and question the origins and construct of personal memory/myth, and highlight the concept of absence: absence from a home, absence of homely ingredients and affects, and these are accompanied by the absence of the (original) storytellers. My usage of surrogation -- expressed in material terms (substitution of ingredients) and in re-embodied practices (speaking and making) -- aligns conceptually with how the migrant begins to re-write herself on the individual level of adaptive cooking, using different techniques or ingredients to produce a familiar taste, and in doing so, begins a re-ordering of what it means to belong.

Surrogate speaking might be compared to verbatim theatre, documentary theatre, lip-synching, and ventriloquism, or reverse ventriloquism. While there are attempts at verbatim speaking, I am cautious of how the term 'needlessly ups the ante on the promise of documentary' (Reinelt 2009: 13). The role of the surrogate speaker is not at all to represent with veracity, a true documentary enactment of Rola's narrative. Rather, it is to reinsert the messiness of linguistic translation and comprehension typical in migrant experiences whenever there is a struggle to understand and be understood, often because language or cultural norms in the new residence become barriers. In this proxy performance, surrogate speakers report feeling an immense responsibility in the task of conveying readability to the ingredients of a somewhat unknown dish, by directing its physical and semiotic construction. The task becomes all the more difficult when due to lack of understanding or comprehension of what they hear, they leave out chunks of information, which could potentially jeopardize the making of the dish, or misrepresent the narrative:

I struggled with her accent at first - to understand, and I felt really responsible, otherwise we would end up making mush! I felt

much more engaged with her and a responsibility to reflect that to others who couldn't hear her voice. (Maudslay surrogate speaker JR)

I felt that my role was to try and give as much insight as possible to the group as to what I could hear – it wasn't just to get the recipe made. It was important to me not to paraphrase what the speaker was saying, but to try and keep what she said intact (although it wasn't always possible and was clunky) [...] and be respectful to the speaker's contribution and centrality. [...] I always relate to food and people talking about food, and the way the speaker associated so many other things with the process of cooking and feeding resonated and felt very real to me. (Millburn surrogate speaker NH)

The proxy ways in which surrogate speakers as well as fellow participants perform in *Breakfast Elsewhere* bear some similarities to the work of artist Lina Issa, whose work is studied by Sruti Bala as a form of vicarious gestures of replacement (2018). Bala's study of Issa's projects within the participation genre is revealing in how replacement works in mimesis, as one which creates (often self-aware) spectatorship in all participants, moving within uncertainty. Of particular resonance to my experiment with surrogacies in *Breakfast*, is Issa's 2009 work *Where We Are Not*, which collaborates with fellow artist Aitana Cordero. Cordero takes Issa's place on a trip back home to Lebanon when Issa's complicated immigration status prevents her from embarking. Bala, reflecting on her experience of the work, affirms Issa's intentions behind the project that 'places only ever exist in the way we carry them in our bodies and memories' (ibid: 101).

Cordero's proxy 'homecoming' performed on behalf of Issa not only echoes Rola's failed trip to Saffuriya (with similar instructions and directions for her traveling family to take in sensory experiences in quotidian events and objects), but also for the complicated performative role of speaking on behalf of

someone else as a surrogate. The surrogate role is after all meant not to serve as a literal replacement or *acting* representation for Rola, rather, 'at best [it is] a gesture of participating in someone else's sense of home and self: it suggests the possibility but of course does not achieve or fulfill it' (ibid: 112). The result for the case of *Breakfast* resembles Bala's reflections on Issa's work in that the proxy performance is one of interruptions of experience, 'being repeatedly reminded of the situatedness of one's own subjectivity' instead of full immersivity (ibid: 113). This reminder of individual subjectivity is detected in the feedback shared by surrogate speakers and cited throughout this chapter. The moments of fragmented attention that the surrogate speakers provide, tease out a collective mnemonic reflexivity within the group.

Brandon Labelle believes that when we speak, or are 'in speech', we participate performatively in what he terms a 'citational chain': 'a lineage – an ethos – that places demand upon the subject (to repeat, restate, reiterate), while suggesting a horizon of possible modulation – repetition or recitation is never a perfect copy [...] We must try identity on. It may be a process by which we find ourselves, already waiting' (2014: 160). The imperfect recitation that is inherent in surrogate speaking works to give a certain tangibility to the associated risks, losses and accidental missteps that may accompany the journey of migrant, some of who feel tasked with the labor of transferring cultural knowledge and memory in order to improvise continuity in their new home; even as they are foisted with new labours of being (mis)understood as a stranger, sometimes in new tongues or tones. In faltering tongue, surrogate speakers attempt to convey the subtler subjectivities concealed in this narrative: language and legibility as means of belonging.

I was the speaker of Rola's words, which I enjoyed. It reminded me of some (amateur) interpretation I have done sometimes, in the requirement to concentrate on Rola's words and allow them

to flow through me in some way, and in the need to not panic when I could not hear or understand perfectly. (FabLab surrogate speaker MH)

As the above quote suggests, the surrogate speaker's role is to act as a conduit for the imperfection and lack that results from speaking another person's words. Trinh Min-ha, writing about filmic representation of the Other, critically points out that attempts to represent the Other, 'reopen endlessly the fundamental issue of science and art; documentary and fiction; universal and personal; objectivity and subjectivity; masculine and feminine; outsider and insider' (1991: 65). If we mean to seek a 'definite ideology of truth and authenticity' from the native's point of view, we may be quickly disappointed, Trinh suggests (ibid). This is perhaps precisely why surrogate speakers often allude to their function as translators or interpreters, instead of replicas, actors, or representatives. There is a destabilizing function behind this faltering repetition that is perhaps at the heart of surrogate performance, one which bears the traces of doubt, uncertainty, messiness, and the untranslatable, captured in the way surrogate speakers would sometimes switch their delivery from first to third person (or vice versa):

I was the 'translator.' I remember having difficulty choosing what way to narrate her memories and instructions, in the 1st or 3rd person. I skipped around. I remember laughing with her, and feeling the others would not understand why I was laughing. I connected to her laughter. And I connect this task to the idea of keeping in touch with one's traditions but also with understanding that traditions aren't stable or 'originary' (not even the oldest ones in our families –and also that: tradition has so much to do with family), the task kind of helps break the connection between what is traditional and what is original. They don't correspond to each other. (Fablab surrogate speaker TG)

I felt like I was translating her at first and speaking in the third person but moved on to representing her and talking in the first

person. [...] I felt my role changed as the performance went on from participant to observer, to translator, representative, instructor, storyteller all combined with participant. (Millburn surrogate speaker RD)

In this mediated translation by surrogate speakers, a space is held not only for the absence of Rola's voice, but also for heightened listening to and interacting with the improvisatory challenge of collective cooking and individual remembering of similar home cooking experiences. Surrogation not only touches on the participants' memories of home, but its citational estrangement simulates the sense of adaptive arrivals and improvised navigations despite gaps in communication, edged with a sense of a waiting alertness. This circumstance describes what Kathleen Stewart calls 'weak ontologies' which are composed of 'diacritical relations, differences, affinities, affects, and trajectories' (2008: 73) that come together to create 'a residue of all the moments of watching and waiting in the mode of the potential, or the very problem of a moment of poesis' (ibid: 77). The weak ontologies within *Breakfast* re-cite migration narratives, what with its own subtle moments of hidden regrets tucked in the easy story-telling by Rola-performed-by-proxy:

I found the idea of a surrogate speaker so engaging and strange at the same time. It made me feel like the ghost of the woman who taught you this recipe was there continuing the tradition of this recipe literally by being embodied by another person. I also found it really moving how there were some grammatical mistakes made by the surrogate speaker who was a native speaker because she was repeating the audio. Often native English speakers can be quite impatient with non-native speakers and at those moments it was like those 'cultural boundaries' were bridged. (Maudslay participant TI)

I was fascinated by the idea of someone repeating the words and the instructions. The person who 'acted as' did a terrific job and I felt very close to the Palestinian woman although she was not there. [...] The performance reminded me of my time in Palestine, of course, but also of when I was living with my Palestinian friend

Ibrahim in the US and of all the times he and his wife invited me for dinner. Same passion in talking about food. Same taste. Same ambivalent feelings when talking about Palestine. (Millburn participant TF)

I was trying to imagine the speaker's kitchen. It took on a dream-like quality - half in Coventry and half in Syria (or even Palestine...) ...as a result everything was out of place and time. But it felt that it was deliberate. It was about the struggle to connect with cultural experience, and not just us as westerners/non-Syrians, but for the speaker also. [...] [I felt my role as] conspicuous observer/passive consumer ... historically implicated in the deterritorialisation enacted through the performance and talked about directly in the testimony. I enjoyed it but in a way that I like it when poems hit me like a powerful misfortune. (Millburn participant CM)

The terms and functions of surrogacy are meant to overtly problematize the certainty of performance and spectatorship (and, as we will discover in *Unmade, Untitled*, in Chapter 3, how surrogacy becomes a spectre that haunts the dis-embodied voice of autobiography, thereby troubling authorship). The mediation of the surrogate speakers also problematizes authorship in both performances: in who is allowed to give voice, and to what extent the pronouncements of such words spoken live by another body, and constitute an apposite or merely mimetic repetition, as requested by the auteur or performance in order to progress smoothly¹⁵.

¹⁵ Editing the audio recordings was another difficult authorial task which was a strange process for me, when I became self-conscious of how much control I had over Rola's narrative, even if my goal was to tell her story as succinctly and lucidly as possible in the resulting performance. My ultimate decisions in editing, and crafting the making of, and mode of the experience of the dish, was governed by a priority to preserve Rola's narrative as much as possible and to enable participation by as many persons as people (as well as keeping the piece within the safety limits of the risk assessment).

The imperfection of the recreation and translation of *tese'yeh* might well stand for the futility of stringent authenticity or authorship of *tese'yeh* (or any cultural food object) as text. Finding the gains of mis-translations and managing the disappointment of failure at all these levels, becomes a way to re-prioritize the multifold advantages in subjective interpretation. In the next section, I consider the extent to which the performance moves through the potential of failure, while at the same time legitimizing the plurality of embodied interpretations as participants negotiate how they respond in collective making.

Morning Radio Song

الله معك يا هوانا / Godspeed
passion
يا مفارقنا / that is leaving us
حكم الهوي يا هوانا و اتفارقنا / Passion
has ruled, oh our love, and we
separated
و يا أهل السهر يللي نظرونا / And oh
people of the night, who
awaited us
بكرًا إذا إنذكروا العشاق ضلوا إنذكرونا /
Tomorrow if the lovers are
mentioned, keep
remembering us
يا حزن السعيد إنتهينا و إتودعنا / Oh
cheerful one's sadness, we
finished and said our
goodbyes
ما بنسى شو بكينا و صلينا تاتضالك معنا /
won't forget how much we
have cried and prayed for you
to stay with us
و يا أهل الهوى يللي نظرونا / And oh
people of passion who
awaited us
بكرًا إذا إنذكروا العشاق ضلوا إنذكرونا /
Tomorrow if the lovers are
mentioned, keep
remembering us

نبقى سوى و صوتك بالليل يقلى و أنا عم
إسمع / We'll stay together and
your voice tells me at night
and I'm listening
/ بحبك حتى نجوم الليل نجمي و نجمي توقع
And I'll love you until the
night stars fall star by star
/ و خلص الحب و سكنت الكلمتي
And love has emptied and
the word silenced
/ و إتسكر القلب ما وقع و لا نجمي
And the heart has closed and no
star has fallen
/ ما تاري الكلام بيضلو كلام
It turns
out that words will be words
/ و كل شي بيخلص حتى الأحلام
And
everything ends even dreams
/ و الأيام بتمحي أيام
And days erase
days

(Assi and Mansour Rahbani
1974. Sung by Fairuz in the
musical *Loulou*. Translated by
Ibrahim Al Makky)

2.5 Failure, translated & other improvised inauthenticities

During the performance, the surrogate speaker repeats Rola's recounting of her attempts at material translation in having to doctor the contents of hummus from cans bought from specialty stores in Coventry in order to make *tese'yeh*. We learn from Rola that in Syria, hummus (or indeed the entire dish of *tese'yeh*) can be had by bringing an empty plate to the shop where it would be assembled to your liking. This adjustment to material, to tune it back to a memory of how something ought to taste, is a method of material translation that is necessitated in displacement. Michael Cronin centers translation as a critical factor in the triangulation of food, mobility and culture, and states that '[l]ocating translation as an essential element of any concept of what it means

to cook in a globalized, migratory world means [...]acknowledging its status as a thoroughgoing mutable mobile' (2014: 349).

Food as a 'mutable mobile' might stay roughly the same in terms of overall materiality but changes configuration and taste from place to place, becoming in effect translated (as opposed to an easy transference). In the case of *tese'yeh* in Coventry, we encounter what Cronin identifies as a paradox of untranslatability, whereby in order to arrive at a satisfactory taste of *tese'yeh* to arrive at a specific experience of home and belonging, one needs 'more translation not less. [One has to] try harder to understand what the other is saying, devote more resources to the effort, and value successful translation all the more when it is achieved, precisely because it is so difficult' (ibid: 350). This is found in the addition to canned hummus, of 'boiled chickpea water' with cumin, lemon juice, garlic that add to the translation of the dish: in effect a new material translation.

I really enjoyed hearing the instructions through someone, so there was an extra layer of translation, and the instructions were a bit removed from the person who knew how to make the dish.
(Millburn participant AW)

Translation as a means of accommodation can also be found in the sporadic place that *tese'yeh* takes on Rola's family table here in Britain - whereas it used to be a breakfast enjoyed every Friday to mark the beginning of the weekend. We learn somewhere in the middle of the performance that this dish we are assembling is not a breakfast her children gravitate to, and some surrogate speakers attempt to mimic Rola's tone here, of humorous deadpan, how *tese'yeh* competes with 'toast and butter, corrrrrnflakes' for breakfast. This confirms the pattern discovered by Krishnendu Ray, whereby breakfast is the meal that is most malleable on migration; a meal that, with the added time-crunch, is often sourced from outside the confines of home or traditions (2004:

48). And yet, in lieu of frequency, *tese'yeh* in Coventry is given distinctive prominence in being made for festive occasions, perhaps over Eid or a bank holiday. Rola's performing-belonging through *tese'yeh* resists her children's performing-belonging through cornflakes: its presence at celebratory meals is a source of cultural and traditional preservation, and a live connection to an elsewhere 'origin', translated, repeated, and eaten by the family so that it stays in memory and in taste.

These different types of translations in the materiality of the dish and adjusted methods of making and consuming *tese'yeh* are highlighted in the hesitations, mis-steps and variable interpretations that surface in trying to follow this particular kitchen choreography. Sufficient opportunities for interpretation exist in many places during the performance but definite translations become harder to agree on in collective making, where many possibilities have to be decided on, whether they are guided by the surrogated narrative, free-styled with familiarity, or not. The logistical or interpretive mistakes and misunderstandings were as much at play in negotiating participation, having to overcome a level of uncertainty, some embarrassment perhaps of not performing well, or failing to do the right thing, lest it led to the inedible.

In their anatomization and inventory of failure, Margaret Werry and Roisin O'Gorman expound (in a handy list that is quite citation-foolproof) that '(f)ailure is a natural condition of collaboration and relationality, and the contingency that these imply. In any collective project, some level of failure is inevitable. We can regulate the level of failure, but we can never eliminate it' (2012: 110). The performance concept for *Breakfast Elsewhere* was inspired by an incident that revealed to me how we might improvise with failure, when I was trying to assist my Syrian housemate in cooking a popular comfort dish (quite aptly named) 'Upside down' (مقلوبة). I had assumed he knew the recipe, so I overlooked (or found unusual) the initial 'quirks' in cooking. However, it gradually became clear

that he was attempting to make the dish from the few times he had seen (in passing) his mother making it, relying on this inattentive, imperfect and incomplete memory of her kitchen choreography and his more-adept memory of eating it numerous times.

Forgotten ingredients, a mis-timed cooking of the chicken as well as the rice, and the many mis-steps leading up to the spectacular upside down flip, unlidded a dish that looked nothing like the glistening, perfect aubergine- and tomato- covered 'cakes' shown in the food-blogs (which were finally consulted). Yet my housemate's sense of gratification was as immense as my incredulity at having achieved something edible, even close to how it was meant to taste. The partial success (partial failure?) of the task was perhaps even more enjoyable due to the comic tension, carefully negotiated stakes of failure, and the great convivial amusement of the other housemates who, with great appreciation and gusto, tucked into this late-night food and our tale of its making.

In depriving the audience of a clear guidance of a written recipe, *Breakfast* places its participants on the edges of failures of translative mistakes, as they are plunged in a convivial albeit contrived situation of too many cooks working on a single dish. The vulnerability inherent in the potential for failure in conversation becomes a place to experiment and connect, with other participants facing the same task. In a way, they experience a simulation of Rola's everyday experience of being in constant translation between the two cultures within her home (where she sees her children as being 'British'), society at large and even materially, with finding and using substitute ingredients. Performing an impossible translation, we see that 'failure's promise lies in its capacity to unravel the certainties of knowledge, competence, representation, normativity and authority' (O'Gorman and Werry 2012: 1) both in the dish made

during performance, and also in how Rola copes with the assimilations and erosions in culture, and the new 'inauthenticities' produced as such.

While much of the mis-en-scene / mis-en-place for *Breakfast* -- in this case, the placement of the ingredients (some pre-measured) within the suitcase -- did not provide too much room for substantive error, the collection of individual embodied knowledges already provides many ways to interpretively produce and transform any number of outcomes. The implicit task to improvise and make things up as they go along (which is already prefigured by the surrogate speaker's improvisations) has the effect of replicating an experience of being in tentative uncertainty and disjointedness when encountering unfamiliar ways of being or doing when one is displaced. This collective hesitation, or apprehensive agency (perhaps to not even participate, which happened in varying degrees within a few performances), created a deliberate pause prior to action, as one participant pointed out:

I especially recall the pauses. Both among participants, moments of confusion, hesitation, careful listening, and exchanging eye contact. The surrogate speakers formed the undertone/structure for me above or within which our not-quite everyday talk, sensing our way into and through the piece took place. (Maudslay participant JP)

The overall sense of collective collaboration meets the edges of failure in re-creating a repertoire, a dish riddled with translative possibilities and human error. Here, unskillfulness, lack of cultural knowledge, mis-interpretation, and uncertainty build rapport and conviviality around the potential of failure, or perhaps rather, trying to collectively overcome the inedible. Participants might engage in what Wallace Heim in her reflections on conversation within a social practice artwork distinguishes as an 'embodied responsiveness – conversationally, imaginatively, perceptually' in order to confront the 'unknown and unfamiliar' (2005: 199–200), and indeed, to confront and improvise with

failure. The surprise, delight and relief (the same emotions expressed at our botched making but tasty 'Upside Down') was almost always encountered by all at the end of performance, as participants take a moment to regard with some level of pride and amazement that which they have co-created through a collaborative, interpretive cooking: their own translation of *tese'yeh*:

It felt as if the dish emerged from all of us and we didn't really know when or how exactly it was going to emerge until it did.
(Swarthmore participant LC)

It almost seemed as if we were all part of some sort of hive-mind. Looking back on it, I actually am astonished that we accomplished what we did with such little verbal communication.
(Swarthmore participant WH)

I was surprised how some of us got everything right from the outset, i.e. which bowls to use for which task. I would have needed some time to figure it out. I remember emptying humus from a can and not being sure if all of it must go in the bowl. In some other tasks we were also not sure how much salt to use. I think a bit of uncertainty made the task and cooking more fascinating. (Millburn participant JD)

I have found that this form of embodied, translative participation has emancipatory potential. Participants in *Breakfast* can be seen as 'spectators who are active as interpreters, who try to invent their own translation [...] An emancipated community is in fact a community of storytellers and translators' (Rancière 2009: 22). In this way *Breakfast* shows us how food is a mutable and mobile text, with many possible permutations of meaning, based on one's experience: '(i)t is in the actual making of the food, in the weaving into being, so to speak, of the dish, that the textility of cooking becomes apparent' (Cronin 2014: 344). The idiom urges and evokes a leaning to hear, or better to listen with an attentiveness, possibly an envisioning of these lives of persons in displacement, ours and theirs.

I think it did create that sense of disjointedness when people tried to replicate a recipe by listening to a surrogate voice and the dynamics of working with strangers...etc. All these created a space for people to 'experience' the frustrations of perhaps grasping at traditions or a replication of what we recall as familiar from home in a new & strange environment, with strangers and constraints from this new environment. (Millburn surrogate speaker SX)

The assembly and consumption of this breakfast dish and narrative depends not only on how the surrogate speaker manages to relay the information, but also on how the other participants translate the interweavings of Rola's instructions and story-telling. It relies on their improvisations with their own food memories and embodied cooking knowledge, as a few too many hands grapple and reach across to keep up with how it all unfolds. The resilience of food as translatable text stands in contrast to the role of surrogacy which still implies an originary, or authentic predecessor. Taste, like affective potentials, and like attachments to our material and social belongings, is subjective and messily entangled between many bodies. It always moves as such that certainty can only be located in a particular point in one's personal history and circumstance of being with others (whether of the same culture, nation or set of beliefs). What affects me may not affect you in exact translation. In this invitation to write an interpretation, or imagine an experiential translation, I am struck by some of the contemplations of displacements shared in several respondents:

I once thought I had a strong belonging to Singapore. But now I'm not so sure anymore. It's been an ongoing process of feeling that if I were to return to Singapore now, would I still be able to accept all of it, warts and all, and if my home could accept the slightly-changed me? (Millburn surrogate speaker SX)

I was also reminded of Dublin, where I place my family home despite the fact that I have never lived there. I have been

reflecting since on the sense of belonging to a place that may not belong to you, or accept you. (Millburn participant GM)

When the sensed and remembered phenomena commingle with food and its many forms of making in performance, 'language, memory, affect, sensation, perception and cultural forces find themselves in a deep chiasmatic intersubjective relationality, where each element in the relation is continuously crossing and being crossed by all the others' (Banes and Lepecki 2007: 6). I explore more deeply this description of complex and intersubjective belongings to places elsewhere captured in the last few participant quotes throughout the next chapter, which discusses the project *Unmade, Untitled*. This second PaR project utilizes autoethnographic methods which are 'predicated on the ability to invite readers [or spectators] into the lived experience of a presumed "Other" and to experience it viscerally' (Boylorn and Orbe 2014: 15) and is staged within a similar food-making performance format as *Breakfast. Unmade, Untitled*, however, forms a counterpoint in its exploration of material displacement in migrant food-making as a metaphor for the displaced and dis-voiced body, seeking ghostly relations with lost belongings.

Exercises: Ground & Root

As part of my performance practice, I have developed a few exercises for attuning my own listening during performance (while facilitating *Breakfast Elsewhere* and performing in *Unmade, Untitled*). I have also used a selection of other scores and exercises as part of a collectively training on attunement with production

facilitators. Here I include two samples, the first I have created, and the second is by Ximena Alarcón.

1.

Ground Loops

A score to practice attuning, grounding, and holding space before audience-participants arrive to a performance you have made.

Prepare by clearing the space and setting up calmly, the objects required for the work.

Mistakes are only forgettings; these are allowed, even necessary for playing to happen.

Make room for others to bring their personal effects and affects, finding micro-opportunities for generous exchange where possible.

Tune to your breath and be present to your collective presence in the room.

Recall a time when you felt welcome and held by a friend.

In this recollection, sense if any pleasant sensations may be located in the body.

Allow energy from the ground to move towards this part of your body, as if a beam of light.

Imagine this light reaching for
all the corners of the space.

Imagine the light looping
through you and others, to
overflow the this convivial
space you have prepared for
the people you have
gathered.

2.

Roots

to be performed ideally with bare
[sic] feet on a flat surface

*This score is dedicated to all
migrants in the world. When you
leave your country or what you
think is your homeland, you are
not cut off from your roots. You
are able to reach deep into the
earth for the roots of your
homeland, and feel that you
belong to the whole planet.*

Breathe deeply
Open space in your body
Focus on your feet
Feel the energy of the earth
The pulse of the earth
Connect it with the pulse of
your heart

Imagine under your feet our
vast planet
Think of a network of roots
and connections
Think of their strength and
weakness
Visualize different paths in the
connections

Feel at home.

In a slow, rocking movement
shift your body from left to
right,

Continuing to rock
Begin to lift each foot from
the ground
First the heel then the ball

Feel the weight of your body,
Finding your own, unique
rhythm
Feel the balance, and the
imbalance

Continuing to rock
Use your right foot to pull
memories
from your present land
and your left foot to pull
memories from your former
land

Voice any sound that comes
from each memory
As you continue rocking

Start to create variations in
the sounds
Start to create variations in
your movement

Continue dancing your
unique song
building links between your
sounds
creating a harmony
between the two lands

(Alarcón 2011: 2)

CHAPTER 3: Suspended departures & other self-hauntings

In this chapter, I share analytical reflections on *Unmade, Untitled* (2016–; henceforth referred to as *Unmade*), an auto-ethnographic, practice-as-research performance that problematizes my original research question ('can we eat our way home?') by rebuking its assumption with a subtraction, or perhaps an omission, a hole. There have been several iterations and iterative reflections of the work. *Unmade* was first performed (somewhat furtively) in a private residence in my estranged home of Singapore in February 2016. There, a gathering of about twenty invited guests were asked to engage in kitchen activities that would treat symbolic paper materials as though they were ingredients, prepared in specific ways to create ghostly food for departed selves.

A second iteration was featured at KARST gallery in Plymouth in April 2018, as part of the Society for Artistic Research conference, an experiment that helped develop the performance concept further, and focussed on Chinese red envelopes as a material that I would continue to use in subsequent performances. In between these shows, I presented a performance paper at Theatre and Performance Research Association's (TaPRA) PG Symposium (February 2018 in London) that analysed the use of affective materials in the work, co-performed with Adelina Ong, a London-based academic colleague also from Singapore. These versions have informed the performances delivered in June 2019 in Coventry, which had undergone a development period of test performances nine months prior (see Appendix A for other production notes). I will refer, without linearity, to selections from all these performance events throughout this chapter to focus on the methods used in performance that translate and transmit this affect of un/belonging, central in *Unmade*, and the various discoveries that surfaced.

Written from a place of elsewhere, of not yet, perhaps never, arriving, *Unmade* focuses on the haunting loss of 'sense of place', a symptom of modern mobility, and migration. In making symbolic, uneatable food for places, selves and memories lost, there is a sense of self-haunting, that has a palpable presence in migrant narratives. Such a haunting may also be a kind of mourning of lost selves, as new localities and identities become negotiated and assimilated, a past existence that can be summoned when one hears a once-familiar song, or triggered when one realizes a change in cadence in one's own speech. In Richard Sennett's writing on exile, he resurrects the allegorical figure of the wanderer, Oedipus, whose body is marked by two wounds: 'the scar of origins which cannot be concealed and the wanderer's scars which do not seem to heal' (2011: 70–72). The haunting condition of un/belonging is marked by the repeated doing and telling of one's departures and unsteady arrivals and remembering of events, becomings, and feelings that elapsed in between.

Anne Marie Fortier describes how the loci of migrant belongings derive 'from the articulation of movement and attachment, suture and departure, outside and inside, in identity formation' (2000: 2). Migrancy's continuous wound is further implied here, with loosening sutures tracing back to both harbours of home: the one you leave and the one you arrive to, and neither of which you belong to. Such an un/belonging involves a specific kind of mutual haunting and cohabitation between the migrant and her lost homeward longings. The term coincides with Boym's description of the reflective nostalgic, who, when faced with the poignant meeting of the homely (*heimlich*) with the uncanny (*unheimlich*) 'see[s] everywhere the imperfect mirror images of home, and tr[ies] to cohabit with doubles and ghosts' (2001: 251). Un/belonging is a doubled haunting by the ghosts of homes and selves past and present. These ghosts do not easily surrender to the exorcisms of assimilation and forgetting, just as they might elude the restorative nostalgic's attempts to rebuild past practices. The performance alludes to this quality of self-hauntings in the use of audio-visual

materials that intentionally mirrors and doubles the site of the performance, as if to give a visual illusion for this home elsewhere.

I try to make sense of my own deictic revenant of un/belonging through Derrida's theory of 'hauntology', more specifically in the resurrected use of the term in Karen Barad's writings on material and temporal indeterminacy (which I will return to in the conclusion), and Mark Fisher's ponderings on failed social democracy and lost futures (2014). With hauntology, Derrida creates a play on the term ontology to describe the dematerialization of Marxist mechanisms in our capitalist world, turning these invisible forces into unmourned ghosts that continue to haunt us. Fisher sees the haunting afflicting modern society not so much in the loss of socialism or democracy, rather in 'the *not yet* of the futures that popular modernism trained us to expect, but which never materialized. These spectres – the spectres of lost futures – reproach the formal nostalgia of the capitalist realist world' (2014: 27).

One of the consequences of the hauntings of lost futures is a sense of affective dislocation of identities, made more difficult when our fantasies of mobility and travelling freely are replaced by the realities of being made, or forced to move, whether by economic, social or political impetus. As our sense of home moves from physical place, and social and material landscapes towards imagined communities bound in global ethnoscares (Anderson 1991) [1983]/Appadurai 1996), these narratives of displacement have likewise required new frameworks. It may appear as if the affects (and effects) of belonging cannot be pinned down, making us wonder whether belonging was ever promised to begin with, a slippery shapeshifter that can quickly reshape into un/belonging.

Avery F. Gordon's scholarship on ghosts, and "hauntings in the sociological imagination", helps us here to grapple with how this process of ghostly surrogacies is enacted in our everyday lives, in the ways we do and tell away

our past selves, and into subsequent assimilations of new identities upon arrival. Our everyday inhabitations in migrancy are haunted by a whole host of ghosts: ghostly homes, ghosts away from homes, and even the ghosts of failed future returns. Our memories of their existence, however, are deeply embedded in our bodies if not in our consciousnesses, and such hauntings, when these ghosts resurface, '[draw] us affectively, sometimes against our will and always a bit magically, into the structure of feeling of a reality we come to experience, not as old knowledge, but as a transformative recognition' (Gordon 1997: 78). Re-locating these ghosts may give us some clues towards how un/belonging could be helpful in understanding how they operate in the migrant imaginary and narrative. What might be revealed when surrogates help to fill them in, for a short moment? How else could they be shaped in our memory and how do they shape our ever-unfolding worlding of new places and identities?

In this chapter, I outline the methods that *Unmade* uses to create memory spaces to comment on the complexities of migratory belongings in an age of global migration. The performance creates a sense of the uncanny by introducing ritualistic food-making that weaves in disruptive materials within the familiar, perhaps even intimate, space of the kitchen. I seek to make sense of this duality and doubling, and how the ghosts of un/belonging might become visible and visceral by proxy forms that do and tell the wounds, scars and other strange remains and leftovers of belongings. I discuss how surrogacy functions more tangibly as a dislocation of voice and continues the metaphors for displacement, holes, and absence. I consider how futility and 'waste' in *Unmade* are performative means to resist assimilation as productive (eatable) material. I assess to what extent these entanglements in haunting, surrogacy, estrangement and disruption draw out the difficult affective experience of un/belonging to home.

It is no surprise that this work is rooted in my own complex sense of belonging to a country that I am not native to or a citizen of, but call, or called, home: Singapore. I affirm Tammi Spry's observation that '[p]erforming autoethnography has encouraged me to dialogically look back upon my self as other, generating critical agency in the stories of my life, as the polyglot facets of self and other engage, interrogate, and embrace' (2001: 708). As an artist-researcher, I have wrestled with my many positionalities within this project, and utilized both a unmaking of my current self and remaking of my forgotten or repressed memories of belonging in trying to frame and tell these stories. In this practice of performing mnemonic relationality with my selves, I contaminate participants with an ambiguous affect, and am myself contaminated (in a Mouffean sense) by their voices telling my story of many places. In this performative surrogacy, I have come to understand the co-terminous relationship between the exile (the one who leaves) and the places left behind – and how they are never separate.

Unmade is a project that has proven resistant to thematic labels, preferring to remain a spooky action, elusive and difficult to speak of, and yet affectively palpable. As a work of autoethnography, *Unmade* likewise 'interrogates the realities it represents. It invokes the teller's story in the history that is told' (Trinh 1991: 188). And it attempts to interrogate by first re-assigning voice, and in doing so, displacing the body of the author. Participants in *Unmade* are invited to engage as witnesses, performers of the invented rituals, or surrogate speakers who re-voice an autobiographical narrative as they make a meal comprising non-eatable foods. To continue their echoes, this chapter will weave in collected participant feedback, reflexive writing, and critical responses to this self-hauntology in my migration story and other affective, messy and unresolved un/belongings to places once known as home.

3.1 Nomad at home

Imagine the dot of a languid exclamation mark being swallowed by the curvature above. That is usually how I might describe on a map the tiny island of Singapore – a country I grew loyalties for without birthright. For the greater part of my existence, I ‘belonged’ to Singapore, where my family still lives, a product of the cultural codes practiced by a Chinese-Peranakan family. I was raised on the redacted version of history trimmed to fit a tidy narrative of this ‘little red dot’ connoting the island-nation state of Singapore, and still retain some fluency in the hybrid of languages spoken there, chief of which is Singlish. Singaporeans, and those studying the country, refer to this ‘little red dot’ with a particular admiration and fondness, the way one would regard something so small, yet so tenacious. Defending the fragility or vulnerability of this dot has been at the forefront of the pragmatic policies administered by a government that continues to be in power, with little opposition, since its founding. The result is an ‘air-conditioned nation’, a term coined by journalist and scholar Cherian George to describe the custodial ways in which the country has been able to achieve a high level of economic progress, ‘at the cost of individual autonomy, and at the risk of unsustainability’ (2000: 15).

My departure two decades ago and sporadic returns to this now-estranged home never fail to challenge my body and its memory, which are put out of place and perception. In writing about intercultural performances staged or written by women, Julie Holledge and Joanne Tompkins discuss geo-political interpretations of ‘home’ and how memory space is constructed within feminist post-colonial narratives by female diaspora playwrights (2002: 97). This memory space, following the definition of Gaston Bachelard (1994), is the imaginary and symbolic space between ‘home’ and ‘homeless’ feelings experienced by the displaced. Memory space, in my experience, seems to function as a placeholder, when the physical experience or phenomenology of place becomes

confronted by muscle memory grasping for remembered things, places, and people no longer there. With each return my eyes scan for recognisable fragments of places hidden in memory. Didn't this used to be a shop I bought art supplies from? Wasn't there a church not far from it? Where is that sliver of sea I used to be able to spy from my parents' flat?

Mapping, storying memory

An excerpt from de Certeau's
'Walking in the City'

Because of the process of dissemination that they open up, stories differ from rumors in that the latter are always injunctions, initiators and results of a leveling of space, creators of common movements that reinforce an order by adding an activity of making people believe things to that of making people do things. Stories diversify, *rumors* totalize. If there is still a certain oscillation between them, it seems that today there is rather a stratification: stories are becoming private and sink into the secluded places in neighborhoods, families, or individualism while the rumors propagated by the media cover everything and gathered under the figure of the City, the masterword of an anonymous law, the substitute for all proper names, they wipe out or

combat any superstitions
guilty of still resisting the
figure.

The dispersion of stories
points to the dispersion of the
memorable as well. And in
fact memory is a sort of anti-
museum: it is not localizable.
Fragments of it come out in
legends. Objects and words
also have hollow places in
which a past sleeps, as in the
everyday acts of walking,
eating, going to bed, in which
ancient revolutions slumber.
A memory is only a traveling
Prince Charming who stays
just long enough to awaken
the Sleeping Beauties of our
wordless stories. 'Here, there
used to be a bakery.' 'That's
where old lady Dupuis used
to live'. It is striking here that
the places people live in are
like the presences of diverse
absences. What can be seen
designates what is no longer
there: 'you see, here there
used to be...' but it can no
longer be seen.

Demonstratives indicate the
invisible identities of the
visible: it is the very definition
of a place, in fact, that it is
composed by these series of
displacements and effects
among the fragmented strata
that form it and that it plays
on these moving layers.

'Memories tie us to that
place... It's personal, not
interesting to anyone else,

but after all that's what gives a neighborhood its character.' There is no place that is not haunted by many different spirits hidden there in silence, spirits one can 'invoke' or not. Haunted places are the only ones people can live in...

(de Certeau 2007: 257–8)

If we believe, as the human geographer Yi Fu Tuan posits, that '(p)lace is a pause in movement', then my movements in geographic space might have rendered it impossible for Singapore - the place, or my memory of it - to ever become 'a center of felt value' (2001: 138). My memory of and belonging to this place were compromised not only by my being away, but also Singapore's clipped pace towards modernity and urban development since its founding. Landmarks, maps and memory spaces become virtually unrecognizable due to the constant remodelling of towns and land use. Land reclamation expanded Singapore's land mass by 25 per cent, from 586km² in 1965 to 719km² in 2015, at the expense of the sea, and continues unabated (de Koninck et al. 2017: 22). This self-erasure of geographic shapes, material history and cultural memory has George crisply observe that you can get 'lost at home... because what was there then is here no longer' (2000: 190). Even those who stay might not always be able to keep apace.

This shifting landscape matched my own sea-change, as I lived in, received an education from, and constructed multiple lives in various elsewhere, predominantly in the United States. In order to locate and express my intent and will, I re-learned phrases, adopted novel expressions, and lost my voice to new accents, unaware of the subtle violence of such an assimilation. David Eng and Shinhee Han cite Homi Bhabha in what they term racial melancholia for

Asian Americans, whereby 'the social imperative to assimilate [is] the colonial structure of mimicry' of Western ideals, which is doomed to failure (2002: 349). Eng and Han believe this mimicry to be operating as a melancholic process whereby '[t]his doubling of difference that is almost the same but not quite, almost the same but not white, results in ambivalence, which comes to define the failure of mimicry' (ibid).

Brandon Labelle speaks of the mouth as questioning the separation of interior/exterior, a performative chamber where one creates and embodies oneself as a subject (2014: 2). The folds in my vocal cords soon became well-exercised to make words emerge with a pushed nasal drawl that would soon pass for 'American'. I re-learned words: 'bills' instead of 'notes', 'water fountain' instead of 'cooler' and dutifully removed 'u's from honour, colour, neighbour, humour, dolour. I did not know that I would one day have to mourn this lost accent, an early indicator of my own ghosting whereby a new being would play the role of past, lost selves. In some of these places, my body would be gradually translated into an exoticized species of female Asian Other. These discoveries of racial and gender privileges contra discriminations birthed ever more fraught questionings of my Asian identity and values. In my absence from home, I came to understand how forgetting was an unspoken necessity of successful nation-building and that remembering was a luxury¹⁶.

This experience of un/belonging culminated for me with the sharp loss of my permanent residency in Singapore. Without permission to arrive or depart as I

¹⁶ Paul Rae cites Singaporean writer Janadas Devan's 1999 essay on the how Singapore's historical narratives is underpinned by selective memory/forgetfulness: '[t]he history of Singapore, in particular, is a series of forgettings. This is nobody's fault. That is how the history of Singapore unfolded: as forgettings, as leavings, as partings, as separations, as sudden, unaccountable breaks... To put it simply: Singapore, in many ways, is the product of forgettings. Singapore occurred, and continues to sustain itself, as a result of recurrent acts of forgettings. Forgetting is the condition of Singapore' (Rae 2009: 169).

used to, this change in legal status birthed a ghostly yearning of longing to belong, and a permanent dislocation from home. Appropriately bereft, I was free more than ever to wander unsettled. I would construct concepts of home from memory, and mint a nomadic American identity from aspiration. Stretched over distance and time, the possibilities of an imagined self, worn against identity politics and post-colonial dissatisfactions, soon transformed my migrancy into the impossible homecoming that Iain Chambers traces in his scholarship on migration and identity (1993). Chambers points out that '(m)igrancy... involves a movement in which neither the points of departure nor those of arrival are immutable or certain' (ibid: 5). The fluxes in departure and arrival complicate the process of cohesion to place, and change the modalities and imagination of belonging.

This concept of mutability is supported by Laura Bieger's research on how narratives of home are constructed in literature, wherein modern belonging is increasingly associated with 'a series of homes rather than to just one that is thought to be singular and irreplaceable' (2015: 26). As citizens of modernity grow increasingly mobile, Bieger notes how our sense of belonging becomes relegated to a realm beyond material objects and physical landscapes, to the imagination and to (consumable) narrative forms. Home becomes ever more elusive, de-localized and less materially specific in mobile modern lives. The ability to narrativize our belonging is a 'resource of orientation and emplacement that sustains our being through its capacities to articulate unsettling experiences' (ibid: 17). In my making of *Unmade*, writing out a narrative of my unsettled belongings away from home was indeed a means of orienting and emplacing these difficult parts of my migration experience, however, the telling of these narratives needed external voices and other surrogates.

Post-score II

A score for reflection on the practices of displacement and affective returns

Un/make

i. make a list

Make a list of the places you used to call home.

Write how each place registered in your sense memory.

Attend to the tactilities and scents of these remembered sensations

ii. make a record & translation

Record yourself telling remembered stories of your previous homes

Translate these into a performance featuring 'close enough' smells, textures and gestures, using objects that conjure these sensed memories.

iii. make a return

Find persons willing to play surrogate to your stories by speaking your story back to you.

Journey by listening, witnessing and sensing.

Return by mistranslating, unmaking, by zigzagging repetitions.

3.2 Surrogate im/materialities

Unmade attempts to stage the intimacy of home by siting the performance in the domestic space of and embodied practices within the kitchen. In Singapore, this was the home kitchen of an expatriate family living in a bungalow house. In Plymouth, the performance took place in the communal kitchen of KARST gallery, which also houses artist studios. In Coventry, after experimenting with studio sessions, I settled on the specificity of a home kitchen belonging to Mark Hinton, a community engagement staff member at the University of Warwick, and practitioner colleague. Mark generously hosted a series of test performances of this work in January 2019, before agreeing to host the double-bill of performances¹⁷. This brought the research project full-circle and back to a community member's home kitchen, which had begun with the cook-alongs in the home kitchens of interviewees.

These kitchens, when used in the performance, become a surrogate for the intimate kitchen spaces that we have in our memory of home and hearth. This is a particular site specificity that, according to Nick Kaye, affords an opportunity for 'exchanges between the work of art and the places in which its meanings are defined' (2000: 1), and allows the audience participant to explore their surroundings with perhaps a more conceptually-coherent domestic perspective. Being in someone else's kitchen, while at first a little strange, elicits a particular ease at knowing how to be in a kitchen, perhaps drawing out our memory of quotidian kitchen choreographies. One participant felt their presence to be invasive in Mark's kitchen, believing that the kitchen had undergone a process of neutralization, although in actuality not much had been changed in order for

¹⁷ This double-bill would include *Breakfast* in addition to *Unmade*. An earlier set of performances, conducted as a contingency preparation, was performed at the home of Susan Haedicke, and prior that, in my own residence in Leamington, which I moved out of a few months after the performance. Refer to Appendix A for details of performances.

the performance to be 'hosted', parasite-like (with a nod to Michel Serres), in the space:

Memories of kitchens intervened in *Unmade*. The kitchen we were in is also someone's kitchen, yet it was made available for the performance, it was somehow as neutral as it could, and I felt it in a way. Like it was made clear for us - I was somehow looking for the clues of life in the place - sometimes I felt like we were invading the place a bit. (Coventry participant EG)

A few others, in turn, felt very welcome into this homely memory space:

Entering the cosy kitchen, feeling so welcomed, surrounded by such a nice smell, it almost felt like I was entering a memory... even though we would have been strangers, something in that kitchen helped us connect. It was like bringing us together while doing something foreign for our cultures, that was at the same time reminiscent of our homes. (Coventry Participant ET)

I was privileged to be invited into someone's home. Doesn't happen everyday, so it was special and human scale and it established what we were reflecting on: home, and the places we grew up, family space. It felt appropriate to be in someone's home. (Coventry Participant JR)

Participants of *Unmade* were invited (by facilitators or myself) to assist in simple, repetitive hand-work and required a collective application and embodied knowledge of cooking: tearing, soaking, twisting, pounding, rolling, squeezing, filling food-like materials. What was unusual was the use of symbolic paper¹⁸

¹⁸ Joss paper, burnt as part of ancestral deity worship in Taoist ritual, was another material experimented with in the Singapore iteration, and considered taboo if used outside the the context of sending provisions to wandering spirits who revisit the living during the Hungry Ghost Festival. In Singapore, the resulting joss paper dish — which resembled spring rolls filled with cabbage and orange peel — was cooked on a barbecue grill, where the rolls reduced fragrantly to ash. As a material, joss paper hinted too obliquely at hauntology and required additional complex translations that I found unwieldy, to name a few reasons for my opting to focus on the red packets instead.

objects (specifically, red packets) as a key ingredient mixed into other edible materials.



Figure 9: Red packets used in *Unmade*

Used in Chinese-based traditions, these red envelopes containing gifts of money are given out as tokens of good luck and prosperity during celebratory or auspicious occasions, such as weddings and birthdays (red being a color of good luck). When I left Singapore for the United States for undergraduate studies (a move I knew would not lead to imminent return), I was gifted these small red envelopes, filled with money and the propitious blessings by my ineloquent family elders. Whether spent or still holding currency, they have become a belonging that I carry from place to place. These red paper objects also come with their difficult baggage when I begin to read in them my own discontent about the ways I have learnt to perceive value in monetary currency and to accept the necessary sacrifices in order to generate more of it to measure worth.

In the most recent performances of *Unmade* (in Coventry), participants were invited to a moment of attunement, after which there was an introduction of the practice of surrogate-speaking (or a re-introduction of the concept, if they had

just experienced the previous performance of *Breakfast*). Asked to listen-speak out loud some of the intentions of the performance that I whisper in their ears, audiences thus received some of the basic instructions on what they could expect. They were asked to enter in pairs with a stranger or alone, into a warm kitchen where a broth was beginning to brew, and a television was playing a video-cassette recording of me in the kitchen of a previous home, busy with cooking a soup.



Figure 10: Audience participants in *Unmade* in Singapore (2016).
Photo by Sam Chow, used with permission.

Previous performance iterations (in October 2018 and January 2019) featured a projection of similar videos recorded of me within the same kitchen space as performance space, such that the images matched or ghosted the actual space of the performance. Deciding that the projector felt like an intrusive mechanical technology that imbued the performance with a theatrical quality that externalized this ghosting metaphor, I elected to contain the recorded moving images in the boxed frame of the television, a means of tuning the performance to the period I was recalling in my childhood, and a nod to the



Figure 11: Participants and surrogate speaker in *Unmade* in Plymouth (2018). Photo by Raul Barcelona, used with permission.

techno-nostalgic anachronism that Fisher alludes to in *Ghosts of my Life* (2014). Once participants arrived into the kitchen, I tried to chat with the first entrants to ascertain their levels of comfort, and to engage a willing surrogate speaker to lend their voice in re-speaking a pre-recorded narrative into a microphone while seated in an armchair (I cover more details on the role and practice of surrogate speaking in section 3.4). I asked participants to lend their hands to the food-making tasks on the table, which held a bowl of pinkish filling and wonton wrappers on one end, and a stack of red packets bound by string on the other. Cutting the string from the stack of red packets, I demonstrated to participants how to rip the red packets open, empty them of the salt they might contain, tear them into little pieces, and soak them in water (refer to *Unmade* documentation **01:21-01:38**).

To the next set of participants, I might show them how to make Chinese dumplings, placing a teaspoon of the pink meat-like filling in the centre, and showing the way to simply seal the edges, or else more sophisticated ways of

crimping them shut so that they turned into variously shaped forms. To another set I might show how to untwist the bits of cut string to separate the threads that formed them, a gesture which found resonance with a few participants:

pulling apart the string triggered really strong memories in me. I remembered the activity of 'breaking beans' which is an activity that is associated with women in my culture and because it is such a dull, time-consuming activity that only requires you to use your hands it is always a good opportunity to socialize (usually with other women). (Coventry participant TI)

I liked the sensory and calming experiences of making dumplings and separating out the strings of 'vermicelli'. It was a more mindful experience of preparation than I usually have when cooking in my own house for my family! (Coventry participant AM)

Over the next beats of the performance, as I moved about to refill bowls, or tended to the broth, participants would slowly notice that I had taken the shredded red paper, now soaked and pulverised in the blender, and mixed it with seasonings and the salt extracted from the red packets, turning these materials into a filling for the dumplings that were being folded. The untwisted string, too, became a springy pile of 'noodles', which were then blanched, and bowled. One or two participants would be shown how to cook the dumplings, some by boiling, and the rest by pan-frying. Cooking all the materials until none of the 'raw' was left and plating the finished product generally marked the conclusion of the performance, which I asked the audience to take through to the other room where the performance had begun.

The string soup and the paper dumpling filling were witty and frustrating (I was hungry!), and made me think about lots of things [such as] the Clangers' Blue String Pudding. (Coventry participant RH)

The revelation came slowly and was uncertain, so much so that the revelation could be described as a mass uncertainty where tension built without release and eventually petered out.

(Leamington participant BM)

It wasn't clear that we were 'cooking' - the fact that we were tearing up pieces of paper and sorting string: 'What's going on?'

(Coventry participant JR)

3.3 Cooking with holes

Cooking becomes a method of translating the symbols present in the materials, a 'necessary articulation' (Lévi-Strauss 2008: 42) that pits cultural form against a symbolic materialist nature. The symbolism of care, prosperity, plenty and propriety associated with red packets and joss paper can be seen to fortify the dish with blessings and well-wishes for a good life, and even an after-life. Yet these very disruptive substances render the cooking efforts futile, and the dish indigestible. The non-edible part of the dish works as disorderly material, an irritant and a reproduction of what it aims to disrupt (Bennett 2010: 42). By inserting a non-nutritive 'hole' into edible materials and its preparation, *Unmade* intervenes with the nurturing effects and reading of food as homely representation. This version of food performs as an 'actant inside and alongside intention-forming, morality-(dis)obeying, language-using, reflexivity-wielding, and culture-making human beings' (ibid: 39).

The performance seemed to have [as its] central conceit / theme at multiple levels [of] creating a dish that would be thrown away not because it didn't have the right elements, smell and correct preparation process but because it contained some elements that we can't 'digest'. (Leamington participant JL)

These red packets, thus incorporated into and cooked as if they were food, began to take on a new symbolism. Despite its incorporation by cooking, the

disruptive paper continued to stand as its own materiality: a hole in the food it was not – to paraphrase artist Carl Andre’s epithet on holes: ‘a thing is a hole in a thing it is not’ (cited by Smithson 1996: 95). This renegade material actant – a filling that does not fill – became a hole by being not food, ‘a thing it is not’ in order to connote the sense of longing to un/belong in a home where I never felt truly at ease. The wounds of migration, as described by Chambers, Fortier and Sennett earlier in this chapter, were given an apt metaphor in these performative holes and absences and the materialization of dis/comfort food. When introduced to food, the materiality of red packets (their failure at being edible) catalysed the metaphor, by creating a subtle effect of futility and abjection. Seasoning and careful preparation did not convert it into something delicious to be eaten, even if it smelled and tasted good (as participants often attested to in our post-performance dialogues).

At this point the dumpling making became futile however something about the satisfaction of the food making ritual meant that I didn't stop making them. Instead this sparked a curiosity in to where the performance would go next. (Leamington Participant AB)

Unmade’s usage of non-food materials within the process of cooking has several precedents in contemporary conceptual art. A few projects, in particular, offer a glimpse into how using culinary methods on non-food materials may reveal hidden critiques by complicating the notion of what is of worth and what becomes devalued. This interplay of cooking non-food is seen in Wang Jin’s *Quick Stir-Frying RMB* (1995), wherein the artist rented a stall in Beijing’s Donganmen night market and cooked a kilo of coins in a wok (Hung 2000: 114). The performance literalized the Chinese phrase equivalent to ‘making a quick buck’: frying money. Similar to *Unmade* (and its use of red packets devoid of money and yet still connoting the luck associated with money), the use of a substitution of materials in cooking offers a subtle

(perhaps ironic) sense of discontent, and a commentary on the way we create worth or perceive value, in this case that of cash money.

Art duo Ota and Fitch's *Orphic Memory Sausage* (2008) made a similarly playful mash-up of food with non-food by inviting audience members to bring an object of memory, which would be mascerated, filled into a casing, and turned into sausages using a traditional sausage-making device (Raviv 2010). This project, like *Unmade*, engaged a sensory and participatory modality to explore 'themes such as consumption, the value of art, and the relationship between art and the everyday' (ibid: 17). Their performance requested not only the participation of spectators in providing memory objects, but also their handwork in making inedible food objects by 'breaking up objects that supposedly carry cherished memories... followed by a gentle act of mixing everything by hand into a soft paste and carefully stuffing it into the sausage skins' in an exploration of how artifacts of memory might be preserved or consumed (ibid: 16).

In addition, Gordon Matta-Clark's playful and performative early work with food and cooking provide a clearer lineage of *Unmade*'s foray into entropic narratives. In *Photo-Fry* (1969) Matta-Clark sent as Christmas cards Polaroids that had been dropped into a deep fryer, their melted photographic surface bonded with gold-leaf (Lee 2001: 42). The distorted image of a memory object (photograph) physicalized the entropic registers — the tendency for objects (and even the memories of objects) to fall apart. As Lee points out, the 'propriety of the [gold] material did less to illumine the browning image than to dramatize its implacable baseness... The pathetically residual quality of the object, little more than a blackish smear overlaid by a film of gold leaf, is very much a paean to entropy and process art' (2001).

The meeting of food's homely associations and cultural meanings and the auspicious messages in the form of symbolic papers yield a void, a hole in edibility. By inserting a non-nutritive 'hole' into the semiotics of edible materials, *Unmade* makes this absence of food present, and in doing so, intervenes with the nurturing effects and reading of food as homely representation. Food falls into the realm of what Bourriaud has termed the exformal: 'the site where border negotiations unfold between what is rejected and what is admitted, products and waste' (2015: x). It is considered waste and wasteful, even though this new non-food material creates art, in its affect and artifice, and becomes a way to critique the origins of displacement and mourn the loss of a home. According to one participant:

I had a suspicion that we were stuffing the dumplings with paper, and then when that was confirmed and I was cooking them I zig zagged between wanting to cook them really perfectly (because that is what I would usually want to do in a kitchen) and being very angry about the food waste!! (Coventry participant JV)

Bourriaud's concept of the exform in art as 'reversing the thermodynamic machine' (2015: ix) gains timbre with Robert Smithson's 'dialectics of entropic change' that he extrapolated from the second law of thermodynamics. Smithson noticed a trend within the milieu of 1960s conceptual art, which used materials and process to gesture towards a gradual equilibrium to 'neutralize the myth of progress' (1996: 315). *Unmade* likewise questions this myth of progress by bringing to disorder the homely materials of food, recomposing them through the metaphor of holes and voids, to set a feast for the hungry ghosts of un/belongings and the notions of futures lost. The (re)composition of these actants (stove, pot, pastry wrappers, red packets, storyteller, researchers, and soon, attuned eaters) turns the dumpling from object of ethnic culture to aesthetic experience, or according to Rancière, this dumpling no longer eatable but still sensible, is 're- aestheticized in a new way... The prose of everyday life

becomes a huge, fantastic poem. Any object can cross the border and repopulate the realm of aesthetic experience' (Rancière 2002: 144).

Entropy further corroborates the ghostliness of the project when we consider, as Karen Barad entreats us to, that hauntings are not mere immaterial memory, and they are easily eliminated from existing material and temporal entanglements (2017: G107). The by-products of un/belonging still have dynamic indeterminate usefulness. The intangible-symbolic inedible food detritus leftover in *Unmade* repeatedly haunts and entangles with other bodies to handle with care the failed mournings of un/belonging. This recomposition and re-articulation of disjecta membra from Singapore works, as Martyn Hudson puts it, to create an archival gesture for these past selves within the continuity of our living beingness (Hudson 2017: 130). Whilst native Singaporean participants might be well placed to decode the hidden critique of materialistic and consumerist culture in the entropic (mis)use of the red packets and joss paper in this artistic gesture, it is likely that the migrants in the same performance (in Singapore) could engage more affectively with the quiet registers of displacement, and how this is felt as a process of un/belonging.

Attending to the ghosts of un/belongings requires an attending to the discomfiting voids, and affective dis-junctures in migration. These ruptures bring to focus the potentialities of un/belonging within the archive of migrant narratives, and perhaps create space for a re-imagination of what it might mean to belong when dislocated, and how belonging requires a ghostly labour of care and attention. This attending might allow us to 'behold the spectres of ontological indeterminacy' (Barad 2017: G113) in un/belonging, and its dynamism in multiple places, and temporalities, both in memory and in materiality. For *Unmade*, material surrogacy helps support the point of bodies not being in the right place. Non-food materials used in food-making become surrogate for what would have been edible, their absence perhaps bringing to

a troubling realization that these improvised repetitions of ghostly food-making cannot reproduce a feeling of belonging, perhaps because it was never there.

3.4 Mouthing doubling

Classroom in Central School of Speech and Drama Bankside campus in London. A paper is being delivered at the *TaPRA Postgraduate Symposium* on a cold day in February, 2018.

Adelina is seated at a table with an empty chair beside her, intently focussed on speaking out loud a pre-recorded text that she hears over headphones from an mp3 player. When she is done, Carmen takes over the speaking and begins to deliver her paper, passing the read pages to Adelina, who tears them into pieces.

As she rips the pages, Adelina hums various folk songs from her childhood in Singapore (including Bengawan Solo, a nostalgic Malay song about the river Solo). She places the torn pieces of paper into a small bowl, to overflowing.

When Carmen hands the last page containing the final paragraph to Adelina to read, she takes the empty seat at the table. Carmen removes a pair of chopsticks from their sleeve and faces the pile of shredded and folded pages barely contained by the bowl.

ADELINA (reciting on behalf of Carmen, who picks the bowl up, and using the chopsticks, begins to eat the torn pieces of paper from it as Adelina recites):

Between listening to a story carved out of memory and forgotten spaces and places, and inhaling the sticky smells of fried bean-paste-paper mixed with aromatic ash, one might begin to feel the remnant steam from the stove mixing with the thick humidity from being so close to the equator, causing the newspaper you

are sitting on to leave its inky imprint on your ankles. A familiar strain of a folksong barely being hummed is echoed in the raindrops splattering the terracotta tiles just outside the kitchen. If we pause long enough, we might see some sense in this nonsensical imagined ritual that has crafted a possibility to remember what it was like to once belong. And it is in this sensory, felt, memory space of un/belonging elsewhere, we might re-member [Yi Fu] Tuan's observation: 'Wherever we are, our senses immediately bind us to it. Think and we are out of our senses, detached and elsewhere. Thinking makes us an exile' (2011).

Marvin Carlson has framed his take on theatrical repetition and mimesis as hauntings, so that 'one of the universals of performance, both East and West, is its ghostliness, its sense of return, the uncanny but inescapable impression imposed upon its spectators' (2006: 1). Carlson then identifies theatre 'as a site of the continuing reinforcement of memory by surrogation' (ibid: 2). This key link of repetition between memory and surrogation perhaps turns *Unmade* from an intertextual into an interrelational form of postmodernist performance. The result of this is a shared and affective experience of conjuring one's memories of places and spaces, specifically those created within the home kitchen.

Viewed through this lens, the surrogacy performance that I request of participants provides an embodied translation of the affect of this estranged un/belonging, of how the body feels a sense of dis/connection to what was once familiar, but is no longer. The hauntology of unsteady departures and arrivals, displaced memories and sustained sense of dis-inhabitation are re-inscribed by the physical and vocal recitations: doing and telling of home by multiple surrogates. In this proxy performance of cooking in a kitchen, and of listening-speaking of a pre-recorded auto-ethnographic text, audience members are drawn into a 'reenactment of events already enacted, the reexperience of emotions already experienced' (Carlson 2006: 3).

In the above excerpt of the paper presentation at the TaPRA postgraduate symposium, my colleague Adelina performed the role of surrogate speaker for parts of the paper's delivery at my request. Although we had a briefing and quick rehearsal prior to the presentation, Adelina later shared in a text message that she felt her performance became anti-presentational as she struggled with the task of listening-speaking. This was inhibited further by her anxiety of not communicating my ideas accurately. The effect of Adelina's striving towards coherence and articulation (despite my reassurance that it was perfectly fine to skip text that she could not hear) was in fact resonant with migrant feelings of un/belonging, and demonstrates how *Unmade* attempts to convey this sense of uncertainty and estrangement through embodied transference (surrogacy) of voice as well as through matter/materiality.

This lack of articulation in surrogate speaking can be seen to stand, too, for the lack of articulation inherent in dislocation and un/belonging or the failure of remembering (how) to belong. *Unmade* attempts to address and mimic this sense of disruptive re-inhabitation via performative surrogacies. Sara Ahmed describes this as 'uncommon estrangement', an absence, gap or void that comes from having been assigned the identity of 'stranger' by others both at home and away (1999). This estrangement exists 'between memory and place in the very dislocation of migration [that] becomes reworked as a site of bodily transformation, the potential to remake one's relation to that which appears as unfamiliar, to reinhabit spaces and places' (Ahmed 1999: 344). This remaking requires an unmaking (reworking) of sorts, and here I borrow from Claire Chamber's study of performance apophatics and via negativa to unpack this surrogacy of voice, which echoes the surrogacy of bodies and materials in the food-(un)making within the performance (1993). For Chambers, apophaticism, like performativity, facilitates an 'engagement with presence through absence, with self through otherness, with the unutterable through utterance itself' (1993: 42).

This deliberate self-exclusion, or self-absencing is an attempt at the sort of listening through time that Jean-Luc Nancy poses as a sort of challenge to listen beyond the message to an 'ontological tonality' (2007: 4). To engage with this level of resonant listening is 'to enter into tension and to be on the lookout for a relation to self... the relationship in self' (Ibid: 12). While surrogate speaking may seem counterintuitive in an auto-ethnographic performance, it has the effect of materializing what Tammi Spry has called 'space for detached voice and the "profane" body to dialogue... challenging the construction of master narratives' (2001: 720). If non-food, used in food-making in *Unmade*, is a citation or stand-in for the actual food that brings comfort and identities of belonging, then the voices and bodies of surrogate speakers can be seen to stand in for the many past estranged (pre-strange?) selves that used to belong to places that only exist in memory.

Unmade attempted to prepare its participants for resonant listening by inviting a moment of attunement before they enter the performance space of the kitchen, marking an invisible threshold of performance ritual. In the living room space (where participants in the most recent iterations would share in the eating of the dish prepared in the previous performance), participants were invited to deeply listen to the sounds and pauses within and outside the room, to listen to each other's breathing, and to recall sounds of kitchens past. In doing so, it encouraged a mnemonic reinhabitation of the spaces and places with which participants had already had some interactive context (both the actual kitchen where they had participated in *Breakfast* and their memory of places of belonging). As an old regional folk song began to play from a tape recorder in the adjacent kitchen, I whispered into the ears of participants invitational instructions on how to navigate the performance. In reciting out loud my whispers to the wider group, the notion of surrogate speaking was introduced, and the transfer of voice could begin.

Once in the kitchen, surrogate speakers were recruited in a variety of ways throughout the many iterations of the performances, mainly by direct request. They were given quick instructions on how to operate the audio recording, which in the Coventry performances took the shape of a cassette player¹⁹. Surrogate speakers (similar to those in *Breakfast Elsewhere*) were asked to listen to a pre-recorded in-ear audio feed of narrative, and to speak out loud what they heard. They were assured (in person or on a text-score) that speaking fragments of dialogue or leaving out words they could not hear was part of the process.²⁰ In *Unmade*, however, surrogate speakers could choose how long they wished to stay on the task, before handing over to someone else.

In the Coventry performances, participants who were tapped on first to surrogate speak were asked to speak into a microphone, which slightly amplified the sound of the words spoken so they formed a backdrop to the chatter that would arise from the activity around the table (of paper tearing and dumpling folding). Additionally, the voices of the surrogate speakers were being temporarily recorded by a loop pedal, which would by the end of the performance loop together a gradual layering of the many voices spoken, creating a ghostly repetition of recitation.

I had a strong experience of listening to the past, invoking sounds from other times... One speaks but not really to be listened to, at some point the accumulation erases the attention directed by a need to understand, so it is a rather light task. The position in the room and perspective was nice. (Coventry participant EG)

¹⁹ I experimented in a few performances with using a short performance score printed on edible paper, which described the requirements for surrogate speaking. These were concealed in red packets that I handed out to recruit speakers. The score was given to the next willing audience member as part of the 'transfer' of this role.

²⁰ This was not the case for the Singapore performance, where surrogate speakers were requested to speak the entirety of the (approximately) eighteen-minute-long recorded text.

Giving unsteady voice to an other's un/belonging doubly recasts the speaker's own body's estrangement and surrogacy to this autoethnographic narrative, as they similarly struggle with being true to the words. The experience, for many, brings to fleshly consciousness the strangeness of our bodies' inhabitations of new, un-lived narratives, and memories of places and the experience of being out-of-place. A surrogate speaker from the Plymouth performance felt this estrangement rather acutely, sharing in our post-performance discussion that:

the actual acts of speaking the words were strange. The person channeling, the channel has no timeline. There is an immediacy that is totally displaced. I get much less from the text, I am displaced from the story very much, I am just becoming part, I am the mouthpiece of the machine. (Plymouth participant OC)

This lack of comprehension experienced by some of the surrogate speakers in *Unmade* is quite unlike the experience of *Breakfast*. Channelling information does not necessarily require meaning-making to take place, matching the sense of lost knowledge in how to belong that the project intends. There is an inherent anxiety at what might feel like empty speaking, distanced, removed. This feedback reported above echoed the sentiments of one of the surrogate speakers in the Singapore performance, who felt conflicted about the role he was asked to play, and noted how he experienced spatial and relational incongruence:

[surrogate speaking] was making me feel removed to a certain degree, no longer able to simply experience what was unfolding around the room. I was using gesture, eye contact, as well as my speaking voice, to affirm connection with those around me... On further reflection my role was more of a channel than an interpreter. (Singapore participant PF)



Figure 12: Surrogate speaker in *Unmade* in Singapore (2016).

Laura Bieger, who views belonging from the standpoint of narration, argues that 'narrative becomes an indispensable component of dwelling in the world', one which is time- and space-bound (2015: 18). In *Unmade*, however, these narrative structures lost their function to orient when they were redistributed to participants who were asked to lend their voices to my story of estrangement, and to the non-food materials that were tasked with giving body to the metaphors of holes and of absence. The transfer of voice from the originary narrative body (mine) to the surrogate speaker contributes a rhetorical matter-of-factness and perhaps an oscillation between closeness to and distancing or dissociation from the autobiographical narrative to create space for the audience to imagine their un/belongings while also revealing the limits of authenticity of memory.

I only heard the humming from the recording that was in the room but, it made me feel melancholic and relaxed and made me disassociate with what was happening around me as if I was watching a movie. I felt like I could see people interacting as a 'choreography' (a well-rehearsed one that is enjoyable and pleasant for the participants) and not as organic, 'natural' reactions (i.e. how I experienced the piece when I was actively participating). (Coventry Participant T1)

By repeating it, the words felt like mine. I drifted away from the kitchen in that moment and I was right in front of the Ocean, staring into the void, letting all the memories re-inhabit my body. I even felt the salt on my skin. It gave me a sense of calmness but at the same time it made me question again who am I, where am I from and where do I belong to? (Coventry Participant ET)

Salt on wounds

Salt preserves.

The particular salt humans like to eat and that our bodies need to function is formed of reactive and poisonous elements, has been used as currency and in trade in antiquity, and used to protect against decay. Gifting it with symbolism and significance, humanity has used salt in spells and rituals, protecting ourselves not only from rot but also from vagaries of evil spirits (Kurlansky 2003).

Salt corrodes.

They have given the name of the neighborhood by the sea where I used to live the moniker 'White Sands'. Objects seem to rust easily in this place so near the equator - the humidity working to speed the work of salty corrosion. On hot days, you can almost feel salt grains on your cheeks, on the backs of your hands, your forearms,

even the insides of your wrists.

Each time I visit, I gulp hungry deep breaths... as if breathing in the sea was one way to remind my body to remember what it feels like to desire to be in place.

But each time I come back to this place, having roamed a little more, having swum in and inhaled the seas of other places, I have to work harder to remember.

I do this by secretly licking the salt off my skin, tasting sweat, sea, debris from all my wanderings.

(Excerpts from *Unmade* surrogated text)

Unsurprisingly, these re-membered gestures and words re-embodied in the bodies of participants and surrogate speakers raise questions about my own body and its homely indeterminacies. Wearing the mutable skin of the cosmopolitan migrant-artist in the performance, I find myself arriving not so much to a place, as to a 'possibility of another place, another world, another future' (Chambers 1993: 5). Rootless in every instance, I intuit and construct a place-between-worlds as 'a meandering hungry ghost [living] between a lost past and a non-integrated present' (ibid: 27). Belonging, it seems, is out of joint for bodies holding the scars and wounds of multiple timelines and places, but a re-worlding becomes possible from resonant listening, which opens up the timbres of our own un/belonging.

Unmade... felt like it emerged from all of us, all of our ghosts (the kitchen felt fuller, thicker). Endless accumulations to a point of exhaustion. (Coventry Participant EG)

Unmade made me reflect on my own past and give some consideration to the ghost of myself that I perhaps haven't thought of for a while, or haven't integrated. I really loved how something that was obviously tender and deeply personal had been made into something beautiful that could be shared. (Coventry Participant EH)

Sennett describes this sense of self-making in migration, in which 'one has to deal creatively with one's own displaced condition, deal with the materials of identity the way an artist has to deal with the dumb facts which are things to be painted. One has to make oneself' (2011: 69). While there is some purchase in Sennett's framing of migrant self-making as deriving from an unspoken obligation to forge something positive from the experience of displacement, I sense that there is more to this 'making' than Sennett posits. This spacious affective elsewhere where un/belonging is sited is populated by remembered past selves, and subjunctive future identities, ripe for distorting and dis-ordering as we repeatedly come into ourselves and our identities simply by moving through old and new worlds, moving between 'home' and 'away'.

Other voices and othering materials lend elusive shape to these visitations and remembrances of once-located belongings and enable a mutual recognition of previous selves in a previous home that perhaps become doubly lost upon arrival. The doubling of voices may be seen as an incantation that conjures in the moment of performance the discomfiting re-embodiments we are made to put on in seeking our migrant un/belongings. The unsteady channelling of surrogate voices speaking out loud an Other's narrative rings with the impossibility of giving proper shape and mourning to these ghosts of past belongings, and they leave us with a haunting melancholic disjuncture. In the

next section, I look into theories on absence, loss, mourning and nostalgia in order to make sense of how estrangement, mourning, and (re)incorporation work in *Unmade*.

3.5 Ingesting voids: mourning, ghosting

In the postgraduate collegial context of the *TaPRA* symposium, there was a certain fantastical satisfaction of being able to consume a paper you have just presented, an autophagy of one's own intellectual production. The eating of my own words produced several affects and interpretations. Some have read it as a poignant gesture of being unable to state a claim to belong to these various places and nations, bringing to mind the legitimacy of 'having papers' that allowed one's legal immigration status. The materiality of this potato-based paper that I ate became demonstrably fragile, a strange food that lacked nourishment even if it overfilled the bowl. Putting the words back into my mouth, however, I incorporated more than just a symbol. The act of eating words on paper that I've contemplatively written (and continue to write) on my own un/belongings fused the surrogate words re-spoken, received and recited back into my displaced and un-voiced body.

This edible paper motif was adapted in a few small measures within the performance, at first with the performance scores used in the KARST gallery performance, which were printed on edible paper which I would offer to eat after surrogate speakers were done reading the text. A similar use of edible paper was included in recent Coventry performances, in a small threshold-crossing ritual before participants entered the kitchen. Asked to enter the kitchen as a pair of strangers (participants autonomously selected their partners while they were seated in the living room), they were escorted by a facilitator to the door of the kitchen and given a last set of instructional invitations, which

mapped out which areas of the kitchen they might engage with. This piece of information, printed on edible paper, was likewise consumed by the facilitator, leaving participants without a textual reference to rely on for how to proceed.

By listening, speaking, repeating, and ingesting text, *Unmade* shows how meaning can become interpretive and metaphoric. In this way, the poetics of material proxies and surrogates questions the need for authorial authenticity and presence. In inviting the re-embodiment of uncanny, untranslated repetitions filled with semiotic holes, the work requested the participants' co-existence and witnessing of an interior sensation of dislocative uncertainty: a place filled with ghosts, doubles and other weird voids. My narrative of failed mournings of un/belonging performed by participants creates a tension within the form and aesthetic of the performance, which 'provokes emotions it claims only to represent, evokes memories and grief that belong to some other body' (Taylor 1999: 65). This spectral narrative of displaced memory and melancholia chimerically brought forth by surrogation also summoned up a sense of uncertainty and loss. Appadurai notes that the sense of loss in the migrant narrative, contains an

anxiety surrounding the status of what is lost, since the memory of the journey to the new place, the memory of one's own life and family world in the old place, and official memory about the nation one has left have to be recombined in a new location. Migration tends to be accompanied by a confusion about what exactly is lost, and thus of what needs to be recovered or remembered. (2016: 37)

Unmade had a few words, phrases that stayed in an uncanny way, especially in their tonality, rhythm and pauses, which I find difficult to describe. [The performance] felt even more personal and themes of departure, a kind of muscle memory that has the past stitched in/onto the body are themes that have been with me for some time now... The cooking, the occasional small talk,

had an eerie undertone or presence to it that somehow heightened the way wounds/past ghosts are with us everyday.
(Coventry participant JP)

Dominick LaCapra provides a helpful opening in how we could contextualize such an anxiety faced by the displaced and the accompanying confusion of remembering. LaCapra (channeling Freud, Kierkegaard and Heidegger) understands anxiety to be a fear-based affect associated with absence, one which 'has no thing (nothing) as its object. A crucial way of attempting to allay anxiety is to locate a particular or specific thing that could be feared and thus enable one to find ways of eliminating or mastering that fear' (1999: 707). LaCapra continues that '[b]y contrast, the anxiety attendant upon absence may never be entirely eliminated or overcome but must be lived with in various ways' (ibid). Mourning creates space, and such a 'cultural mourning' by immigrants, so named by Ricardo Ainslie, is expressed through attempts at dissolving the sense of dislocation. Ainslie cites the example of displaced communities recreating 'lost worlds' in the form of Little Italys and Chinatowns, which have the potential of soothing and comforting the immigrant mourner by bringing together both 'here' and 'there', and 'now' and 'then' (2014: 359–60).

Vamik Volkan has written extensively on perennial mourning, and how, when applied to displacement (even in cases of voluntary migration), this mourning can be complex and incomplete, requiring creative means of linking objects, processes and phenomena (such as nostalgia) to cope with the anxiety of absence (1999: 169) produced in what I have termed migrant un/belongings. In the case of migrant food-making the recreation of a homely cuisine could be seen as a linking process to negotiate with the abstract object of loss: absence of homeland. This expression of soothing mourning is tied not only to a place but also to a longing to belong to the collective memories, or the tastes and tactilities of another time and place, which can be experienced intimately and

corporeally with each mouthful of food, and even with intricate gestures of crimping, stirring, slicing. The extra effort in obtaining specific ingredients, or in the improvisations with new substitutive ingredients or techniques can be seen as a living memorial, a creative process that links object or gestures to the migrant in order to temper nostalgia with adaptive changes that come with displacement. Volkan notes that with incremental adaptive changes, 'the affect of nostalgia fades away, but usually does not disappear entirely' (2017: 33).

In *Unmade*, memory was encapsulated in an estranged, lingering nostalgia for home, and enacted as a form of private mourning of an internal migrant, displaced while at home. Participants became unknowing witnesses to this internal process of un/belonging as they engaged with, sought guidance from, or observed my migrant body busily (live or mediated), perhaps desperately 'doing home' in a present place, while surrounded by artifacts, smells, sounds and narratives from a place and time that used to be home. This somewhat unremarkable doing cooking came to represent an amalgamation of what Svetlana Boym has typologized as 'restorative nostalgia' (one which attempts a 'transhistorical reconstruction of home', and is embedded in truth and tradition) and 'reflective nostalgia' (concerned with the ambivalence of longing/belonging itself, as it 'explores ways of inhabiting many places at once') (2001: xviii). The un/belonged migrant, like Boym's reflective nostalgic, who tries to cohabit with doubles and ghosts, is doubly haunted by the ghosts of homes past and present, their melancholia unintelligible to others and sometimes to themselves (ibid: 251). Through the portal of the everyday kitchen space, and substituted surrogate bodies and materials, the performances opened the possibility for a sensorial and mnemonic accessing of the sublime past, where recollected emotions and memories could be brought out from the associations with the gestures offered within this re-enactment and re-membering of an un/belonging:

This triggered memories of Rwanda and particularly Kigali - a time when we went looking for a restaurant we used to go to, where we had a lot of memories and felt at home and welcomed, only to find that the building did not even exist anymore. Feeling lost. (Coventry participant AM).

It brought out embodied knowledge of how to behave in the kitchen, therefore bringing forward a strong feeling of home, of nostalgia. The performance itself was a journey through the senses, and all the senses implied in every activity that I've done made this nostalgia possible and extremely real. (Coventry participant ET)

It was through the repetition – it reminded me of making samosas with my family. (Coventry participant SR)

Re-embodied re-membering becomes a mourning mechanism to cope with changes and losses, by communing with the ghosts already among us or within our memory. 'A ghost is about loss, loss made manifest, the vision of that which is no longer there,' states Diana Taylor, writing about the hauntology involved in global performances of grief in celebrity deaths (1999: 73). Ghostly anachronisms (echoed in the media technologies such as the walkman and the video cassette recorder used in Coventry performances) experienced in migration can be located in the discontinuities of re-spoken narratives, with the loop pedals at the end performing a ghosting of just previously re-embodied voices. Picking up on Derrida's *Spectres of Marx*, we might understand how the revenant or spectre contain both past and present, so that the 'present is always constituted through the difference and deferral of the past, as well as in anticipation of the future' (Buse and Stott 1999: 11). Diana Taylor understands ghosting to be a visualization of loss 'which continues to act politically' (1999: 64), but I wonder whether listening instead of seeing brings us closer to these ghosts in order to reckon with our failure of memory across our multiply located selves, a failure of memory which, Sarah Ahmed believes, is 'felt on and in

migrant bodies in the form of a discomfort, the failure to fully inhabit the present or present space' (Ahmed 1999: 343, emphasis mine).

This idea about memory was reinforced when I was told about the spices that were boiling and what effect they are said to have. Restore memory. This is the strongest impression that I got.
(Coventry participant ET)

The performance alluded to this failure of memory in the packet of Chinese herbs used to simmer a tonifying broth for the restoration of memory. Like the red packets, the herbs did not always receive outright explanation or translation, except when participants who assisted the cooking at the stove directly enquired over them. The completed dish resembled a bowl of dumpling noodle soup garnished with fresh herbs that I took through the living room. This marked my departure from the hauntings, and the performance. This departure was done subtly as I left a final invitation for participants to finish pan-searing the last set of dumplings and asked them to bring them through, as an unprompted and mostly unexpected ending, as participants waited for the usual cues to mark the performance's closure. In this ambivalent ending that continued the theme of uncertainty, I have found that waiting for my collaborative participants to come through to the conclusion has come with various surprises.

Whether or not participants were attentive to the ghostly channelling through the multiple re-voicing of my autoethnographic narrative, their involvement in the sumptuous cooking of uneatable 'discomfort' food struck an uncanny chord with most. This food, now turned spectacle, a feast for hungry spectres, left participants bereft of the ontology of eating which would usually follow collective food-making. Served a hauntology and perhaps a brief, palpably felt melancholia, some participants wanted to taste the food made with red packets, or take a sip of the broth, to sate not only their curiosity, but it seems,

to bring the proceedings to a more acceptable progression towards closure. Here I borrow from Taylor, in noting that there is a kind of 'sacralization of the remains — theoretically antithetical to performance' (1999:64) with the dish of food produced and the fact that participants in one particular performance, despite questioning the edibility of the dumplings, decided to eat them as a collective group action. One of the participants who wrote a remarkably reflective feedback describes their experience with great poignancy:

The paper sticking to my teeth until I brushed them late at night was uncanny. Partly because I knew it was the ghosts; food and we had violated the rules of the performance... Throughout the week I thought about the process and group dynamic. I don't know how the others felt, but I remember our hesitation and [someone] making the first move, eating a dumpling, after which the person sitting next to me offered me one, saying 'be brave'. I continued to hesitate with the dumpling in my hand before I ate it, and it still fascinates me how/why we did it collectively... These ghosts stayed with me. The group dynamic is still less clear to me and it remains uncanny that it came this far... I am genuinely amazed by our stubborn ignorance, knowing we were cooking paper, having a vague sense of the ghostly nature and still eating them. (Coventry participant JP)

In this unexpected way, *Unmade* demonstrated to me the idea that the consumable narrative can be an extended art of eating. Participation as 'a paradigm of physical involvement [which] sought to reduce the distance between actors and spectators' (Bishop 2006: 11) became literally physically integrative in the most corporeal ways – where the art and its viewer are contained within the same body when the work is literally consumed. The participants in this performance unwittingly internalized and performatively, surrogatively ingested my loss, in our collaborative performance of mourning and haunting.

My experience and narrative of un/belonging was re-worlded in performance: re-storied by others who channelled but also left out the details in their recitation and recollections, and restored to an other-corporeal elsewhere. My failed belonging to Singapore as home, given a ritual haunting in *Unmade*, was selectively re-articulated through the re-ordering of bodies and their surrogates, materials, waste and their metaphors and meanings to reconsider what we deem productive states of belonging. The performance conjured ghosts of migrant hungers, and un/belongings which gesture us back to a space and place before (post)colonization, before practices of traditions were replaced, before accents became lost, before the voice arrived at the lacuna of the mouth. These losses may never be fully grieved, mourned or memorialized, but can still help in navigating how origins and future matterings may be performed beyond the borders of belonging. Their continual hauntings remind us of us-in-becoming, as we radically suture our arrival to a dissident, yet homely elsewhere.

CONCLUSION: Cuts to Conclude

Karen Barad writes of the 'agential cut' as resulting from an intra-action, or, a particular practice being enacted that yields 'not absolute separations, but only contingent separations' within a given phenomenon (2014: 175). Barad's melding of performativity, philosophy and quantum physics arrived late in my research, and while I rue how I might have designed the apparatus of the performance experiments differently, I am comforted in this new understanding that the intra-actions and entanglements stemming from the first cut of my research will continue unabated, with the promise of uncertainty, and that this itself will yield discoveries to come²¹.

The cut that Barad alludes to enables superimpositions and identifications to be made in materially specified ways, determining the differencing in a given practice. In accompanying the movements of my practice through a range of modalities towards something that can be called research, navigating multiple streams of communication and collaborations, I find myself trying to reach beyond reflection, aiming instead to contemplate with deeper listening, the diffractions that my research actions have generated. I come to this closing cut in my written thesis with a light pause, seeing how necessary it is to form this incision in order to set a boundary around a project that has been seeking a homeward trajectory via the material route of food.

²¹ In her article "Diffracting Diffraction: Cutting Together-Apart" Barad re-cites herself from an earlier article "Quantum Entanglements and Hauntological Relations of Inheritance: Dis/continuities, SpaceTime Enfoldings, and Justice-to-Come", and this re-citation is perhaps one that feels most validating of the PaR: '[t]o address the past (and future), to speak with ghosts, is not to entertain or reconstruct some narrative of the way it was, but to respond, to be responsible, to take responsibility for that which we inherit (from the past and the future), for the entangled relationalities of inheritance that 'we' are, to acknowledge and be responsive to the noncontemporaneity of the present, to put oneself at risk, to risk oneself (which is never one or self), to open oneself up to indeterminacy in moving towards what is to-come' (2014: 183 and 2010: 264).

My project has found that food's simultaneous ordinariness and complexity, coupled with memory's enigmatic archival workings, make the culinary 'doings' and 'tellings' around the performativity of belonging slippery and indeterminate. Displaced interactions with food have to find ways to re-nestle within changing contexts, practices, and places within and outside the body. These entanglements evolve with time, affective experience and imperfect repetition. The ethnographic research and subsequent performances reflect Roland Barthes' quip that 'food has a constant tendency to transform itself into situation' (1997: 26), such that how we make food, what we eat, and the ways we story these practices inform how we inhabit our place in the world, and approach others in this place. The adaptive, imaginative measures used in the kitchen, where food traditions and gestures from a previous home take root with alternate outcomes, becomes metonymic for the necessary negotiation with change and uncertainty.

I refer to this process as a 'close-enough' worlding to point to its substitutive nature of making-do in situations of displacement or relocation, whereby improvisation in food-making becomes necessary to maintain a sense of continuity from past to future, wherever such a continuum is desired. This is a food-making that is sited neither here nor there but cuts and weaves together the complex politics, locations and phenomenologies of being and belonging. Food-making, like place-making, might be practiced with varying degrees of receptivity and attunement to remembered repasts. Parasecoli observes that the formation of immigrant 'communal repository of memories and experiences' (2014: 419) helps smooth the process of being in place and grappling with otherness. In addition, I aver that this living archive of food belongings is continually inscribed with new narratives, playing out a repertoire of material and methodical adaptations, which also makes room for new cuts: the changing tastes in future generations and other forays into hybrid gustatory belonging.

'Close-enough' food-makings construct tastes and practices that can simultaneously stave off deep cravings and feed belongings to multiple homes both here and elsewhere. It is this interconnected, transplanted culinary coherence and competency that leads to a continuity of the familiar and the strange in migrant food belongings. These personal, ordinary, barely noticeable gestures within migrant food-making create homes in the space between departures and arrivals, transforming memory, materials and places into brave new belongings. Listening closely, we might notice how food and body bound in the act of doing-cooking, resonate and reflect the metaphors for the homes, cultures, histories and national identities we inhabit and our senses of displacement from, and of belonging to them. And this is perhaps how we might be able to eat our way home: always imperfectly, and through the foodways that tunnel halfway through archives of memory co-constructed with others like us, who also strive to belong to the same-different places at once. Our imaginations meet the realities of change and difference to take us through the other side of belonging.

Migration and its effects are intrinsic to difference, and the manner in which these differences are met or negotiated by migrants and others in social and political entanglements impact the diffractions that are produced. Donna Haraway's definition of diffraction, applied to the context of performing belonging in migrant food-making, is helpful: diffraction of phenomena 'does not produce "the same" displaced, as reflection and refraction do [...instead, it] is a mapping of interference, not of replication, reflection, or reproduction' (1992: 300). The gestural citations, surrogate re-makings and re-speakings by participants in *Breakfast* and *Unmade*, can be regarded as performative diffractions of how migrant food belongings occur. They point to the necessary effects of interferences that hinder repetitions of the same, and the ways in which we entangle with difference and emerge changed in our becomings.

The strangeness of surrogacy within the performance has permitted my transformation into a stranger entity, dispossessed of fixity in authorship, and alternately releasing and conducting control over what happens in participation. One particular diffraction generated in performance offered an entirely new point of tension, cohesion and perception that I almost failed to listen to. I alluded to this incident towards the end of Chapter 3, whenby a group of participants of *Unmade* were collectively compelled to tuck into the paper-filled dumplings that they had made in the performance. Although several participants later shared that they were fully aware of its probably-inedible contents. This diffraction haunted me immediately and acutely post-performance: I questioned whether I had been unethical in my ambiguity, taking the food and cooking metaphor perhaps a bit too far into deceit; analysed with some agony whether the things I said or left unsaid were duplicitous; and doubted whether I had appropriately 'dealt' with this divergence in a way that restored the dignity and autonomy of participants. In hindsight, my most glaring misstep was perhaps not to allow this diffraction to inhabit its interruptive moment as is: an outcome that exactly (and ironically for me) demonstrated differential becoming.

In convincing myself of my self-generated theories and metaphors of making ghostly foods for departed selves, I momentarily spliced myself away from the project and failed to listen closely for a different translation of my participatory experiment. Had I done so, I would have allowed space for a delectable in/delicacy to be more fully savoured, the spoils from a 'little crime', as one participant put it:

It was very much on the hand of us, participants [...] When I said we reached a level of trust, I meant a level of trust in us as a group. We were responsible for ourselves at that point. And yes, we got confused. I personally lost track of what was edible or not. And yes, we took off, and indeed it led us to do something silly. I

personally learned from this, and I think it would be important to stay positive when something like that occurs. We learn from it, and we did a little crime as participants... (Maudslay participant EG)

My learning to listen to the differential becomings emerging from my project has yielded discoveries of the intricate limits between authenticity and authorship, and the immensity of trust in what happens out of my control. While there may be a common 'tendency to accept the separation of authorial voice from the voice produced by a specific performing body' (Mock 2009: 17), this is trickier when surrogate voicing is part of the delicate balance between 'heteronomy and autonomy' of participation that provides narrativized and embodied meaning for the performance (White 2013: 206). Even if (to my chagrin) I have been blind to my own participation in the above incident, I am keen to explore more fully the notion of holding trustful, vulnerable presence (instead of as a guide or facilitator) in future performance-making. I am curious to see whether it allows for more potential differentials to emerge, and how I might reconsider the artist as social being, participating and more trustfully listening within her own performance.

All things and feedback considered, I venture that audience participants in *Breakfast* and *Unmade* indeed experience what Meskimmon calls 'becoming a fully-sensory subject' because of the ways in which participation and surrogacy destabilizes subjectivity (2011: 193). The transformative potential of art, Meskimmon reckons, is never guaranteed, but for me can be traced in the fleeting moments of sensing one's intersubjectivity, or 'mutual recognition of difference that includes generosity and intercorporeal interdependence' (ibid). Jill Dolan has labelled this 'cohesive if fleeting feeling of belonging' a kind of utopia we might attune to in performance (2005: 11), but I find this too neat and final a landing. The cumulative criss-crossing of hands, repetitive lines of text, the hesitation and laughter, the awkward uncertainty, slow ingestion (and

expectations), nostalgic sighs, loud or unspoken frustrations and easy commensal chatter all belong. They form a 'means to sense, think and be noisily, messily - bodily – entangled' (Heddon 2017: 37) in a micro-telling of a world that is not untroubled, that continues beyond the walls of performance.

In her collection of essays contemplating travel, boundaries, and displacement, Trinh Minh-ha notes how in an era where many might identify as 'foreigner', 'traveling perpetuates a discontinuous state of being, [yet] also satisfies, despite the existential difficulties it often entails, one's insatiable need for detours and displacements in postmodern culture' (2011: 40). This travel is not merely movement over distance but also a generator of narratives, made complex by indeterminate configurations of 'home', 'away', and 'elsewhere'; and by our need for deviation and return. 'We travel the distance in order to transform as well as transgress' says Jane Rendell, who, like Trinh, stabilises her itinerant self and interdisciplinarity within her writing (2002: 47–54). Writing is an elsewhere that is not my natural home, yet in this exercise of critically giving words to what was performed, I have found fellow travellers in theorists and their ideas, reunited with the ghosts of the selves that I have shed in my multiple displacements, and followed the vibrant entangled strands that connect me to the many collaborators and participants who landed in this project's meshwork. To be able to trust and listen to the qualitative resonances of this written analysis of the work might well become the next agential cut to my praxis as artist and academic.

The cut and question that began the research, widened by the participation of others and by this writing, have created a space to reinsert myself back into my research, travelling through distance and time in order to encounter stories of displaced belongings, performing and writing them as yet another means of journeying. To belong, my fellow travellers seem to advise, one only need listen to and locate the elsewhere, within. The home that I wish to return to becomes

clearer than a mere ghostly remembrance, heard through another person's voice speaking my words to tell me our story. This ritualistic repetition through performance loosens my grip on belonging to an uncanny nostalgia, and to the order and location of things as I think they should be. I return again and again, to the business of being a foreigner among many, to a home-in-becoming in this elsewhere.

Initiation Song

Please bring strange things.
Please come bringing new things.
Let very old things come into your hands.
Let what you do not know come into your eyes.
Let desert sand harden your feet.
Let the arch of your feet be the mountains.
Let the paths of your fingertips be your maps and the ways you go be the lines on your palms.
Let there be deep snow in your inbreathing and your outbreath be the shining of ice
May your mouth contain the shapes of strange words.
May you smell food cooking you have not eaten.
May the spring of a foreign river be your navel.
May your soul be at home where there are no houses.
Walk carefully, well-loved one,
walk mindfully, well-loved one,

walk fearlessly, well-loved
one.
Return with us, return to us,
be always coming home.

(Le Guin 2016: 404)

POSTSCRIPT

To undertake this PhD research was to pull asunder and reconstitute the various identities and journeys towards belonging I have undertaken in the past two decades, in both a personal context as a migrant, and as an artist turned returned-researcher. Perhaps it was a case of life imitating practice-based research when I found myself once more in a transitory living situation during the write-up stages of this PhD, fretting about dwindling funds, kept awake by visa conditions and the politics driving them, and counting the many rooms and other blessed shelters with coursing WiFi under which snippets of this thesis have been written. Then came the death of a dear grandmother, the same person I mention briefly in Chapter 1, the matriach and wellspring of how I imagine cooking my way to my former home of Singapore.

In this uncanny, familiar space of nomadism I was able to praxically observe my own psychogeographic departing/arriving, habits of inhabitation and making-home. I noticed my usual anxieties surrounding these repeated departures and arrivals evolve into a detached curiosity at this taken-for-granted process in everyday migrant mobility; my head doing all the wandering, while my heart stood still in a miasma of loss and mourning of homes past. It is easy to trace the artistic lineage of my own practice in performance and food to an unremarkable upbringing by a working class family in the food paradise that is Singapore²².

A prodigal child unable to fully return from a now-estranged home, my obsessive work with food and performance is connected to my search for

²² This foray into food and performance had a more theatrical beginning in 2009, and has since evolved into social practice, or socially-engaged art, increasingly involving community members to share, co-translate and collaborate on turning their food micro-ethnographies into artistic or performance forms.

surrogates for home, as I attempt to deconstruct and recreate a palimpsest of 'belonging' in the various places I have been invited to create. Perhaps for me the most worthwhile thing I could do as an emerging artist-researcher was to ask others to show me how home is made, and how 'elsewhere' is borne of its unmaking, through peregrination, time or both. The everyday kitchen, and the lexicon of food-making for me, is a praxis that speaks to how we assert our belonging by engaging the here/there (place), the now/then (time), and the available (materiality/connection); a process that takes place out of necessity, improvisation and imagination. I wanted to frame my application of auto-ethnography as informing my practice-research here in this postscript as a way to acknowledge that no research is neutral; to cite Patti Lather, who believes that 'emancipatory knowledge increases awareness of the contradictions distorted or hidden by everyday understandings' (1991: 52).

Making art out of displaced everyday food-making, perhaps, is my way of directing a self-recovery of my dispersed itinerant selves, to come closer to an integral whole, and to re-locate home by re-membering the many 'I's from 'collective reality past and present, family and community' (hooks 1989: 31) in order to come to a radically different relationship with my worldings and belongings.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A – Notes on Performances & Production History

Breakfast Elsewhere was presented first in October 2016 at Millburn House, Warwick University and in a home kitchen on Pond Road, London, before touring more confidently at Journeys Festival (in Leicester and then Manchester), then in various academic conferences and events in 2017-present (Coventry Fab Lab as part of a public engagement series, Frankfurt during the Mnemonics Studies Association Summer School, then New York and Swarthmore as part of a teaching engagement with Parsons School of Design and Swarthmore College).

Unmade, Untitled was first staged in Singapore in Feb 2016, hosted in the home of an expatriate family, following a teaching engagement in senses and performance with Lasalle College of the Arts. It was further developed during an artist workshop at the conference for Society for Artistic Research, in April 2018. Although *Unmade, Untitled* was conceived of prior *Breakfast Elsewhere*, its longer gestation process has seen it experimenting with symbolic materiality (i.e., joss paper in the first iteration; various food materials connoting wealth were used to fill the red packets), and other textual and technical experimentation (i.e., projections introduced in the October 2018 production, which were contained in the more nostalgic VHS-TV system; similar technonostalgic audio outputs of tape deck and the Walkman; and the addition of loop pedals to play-back and layer the echoes of multiple surrogate voices).

Given the PaR nature of the project, many of the performances were naturally staged within an academic context although public engagement support (in particular, with Mark Hinton's hosting the project in his home and his commitment to community engagement), enabled the performances to later

reach a wider, arts-going community and public in Coventry. The following table of this project's production history provides further information and context on participants and respondents to the survey (survey questions on following pages).

Location	Month / Year	Performance/s	# of participants	% of which in academia	# of survey responses	% of which in academia
Singapore	Feb 2010	Unmade	16 (1 show)	63%	2*	50%
Millburn House (Coventry, UK)	Oct 2010	Breakfast	36 (6 shows)	72%	18	56%
Pond Rd (London, UK)	Nov 2016	Breakfast	12 (2 shows)	33%	2	50%
Fab Lab (Coventry, UK)	Jun 2017	Breakfast	17 (3 shows)	24%	8	50%
Journeys Fest (Leceister, UK)	Aug 2017	Breakfast	13 (2 shows)	Unknown	0	NA
Mnemonics Studies Conference (Frankfurt, GE)	Sep 2017	Breakfast	13 (2 shows)	100%	5**	100%
Journeys Fest (Manchester, UK)	Oct 2017	Breakfast	12 (2 shows)	Unknown	0	NA
Dark Matters Mfg (Brooklyn, NY, USA)	Nov 2017	Breakfast	11 (2 shows)	18%	0	NA
Swarthmore College (Swarthmore, PA, USA)	Nov 2017	Breakfast	10 (2 shows)	60%	6	83%
Parade (Leamington Spa, UK)	Oct 2018	Breakfast + Unmade	17 (2 shows)	60%	7	56%
Maudslay Rd (Coventry, UK)	Jan 2019	Unmade	25 (3 shows)	60%	6	33%
Millburn - PaRLab (Coventry, UK)	Feb 2019	Unmade	4 (1 test)	100%	0	NA
Maudslay Rd (Coventry, UK)	Mar 2019	Breakfast + Unmade	24 (3 shows)	42%	7	29%
Clarendon Rd (Leamington Spa, UK)	Apr 2019	Breakfast + Unmade	7 (1 show)	56%	2***	50%
Maudslay Rd (Coventry, UK)	June 2019	Breakfast + Unmade	27 (3 shows; 1 test)	44%	2	100%

* feedback came from direct contact with one surrogate speaker and one participant, before the formation of proper survey questions; I have cited the former only.

** these were a mix of convivial sharings and survey responses which I have not cited.

*** these were short written responses that did not attempt to answer the entire survey, both of which were not cited in the thesis.

Capturing Post-show Feedback

Voluntary participant feedback was sought via post-performance e-mail surveys, analysed and used within the written thesis. Post-show conversations provided a casual forum for debriefing (where participants would ask about the process of making the work), informal chatter about similar dishes or experiences of food and displacement, and a way to share unstructured feedback. Several of the earlier post-show conversations were recorded to assist with development. Over the duration of research, I received a total of 68 unique responses, most of which were via email (four were conversations that I would transcribe). Respondents were given the freedom to skip questions.

Post Performance Questions

1.

Did any themes, memories, or materials (objects) stand out?

What associations did you make with each of the performances (*Breakfast Elsewhere / Unmade, Untitled*)?

2.

What was difficult to understand, or what did you wish to know first before stepping into the pieces? What element felt like it needed translation or mediation?

3a.

Could you describe your audio-experience, ie: the voices or sounds in the piece, and what that added to your experience of the performance?

3b.

If you were a surrogate speaker (either for *Breakfast*, or for *Unmade*):

Could you tell what this experience was like for you to listen-speak?

Was there any comfort or discomfort about this? What helped to perform this task?

4.

Could you describe what you felt in your body during each performance, what sensations or feelings were clearly felt? Could you identify how this happened?

5.

Could you describe your sense of place (physical or metaphorical) within each of the performances? How did place or locality influence your experience? Did something feel dislocated or out of place, or did you feel lost?

6a

What thoughts, moods, emotions etc did the performances (particularly *Unmade* since it was the latter show) imprint on you, as you left, and perhaps when you arrived back to your home?

6b.

Were there any particular uncanny moments, memories or ghostly residues you experienced within or after the performances?

7.

How did you feel *Unmade* spoke with the first performance *Breakfast Elsewhere*?

Do you have other reflections you'd like to share about your experience overall as a participant, especially in relation to other participants?

APPENDIX B – Cook-Along Interviews: Cook Biographies

ROLA

A long galley kitchen already painted a fuschia pink when they moved in, it was clean, and well-worn with a back door that led to a small back yard. There was a fully-stocked pantry and every last storage space was well used to house many of the family's crockery (for various occasions), kitchen equipment and tools. The dining room was separate, but often used as a prep surface.

Rola instantly identifies Palestine as her home, despite the fact that she has never been to the country as her parents and extended family migrated before 1948 to Syria and Lebanon. She arrived to Coventry fifteen years ago, joining her husband Wafiq. Rola has a sister who lives with her own family a mere five-minute walk away. She feels a bit disconnected with the current Arab community (comprising migrants of various nationalities) in Coventry after a few tensions that arose locally some years back, which she attributes as a trickle down effect from the political unrest in the middle-east.

Rola's lively household made this cooking session the most chaotic, yet sensorially enjoyable. On our first visit we made shishbarak (Arabic 'tortellini' in yogurt sauce), chicken stew with rice, tabbouleh, and a semolina dessert harrissa. Rola's oldest daughter floated between kitchen and the dining table (where Wafiq was prepping parsley) while her inquisitive and loquacious nine-year-old daughter played the role of a 'human step ladder' reaching items stored above the cabinets by standing on the counter. Many of these special cooking wares were obtained either from travels or previous homes (tagines from Morrocco, an orange dutch oven from Dresden while visiting family members there, and a prized sarg-griddle, brought over from Syria).

Rola's vibrant personality, candor and sharp perspective were reasons I opted to work with her in this first period of practice-based research. Her migration story also includes other stops in various countries before the UK, and this is inflected in the

specific styles, ingredients and tools she uses in her dishes and how she constructs meals to cater to her family's taste preferences (she and her husband prefer to eat traditional Syrian or Palestinian cuisine, however, her children crave Western foods like pasta, chips, and pizza, and as a result these foods occasionally make an appearance alongside Arabic dishes at dinner) which she sees as existing "between two cultures". She is also used to large-scale cooking, for different family occasions, even a recent wedding featuring 300 guests, or for the occasional school meal which she sees as a way to share their food and culture with their children's classmates. While she is mainly relaxed in her kitchen, this calm is afforded because of meticulous planning: from shopping lists to mental lists of what steps of food prep should be underway before cooking begins in earnest.

Rola and her husband Wafiq were meant to visit Palestine with their children a few years ago but she had to stay put in the UK with the two youngest British-born girls who weren't granted tourist visas. Wafiq journeyed with the two older children to Jaffa and later to her ancestral village of Saffuriya, in what she recounts as a bittersweet proxy adventure, mediated by technology in the videochats phonecalls, photos, videos she received from them.

Here are a sample of the questions asked at our third home-based interview, which were recorded and included in the performance of *Breakfast Elsewhere*:

- Home is a place where ____
- What do you say when people ask "where are you from?"
- What was your impression when you first arrived into Syria/(and other places you have called home)? What did each place smell like? What did it sound like?
- Tell us about Tese'yeh, when it is made, who makes it in your family. Is your version different? Why? How? Tell us about what the family usually eats for breakfast everyday.
- Tell us about Sepphoris/Saffuriya, and about when Wafiq took the kids to Palestine.

- What was most confusing when you arrived into England/Coventry? What do you now like best about England/Coventry?

AGNES

Small tight kitchen with a round breakfast table and a side interior pantry that was stocked. She cleaned the floors by hand when we arrived, with a traditional African straw-broom. The kitchen has a small window decked with a frilly curtain. A few British paraphernalia (Union jack mugs, Queen Elizabeth plates) were spotted.

Agnes, now retired in her 80s, introduced herself as having been a kindergarten teacher (back in Zimbabwe) but later mentioned she worked as a cleaning lady when she first arrived into UK (in London). It was not clear how many people lived in the same house although the many relatives who called in to visit (and were surprised by our presence) suggest that hers was a family gathering spot. The cook-along session was an intergenerational event as we shopped for groceries with Mutsa, Agnes' granddaughter that morning. Agnes was minding Mutsa's children (aged 5 and 6) who greeted us shyly and accepted our gifts of biscuits when we arrived before being sent to their room to read and play quietly. Agnes' oldest daughter who was visiting, joined us in the kitchen for a short while and helped in some of the preparation and shared her thoughts that 'traditional' Zimbabwean food was usually reserved for special occasions, and that simpler foods were consumed on a daily basis, citing spaghetti and sandwiches as plain food that was easier to put together.

Agnes' calm manner in the kitchen was likely a result of age and experience. She answered our questions kindly but language might have proved a barrier to being able to share more, or speak more candidly. Agnes received many phonecalls on her two cellphones, where she made many emphatic concurring sounds between speaking in Shona. We could only pick out the

words 'Western Union' repeated several times. She improvised with the groceries that Mutsa helped to pick out, and seemed unperturbed by the off-timings (some foods had to be reheated before being served), and was eager to share an additional pork dish she had simmering before we arrived. Her method of stirring the sadza with what resembled a wooden paddle (using hearty strokes that moved away from her body) was most intriguing, as was her demonstration of how to eat sadza with okra using a circular movement of the hand.

GRACIE

This cook-along session was the only one that took place in my kitchen as Gracie's husband did not like house visitors. Gracie brought a few of her tools, two small wooden dowels for rolling the dumpling skins, and a hand-cranked food processor. I found it challenging to juggle playing host (although Gracie appeared quite at home in my kitchen) and interviewer at the same time, a task made even more difficult as I had only recently moved into this abode in Coventry, and Gracie would frequently lapse into speaking Mandarin with me, a language I had limited fluency.

Gracie and I shopped for the ingredients needed for dumplings, which she had mentioned in our first encounter (at Carriers of Hope) as being something she makes often, and in large batches. Our shopping was leisurely - she seemed more keen to enjoy my company and practice her English, sharing that her husband and daughter usually do the shopping, as she deemed her Chinese-inflected English not understandable nor good enough. The fillings for dumplings were as such casually improvised based on what looked interesting at the market and Chinese speciality grocers.

Gracie mentioned early on that she was retired too soon from her vocation as a teacher (in China), and was having difficulty looking to find informal employment because of language skills, so has been spending time on her other passions: sewing, knitting and crochet. She has an adult daughter from her previous marriage,

and both she and her daughter moved to England and live with her second husband. While making a variety of dumplings, we conversed about the ease of using whatever ingredients are available on hand when cooking by instinct and repetition (and without recipes). Gracie did not like to be photographed but consented to images that did not feature her face. She talked about her time in Coventry, getting to know the city by taking long walks. Conversations would somehow get back to her being under-employed and her need to keep busy in order to feel 'useful' and current.

SIMONA

Bold, red modern kitchen with ample counters and storage and a spacious L-shape layout to hold a dining area. The kitchen sat next to a sunroom (functioning as a game room with a small pool table) and the dining room oversaw the comfortable living room, which was furnished with seats that were once used in her beauty salon.

Simona barely allowed us to help her prep. Her two rambunctious sons who favored processed turkey cordon bleu over her home cooking, were on hand to 'assist' in the interview, piping in suggestions, questions, wisecracks and the occasional teenage prank. Simona effortlessly made a Romanian chicken paprika stew, served with mashed potatoes, turkey cordon bleu for the children who ate it with white bread, and a salad. She also had a pot of pork and beans stew which she was eager to have us try – and as we did, she shared that she rarely eats pork these days as her new partner is Muslim. She shared pictures of her wearing a headscarf, and told us of her solidarity fasting during Ramadan.

As a translator and social service worker used to interacting and conversing with strangers, Simona was the most openly expressive and chatty about her personal life experiences, which she shared with lots of laughter. Her narrative was that of a rebellious, and adventuresome girl turned good, and someone

who worked hard to beat the odds life threw her way, first leaving an impoverished situation in Romania, arriving to Spain to work as a fruit picker, and surviving being almost penniless in a new country. She floated from one story to another, all of which covered a wide breadth of emotions and animatedly regaled from a place of contentment. Her way of working with food had flair and pragmatic efficiency, but it was quite clear from conversations she saw food and eating as a means of survival, placing its social and cultural functions somewhat as an afterthought. She remarked to us that this was the first time her eldest son helped her by washing the dishes (likely to impress the two female interviewers).

LYDIA

A shaded and neat kitchen with neutral tones where the sink looks out to the back garden with a clothesline and where outdoor toys were scattered. The kitchen was well-stocked with staples, and she showed us a few special utensils she brought along from her time living in Milan.

During the cook-along interview, the reserved Lydia often compared her time and experience in Italy and England, noting that hospitality is played out very differently by different cultures, and saying how she felt more at home in England, being able to find Afro-communities here. Cooking started with donning brightly colored aprons. Potato flour and palm oil were staples in Lydia's Ghanaian kitchen that she brought to our attention – she mentioned that she would sometimes prepare a kind of potato mash made with this starchy flour, as a plain snack for herself, adding a new tweak of instant mash potato flakes (discovered here) to add a different texture/taste.

In quick time Lydia demonstrated how she sliced plantains for frying, and we quickly defrosted the fish we bought which were also fried up simply with few seasonings. Lydia told us about Jollof rice, which she had some leftovers of, and this was reheated so we could sample it with lunch. We made red-red – a

dish she mentioned was ubiquitous in Accra: black-eyed peas cooked in a (red) tomato sauce with (red) palm oil. Lunch was served with a side of evangelizing as Lydia talked about her father who was a “traditional” man who did not share her religious beliefs. She spoke with conviction using analogies and examples of her positive experience with Christianity and her thoughts about biblical teachings (particularly tenets of charity and love), and asked us to ‘give it a go’.

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