

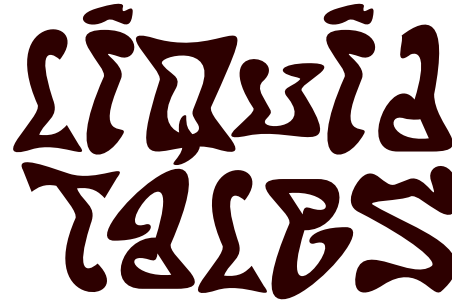
Body: Social body, as a collective system of individuals, and physical body, as an intimate and individual system within one's organism.

Belief: One's version of reality.

Myth: Type of belief; widely held traditional story explaining the contemporary supported by past experience and history. It is the stem for a pattern in which copies and updated versions prevail the matrix.

Tale: Collective story that needs to be told and heard in order to hover.

Ritual: An organized way of explaining uncertainty and chaos, based on belief and myth.



Absorb: Physically take in a liquid.

Comprehend: To absorb something mentally.

Intimacy: Distinctiveness within a collective group.

Universality: Collectively shared. Contains the idea of a whole.

System: A group of unities (cogs, individuals, institutions...) functioning together towards a whole. It is described by its structure and purpose and expressed in its functioning.

Memory: The ability to reinvoke or repeat a specific mental image or a physical act.

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Now as throughout Earth's history living associations form and dissolve. Symbiosis both stable and ephemeral, prevail. Such evolutionary tales deserve broadcasting. – Lynn Margulis

When I first learned about evolution I learned about a world of life-and-death struggles. Coexistence of species was based on dominance. Survival of the fittest they said. Lynn Margulis first brought evidence for Symbiogenesis – a different, almost opposite version of the origin and development of life. In this theory, independent microbes merged to develop more robust life forms. They would evolve from there, developing more relationships between organisms. What is interesting in Margulis's view is the way she reminds us that all theories about evolution remain theoretical. Science and biology could be seen as tales, stories that we once chose to believe in. These theories are crucial in understanding our world because cultures build upon them.

Symbiosis is a natural system, as in a cohesive conglomeration of interrelated and interdependent parts, which seems to be in contradiction with many current systems we respond to and often take for granted (modern science, measuring systems, capitalism, western philosophy, values, social construct, normative ethics...). These systems appear to me as stable constructions

within which it is easy to grasp meaning and to understand the abstraction of the world. System thinking is a perspective, a language, and a set of tools to unravel underlying forces and thoughts. I like systems. I like cracking them, getting them, understanding their cogs. Yet I often don't grasp them. As they make sense to most, they remain obscure to me. I struggle to explain what is around me through these systems.

Systems tend to claim they can apprehend the whole reality by means of concepts and reasoning in a desire to master the changing reality. They end up confining it to a rigid and still structure. They present the world as essentially stable when the Earth is swarming with growing activities, continually producing matter, and life keeps gaining in intelligence. I aspire to dynamic systems. Symbiosis is a dynamic system (but it is stable because it is a system. It relies on the efficiency of a relationship*, on exchange, on giving or receiving, sometimes both. It is dynamic because it regenerates. It reveals logic and brings a poetic vision of our relation to life. In that sense symbiotic tales set an example to rethink and decon-

struct the very basis of human cultures.

In this research essay I want to bring a fresh understanding of the body through a new system. A more inclusive system, more experience based, more symbiotic, less stable and more fluid. In this system liquid connects the body to itself, to other bodies, connects the mind to it and brings the inside closer to the outside. This is an attempt to write my own system, my own tales halfway between scientific ones and personal ones within the collective. The starting point should be my own body because the perception of a whole can be apprehended through grasping the closest details and gradually zooming out.

I will focus on liquid nourishment

Liquid by its essential nature is both the core and flesh of the living. It is the main component of bodies and as it flows through

*Biologists and ecologists define a symbiotic relationship as an intimate interaction between two or more species, which may or may not be beneficial to either. There are different kinds of relations: competition (the struggle of individuals to obtain a shared limiting resource); predation; parasitism (host relationship); mutualism (two interacting species benefit each other by mutually increasing both species' chances of survival or reproduction) and commensalism (one species benefits, but the other is neither harmed nor helped).

them it carries substances in and out of cells. It is the universal transporter between bodies and their environment. As a maker, its material properties and versatile nature are truly interesting. Liquid transforms, it changes state and complexion. All life on Earth uses a membrane that separates the organism from its environment.

In that sense, liquid needs to be held and therefore implies all kinds of direct or indirect but always-dynamic relations between container and contained. The ambition here is to figuratively grasp the ungraspable through its literal materiality.

Nourishment is a great mirror of human life. If we are not equal in taste, traditions and beliefs around food or the access to it, it is definitely universal because vital. In that sense nourishment is an amazing tool to discuss on being human, on being bodies and on being an intrinsic component of the living. I will look into decoding our food habits and rituals drawing out from it what is a matter of culture and what is a matter of belief in order to determine their consequences on bodies-both physical and social. Considering bodies through

the spectrum of food culture and food beliefs implies different levels of observation: an intimate scale of our own bodies and a larger societal scale, both allowing questioning the reality of a universal scale.

I feel the need to build and propose new rituals, new ways of consuming and comprehending our food. I feel the need to update the symbols lying in food products and eating habits. This goes through understanding the cogs of our existing patterns and cultural systems, the way our cultures articulate, considering different scales, different cultures with distinct rituals and habits.

Challenging and transcending my own culture is a way to invent new imageries and typologies, and to open possibilities for new intimate and collective imaginations.

Food is, to me, a precious tool for imagination because of its sensory stimulation: it initiates intimate and complex conversation with your own body.

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THE VERY FIRST

The very first meal was liquid. There was no sitting down at a table for this one. You were floating in the womb, never in danger of falling off or down. You were neither using hands nor mouth. Your skin absorbed the nutrients in the liquid. It was an intramembranous meal with skin for interface.

It was a meal of proteins, carbohydrates, lipids and phospholipids, urea and electrolytes. It was a thirty-six weeks long meal. By week twenty-one, you were drinking several ounces a day. You were breathing in and out, swallowing down to your gut your only environment.

The water carries you, the mother carries the water. She represents the limits of the world. Through the fluid she communicates with you. The exchange is discreet. Inside, the water mediates the communication. It is invisible to the eye.

The womb is a vast place. There isn't much space but the walls are thin. Thin enough for light or sound to go through. The mother filters the world for you, making sure that you get the best part of it. It is a place for encounter. An intimate relation

MEAL

to the mother is created and her body weaves yours. It is a place for learning. You learn to recognize the taste of the mother. It has inherent savoriness: umami* is the initial flavour. It has a mild but lasting aftertaste, it is brothy. It is a place for transmission. Taste, unlike other senses, requires the assimilation of a world fragment. Smells, sounds and images exist out of the body. Feeling food implies its immersion in your body. It has to penetrate beyond the skin, to merge in your flesh leaving an ineffable mark.

Once the womb pushed you out, senses are assailed. The world is too bright, too loud and boundless. In the newly discovered chaos, taste and smell drive you back to the original nurturing place.

*Umami: "umai" (delicious) and "mi" (taste). Basic and pretty neutral taste but it has the taste of what is good. The umami effect relies on three amino acid: glutamic, guanylic and inosinic. Brillat-Savarin points it out in 1825 with the word *osmazôme* as "the purely sapid portion of flesh soluble in cold water, and separated from the extractive portion which is only soluble in boiling water."

Milk is the umami reminder. It makes the very first meal last a few more weeks. It carries both reminiscence of a liquid world where you were once protected and the last fragment of the mother before weaning.

Out in the world the exchange can no longer be discreet. For it to remain intimate, mother and child ritualize it. The newborn comes back to the mother almost mechanically looking for a safe space, a survival mean, a primordial connection, a reference of taste. At the rate of eight meals a day the routine naturally occurs in between them.

WHEN ROUTINE BECOMES RITUAL

Routine is about repetition; it is the habits that set your rhythm; it sets a temporality, gives point of references. The ritual acts and lays gestures and words on a personal or collective thought: it performs culture and beliefs. It is an organized way of explaining uncertainty and chaos. A habit can be a ritual and vice versa. I actually think they are inseparable. A habit always refers to a tradition or a belief that is already so deeply assimilated that it is no longer considered as such. I, for instance, have the habit of putting my home keys in a specific spot. There is a metallic hook on the radiator immediately on my right when I come in. Keys belong there and nothing else does. This could simply be a practical habit, however it comes with a multitude of others: where I take my shoes off, where I set down my bag, where and when I empty it. I get home and everything falls into place, settles where it belongs. If everything has a place, I can keep the chaos out of my walls and the room remains

safe. This is a belief that I built for myself and a belief that I build my routine upon. Drinking a hot tea or coffee in the morning as a necessity is likewise both habit and ritual. Without it your body just won't wake up. Maybe turning the boiler on is a simple habit but warming up your body at the beginning of the day is definitely a ritual. Even in a rush I will feel better if I don't skip a cup of tea in the morning. It eases my body out of my safe and soothing room, out of the warmth of the bed the same way leaving the womb is allayed by the mother's milk.

REMINISCENCE OF A UNIVERSAL EXPERIENCE

Reconsidering "survival of the fittest" would make obsolete and absurd domination relationships that humans maintain towards other species, their environment and amongst themselves. According to Symbiogenesis, we could consider a world of complex and intermingled relationships (similar to the motherly symbiosis) as symbiosis blurs boundaries between organisms and questions individuality of bodies: partners in the relationship don't exist before they meet; there is no pure state before hybridization. Lichen, for instance, doesn't exist outside of the association of alga and mushroom*.

*The word symbiosis (life in common) was created in 1877 to first describe the dual nature of lichen, which is both mushroom and alga: the alga synthesizes carbohydrates and uses nitrogen and protein that the fungus made using these same carbohydrates. The fungus also lavishes water and minerals on the alga. This lasting association transform partners in a new organism.

For animals, as well as plants, there have never been individuals. This new paradigm for biology asks new questions and seeks new relationships among the different living entities on Earth. We are all lichens.

– Jan Sapp, Scott F. Gilbert, Alfred I. Tauber

This applies to the intimate scale of your own body. The multitude of bacteria living together makes the physical body a dynamic and creative environment in which the mind lives. This relationship makes them inseparable and makes it our mission to let them communicate as smoothly as possible. In order to apply this to the bigger scale of social bodies (the way human bodies relate to each other and the way they are socially organized), it needs to be a collective belief. I believe symbiosis is such an intrinsic component of our bodies that it reflects on our existing systems already in the way that we need social bodies to support and understand our physical bodies.

The origin of my life is symbiotic. Yours too. The motherly symbiosis is the universal experience shared by all humans. No exceptions. We all start building from the same

foundation. It is the symbiotic reference of all human beings. This initial relationship is an unforgettable link to the mother.

The motherly matrix is imprinted all over and under the skin that once was the only interface for communication. After the womb experience, communication transferred to the mouth. I believe the original symbiosis left a liquid mark, an imprint within bodies that we are trying to recover. We are trying to fill the womb/matrix. Through rituals, we try to revive the transcendent symbiotic relation. We want to tame it through culture.

In the context of this specific relation, liquid plays the part of the mediator in a language that goes beyond words. It dictates the rules of the ritual as it flows and writes a tale of a universally shared body experience.

In the beginning there was the organic womb where life put itself together. In the marshes, coal beds and peat bogs, bacteria macerated, and from the primordial soup would spring more complex life forms. Then the Earth delegated the task of maintaining warmth: uteruses, marsupial pouches, eggs provided their hot-house environment, while primitive habitats in turn acted as incubators. Men lived in caves, in the very womb of the Earth. Later, round igloos and yurts, wooden cabins and woollen tents were our homes. In the Siberian forest, the hermit expends a huge amount of energy on heating his shelter, the guarantee of bodily security and well-being.

Only then is the solitary woodsman free to roam the forests and climb mountains despite the cold and other privations. He knows that his haven awaits him. The cabin fulfils the maternal function. The danger comes from constantly craving the comfort of this lair and vegetating there in a kind of semi-hibernation. This temptation threatens many Siberians, who can no longer manage to leave their cabins, where they regress to an embryonic state and replace the amniotic fluid with vodka.
– Sylvain Tesson

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I HAD A COFFEE IN ORDER TO START WRITING

I had a coffee in order to start writing. It wasn't a good idea. The muscles in my legs are twitching, my heart is racing and I can't focus. Everything is a distraction and I am jumping from one idea to another. I keep losing track of what I am trying to do. I feel shaky inside. If I focus enough on my hands I start seeing a light trembling out of my fingers as if I was imagining it. I also need to adjust the focus of my vision as it goes blurry for half a second every now and then. My arms seem heavy but very active. My fingertips feel cold on my skin. If my body feels unfocused my mind seems to be sharpening. My body might be trying to adjust its rhythm to my rushing train on thoughts. The coffee first immersed my mouth with warmth, rushed down my throat to my stomach from where it was absorbed, and tortured it for a bit. It tickled my insides. It increased the amount of acid in my stomach before it reached my bloodstream and travelled within it. I can picture my blood

darkened by coffee loudly flowing and pulsing through my veins. The warmth transforms into electrical energy and abruptly submerges my limbs with tremors. It reaches my brain.

From that moment on, everything becomes agitated. Ideas quick-march into motion like battalions of a grand army to its legendary fighting ground, and the battle rages. Memories charge in, bright flags on high; the cavalry of metaphor deploys with a magnificent gallop; the artillery of logic rushes up with clattering wagons and cartridges; on imagination's orders, sharpshooters sight and fire; forms and shapes and characters rear up; the paper is spread with ink - for the nightly labor begins and ends with torrents of this black water, as a battle opens and concludes with black powder.

– The Pleasures and Pains of Coffee,
Honoré de Balzac

The body was under attack. Its encounter with coffee was first chaotic. Body and mind disconnected for an instant. After an hour or two, as the caffeine reached its highest levels in your bloodstream, their relation is resumed. The foreign substance has been accepted and is now fully contributing to mind and body activity. It might even feel like it took over and that it is now ruling over the obedient body.

PHYSICAL MEMORY

My body acts as a filter when drinking caffeine. It takes the energy out of it and transforms it. Its energy is only activated when consumed; it is the result of an action, of a physical reaction. As I include coffee in my writing routine it boosts my creativity and fills up my energy levels; transforms its taste in pleasure and its smell in memory. It seems that I started associating coffee to its power before its energy even reached my body.

I started drinking mechanically. This way, coffee has power over mind. It has the ability to hold in one's mind through the physical imprint it left on the body in the past.

Henri Bergson writes about the memory of the body in *Matière et Mémoire*, in 1896.

Consider memory, the body retains motor habits capable of acting the past over again; it can resume attitudes in which the past will insert itself; or, again, by the repetition of certain cerebral phenomena which have prolonged former perceptions, it can furnish to remembrance a point of attachment with the actual, a means of recovering its lost influence upon present reality. – Henri Bergson

According to Bergson body memory, as opposed to a memory not existing through

senses (learning a lesson at school for instance), is a nearly instant memory upon which past memory builds itself. Body memory concerns habits; it replays and repeats past action, not strictly recognized as representing the past, but uses it for the purpose of present action. This kind of memory is automatic, inscribed within the body. Bodies have a physical memory. Past memory gives to the sensorial and motor mechanisms – that rule our systems of habits – all the memories able to guide motor reaction according to what the body has learnt from experience. Sensorial and motor mechanisms also provide a way to materialize and anchor themselves in the present to more unconscious memories. This way, for a memory to become conscious again it has to be revived through motor action. Habits formed by repeated actions are amassed in the body: these do not represent the past, they merely act it.

Throughout the experience of the womb the body accumulated sensorial and motor unconscious memories. These memories are physically activated through milk consumption. Coffee triggers its own memory at the intimate scale of one body and channels the communication between mind and body.

COLLECTIVE INTIMACY

Symbolically mother's milk is immaculate. It is unspoiled, pure and intimate. Milk is meant for two: it is exclusively shared between mother and infant. It is a physical memory of their symbiosis both because it is a tangible material and because it acts and modifies the two bodies through its consumption. The intimacy of the womb can never be replicated because the awareness of an outside body is too present, the consciousness of being a body.

This intimacy is however universal. Coffee is black, intense; it stains. Its effect on my own body is powerful enough to allow me to feel my own blood pulsing and to make my head spin of excitement. When swallowing down a liquid and by letting it fuel the body, the inside intimacy, the privileged communication through liquid is restored. This inner relation to coffee is intimate.

This intimacy fades again outside of the body as coffee has a very strong collective symbolism. I see it in the way it punctuates days and nights for many of us and how it gives an excuse for a break, in the way it shapes a neighbourhood, how it sets

the mood for a social exchange. I see it in popular or prestigious coffee places that represent comfort, modernity, and the easy idea of progress. In Western cities coffee places fit the image of very specific lifestyles. They celebrate trends; offer unlimited Wi-Fi, fancy roasts or a local experience, slogans to live by; they are creative places and the cradle of social exchange. The title of this modern myth could be: there is a coffee for everyone and everyone must love coffee; the better the coffee the bigger the social recognition. We are being sold the idea of a coffee society in which globalized taste make you an individual.

Coffee carries both an internal intimacy and a symbolic collective individuality so coffee can't be universal. It has been a persistent agricultural product throughout history not only because we consumers create a market for it, but also and mainly because it is deeply anchored in cultures and societies from which it once built the identity. Coffee is a cash crop and its roots are intrinsically linked to colonial history. Tracing back to Eastern Africa and the Middle East, coffee was protected for a

long time by its local growers and consumers before being stolen by European settlers that hastened to replant coffee trees in countries already colonized and had them grown by enslaved populations*.

Therefore, there are many histories of coffee different for each country, each having different impact on building cultures, on creating rituals (that are not all linked to its consumption). The social and geographic configuration of coffee presented as a system shapes the abstract idea of an uneven social unity.

Coffee gathers at the same time as it sorts and separates; it defines a way of being together, a certain "order" of things where everything has its place. Order as in 'organization': placing individuals, aggregates and institutions

*The Dutch stole coffee cherries from the Yemenites in 1690 and planted them again on Java Island. Nothing was then stopping it from spreading. Amsterdam's mayor offered in 1713 (Peace of Utrecht) a coffee plant to Louis XIV. This plant will mother the ones implanted in Martinique, Guadeloupe and Saint Domingue. In 1715 the Sultan of Yemen offers 60 coffee plants to France. All of these will be planted on the Reunion Island (Bourbon island at the time) and farmed by locals and imported workforce from Madagascar. In 1788 the population of Bourbon has 47,195 inhabitants including 37,984 slaves.

in relation to one another, thus composing the elements of a whole and affecting them in appropriate places (Bernard Charlery de la Masselière). Order is also the exercise of authority, the institutional hierarchy or hierarchies that coordinate and constrain these different elements: coffee stages the power and lets it circulate. There is a physical dimension to coffee showing a dynamic balance of tensions and power relations between producers, nations, and consumers; very similar to the intimate fight that coffee puts up within my body.

I notice the effect of coffee on my body, on my energy levels, on my creativity. I also notice that my body remembers it without me fully knowing. I notice and I understand that coffee is emotionally, culturally and historically charged. I look at coffee and it is dark. Dark but gleaming. I read in coffee its inherent violence.

Coffee carries in its very materiality the mark of its making process. It contains its history, it contains the time and the space of its construction as a vast system and it contains the comforting idea of our consumption, the violent reality of its production.

As bodies accumulate memories, coffee amassed its own and releases it onto them. Including coffee as a habit in our cultures means including this inherent violence towards bodies, both physical (intimately) and social (collectively). It contains a piece of some other place, some other culture and it refers to some other time that you can't help assimilating by consuming. All this information dissolved in the liquid but it stayed and it stained. Liquid carries just as much information as it carries nutrients.

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RIWALS WILL DILUTE THE SUREN

The first sip will scorch your lips, wrap your tongue in heat and burn your throat.

The ethanol contained in alcohol makes the receptors in the mouth and throat more sensitive. High temperature triggers these receptors, which then tell your nerves and brain what's going on, and results in a burning sensation. These heat detectors activate at about 41,6 degrees Celsius, but ethanol lowers that to just 33,8 degrees. Body temperature is normally around 37 degrees, so when you feel that burning sensation, it's because your body itself is now beyond the threshold for those heat receptors. Alcohol hacks the receptors and confuses the body into sending distorted messages to the brain. Going down, alcohol will chafe the lining of your stomach and will make the digestive juices flow. High levels of stomach juices means you won't feel hungry, but you will keep being thirsty. Thirty seconds after your first sip, alcohol races into your brain. It slows down the chemicals and pathways that your brain cells use to send messages. Ethanol

disrupts the cell membranes of neurons, mildly and temporarily: it suppresses the activity in the prefrontal cortex – responsible for rational thought, planning assessment, anger suppression – and temporal lobes, where memory processing regions are located.

Accumulated information in liquid nourishment has consequences on bodies. If we consider the previously talked about inherent violence contained in coffee, it might be easy to apply this thought to alcoholic drinks. The idea of alcohol carrying information is actually quite common. It, for instance, carries time as it is distilled drop by drop, as it ferments for days, as it ages for years. Liquor or wine will accumulate the information through their making process and this is commonly admitted and actually valued. Although alcohol is demonized for its well-known negative consequences on both physical and social bodies, its consumption is very normalized, even broadcasted and fully integrated in a social routine. It seems like alcohol as an edible-drinkable product has rather negative symbolism when outside of the body but its consumption strips it from this idea, from

its evil glaze. This paradox can only happen because its consumption is very ritualized.

What goes from one space to another, from outside to insides, needs a rite of passage both coming in and out. A space is tied to its own system of belief and rituals and coming in means compromising with your own and merging systems. Like taking your shoes off in someone else's home.

To get in and out of the body-space we therefore need rituals. As liquid carries a memory that isn't only yours, not ritualizing its absorption can be violent*. Ritualizing what comes in turns what is profane to sacred: drinking thus becomes a transcendent act ruled by alcohol.

*Take for instance human medical force-feeding through route of administration by injection, using a needle or a syringe, a catheter... On another topic, still considering the body as a space and the skin as the interface pierced of a few doors, a sexual intercourse without ritual is breaking and entering this space, it is a rape. In the intimacy of a sexual penetration individual rituals might conflict as several living bodies are involved: the overlap of both rituals is where the consent lies.

COLLECTIVE RITUALS
FORM CULTURES
AND INDIVIDUAL
RITUALS MARRIAGE
CULTURES

Alcohol doesn't have just one nature; it exists in arrays and in lists. Alphabetically ordered lists of liquor and spirits. Lists of colors and shades. Lists of alcohol by volume in percentage. Lists of labels and protected designation of origin. Lists of type of grain, grape, spice, herb, pitted fruit and non-pitted fruit. Lists of liquor, beer, eau-de-vie, wine, spirit, brandy, aperitif, digestif. Fermentation, maceration, distillation. Lists of barrels and alembics. Lists of bottles and names of glasses. As a consumer you have a choice: a choice of what to drink and a choice of what it will mean. There is a place, a time, a mood for each drink, a person to share it with, a social recognition depending on what you choose and where you are. Any symbolism can dissolve in alcohol. Having that much

choice only revives what we want to believe in. Choice builds up personal and collective beliefs. Whether I like a cappuccino made in a moka percolator with Arabica beans and unsweetened almond milk, or I consider that natural wine free of sulfite and any additives prevails all other wines, I will believe this choice is tied up to my individuality resulting from my unique cocktail made of tradition, beliefs, geographic and social attachments.

In many cultures including mine, alcohol consumption has long responded to social issues of structuring relations amongst each other or between humans and spiritual entities. Collective rituals of alcohol consumption are thus considered essential for many significant events of social and religious life and are rooted in those cultures through belief systems.

Another paradox lies here: as alcohol is deeply rooted in the reality formed by a culture, its known and tangible effects on the body and mind allow escaping from this reality. The symbol of alcohol and its substance both root you and disconnect you. I find this paradox

in Charles Baudelaire's work on wine, where it seems to be more of an abstract idea than a real beverage: he elevates the wine to a magical potion, he distills it until only its meaning remains. Its meaning is found in the erotic, the revolt, the dream, the travel, death and virtue, all means to escape the unbearable reality. Wine comes in the body as an active third party throwing off the equation between mind and body.

The Soul of Wine

One night the wine was singing in
the bottles: "Mankind, dear waif,
I send to you, in spite
Of prisoning glass and rosy wax
that throttles, A song that's full of
brotherhood and light.
I know what toil, and pain, and sweat
you thole, Under the roasting sun on
slopes of fire,
To give me life and to beget my
soul — So I will not be thankless
to my sire,
Because I feel a wondrous
joy to dive
Down, clown the throat of some
work-wearied slave. His warm chest
is a tomb wherein I thrive
Better than in my subterranean cave.
Say, can you hear that rousing
catch resound

Which hope within my beating
heart sings high? (With elbows on
the table, sprawl around, Contented
hearts! my name to glorify.)
I'll light the eyes of your
delighted wife.
Your son I'll give both rosy health
and muscle And be to that frail
athlete of this life
Like oil that primes the wrestler
for the tussle,
In you I fall,
ambrosia from above,
Sown by the hand of the eternal
Power,
That poetry may blossom
from our love
And rear to God its rare and
deathless flower!"

Baudelaire even personifies wine and gives
it a demanding body whose destiny
it is to be swallowed by humans.

I also picture alcohol as a living body that will wear what you want and in its mysterious language you will find what you are looking for until the exhaustion of your own body. Alcohol benefits from the human body and mind when absorbed because it is a way for it to be held and activated, to achieve its purpose and to impose its ideology. Alcohol is a versatile liquid that carries what you choose to have it carry. Its materialities transport beliefs and feed them as it does so. The symbolism of alcohol dissolves in its essence. Humans benefit from drinking on a social level, and on a personal psychological level both when alcohol is inside the body and outside the body, as it definitely leaves a mark onto and within it.

Alcohol with its multifaceted nature transforms the individual and thus the collective. Alcohol rules by serving; the power of alcohol always has the potential to exceed itself. It illustrates a transformative passage from the individual physical body to the collective body of humanity. This is the ideology of the embodied alcohol. It doesn't simply contain beliefs anymore – as coffee contains inherent violence and transmits it

to bodies – its ideology is its essence. Alcohol is a parasite that you host knowing it might absorb you. It is a parasite in disguise selling you the idea of mutualism. Alcohol can be personified and liquid embodied.

Saul,
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MATERNAL BROTH

I have recently been craving for soup, partly because I dived into liquid so eagerly for this research. I dedicated mind and body to it until they both were demanding coffee, alcohol and soup. I even went to the pool to try and retrieve the womb experience. It didn't work, there were too many bodies, and chlorine doesn't taste umami one bit. Where else does this thirst come from? What is soup carrying for me that I am drawn to it? I seek the comforting soup. I want to hold a warm bowl with both hands. I relive a transparent golden broth sprinkled with tiny beads of oil. It was the simplest broth: vegetables had been simmering for a while and their essential juices had mingled with the water. Nothing but vegetables, no salt, I can't remember herbs. I helped myself from the pan directly on the stove gently pushing aside the softened vegetables to collect the broth only. I sat at the table, next to Alice and my grandmother. Once I had the first spoonful I knew I had been craving for this exact broth.

Levi Strauss wrote:

We know that any myth represents a quest for the remembrance of things past.

The myth of soup carries the idea of a household. Its making process implies to be settled and its consumption suggests a reunion of guests. The symbolism of the house is tightly linked to the feminine figure. Soup is maternal: it is an affectionate food as the ingredients are softened through a long boiling time and don't need any effort to be swallowed. It is one of the first foods served to infants after breast milk easing up the introduction to solid food. It is a healing meal.

The primordial soup confirms the strong femininity and maternal symbols contained in the soup. One of the scientific theories (along with symbiogenesis) of the origin of life describes a complex organic simmering solution in which ingredients somehow managed to reproduce. Once again scientific tales feed the symbolism of our nourishment. As science contributed to build the feminine body through trying to understand its physical mechanism it fed the imagery and gave it social status and cultural attributes: soup is one of them and tools are others.

The utensils and containers surrounding the consumption of soup indeed serve this intimate and maternal imagery. Bowls, cooking pots, tureens, ladles and spoons have bulging shapes; they are potbellied and soft. These shapes evoke the curve of an engorged breast, the nurturing and protecting arch of the womb.

Soup seems to be very attached to certain traditions and rituals, meaning they differ according to cultures within society. However the features of its concoction and consumption can't vary that much. Soup contains too much of an original symbolism from the moment it is made that it becomes its essence. Although the modern broth has evolved and adapted to a less settled and faster lifestyle, we wished to conserve its maternal and healing symbolism. Walking down the aisle of a supermarket you can find instant powdered soup in all flavors, sealed in individual packets. Powdered soup is interesting to look at as a time reference: the liquid has been freeze-dried and the powder remains as the proof of past times. Powder incarnates here the modern essence of life

and liquid is its activator. Powdered soup serves a graspable image of its cultural myth; it shrinks down the symbolism to its original value of comfort and care. In the evolving flow of culture myths manage to grab a portion of it, to freeze it in time in order for it to become timeless and applicable to contemporary times.

LIQUID NEEDS TO BE HELD

Containers are tangible proofs of culture. They shape behaviors, organize rituals, illustrate symbols. Handled with care, a spoonful of soup hugs the lips: eating soup requires slowness and contemplation; the spoon and the bowl indulge such ritual, the dehydrated soup packet organizes different rituals (rehydrate, microwave, wait for it to cool down) according to the same belief system contained in liquid soup, achieving an updated and modern contemplation. From precious china to single use paper cup, containers mediate our relation to liquid. They let us hold it and consume it.

On one hand if you contain something, you control it and prevent it from spreading or increasing. On the other hand if you contain something you shape a personal way to look at it and dig deeper into it.

A large pot of soup holds collective images, it holds tradition, cultural symbols, whereas your bowl of soup holds your intimacy and your personal absorption of the collective. Your hands holding the bowl, the soup in

the bowl, the spoon holding the soup, your mouth and your guts are porous interfaces shaping your intimate beliefs. By holding liquid you grasp its materiality; by containing it you comprehend its abstract materiality. The substance of abstraction is ungraspable. *Only something we can physically grasp embodies true reality for us* (Zane Berzina). I keep trying to solve abstraction through making but if it is liquid I can never get to grasp it, I have to contain it. It goes the same with writing: language is like the pot of soup because it is collective; as you scoop the words out you contain them in your bowl made out of culture, intimate rituals and personal beliefs, which will infuse the words again slightly changing the color of your broth and the meaning held in your words. *A system can only emerge once its borders have been defined. Evolution has developed a universal solution for a biological, liquid membrane – a film of ‘skin’ that separates and protects the content from the surrounding environment.* (Zbigniew Oksiuata)

We can't help creating systems. They are containers for our understanding of things. They give us objectivity and they

create collectiveness. However I think systems are pre-existing humans and can't be as stable as we imagine them to be. They live underwater and come float ashore next to us – where it is breathable, where gravity makes things seem stable and graspable – once we made containers for them. These containers are 'membranes' and second skins, they are words, bowls, rituals, beliefs... Pointing out such containers helps materialize the abstract. By giving it a substance it seems to solve my problem.

THE STREAM OF ABSTRACTION

Liquid nourishment is a language through the symbols it carries, the shared beliefs and rituals it cultivates, the connections it builds. It marks my body with the tangible memory it accumulated as it flows by and through. Liquid comes to life in my tales and lets me translate its language through senses. It materializes in almost invisible ways in the shape of myths and meaning-seeking systems. Myths and tales are in my views attempts to grasp reality in an organized way as they give explanations to uncertainty and chaos, to the unpredictable. They invoke collective imagination through images and metaphors: they are poetic systems. However, as they are absorbed, they stabilize and freeze reality failing to transcribe its immateriality. Liquid is the transcendent material that reverses the paradigm of building stable systems.

Thinking systems with the body as a starting point, with senses as building tools, is a way to grasp reality in a less abstract way. Abstraction is a state of being

lost in thoughts, it is a process of zooming out to where matter shatters, it is the ultimate reality that I never get to grasp. Reality is liquid: it runs through my fingers and leaves my palms wet for an instant only.

For me to get close to it, it has to run through my body and be analyzed by my senses. Abstraction and reality meet in liquid. Although my visual abstraction – the way I imagine things to work and connect and the way I sketch them – is very much built in space, geometry and works in cogs and mechanisms, I feel the need for a more fluid interpretation of the abstract, a less stable analysis in which there is room for the ungraspable. Liquid is my metonymy for an abstraction in the way it is dynamic, ephemeral and always on the edge of being graspable. As I write and reach the end of this research I feel both soaked and drained, my own words are failing me and liquid became overwhelming. As words contain too much already I seem to have exhausted them, I seem to be unable to grasp anything through them anymore. Matter has drowned and taken over words.

I find interesting to draw a parallel

with theater as a immersive experience of words through bodies and especially a play from the Norwegian playwright Arne Lygre Nous pour un moment directed by Stéphane Braunschweig*

Nous pour un moment is a succession of six sequences in which we meet anonymous characters, defined only through the vague relations that connect them to the others and a certain social status: a stranger, a friend, an enemy or an acquaintance, showing a systemized approach of human relationships. About twenty characters (played by five actors) cross path and share life experiences and their torments for a moment only. Lygre explores the ambiguous relationships that bind us to others through dissolving identities: the action is split in sequences, with turning points when the person who last spoke enters the role of another.

*The play (from which the original title is *La deg vøre*) was premiered on September 9, 2016 at the Oslo National Theater, as part of the Ibsen Festival. Anne Cantineau, Virginie Colemyr, Cécile Coustillac, Glenn Marausse, Pierrick Plathier, Chloé Réjon and Jean-Philippe Vidal played the French translated version directed by Stéphane Braunschweig.

Characters transcend each other: as a viewer you keep seeing the same body but a different identity is projected on it. Words shape the reality and identity shapes through language. The scenography of Stéphane Braunschweig magnifies this boundless vision of the dramatist and subtly accompanies the rigorous construction of Arne Lygre's text. The floating identities find echo in the lapping of the characters' steps, as the set of the play is a large and shallow pool of water that seems to blur in the distance. Two white walls rising out of the water define the time and the space, but also the roles as words appear sharply onto them and float over the actors whenever a new character is introduced. Borders are abolished and characters are porous. Identities contained in the water and the words emerge for just a moment: nothing remains, everything moves tirelessly and the image immediately formed enters the process of its own disappearance.

The collaborative work of Lygre and Braunschweig shows a liquid and layered vision of reality anchored in movement and instability in which social bodies and

physical bodies are convertible membranes that the actors wear. Now at the end of this research I believe there is no partition between physical bodies and social bodies as they feed from each other and exchange on a symbiotic level. Although physical bodies suggest clear borders between individuals, its dependency towards collectivity shows otherwise. Borders aren't solid constructions in a liquid system, in that sense there is no pure state of the body but a constant stream of barely graspable words, images and matter.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank my research project supervisor, Will Pollard, for his crucial help defining the path of my research and for his guidance through each stage of the process.

I wish to extend my gratitude to Alexandra Gasparis for sharing my enthusiasm for words and details.

To my reliable and talented graphic designer Chloé Delchini.

To Alice for her interest in my research, her sharp critical thinking and for taking me to the theater when I most needed it.

To Constance for her inspiring strength when I thought I had none left to write.