

ONION SETS, LIKE ANGRY FISTS

A METABOLIC EXORCISM

MARCH 6, 2025

Tonight, we will take part in a metabolic exorcism.

We will read, write, speak, eat, and digest words and sensations.

Each of the four courses of the dinner corresponds to a text. Each text is linked to a question, directly or indirectly connected to its content. Some of the recipes come from cookbooks written by feminist collectives of the past, while others have more personal histories. It will be up to us to understand how we relate to these texts, especially when they seem cryptic or disconnected from our present circumstances. The questions will allow hopes, pleasures, doubts, discomforts, pains, sadnesses, and future possibilities to emerge. To process—or metabolize—them, we will use our bodies, strengthening the bridge between our psyche and our organism.

We will ask our bodies to work with us in giving new meaning to these sensations.

We will treat them as filters, using our digestive systems, our stomach muscles, to break down the spirits that haunt us—expelling what intoxicates us and transforming the rest into material that nourishes us.

This exorcism takes on a particular character in a European/Italian context. We know what an exorcism is—the Christian Catholic one is likely the most familiar. The spirits haunting this group may be different from those that torment others.

Beyond our personal or shared emotions, given our backgrounds, this exorcism will also help us transform our relationship with the ghosts of past feminism—often exclusionary and limited. If our feminist mothers were held back by privilege, in this ritual, we will gather those constraints, exorcising them from the fear that may have prevented them from embracing certain aspects and individuals. As the feminist killjoy Sara Ahmed teaches us, the legacy of racialized feminists has been silenced and undervalued. Through our collective metabolic process, even limited teachings can be digested and transformed into something useful for more people.

Like the sin eaters who consumed a meal on the graves of the dead to absorb their sins, we too will consume both a real and symbolic meal to transform and reinterpret the fears of our predecessors.



RITUAL PROCESS

Before each course, we read the text and the accompanying question together. We take time to write our response and, if we feel comfortable, share it with others.

We consume the course, leaving our written response under our plate.

We metabolize our response and the ghosts it evokes.

ENTRÉE:

THREE SISTERS SOUP

FROM "THE SECOND SEASONAL POLITICAL PALATE: A FEMINIST VEGETARIAN COOKBOOK", 1984



This is the smell of matsutake, a group of aromatic wild mushrooms much valued in Japan. The smell evokes sadness in the loss of summer's easy riches, but it also calls up the sharp intensity and heightened sensibilities of autumn. Such sensibilities will be needed for the end of global progress's easy summer: the autumn aroma leads me into common life without guarantees. If we open ourselves to their fungal attractions, matsutake can catapult us into the curiosity that seems to me the first requirement of collaborative survival in precarious times.

The spectre that many try not to see is a simple realisation—the world will not be "saved." ... If we don't believe in a global revolutionary future, we must live (as we in fact always had to) in the present. When Hiroshima was destroyed by an atomic bomb in 1945, it is said, the first living thing to emerge from the blasted landscape was a matsutake mushroom. After the war, the promises of modernization, backed by American bombs, seemed bright. Everyone was to benefit. The direction of the future was well known; but is it now? The irony of our times, then, is that everyone depends on capitalism but almost no one has what we used to call a "regular job."

To live with precarity requires more than railing at those who put us here (although that seems useful too, and I'm not against it). We might look around to notice this strange new world, and we might stretch our imaginations to grasp its contours. This is where mushrooms help. Matsutake's willingness to emerge in blasted landscapes allows us to explore the ruin that has become our collective home.

- The Mushroom at the End of the World - On the Possibility of Life in Capitalist Ruins, ANNA TSING

HOW DO YOU WORK COLLECTIVELY?

SECOND COURSE:

SANDY POTATOES

It was from this alliance between the crafts and the urban authorities, along with the continuing privatization of land, that a new sexual division of labor or, better, a new "sexual contract," in Carol Pateman's words (1988), was forged, defining women in terms — mothers, wives, daughters, widows — that hid their status as workers, while giving men free access to women's bodies, their labor, and the bodies and labor of their children. According to this new social-sexual contract, proletarian women became for male workers the substitute for the land lost to the enclosures, their most basic means of reproduction, and a communal good anyone could appropriate and use at will. This was for women a historic defeat. With their expulsion from the crafts and the devaluation of reproductive labor poverty became feminized, and to enforce men's "primary appropriation" of women's labor, a new patriarchal order was constructed, reducing women to a double dependence: on employers and on men.

-Caliban and the Witch, SILVIA FEDERICI

WHAT DID THE FEMINISTS OF THE PAST LEAVE YOU?

The pathway to the garden has all but disappeared; onion sets, like angry fists have pushed themselves through the frozen soil

sad pumpkin hearts have split themselves in two enraged at being left behind their vines stiff and dry as snake skin tangle in the molding leaves

stalks of corn lean together like old women pausing to mourn the scowl of cold november winds.

"Winter Garden"
Denise Helene Panek
Bearing Witness: Sobreviviendo
Calyx, Vol. 8, No. 2



FIRST COURSE:

PASTASCIUTTA ANTIFASCISTA

That was the apartment I wanted that winter, the apartment where I'd chosen to spin out my days.

As soon as I'd unpacked, I bought a can of white paint and a good-size paintbrush.

Neither the kitchen nor the bedroom had been repapered, and their walls were spotted with stains large and small. These dark splotches were especially conspicuous around any electrical switches. I wore pale gray tracksuit pants and an old white sweater, so the splatters wouldn't show up too badly. Even before I'd started to paint, I was unconcerned with achieving a neat, even finish. It would be enough, I reasoned, just to paint over the stains—surely white splotches are better than dirty ones? I swept my brush over the large patches on the ceiling where the rain must have seeped through at one time, watching gray disappear beneath white. I gave the sink's grubby bowl a wipe with a washcloth before painting it that same bright white, never mind that its pedestal was brown.

-The White Book, HAN KANG

WHERE WILL WE MEET AGAIN WHEN THIS WILL END?

DESSERT:

GRAPE JEMIMA



FROM ISSUE 1 OF "SPARE RIB" MAGAZINE, 1972

there was a certain numbness they cultivated without knowing it. not caring calcified in places they wouldn't have expected, an impulse they had allowed to flourish in order to protect themselves from the reckless energy of millions that surrounded them day in. day out. it began to build its own anthills against their spirits, and just like the city had routes and passageways variously under construction, their bodies became complicated networks of evasion, eventually they didn't know how they felt.

it was exactly the same process that made patties and fried chicken into the stuff of fast-food chains, and eventually the machine began to only feed itself and our duller tastes for existence, eventually they didn't even have to start with chicken to get us to show up and buy

GRAPE JEMIMA
Peel a great bunch of grapes and resign yourself to getting the seeds out of 'em. (Thawed frozen raspberries are a lazy alternative). Put them in a fireproof dish. You need ½ pint sour cream with a few drops of strawberry essence added, or you could have ordinary double cream with a teaspoon of sherry.

Pour half the cream over the fruit, then whip up the rest into the inevitable stiff peaks and spread it over the fruit as if you were icing a cake. Put in fridge to chill firm. As you stagger into the kitchen with your guests plates loaded with rejected chicken casserole trying to hide under their forks, etc, get the pudding out of the fridge, sprinkle the pud with dark moist brown sugar (Barbados ideal), until its brown all over and shove it under a fierce grill until it's caramelised into a crunchy layer. Whizz back to your guests who will be shocked out of their apathy by the amazing sight of the Jemima. Right. I'm off now, so bye bye.—Fran.

-M Archive: After the End of the World, ALEXIS PAULINE GUMBES

HOW DO YOU WANT TO DEFY EXPECTATIONS?