

I don't want to sound too romantic, but my heart was still healing when I arrived here. Solitude comes with silence. Solitude is a quiet and pleasant place to stay, when you learn how to inhabit it. I knew how to do it, and I did it. Fue un alivio; I felt I was in peace with cosmos, or something. You know, I was really sensible (sensitive) to all. The air was cold; I could feel my face and my hands being part of my body. Present. I felt I could pass through people, like a ghost, and while doing that I could profoundly know them, from the surface to the core con toda su viscosidad. There was no routine, yet. I felt I could entirely expose myself and still, no one would see me.

A church is a place of silence, at least a catholic church, as I know it. That church had claque sounds and artists. But the artists were sorprendidamente silenciosos. No music. No nothing. La verdad es que algunos no van mucho al taller. Some of them live far away; some others have to work muchas horas. I could say that emptiness was also a noun for that church.

I was complaining about the bread you get in London when a Portuguese girl told me that bread in Madrid is also shit, that when she used to live there, 5 years ago, they usually had baguettes that after a few hours became chewy as a gum. And then she said something I liked, a silly image; she said that they used to play swards with the baguettes.

So, even though I was convinced that the ferociousness of capitalism had eaten all the original bakeries in London (and with that every possibility of eating a good but cheap bread) and that in Barcelona I used to eat really good bread (sobretudo cuando me mudé encima de un forn de pà centenari), even then, I had to recognize that the bread I used to eat when I was a child was also the chewy baguette. White bread with a French accent, fast and sellable. Baguette was the bread at the dinner table of our

apartment in El Clot. And I imagine that we were not the only ones. I guess that Baguette could be the Spanish equivalent of the English chorleywood bread. Oh! But one thing we never stopped eating was *pà de pages*. Sometimes we would have it daily, but the common thing for us to do was eating *pà de pages* on weekends, especially if we did a barbecue.

I bought a poetry book by Yvonne Rainer. She has a poem about domesticity and it made me think about Donna Haraway, but this has nothing to do with bread, in a linear way.

One day I ran the streets of happiness, just to burn the energy of a scream.

Carla told me that the only bakeries you could find in London belonged to a bigger chain, or a supermarket. And that's entirely not true. It's true that I couldn't find a centenary bakery still working, but I found good bread outside the big companies. I went to Broadway Market and there it was, artisan bread! You could buy one for 4 pounds, *más o menos*. Slow food, fetish bread, with its rules, its expertise, and its refined taste. This made me think in a workshop I once saw organized by London bakers in La Alpujarra.

Hadria would tell me “*el pan es comida de pobres*”. Mass processed bread is *comida de pobres*. *Hacer pan, como follar, es un privilegio burgués*. Hadria was the first person to show me how to make bread, she is a friend from a really good friend of mine and being with her made me feel at home. She learnt from her mother, who learnt from her mother in Asturias but also from her political family who were from Morocco. I thought that it would be a nice combination of things, I would learn from a woman who has learnt from other women and so on. Easy, unpretentious very good but not professionalized bread. If I had to learn from somewhere, it should be from there. I loved it, even before we started making

it. We talked about matriarchy, sex, candida, capitalism, wine and eggs among other things. We forgot to put salt on it. That was a misfortune. ¡Como si fuera pan de dietética!

I was wondering why he wasn't answering my e-mails. I really thought he would be some sort of an arrogant man. I didn't like the idea of him being a chef. I hate that figure. The male chef. Mi abuela is a chef, you know? It was so obvious that hurt. I thought, I don't care if he is nice, I won't like him. And again, he wasn't answering my emails. I wrote a long one, which resumes my expectations. I've always felt that I have great expectations, but as some sort of utopia, I like the idea of walking towards the impossible to make some of it probable. My expectations weren't that heroic though.

I'll sing the e-mail to you:

Hello Peter,

First of all, thank you for willing to share with me/us the knowledge of bread making. I'm really exited about learning how to do it!

As Steve already explained I'm doing a short residency at THIS. My work, in broad terms, revolves around notions of control, body and performance. In my late research I have approached food from a feminist perspective pointing out questions such as how technologies of care -we can include here organic food- have turned into control strategies.

My interest in bread started when I realised that bread in London had many different facets. There is bread present in the typical lunch: the sandwich, but is usually a mass processed bread. The bread I found in the supermarket is usually never baked in there, the same happens with chains like Percy Ingle. I have found proper bread in markets like Broadway marked and then

some people started telling me that they bake their own bread. Also, there is a self-sufficiency potentiality in learning how to make your own bread that I believe really powerful.

What I'd like to approach, in a practical way, are issues like oral tradition, communities of learning and food politics regarding to production, distribution and gender construction.

Everything you know about this subject, maybe history of the bread in London or your own experience, will be more than welcome. I know is such a wide perspective, my aim is to approach it in a sustainable and honest way, unpretentious, forgetting the theory and going straight to the practice, making our hands dirty through the process of kneading bread, sharing our experiences and knowledge while learning how to make it. It should be a horizontal exchange with all of the participants of the workshop. I'd like to record sound of the session and maybe take some pictures. I'm not sure yet what I'm going to do with it, right now it's part of the process.

I could set up a list of questions to approach in the workshop. I expect a casual conversation, nothing more, while we learn the art of making bread.

I'm gathering some material here (thoughts, links and pictures), maybe you want to take a look, but it's quite random: <http://gentlebread.tumblr.com/>

And here a beautiful quote from "The Practice of Everyday Life, Vol. 2: Living and Cooking" by Michel de Certeau, Luce Giard, Pierre Mayol:

Bread arouses the most archaic respect, nearly sacred; to throw it out, to trample over it is a matter of sacrilege; the scene of bread thrown in the trash arouses indignation; it cannot be separated from the working class condition:

to throw bread in the trash means to forget the story of poverty. It is a memorial.

Thanks again for your predisposition, and if you think we should meet before or maybe make a Skype talk just let me know!

And at some point he answered, and he sounded quite nice though. I decided to carry on with the events. It was a coincidence that a chef would do the workshop, instead (let's say) one of the women working at the beigel shop in Brick Lane. Steve, who shares space with me in the studio, overheard a conversation where I was talking about finding someone to do a bread workshop. He had a good friend who was a chef specialized in bread. I accepted even though my values seemed different to theirs. I didn't need a professionalized chef to make the workshop. I was interested about oral tradition and the valorization of the women's work in the kitchen. So no, a male chef was not my favorite option. I was sure he would mansplain me. I fought against my objections and decided to gratefully take what it was given to me. See if my suspicions were true and at some point approach them once it was done. It wasn't a coincidence that the chef was a man, of that I'm sure.

We had a kiln in the studio. This came up:

BAKE BREAD

BAKE BREAD IN THE KILN

CERAMIC BREAD

EATABLE BREAD

TALK ABOUT BREAD

TALK ABOUT BAKING BREAD

TALK ABOUT DISTRIBUTING BREAD

WHILE KNEADING BREAD

BAKING BREAD

EATING BREAD

I was thinking about bread when I understood that clay had a poetic relation to it. They are essentially different but gesturally and processually similar. I pictured them both mixed with each other, touching each other, fist with care and then brutally, pressing each other, like love, like fucking.

Ella came to the bread workshop we did with Peter. While we were kneading the dough. She told me:

I'm used to kneading but mostly clay, so it's like the opposite... you try to get the air out rather than put it in. So it's gonna be... well it's quite different though, like the action is very different.

And I asked her:

Do you move your hands differently?

And she answered:

Yes, is totally different 'cause you keep it really compact... but you... I'll show you sometime.

And she did.

Ella was concerned with not being professional enough. You already know what I think about being professional. I didn't care much; on the contrary I preferred that. She seemed to me that she knew what she was doing, but anyways, if she didn't I wouldn't care. I like the figure of the amateur, because usually then you approach things from another point of view, más desaprendido. You are braver. Despliegas más posibilidades. I loved how she insisted in body position, balance and pressure. Looking for the sustainability of the effort that was wedging, pushing and flatten.

After that I became really obsessed with particles. She told me that clay had memory; that you need to tire the material for it not to remember its last shape. Keep moving the particles, keep moving the particles! Like when Peter, the chef, was telling us to stretch the gluten, until forming long and elastic strands. Pure affection; I thought. Touching and feeling like Eve Kosofsky; I thought. Transform and being transformed; I thought. I told Ella that Nao would also show me how to work with clay, and Ella told me: “look, two amateurs and two professionals”. It made me think, again, that it couldn’t be a coincidence that the two professionals were men. And then again, fate brought me to there, so I decided not to fight it back, just embrace it and understand it as a symptom of a system, rather than un seguidos de unfortunate choices.

I couldn’t meet with Nao until the end of the residency. He was in Japan for almost a month. So, I had to wait to use the kiln, because he was the only one who knew how to use it. He is also a sculptor, and I really love how sculptors see the world. As a good friend of mine would say, las escultoras dicen la verdad. And I had the impression that Nao was telling the truth. He would explain me playfully and without pretensions the way he worked while showing me how to work with clay. We had a long conversation; we talked about his family, who por casualidad are bakers too. We talked about alternative education, gravity, how words affect movement y a la inversa, como los movimientos afectan a las palabras. We talked about seeing, expectations and speed. How he had to read twice the sculpture he had in front of him because it was difficult to let go the first image he had in mind. Stick together, stick together, stick together. Stick together, stick together, stick together. Stick together, stick together, stick together. Stick together, stick together, stick together. As a mantra.

Gentle Bread
performance text
sung by Ariadna Guiteras
April 28th - 2016

Chalton Gallery
London U.K.