

Dis/orientating the Early Childhood Sensorium: A Palate Making Menu for Public Pedagogy

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This paper shares a multilayered retrospective story of an international exhibit curated for the Climate Action Childhood Network Colloquium as part of a commitment among exhibit curators to reveal the complexities of unpalatable climate futures. In the format of a tasting menu, we offer a sampling of the exhibit installations as a menu of potential alterpolitics in the making. Facing intensifying inequitable climate presents and futures, our intention is that this invitation might create openings for the intersection of local and global concerns. We gesture toward collective but tentative responses for thinking climate action pedagogies through the metaphor of a troubling meal.

Key words: *research-creation; early childhood education; climate; pedagogy; children's museum*

savour (v.) from Old French savorer "taste, breathe in; appreciate, care for"

This paper shares a multilayered retrospective story of an international exhibit, *Dis/orientating the Early Childhood Sensorium: Micro-Interruptions for Alternative Climate Futures* (hereafter referred to as the Exhibit), curated by the Climate Action Childhood Network (CAN). The Exhibit took place at the London Children's Museum following a three-day Interdisciplinary Colloquium on Climate Pedagogies in February 2020 on the lands of the Anishinaabek, Haudenosaunee, Lūnaapéewak, and Attawandaron peoples, and featured a decaying food-waste chandelier (Figure 1) that framed a dining table setting (Figure 2). It is at this table that we think through the fissures and junctures of our

encounters with the Colloquium and Exhibit as cocurators / research colleagues who are situated in Victoria (Lekwungen territory, Canada), Perth (Whadjuk Noongar Country, Australia), and Guayaquil (Huancavilca territory, Ecuador). Inspired by Alexis Shotwell's (2020) reminder in her Colloquium keynote address that we are "ethically entangled with more distant others," we locate our Exhibit retrospect as a potential alterpolitics in the making that moves across multiple and incommensurable times, distances, and places. Centered around a menu created from our curatorial discussions and experiences of Colloquium events and the Exhibit, this paper continues the Colloquium's call for speculative and pedagogical responses to climate issues in early childhood education.

We begin with a three-part introduction: a brief overview of the Exhibit's emergence, the Exhibit's call for otherwise sensoria that subsequently frames our retrospective story, and the theoretical orientations that shape our menu provocation. This introduction is followed by the menu, an ensemble of six recalled Exhibit micro-moments told as stories à la carte, which aims to provoke indigestives and inedibles. Finally, before clearing the table, we sit with the mess and grapple with the unpalatable through expanded sensoria, not as a resolution but as a lingering indigestion—one that takes up Gert Biesta's (2014) assertion that "'beginning' is only half of what action is about, as everything depends on how others take up our initiatives" (p. 134). In this case, how the reader digests what is on offer through this colloquium exhibit retrospective put into an experimental article form, we hope might set something in motion in terms of sparking new pedagogical considerations in early childhood education to emerge.

Now, more than two years after the Colloquium, our slow and differential digesting of the Exhibit's six installations has produced, among other things, this paper on offer, which takes place in worlds profoundly changed from the ones lived in then. These worlds have been marked by intensifications of existing settler- and neocolonial conditions, such as the deadly fires and floods along the west coast of Canada and throughout Australia, and the immense acceleration of toxic waste from the North into the coastal lands of Ecuador. As global climate crisis realities intensify and profound inequities are amplified by the COVID-19 pandemic, cultivating an ability to attune ourselves to a plurality of situated perspectives feels increasingly urgent in this time of rapid narrowings. What happens distinctly in one place matters to another. Thus, our retrospective Exhibit story aims to blur divisions between the local-global without erasing difference by sharing climate stories as already both/and: both local and global, both heterogeneous and common.¹



Figure 1. Food-waste chandelier. Photograph by Alex Berry.



Figure 2. Setting the table. Photograph by Adrienne Bacelar de Castro.

Exhibiting CAN

The Exhibit installations we drew on in creating our menu offering emerged from two SSHRC-funded international research initiatives between 2018 and 2020: *Climate Action Network: Exploring Climate Change Pedagogies with Children* (CAN) and *Rethinking the R's: Transforming Waste Practices in Early Childhood Education*. To date, these initiatives have developed 18 collaboratories, each with a situated area of focus, as generative pedagogical spaces for experimenting with human-climate relations in distinct early childhood contexts. Fourteen collaboratory sites across Canada, the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia, and Ecuador were brought together through a collective and interpretive rendering in the London Exhibit through six common threads: energy, food, plastics, ruins, water, and weather. These six collaborative installations were enacted as a series of openings—small, tensioned portals—that invited visitors into the curated research projects' evocations and interpretive resonances (Climate Action Childhood Network, 2022).

The Exhibit was launched alongside CAN's sister exhibits *Conversations with Rain* (Perth, Western Australia, Australia) and *Sensorial Becomings: Climate Pedagogies with Children* (Victoria, BC, Canada). The Exhibit was, and continues to be, an act of colabouring (Vintimilla & Berger, 2019), where both virtual and material labour

was generated across thousands of kilometres between collaboratories, committees, visitors, and authors. Pedagogical colabouring with children, educators, families, students, community partners, and researchers within each unique collaboratory provoked initial conceptual propositions that were enlivened anew through the Exhibit's installations. Important to highlight is that these installations did not act as coherent representations or showcasings of the distinct CAN collaboratory projects but rather as creative responses to them. We recognize that this paper and the menu at its heart are indebted to our relations with the Food(ing) Collaboratory (Seneca Early Childhood Centre: Gagliardi, 2018; Khattar et al., 2019) and the Food Waste Collaboratory (Capilano Children's Centre: Kind et al., 2018), two collaboratories that have been thinking otherwise food relations with young children well beyond the dialogues that shaped this paper. Food relations are also currently being rethought at the new Reimagining Waste Collaboratory (London Children's Centre: MacAlpine & Pacini-Ketchabaw, 2021).

Our table (Figure 2) is set as a pedagogical proposition that situates researching-creating and thinking-doing as interdependent events. That is, it considers research as a speculative practice in the making that seeks to *do* theory as performative, experimental, and bodied (Pollitt, 2019; Truman et al., 2019). Central to its purpose and premise is the notion that art (including the art of tasting) constitutes research in its own right (Barrett & Bolt, 2010; Manning, 2014, 2015; Massumi, 2011), an orientation conducive to experimenting with early childhood education's prevailing sensory developmental baseline, which we address further in the subsection that follows. While turning to art as a vehicle for "unsolidifying" tasteful neoliberal forms (Phillips, 2015), we recognize the importance of being careful not to perpetuate notions of art creation and curation as neutral pursuits. As such, by taking on the form of a culinary event, this paper thinks with what Bishop (2005) calls an "activated, relational spectatorship" (p. 119) that depends on impurities, contradictions, and interactions of multiple ingredients that arrive in already political forms and processes.

Our curatorial intention with the Exhibit was to create a permeable frame where gallery walls could act as discursive thresholds within which the resonances of multiple CAN projects could diverge and be held (Fournier, 2021). As a curatorial committee looking back on the Exhibit, we are inspired by the sticky liminal spaces of Fournier's (2021) transnational exhibit series *Fermenting Feminisms*, which offer audiences opportunities to encounter the simultaneity of local and global decompositions via a series of heterogeneous, contaminating microbial happenings. Provoked by Fournier, this paper attempts to keep a multifaceted narrative going, one that began well before the exhibit at the Children's Museum, which gave shape to the Exhibit's initial design and installations and continues to metabolize and reform itself across multiple projects and places. This paper's menu making includes multiple curatorial voices that travelled across/between virtual and in-person encounters with, and constituted, this Exhibit. Our created menu invites readers to sample micro-moments from the Exhibit to contribute to what Gert Biesta (2014) might call "a specific form of doing educational 'work', one in which pedagogy operates in a public way" (p. 131).

Early childhood sensorium(s)

Drawing on the scholarship of Natasha Myers (2018), we set a rhythm and tempo within this menu to inhibit colonial sensory receptors, such as a thirst for consistency, control, and linearity, and to awaken *alternative sensoria*. Working with Myers' sensorial attunement, we attend to the generative power of multiple temporal rhythms that cut against dominant sensory narratives in early childhood, including the persistent sensory paradigm of optics/representation (Nelson et al., 2020). Here, we are reminded of Donna Haraway's (1988) call to reclaim the sensory system that has been used to "signify a leap out of the marked body and into a conquering gaze from nowhere" (p. 581). In thinking tasting sensitivities as situated and heterogeneous, we aim to resist what Haraway describes as the gluttony of the objective transcendental gaze that sees but cannot be seen, that

“represent[s] while escaping representation” (p. 581) in the service of unquestioned progression.

Playing at the edges of sensory attunement with Myers (2018), we also interfere with the prevailing developmental story of the individual child, with five distinct and intrinsic senses, who is educated through consumptive pedagogies designed to serve children’s happy, free sensory explorations (Nelson et al., 2020; Vintimilla, 2014). We invite the reader to resist simplified divisions between sight/taste/touch/smell/sound and put tasting to work as *more-than*, through what we hope is a productive vehicle for pushing past child-centered framings that dilute and divide children’s sensitivities to the complicated, uneasy climate relations they are embedded in. Just as each of the Exhibit’s six installations immersed spectators in a multisensational encounter with energy, food, plastics, ruins, water, and weather performances, our menu seeks to engage the listening body toward different ways of sensing the urgent calls of child-climate stories. Continuing the Colloquium and Exhibit’s intentions to disorient familiar practices in early childhood education and distort our settler sensoria, our troubling Exhibit story tries to unsettle mainstream desires of tasting virtue or satiating cravings to feel superior as humans.

Affrica Taylor (2017) asserts that grandiose settler colonial narratives of environmental heroism dominate in early childhood education. Such narratives often take shape through developmental discourses of stewardship and childhood purity in a harmonious nature, through which children’s situated experiences are depoliticized in the process of universalizing places differentially marked by climate disaster. Leaning on Taylor (2017), we respond pedagogically to the dominance of such universalizing narratives as Exhibit curators and research colleagues by pursuing minor heterogeneous stories that endeavour to answer to children’s uneven climate inheritances. Following Claire Bishop (2005), we understand curation as the creation of a public experience that activates involvement within a particular socio-political arena. In varying ways, each CAN collaborative activated involvement—where pedagogy operates in the interest of creating conditions for new publics and forms of togetherness to emerge (Biesta, 2014)—within the arena of early childhood education (Hodgins et al., 2022; Pollitt, Blue, & Blaise, 2020; Pollitt, Kind, Vintimilla, & Blue, 2021). So too, the Exhibit curation aimed to gesture toward speculative pedagogies for early childhood education through aesthetic installations to “set ideas into motion” and cause us to inhabit the world slightly differently (Bishop, 2005, p. 104). Some of the Exhibit’s entangled encounters—including the small and mundane—are brought to our menu offering aimed at decentering the human subject to make spaces for the emergence of minor shifts in subjectivity. We invite readers to open our menu as tasters, to try out flavours that might help to shape pedagogical sensibilities capable of making, performing, and inventing otherwise climate futures.

Menu making

Invoking the table motif to tell a multimodal, multilayered Exhibit story anew, it feels critical to ask ourselves on whose terms the invitation to come to the table is extended. Who is missing? As white settler scholars, we recognize that our curatorial storying begins from a place fraught with unevenness, as we tell it from a table preset with whiteness and its exclusions. With this in mind, we offer this menu as a metaphor with an intention to amplify classist, colonial rituals of eating to unsettle the assumed purity of so-called fine dining and artistic consumption (Figure 3). Using the metaphor of a menu to rethink human-climate relations is not something we cultivate exclusively. CLIMAVORE is another example of a series of culinary responses by museum restaurants across the United Kingdom that experiment with forms of eating that take seriously human alterations of a planet’s climate. Akin to the Exhibit’s pedagogical intention to disorient developmental depictions of early childhood’s sensory palate that reduce climate disaster as unpalatable for some versus a catastrophic global event that is still in the making, in this menu we exaggerate classist fine-dining tasting experience motifs to complexify

palatability as more-than-human and, importantly, as a pedagogical obligation.²

Our work is anchored in feminist common worlding dispositions. Following Hodgins (2019), we “grapple with the complexities of being deeply embedded in neoliberal and settler colonial capitalism ... [while] experimenting with methods that are receptive to and gesture toward the sensorial, the affective, the historical presences that haunt” (pp. 4-5). In storying this Exhibit through a menu of inconvenient climate tastings, each menu course is in response to a particular Exhibit installation. For example, the Soup Du Jour, *Plastic Boullion*, makes indigestible the Exhibit’s installation titled *Plastic Worlding* and the ephemeral resonances of plastics’ slow violence across two research sites in Ontario, Canada and Azuay, Ecuador. The menu item speaks to how plastics’ violences are at once distinct and shared, and to how learning to sense them in new ways in early childhood education is uneasy, unhurried work. Written as a pedagogical provocation for early childhood that attempts to draw in and disorient readers from extractive quick consumptions of the Exhibit, the menu invites slow reading.

Thinking with Isabelle Stengers (2008, 2015, 2018), we extend this tasting menu invitation as a metaphor that experiments with the refrains of modernity’s sensorial traditions by making them felt, and by failing to satisfy them. Refusing to contribute to the overwhelm of unsituated Anthropocene stories in circulation that center a universalized but “nowhere man” as the culprit in creating serious global challenges (Haraway, 2016), we follow Taylor and Pacini-Ketchabaw (2019) to “eschew the heroic tales of major individuals on the big stage and seek out alternative, minor, but powerful polyphonic stories of multiple small players, quietly changing worlds together on the margins” (p. 4). Attempting to become receptive to what exists on the peripheries of dominant sensory categories that figure mainstream early childhood discourse, we take seriously Erica Violet Lee’s (2020) commitment “to choose the things to map, not just the map-able.” Our not-just-palatable menu comes with a warning—that not everything is up for dominant, colonial tastings.

Palates are made over time. They embody histories of diverse pedagogical perspectives that continue to shape/enable/deny future sense-abilities. The menu that follows is situated within forms of violence that continue to inform everyday affective realities of colonialism in early childhood education. Stewed in a commitment to interrupt dominant conceptualizations of the (white, male, middle-class) human as the sole focus of education research and pedagogy, a common worlds framing calls on us to attend to the movements, impermanence, and multiplicities of others across shared, uneven worlds (Hodgins, 2019; Taylor & Pacini-Ketchabaw, 2019). This attention includes an acknowledgment of dominant framings of the human as a projection of colonial white masculinity that continue to violently exclude, exploit, and erase Black, Indigenous, and other racialized peoples (Nxumalo, 2019; Wynter, 1995, 2003), as witnessed through recent anti-Black and Indigenous murders by the hands of American, Canadian, and Australian colonial institutions (Al Jazeera, 2020; Pashagumskum, 2020). The reality of this colonial violence is also visible in the destruction of Indigenous lands that cultural food systems are dependent on, creating uneven access to fresh food in many Indigenous communities in Canada and Australia (see Kaartdijin Noongar, 2022; Todd, 2016).



Figure 3. Menu du jour. Photograph by Alex Berry.

Note: Menu card designed by Dana Lee, Maira N. Ramirez-Lazo, Lisa-Marie Gagliardi, Aja Papp, Sara Sutherland, Nicole Pierce, Tanya Andrejas, Laura Salau, Randa Khattar and Veronica Pacini-Ketchabaw. Menu photos by Sylvia Kind.

Opening the menu: Our connoisseured swirlings of the Exhibit installations

taste (n.) from the modern French tât “a small portion given” / “faculty or sense by which the flavour of a thing is discerned” / “aesthetic judgment, of discerning and appreciating”

taste as an active noun: deciding, choosing, changing, arranging

This menu is inspired by Stengers’ (2018) conceptualization of a connoisseur. One who savours an idea, swishes it around in their mouth, and dwells with contradictory flavours, not despite but *because of* an instinct to spit (Berry, 2020). Paying attention to the (un)palatableness of slow rhythms and particularity to the specific in early childhood education, we resist the habit of transcendentalism and general authority (Stengers, 2018) of education research that continues to extract and appropriate knowledges in the service of relentless progress. Thinking through Stengers’ image of the connoisseur in our roles as dinner hosts / researchers, we reconsider ourselves and our dinner guests (readers) as “unprotected against doubt” (Stengers, p. 8) and implicated within the questions we are asking. In putting this image of the connoisseur to work, we propose a differential, messy engagement with the colonial sense-abilities this menu highlights and responds to, an invitation that does not seek to satiate but rather to *chew slowly* and stir a hunger toward pedagogical dispositions that resist the quick consumption of too-singular stories. As we work up an appetite for experiencing catastrophe otherwise through

this dining experience, we think about the ways in which we differentially affect and are affected by that which is brought near (Ahmed, 2010). Attending to the uneven reach of ecological devastation in Canada, Australia, and Ecuador, this menu takes seriously a pedagogical commitment to presence the specificities of difference that inform the act of tasting. Embroiled by feminist expectation at an uneven table, we ask: What does this fare make tasteable? For whom, and under what conditions, does it become palatable?

Beverages

Cascading Cocktail

What Water Moves installation ingredients:

A7 photograph cards, black and white. Card holder.

Tablet with headphones. Song: Aptzāi Yana Wana (Ajehuac Yana, Spring Lake-San Marcos, Texas). Tall black box.

When making your selection for what to drink with this meal, you are presented with a blend of Ajehuac Yana, Derbarl Yerrigan, and Lake Ontario waters. Dead and dying blowfish carcasses are floating in the carafe of waters from near and far. One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight ... some even lock eyes with you as you shuffle from card to card. By pouring the waters into your glass you summon a water song that begins to fill every gap in your watery body. A gentle rhythm builds as a chorus of voices moves the waters from carafe to glass—from distant places directly to you. As you take a swig, your throat becomes a vessel for waste, death, life, and possibility, stirred with humming sounds of children's sung water relations. It settles in your belly where it will gurgle and swish for the rest of the meal.

Hors D'Oeuvres / Aperitifs

Soup Du Jour: Polymer Bouillon

Plastic Worlding installation ingredients:

Insects: Cabuya grass, woven plastic fibres, Saquillo cocoon.

Two large glass specimen jars.

Woven plastic whale. Fishing wire. Gallery lights—Shadows.

Flip-through card stack: "The logics of plastic." Plastic card holder.

Soup arrives quickly. Steam lingers behind as it is carried to the table—a distinct waft that carries slow, airy micro-remnants of a petroleum stew. Stomach hollow. Hunger insatiable. But plastic is a trickster. A paradoxical polymer, this bouillon will fill you up and leave you empty.

Stirring with rising tides and temperatures, this bowl experiments with the liquid borders of the body. Plated warmly in a hand-woven cocoon of filmy fibres from an Andean plastic-forest in Ecuador, gathered 5,104 kilometres from your table, broth melds local and global fares with the rarest cuts of whale offal from a land-filled plastic ocean in London, Ontario.

Slow-cooked polyethylene ligaments slide from a silver spoon, slipping down your throat. Broth smooth and filmy, tangling effortlessly through insides—binding and tightening in the crevices of organs. Malleable,

inventive, efficient. You, too, are becoming a synthetic creature.

An aftertaste intensifies once the dishes are cleared. Ethylene hunger. Swelling ephemeral residue, post-bouillon glow that comes from inside blinds synthetic memories. The body perspires, a few degrees higher. A belly of methane gases in the unright. Synthetic vocal cords hum: “Another bowl?”

Entree

Food-Waste Fondue

An Invitation to Dinner installation ingredients:

One small table. White linen cloth. Gold, woven table mats. White cloth napkins. Napkin holders. Royal Albert china dinner plates. Crystal glasses. Silverware. Menu card and holder.

Food-waste-resin chandelier hooked from above. Spotlights.

A layered medley of decaying berries—assortment of legumes infused with lively fungi, more-than-ripened citrus—all encapsulated in a synthetic polymer glaze and carefully hung above your table. Arriving to this dining room from a small tropical fruit farm in the exacerbated coastal oil basin of Guayas, Ecuador, this Food-Waste Fondue is growing sticky with not-so-palatable storylines.

From rural lands across highways to city market stands, small hands participate here in the careful arrangements of storefront offerings. They hustle with the experienced movement and survival of/for their elders, now more than ever, in some of the harshest socio-ecological conditions this lively growing port city has endured. Opening wide, you are encountering layers of market childhoods in the hillscape barrios of Mapasingue, the absences of a generation now publicly marked by a microbe, and the socio-political conditions that activate inequities across borders. Joy and love exist here too; eating is a practice of generosity and hospitality, a gathering of foods, families, and others together in the heat. Who sits at the global table? An intense vibrancy of rotting tropical flavours begins to settle in closely shared spaces, between teeth and gums. Dying cells open up new forms, and decay is embodied as an acute awareness of life, resurgence, and becoming. One is always of many in the industrial city.

Designs begin with a pencil and paper—numerous sketches imagining possible formations. Small wooden boxes are built as molds for slowly sedimenting layers of resin and food waste. Resin is demanding and beckons late nights of waiting for each layer to dry before drizzling over the next. Delicate chain links and hooks are sized and painted. Resin is stubborn—sticky—and more unpredictable than usual as it attempts and fails to encapsulate a living assemblage of rotting food. Design plans change in response to decay transformations. Resin sets and the wood is peeled off. Crystallized parcels of food resin are packed tightly with paper and plastic shopping bags in preparation for 26 hours of carry-on travel time: Guayaquil—Houston—Toronto—Vancouver—Toronto once more, a train and a bus to the London Children’s Museum. Berries are active along the journey, with juices that meld through resin barriers, seeping into paper-plastic shielding. Despite a desire for containment, fruit flows and generates risky conditions as worry simmers among museum staff. Is it appropriate for children? Is it safe to be hung above small bodies and hands that grab? We hang it with care. A few hours before the Exhibit opening, it falls. It fails. Hooks break and resin cracks. We scramble to repair and rehang it in time. It holds, swaying slowly suspended from ceiling pipes as the dining room opens and dinner guests pass by. Chemical relations of food fibres and resin intensify. Gallery lights illuminate small droplets of translucent, slow-motion syrup dripping from the chandelier onto gold-rimmed porcelain plates.

Accompaniments / Side Dishes

Rainforest Soufflé

Weather Wandering Installation ingredients:

Projector. 2 x 1.5 metre projection. Sound file. Small stools.

High-definition speakers throughout gallery.

The sound of listening. A canopy of trees in a tiny urban forest sways to the pulse of a chainsaw orchestra on Lək^wəŋən family lands. The same canopy sways to the filmic score of child-made rain on Whadjuk Noongar boodja Country (countryPerth). Forest shrinks in the force and scale of anthropogenic clearing. Weather states change bodies, reinvent imaginations, reorient which way is up. Weather weathers. Where are the trees stretching/disappearing to? What kind of weather sways in and informs your imaginary? Occupies the waterways under your skin? Do you hear rain, fire, undergrowth, overstories, resurgence, destruction, burnt leaves falling from unanchored disintegrating roots? Listen. You are entering an unstable weather continuum, a presencing of trees and a choose-your-own-adventure soundtrack shaped by the absence of rain, histories of presence. The sounds continue to loop and trees continue to sway on screen. For now.

Spiral Vermicelli

Energy Spirals installation ingredients:

Black wire coils suspended. 22, 5 x 5 Photographs.

Small stones. Long, shredded typewritten paper. Lights and Shadows.

Shadows dance in the furthest corner of the dining room, reverberating with twirls of copper wire that hang from above and a mountain of long, tangled paper below. Sifting your fork through endless spirals.

A rustling of leaves.

A cemetery landscape, tides wax, spiralled lines of ants rush over your glass, metal-fan wings spin, hammered paints splatter, marble tombstones—marks of cremation, cracked egg yolk—seeping, spilling, radioactive currents, apple core melts into dewy earth and the moon wanes on. *Energy flows in spirals.*

No straight lines, only waves, lit hard from above and light below. Rhythmic cycles of spiral energy pulse across the table. Where does one end and another begin? Fork spins in circles around your plate, slow screech, wire-paper assemblages twirled up with Birmingham (UK) industrial energy networks and hyper (de)composition of London (Canada) burial grounds. Energy waves throb, whirling up with big-city energy and microbial regeneration that hums below the earth. Your pulse echoes their waves, beating with the vibrations of spiral energy transformations.

Dessert

Crusted Layer Sponge

Witnessing Ruins installation ingredients:

A5 soft cover book. Gloss paper. Stapled at spine.

Laptop. Headphones. Presented on a black box.

Just when you think you cannot possibly fit in anymore, the final course is served. In the photographs it presents as wide-open fields and a winter forest. As you pick up your dessert fork the gas is slowly building in your body just as it is beneath the ground from decades of waste being buried and layered in the earth's crust. As you take the first bite of your layered dessert you hear an awful crunching and punching accompanied by long, sharp beeps that are there to supposedly help you swallow. The layers include dried leaves, goose feathers, dandelions, bones, snails, pumpkin, and floppy disks. You close your eyes and imagine the path that these are about to take. Inhale, exhale. Pause. The gas well pipes match the length of your intestine, which you can feel being filled with waste as you take bite after bite. As your body digests, it is tracing pasts, presents, and futures.

(In)Digestion

digest (v.) etymologically “to carry apart” from dis- “apart” + gerere “to carry”

We continue to be provoked by the Colloquium's food experiences, particularly the invitation extended to Colloquium participants to craft pedagogies that begin with Haraway's (2016) call-cum-feminist-mantra of *staying with the trouble* of telling complicated, situated, and sympoietic stories. Biesta's (2014) articulation of public pedagogy, as a specific pedagogical form that is characterized by its connection with a public, is helpful to think with here. For Biesta, public pedagogy conjugates the educational and the political, embedding both firmly in the public sphere. With Hannah Arendt (1958), we understand this public sphere as “a space of appearance” that “comes into being” and is created by a particular *manner* of gathering and togetherness (p. 199). Public pedagogy is interested in this form of *publicness*, a particular quality of being together that gives shape to a political existence (Biesta, 2014). This pedagogical orientation seeks to make a public, as a condition for difference to emerge and to be nourished and sustained, further implying the necessity and value of the cultivation of a sense of collectivity defined by plurality within the field of education.

Biesta (2014) describes how this form of public existence becomes threatened when its interests are tied to the market and private self-interest. He uses the metaphor of a set menu to articulate this idea, whereby the menu proposes to consumer-citizens an illusion of freedom and choice through a prearranged selection, eroding public interest and decision making in the service of a private self and its value-driven immediate wants. Biesta's notion of public pedagogy as one “that (re)connects the educational and the political and locates both firmly in the public sphere” (p. 131) invites deeper consideration of what is on offer here through our menu and the invitation to slowly digest its contents. By inviting readers to sample Exhibit installations *anew* and emphasizing the importance of disrupting dominant, hyperindividualized modes of sense making and consumption, we hope to sustain the Colloquium's pedagogical intention to draw attention to early childhood education's implication in perpetuating dominant approaches to sense making about the world and our place in it. Furthermore, we invite tasters (readers) into new possibilities for opening up collective understandings through the enactment of situated, political pedagogical approaches in early childhood education. In so doing, we resonate with Arendt's (1958) conceptualization of the public, not as a physical space or a particular location, but rather a certain quality of exchange between people who gather toward the purpose of a collective life. As early childhood scholars, we cannot think of this purpose without Cristina Delgado Vintimilla and Veronica Pacini-Ketchabaw. Vintimilla and Pacini-Ketchabaw (2020) ground our orientations to pedagogy in early childhood education as “a body of knowledge that thinks educational practice” (p. 630), one that actively engages the question of how this practice might enable particular modes of existence and understandings within the project of collective life-making.

(In)Satiabale

Paying attention to situated heterogeneous climate stories is a doing and a thinking that necessitates moving beyond a human of the Enlightenment (Haraway, 2016; Taylor, 2017). We propose this requires not a blueprint or application that appeases but rather a particular *manner* of being at the table. How does a connoisseur come to savour what they are already eating yet may be able to ignore? It is in this destabilizing manner of tasting that we attempt to make perceptible what separates thinking from the lived consequences of climate catastrophe, or, as Stengers (2015) articulates, the prefabricated categories of common “sense” that continue to produce amnesia. Our menu du jour is a response to neoliberalism’s temporal pulse, refusing the seemingly endless illusions of choice at the table. With this in mind, the menu is a modest proposal for helping evoke alternative visions of subjectivity within the material-semiotic folds of tasting and (in)digestion. Particularly, it offers a speculative metaphor to stimulate attention to existing power relations mediated among those who digest, the digested, and the indigestible (Cutler, 2019). Rather than offering early childhood education a script for enacting public pedagogies, our menu prompts minor perceptual cues that stimulate sensations and sensibilities of digesting that are situated in more-than-human sensory relations. What is beyond the initial taste response? What kinds of grappling are being experienced at the table? What does this fare make sense-able? What are the legacies/labour that produce that which we come to consume?

As we think with the poetic and metaphoric potential of the dishes on offer here to nourish an appetite for thinking child-climate relations beyond prefabricated sensors (Myers, 2018), we remain attentive to transcendent romanticism or attempts at emancipatory escape through the sensational. With Stengers (2015), cultivating a just “palate” for climate catastrophe requires an attentive venturing into what she describes not as “a friendly world, but an unhealthy milieu” (p. 104), one that is perceptive of, and vulnerable to, the differential pain of a mutual poisoning. A noninnocent endeavour, we recognize that the dishes we offer, too, are susceptible to becoming poisons. In taking this creative risk—with recognition that we are able to choose it—we situate our retrospective story as figured within “our own involvements in perpetuating dominant values rather than retreating to the sheltered position of an enlightened outsider who knows better” (Puig de la Bellacasa, 2017, p. 10). Alongside Stengers (2015), we wonder if it is in considering catastrophe anew, cultivating fuller and more complex palates for the times, that we might generate the capacity to notice illusory capitalist refrains and think toward what could exist beyond them. This menu is intended as an occasion for this manner of situated attention, a tasting event that might provoke thought with/in a damaged story and in earthly conditions that are no longer hospitable to the status quo. Opening the menu, choosing a dish, risks engagement over a wobbly table. We have attempted to magnify consumptive practices rooted in settler colonial logics, not to cement them but rather to destabilize and make felt the sensibilities they refuse. In savouring we ask, what happens to the “sensible”? Within the sensorial archives of early childhood education that seek cohesion and certainty, what becomes unswallowable/leftover? Recognizing this menu experiment as potentially hard to swallow, and knowing that we may fall short in realizing the goals set out in this paper’s experimental approach, we also embrace pedagogical experimentation as part of the process of making ourselves vulnerable in attempting to get somewhere new.

These experimentations are of a noninnocent pedagogical endeavour that intends to gesture toward particular forms of subjectivity that might be capable of savouring slow, inconvenient climate flavourings. Our situated and partial responses are an attempt to interrupt the capitalist operandus of food production, consumption, and waste that perpetuate impossible logics of a “global table.” Instead, our metaphor of this table, and the menu that prompts it, are imbued with decay, more-than-human transformations, and tensioned stories that dance in and between capitalist refrains so that we might sense a permeability to their consequence. We offer these tastings as a pedagogical provocation for interrupting humanist sensory categories that seek division and control,

and for resensitizing early childhood education's sensory palate toward dispositions capable of inheriting the complexity and contradictions of more-than-human relations. We propose this resensitizing as a modest but crucial shift toward making a public in early childhood education that senses a collective urgency that is at once differential and common. The menu we have offered functions as a creative score for educators to think with; its performative structure enables creative writing, and metaphor, as a minor responsive act that might initiate disruption to overpracticed sensoria and palettes in early childhood education.

Aftertaste



Figure 4. A liquifying chandelier. Photograph by Alex Berry.

The reality of this dining room is that there was no actual food served at the Exhibit. One of the focal pieces of the Exhibit, the food-waste chandelier centerpiece that consistently leaked from the inside out (Figure 4) and came crashing down twice during installation, posed relentless interruptions to set and reset our table. Revisiting the food-waste chandelier now, over two years since the Exhibit, we learn it has continued to decay, with the resin activating a syrupy mess. While we may have left the Exhibit on the very cusp of COVID-19, the Exhibit's mattering has not left us; the work of (de)composition keeps going. This consistency suggests the ongoing work and responsibility of the connoisseur to notice a world already tempered and "ticklish" in movement beyond human reason (Stengers, 2015), a connoisseur who works with multiple bodies and relational palates in which indigestion is the overt destabilizing reminder, offering bitter clues and more questions at a table we may not yet know.



Figure 5. Untitled. Photographs by Veronica Pacini-Ketchabaw.

Plastic-wrapped in the basement, food-waste-resin stories live long after dinner. Tasting them now, displaced/replaced across hemispheres—in and out of capitalist rhythms. Small chain-links move with unease—lethargic in the pull as syrupy insides drizzle through and across metal loops (Figure 5). Extending them long, small flakes of white, acrylic paint fall, sticking to fingertips and clinging under nails. The chandelier is slippery, sluggish as its accordion layers expand outward, sticky to what comes near. Still inside but leaking through, food-waste bodies are dissolving with each other and beyond the boundaries of resin skin. It is difficult to mark their forms. The view is blurry, rotting juice crystals tacked with mix-matched pieces of paper and plastic. Coming from the inside out. Residue lingers in mouth, the aftertaste is tart, the flavour uncertain. Bruises are slow to swallow. We percolate in this inhospitable moment when instinct calls to spit. How does climate catastrophe taste?

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