

May, 2025

Dear C,

As promised, I write to you from my tiny kitchen in Garbatella, amongst bottles of half-drunk wine kept for sauces, and a bowl of lemons, topped with a small, rotting apricot. I consider the soft grey hairs growing from the decomposing fruit, as I glance from the small bin of organic waste by the sink, to the essay you sent me: 'Purity, Impurity, and Separation' by Maria Lugones. The negotiation we make between these states is constant, relying on porous borders to enable ecologies of resistance and survival. We are components in polyphonic systems.

As I write, I listen to the lyrics you wrote for 'Choral Accomplishment':

*we escape hours and minutes  
'cause we don't have a time  
slowed down, lazy unfinished*

*can't we stay a bit longer?*

The politics of slowness at a time of high speed consumption.

The choral accomplishment in your film isn't the product, but the process. In the process we witness women singing a tender, slow form of protest. We behold their pleasure as they luxuriate in pouring milk and dressing each other in workwear, each textile a thin skin between the body within and the world beyond it.

Their actions are symbolic.  
Fluids run backwards.  
Things are unreal. Magic.

These women refuse the swift efficiency of repetitive labour. Their ceramic tools require more than one person to activate them and great care is taken in the choreography of movement. A fork is slipped into a protagonist's hair and twisted around a curl. A flower blooms from one woman's forehead, like a third eye. Each symbolic gesture points towards an inheritance of material knowledge found in the land, to metamorphosize in the kitchen.

The politics of food, at a time of weaponised starvation.

*walking over a steep silence  
on the wreck of your enlightenment  
offbeat plunge to the unnamed  
common sense of disagreement*

Do you mean that people naturally disagree? Or do you mean that within conflict commonsense is the key to resolution?

I momentarily stop the film to google the farmers in Sardinia that you mentioned when we met. I watch them throwing their fresh, white milk onto the streets in 2019: a visually striking protest at the falling prices of dairy affecting their livelihood.

When I consider my place as a consumer and worker within violent, capitalist systems I feel overwhelmed. I can see destitution lurking at the centre of Negative Freedoms and to quell my fear I imagine the life of a cloistered nun: the fantasy offers the embrace of sisterhood, stripped of the need for money and surplus material possession. I imagine shutting the world out in order to pray for it. I imagine a cloister's kitchen, similar to the one in your film and the labour required to feed an enclosed community.

However, since I find it impossible to believe in human purity, I also see the nuns queer marriage to God, microbiomes, recycling bins and the cat-cradle of shared ideas. Neither can I separate your work from a string of cultural cues I have gathered: from Martha Rosler's solitary and menacing kitchen semiotics, Judy Chicago's yonic plates, and Rirkrit Tiravanija's kitchen works. They all congregate in my mind as I watch the film, each contributing to my understanding of a world that is both familiar and unfamiliar.

*we have found another way out  
there's no row, nor line or circle  
make me stone and I will crumble*

*an enchanted break.*

A spell cast between human and nonhuman entities.

These slow lines of conversation have offered me a way into your world, which is perhaps part of a nonlinear way out of this one.

When I take out the compost, I will take this letter to the post office. And then I will wait.

With love,

E  
x