

THESIS

DIGESTIVE DIALECTICS: EVERYDAY LIFE, FOOD, AND SOCIAL CHANGE IN  
CONTEMPORARY JAPAN

Submitted by

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## ABSTRACT

### DIGESTIVE DIALECTICS: EVERYDAY LIFE, FOOD, AND SOCIAL CHANGE IN CONTEMPORARY JAPAN

In the field of social research, the concept of change has been dissociated from its practical foundations, recast as a function of structural manipulations and conceptual processes. The living, breathing body of people in their everyday lives has been annihilated by the panoptic gaze of “objectivist” science, its somatic knowledge reduced to a residue. But for all of this technocracy, the lived—everyday life—is no mere repository of conceptual knowledge, but the soil which supports the whimsical adventures of these plants—the so-called “higher spheres”—pullulating from its nourishing base. This thesis, therefore, attempts to relocate the living body in the matrix of gastropractical forces, micro and macro, in two specific contexts in contemporary Japan. Its objective, then, is to discover this body and the forces it confronts in everyday acts of food consumption in rotary sushi bars and Korean barbecue restaurants, the perceptual limits that constrain the ability of actors to “see” the potential for change immanent to repetitious gastropraxis.

By utilizing theoretical and methodological precepts fashioned by the work of French sociologist and philosopher Henri Lefebvre, this research project moves to tackle the issue of social change from a phenomenological perspective. That social space and time are a component of the eating process is apparent. By focusing on a confluence of

issues, both immediate and mediate, I take the viewpoint of an actor within these contexts and subject it to rigorous examination. From this perspective things like environmental destruction, culture, aesthetics, political economy, and colonization are analyzed dialectically. Only by problematizing these forces at the level of the body will the potential for change be uncovered, by laying bare the epistemic barriers that have been erected to reduce its visibility. If social change is to be enduring, affective linkages and embodied knowledge must be integrated into the conceptual whole, which can only happen by recognizing the barriers which prevent its incorporation.

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## CHAPTER I

### EMBODIMENT AND GASTROPRACTICE: INTRODUCING THE SUBJECT

*“Thinking people were obsessed with the political drama. Rightly so. But they were forgetting that although political drama was being acted out or decided in the higher spheres—the State, parliament, leaders, policies—it still had a ‘base’ in matters relating to food, rationing, wages, the organization or reorganization of labour. A humble, everyday ‘base’”*

Henri Lefebvre (2008a: 6)

#### 1.1 Introducing the Subject

Thundering, clamoring hunger pangs strike our subject, a body and consciousness, as it maneuvers and mitigates the hectic chaos of urban Japan. Condemned to choice, our subject navigates the postmodern, cryptic maze of urban Japanese gastrotopy (food space) on an endeavor to overcome hunger and paralysis by alleviating the belly’s bellowing blabber. Alas, a choice is made; from the multitude of eateries in this cityscape our subject decides—*kaitenzushi*. Like a battle-worn soldier emerging from the cloud of war, our subject enters through a simple, functional, sliding glass door, opaquely tinted with calligraphic inscriptions emblazoned on the glass, announcing the name of the establishment. Though rehearsed, our subject is warmly, hospitably greeted by a middle-aged hostess, her canorous voice soothing, strikingly distinct from the cacophony of the street, arresting our subject’s attention. As the war-born stupor of the street is shed for the intimacy of the sushi bar, our subject traverses the internal space, enveloping itself in



poly-layered discourses ranging from the traditional to the modern, from capital accumulation to cultural identity. In transition, our subject gently slides onto a stool straddling the bar, the “everyday” is effaced, distanced, and yet it permeates this moment, saturates this space of seemingly individual regeneration. Leisurely, in a quest to satisfy a need and a desire, our subject attempts to escape the mundane, everyday existence encountered, both eternally and ephemerally, seeking self-cultivation and sustenance, indulgence and satiation.

But everyday battle plans incorporate bodily, cultural, and social regeneration via food preparation and consumption. As our subject descends further into its consumptive trance, overcome by the pungent aromas of “fresh” tuna and mackerel, eyes full of the vivid reds and pinks, the soft blues and pearly whites of mostly raw seafood, a naturalized and “traditional” interior design, it detaches itself from its social, global context, turning toward immediate, uninhibited self-gratification. The physical surroundings, imbued with cultural significance, mobilize solipsistic horizons of understanding, restricting our subject’s perspective, enclosing its field of “vision<sup>1</sup>.” Be it a cup of green tea or the gallantly clad sushi chef sporting Western-style culinary garb, meticulously crafting edible artwork, our subject’s consciousness is dragged toward the immediate by an affective, sensual connection with both ambiance and objects bombarding the senses with images of quintessential “Japanese-ness.” Small saucers of sushi saunter silently in front of our subject, slithering along their serpentine course, preordained by the path of the conveyor belt that carries them. Mimicking blood in the artery, these plates pass the organs that necessitate their existence, subjects for objects,

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<sup>1</sup> Please note that ‘vision’ here connotes the application of all senses, in other words perception.

objects for subjects, a dialectic of nourishment, digestion, of mutually constituted entities, spatial and temporal, interacting at this particular moment.

Deep in the trance of consumption, a bridge between being and becoming, our subject simultaneously approximates and distances itself to and from the sources of its nourishment. Regardless of the nebulous or indeterminate origin of these products, consumption assists in situating our subject, in evoking a sense of locality and immediacy by narrowing the horizons of perception and conception. In this way our subject fails to recognize the impact of its actions on local conditions, national political economy and the dictates of global capital and global environmental degradation. These various levels of reality are telescoped, condensed into fleeting, scarcely visible moments of lived experience. Unfathomable production methods, arcane aesthetic principles, even the ethnomethods of “proper” consumption techniques are concealed during the moment of consumption, in the circuits of necessary knowledge and understanding. As gastropraxis—the practices associated with the production, circulation, distribution, preparation and consumption of food in all possible senses—is scaled up, abstracted from historical boundaries of material and cultural production, human awareness of food circuits, cultural roots, environmental impacts and “authenticity” diminishes. But how can this possibly be the case? Are not we incessantly assaulted with media and “information” in contemporary societies? Should not we be more aware of the material and cultural conditions of food consumption in contemporary, modern society? I propose that, instead of looking into the abstract, we start with the concrete undulations of everyday practice to unravel this mystery—the corporal, embodied experiences of food consumption.

## 1.2 The Problematic Stated

This subject is a fiction of the narrative, an avatar, an anybody employable to demonstrate relevant facts of social digestion, a process of production and reproduction of human societies. Gastropraxis (production, preparation and consumption of food, food culture, food spaces, etc.) has, along with everyday life, been scarcely acknowledged in social scientific research as a viable agenda for investigation, save for a few dedicated anthropologists, sociologists, historians and cultural theorists (e.g. Bourdieu 1984; Goody 1982; Mintz 1985). Unfortunately most inquiries into gastropraxis have tended to decontextualize or detach food and its associated consumptive practices from socio-historical milieus (e.g. Ashkenazi and Jacob 2000; Mintz and Du Bois 2002). Separating food practices from social totalities remains problematic, a sociological version of *ceteris paribus* whereby relevant social productive and reproductive issues are ignored in the hypostatization and reification of gastropraxis as a general category<sup>2</sup>.

In contrast, exceedingly economistic interpretations of gastropraxis, particularly in production and distribution circuits, over-privilege the economic in relation to the cultural. From this perspective culture becomes epiphenomenal, a reflection of an economic structure—or even worse, unimportant (e.g. Friedmann 1982; Magdoff, Foster and Buttel 2000; McMichael and Buttel 1990). A similar lack of cultural understanding, in my opinion, is what mars the local food movement from realizing its potential—it is a technocratic (and at times nostalgic) response to the vagaries of cybernetic, industrial agriculture, substituting an effect for a cause (on various positions see Born and Purcell 2006; Delind 2006; DuPuis and Goodman 2005; Hinrichs and Lyson 2007; Kloppenburg,

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<sup>2</sup> In many ways this can be attributed to the academic division of labor that enforces overly narrow specialization.

Hendrickson and Stevenson 1996; Strange 1988). I reject this simplistic, undialectical economism in favor of a dialogic method, one that holds economics and culture as explicitly linked, constituting and constituted by the other (for a contemporary discussion of these issues see Ribera-Fumaz 2009, Sayer 2002, Shields 1999, Simonsen 2001). A goal of this thesis, therefore, will be to overcome economy-culture dualisms prevalent in food study literature. Focusing on gastropraxis as a partial totality, we will examine the social production and reproduction of the relations of production, economic and cultural conditions, as well as environmental degradation from a phenomenological perspective.

### 1.2.1 Questions to be Answered

By answering a few researchable questions we can provide an analysis that overcomes dualistic theories of culture and economy, as well as situate the individual actor into particular social contexts of activity. Two central questions, therefore, can be stated succinctly: How do everyday acts of food consumption collate and combine strategies of capital accumulation and political power, as abstract spaces, rhythms and practices, with subjective trajectories, preferences and tastes? How do conceptual modes of operation (aesthetics, science, economics) obscure the vitality of lived experience by erecting perceptual barriers to the recognition of more holistic interpretations of gastropractical activity, specifically environmental despoliation and marketization of cultural forms resulting from the contemporary vicissitudes of present-day gastropraxis?

These lofty questions imply sub-questions, necessary foundations from which we can proceed: What are social space, everyday life and social time? How do they intersect (mutual constitution and production) in the consumption and preparation of food? What

role do state and economic bureaucracies play at various levels, in shaping, obscuring and obfuscating the perception of spacio-temporal gastropraxis? At what point do these barriers both inhibit resistances and challenges as well as serve as the immanent critique from which they emanate? How do these barriers, as the conflictive grammar of capitalist strategies, confront, diverge and clash with the tactics of agents performed in everyday gastropraxis? What roles do the body, embodiment, and affective sensuousness and knowledge play in reconstructing the cultural-political economy of gastropraxis, in bridging the gap between conceived and lived forms of knowledge? In addition to providing answers for these specific questions, I will address (in less extensive capacities) the role of neoliberal food provision, ideology, tradition, environmental issues, colonization, and others. Doing so helps situate this work within broader sociological narratives, extending its impact without sacrificing the precision or articulation necessary to adroitly respond to the primary research questions.

In answering these questions I have decided on a critical methodology (critical theory) that necessitates an extensive discussion between empirical observations and theoretical positions. Such a discussion allows us to “uncover” potentiality in the apparent reality of the empirical. Critical theory of this sort will seek to inform social practice only after it accomplishes its main task of revelation, of excavating immanent critique. I seek to uncover the obfuscated relationship between gastropraxis and social totality: how food consumption socially links individuals, in their everyday practices, to larger, more abstract entities (nation-state, economy, environment). This analysis assumes that in the apparent lies discoverable potentialities, of progression and regression, embedded within analyzable moments of social practice. My goal, therefore,

is to uncover these potentialities via a dialectical method by examining the modalities of spacio-temporal social practice. To accomplish this objective, I draw heavily on the work of Henri Lefebvre, his critique of everyday life, analysis of time (rhythms), and theories of spatial production. First, however, let us consider the appropriateness of Japan.

### **1.3 Why Japan?**

A legitimate question can be asked about why Japan serves as the site for observation and analysis. Choosing Japan as a research site, and in particular a suburb in the Tokyo-Yokohama Greater Metropolitan Area, centers on a few facts and postulates. First of all I have lived in the area and have spent time acclimating myself to the social environment, the language and culture during a three year stint when I was stationed in Japan as a member of the US Navy. As a result, I believe that I have a more intimate knowledge of Japan, especially of daily practices, than most “Westerners,” facilitating access to knowledge sources, familiarity of everyday aesthetic choices and perceptions of quality. That said my capability to communicate in Japanese has deteriorated in the five years separating the observations collected in 2010 from the end of my naval deployment. My everyday conversational abilities and basic reading skills remain strong, but the loss of over 500 kanji<sup>3</sup> required me to lug around a dictionary in order to decipher more complicated material. Past intimacy and newfound distance, I feel, provide me a unique vantage point from which an examination, from a double-perspective (explained in Chapter III), can be executed.

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<sup>3</sup> Kanji are ‘Chinese’ characters, ideographic representations of ideas, concepts and things. A fully literate Japanese person is said to have mastered at least 2,000 of these by the end of high school.

Secondly, in response to an idealist local agricultural movement (mentioned above), Japan presents a strong counterbalance, an empirical exhibition highlighting the circumspection necessary when considering global material conditions and social change. As Burke and Phyne (2008: 81) explain: “In the late 1990s, Japan imported two-thirds of its food supply.” At current levels of consumption the Japanese rely on an area three times the size of all arable farm land in Japan for their daily food intake (McMichael 2000: 409). Considering this fact, local food movements still prosper in Japan, along with the ideology of the inherent superiority of the “traditional” Japanese diet (Ashkenazi and Jacob 2000; Kimura and Nishiyama 2008; Nishiyama and Kimura 2005; Takeda 2008), though the jury is still out on the effectiveness of these strategies in promoting change. Instead, Japan is a prime example of the global political economy of food, a mixture of a dependence on and a diffusion of products (Friedmann 1993; McMichael 2000; Pritchard and Curtis 2004). Dependence from sources abroad, the transfusion of cultural modalities, and the resilient defense of the “traditional,” Japan serves as an ideal case in dissecting the conflicting strategies of global food provision, national cultural crises, and the environmental impacts of both, a veritable battlefield of disparate currents.

The final reason for choosing Japan is that it seems to exemplify the so-called postmodern condition—all the rage in contemporary cultural inquiries—characterized by being an abstract, urban, sign-value driven consumer society (Clammer 1997; Huang 2004). Regardless of the validity of such statements, the Japanese are proficient consumers. Not only that, cultural identity is forged directly from products, their concomitant epistemological frameworks, bought and sold, including food. Essays in the book *Re-Made in Japan* (Tobin 1992) specify the mechanisms by which department

stores (Creighton 1992), televisions and telephones (Kelly 1992), and changing drinking etiquette (Smith 1992) shape identities, largely by consumer practices. Urban restructuring and Tokyo's ascension to "global city" status (Huang 2004; Sassen 2001; Sorensen 2002) has reemphasized the architectural and urban contexts of this invasive postmodernity (Jameson 1991). In short, Japan, as a confluence of several interesting facets, presents itself as a perfect storm for social research into everyday gastropraxis, highlighted by its position as both an economic powerhouse and net-food importer, implying the cultural transfusions that these positions entail.

#### **1.4 Henri Lefebvre: Everyday Life, Space and Time**

Henri Lefebvre was a French philosopher and sociologist that lived from 1901 until 1991. His life was eventful, a testament to an emblematic, heterodox thinker who vociferously challenged dogmatism of any kind, be it bourgeois or Marxist. His sociological contributions, at least in the Anglo-American world, have largely been confined to urban studies and spatial production. Though highly influential, and rightly so, these works over privilege one facet of an even more total, penetrating corpus of work focusing on everyday life, the mundane practices and revolutionary potentials intrinsic to the most miniscule moments of normal experience. Everyday life, the category that captivated Lefebvre, is largely what unites his mercurial, impulsive array of written work (over 60 books and 300 articles, largely untranslated). His intimate encounters with Surrealists, Dada, the Situationists, Pyrenees peasants, the atrocities of World War II, etc., are all reflected in his work, most prominently in his *Critique of Everyday Life* (2008a, 2008b, 2008c).



Taking this as a starting point, it is my estimation that applying Lefebvre to contemporary social phenomena is a fruitful venture. More than just urban or spatial analysis, everyday life allows us to see social life as a texture, a totality (albeit partial and fragmentary) in which the complexities of contemporary society can be envisaged from the perspective of lived experience. I am consciously applying Lefebvre, his theoretical and methodological principles, to the subject at hand partly to expose, or re-expose, American sociological inquiry to an untapped source of information, one that helps position social change on the level of everyday life. Lefebvre allows us to overcome the one-dimensionality of much French social thought since the end of World War II. His lively debates, directly and indirectly, with Sartre, Foucault, Bourdieu, Baudrillard, Castells, Althusser, and Debord (amongst others) situates his thought between these theorists. From these debates, the iconoclast Lefebvre surfaces with theoretical and methodological positions that manage to both demonstrate the insufficiencies of those associated with the theorists above, as well as to more fruitfully employ their “rational kernels” (Marx 1976). In a nutshell this is the beauty of Lefebvre, that while he differs from these approaches, he is never quite ready to jettison, wholesale, their entire argument. Instead he dialecticizes uncritical concepts, overly positivistic or structuralist positions, and roots free-floating postmodernism into more solid, material foundations—one dominated by the organizing rhetoric of the market and its structures. In this capacity Lefebvre’s work is pivotal in overcoming the crippling paralysis induced by poststructural and postmodern theory, in illuminating a path forward, emanating from everyday, lived experience.

#### 1.4.1 Everyday Life

Everyday life, at once the most repetitious, banal, and trivial of the domains of human activity is also the *locus* of human creativity, spontaneity and self-realization. The bane of human existence to philosophers, technocrats, scientists and politicians, everyday life transcends its association with the sordid and uneventful. As Lefebvre quips, “Yes, it is the humble and sordid side, but not only that. Simultaneously it is also the time and the place where the human either fulfills itself or fails” (2008b: 19). While intellectuals have been condemning everyday life for centuries (notably Kant, Hegel, Sartre, Lukács, etc.), Lefebvre sees its redeeming qualities, its potentialities, its strategic task in uniting, legitimizing and challenging economic, political and ideological forms and structures (2008a, 2008b, 2008c, 1984).

As the quote at the beginning of the chapter suggests, food is an inextricable component of everyday life. Lefebvre, perennially on the cusp of delving deeper into an everyday examination of food, never quite realizes the project. Before his death, a few French compatriots would specifically address the issue (Bourdieu 1984; Giard 1988), but a Lefebvrian analysis of food practices (gastropraxis) in everyday life still remains incomplete. This thesis is a first attempt, then, to demonstrate the fecundity of such an approach. My position is that by examining the empirical, experiential vectors of everyday gastropraxis in Japan, phenomenologically, subjectivity (its production and objectivity) as the creative capacity of each person becomes instrumental in challenging powerful entities by discovering the hidden potentialities buried beneath the burdensome banality of everyday life, in its manifestations in everyday gastropraxis. From this perspective, multi-level reality, in-visible in praxis, can be illustrated, traced to its roots,

critiqued and challenged. One of the primary methods of discovery and illusion is the (social) production of space.

#### 1.4.2 Spatial Production and Spatial Discourse

*The Production of Space* (1991), probably Lefebvre's most popular work in English-speaking circles, analyzes the spatial dimensions of capitalist society. Building off of work compiled in *The Urban Revolution* (2003) and *The Survival of Capitalism* (1976), Lefebvre begins to place emphasis on spatial problematics of social production and reproduction, oftentimes overlooked by social theorists. More than a container, space is a product and a means of production—it is a spatialized and spatializing set of social relations. In *The Urban Revolution*, Lefebvre (2003: 73) claims that, “Space is... a medium, environment and means, an instrument and intermediary,” meaning space is produced via activity, produces activity, and mediates the production and reproduction of itself and its activity. Capitalism survives, persists, and perseveres beyond the historical contradictions expounded by Marx and others because it produces and occupies a space, a space of everyday life (Lefebvre 1976: 83-85). But how is this possible? The triad of spatial production will help illustrate this point.

Spatial trialectics, a conceptual device used by Edward Soja (1996: 73-74) to explain Lefebvre's spatial triad, captures the interactive nature of the perceived, conceived and lived moments of spatiality. The perceived moment of space takes the material representation of space as a given, immutable ontology—as a foundation for repetitive, everyday practice. Conceived space is an abstract space that imposes models, maps and technocratic, functional logic and discourse on material, perceived spaces,

oftentimes unbeknownst to people in everyday life—including those scientists unwittingly creating said conceived spaces. Conceived space mobilizes signs and symbols, signals and images in order to control activity, with exchange value as the sign *par exemplar* in capitalist space. Material, perceived space is saturated by the money-sign, of exchange value, as a homogenizing order, a quasi-natural condition of space itself.

Perceived and conceived spaces are united in “real” activity, by everyday actors in lived space. This space is dominated, particularly by exchange value, but is also the space of counter-hegemonic resistance, where use (qualitative) and exchange (quantitative) values intersect in everyday activity. In my description of the subject above, all three are present at all times, to greater or lesser degrees. The physical logistics of space, the transitions from the street to the seat, the ideology quietly announced by the aesthetic, economic and industrial discourses of the sushi bar, and the actual movements and thoughts individuals inside these establishments all empirically demonstrate the applicability of the trialectic of space as an analytic tool.

#### 1.4.3 Time and Rhythm

A “pure” socio-spatial dialectic (Soja 1989) ignores the temporal component, historicity, presented as the trialectic of being: spatiality-sociality-historicity (Soja 1996: 71).

Lefebvre’s most sustained examination of time, linear and cyclical, is contained in a small volume entitled *Rhythmanalysis* (2004). Space implies time and vice versa.

Cosmological, biological cycles, the material foundation for sociality, impose needs on humans, which via interaction with the environment are satisfied and “naturalized.”

Social time, symbolically tied to these cycles, is produced, blurring the line between the social and the “natural” as second nature. Only with the rise of calculation techniques does linear time, the time of logic and accumulation, destroy its subordinate role to cyclical time. Rhythm is the convergence of the quantitative, abstract linear time and the qualitative, concrete cyclical time (Lefebvre 2004: 8-9). Everyday life in capitalist society, evidenced by our discussion of the subject above, maneuvers both the cyclical and linear. The freshness of fish, the time of day one eats, the distance and time one commutes to and from work, the speed of the conveyor belt, the hours of operation of the sushi bar, etc., all demonstrate, in a cursory manner, the everyday nexus of space, time and practical activity. We need to consider how spatial scales, temporal levels, and consciousness interact to both conceal and reveal potentialities in everyday life—how the individual is weaved into a social fabric, a totality, through everyday practices, focusing primarily on gastropraxis.

#### 1.4.4 Affective Connections: Cathexis and Embodiment

It should be obvious, at this point, that everyday life, the spatial critique, and rhythm analytical project are primarily concerned with reintegrating the conceived with the lived, reducing the disparity between them. The importance of embodied forms of knowledge, everyday knowledge, and other dimensions of knowledge generation are paramount if we are to incorporate the non-visual into conceptual bodies of knowledge (Carolan 2007; Gardiner 2006). Lefebvre oftentimes stresses the differences between formal knowledge (*savior*) and embodied knowledges (*connaissance*). The most obvious distinction between the two is that formal knowledge abstracts and leaves the concrete

body, its movements, feelings, motivations, cycles, drives, etc., in favor of the cybernetic, “objective” body of the model, without looking back. Michael Carolan (2007) rightfully criticizes organic and fair trade labeling campaigns for targeting this cybernetic body, by means of the *logos* of the label, its representational content, in generating intended reactions. Notions of cathexis and affect have, in this conceptual *coup de grace*, been confused for input and output.

Simonsen (2005) most proficiently makes the case for a reading of Lefebvre that highlights the role of embodiment and sensuousness. The body is both a reflection of spatial practices, a space, as well as a producer of space. As such it conducts and transmits external stimulation into bodily sensations, channeled and organized into feelings, reactions, gestures and thoughts. Invariably conditioning, symbolism, signs and signals motivate and shape behavior without determining it. Desires, play, festival, laughter, satisfaction, artistic reflection, and *poiesis* are all sensuous forms of experience that supplant or sublimate representational exigencies by transforming the body into a creative, appropriative medium of experience. Heightened cultivation of all senses permits actors to better develop embodied knowledges, such as tastes for wines grown in regions with particular soil compositions, in predicting coming thunderstorms by scent, as well as other forms of knowledge generation. Representations reduce these bodily implements, abstract beyond their purview, typically failing to forge lasting links between the body and the representation. Though this happens in lived experience, its acuteness is blunted by representation. Coupling embodied sensuousness and conceived knowledge must be the goal of any challenge to current food regimes. This thesis merely

looks to problematize, in order to confront, barriers to the realization of fuller embodiment of gastropractical knowledges.

### **1.5 Spatial-Dialectical Phenomenology**

To uncover such critical knowledge inherent in everyday gastropraxis, we need a methodological apparatus that takes empirical, observational reality and submits it to a rigorous critical, theoretical analysis. My goal is not to adumbrate a rough estimate and probability of the occurrence of specific gastropractical forms, nor is it to chronicle subjective descriptions and feelings (affect) people might experience in the course of practical activity. These concerns are capable of enlarging our understanding of gastropraxis on many levels, and in some cases have been employed secondarily in this analysis. However, our goal is to uncover both the moments in lived experience in which potentiality for social change resides and the practical barriers one faces in realizing this potential. In order to satisfy this imperative, I have decided on a spatial-dialectical phenomenological methodology.

Spatial phenomenology employs Soja's (1996) trialectics of being and spatiality as an analytical tool, building on methodological premises established by Bologh (1979), Horkheimer (1972b), and Lefebvre (2008b, 1991, 1968a, 1968b). First, *capta* (to be explained in Chapter III) is collected in a specific food context: a spacio-temporal social nexus that serves as the object of investigation. After empirical observations are conducted, analytical notes are made identifying the triad of spatial production (perceived, conceived, lived) and rhythms (linear and cyclical). Further analysis reveals the imbrications of levels, their nestled embeddedness, in-visible in empirical

observations. Though abstract, these levels are materialized in gastropraxis, mobilized according to logics that are constructed on the basis of secondary data compilation—by organizing previous research into levels of analysis. Continued dialectical investigation divulges extant potentialities, critical moments of challenge residing in the everyday, by exposing contractions in everyday gastropraxis. An extensive discussion of the research methodology employed in this thesis will transpire in Chapter III.

## **1.6 Structure of the Work**

The following chapter (II) will broaden our understanding of the concepts and ideas necessary to execute this research project. Everyday life, social space, time, totality, praxis, and gastropraxis are of central importance and will be elaborated, described and discussed. In addition, a review of the literature will elucidate issues concerning socio-historical Japanese political economy; sushi and beef production and consumption; environmental destruction; and a few other noteworthy phenomena.

Chapter III presents a broad, substantive examination of the methods utilized in this thesis. Spatial-dialectical phenomenology will be clearly defined and operationalized as a dialectical method of analysis of lived experience based on the location of contradiction between visible and in-visible contours of gastropraxis nestled within the phenomenological range of the actor. I will operationalize levels of analysis, as well, as I outline the method of analysis that takes place in the following chapters.

Chapter IV and V analyze two particular types of restaurants in Japan: *kaitenzushi* and *yakiniku* restaurants. I will describe a virtual (ideal-typical in the Weberian sense) trajectory one might take through one of the two types of restaurants indicated. This



virtual trajectory is constructed from empirical observations conducted in the field.

Moving from the phenomenological trajectory, I will shift the level of analysis so that the in-visible is delineated and explicated. From these perspectives subject-object relations will be highlighted where potential challenges can be made.

Chapter VI summarizes the findings and brings them to a critical moment of reconnection between the dislocated subject and the objects of consumption, how they are known, and the affective linkages between the two. In particular I will highlight how actor-state-economy-environment constellations highlighted in analysis can be superseded, primarily by reducing epistemic barriers and distance inherent in individuated consumption practices.

## CHAPTER II

### EVERYDAY LIFE, SPACE, AND GASTROPRACTICE: THEORY AND CONCEPTS

*“The result is that man [the human] feels that he is acting freely only in his animal functions—eating, drinking and procreating, or at most in his dwelling and adornment—while in his human functions he is nothing more than an animal.”*

Karl Marx, 1844 Manuscripts

*“[C]apitalism has bought time for itself out of the space it captures, out of the geographical niches it has created, the physical and social environment it absorbs”*

Andy Merrifield (2006: 108)

#### 2.1 Critical Theory, Culture Industry and Food Studies

Critical theory<sup>4</sup>, what could roughly be defined as a philosophical, sociological rejection of economistic, reductionist Marxism, justifiably identifies the salience of the cultural-economic nexus of social practice in so-called modern society as the primary object of analysis. The culture industry, an increasing commoditization of the aesthetic and artful, removes the utopian, negative content of the work of art in favor of one-dimensional passivity and sublimation, pacifying subjects by reducing the revolutionary horizons that they encounter in the machinations of privatized mass media (Adorno 2001; Benjamin 1969; Horkheimer 1972a; Horkheimer and Adorno 2002; Marcuse 1988, 1964).

Undoubtedly food, and gastropaxis, constitute one of the more material, essential components of the culture industry, bridging the chasm that exists between the true and false needs that motivate Marcuse’s analysis of one-dimensional society (1964: 4-5). In

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<sup>4</sup> I restrict critical theory, in this case, to first generation members and/or associates of the Frankfurt School—principally Herbert Marcuse, Theodor Adorno, Walter Benjamin and Max Horkheimer.

consideration of this fact, these theorists remain silent; their deafening omissions resonate in the void produced by the lack of clarification on the issue. Even more striking is the inability to link food production and consumption, international politics and environmental destruction, which would find a corollary in the institute's criticism of the Enlightenment project's domination of "nature" (Horkheimer and Adorno 2002). Nature, conquered by a rationalist ethos, is subjugated, exploited and ravaged largely in pursuit of profits pullulating from commoditized space (farm land), objects of "nature" (plants and animals), and wage-slavery (dominance of the market). Critical theory, then, fails to realize its potential of total critique by systematically overlooking gastropraxis, food as a culture industry, and the domination of "nature" in pursuit of agricultural profits.

Lefebvre's work coalesces around similar core interests with those of the Frankfurt School. Be it his foundational role in French dialectical thought, Hegelian Marxism, or his problematizing of everyday life (leisure and culture), Lefebvre shares more than a few affinities with his Frankfurt brethren (the omission of women from this tradition is problematic as well). The main difference, perhaps, between Lefebvre and the Frankfurt School boils down to optimism and pessimism, the Frankfurt School being well known for its distaste of humanistic Marxism (Jay 1972). In emphasizing the emancipatory potential camouflaged in everyday life, Lefebvre particularly singles out Marcuse's undialectical cynicism, his technocratic vision of the future in a totally administered society (Lefebvre 1969). Lefebvre (2008b, 2008c, 1984) understands that the idiosyncrasies of everyday life, of the consumption of food or the women's press, were evidence enough of the culture industry, the bureaucratic society of controlled consumption in his vernacular. But for Lefebvre, these trivial contingencies were also

sites of resistance, of an immanent critique unfolding between the in-visible disparities of lived, everyday practice and the conceived abstractions of scientific thought. In this capacity I accept much of the concept of the culture industry coined by the Frankfurt School on the condition that it can be applied to food studies and the reproduction of the relations of production, as conceptions of space and practice. Let us now extend our discussion of concepts of everyday life, space and time and how they are applicable to executing the research program outlined above keeping the culture industry in mind.

## **2.2 Everyday Life, Space and Time**

Research utilizing Lefebvre's concepts of everyday life, space and time in a Japanese context is far from novel. Studies of the intimate alienation of train travel (Fuji 1999), the transformations of timespace after train services are suspended for the evening (Morris, Solomon and Dimmer 2006), Disneyland and cyberspace in urban Japan (Wakabayashi 2002), and the nostalgic spaces of open-air museums (Herrington 2008) exhibit the usefulness in applying Lefebvre to a Japanese context. What this thesis intends to do is extend these concepts (everyday life, spatial production and rhythmanalysis) to gastropraxis, critically eying the synthetic, contextualized process of individual and social regeneration that occurs when an actor eats a meal.

### **2.2.1 Everyday Life: Critical Concepts and Definitions**

Everyday life, like many of Lefebvre's concepts, is difficult to pin down, a nebulous sort of catch-all that is irreducible to a specific thing, but is "real" enough when actual practice is examined. In part this is a defense mechanism against dogmatic, unbendable

positioning as well as a commitment to dialectical thought that attempts to grasp an ever-changing reality. As mentioned in the introduction, everyday life is both mundane repetitiveness and the space of self-realization and creativity. Accepting and critiquing existential philosophy Lefebvre states that: “Everyday life is... neither the authentic nor the inauthentic... [but] the milieu and the moment in time where they come into conflict” (2008b: 24). Lefebvre defines it in relation to so-called “higher spheres” of social activity:

It surrounds us, it besieges us, on all sides and from all directions. We are inside it and outside it. No so-called ‘elevated’ activity can be reduced to it, nor can it be separated from it. Its activities are born, they grow and emerge; once they have left the nourishing earth of their native land, not one of them can be formed and fulfilled on its own account. In this earth they are born. If they emerge, it is because they have grown and prospered. It is at the heart of the everyday that projects become works of creativity (2008b:41).

Time and time again, Lefebvre describes everyday life as the overlooked soil from which the verdant foliage of art, philosophy, politics, science, etc., sprout, only to incompetently attempt to detach themselves from this “base,” forgetting their relevance is bound to the movements of this “base,” as if a beautiful landscape could ever prosper without fertile soil from which to grow (Lefebvre 2008a: 87). As such, everyday life has a double determination: it is both the residue, what remains after energies are spent in the higher spheres, as well as a product of practice, a product-residue, escaping neat classification and total administration.

Everyday life, then, is the minutia, the frivolity of the whole; a perfectly viable avenue for a sociological analysis of gastrop Praxis. In one of his more clearly stated propositions on the outlook of the critique of everyday life, Lefebvre cavalierly suggests that “the simplest event—a woman buying a pound of sugar for example—must be

analysed” (2008a: 57). The dialectical method is indispensable in contextualizing such phenomena, locating it within a social totality as a point of reference and a critique of said totality. By analyzing an event, a social context, or a thing (concretely)—much like Marx did in the first volume of *Capital* (1976) with the commodity form—deeper relational characteristics can be exposed between people, objects, things, and ideas. Hence, the particular and the general are mediated by individuals in practice, forging a link between the two. Lefebvre concludes his commentary on the value of studying everyday:

And although what I grasp becomes more and more profound, it is contained from the start in the original little event. So now I see the humble events of everyday life as having two sides: a little, individual, chance event—and at the same time an infinitely complex social event, richer than the many ‘essences’ it contains within itself (2008a:57).

*Totality, Praxis and Everyday Life.*

Marx only applied dialectical materialism to one field of human reality: the political economic, according to Lefebvre (1968a, 1968b). The base-superstructure thesis only applies to this field, which sees the economic base as nothing more than the distilled, component form of objective human interaction. Furthermore, research into the superstructure should not be foreclosed or relegated to epiphenomenal logic, not considered “a mere shadow” (Lefebvre 1984: 31). “Economic relations are not the only relations but the simplest ones, the ones found again as ‘moments’ in complex relations,” Lefebvre relays, “Dialectical materialism is not an economism. It analyses relations and then integrates them into the total movement” (1968a: 73). Everyday life, as the seminal, decisive subject for critical sociology, studies the “connective tissue” synthesizing economic, political, philosophic, aesthetic and cultural activities (Gardiner 2006, 2000:

79; Lefebvre 2008c). Everyday life “is profoundly related to *all* activities... it is their meeting place, their bond, their common ground” (Lefebvre 2008a: 97). Excavating everyday gastrophaxis aids in discovering the integrative processes occurring between individual activity and the social whole, as a mediation between the two, and “it is in everyday life that the sum total of relations which make the human—and every human being—a whole takes its shape and form” (Lefebvre 2008a: 97).

This social totality provides individuals with a frame of reference in a relative world (Lefebvre 2008b: 180). Totality, through its form, produces absolute limits that constrain the relative, “giving this partial, divided, contradictory knowledge a meaning” (Lefebvre 2008a: 67). Every form of knowledge has a bit of truth to it, emerging from the practical resolution of contradiction as history, as potential disalienation in the moments of the totality<sup>5</sup>. The completion of knowledge, coterminous with absolute truth, however, remains impossible, purely idealistic. This impossibility is expressed as “the asymptote of the total process” (Lefebvre 2008a: 67), the infinity between the historically conditioned hermeneutic and the flux of reality. Instead, a “sense,” or direction and meaning derived from historically contingent knowledge, is derived from practice, the dialectical trajectory of human activity. Totality, then, is vital in providing a frame of reference for particular activities mediated against the general whole.

Social (concrete) totality is the summation of all human praxis, material and mental, and their residues. Praxis is creative or re-creative activity; it is what constitutes consciousness and objectivity; it is the objectively “real,” the concrete, so to speak.

Totality and praxis, therefore, are disassociated from ontological essences, immutable,

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<sup>5</sup> This resolution is not unidirectional. Lefebvre largely adopts and adapts the Marxian-Hegelian dialectic with a Nietzschean progression-regression schema (Merrifield 2006, 1995).

metaphysical realities; they are in fluctuation, human activity in the process of becoming. They are dialectical concepts which imply each other, and the “other,” necessary for applicability in this research agenda. Orthodox Marxist notions of praxis, inchoate and reductionist, based on productivist economism and the metaphysics of labor, are transcended by a more complete definition. Praxis, more than an economic category, beyond myopic associations with labor productivity, is more complex:

Praxis encompasses both material production and ‘spiritual’ production, the production of means and the production of ends, of implements, of goods and of needs... It is also to produce and to produce again the multiple *social relations* which enable production and the *appropriation* of goods” (Lefebvre 2008b: 237-8).

With Lefebvre, production becomes a more complete concept. Social relations are produced and reproduced, like goods, ideas, spaces and temporal scales, even consciousness. Consciousness emerges from praxis, as a relation between the subject-object of human activity and its metabolism with the environment<sup>6</sup>. Everyday life is not synonymous with praxis, it is merely a level of praxis as a social totality (Lefebvre 2008a, 2008b, 2008c). Moreover, the conception of praxis can be catalogued into two forms: the repetitive and the creative (Lefebvre 2008b, 1984). Repetition and creation confront each other in the everyday, the space-time of the reproduction of the relations of production (Lefebvre 2008b, 1976). As more than the recurring doxic substratum of Bourdieu’s (1984, 1977) *habitus*, human agency in everyday practice retains a degree of creativity by means of subjective self-expression. Furthermore, repetition engenders, at

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<sup>6</sup> For Lefebvre, ‘human nature’ is the only ‘real’ nature that exists as humans have both humanized nature and naturalized the human in dialectical interaction. The eye becomes naturalized as we fashion the natural world to meet our needs, by humanizing nature. In this way the eye comes to see what is human in the natural world and what is natural in the human: the appropriation of nature for meeting human needs. I use environment instead of the metaphysical, idealist notion of Nature.



least, a modicum of creativity as creativity results from repetitious habits slowly differentiating as modest changes to the content of activity occur. This creativity includes self-production and social production, emerging from the repetitive base at the heart of an ever-changing everyday life.

Our subject, everyday gastropraxis, can be defined as a partial totality, both repetitive and creative. As such, it is a level of the social totality, a specific space-time activity of everyday life: roughly a “sub-system.” Gastropraxis mediates individuals with grander, more extensive abstract social entities. Social scientific investigations into Japanese gastropraxis have already revealed the existence of this fact. Disassociated from its structural, Althusserian roots, Anne Allison’s (1991) examination of mothers, *obentō* (lunchbox) arrangement and content, and the young children that consume them, highlights how *obentō* preparation and consumption mediates national interests, aesthetics and capital accumulation with individual activities. Harumi Befu’s (1974) ethnographic exposé of dinner entertainment in Japan expresses similar themes in articulating the link between persons, their status positions, and the appropriate employment of ethnomethods during the course of a business dinner. The impact of train travel, an expression of state power and capital accumulation strategies in shaping the everyday, facilitates further the examination of mediation in Paul Noguchi’s (1994) *eki-bentō* (train station lunchbox) ethnography. Ritzer (2008), Ohnuki-Tierney (2006), and Traphagan and Brown (2002) all comment on fast food production and consumption techniques, the mediation between the individual and “rationalization,” ever-changing consumption patterns, or new content cloaked in “traditional forms.” Likewise, the centrality of convenience foods in everyday life, their direct interlinking of consumer

activity with distribution centers, by Point-of-Sales (POS) computer terminals, the increasingly commoditized versions of family favorites that they sell also illustrate how extensive this mediation between the individual and the social whole, via gastropraxis, really is (Bestor 2006; Whitelaw 2006).

Totality and praxis imply each other in materialist dialectics. Everyday life, a level among levels of both totality and praxis, aids in illuminating the empirical, concrete connection, the internal relationship, that exists between a social whole and an individual actor—a dialectical relationship of the general and the particular. Gastropraxis, as a concept and a sublevel of everyday practice, provides an even more specific platform from which our investigation springboards. But the point must be made that changes in gastropraxis, perceived as positive or negative by society at large, generally tend to register when people make affective, embodied linkages with the creative practices that emerge from the repetitive. Disclosing and exposing the factors tending toward the repetitive instead of the creative, or differential, remains the primary purpose of this thesis.

### *Food, Needs, Desires and Pleasure*

For Lefebvre, as for Marx and Hegel, the total human phenomenon can be represented by the triad need-labor-pleasure (or some variation of this), while everyday life can be represented by the triadic interplay between need-desire-pleasure (Lefebvre 2008c)<sup>7</sup>.

Food, and the practices associated with its production, preparation and consumption, straddles not only the need-labor-pleasure triad, but the need-desire-pleasure as well. The

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<sup>7</sup> Lefebvre clarifies that this doesn't preclude the possibility for any other relevant element to appear, just that these are the foundations the total.

theory of needs forms, perhaps, the foundation and fixture of the *Critique* series, confronted in each volume explicitly. Needs emerge from bio-physiological conditions, “natural” imperatives (instincts) mobilized in the regeneration of human energy. These natural processes slowly transform into conscious applications of labor, the active appropriation of nature for human purposes in which the natural becomes social (Lefebvre 2008a: 162-3). Labor, and the needs that motivate it, change, as Lefebvre (2008a: 163) suggests: “On the one hand needs are *satisfied by society*, on the other, as history unfolds, society *modifies* them both in form and content.” The human species humanizes nature, appropriating it through the senses: the production of perception via praxis. In other words, we dialectically shape the world we inhabit, organize it at various levels to suit our needs, changing that environment, those needs, and ourselves by means of praxis.

Want creates the impetus to create, by means of privation and destitution. From want, as need, the human being creates not just an object to satisfy the need, but also a subject in the form of a consciousness emerging from praxis. The transmogrification of needs as a general condition into a particular precondition for enjoyment signals the production of both individual and social desires (Lefebvre 2008b: 6). Motivations for desires should not be over- or underestimated. Needs are few, inherently nebulous, unable to be fully and clearly articulated. Desires, emerging from and having their foundations in needs, become explicitly tied to direct objects of consumption. For Lefebvre (2008b), needs are generic, contingent on human bio-physiology, determined quantitatively (e.g. amount of calories for survival), spontaneous, and are full of vitality and depth—they are ambiguous. Desires are individual and social; they are regulated by

societies and tend toward the qualitative. Lefebvre (2008b), however, quips dialectically that needs can just as easily be socially qualified, and that desire can be “naturalized” and quantified as well, especially in capitalistic societies. From this discussion, needs materialize as objective conditions to be satisfied, with desires being their subjective mirror, mediated by society as a whole, a culture, history, language, values, and so on (Lefebvre 2008b: 8). Desire becomes desire as an individual assumes it in relation to an object which confers a level of enjoyment. True desire occurs when desire for something is transcended by satisfaction, when it becomes creative: it transforms into a new need (Lefebvre 2008b: 8).

The need-desire dialectic demonstrates the incessant fluidity and transfiguration of society and the direction of labor in satisfying needs and desires. In societies of mass consumption—which certainly characterizes the Japanese experience (see Clammer 1997)—needs and desires come to be manufactured on a grand scale. The need-desire dialectic is interrupted by programmatic organization, what Lefebvre (2008b, 1984) calls “the bureaucratic society of controlled consumption.” Desire, disassociated from “genuine” need, is reduced to pure submission, manipulated and arranged by advertisement and a culture industry seeking steady rates of profit (Lefebvre 2008b: 10-11). Colonized, everyday life is controlled and programmed by corporations and governments, imprisoned in the conceptual logic of scientific abstraction and the commodity form, perhaps the bleakest of Lefebvre’s ruminations on the humanistic potential for social change (Gardiner 2000; Lefebvre 2008a, 2008b, 1984; Shields 1999). Although this position echoes that of Marcuse’s (1964) society of total administration, for

Lefebvre something else remains: pleasure and play, which elude fully totalitarian administration.

Though needs can be planned and desire can be programmed, genuine pleasure and play remain elusively spontaneous, even if they are not free from coercive interference. Pleasure, regardless of administration, derived from the consumption of commodities remains volatile, even if it appears superficial, shallow, and ephemeral. If one labors to meet needs, from which desires emerge, labor can become a need and a desire in itself, becoming an end in itself. Labor, the metabolic interaction of the human with nature, appropriates a “human nature,” a consciousness and a partial totality from praxis, as new forms of labor and needs. But pleasure remains essential in this process, as Lefebvre argues: “Labour is indispensable if man [sic] is to *appropriate* nature, but pleasure alone makes this appropriation effective” (2008b: 191). If pleasure and play are the byproducts of labor, satisfying needs and desires, self-cultivation and self-realization can result from and in everyday praxis.

In capitalistic societies, characterized by the political-economic promotion and promulgation of consumerism as a way of life, the experience of pleasure is altered. The image and sign usurp the symbolic connection and integration of everyday life. Desires and pleasure are abstracted from everyday life, uprooted and transplanted into the commodity form itself, as a package of significances to be consumed<sup>8</sup>. Form, function and structure have been dissociated from historical uniqueness and ambiguity, from a style or an “undifferentiated whole” (Lefebvre and Levich 1987: 7). In contemporary society, each of these has been separated and operationalized, with objects proclaiming form, function, and structure in a fragmented manner which necessitates discursive

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<sup>8</sup> Commodity form, commodity fetishism, etc., are derived from Karl Marx’s *Capital* (1976).

assembly (advertisement) to produce coherence. Advertisement becomes a powerful vehicle for disseminating information and shaping everyday life through the modality of consumption, even as enduring affective links are relatively scarce. In contrast to Marcuse (1964) who saw this all pervasive consumptive apparatus as virtually inescapable, Lefebvre's bureaucratic society of controlled consumption presents itself as its own critique. For this society pleasure "is the aim and objective... its official justification" (1984: 79). An aim which remains unfulfilled given the guile fugacity of pleasure emerging from practical activity.

Rationalization of productive techniques, programming and manipulation of needs and desires, and the planned obsolescence of goods are nothing more than the attempt capture this evasive pleasure and close the circuit of everyday life, as a technocratic order of satisfaction. But the realization of this remains cybernetically utopian. Instead of one-dimensionality, Lefebvre (1984) sees a general malaise, a void, a crisis of significance that spontaneously generates forms of social unrest. Pleasure, in his reasoning, is a distinct, non-correlative condition of consumption. Pleasure, though manipulable, does not result from a (logical) causal chain of consumption (need → desire → satisfaction → pleasure). Even when pleasure does result as the outcome of technocratic planning, it still maintains its creative, transcendental foundation in motivating change. Pleasure is an embodied effect of practical activity, spontaneous and surreptitious, a potential springboard for what Michael Carolan (2003) classifies as a phenomenological challenge to a particular technocratic social order out of tune with embodied knowledges and experiences in everyday life.

Food, as energy consumed by people, begins as a pure biological imperative—a need—becoming socialized in the process while also becoming a desire and a vehicle of pleasure. As others have commented (Ceccarini 2010; Cwiertka 2002, 2006; Ishige 2001; Ohnuki-Tierney 2006), Japanese gastropraxis has underwent an extended period of drastic transformation since the Meiji Restoration after 1868. New foods, methods of eating and preparation techniques have transmogrified and obliterated so-called traditional Japanese culinary conventions, replacing them with an industrial, commoditized gastropraxis. Spaces, times, routines, and people have been systematically organized in the promotion of an urban, cosmopolitan gastronomy dependent on capital accumulation and the channeling of subjective desires into specific food circuits. Far from being passively accepted, conflict against and contention of these changes is evident (e.g. Kimura and Nishiyama 2008; Nishiyama and Kimura 2005; Takeda 2008). Recalcitrant government agencies and farm unions have rallied against economic liberalization in the face of deteriorating economic conditions over productive considerations of gastropraxis (Fulcher 1988; Hills 1981; Pempel 1992; Vogel 1999; Yoshimatsu 1998), as a legitimization crisis (Habermas 1975) ensues over not just political and economic deficiencies, but cultural identities as well.

In the ever-fluctuating realm of needs, desires, and pleasure, food is one entity that clearly manages to unite both the objective (conceptual) and subjective (lived) components of social organization, when considering these terms as being separate, disunited. Coming to grips with these three dialectical moments (needs, desires, pleasures), how they are produced and managed, is paramount if successful and durable changes to the space-time contexts and objects of gastropraxis, from a practical

democratic perspective, are to remain feasible. Only a critical phenomenological study of everyday gastrophaxis (and its spaces and times) can accomplish this objective.

### 2.2.2 The Social Production of Space

If Merrifield's quote at the beginning of the chapter is credible, in addition to Lefebvre's earlier claims (in Chapter I), an examination of the production of space is required.

Explaining the origins of the project, as well as the conceptual components, provides us a starting point from which we can transition to methodological operationalization. In *The Production of Space* (1991), Lefebvre identifies three extant fields of human knowledge of space: they physical, mental and social. Historically, placing culpability at the hands of Cartesian dualism, these three fields have been separated in both theory and practice.

Lefebvre's project, then, demonstrates the intersectionality of these three fields, their inextricable synthesis in the movements of everyday practice. His method for overcoming the Cartesian fragmentation of space, then, envisages a dialectical theory of space that simultaneously accounts for the physical, mental and social determinations as intrinsically intertwined in everyday life. Lefebvre's theory of spatial production bonds the mental and material structures of space with a living, manipulating person(s), maneuvering the everyday. Edward Soja (1996: 73-74) dubs this spatial triad the "trialectics of spatiality." This triad (or trialectic) is the key to deciphering the complexities of spatial production.

The trialectic of spatiality consists of three principle components: the perceived, the conceived and the lived. For Lefebvre (1991: 33, 38-42) perceived space, or spatial practice, corresponds to the actual materiality (built or unbuilt) of space. It is



commonsensical, based on the “appearances” of material dimensions. It is that “which embraces production and reproduction... ensures continuity and some degree of cohesion,” which socially involves a relation between members of society to that physical space and “a guaranteed level of *competence* and a specific level of *performance*” (Lefebvre 1991: 33) implied in perceived space’s cohesion. Perceived space as spatial practice is primarily responsible for the production and reproduction of the relations of production (Lefebvre 2003, 1991, 1976; Merrifield 2006; Shields 1999; Soja 1996, 1989). Spatial practice produces society’s space, it secretes it (Lefebvre 1991: 38). In a way, perceived space and spatial practice echo Bourdieu’s *habitus* (1984, 1977) in that it is habitual, mundane, repetitious—the semi-conscious, banal, routinized activity physically implied in the structure of buildings, streets, paths and social flows. Lefebvre (1991: 27-30), however, emphasizes both the illusory realism and transparency of reading a space based purely on its physical structures and its habituated activities, in which case the contingency of conceived and lived space on the perceived is overlooked. As Soja (1996: 66) suggests: perceived space and spatial practice are empirical, perceivable by the senses, measurable and describable as the content of observations. Perceived space, however, only acts as one moment of the spatial dialectic.

If perceived space is material, then conceived space (representations of space) is the mental projection (ideological) of space as conceived by urban planners, scientists, mathematicians, and technocrats (Lefebvre 1991; Soja 1996). Representation, in Lefebvre’s lexicon, “implies the world of abstraction, what’s in the head rather than the body” (Merrifield 2006: 66). Conceived space is the dominant space in every society, reliant on expert knowledge(s) organized into discourses (codes and rhetoric: signs,

signals, symbols and images [see Lefebvre 2008b: 276-312]) facilitating dominated spatial production (Lefebvre 1991: 38-39). Far from the free-floating abstractions of idealism, these conceptions are materialized: they are expressed materially in practice. This cyberanthropic image, the hallmark of structuralists and functionalists, develops as a control mechanism disseminated by “objective” science and traditionalist ideologies as representations of “reality” translated into disciplinary self-control and surveillance (Lefebvre 2008c, 1991, 1984; Soja 1996). Lefebvre, implicitly in dialogue with Foucault’s (1977) overly technocratic post-structuralism, eschews such totalizing visions that expunge the lived in favor of the abstract (conceived). Lefebvre urges us to reinsert lived experience, embodied knowledges, and affective sensations into spatial theory.

Lived spaces are spaces of everyday experience, enveloped in symbolisms, coded or not, that conflict with dominant (conceived) representations of space (Lefebvre 1991: 33). In the lived, passivity and activity meet and quarrel, material objects (perceived spaces and things) are imbued with symbolic meaning and affect. “Users” and “inhabitants” manipulate their surroundings physically, mentally and socially in everyday life, tactically confronting the strategies of the dominating representations of space (Lefebvre 1991: 33, 39-42; Shields 1999; Soja 1996). Though similar to the perceived, in that it is on the purely phenomenological level, the lived can be differentiated by the distinction between “habitat” and “habiting” (or dwelling), whereby habitat is habitual, repetitious and habiting can be artistic, subversive—*poiesis* (Lefebvre 2003: 81-85). This is the space of art, defiance, poetry, generally everyday life as defined above.

### 2.2.3 Rhythmanalysis: Time, Space and Sociality

A “purely” socio-spatial dialectic (Soja 1989), however, ignores the temporal (as well as the rhythmic) component, historicity, presented as the trialectic of being: spatiality-sociality-historicity (Soja 1996: 71). Lefebvre (2004, 1991) emphasizes the interrelatedness of space and time—that one implies the other—they are two sides of the same set of social relations. In the first few pages of *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (1977), Pierre Bourdieu stresses the irreconcilable chasm that separates “phenomenological” (lived) knowledge and “objective” (conceived) knowledge. Temporality is one such gap differentiating experiential time and the ahistoricity of the objective model, in which social scientists impute a homogeneous, singular timescale. Lefebvre, while concurring with the essence of this critique, clarifies that the problem is not that two discrete timescales exist, but that they are inextricably bound together in the experiences of everyday life and society in general (the cyclical and linear). Lefebvre’s most sustained examination of time, exploring the implications of the linear and cyclical, is contained in a small volume entitled *Rhythmanalysis* (2004).

The body is the meeting point of both the cyclical and linear, which combine, in various ways, to produce rhythms. Cosmological, biological cycles, as the material foundation for sociality, impose needs on humans, which, via interaction with the environment, are satisfied and “internalized.” Social time, symbolically tied to these cycles, is edified onto this internalized nature as a form of social organization, blurring the artificial line demarcating the social and the natural, as second nature. It is not until calculation techniques improve that linear time, the time of logic and accumulation, becomes a central force in human society. Cyclical time becomes increasingly

subordinated to linear time in capitalist societies as time and space become parcelized into exchangeable quantities, usurping and redirecting the symbolic affect of cyclical, cosmological time by choreographing it with the sterile meticulousness of the industrial clock (Lefebvre 2004).

Everyday life in capitalist society navigates both the cyclical and linear, with an ever increasing role given to the hegemony of industrial time. The freshness of fish, the time of day one eats, the distance and time one commutes to and from work, the speed of the conveyor belt at *kaitenzushi-ya*, its hours of operation, etc., all demonstrate, cursorily, this everyday nexus of space, time and practical activity. We need to consider how spatial scales, levels of temporality, and lived experience interact to both conceal and reveal potentialities in everyday life—how the individual is weaved into a social fabric, a totality, through everyday gastropraxis. Similarly, the irreducibility of the cyclical as a residuum of the linear requires further examination in order to locate its potentiality from which embodied challenges germinate. Space and time are seen as social relations, and everyday life is an orientation towards practical activity that perpetuates and confronts the production and reproduction of social relations. Grasping the creative within the repetitive, the differential within the homogenous is paramount for conceptualizing the complex intersection of the abstract, systematic structure and the compound, multifaceted fluidity of the lived content of everyday life.

#### 2.2.4 Epistemic Barriers and Phenomenological Challenges: A Question of Strategies and Tactics

Lefebvre's work on everyday life, space and time reveals the situatedness of knowledge and power, the coercive conceptions of space and time that organize social practice while simultaneously undermining the taken-for-granted in-visibility of political-economic regimes that organize these conceptions. The purpose, then, is to lay bare the occluded, obfuscated complexity of space and praxis that largely evades perception and recognition. Lefebvre (2003: 29-31) begins outlining a theory of obscurity based on the concept of the "blind field." Between fields (in this case the rural, industrial and urban, though not necessarily) are blind fields which are "not merely dark and uncertain... but blind in the sense that there is a blind spot on the retina... A paradox" (2003: 29). Blind fields "embed themselves in re-presentation," as a presentation and perception of the "facts," along with their concomitant interpretations (Lefebvre 2003: 30). Blindness, for Lefebvre (2003: 30), is "our not-seeing and not-knowing, [which] implies an ideology," manifested in the blinding, dogmatic assumptions we accept and the blinded misunderstandings we make<sup>9</sup>. Blind fields, then, are the result of our socio-historically shaped perceptions, the ideologies that govern them, and the conceptions that reinforce their sustained applicability in everyday life.

Lefebvre builds on the concept of the blind field in *The Production of Space* (1991) by theorizing the "illusion of transparency" and the "realist illusion." The illusion of transparency envisions space as transparent, innocent, made readable by the deciphering lexicon of speech and writing, emplaced in space while vacating it of

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<sup>9</sup> Lefebvre (2003: 30) implores us not to reduce blindness to "the trivial distinction between shadow and light," even if "illumination" assists in the revelation of the ideological nature of the blind field.

practical experience (1991: 27-29). The realist illusion, in contradistinction to the idealism of transparency, perceives space as natural, mechanical, empirical. As reifications, both cases imply the other by constantly denying the lived. Rather than working against each other, these two illusions work cooperatively in shaping both perception and conception from disparate positions. Materiality, bereft of symbolism and signification (a practical impossibility), and conceptual representation (the free-floating signification of space as code) work in tandem to channel the visibility of actors in and producing space, as lived content. This mobilization of the illusionary is a highly political, ideological affair which attempts to bracket the perception of actors living in space from envisioning the whole, the totality, *in situ*. The in-visible—the unidentified, unconceptualized materiality of lived spaces, in all of their complexity—furtively bubbles up as a residue of politically produced perceptions and conceptions. Overcoming the politics of perception, therefore, resides in the counter-organization of representations of space, a supplanting of the conceived by lived, embodied forms of knowledge and contestation.

Michael Carolan (2006a, 2004, 2003), in contemporary sociological circles, augments our understanding of perceptual limits, what he dubs epistemic barriers and distance. In examining obstructions to expanded implementation of sustainable agriculture, Carolan focuses on variables that shape perceptions of profitable and proper agricultural practices. Sustainability is in-visible, something manifested in the residue of the visible in present-day society—until it becomes codified and inscribed into capitalist logic. Be it increasing complexity in relating causes and effects, scalar issues (micro, macro), political/scientific debates, prolonged temporal effects, or practical distancing,

epistemic distances turn into barriers when they become political dogma. Carolan (2006a: 233) clarifies that “epistemic barriers are thoroughly performative, and thus social, in their nature: they are constituted through social interactions and organizing abstractions that shape how and what we know, and thus what we ‘see’.” If social relations of production, the overarching organizing discourses that shape them, serve to erect epistemic barriers against sustainable agriculture, their effects in the realm of consumption need to be analyzed.

Likewise, the issue of ontology maintains its relevance. Epistemology implies an object of knowledge; therefore how we know something indicates that there is something knowable. The ontological, in other words, manifests at various levels of perceptibility as well. Everyday perception, that which can be translated consciously via sensory perception, is crucial for everyday life. The reverberations and resonances of activity in expansively complex societies largely transpire beyond the horizon of situated presence. At the level of everyday life, we need translation mechanisms to relay this information to us. Unfortunately, as in the case of Global Climate Change, these mechanisms operate in the abstract sphere of science. The problem remains in how to transgress epistemic barriers by bringing conceptual (abstract) knowledge into the circuits of everyday life, making the non-perceptible thingness affective.

Carolan’s (2007: 1265) conceptualization of tactile space, which “offers a spatially sensuous supplement to the limited representational knowledge we have of the world by its ability to nurture non-representational knowledge,” brings lived and conceived knowledges into closer proximity. Invariably, the dialogue between the lived and the conceived, which typically operates partially and monologically, produces

disparities and differences, or what Carolan (2003: 227) refers to as phenomenological challenges, “discursive moments that confront the existing social relations of knowledge.” Connecting these concepts to the Lefebvrian scaffold erected above is all that remains. This will be accomplished in the discussion of strategies and tactics.

Everyday life, the lived, exists in the crevices, as a residue and a product of the mode of production, active between its perceptions and conceptions of space and practice. The realist illusion and the illusion of transparency (epistemic barriers) appear as power, as strategy in the organization and direction of spatial praxis and its representation on various levels (local, national, global). The lived, however, functions at the level of tactics. Tactics are the short-term decisions that actors make in everyday life, in their individuated practices, that are shaped and structured (but not fully determined) by strategic forces. Strategy, at the phenomenological level, is always in conflict with the tactic, conditions and is simultaneously conditioned by the tactic by means of phenomenological challenges (Lefebvre 2008b).

Michel de Certeau (1984) celebrates tactical resistance to strategy by momentarily appropriating temporal durations in space, but not space itself—which remains strategic<sup>10</sup>. For Lefebvre, however, the appropriation of space is a possibility if tactics transform the perceived and conceived strategies of space mobilized by the state and the economy, by irrupting from within the potency of the lived—by realizing the body as a *locus* of embodied knowledges, or tactile space. If changes to everyday life are to manifest and endure, affective linkages between lived experience as embodied knowledge, conceptual relevance (by bringing theory and practice closer together) and

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<sup>10</sup> De Certeau (1984) expresses this distinction by using space and place to delimit the tactical and the strategic.



directed confrontation, aimed at materialized discourses that impinge on the vitality of everyday life, must be made.

The body as a space and a product of space, a congruence of linear and cyclical times, the mediator between a world conceived, perceived and lived, must be fully reintegrated; this is the Lefebvrian project. Erotic, tactile and embodied knowledge all have the capacity to be more efficacious engendering deeper, longer lasting commitments in anti-corporate, pro-environmental social movements. This claim finds its contemporary correlate in both Goodman and DuPuis (2002) and Carolan (2007). But we should not reify the lived as inherently superior to the conceived. Instead bringing them together, theory and practice, so that they reflect the presence of the other in the conscious organization of social life and gastropraxis remains the ultimate goal.

### **2.3 Japanese Gastropraxis: Socio-Historical Movements and Structures**

What I intend to roughly associate with modern Japanese gastropraxis, from here on, has its roots in the highly complex, multilayered series of socio-historical events and things that have mutually shaped and created the series of places, practices and products coalescing around what commonly recognized as Japanese cuisine. It is predicated on Zen Buddhism, scattered regional and historical peculiarities, Chinese and Korean influences, natural abundances and limitations, as well as expanded contact and interaction with Westerners. Colossal transmutations in Japanese gastropraxis stemming from the Meiji Restoration and its aftermath—the extension of rail services, department stores, refrigeration technologies, post-WWII shortages and subsequent economic recovery and prosperity—stand as a durable legacy of gastropractical fluidity, its ability

to adapt and incorporate to the permanent, transitory flux of culture intrinsic to the capitalist modernization project (Bestor 2004, 2001; Creighton 1992; Cwiertka 2006, 2002; Ishige 2001; Ohnuki-Tierney 1993; Young 1999).

### 2.3.1 Socio-Historical Vectors of Japanese Gastropraxis

When Commodore Mathew Perry forced the Tokugawa Shogunate to open Japan in 1853, few could have imagined the transformations that would emerge over the next 150 years. The Shogunate's self-imposed isolation was abruptly rescinded after Perry's more intensive imposition of the "Unequal Treaties" of 1858, giving Western powers free reign to dictate future commercial conditions with Japan. A national embarrassment, this fiasco motivated sectors of the population to seek radical change and demand the Shogunate's ouster. With the aim of modernization, "a coalition of middle-ranking samurai from the south-western domains" performed the *coup d'état* that expelled the reigning military dictatorship and paved the way for the young, modernist Emperor Meiji to be restored to power (Cwiertka 2006: 15). One of the byproducts of this revolution was the creation of a more globally integrated political and economic nation-state. Japan, embarrassed by the West, would use the Western model of modernization (legal, political, technological, industrial) to achieve this integration, distancing itself from other Asian countries that shared proximal cultural foundations. This process of modernization, known as *bunmei kaika* (civilization and enlightenment), became the official policy of the Meiji Restoration. The new state, however—deviating from the trails blazed by its European predecessors—was not a product of a bourgeois revolution, but an organizational ensemble promoted by bureaucrats with a specific political vision of the state's role in

directing economy and industry (Cwiertka 2006:15-17; Fulcher 1988:229; Ishige 2001:141-142).

Cwiertka (2006) emphasizes the importance that gastropactical metamorphoses had in catalyzing these national transformations. During the first few years of the Meiji Restoration, Japan was a country of diverse customs and localized diets lacking a unified national culture. Emperor Meiji became a symbol of national unification, backed by a cadre of modernist bureaucrats and the pageantry of imperial fanfare, in an effort to build a modern nation-state (Cwiertka 2006: 23-24). Central to Cwiertka's intellectual approximations, the creation of a national cuisine was both a political and economic project, emanating primarily from the emperor as a national symbol of modernizing Japan during the years of "civilization and enlightenment." His symbolic consumption of Western food by Western dining customs became principal in the creation of the national cuisine and the structuring of everyday life for decades to come.

The influence of Western dining practices, both in form and content, was so enormous that by 1873 state dinners were thoroughly "Westernized" (Cwiertka 2006: 15). While much of the country relied on regional peculiarities for traditional foods, dress, decorum, and so on, the dizzying perforation of modern goods into the daily lives of the newfound urban elite dramatically altered Japanese urban culture. Initially it was the urban elite who enjoyed the exposure to novel, imported Western foods, fashions, and industry throughout Japan, which only eventually trickled down to the masses by process of socio-economic hysteresis. Cwiertka states that, "From the Meiji period onwards, familiarity with things Western and, by extension, dining in Western style came to be regarded as a sign of sophistication and signified social prestige" (2006: 23). This

prestige is partly what promoted the diffusion of Western food throughout the population, with Western food bestowing status on those that consumed it. The introduction of Western food (*yōshoku*) assisted in the production of Japanese cuisine (*washoku*), enunciating cultural boundaries, defining inside and outside relationships, and facilitating the coalescence of a more uniform Japanese identity, partially through gastropraxis (Cwiertka 2006: 20-21).

Changes also emerged from industrialization and military and railway expansion. Imperialism and colonization, and the concomitant militarization of Japanese society, helped diffuse, incorporate and transmit philosophical ideas, production techniques, as well as cultural artifacts and gastopractical forms and content both to and from Japanese contexts. As industry and capital refaced and reconfigured the geographical logistics of the Japanese state, reassembled and connected by the artery-like interconnection of rail systems, this project extended beyond the nation's borders, infiltrating peripheral annexations, increasing cultural osmosis and exchange—mostly at gunpoint. Novel gastopractical constructs developed in Japanese contexts, giving and taking from founding cultures and situations (Cwiertka 2006; Ishige 2001).

The post-war food shortage and successive economic recovery and explosion further altered the contours—the structures—of Japanese food provision. Beside the cultural elements, new and old products from far away markets coupled with changing demands for rice, fish and meat helped integrate Japan into the global agricultural marketplace; contemporary events have continued down this path. As Burke and Phyne (2008: 81) explain: “In the late 1990s, Japan imported two-thirds of its food supply.” At current levels of consumption the Japanese rely on an area three times the size of all

arable farm land in Japan (McMichael 2000: 409). As mentioned above, this condition strikes at the very heart of international agricultural capital, specifically meat and grain production in the US, not to mention global fishing efforts and the reverberations and consequences of these endeavors.

On the cultural front, the pervasiveness of restaurants, grocery stores, and convenience stores have altered the modality of food consumption in post-war Japan. These changes have not only modified the form of consumption, but its content as well. Bestor (2006) notes how convenience stores have altered traditional relationships expected between store owners and consumers, primarily in the structure of produced greetings designed to solicit response. Whitelaw (2006) examines the industrialization of a previously homemade delicacy: *onigiri* (rice balls). Both authors elaborate on the Point of Sales (POS) terminals used by chain stores to actively respond to consumption patterns of consumers, gathering data instantaneously in order to correlate supply with demand for popular items. The employment of such technological devices increases corporate, bureaucratic control over consumption, immediately responding to consumer trends, catering to them, and controlling them by developing elaborate advertisement techniques.

Present-day Japan, in this capacity, provides an ideal case of the complexities of the current global political economy of food production and provision. Here, the production of dependence, the incorporation of new cultural objects and practices, as well as the reactionary counter-movements, are all in play (Ashkenazi and Jacob 2000; Friedmann 1993; Kimura and Nishiyama 2008; McMichael 2000; Nishiyama and Kimura 2005; Pritchard and Curtis 2004; Takeda 2008). The country represents extreme positions of international food dependency, the neo-liberalization of food provision, along with

identity crises engendered by marketization and the effacement of the “traditional.” To summarize, a confluence of actors, forms, and institutions have assisted in transmitting and promulgating social norms and practices in everyday gastropraxis to the Japanese population at large since the end of World War II.

### 2.3.2 The Shifting Channels of Gastropraxis: Post-War Trends

Current conditions of Japanese gastropraxis are the direct results of policies developed after World War II, though many relics, such as land policy, still have antecedent roots in Meiji-era reforms (Sorensen 2010). During US occupation, large landholdings, where owners were absent, were redistributed to the rural population, strictly regulating the size of allotments (Brucklacher 2002; McDonald 1996; Sorensen 2010). For rural Japanese, small-scale farming became a way of life, but it was fraught with difficulties. As the years went by, government subsidies were endangered by foreign pressures, mounting in demands to liberalize the Japanese agricultural market, forcing small farmers to take subsidy cuts—forcing them into wage-labor as well as farming duties (McDonald 1996). With the rationalization of farming techniques, existential threats to small-farm lifestyle, and a changing composition of diet—less rice, more grain and meat—rural residents, mostly the children of these farmers, began moving away from the country and into the urban areas to look for better opportunities. The towns they left behind are now dying slow, agonizing deaths. Farmland remains fragmented, meaning landholding policy still prevents large, contiguous landholdings (save for a few loopholes), but rice, the primary crop for farmers in Japan, has seen decreasing demand over the past 50 years (Kawasaki 2010).

While the rural economy has suffered, the urban topographies of gastropraxis have, for the most part, been booming. Since 1980, the average salaried workers' household income has increased almost 57%, with consumption expenditures increasing 40% (Asahi 2003). In 2001, the average Japanese salaried worker spent 73,180 yen, or 17.4% of their total budget on food (Asahi 2003). Government statistics from the Ministry of Economy, Trade, and Industry (METI) indicate a general decrease among all categories of food and beverage retailers, in total numbers, from 1979 to 2007, while sales, employees, and floor space has generally increased (2007). Even as Western food retailers have had a difficult time penetrating the Japanese market (Haddock-Fraser, Poole and Doishita 2009), the overall trend has been for more centralization and concentration in the retail food sector, with fewer and fewer outlets, greater square footage per unit, and a larger workforce employed in total.

These general contours of Japanese gastropraxis find their specific import for this thesis in the changing attitudes and activities associated with eating out. From 1980 to 2001 the percentage of people that said food was a priority in daily life went from 17.3% to 22.8%, with dining out ranking as the most popular leisure activity (Asahi 2003). Cwiertka states that by 1996 "only 31.8 per cent of food consumed by an average Japanese was in the form of fresh foodstuffs cooked at home" (2006: 161). This is in contrast to 41.6% of foods purchased being pre-prepared, 9% in the form of home delivered meals, and 17.6% consumed while dining out (Cwiertka 2006: 161). Tokyo, and its suburbs, has, perhaps, the most impressive array of eating establishments on the face of the planet. Countrywide, the number of eating and drinking establishments has doubled from the 1960s to the 1990s, while growth in sales skyrocketed from "410

billion yen in 1960 to 13,135 billion yen in 1992” (Cwierka 2006: 165). We are concerned here with *kaitenzushi-ya* and *yakiniku-ya*, two of the more popular venues for Japanese urbanites wanting to eat out.

### 2.3.3 The Political Economy of Beef in Japan

Before 1873, there was a 1,100 year ban on meat eating in Japan. The first edict against eating meat was pronounced by Emperor Tenmu in 675. A series of other laws, at times influenced by Buddhist and Shinto doctrines, appeared throughout the centuries, completely outlawing meat eating or specifying what animal products were acceptable. These laws mainly stipulated that people could not eat domesticated animals; wild game and fish, however, were noticeable exceptions (Cwierka 2006; Ishige 2001). Following the 1858 opening of Japan, and semi-colonial subjugation by the West, a circle of influential and learned men started to “[believe] that one reason why the Japanese had poor physiques compared to Westerners was that they did not consume meat and milk” and that they should adopt Western eating habits to bolster their own bodies in order to vanquish the inferiorities exposed by Western domination (Cwierka 2006: 27,33; Ishige 2001). Western science and social Darwinism were employed as ideological tools to propagate meat consumption, especially beef, as a food of modernity and enlightenment (Cwierka 2006). In 1872, when it became public that Emperor Meiji regularly partook in eating beef and mutton, previous ambiguity surrounding meat consumption (meat eating as barbaric, legitimization of the positive aspects of meat eating, etc.) was clarified and meat consumption was officially sanctioned by the state, even if actual consumption levels remained relatively low until the post-World War II economic boom (Cwierka 2006).



The post-war period saw dramatic transformations in Japanese diets, boiled down to the expansion of meat eating due to rising affluence. John Longworth notes that from “1955 onwards, the mechanization of rice cultivation led to an increase in the availability of beef, as large numbers of draught cattle were fattened and slaughtered” (1983: 2). Ishige (2001: 166) observes that from 1965 to 1991 meat consumption rose from around 30g per capita daily to 76.4g. Longworth (1983: 5-7), however, remarks that beef consumption has lagged consumption of other meats and states that supply has been the major factor limiting further proliferation of beef as a standard component of the meal, stemming from the slow expansion of production and the imposition of import quotas. Likewise, domestic production of beef in Japan is heavily dependent upon imported feedstuffs, particularly from the United States. All the while, imported foodstuffs in general have increased, while domestic production of beef has entered a prolonged stasis.

Grappling with these changes, especially the beef boom since the 1970’s until the present, a few relevant factors need to be accounted for. As mentioned, the increasing affluence of the average Japanese citizen, a result of both the US-backed state apparatus as a buffer to Communism, and of increased government-directed industrialization, particularly in electronics, played a vital role in democratizing living standards and consumption patterns (Cwiertka 2006; Fulcher 1988). In gastrophaxis, Korean food emerged on the scene, entering the Japanese diet first as a stop-gap caused by post-war food shocks, then, after rationing ceased, as Korean-style barbecue. Prior to the War, during colonization, Korean cattle were also instrumental in promoting beef consumption, the result of the Japanese appropriating resources to subsidize growing demand for beef. These barbecues were domesticated and relabeled *yakiniku-ya*. Today

“*yakiniku* ranks among most popular ‘classic’ meat dishes” which “clearly demonstrates the role of [Korean food] in the popularization of meat eating in Japan” (Cwiertka 2006:151).

The beef industry was heavily protected from foreign competition by the Japanese government by use of import quotas which sheltered local producers of *wagyū* cattle, prized by the Japanese for their fat marbling (Anderson 1983; Hayami 1979; Longworth 1983, 1976; Sapp and Williams 1988). Government ministries (such as the Ministry of Agriculture, Forests, and Fisheries [MAFF]), farmers associations, health advocacy groups, and, most importantly, the Livestock Industry Promotion Corporation (LIPC) have influenced government policy by intervening in the beef market and endeavoring to protect Japanese beef producers by pounding the war drum of self-sufficiency in food production. Trends, however, indicate that self-sufficiency remains impossible, given the current arrangement of productive forces. Rice has been the only crop which the Japanese have been successful in attaining self-sufficiency, and only as rice has declined in percentage of daily caloric intake (Ohnuki-Tierney 1993).

High beef prices have often been the rallying cry of liberal-minded Japanese searching for protection against prices as high as \$120 a kilogram for beef under the import quota system (Longworth 1983). By 1991 their complaints had politically dented Japanese agricultural arrangements, with neoliberal trade policies prevailing, rescinding import quotas and liberalizing the beef market henceforth inundated with imports (Jussaume et al. 1994; Kerr et al. 1994; Youmans 1994). During this time fluctuations in domestic production have been minimal, even as industry dynamism maintains. In fact, since these changes patterns of land use and efficiency in domestic production have

allowed for production to peak while total number of farms “[has] decreased by 92% of [its] maximum point in 1956” (Gadda and Gasparatos 2009:169). The insatiable hunger for beef continued to increase incessantly until the Mad Cow scares in the early 2000’s forced the Japanese to, at least momentarily, reevaluate the state of gastropractical affairs.

BSE<sup>11</sup> in Japan was first reported in 2001, when it was “publicly announced that a dairy cow from Chiba Prefecture... had tested positive” (McCluskey et al. 2005: 197). This panic triggered extreme disruptions in consumer demand, causing sales of both domestic and import beef to fall by 70 percent (McCluskey et al. 2005: 198). While the problem did not originate with import beef, it managed to get lumped together with domestic supply as food safety concerns outweighed the beef’s actual origin. However, in 2003, a cow of US origin was discovered to be infected and Japan reacted by blocking all beef imports from the US (Carolan 2006b; Mutondo, Brorsen and Henneberry 2009; Tonsor et al. 2009). The US had slowly been making inroads in the Japanese beef market, trailing only Australia in terms of total tonnage imported (Kerr et al. 1994; Longworth 1983; Youmans 1994). This ban of US beef into Japan lasted until 2006 and was severe enough to cause major disruptions in supply, most notably resulting in the phasing out of *gyūdon* (beef bowl), its 100 year old flagship dish, at Yoshinoya, a popular fast-food chain in Japan with nearly 1,000 outlets. Since the ban was rescinded a new awareness of the dangers of industrialized food production, with BSE being the most prevalent, has gained traction, even as beef consumption has remained relatively high.

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<sup>11</sup> Mad Cow Disease (Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy [BSE]) is a nervous system disease which is caused by cattle eating meat-and-bone meal, the parts of other livestock animals, as an ingredient in cattle feed, which can be transferred to humans as Creutzfeldt-Jacob Disease (vCJD) via consumption of infected animals, undercooked prions (Carolan 2006b: 240).

#### 2.3.4 Politics of Sushi Consumption

A prodigious amount of literature on the subject of sushi has been released over the past 15 years or so. Popular media has enchanted us with the “Zen” of sushi (Corson 2007), the globalizing impacts of the sushi trade (Issenberg 2007), even the confluence of sushi and sustainability (Trenor 2008). In academia, Theodore Bestor (2004, 2001, 2000), at the forefront of social scientific inquiries into the contemporary machinations of the sushi industry, deftly reveals the interconnectedness of the global sushi market, specifically those places revolving around the Atlantic bluefin tuna trade and its cultural economy. His examination of Tsukiji, the largest fish market in the world (known as “Tokyo’s Pantry”), reveals the cultural-economic centrality the fish market has in the economy of Japanese gastropraxis, as more than a million pounds of fish pass through its stalls daily.

While Bestor adroitly uncovers the anthropological foundations of the global sushi trade, it is up to other researchers to detail cultural changes and the demographics of consumption. Cultural cross-pollination forms the foundation for other academics (e.g. Carroll 2009; Laemmerhirt 2010) as sushi becomes both a globalizing product and a product of globalization. Others, such as De Silva and Yamano (2006), enumerate trends in Japanese consumption demographics, explicitly frequencies of the ages, sexes and the preferred destinations of sushi consumers. The study of *kaitenzushi-ya* that follows, piggybacking on themes presented above, firmly roots itself in the consumption of sushi, in *kaitenzushi-ya* as a space of consumption: as a global-urban phenomenon.

Transitioning from an agricultural to an urban society has greatly impacted Japanese food consciousness and structure (e.g. Clammer 1997; Creighton 1992; Cwiertka 2006; Noguchi 1994; Ohnuki-Tierney 2006, 1993), spawning reform

movements, protective farmers' unions, food cooperatives, government intransigence, and staunch traditionalisms (Kimura and Nishiyama 2008; Nishiyama and Kumura 2005; Takeda 2008; Vogel 1999). Sushi, as an idealized component of Japanese cuisine, perhaps the quintessential Japanese food, cleaves (in both senses) at the intersection of modernization and "tradition" (Bestor 2006, 2001). Regardless, the majority of Japanese seafood (and food in general) is imported from other countries and distant fisheries (Bestor 2004, 2001; Burke and Phyne 2008; Friedmann 1993; McMichael 2000; Phyne and Mansilla 2003; Pritchard and Curtis 2004; Wilkinson 2006). The point of this discussion is to demonstrate the interconnectedness of sushi consumption in Japan (or anywhere else) as a global phenomenon. Moreover, if we are to take Goodland (1997) at face value, global gastropraxis can and should be implicated in the destruction and devastation of the environment, even if individual consumption patterns appear to elude culpability.

Though beef, due to the associated risks with contracting BSE, gobble up the attention of foodies in Japan, in newspaper headlines and in social movements aimed at changing the gastropractical structure, the consumption of fish, particularly tuna, turns out to be just as dangerous, if not more so. Anisakidosis, caused by ingesting larval nematodes in raw fish, notoriously causes health defects in consumers. Furthermore, consumption of raw fish by pregnant women increases susceptibility to Listerosis, which attacks people with weakened immune systems. Finally, as is the case with consuming fish from higher tropic levels, mercury poisoning becomes a problem as well. Mercury poisoning has historically afflicted towns located in proximity to industrial run-off, but it

also arises from fishmeal fed to farmed species of fish (Clark and Clausen 2008; Clausen and Clark 2005; De Silva and Yamao 2006).

Be it tuna wrangling in the Spanish Mediterranean (Bestor 2004, 2001) or Chilean salmon farming (Phyne and Mansilla 2003; Wilkinson 2006), excessive consumption, overfishing and expanding development of aquaculture (seafood farming) destructively impact global fisheries and marine ecosystems, a direct result of sushi's increased national and global popularity (Ellis 2008; Greenberg 2010; Urry 2010; Wilkinson 2006). Theories of metabolic rift demonstrate how profound such intensive levels of environmental despoliation and degradation really are. Via Karl Marx and John Bellamy Foster (1999), Clark and Clausen (2008; Clausen and Clark 2005) argue that oceanic metabolic rift occurs when exhaustive overfishing and overharvesting of multiple marine trophic levels leads to disparate energy (material) exchanges with others, resulting in general ecological crises. The problem remains, however, in creating an affective link between the seemingly innocent activity of individuated consumption with the very real, but verifiably imperceptible, abstract outcomes of the whole. The abstract nature of environmental investigations, high above the domain of everyday life, clouds the perspective of scientists who prefer to roam the mental spaces of conceptions in search of technocratic answers to problems, rivaling the abstractness of the state and the corporation. Rather than wander the pasture of abstraction looking for transformational fertilizer, we need to recalibrate our sights on the spaces of lived activity, everyday life, in our search for answers.

## CHAPTER III

### SPATIAL-DIALECTICAL PHENOMENOLOGY: PRINCIPLES AND IMPLEMENTS

*“Enlightenment is intimacy with all things”*  
Dōgen Zenji

#### **3.1 Methodology and Embodiment: The Proposition**

This chapter seeks to explicate the methodological implements of the proposed research agenda. I will start by defining the method, explaining the characteristics that comprise it, discussing the four rules of dialectical phenomenology, and detailing preliminary analytic directions to be explored. The next section of this chapter confronts specialized definitions of levels of analysis and contexts mobilized in executing the analysis.

Subsequently, I will enumerate the trialectic of space as a primary mechanism in the examination of the subject. Section five will specify capta collection techniques utilized in the gathering of field observations. Section six approaches these methodological precepts and instruments problematically, emphasizing shortcomings and pitfalls, while attempting to resolve issues of self-reflexivity and limitation. The final section will further expand on the method of analysis more concretely, gearing the reader toward the analyses that follow.

## **3.2 Spatial-Dialectical Phenomenology**

### **3.2.1 A Basic Definition**

As previously mentioned above, this research project is to be executed via the application of a methodology I have dubbed spatial-dialectical phenomenology. Succinctly defined, spatial-dialectical phenomenology is a method that employs a detailed account of lived experiences, making special note of the spacio-temporal contexts in which these experiences are enmeshed. It requires a double-perspective for the researcher, considerably precarious and problematic, that necessitates one to view a space-time logically or “normally” and to also envision it as a totality, or as an interactional whole in which internal relations and contradiction trump logical linearity and external essentialism. This totality is difficult to perceive (indeed its existence is even questionable at times), there are epistemic barriers obstructing its perception in practice. Therefore, with spatial-dialectical phenomenology being a method of analysis, we will move from practice to theory and from theory to practice, from the concrete to the abstract and the abstract to concrete. The purpose of this procedure is to expose and elucidate the process of becoming from the static appearances that we are confronted with on an everyday basis. To clarify even further, we are not interested in subjectivities per se, but in the objective conditions from which subjectivities arise, their contexts, their connections, their interactional compliments. Spatially and temporally considering interactive contexts and their effects on our consciousness is the primary concern of our investigation.



### 3.2.2 Characteristics of Spatial-Dialectical Phenomenology

The first characteristic of spatial phenomenology is that the researcher is to be exposed to the spacio-temporal social “context” of idiosyncratic and particular everyday practices.

Lawrence Grossberg argues:

that contexts (everyday life) are not static structures but active configurations of possibilities, of mobilities and stabilities, of the spaces and places at which forms of agency become available, [where] popular formations define possible ways of producing and navigating one’s way within and across the spatial field of everyday life, even as they constitute that field. (1997: 18).

Meagan Morris states that a context stands in for a case study that contains the mediations between everyday practices and institutions, social forces and power relations (1998:7). Important to these definitions is that contexts are in performative flux, constantly in the process of transformation and change, and therefore dynamic. Spatial and temporal influences, constraining and liberating, on everyday practices within the context is of central importance, and therefore defining our contexts of research is paramount.

The second characteristic of spatial-dialectical phenomenology is that the context needs to be lived, experienced from two perspectives. This is arguably the most contentious issue for this methodology as it directly injects contradiction into the research process, oftentimes presented in overly logical (non-contradictory, coherent) fashion. The researcher (1) needs to experience the context (space-time matrix of the social event) as a typical “user” or “actor” would “normally” experience it. These terms (user, actor, normal) are loaded and need to be explicated. The user or actor of a space-time context can be considered the social subject of this research project. The subject interacts with and within a particular concrete situation, as empirical assemblages of objects, spaces,

times and other people—objective conditions from which practical activity can occur. These “objective” conditions are important because we wish to uncover their effects on consciousness: what they reveal, what they limit, prohibit and approve. Normalcy, on the other hand, is the more nebulous construction. By normal (to experience “normally”), we specifically mean a state of consciousness that is in transition between the customary, repetitive *habitus* of specific moments of the everyday and the more self-reflexive, self-conscious moments where one exterminates passivity, at least on some level, and becomes a more active subject: movement from the “perceived-conceived” to the “lived-conceived” (Bourdieu 1984; Lefebvre 2008a, 2008b, 2008c, 1991).

The researcher (2) must examine the context from an “elevated” position, one that works on a more conceptual level. Pseudo-positivist phenomenology (Gardiner 2006, 2000; Garfinkel 1964; Schutz 1953, 1943) is particularly troubling on this point, privileging the commonsensical over the contemplative, tending to reproduce the same actor-as-dope position cementing their criticism of macro-level theories. On the conceptual level, the researcher must apply the tools of dialectical phenomenology to better evaluate the context which and in which the researcher is studying. There are four basic principles to dialectical phenomenology as outlined by Roslyn Bologh (1979: 33-69):

- I. Treat concepts and objects as grounded in historically specific social organizations (forms of life).
- II. Treat individuals and spacio-temporal contexts as embedded in historically specific forms of life.
- III. Treat forms of life as totalities of internal relations.

#### IV. Treat a form of life as contradictory.

Bolough's methodological principles emerge from intense readings of Karl Marx's *Grundrisse* (1973). Similarly, we can locate corresponding strains of thought in Martin Nicolaus' foreword to the *Grundrisse*, and in an article anticipating the book's reissuance (1973, 1968). Dialectical analysis, in this vein, is open-ended and polymorphous. In opposition to Schutz (1953, 1943) and Garfinkel (1964), whose specific intent was to understand social order explicitly visible in everyday life, dialectical phenomenology evinces a coherent logic of practice, a structure and a form, and then seeks to locate within this logic the transitory, the contradictory, and the conflicting. By focusing on the lived experience of everyday life, dialectical phenomenology's intent is to bring the conceived closer to the lived, to reintegrate theory and praxis on the level of everyday movement, recognizing the salience of both structure and agency, repetition and difference, from the historical pathways of everyday experience.

The third characteristic of spatial (dialectical) phenomenology is a direct extension of the second. The researcher must be able to move from the concrete to abstract, from the abstract to the concrete, dialectically, in order to construct "partial totalities" and "virtual objects" (Lefebvre 2008b, 2003b). Contexts, as spacio-temporal nexuses of social activity and relations, are the immediate concrete entity of observation and analysis, an inextricable sphere of complex, multidirectional empirical connections of and within itself. However, moving to more abstract positions we see different "levels" of activity occurring within this particular space. Taking Dickinson's (1997) conception of the "gaze" as a positional perspective assumable within a specific context, a level of analysis, a researcher can make visible different phenomena relevant to the lens and the

frame of the gaze. Taking the economic level as a vantage point, homogeneous (formal) activity revolving around exchange value and the commodity form replaces cultural idiosyncrasies associated with the intentional activity of sushi consumption, for example. From this perspective we can see the piece of sushi, the establishment itself as fragmented entities woven into a homogeneous fabric of exchange value. On the level of the lived, sushi consumption is cultural, economic, pleasing, cathartic, cathectic, affective, and so on—a multitude of significances bundled into one seemingly “innocent” object and practice. Movement from concrete levels of perception, from individual experience, permits us to envision the abstract in the concrete, from which we can return to a concrete perspective with greater respect for a more “total” understanding afforded via analysis.

The fourth characteristic is the application of dialectical logic at every level and between every level of analysis, which implies formal, logical organization and its contradictions. Concretely this manifests as the extension of the principles of dialectical phenomenology into the field, taking of field notes, into analyzing field notes, and to the writing process itself—the embodiment of the analytical process. In essence, this characteristic suggests that the analytical process is never complete, more can always be gleaned and extrapolated by both notation and analysis, not to mention the unfortunate (at least for social researchers) truth that social reality is constantly morphing, changing, and altering its forms by means of the very practices that get ossified in the research process. To some degree, all we study is history and representation, which is essentially what empirical observation and analysis are. Indubitably analysis provides a valuable contribution to society and sociology, but one that merely has its limits in the dated re-

presentation of praxis past, its analysis and the supplication that, while historical, it is still pertinent. However, I feel that this process of constant evaluation via dialectical methods provides a sense of openness to the research process which, for fear of emerging as dogmatic or technocratic, I wish to emphasize as reflexive and refractive of itself and its object.

The final characteristic is to split experience (contexts) up into levels of analysis. Levels of analysis might not appear in everyday practice<sup>12</sup>, but just as actors replicate the conceptual, dice up experience into the memorable and the forgotten, I feel that they also attempt to explain their lives by highlighting differentiated, multileveled influences indicted in analyzing changes (i.e., “The government is the reason I lost my job,” “God saved me in that car accident,” “I am Japanese, that is how we do things,” etc.). Putting aside the validity of such statements, the point is that, on the level of everyday life, polyvalent, overlapping levels of social totality are at play; everyday life is only one level of this totality. Moreover, the discreteness of levels is incomprehensible, apparent in the paralysis of previous sociological inquiries struggling with the bifurcation of reality into the “micro” and “macro.” These levels, in my analysis, imbricate and repel, suture and slice at each other. Likewise, these levels are not distinct, immutable ontological entities, but rather are the products of historical expressions of social praxis, and as such are inherently dialectical. Let me outline the use of levels and contexts more specifically.

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<sup>12</sup> In fact I contend that most people probably experience life as a series of presences and absences, in opposition to the stream of consciousness Schutz (1953, 1943) theorizes.

### 3.3 Levels of Analysis and Contexts

#### 3.3.1 Levels of Analysis

Stemming from empirical observations in specific spatio-temporal social contexts, this analysis is firmly rooted in the concrete, everyday reality social actors encounter in sushi shops and *yakiniku-ya* located in urban Japan. Levels of analysis, therefore, do not correspond to empty, abstracted mental spaces, immaterialized constructs existing beyond the dialectical scope envisaged in everyday gastropraxis. Instead, the levels of analysis posited here (the local, national and global aesthetic, political-economic and environmental) are concrete in that they are visible within the contexts observed, even if they are not necessarily blatant or well-defined. As such, they more resemble the “gazes” Dickinson (1997) applies in analyzing Old Pasadena—they are essentially positional vistas highlighting the complex, polyleveled totality of particular spaces. For instance, Zen inspired aesthetics and nationally constructed cuisines nourish not only the citizens of a particular locality but also bolster national and global capital accumulation projects when they are transformed into exchange values. How these levels become visible or invisible (receding into the background of the perceptible) will be established through the process of analysis.

Aesthetics, as specified in this work, largely adheres to the definition Ben Highmore (2010: 9-12, 52-54) establishes, in that they orient passions and activities, organize senses and perceptions. Highmore remarks accordingly that “aesthetics [have] a real sense of the confusions of ordinary life as we navigate and register the sensual materiality of the exterior world” (2010: 10). In the analysis of the *kaitenzushi-ya*, I have, somewhat, simplified the concept of a nature aesthetic into two differing levels of

analysis: the national (inspired by the Shinto religio-philosophical tradition) and the global, or universal (influenced by Zen Buddhism and the idea of a tenacious, ever-fluctuating universal nature). Dialectically, in collaboration and conflict with this nature aesthetic, is the industrial aesthetic functioning on several levels (micro, macro; local, national, global). The industrial aesthetic is constituted by a series of fragmented abstractions, mechanizations, law, propensities, properties, and quantifications. But to fully enumerate the complex unity and disunity of these aesthetic codes, as they mish and mash, supplant, dominate, contrast, and exhaust the other, we need another level that animates their functioning, a level of power, domination and homogeneity. This is the abstract space, the global level of capitalism, which has its various subordinate circuits in the particular, local, regional and national economies of scale.

In the second analytical chapter, while reusing the visible/in-visible dialectic of representations of space, I reformulate a few of the analytic categories. Colonization emerges as a determination of space, reduced to three basic levels: the local, the national and the colonized. Colonization, by engendering forms of resistance and acquiescence, generates domination: local, national and global—with the predominance of the exchange value and commodity exchange penetrating each. But between colonization and domination, as a byproduct and a residue of their organization, lies appropriation, functioning at the level of the body, the site, the city, the nation, and the global. The interplay between the levels of each determination, as well as between the determinations themselves, produces obscurity and clairvoyance, opacity and clarity, visibility and invisibility. The difficulty in presenting this material lies at the intersectionality of so many

factors. Reductionism would provide a less obstructed vantage point, a less complex frame, but so much of the vitality and movement would be lost in such an act of violence.

### 3.3.2 Contexts

The contexts delimited throughout the pages of this thesis should not be viewed statically, or intransigently, for they are dissected, transected and intersected by myriad currents, controls, people and things. Their permanence relies on permeability, as their porous membranes facilitate the transaction of cultural-economic objects, aesthetic sensibilities, cultural practices, and social interaction. The fact that a context is concrete does not mean that we treat it like a slab of concrete; its vitality and volatility rests on the fact that it is an ensemble of living bodies producing and reproducing it, repeating and altering its form, structure, and function by means of social practice. It is true that the contexts presented here are somewhat nebulous and unclear at times, as products, people and aesthetics constantly seize us from dwelling too long in the confines of the materiality enunciated. But, in keeping with our conception of the context as a malleable entity, I do not propose that this position detracts from the profundity of the argument. Grasping the abstract within the concrete and the concrete within the abstract is the only viable route for connecting the conceived and the lived, for producing a self-reflexive, embodied form of knowledge that unites theory and practice at the level of lived experience.

### 3.4 Trialectics

Before adopting, wholesale, the positions promulgated by Lefebvre we must clarify his method of analysis. Lefebvre is considered one of the pioneers of dialectic materialism as



a philosophical and sociological method of analysis (e.g. Lefebvre 1968a, 1968b). He thought it was Karl Marx's most important contribution to philosophy and science, though it was only applied to one sphere of social activity: political economy. As such, Lefebvre's dialectic is oftentimes presented as a triad, or trialectic (see Merrifield 2006; Shields 1999; Soja 1996, 1989), where three categories or concepts interact in the process of becoming, leading to contradiction and change. As such, his dialectic is never reducible to a firm binary construct with a predetermined synthesis resulting from two opposing forces. The impact of Nietzsche on Lefebvre's thought, here, is unquestionable, as his trialectic is never complete or teleological (Merrifield 1995). Instead we have relations such as need-work-pleasure, historicity-sociality-spatiality, homogenization-fragmentation-differentiation, etc., that attempt to capture movements of the social totality, taking into account the "other" as both a repository for another negative (critical) moment in relation to the thesis and antithesis, as well as providing an alternate route that modifies teleological materialism, replacing it with something more dynamic and spontaneous.

This panning of binary dyadic forms, not to mention the abhorrence of the monadic, suggests the presence of (at least) the third: or the other (Lefebvre 2003a). In the contexts observed several triads can be specified: the production of food, the preparation of food, and the consumption of food; the signifier (the object), signified (what it promotes), and cathexis (what is embodied by the subject of interpretation), and so on. One of the most important trialectics of food consumption is that of the need-desire-pleasure. The body, for the reproduction of energy capacities, requires a certain amount of caloric intake. In Japan, these needs have been socialized into the peculiarities

of Japanese cuisine. Desires are the subjective longing for particular objects of consumption that fulfill needs (but can be motivational beyond needs). Pleasure is not a guarantee, nor a definite condition of the fulfillment of either need or desire, it is the other, resulting when constellations of objects and subjects spontaneously align and produce it. That said, dialectics and trialectics are basically the same thing and will be used interchangeably throughout this work. The method of analysis employed here, as mentioned, is based largely on Soja's (1996) trialectic of spatiality.

### **3.5 Capta Collection Techniques: Contextual Contours**

The field notes, which comprise the 'positive' component of spatial phenomenology, were collected between May 18<sup>th</sup>-July 20<sup>th</sup> 2010 in Yokosuka, Japan (a city in Kanagawa prefecture near the mouth of Tokyo Bay). These observations are mostly made at the level of fragmentation: that is at the level of different entities which encompass spaces of consumption and preparation, temporal rhythms, and social practices, where objects and subjects are apparently alienable and discrete at the level of everyday life. In taking field notes, I have tried to be as systematic as possible. Concerning eating food whose final preparation was outside of the home, I chose to repeatedly patronize a few, what I consider to be, "prototypical" establishments. Though I have collected data on a variety of establishments, I have focused on two types of restaurants: *kaitenzushi*-ya (rotary sushi restaurant) and *yakiniku*-ya (Korean-style barbecue). Because the amount of *capta*<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Capta is the more preferable term for at least two reasons: 1.) It better illustrates the activity and practice of conducting research rather than the passive, taken-as-given significance of "data"; 2.) Data might exist, objectively as such, but our perception and conception of the material, objective world occurs through our subjective, sensuous apparatuses, meaning we capture the objective via our subjective interface technologies, produced and refined via historical practical activity creating subjects and objects dialectically. I would like to credit Dr. Peter L. Taylor with introducing me to the concept.

collected in the field far exceeds the amount required for analysis in a thesis, I have decided on sticking to these two types of restaurants for a few particular reasons. First, they provided clear opportunities for me to discuss several themes that will be revealed in the chapters that follow, particularly concerning the ability to postulate and analyze embedded and interpenetrated levels of analysis. Secondly, I felt as if I gathered the most comprehensive accounts of lived experience, spatial logistics and temporal patterns when I took notes on these particular establishments. For these reasons and others I have decided to narrow the scope of my initial research project to focus on these two specific spatio-temporal social contexts.

The first type of restaurant included in this thesis is the *kaitenzushi-ya*. Rotary sushi bars operate somewhere between fast food and casual dining. They offer a more affordable assortment of sushi to the customer than a traditional sushi bar, which can easily add up to over \$100 dollars a meal if one does not keep track of their order. Instead of the sushi being made on request, the *kaitenzushi-ya* runs a mechanized belt, replete with pre-made sushi on small saucer plates, around the bar. Behind the bar a sushi chef prepares dishes, plates them, and then sets them on the belt where customers can select what they want. This is in contrast to a traditional sushi bar where orders are placed by customers to the chef and made to order, an attempt at maintaining freshness (De Silva and Yamao 2006). The cultivated relationship between the customer and chef that takes place at a traditional sushi bar, where each participant gains a more intimate understanding of the other, is, as we shall see, mostly absent. An assortment of colored plates correlate to a pricing scheme based on these colors, for instance a blue plate may

run for 250 yen (roughly \$2.75 as of summer 2010). After the customer is satisfied with their meal, their stack of plates is tallied up by a host/hostess and they pay the bill.

Observations were made at two different *kaitenzushi-ya*. Both were located on the same “block,” separated however by several floors of department store and a train station. TOTO Sushi is a fairly well known chain and there are at least three locations in downtown Yokosuka. The one that I frequented and in which I did my observations was on the 8<sup>th</sup> floor of the More’s City department store, directly above the west exit of the Yokosuka Chuo train station. I chose this site primarily due to familiarity. In the past, well over five years ago (in 2011), I repeatedly patronized this very sushi shop when I lived in Japan. Another reason why this establishment was selected was due to its central location near the city’s transit hub, which applies equally to the other sushi shop analyzed. Instead of isolating the shop, I have tried to contextualize it within an urban fabric, and, therefore, notes that I have taken on the subject include observations made during pilgrimages to and from the shop (e.g., riding the elevator up to the 8<sup>th</sup> floor, getting off the train and heading there, etc.). I have a total of four well documented observations of trips to this particular location. In addition I have recorded fragmented notes on occurrences that struck me as relevant during the four other research-minded visits I made to this establishment<sup>14</sup>. Observations were conducted at different times to try and capture a more complete understanding of how this space changes throughout the day. For instance, noting the pace of movement during a mid-afternoon (2-3 PM) snack and a dinner rush (6-8 PM).

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<sup>14</sup> Though I went to the restaurant 11 times during my stay in Japan, I only went with the intention of collecting capta eight times. Other trips to the establishment were with friends or acquaintances.

Concerning the interior of the establishment, I decided to make notes of nearly everything, cognizant of the fact that some things were overlooked, others excluded, and still others deemed unnecessary. In particular I focused on the dimensions of the space, the internal logistics, its arrangement, the way bodies moved and maneuvered the space, their rhythms, smells, ambiance, noises, interior design and aesthetics, repetitions and discontinuities, and whatever else I felt was interesting (e.g. a worker spilling a drink, an intoxicated customer, etc.). These note-taking themes and operations are applicable to each context mentioned below.

In addition to TOTO Sushi, I also conducted observations at UoyaTei *kaitenzushi-ya*. As mentioned this location is literally a five minute walk and elevator ride from TOTO. UoyaTei sits below the east exit of Yokosuka Chuo station, underneath a massive awning/platform on top of which are scattered station turnstiles, a ticketing office, fare machines and a small kiosk along with people awaiting friends, family and lovers. Two main reasons can be given for why I decided to conduct observations at this establishment: 1.) it serves as both a restaurant and a place to get take-out (*mochi-kaeri*) and 2.) sushi prices were slightly cheaper. The transitions from the interior to the exterior played a significant role in my observations; I remained unfixed, in transition, just as the space and people in it. In total I took four detailed observations of this space, as well as numerous observations of the foot traffic outside of the site proper, as I passed by the location nearly every single day<sup>15</sup>.

The second type of restaurant, gastrop Praxis, that I decided to document was that of the Korean barbecue, or *yakiniku-ya* in Japanese. I decided only to conduct

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<sup>15</sup> The train station was a central location for both coming and going, along with traversing the cityscape in general. I have, in addition to the observations on the spaces of consumption and their contextualization in the urban fabric, a substantial amount of notes from observations in and around the train station.

observations at one establishment, with a total of six well documented observations of phenomenological trajectories through the neighborhood into the restaurant and out. Once again, I took notes at a variety of times to capture different crowds and rhythms. Hayama Torigin is more than just a *yakiniku* restaurant, it is a massive complex in the middle of downtown Yokosuka. An 8-10 minute walk from Yokosuka Chuo station, Hayama Torigin presents itself as an ideal site to conduct observations because it is reasonably priced, well located for pedestrian and auto traffic, convenient for business lunches and local families, etc. The aesthetic dimension of this establishment was one of the most interesting witnessed, both in what is expressed and what is effaced. Once again the pricing and location elevate this establishment as an ideal site to conduct observations. As I have had experience with a multitude of *yakiniku-ya* in my life, I felt that this specific establishment is as good a representative as any other.

It should be noted that we are not trying to exhaust the entirety of the Japanese gastropractical spectrum with this analysis, just gain insight as to how everyday food practices link, provoke, articulate, structure and contradict global-national political-economic spatial strategies at the level of the body. Our goal is not a typology and explanation of each particular manifestation of Japanese gastropraxis, nor is it purely a cultural ethnography, even if it incorporates some of those elements. Explicitly, we only seek to employ specific materializations, movements and assemblages of Japanese gastropraxis, experienced on the level of the everyday body, to illustrate our point that that the general is expressed, in some fashion, in the particular.

### **3.6 Biases, Shortcomings and Methodological Problematics: Reflexivity**

It should be evident at this point that this thesis is firmly ensconced in the Neo-Marxian sociological tradition. As such, the charge of philosophism, a reliance on overtly philosophic jargon and analysis, will probably be levied against my research program from some quarters of the positivist, empiricist traditions of the discipline. I see my project as an anti-positivist, dialectical materialist approach to analyzing the social world, primarily from the phenomenological (or lived) perspective of the individual actor; the purpose of which is to capture the actual movements of social reality as they are lived. Levels of analysis, gazes assumable by the individual in social practice, never abstract beyond the concrete vectors of human activity, perceptible in the contexts observed—meaning lived experience is never reduced to a systematic concept. Though the horizons indicated by the demarcation of the levels of analysis require study for fuller elaboration, it is my proposition that one could, given the time and resources, extend this analysis to other nodes (gastrotopes) of gastropactical constellations woven through *kaitenzushi-ya* and *yakiniku-ya*. With adequate resources a complete research agenda that concretely follows specific foods on their journey through the commodity chain, as outlined by Cook (2006), could become a possibility. At this juncture, however, such an extensive undertaking remains impossible and undesirable; for this is merely a Master's thesis.

Other than the rancor of traditional theorists (Horkheimer 1972b), whose disdain and vitriol for heterodox approaches to the generation of social knowledge attacks its applicability, a few others might sound off in expressing reservation for this academic enterprise. Structuralists, functionalists, orthodox Marxists, and others, will probably see this endeavor as privileging an overly agentic actor, liberated from the objective

constraints that bound his/her activity. Micro-oriented theorists might contend the opposite, that this analysis is nothing more than an overbearing determination of activity by structural elements constricting the creative capacity of individuals in actively generating forms of life. It is my contention, however, that I have only brought the debate between agency and structure to the level of everyday life, to lived experience, delimiting and delineating its formalistic characteristics, its structural contours, and its volatile content. Everyday gastrop Praxis, as defined in this thesis, is merely the meeting place of actuality and possibility, of structure and agency, of hegemony and revolution.

In addition to working at the synapse of structure and agency, this thesis also originates between the disparities of cultures, languages and *habitus*es (Bourdieu 1984, 1977). I am no expert on Japanese society or language, and as such these have been limiting factors which I have sought to overcome by means of incessant, dedicated study and immersion. Beside the issues broached in the introduction, the translation of material from one language to another always alters implied meanings (Benjamin 1968a), echoing de Certeau's (1984) contention that reading is the active production of meaning beyond the intentions of the author. Some things cannot be translated effectively, including the affective cathexis experienced by me or any other individual—it cannot be reduced to *logos*, a logic of the written or spoken word—it must be felt. Embodiment is a central theme in this thesis, but one that is more often alluded to rather than directly confronted, partly due to the fact that it is difficult to conceptualize and communicate with precision. In this sense my experiences and observations of gastrop Praxis in these contexts offer one possible interpretation on the spectrum of explanations. The slippage between what I perceive, conceive and live might be more pronounced than the average (abstract)



Japanese person, but that does not mean that it is any less valid an assessment.

Furthermore, this thesis is more focused on the objective conditions which shape, produce and mold subjectivity, in the elaboration of the structures of agency. Analysis, then, is not mired in the minutia of authenticity or inauthenticity, but in the exploration of material and representational objectivities.

The most valid criticism, which even I have to levy against this work, is that it is incomplete. I say that it is incomplete because (a) it still remains an impossibility to fully explore the vast complexity of the commodity chain, as mentioned above, but also because (b) there are thousands, if not more, variations of Japanese gastropraxis that I am, at this time, unable to research or investigate. I have focused on two manifestations out of the myriad active, which may, in itself, be arbitrary. Why not study convenience stores and their forms of gastropraxis? Why not study family meals? Why not focus on the rural? Why not Osaka instead of Tokyo? All of these questions can be legitimately charged in countering the findings made in this analysis. The unfortunate burden of research is drawing the line knowing full well that such a line is both political and frivolous. In everyday gastropraxis no such considerate, intentional surgery of reality occurs, it is a fiction of social science to reify it as such. Instead, my claim is that, while incomplete, this thesis, by detailing the everyday consumptive practices of two forms of Japanese gastropraxis, presents readers with vignettes, pedagogic illustrations of the particular in order to demonstrate facets of the general. In other words, while inexhaustive, this thesis outlines openings for future research into both Japanese gastropraxis and gastropraxis as a totality.

The fidelity between the particular and the general, however, remains an object of contention. If a fuller description and analysis of gastropraxis on an expanded level cannot be achieved, then, ultimately we are painting ourselves into an inescapable corner, one that exposes the limitations of this study and reduces its practical impact. Another problem associated with fidelity is the disparity between each individual's experiences of everyday gastropraxis. Interviews and surveys could accomplish much in bringing to light generalizations from such experiences, however fraught with the danger of replicating ideological reification those endeavors are. Maintaining the lived or evaporating it in favor of quantifiable essences or uncritical reflections runs the risk of devolving into the superficiality of the same positivist paradigm I have sought to criticize as insufficient.

### **3.7 Method of Analysis**

While the method of analysis differs for each of the chapters that follow, the general structure of the analysis remains similar. Experiences of gastropraxis have been translated into notes, generally organized on the basis of the trajectory through the space of consumption and thematically, by recurring themes and events that coalesce into certain categories of analysis. Analytic notes typically revolve around the synaptic moments between the themes observed and their correlation with specific instances of gastropraxis. From themes and their manifestations in gastropraxis, levels of analysis (gazes) can be constructed by extracting from notes and secondary readings, the intersection of relevant pathways, people, products and concepts traversing the site of consumption. After such levels have been constructed, it must be demonstrated how they both conflict and

contribute to the embodied vectors of everyday life, how they constitute and are constituted by the other. This process of reintegration will reveal the representational barriers which serve to fragment and obfuscate the complexity of everyday gastropraxis, especially the displacement of everyday, embodied knowledges and their potency in challenging the inflexibility promulgated by conceptual systems of knowledge, elucidating their fragility which hides behind unstable contradictory and cooperative codes evoking myriad influences. Each chapter is prefaced with a short examination of the levels used, how they are operationalized in that particular analysis, which should be more explicitly concrete than what I have written here.

CHAPTER IV

REVOLUTIONS AND REVELATIONS: ROTARY SUSHI RESTAURANTS AND  
THE GUISES OF GASTROPRACTICE

*“Sight and seeing, which in the Western tradition once epitomized intelligibility, have turned into a trap: the means whereby, in social space, diversity may be simulated and a travesty of enlightenment and intelligibility ensconced under the sign of transparency”*  
Henri Lefebvre (1991: 76)

**4.1 Lost at Sea**

The analysis of the *kaitenzushi-ya*, following the methodological premises of spatial-dialectical phenomenology, must first seek to establish a solid, empirical foundation from which to proceed. This chapter, therefore, begins by laying this foundation by means of an explicitly detailed phenomenological narrative, a lavishly detailed “tour” through the two spaces observed. The subsequent analysis, of which description is only the first leg, proceeds by examining the spatial and semiotic codes embedded in the space and its objects. Once this spatial rhetoric has been enumerated and catalogued, dialectically, it will be analyzed for its conflictive unity, its demarcation of perception and conception (the visible/in-visible dialectic is salient here). But it would be foolhardy to posit the conflictive combat of dueling spatial discourses as nothing more than the unwarranted byproduct of an invasive industrialization of everyday life. For our purposes, a globalized and globalizing political-economic project stands as the culprit responsible for

dexterously combining these codes, these ensembles, in the service of politically organizing perception.

Such an analysis is sufficient in its own right, and many in Cultural Studies and related disciplines may be content with that product. For the Lefebvrian, for those interested in the radical subjectivity of the banal, an analysis of slippage, of anti-*Logos* (Merrifield 1995), necessitates an examination of the lived content of perceived and conceived forms, functions and structures. Rounding out this examination, therefore, will be theoretical and empirical discussion on the role of embodiment, creativity and the erotic. Only then can the spatial analysis of everyday life, the immanent critique of the concept by its own content, be efficaciously conducted and concluded—bearing in mind that the closure of the conclusion is nothing more than an opening of further analysis.

#### **4.2 Perceptions of Gastropraxis: The Material Spaces of Sushi Shops**

Let me, for a second, give a detailed account of what one could expect to find, on an experiential level, inside and around a *kaitenzushi-ya* in urban Japan. These descriptions, somewhere between my actual lived experience and the deceptive stasis of the perceived, demonstrate the materiality—the logistical organization—and the ocular dimensions of these spaces. The presentation of these descriptions takes the form of an enunciated “tour” of the de Certeauian (1984) tradition, verbally traversed. As such, I consider them closer to the perceived arm of the trialectic of spatiality, however inextricable the other two components of that trialectic remain.

#### 4.2.1 The TOTO Experience

One of the shops observed was located on the eighth story of a department store, conveniently labeled the “Restaurant Park.” Although this location does not have a façade at street-level, the Restaurant Park does much to simulate the trappings of an historic Mediterranean village, remaining, however, firmly modern and Japanese in the process. En route from the elevator or the escalator to the sushi shop, I pass a catalogue of restaurants: Chinese, Indonesian, Korean barbecue, and Italian, each with its own uniquely designed frontispiece. TOTO Sushi slowly comes into view, standing out, capturing my perception as I follow the corridor away from the main elevators and escalators, peeking around the corner as I proceed down the restaurant-lined passageway. The frontage consists of a brightly lit blue sign with white calligraphy splashed across the face, naming the restaurant, what it serves, and this is “rotary sushi the way you like it” (お好み回転寿司). Near the door there sits an easel with photographs of various lunch and dinner sets purchasable, should one choose to forgo the machinations of the conveyor belt. Between the wooden frames of the store front are panes of glass giving a transparency to the content of the space. Passing through a small entryway, I transition from the frenzy of the shopping center into the intimacy of the sushi shop.

After entering I am immediately greeted by a hostess (typically a younger or middle-aged female) and asked to choose a seat. Most seating consists of small wooden chairs reinforcing the peninsular sushi bar that occupies the main area like a military fortification. Several small booths buttressing the bar lie in the far corners of the restaurant. The sushi carrying conveyor belt runs the length of this bar, backed by a row of glass-lined coolers containing varying quantities of vividly colored fresh, raw fish.

Inside of this fortress a sushi chef churns out poetic plates of pleasure, beautifully arranging dishes for stomach and eye, subsequently placing them on the conveyor belt. In the back of the space, behind the sushi bar, an industrialized kitchen whips up more intricate dishes and cooked confections. As for the rest of the interior, the walls are adorned with earthy colors, gaudy sumo posters, the color-coded plate pricing scheme, along with other products and imagery, prominently coated by a naturalized aesthetic and the industrialized finish of modernity.

Image 4.1 The Façade of TOTO Sushi. Photographed by the author, all rights reserved.



Sitting down, I am confronted with a bevy of assorted items and devices, most noticeably the hum and the pace (rhythm) of the conveyor belt as it parades its product about. In addition, a small black tray holding a saucer for soy sauce, an upturned ceramic

tea cup, a packaged wet-nap, and a sheathed set of separable wooden chopsticks round out the ensemble. Attached to the bar at every other seat is a series of hot water spigots accompanied by clear plastic containers filled with bags of green tea. A small bottle of soy sauce guards a box of pickled ginger emplaced in front of a menu of available sushi organized by color-price.

After sitting down and situating myself in the space at the confluence of so many movements and influences, the world seems to disappear and consciousness begins to revolve around the revolutions of the conveyor belt. The aromatic scent and vivid colors of the fish entrap the senses, driving the ego to the brink of narcissistic obliteration, a self-centered implosion of sensuousness, of desire in the process of satisfaction. Though everyday servings of salmon and tuna saunter about on their tour of the restaurant, taking about two minutes and thirty seconds a cycle, the prize of the sushi world, *ōtoro*, requires a direct request to the chef<sup>16</sup>. After slowly drinking the green tea and devouring a few plates of sushi, it is time to go. The hostess comes by and counts the plates, calculating the total cost of the meal, which is paid for at a small cashier stand next to the entrance/exit of the establishment. Money changes hands and I am given a receipt detailing the total amount of each color plate consumed and an added service charge. After the exchange is complete I am free to leave, back into the flow of the everyday.

#### 4.2.2 The Sushi Shop under the Stairs

The other establishment where I conducted observations, UoyaTei, is at street-level, directly below the main entrance of *Keikyū Yokosuka Chūō* Station. This particular shop

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<sup>16</sup> *Ōtoro* is the fatty belly meat of the bluefin tuna, considered the pinnacle of the Japanese sushi experience.



experiences far more passers-by than TOTO Sushi, sitting caddy-corner to a heavily trafficked crosswalk, and next to a stairwell leading up to the station platform. Similarly a blue sign with white calligraphy pronounces the name of the establishment. The façade, however, is larger, containing window-pane sized representations of various sushi sets, *sans* the adverts. While the majority of the glass is transparent, calligraphy and opaque striping aids in secluding the serene interior, protecting it from the corybantic exterior, and vice versa. Two entrances with two mechanized sliding glass doors control the flow of customers and workers, like a cellular membrane, as they enter and exit.

Image 4.2 UoyaTei Store Front. Photographed by the author, all rights reserved.



The biggest difference between TOTO Sushi and UoyaTei, however, is the transitional space in the latter mediating, even further, the street and the sushi bar. This space is lined with open coolers replete with sushi-filled bento boxes for take-out (持ち帰り; visible in Image 4.6). Another primary difference is the size of the establishment, with UoyaTei being significantly smaller. Though the selection is of sushi is similar, salmon and tuna being ever-present—along with other favorites such as sweet egg, shrimp, and salmon roe—pricing is marginally cheaper. The interior design synthesizes similar modern/industrialist and “traditional” (natural) aesthetic forms. Apart from these differences, including the diminished role in tea preparation, the entire experience feels nearly identical to what one would expect from TOTO Sushi. A detailed presentation of the establishment would reveal only idiosyncratic distinctions, but we need not confine ourselves to such a task.

#### **4.3 The Raw Aesthetic: Conceptions of Fish Flesh and the Factory**

The act of eating appears, at first glance, to be extremely personal, synthesizing an individual desire with a biophysical need in the satisfaction of both by the consumption of a material object. The physical structures that facilitate the act of eating: the material spaces, utensils, condiments, and body, all seem to lose their social character when the decidedly egoistic perspective of the consumer is assumed. However, even within this perspective the socialization of the eating process becomes apparent. Historical pathways influence the appropriateness of spaces of consumption, the implements to be used, the accoutrements to be added, even the modulation of the body via the embodied grammar of gastropraxis. Similarly the physical form necessitates a representational content by an

objective cathexis—a conception (discourse)—that imbues physicality with meaning from without. A table, a rather contemporary introduction into Japanese gastropraxis (Cwierka 2006: 94-95), only becomes an object in gastropractical systems when organizing discourses delineate decorous dimensions of usability and purpose. Likewise the representational form calls upon a material content, they are mutually constitutive entities. In this way, the conceived spaces of sushi shops become important in organizing perception, in shaping what is seen and what is not. Our examination of the representational forms and contents of the sushi shop emerges from the “matter-of-factness” of the perceived and from the aesthetic dimensions of the shops themselves.

Perhaps the most unquestioned and yet inescapable condition for food consumption is the “aesthetic.” The food’s appearance, its presentation, the decorations served with it, the utensils that assist us in our consumptive activity all work on an aesthetic level to indicate what *is* food and what *are* the tools and methods by which, as well as the spaces in which, consumption occurs. The aesthetic, then, is a materialized spatial discourse, a representation of space, one that mobilizes and directs the flow of practice by situating subject and object.

#### 4.3.1 The Aesthetic of Nature: National and Global (Universal)

Japanese identity is intimately intertwined with the biological processes of the environment, roughly analogous to “nature.” Interestingly enough, many Japanese names invoke this nature by utilizing Chinese characters related to seasonality (春, 夏, 秋, 冬), mountains (山), rivers (川), plains (野), and trees (木). Photographing flowers, idealizing Mt. Fuji, and gathering together in public parks to watch cherry blossoms bloom (花見)

are all favorite pastimes. Japanese everyday life is, in other words, thoroughly bound to the discourse of nature and its aesthetic representation. The interior design and everyday objects of the two *kaitenzushi-ya* draw heavily on a naturalized aesthetic, visible on multiple levels. In the first instance we can isolate the food products themselves. The vibrant colors of raw fish, the fresh smells, the lukewarm temperature of the meat all serve to bridge the gap between the urbanized individual and an idealized nature, a crude, imperfect, ever-changing naturalness that manifests on two levels for the Japanese. First, “nature” exists as an abstract totality, a flux of universalistic forces beyond the scope of any particular individual’s perception—a global, universal “nature” influenced by Zen Buddhism. The second level of “nature” envisioned is the idealized, traditional nature and mythology of Japan and the Japanese people themselves—a nationalist “nature” largely emanating from the cosmology of the Shinto religion<sup>17</sup>. In the sushi restaurant, as well as in popular Japanese gastropraxis, both levels are typically subsumed into both the architectural and interior design of establishments, in the materials used, as well as in the ideology of food quality and flavor assumed by most citizens (Ashkenazi and Jacob 2000; Bestor 2004, 2001; Issenberg 2007; Keene 1969; Marra 1995; Ohnuki-Tierney 1993; Saito 2007, 1997, 1985; Takeda 2008; Wicks 2005). I will move forward with an examination of sushi itself, as well as the shop, its aesthetic dimensions and paraphernalia, in order to better establish the presence of the nature aesthetic.

Sushi serves as a prime example for demonstrating the minimalistic approach to much of Japanese cuisine and its relationship with nature. Not only are we confronted with steamed rice, unadulterated by additives (in most cases), but we are also presented a

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<sup>17</sup> This simplification into two nature aesthetics does not foreclose the possibility of others. It is merely a heuristic device to proceed with analysis.

slice of raw fish<sup>18</sup>. While the contrast of colors between the rice and fish can be drastic, dramatic even, the desired effect of the presentation is to eliminate unnecessary contamination by the human hand (Ashkenazi and Jacob 2000: 142). Yuriko Saito (1985: 239) emphasizes that “Japanese cooking is noted for preserving as much as possible the natural qualities... of the material.” Raw fish, its flavor, texture, color, and aroma tops a sticky bundle of hand-pressed rice, a nationalistic symbol of Japanese selfhood (Ohnuki-Tierney 1993). Taking the sushi as given, the first act of consumption, if thinking about the process linearly, is to consume with the eyes.

Image 4.3 Wooden Chopsticks and (Farmed) Salmon Sushi. Photographed by the author, all rights reserved.



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<sup>18</sup> Though not all sushi is made of raw fish.

Staring at a piece of sushi, like that pictured above, helps connect consumers deeply with a national cultural identity, a mythological “Japanese-ness.” The origins of this particular piece of salmon are unknown to the consumer, but the origins of the culture that produced the finished product are inseparable from popular Japanese identity. These colors (pink and white, easily associable with the colors of the cherry blossom) align the spirit of the individual with that of ever-changing nature and cosmos, genuinely situated at the heart of Japanese mythology. The colors of a piece of tuna sushi are even more striking; the deep red and pearly white ape the colors of the Japanese flag, a metonymical depiction of the sun rising, illuminating the Japanese archipelago with all of its splendor. Allison (1991), Ekuan (1998) and Noguchi (1994) elaborate the diffusions of this Japanese ideology of “nature,” how it is transmitted through the presentation and spatialization of food items: in the composition of the *obentō*. The artful mimesis of nature in the ocular arena of gastropraxis remains partial; to fully appreciate nature, incorporation by means of internalization must occur, uniting sight, taste, flavor, texture, and smell.

Taste and flavor, as well as the energies imparted by the object of consumption, are the most salient features of eating at the level of the individual. Taste can be defined as the socially learned appreciation of flavor, which is objectively determined by properties of the object of consumption. In Japanese gastropraxis, especially sushi, flavor strives to retain its naturalness while taste is channeled in order to detect and value the unmodified subtleties of natural flavor. Textures of raw fish also connect the palate of the consumer with the vastness of the ocean, with the interactive ecosystems of the seas, the trophic topology of food chains. This texture speaks as loudly as the colors of fish and

rice and their flavors as one connects intimately, by feeling, with an expansive oceanic continuum far beyond the fleeting moment of consumption. Olfaction (smell) is just as important and performs similar functions as taste and texture in situating both the consumer and the object of consumption within the matrix of the natural. Apperception of sushi as a food in Japanese gastropraxis centers on a cultivation of implements of sensorial consumption that produce and reproduce perceptions and conceptions of sushi as natural. But in the constellation of meaning, the sushi itself is only one component.

The individual piece of sushi, embedded in a space and a cultural system, becomes more than it appears when one consciously “reads” this spatial syntax, this nature discourse materialized in the space and objects of the sushi shop. Nature works its magic on the consumer in both the form and content of the space and the object of consumption, as a symbol of Japanese identity, cosmology and the material “reality” of existence. For example, the ubiquity of wood as both a building material and an aesthetic form extends the naturalized aesthetic from Buddhist and Shinto temples and the fleeting reality of Zen philosophy into the sushi shop. Wooden framing, wooden chopsticks, even wooden chairs and counters all enunciate a history and a sociality, both overtly and minutely yoked to the contemporary situation in which a consumer inside a rotary sushi shop is located. The evanescence of wood, its ephemeral thingness as both form and content, serves as a prime example of Zen Buddhist philosophical concepts invading and establishing hegemony in the material construction of everyday life in contemporary Japan. The displays of wood inside the sushi shop are doxic—an uncritical aesthetic code that evades conscious recognition—they speak a language that requires an attuned listener to transcend the present in favor of a conscious presence if intelligibility beyond

the habitually practical is to be expected. Wood, then, as both a form and content of an aesthetic code, a material object, presents itself to consumers in sushi shops as something more than an innocent object of pure utility. It symbolizes Japanese-ness on one level by its association with national “religio-aesthetics” (Pilgrim 1977) as well as the global in its philosophical embodiment of the totalizing Zen concepts of ever-fluctuating reality and imperfection at the heart of “universal nature.”

If wood and fish filets are both manipulated components of natural totalities, fashioned by the eye, hand, nose, and mouth (and ear to some extent) to enshrine and promulgate natural characteristics, they have been aided by other implements—namely the ideological symbolisms that overlay their materialities. But the frontal assault on the senses by an idealized nature, its pervasive dominance in both the national ideology of Japanese people as well as its perceived transcendental status in reality becomes its own critique, striking consumers as contradictory given the industrial organization of everyday life in contemporary Japan. If this natural aesthetic saturates the interior of both sushi shops observed, it does so cooperatively with the aid of an industrial, modern aesthetic, one that highlights the Promethean struggle to dominate nature and subordinate it to instrumental rationality and Enlightenment reason (Horkheimer and Adorno 2002; Smith 1990).



Image 4.4 Interior of TOTO Sushi Sporting Traditional Artwork and Wooden Menu. Photographed by the author, all rights reserved.



Image 4.5. A Shinto Shrine. Photographed by the author, all rights reserved.



#### 4.3.2 A Factor of the Factory: Mechanical Sushi in the Age of Aesthetic Reproduction

Though I did not observe any sushi making robots, the type Bestor (2001) and De Silva and Yamao (2006) detail, the interior, and exterior—extending into the department store and the street—mirror the increased industrialization and modernization of Japanese gastropraxis and urban life. The elevators and escalators that take you to the eighth floor of Restaurant City, the hand-activated sliding glass doors of UoyaTei, the overhead lighting, beer taps, electrical music systems, air conditioners, and, most importantly, the mechanized conveyor belts all transmit codes of modernization and industrialization, an industrial aesthetic<sup>19</sup>.

Image 4.6 The Synthesis of the Natural and the Industrial. Photographed by the author, all rights reserved.



<sup>19</sup> Whether or not this is a postmodern aesthetic, as many commentators have suggested (e.g. Clammer 1997; Huang 2004) is beside the point.

This modern, industrial aesthetic code—mechanical systems of signs and signals—signify economizing activity and the teleological rationalization of practice, while combating and conflicting with the natural aesthetic by extending its stranglehold on the spatialization of the restaurant. Technological, instrumental rationality trumps the spontaneity of the natural, dominating and directing its implementation. Mass-produced plates, garish in their design, chug along like railcars on the track of the conveyor belt, stretching across the restaurant, expanding the colonization and domination of nature by mimicking the historical aggrandizement of the railway system. On the surface of the plate, two neatly packed parcels of rice and fish—extracted resources from other environments themselves—traverse this land in search of new marketplaces. The eye becomes a passenger, brandied about the establishment, situating its beholder by the direction of the manifold visual cues seemingly enunciated with precision.

Whereas the symbolism of the nature aesthetic, nationalistic or global, rests on the laurels of spontaneous embodiment and affect, the industrial aesthetic promulgates disillusionment in the calculating control of the signal and the sign. The mystification and idealism of the nature aesthetic is metastasized into semantic tools in the organization of space, in promoting a particular logic, a visible communication of syntactic elements organized to endorse a specific consciousness, a perspective operationalized in the service of “seeing” and “perceiving” certain phenomena. The hot water spigot, the tool that reduces the necessary labor required to produce a cup of tea, combines with the earthen tea mug; they interact dialectically. This interaction, conceived of by planners, channels practice in this space, conditions the responses to certain stimuli, it becomes a coherent logic. Water comes out at a calculated temperature, the tea bag portions a

specific amount of tea per customer, the mug—though camouflaged in the nature aesthetic—is mass-produced and seemingly identical to any other in the shop. These elements reduce the natural to mere images, rationalized cogs in the wheel of technological progress by prescribing creativity. In this cipher the polydirectional trajectories of bodies in lived space, their desires and pleasures, are reduced to a felicitous calculus edified onto a functional, technical rationality. The most “revolutionary” of the pronouncements being made in the shop, however, belong to the measured and measuring musings of the conveyor belt.

The metronomic pace of the conveyor belt replicates the precision and meticulousness of the vast train systems that service the country, world renown for their punctuality. The conveyor belt, the cyclic linearity of its movements, synthesizes both the natural and the industrial, the concrete and the abstract, *in situ*. Lefebvre (2008b, 2008c, 2004) locates the rhythmic levels of such integration in everyday life, as one satisfies both the biological, cyclical necessities of hunger and the abstract, linear culmination of “progress” and capital accumulation. Nature, fully enumerated and categorized, is pressured into the confines of the industrial, speaking a language of predictive exactitude. The pact between person, society, and the environment is consummated at the point of consumption, when all are incarnated, incorporated in the consumptive act. Whirling around like a propeller, the circulating blades blurred, abstracted into oblivion, the conveyor belt machinates workers, consumers, the store, its surroundings, transportation systems that supply it with product and consumer, and the energy needed to maintain its chronoscopic regularity. The apparent homogeneity of the industrial aesthetic, an amalgam of reductive component parts fragmented in order to organize and predict,

dizzily operates on levels microscopic and macroscopic, largely imperceptible at the level of everyday life. In order to ground itself it draws on the calming tranquility of the natural aesthetic, its mythological base.

The presence of such an extensive degree of industrial rationalization in the sacred heart of Japanese identity is a testament to the superficial validity of the McDonaldization thesis (Ritzer 2008). But this industrial aesthetic, devoid of most overtures to nature and the environment, only exists by industrializing nature, rationalizing it in the pursuit of progress—one that destroys the natural world so inculcated in the Japanese sense of identity and beauty. The industrial aesthetic mediates the consumer with an increasingly urbanized, industrial society, locally, nationally and globally. As it does so it constricts the natural by appropriating nature as a modality of industrialization. Within the sushi shop, we see the mobilization of an inherently contradictory aesthetic and ideology of nature/industry, understood dualistically<sup>20</sup>. Beyond the “naturalness” of the commodity system, which is justified by the supposed permanence of the government, buildings as capital (the concrete, steel and mortar), awaits an impermanent, fluctuating nature grafted onto the wooden adornments of the interior, in the perishability of the fish and rice. If these aesthetic sensibilities serve to “locate” an actor within a particular context, mustering contradictory logics in accomplishing this, what sort of challenge can be made from everyday gastropraxis? This requires an examination of the motivations for operationalizing such aesthetic codes.

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<sup>20</sup> It has been my contention that nature functions on at least two aesthetic levels in Japanese philosophy. This is contrasted with a modern, scientific conception of nature as conquerable prevalent in the industrial aesthetic.

#### **4.4 Sushi, Political Economy, Environment**

Conceptions of space are never innocent or inconsequential; powerful forces are always behind them. Dickinson (2002) analyzes Starbucks' citation of nature in orchestrating an aesthetic code, in order to situate consumers into established or establishing matrices of capital accumulation and ritualized, repetitive practices. The use of nature as an aesthetic code diminishes the visibility of Starbucks' domination over both the coffee trade and the environments they violently pillage in maintaining their grind. On the individual level, Starbucks hijacks habit and imparts an "everyday knowledge" (Gardiner 2006) into actors as it shapes the discursive horizons that frame their perceptions and conceptions of that space. Likewise, the discussion of the spaces of sushi consumption follows similar lines. If, however, we are to evince the potentiality of everyday life, as a creative force, then we must direct our analysis to the dialectic of the visible/in-visible, one that sees political domination and manipulation embedded in the code as well as its immanent critique. The undermining of nature by industry preliminarily showcases the validity of this position. Power ensconced in the processes of capital accumulation, its industrial structure and its commoditized veneer, can be revealed at the interstices and contradictions of these two aesthetic frames and their political economic promoter.

Discussed previously, Japan imports large quantities of food from other countries. Fisheries off the coast of Japan have continually decreased in total production, necessitating extraordinary amounts of seafood importation to satisfy the insatiable demand for delicacies deemed commonplace (Bestor 2004, 2001; Burke and Phyne 2008; McMichael 2000; Phyne and Mansilla 2003; Pritchard and Curtis 2004; Wilkinson 2006). Elaborate cooperative agreements between salmon farmers in Chile, tuna ranchers in the

Mediterranean, and Japanese corporations and government agencies materialize on dinner plates, in the sushi restaurants observed on the phenomenological level. The incessant flows of imports curtail rising consumer prices, to some degree, even if they fluctuate heavily on the Tsukiji auction floor (Bestor 2004). A slice of farmed salmon on top of vinegared rice is the concrete proof, the phenomenological confirmation that Gereffi and Korzeniewicz's (1994) global commodity chains exist, they are no longer abstract. It is beyond the scope of this thesis to detail the intricate functioning of such commodity chains, but what is certain is that all along the chain nestled and intersecting spaces of gastropraxis enforce and invoke their own spatial rhetorics. Instead, the focus here is on the space of consumption and the concomitant political finagling of spatial codes and rhetoric, implying the existence of these other spaces.

Political and economic actors mobilize aesthetic codes in order to reduce the visibility of this globalized enterprise, perhaps unknowingly. A node in the constellation of the commodity chain, the *kaitenzushi-ya* harnesses the powerful force of the nature aesthetic in order to locate a customer, in all possible senses, in the vicinity of the present. Mimicking the décor of the neighborhood sushi restaurant, festooned with traditional Japanese aesthetics of nature, the *kaitenzushi-ya* precariously balances its apparent reverence for the past (tradition/nature) with its urgent recognition of the present and the future, ensuring capital accumulation. Capital's spatial rhetoric, seen from these perspectives (national/global), is organized around the images of the past supplanted by the mechanization of the present; an endearing, nostalgic parody of antiquity abstracted from its historical context and re-imaged as a commoditized appearance distancing knowing subjects from contemporary conditions of knowledge.



Commodity fetishism (Marx 1976) is just as relevant now as it was over one hundred years ago, but it should not be restricted to only the distances between workers, consumers, and things, the concealed relations between them. While the commodity form masks the social origin of the product, the nature aesthetic masks the industrial processes that result in the product's creation. The "naturalness" of the product is emphasized to obfuscate the existence of an enormously complex, globally extensive commodity chain driven by profit and expanded production, resulting in environmental destruction. The traceability of relationships between workers, farmers, fishers, and consumers is also obliterated, obstructing their recognition at the point of consumption. A Chilean fish farmer, perhaps poor and exploited, survives as dead labor in the flesh of the salmon whirling around sushi bar, the concrete proof is in-visible before us. The nature aesthetic, however, conceals this reality in the same way that exchange value shackles consumer perceptions of the concrete labor processes that factor into the objects they consume. As it situates the consumer, the nature aesthetic becomes a technology emphasizing harmonious interaction with nature, national authenticity and tradition by orienting consumer dispositions.

Much like the salmon farmer or tuna wrangler, the methods of production (farming or trawling) evade perception despite being recognizable, if a customer makes the connection. Not part of the visual code, the in-visible manifests in the quality of the fish, its flavor, its visual characteristics. Farmed fish are generally fed fishmeal, a concoction crafted from other fish parts, in addition to soy, surplus grains, and other protein-rich organisms, which changes the flavor of the meat of these specimens, sometimes for the worse. Recognition of such subtleties requires a form of embodied



knowledge (taste) in discerning the differences between wild-caught and farmed fish. The increasing scarcity of wild-caught organisms due to overfishing, however, results in fishers hauling in and selling less desirable catches in both size and quality. People who have cultivated a taste for exquisite sushi, an appreciation of smells, flavors and textures, will undoubtedly be influential in challenging the degradation of flavor that accompanies this augmentation of industrialized sushi production. In order to be effective, these challenges need to confront political and economic organizations responsible for the perpetual undermining of the environment and affective cultural forms.

Factory fishing, as well as most forms of industrialization, destroy adaptive ecosystems. The waters around Japan have been dangerously overfished, a decisive reason that seafood importation is skyrocketing. Industrialization has wreaked havoc on the coastal waters surrounding the country as well, as factory and farm run-off have crippled fisheries and coastal ecosystems. In the restaurant this plays out by means of the nature/industry dialectic as nature is subjugated to the caprice of industrialization, instrumental in broadcasting “traditional” imagery so as to furtively enable increased capital accumulation. The nature aesthetic works as a sign and a symbol, as conceived space and lived space, as both an embodiment of a local, national and universal nature as a symbolic referent, a cosmological order in which one is harmoniously sutured, as well as an empty signifier masking the industrialized aesthetic whose phantom-like specter haunts nature, brutalizes it to the point of no return. As a symbolic referent, nature is reduced to an image, an abstraction channeling the perception of actors in sushi shops, rendering visible certain elements of the sushi shop as an ensemble while reducing the visibility—making in-visible certain perceivable components—of the global, industrial

facets of the assemblage. The brutalization of the natural world, in no means separable from the social, by industrial political food provision appears in the residua, the invisible, of the sushi shop, graspable by everyday bodies traversing those spaces once barriers are practically reduced or challenged.

#### **4.5 The Corporealization of Nature, Industrialization of the *Karada*<sup>21</sup>**

As expansive and abstract as the entirety of capitalism may be, the global, national and local circuits of commodity chains, their materializations across the vastness of space in general, can all be concretely explored by locating the manipulating body (bodies) accomplishing the movement of things in space. The industrial, as an extension of the body, facilitates the productive act while simultaneously channeling the body outside of itself, by means of its representational extension (the industrial aesthetic). To reduce the deleterious effects of this disembodiment, the natural aesthetic pulls at the strings of symbolic affect, reintegrating the feeling body with the specter drawn out by the reach of the industrial, which simultaneously and ironically enough burrows into the most profound depths of the self. The metabolic interaction between the body and nature, the appropriation and use of nature in the construction of self and society, the dialectical unity between these three (self-society-nature) explodes within the fragmented homogeneity of scientific rationalism—the nature aesthetic mends this rent fabric by systematic fiat.

A disembodied subject, precariously quilted together by images of nature as it gets torn asunder by the conceptual gaze of the cyberanthrope, is scarcely a conscious political agent of change. The sushi, interior design, wood, and calligraphy all ameliorate

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<sup>21</sup> *Karada* is the Japanese word for body.

the feelings of detachedness experienced by people in the midst of the inhumane objectivity of the industrial. But real needs and desires, not just false consciousness, drive consumers toward sushi restaurants as they manifest genuine drives to experience pleasure, to taste fresh fish, to recuperate spent energy exhausted in their everyday pursuits to reproduce themselves. Far from a “dope,” the actor that passes through the *kaitenzushi-ya* brings with it its own idiosyncratic history, its own likes and dislikes, regardless of the homologous cultural forms, structures and content present in specific contexts.

These foundations of sociality are simultaneously objective and subjective, even as the “objective” gaze, the conceptual, invasively colonizes and dominates the lived, reducing it to a mere caricature of experience. The processes of embodiment and cathexis still persist, they are just minimized, overlooked by “traditional” theory and science. Other micro-social theorists (e.g. Schutz, Garfinkel, Goffman) merely replicate the positivistic interpretation (i.e., the logical coherence observable on the level of forms) of society at a smaller scale (Gardiner 2006, 2000). The preceding analysis demonstrates the conflictive unity of perception and conception, the miasmatic smoke-and-mirror show orchestrated by actors on multiple scales and levels in calmly confusing and frantically reassuring both themselves and others that they are individuals that they have the power and freedom to choose this or that. Neo-liberal fictions aside, the splenetic spectacularization promulgated in the corridors of capitalist accumulation have very real consequences beyond the satisfaction of needs and desires, which it both promotes and produces, destroys and eliminates.

#### 4.5.1 Embodiment, Activity and Affect

Sitting at the sushi bar, the chef on the other side, you grab a plate as it passes, mouth watering, awaiting the rapture that you hope will overtake you as plunge that piece of fish and rice into the back of your mouth, chew and swallow. Though doubtful as the norm, this scene illustrates the anticipatory sensations a consumer might feel as they prepare for their journey. Consumption, both a need and a desire in this case, strikes the keys of affect as the consumer conducts the body's orchestra through the symphonic activity of embodiment. Conditioned, predictive and premeditated by planners and technocrats, this process of embodiment escapes their totalizing (totalitarian) grasp in the actual movement of people in the sushi shop. The sushi chef, in their projections, sits quietly behind the bar, producing commodities—exchange values realizing surplus value—that consumers will eat, a calculated amount of waste programmed into the daily functioning of the space. Honed over years of training, his skill has been reduced to a chemical process (just add rice and wasabi) whereby diffuse elements merge and react to the additive compounds that feed off of them. The consumer, whittled down to a collection of robotic attributes, resists automation as much as the chef. Spatial strategies attempt to govern both, even as their tactical manipulations coincide and/or detract from the rationalized plan.

The chef produces more than a product; he produces a work of art. This art envelops the senses of both him and those that will experience its fleeting expression. His materials tell another story, they speak of depleted oceans, industrialized agriculture, wage-labor and capital. The anguish of the worker, whose product he uses in his artistic activity, resists recognition in the sushi restaurant where even labels of origin are absent.

But the same logic that reduces a fisherperson to a cog in the wheel, minimizes the chef into nothing more than a conception, a few quantifiable statistics (time training, hours per week, profit produced during a shift, and so on) on which he is judged. He sits quietly behind the bar, the tension bubbling as he is forced to enact strategy via tactic, conform his lived to their conceived.

This situation may prevail; it certainly did for most of the time I was within these contexts. However, this conception, whose interaction has been programmed like a computer game, can break out of the confines imposed on it. In the lived, the sushi chef must interact with people; listen to them, converse with them. On several occasions cordial interactions between drunken customers and the jovial chef transpired. Joking, bantering back and forth, the two appeared to be genuinely content at that moment, when exchange value had receded into the back of their minds. For just that instance the erotic sensuousness of pleasure supplanted the conceived plan of the corporation. But how can sensuousness on this level translate into durable social change? The answer remains an enigma, but similarities abounding between challenging economic functionalism and environmental destruction could be illustrative.

The customer (he or she) is similarly planned and programmed. Demand levels are predicted, certain quantities of fish are ordered, circling about the conveyor belt, hours of operation are determined based on lunch and dinner schedules, and so forth. Exploited by their own job, customers continue with their “labor” in the sushi shop, this time as consumer. Feeding off of the labor of another, a Spaniard who is just narrowly keeping his head above water during a global recession, the customer perpetuates his/her own self-abnegation by renewing the cycle of wage-labor and capital at the point of

consumption. His/her obliviousness to the conscious recognition of the other in the visible—the exploited worker—reappears in his/her own inattentive exploitation as a worker, however cushy it may be.

Partially true, this interpretation of the event overlooks the affective linkages forged by the fulfillment of desire. Pleasure, however elusive, resonates in the being of the customer as it satisfies more than just biophysical needs. As the quality of the meat degrades and the connection with the sushi chef diminishes, the alienation of the gastropactical act increases. Given this condition, the customer can either become concerned with losing what has been, even if that image is purely fictional, make progressive choices that positively alter the trajectory of sushi consumption, or continue to accept the status quo. Nostalgia and pillaging go hand in hand, as the analysis of the representations of space indicates. Structural changes, at the level of the national government or the global economy, run the risk of circumventing affect, of viewing the living body chemically. The customer, acting tactically, confronts the strategy in gastropraxis with each piece of sushi s/he consumes. Embodiment and affect are the forces that synthesize his/her activity with the strategy, conflicting or coordinating with it.

## CHAPTER V

### THE *CHŌSEN*<sup>22</sup> ONE: SPACES OF COLONIZATION, APPROPRIATION AND DOMINATION IN JAPANESE GASTROPRACTICE

*“The way you cut your meat reflects the way you live”*  
Confucius

#### 5.1 The Historical Roots of Colonization: Categories of Analysis

The expansion and incorporation of Korean barbecue, henceforth *yakiniku-ya*, into everyday Japanese culture is a relatively recent development, considering the historical relationship between Japan and Korea. Popularity of meat consumption, as mentioned, itself is also a somewhat neoteric phenomenon, skyrocketing, along with the célèbre *yakiniku*, after post-World War II food shortages and subsequent economic prosperity (Cwierka 2006). Historically, Korea’s impact on Japan has been monumental, even if modern Japanese culture refuses to acknowledge its indebtedness to Korean (and Chinese) influences. But what led to the enmity between the peninsula and the archipelago? The centrality of the Meiji Restoration, its modernizing governmental structures and ideology, most certainly played a crucial role. The reverberations of the Meiji Restoration, the re-emplacment of the emperor by a revolt of low-ranking samurai

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<sup>22</sup> *Chōsen* is a semi-pejorative term employed by the Japanese against Koreans before, during and after colonization. Today, South Korea (*Kankoku*) and Japan are relatively friendly with each other. North Korea, however, is continually referenced as *Kita-Chōsen*, a belligerent and confrontational epithet used by the Japanese toward an equally aggressive North Korea, a product of years of acrimony and provocation.

(briefly discussed in Chapter II), led to Occidentalization and modernization—the adoption and adaptation of Japanese culture to German statecraft and British and French industrialism—of Japanese political economy.

However, narrowly focusing on the West's influence in the formation of modern Japan overtly denies the salience of its historical mirrors: Korea and China. My view, which will become a leading theme in this chapter, is that Japan should be perceived as a historical mediator between so-called Western modernization, indigenous cultural assimilation and exclusion, as well as historical politico-philosophical currents and cultural forms originating in China and Korea, of which it was historically considered inferior and backward. Moreover, this chapter takes the colonization of Korea, by Japan, to be paramount in connecting variegated points in a nebulous constellation of forces necessary for coming to grips with contemporary Japanese gastropactical forms. Meat eating, exchange value, and the bodies that consume the former by means of the latter, are all implicated in this analysis.

#### 5.1.1 Historicity of the Event<sup>23</sup>

Japan's antagonistic engagement with Korea began in 1876, with the forced aperture of ports of entry, a mimetic moment choreographed on the model of Commodore Perry's maneuvers in the 1850's. Invasion during and following the Sino-Japanese War in 1895 sealed Korea's fate (as well as consigning Taiwan to a colonial status), but it wasn't until 1910, during the Russo-Japanese war that it would be officially annexed (Cwierka 2006; Schmid 2000). While the primary cause for colonization may have been resource

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<sup>23</sup> The following sections are not to be seen as supplements to more robust treatments of Japanese/Korean/Western historical relationships, just illustrative for the purpose at hand.



extraction and extending geopolitical hegemony, the ancillary effects of this gesture led to increasingly frequent cultural exchanges. Korean immigration to Japan drastically increased in the years following annexation, with over a million Koreans in Japan by 1939, and a little over 600,000 remaining after the war (Cwiertka 2006: 149). It was in the desperation following WWII that Korean culinary conventions ascended into popular Japanese gastropraxis.

Korean restaurants, originally called *Chōsen-ryori-ya*, were redubbed *yakiniku-ya* as North Korea became increasingly associated with the moniker *Chōsen* (Cwiertka 2006: 150). Though Cwiertka (2006) does much to recognize the role Koreans had in promoting meat consumption in Japan, most notably through the popularization of *yakiniku-ya*, the traces of Korean-ness in these restaurants have receded to the most miniscule of proportions. This mirrors a general trend in Japanese society where minority groups have been subjugated to the systematic erasure of visibility, particularly of Koreans during and after colonization (Kim 2008). After the signing of the San Francisco Treaty at the closure of WWII, “all Koreans in Japan lost Japanese nationality... [they] became completely stateless... [and] had to register themselves as temporary sojourners” (Ryang 2003: 32). Koreans, swept under the rug of Japanese society, ever more in-visible and marginalized, began losing their grip on culinary contributions to Japanese gastropraxis.

The appropriation of Korean cuisine was a direct result of colonization and domination, in which the dominators sought to eliminate the residue of the colonized both physically and culturally, considering them bulwarks of backwardness. Economic domination, the hegemony of exchange value, subjugates the appropriation for use to the

logic of capital accumulation—a condition imposed and enforced by the US occupation of Japan and its concomitant anti-Soviet policies following the return to normalcy. Some authors (e.g. Cumings 1984) highlight tendencies in South Korea to follow the industrial paths engineered by Japan, first taking over industries, such as agriculture, that were outgrown by the Japanese economy, then by taking over the secondary sectors (material processing), and finally extending the service sectors. Korea relentlessly reacts to the Japanese economy, while both South Korea and Japan share a common ally against a common foe, tempering their historical feud. Contemporary amicability between South Korea and Japan, cultural transfusions and economic coexistence, was perhaps best exemplified by the countries' co-hosting of the 2002 World Cup. While conditions have improved for Koreans in Japan, their culture has largely been redirected through the guises of Japanese cultural forms, appropriated and then dominated by the hegemony of the homogeneous.

#### 5.1.2 Colonization, Appropriation, and Domination

For the purposes of this analysis, the visible/in-visible dialectic of representations of space of gastropraxis will spotlight two movements of spatial discourse (colonization and domination) while looking at their lived counterpart in appropriation. For this analysis colonization, both the historical moments of national colonization perpetrated by Japan and the postcolonial colonization of everyday life, are salient. Colonization entails a multiplicity of fragmented rhetoric and discourses that seek a domination that slyly eludes it. In colonized spaces the diversity of meanings and the hierarchy of power clash. Diffusion moves in both (when considering colonizer and colonized) directions, as

cultural forms and content permeate each other, though clearly this is only a byproduct of the subjugation of one thing by another, not an apologia for the terror and violence of colonization.

Domination is the perceived total subjugation of all things to a supposed unitary logic or power. The case of capitalism furnishes us with the clearest, and most relevant, definition of domination, as a system. Even as it harbors fragmentation in its homogeneity, capitalism reduces the face of the world to nothing more than a quantifiable sum of money. Likewise, the systematic thoughts of science, technocratic control, prediction and calculation are all prevalent forms of domination in the contemporary Japanese society. However, to consider domination as a totality is problematic, for that would be the *fait accompli extraordinaire*, which has not stopped others from making such claims. That position, akin to servile defeatism, forgets the limits of domination, or blindly overlooks such limitation. Domination works at the level of the strategy, implying the slippage of enacted tactics where its efficaciousness as totalization dwindles at the level of the body. In other words, domination is a representation of space, the subordination of space to a single logic which organizes it.

Appropriation, to round out our analytical frame, is the creative application of the human being, via physical or mental labor, to a thing in the pursuit of needs, desires, and satisfaction. People appropriate nature, other people, even themselves, in the process of objectification (the transformation of things in the world into objects of human interaction). This process is a necessary component of social life. Colonization and domination, however, are exacerbated expressions of appropriation that imply higher levels of coercion and abstraction. Appropriation, in contrast to the other two, always

centers on the body—individual, social, global—and its mediation with the social totality via the articulation of the creative act, recognized or not<sup>24</sup>. It is through appropriation that embodiment, cathexis, and affect become paramount, where they are created.

## **5.2 Perspectives of Penetration: Spaces of Experience**

Strolling through the central area of downtown Yokosuka, the parade of cars, the incessant din of activity as it radiates from the centrality of the rail station, it is easy to wander off with the rest of the crowds down Blue Street and into the blocks of department stores that coalesce around the station. Beyond these jubilant corridors of capital and accumulation, beyond the piercing melodies of arcades and game centers, the fanfare of TGI Fridays, the veneer of fashion icons dancing in the windows of department stores, a small street splits off from this joyous reverie of postmodern consumption, which I take, and which leads me southward. As I cross the main street, passing shops selling knick-knacks, tea supplies, fish, and other engrossing objects—each with their own stories to tell—I emerge from the ethereal myopia of the central district and creep along streets forgotten and overlooked by the novelizing grip of capital.

These shops, stores, bars and eateries anchor, at street level, antediluvian structures dilapidated by the chafing winds of typhoons, the fatiguing brilliance of sunrays, the erosive miasma of salt spray from nearby Tokyo Bay, along with the agitating jolts of earthquakes, wreaking havoc on their exteriors and internal structures. Ageing overhangs cover the walkway, offering a brief respite from the hostility of the June sun that grills pedestrians like sliced meat on a skillet. Passing the 7-11, interesting in its own right (Why is Portuguese an optional language on the ATM? Why are there so

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<sup>24</sup> It could be said that appropriation is akin to use value, utility.

many different styles of instant ramen?), and after a few more minutes of walking, I am confronted by the inviting gates of Hayama Torigin.

Upon entering from the north, I pass through a “traditional” entryway, its large wooden overhang looming, carrying a slab of treated wood with the name of the establishment engraved on its face. Grey tiles cover the top of the fixture, evoking the religious architecture so prevalent in temples and shrines across Japan, including shrines of nostalgia that attempt to recreate the atmosphere of the “past,” or at least its image. Flanking the entryway are two flags (banners) demarcating the purpose and the propriety of the place. Rough blue calligraphy splashes across the pure white fabric as it flaps in the wind, announcing the name of the establishment. Two small lanterns round out the experience, indicating that the entrance to the tea room is ahead.

Image 5.1 Entry Gate to Hayama Torigin. Photographed by the author, all rights reserved.



After passing through the gate, I am greeted by a bamboo fence, tied together with heirloom rope, on the left of a stone-slab pathway across a graveled trail, flanked by a row of foliage on either side. Small (electric) lanterns trapped in stone pillars speckle the path every few meters. To the left of the pathway a few cars are parked in the eight available spaces. Having a parking lot in close proximity to downtown and the railway station, is a rarity. The leafy greenery of the space strikingly contrasts with the concrete canyon in which it is enveloped. From some angles the restaurant looks to be isolated from the urban fabric, a rustic eatery in a secluded corner of the country. The luxuriant vegetation that accompanies the entrance is beautifully reflected in the two small *koi* ponds abutting the foyer. Orange and white *koi*, as well as a few small turtles literally enliven and animate the pacified stillness of the flora which hugs the walls of the establishment's exterior and the shadows projected by the tenacious trek of the sun throughout the day as it strikes the building from different angles.

After maneuvering past the ponds, two large, mythic-looking stone frogs greet customers as they near the main entryway to the building, accompanied, on the left, by a small bench and ashtray. An awning juts out from the main building, replete with the requisite large wooden slab, slightly angled, offset from the wall, proclaiming, again, the name of the establishment. Two larger lanterns, each with their own mini roof, straddle the wood-framed awning. Like two repetitious lines of a poem, the anaphorization of the entryways, the one from the street onto the compound and the one from within the compound into the building, bear striking resemblances to each other, both in form and content. An older, more deformed piece of wood braces the two finer looking pieces that act as vertical supports, adding a horizontal element that helps channel weight (both real

and symbolic) into the vertical pillars. A pastiche of adverts for dinner and lunch specials assault the eyes as small poster boards proclaim the specials of the day, prominent house specials for those interested in taking a gander. Behind all of this verdant fluff, the building itself is quite unremarkable in its aesthetic dimensions: a white and black/dark grey two story building which, beside the accessories, is nothing out of the ordinary for the this area.

Image 5.2 Path, Foliage and Main Entryway. Photographed by the author, all rights reserved.



I pass through two sets of electronic sliding glass doors which open up into an atrium with a small reception area. During my traversal of the atrium, after closer

examination, I discern that this is more than just one restaurant, but rather a series of eateries specializing in particular genres of food. There are multiple dining rooms serving several different styles (*donburi*, *yakitori*, *ramen*). A lovely hostess greets and directs me to a small stairwell directly to the right of our position. Announcing my intention to consume *yakiniku*, I am shuttled upstairs where the facilities for enacting that form of gastropraxis are located. On the way up I pass visually stimulating posters, artistic and aesthetic confections, statuettes, and other objects of interest. After ascending the stairwell I am confronted with a choice: a Western style (*yōshitsu*) dining room or Japanese (*washitsu*) style. *Washitsu* rooms require one to remove footwear before entering, to protect and prolong the lifecycle of the *tatami* (straw mats) that function as the room's flooring. As a component of the dining room, the Japanese table also sits lower to the ground than a typical Western table, necessitating that people sit on small pillow-like cushions instead of Western seating structures (stools, chairs, benches, etc.). I chose to go with the Western style.

I enter, footgear intact, the Western room, where I am directed to a table by a young lady adorned in Westernized waitressing apparel: jet black pants, a pure white button-up shirt, and a black apron fastened around her waist and strapped around her neck. Moving through the space, the slick, dark wooden floor beneath our feet reflects our ghostly, muddied images as we glide across its ethereal surface. With the properties of an undersized cathedral nave, the dining room denounces the microscopic particularity characteristic of most space in a country where its supply is jeopardized by lack of arable land, mountainous excess, and hyper-developed urban cores. A row of booths, where four to six patrons could comfortably sit, line both of the lengthier walls enclosing the space.



A third row runs through the center of the dining room, bisecting its navigation with two small, yet comfortable, passageways. In addition, there is a bar-like table, circled by a series of black wooden chairs for individuals or couples, partnered with dividers to eliminate the visual contamination of others sitting across from the consumer.

Descending into my booth, the leathery black seat cushions compliment the stained wood of the table and booth frame. In the center of the table a circular pit outlined by a brassy metal, perhaps 35cm across, sparks to life as the waitress turns a few knobs on the side of the table. A vacuous sucking sound creeps over the relative silence of the dining room as the exhaust system kicks in, drowning out the elevator music that gently leaks from speakers mounted in the ceiling. A freshly cleaned wire gridiron sits atop the pile of hot wooden charcoals which traps the heat generated by gas combustion. I am immediately given a cold glass of water, a set of sheathed wooden chopsticks, stainless steel forceps, and an earthen saucer with two reservoirs. Lined against the wall, on the edge of the table, a condiment station with a few sauces (spicy, sweet), minced garlic, toothpicks, napkins, and a few menus captures my attention. I thumb through the menu and make my decision.

I decide on the *Karubi*<sup>25</sup> lunch set, which comes with 150gs worth of beef short-rib cuts, a refillable bowl of Japanese-style white rice, a small cup of onion and seaweed soup, and a tiny saucer of kimchi. As indicated by the menu, the meat is of American origin, marinated in a special sauce (*tare*). The raw meat is neatly presented on a plate, positioned by type of cut, arrayed circularly. I place two pieces on the gridiron and watch as the flames lap at the grease dripping off, crackling and popping as it violently browns the red and white flesh of the meat. After cooked, I place the pieces into one of the

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<sup>25</sup> In Korean, *kalbi* or *galbi*.

reservoirs now filled with the sweet dipping sauce previously mentioned. I gently lift a piece of the flesh, mid-rare as I like it, to my mouth before the succulent flavor melts away like the veins of fat that once transected the meat. Almost immediately after which, I lift a large clump of sticky white rice to my mouth and simultaneously chew both the meat and rice in unison. All the while I have strewn a few more morsels of meat onto the grill, cooking as I ecstatically masticate what remains in front of me. Running out of rice, I ask for a refill, which arrives not more than two minutes afterwards. This process continues until I am finished.

Image 5.3 Picture of the Karubi Lunch Set. Photographed by the author, all rights reserved.



During the course of my meal, my eyes roam about the establishment, consuming it visually while I nourish my body with the food I devour. The walls are a very light, pale color, framed by soft woods that have been delicately stained. They are adorned with advertisements, banners blaring statements of quality, framed canvases with vertical calligraphy painted along their surface. They lavishly scream through the mouth of a subdued aesthetic that prefers subtlety rather than flamboyancy. About the dining room there are a few windows covered by blinds made of thin, straw-like material and paper. In windows and wall recesses sit vases with scenes of nature (the mist filled serenity of the woodblock print) or simplicity decorating their faces, as well as nebulous calligraphy indecipherable to anyone without a specialized knowledge of Japanese calligraphy (*shodō*). As in the previous analysis, this space is saturated with the imagery of nature, shone through the prism of Japanese culture.

Image 5.4 Wall Recess with Vase and Calligraphy. Photographed by the author, all rights reserved.



However, to focus only on these components would be to miss the complexity of the context. From almost any vantage point modernity and industrialization are visible. A peek into the kitchen reveals stainless steel, the precision of refrigeration devices, beer taps and mechanical rice cookers. A self-serve drink bar packs the powerful punch of Coke into a small unit that spits eight different types of soda and juice from one nozzle. The table, the gas stove burning in the middle of it, the vents that carry off the exhaust, are also instruments and products of industrialization. But my concern here is not so much the nature/industry dialectic of before, even as that creeps into the analysis, but on something more pressing in how we interact with food, nature and each other.

Finally, I finish with my meal, satisfied with what I have just consumed. The bill is already on the table, stealthily left behind when the waitress flew by shortly after leaving me with the stunning spread I so hastily and eagerly gobbled up. I grab the check and head toward the doorway, where the waitress politely bows and thanks me for my service, to which I respond with the typical phrase *gochisōsama*, a difficult word to translate into English but which roughly signifies: “Thank you generously for the meal which I have just partook on behalf of your graciousness and patronage.” I head back down the stairwell and approach the counter, giving the little clipboard with my check attached to the older lady working the door. She politely rings me up and places a small tray out on which I am expected to place yen to pay for the meal. With a radiant smile, even if it is manufactured, she makes change and puts it back on tray and slides it my way, bowing and thanking me. I head back out into the city, the blazing sun immediately juicing me with its oppressive heat.

### **5.3 The Vectors of Incorporation: Colonization, Appropriation, Domination**

The following section is divided into three subsections, which, although expressed in the written word as distinct entities, should be read in chorus. Like three parts of the same musical piece, these subsections analyze the whole from three interlaced and transecting levels in pursuit of the dialectical potential interred in valences of the actual. I elected the order of presentation to move from the permeability of colonization to the authoritarianism of domination, and finally, to come back to the spontaneity of the body. Though the body forms the basis for colonization and domination, it is also from the body that challenges to these processes, consciously or not, emerge.

#### **5.3.1 The Colonized: Korea and Everyday Life**

Chinese and Korean influence on the formation of Japanese identity has been tremendous. The adoption of the Chinese writing system, the spread of Confucian and Buddhist ideals, the dissemination of cultural implements (clothing, chopsticks, and so forth), all point to the salience of early East Asian cultural transpollination. Undoubtedly issues of food and food culture enter into the mix as well. Perception of a unique Japanese self, an ideology which continually permeates modern Japanese political and cultural institutions, rests on a convenient amnesia of Japan's multiethnic cultural history (Dale 1986). But Japan, as it denied its filial relations to Asian countries in an effort to emulate the rising industry of the West, chose "humanitarian" colonization—in the name of Civilization—in order to waken Asia, and the vast backwardness of rural Japan, from their ignorant slumber. The *yakiniku-ya* is, therefore, a relic of this process.

Vanquished from view, the influence of Korean culture is reduced to a few words on the menu, recalibrated from Hangul into Japanese katakana and Roman characters. The sanitization of the Korean from the compound, its vicinity, as well as the interior dimensions of the restaurant can only be attributed to the systematic obliteration of overt references to Korean influence on Japanese gastropraxis. Nearly all of the components of the *yakiniku-ya* experience have been thoroughly cleansed of any connection to their Korean origins. Only a select group of objects even retains any conclusive connection to the Korean cultural context from which it originated, such as kimchi, although debates in recent years have sought to problematize this position as well (Sims 2000). For Koreans in Japan, historically persecuted and marginalized, food appears as the fading and final bastion of “Korean-ness” in a society where homogeneous culture (Japanese-ness) is a virtue (De Vos and Lee 1981; Lie 2008; Rohlen 1981). Superficially it would seem that the adoption of Korean artifacts into Japanese gastropraxis would be a net positive for an ethnic minority (roughly 30% of all minorities in Japan) that has been institutionally shunned and neglected, in helping integrate and assimilate with the more hegemonic norm.

For the diner in the *yakiniku-ya*, there is something infinitely more complex at work. The historical conquest of Korea by Japan at the turn of the century is merely the embryonic moment of conception that set off this chain of events. Colonization, in a double-movement, takes, shapes, structures and forms while simultaneously incorporating and reflecting the cultural modalities of those it colonizes. The colonization of everyday life by the commodity system is another expression of this double-movement (Lefebvre 2008b, 1984). These historical events play out in the performance of the

*yakiniku-ya* as the subjugation of Korea and Koreans to the Japanese transduce from one context to another, filtered through the nationalistic lens of Japanese culture and the globalizing supremacy of the commodity system and exchange value.

Disenfranchised Korea simmers to a boil in the *yakiniku-ya*, where one of the most intimate manifestations of national culture has been reformulated to appeal to the Japanese population and their sensibilities. The trace of the “other” is palpable as soon as the small dish of kimchi is presented, its pungent aroma, vivid color, and striking flavor that screams of an identity long dissociated from the sterility of the nature aesthetic imposed on Japanese gastropraxis. The raw meat, lavishly arranged on matte black plates, replete with hardware and mechanical implements for preparation, finds an analogue in Japanese gastropraxis, in *sukiyaki* and *shabu-shabu*. But these forms are closer to Japanese cooking practices (boiling), whereas *yakiniku* requires a grill. The kimchi, even more so, retains its essence as something foreign, a colonized component forced to fit into a cultural system in which it never quite gets naturalized. Its assimilation into Japanese gastropraxis phenomenologically verifies the hardships and sufferings of the Korean minority in Japan, still struggling for a proper “place.”

Korean dress and architecture, historically and generally, have been more colorful and ornate than the subdued browns, blues and grays of their Japanese counterparts. Buddhism, brought to Japan by Chinese and Korean priests, reflects this flamboyancy in the structure of its temples. Throughout the centuries, however, as Japanese Shinto melded and influenced Buddhism in Japan, the construction of the nature aesthetic began reflecting the more restricted palate of the Japanese spectrum. Nothing of Korean color vibrancy persists in the Japanized interior of the *yakiniku-ya*. The presence of

“traditional” Japanese aesthetic forms, perhaps imported from Korea centuries past, are all that confront a consumer in the interior and exterior of the compound. The re-colonization of the Korean barbecue, during and after the post-war famine, by a Japanese nature aesthetic makes in-visible the historical contingency of the contemporary act, of which, much like environmental devastation from overfishing, a consumer’s ignorance is not presupposed, merely that such recognition is distanced from contemplation at the point of consumption.

The *yakiniku-ya* is also an expression of everyday life being colonized by the commodity system. Dining out has become a primary culture industry, eroding away at the idealized nuclear family established shortly after the Meiji Restoration, the familial orchestration of “civilization and enlightenment” (Smith 1983). Women, whose status during the implementation of *ryōsai-kenbo* was elevated within the household, have been forced into the public arena into the primarily masculine turf of wage-labor. Concomitantly the household meal has been outsourced to the restaurant, whose influence as the “good wife” has increased drastically since the marketization of the meal erupted after World War II. As women infiltrate the formal workplace, they increasingly enter the *yakiniku-ya* on business lunches, as lower-ranking secretaries and errand girls in a masculinized sphere of everyday life in contemporary Japan. When, and if, they return home to their husbands and children, exhausted by the stringent demands of Japanese corporate life, they may elect to take the family out for dinner rather than cook. This is not to say that the ideological imagery of the “good wife, wise mother” is somehow dead, merely that it has embarked on a prolonged voyage through noxious swamps of



contemporary political economy, which relies on the “firmness” of tradition in order to preserve present coherency.

Commoditization of the meal, most clearly expressed in the restaurant where service factors manifest into prices, straddles that tenuous divide between appropriation and domination. The logic of exchange value permeates the entirety of the space; prices accompany every image of food, every proclamation of goods in the restaurant. The country of origin, spelled out in menus, alerts the eater to the global interconnectedness of this activity—in opposition to the situation at the *kaitenzushi-ya*. Workers, the material expression of exploitation, walk around the restaurant serving customers, capitalists, and finally, when they receive their checks, themselves. Though the exclamation of price is the most visible of these circumstances, the in-visibility of the others is revealed when one analyzes the context as mediated by different levels of social reality. But colonization is not domination, there is a give and a take between the tactics employed by people in everyday life and the strategies of domination that structure those tactics.

### 5.3.2 Old Dominion: Capital and Beef

The domination of people, society, nature, and the other both visibly and in-visibly transpires in the perceptible elements expressed in *yakiniku-ya*. Domination, a function of alienation and power, sutures itself into the interstices of the sign, the discontinuity between the commodity and the object, in the mobilization of spatial rhetorics that serve no other purpose than to obscure the residua of power and potentiality in the craggy contours of the superficial and the dialectical. Here the visible/in-visible dialectic deconstructs the fragmented assemblages, the organized confusion, the consequential

frivolity of the colonized and the appropriated, and retransmits it through the codified lens of power. But just as industry and nature, in their mobilization as aesthetic codes by a voracious, pillaging political economic system, inscribe the potential for change into the very product they produce—immanent critique—they similarly mask and shape its perceptible properties. The previous chapter has already detailed this movement by outlining the conflicting aesthetics employed in capitalist space. Here we venture further into the space of domination rather than the particular aesthetic codes it mobilizes.

Spaces of domination function on a singular, fixed logic. The prime mover behind the technical organization of the *yakiniku-ya*, what orchestrates its activity and inserts it into a fabric of homogeneity, is capitalism. Exchange value, in the form of calculability, blankets the space of the *yakiniku-ya* like fresh snow on the peaks of the Japanese Alps. Not only does exchange value announce itself on the menu, as prices, and on the check, in the form of a service charge, it also manifests in the maintenance of the property itself, its relationship to the local environment, the national governmental structure, and the global economy. In the restaurant, just as in society predicated on exchange in general, each expression of action—consciously or not—reflects this general condition in the particular. The length of time the gas stove burns, the duration of a worker's shift, the amount of beer in the cooler, and the electricity necessary to maintain daily operations are all reducible to a universal quantum. In one way or another, when examining the complexity of activity, this general condition is reflected in the contextuality of heterogeneous action united by economic exchange.

Beef, the central component of the *yakiniku* experience, from calf to grill to stomach, is programmed in circuits of capital accumulation, in expectations in the

commodity chain, even into the research agendas of land-grant agricultural universities, integrated into production cycles by developing scientific techniques to increase productivity on farms. Diseases induced by new production techniques, such as Mad Cow, reflect the dangers that blossom from science being subordinated to the logic of capital. At least two known cases have rattled Japanese gastropraxis (summarized in Chapter II) altering its consciousness and structure. That most of the beef on the menu comes from the US or Australia, announced as such, is a reflection of this condition, both of an expansive commodity chain and of food consciousness resulting from industrial methods applied to agricultural production. Japanese food consciousness has been heightened, for better or worse, since the events early on in the first decade of the new millennium. Naming countries of origin, at least for beef and pork, is an expression of colonization complicating the logic of domination, even as it functions on the conceptual level.

Similarly, beef holds something of a symbolic role in Japanese society, as a dish exemplifying prestige and modernity. Historical antecedents, such as the rise of Emperor Meiji and the modernization project, helped pave the way for contemporary consumption. But beef loses its aura in the age of mechanical reproduction (Benjamin 1968b), especially at the strategic level, when its life as part of a cow and life on a sizzling gridiron are reduced to numbers in an accountant's tabulation or probabilities for a rancher hoping to maximize profits. The point is not that people come to see this unitary logic at the point of consumption, that they experience life as a matrix of numbers and prices; in fact it would be the opposite position. Prices and probabilities (such the chances of contracting BSE) function in the realm of the conceived, of strategy, and only enter

into the consciousness of those in everyday life in limited instances, when they look over a menu or read a newspaper report. The affective, or symbolic, connection with beef manifests at the level of the body, of everyday life (the lived), as an appropriative form. The feelings one has when they consume the product vary from the recognition of the cow being grain or grass fed, to a dulled response due to repetition of the act. Only in rare instances do consumers confront the exchange value of beef, at which point they are exposed to the vastness of this global enterprise, and these instances are fleeting. Times of crisis, such as beef import bans, which raise prices, force actors—at least those in middle and poor classes—to confront the economic perspective head on, when they begin budgeting for beef expenditures. This is juxtaposed with the position of the feedlot worker and the restaurant proprietor, who are incessantly exposed to the vagrancies of the beef market on an everyday basis.

It would, however, be a mistake to consider this domination as omnipotent, which is the erroneous position promulgated by social theorists myopically infatuated with political economy—this position confuses a general condition for a total condition. Domination, though materialized, works on the level of abstraction, in capital accumulation strategies enacted by people, concretely, in everyday life. The homogeneity of domination reduced to exchange value and the logic of capital, ironically enough, produces fragmentation as it compartmentalizes the complexity of reality into exchangeable elements, not to mention the residues it produces. Hysteria manufactured at the strategic level, in particular the overzealous reaction of the Japanese government to BSE (see Carolan 2006b), undoubtedly influences how actors experience beef consumption, while it doubly affects beef markets. This hysteria is one of the fragments

necessary for market homogeneity to function; all the while it serves as a point of contradiction when considering the movement of bodies in everyday gastropraxis.

### 5.3.3 Appropriation, Embodiment, Creativity

Though it transpires in the matrix of colonization and domination, *yakiniku-ya* maintain the creative element in the meal, the active participation in the preparation process by the consumer. This creative, productive activity—affectively linking subject and object—is the prime example of the materialist process of becoming, the application of the human hand to natural resources, their metabolic interaction and the volatility of control and conditioning. The appropriation of nature, of space, in the course of *yakiniku-ya* gastropraxis underscores the symbiotic relationship between society, nature and their spaces of mediation. Incorporated elements of nature, the appropriation of what occurs spontaneously and consciously into socio-cultural forms, are in a constant state of flux and fluidity, as second nature expressed in the form of needs, desires, culture and its social space. But, as the previous chapter demonstrates, the harmonious nature of idealistic Japanese folklore has been conquered by the materializing logics of the commodity system. The irruption and eruption of this “spurious harmony” (Adorno 1967: 32), by idealistic complacency and the conquest of the commodity form, subjects material nature, society and space to the domination of the (attempted) homogeneity and hegemony of abstract space and its chauffer, capitalism<sup>26</sup>.

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<sup>26</sup> Regarding the nomenclature “capitalism,” it must be noted that we consider any political-economic formation that holds private property of the means of production, the implementation of wage-labor, and a codified system of private (even government as proprietor) property rights to be fundamental. This includes such categories as: state capitalism, liberal capitalism, late capitalism, welfare-state capitalism, social democratic political economy, and so on.

In the space of the *yakiniku-ya* people are assaulted on all sides by the brazen effrontery of capitalistic domination and colonization, even if they do not perceive it as such. In general, they tend to enjoy the moment, chatting away with compatriots, buddies, co-workers, and family members. Workers steal a few laughs from the severity of exploitation in the spaces that obscure the industrialized conditions of the restaurant to the customers, such as in the kitchen which tries to hide its violent orientation behind a “traditional” drapery and a host stand. Strategies of capital accumulation, unnoticeable or unbearable, are enacted by workers and customers consciously, or not, in the tactical trajectories performed, fulfilling and resisting said strategies. This is the process of appropriation whereby the active body makes for it objects of utility (not just “physical” objects) that satisfy needs and desires.

Image 5.5 Host Stand and Drapes Obscuring Visualization of the Kitchen. Photographed by the author, all rights reserved.



From the perspective of the consumer, the act of cooking the meat (and vegetables) epitomizes this appropriative process. It is at this juncture that use value rises from the deathly ashes of exchange value like a Phoenix, enlivening its conjurer with sustenance and energy before consuming itself in its own evanescent inferno. As the raw meat browns, juices dripping into the fire, the consumer mounts its assault on the conformity of the strategy via tactical interference. Appropriation of the meat to the particularized desires of the consumer, to her/his culturally constructed, and yet specific tastes and likes, offers recourse to the creative act, embedded in a matrix of colonization and domination, in which consumers realize their creative potentials on the most miniscule scale. Cooking raw short-rib flanks in the middle of a table with a gas powered stove, inside a place of business, on a city block on the outskirts of a “global city,” consuming a product that has traveled several thousand miles to appear in this space, all of which seem exponentially grander than that insignificant act, but only if we fail to see the constellations of appropriation that link these activities, objects, and spaces together.

The creative act, which forms the foundation for social reproduction, is the muddled kernel of all activities immanently present either as a realizable potential or a habituated response. As a customer in a *yakiniku-ya*, one is forced to face, even in a commoditized form, the creative element of humanity as species-being, at the level of everyday life, by cooking meat for one’s own likes, desires, pleasures. However extreme the domination of knowledge by the conceived has become, the embodiment of material energy fashioned by the creative touch of the actor produces a feeling—regardless of its profundity or fecundity—that generates forms of sensuous knowledge disavowed by the objective gaze of modernity. Mad Cow hysteria confronts the actor as an objective

condition imposed by abstract science, which finds it difficult to actually determine the ontological and epistemological contours of such diseases (see Carolan 2006b). However, similar logics and practices originate both the disease, as a byproduct and contradiction of technical rationality, and its detection, which further fails the embodied subject by lacking an effective translation technique. At these abstract levels, which enter into the dining experience itself, the contours of products and activities are reduced to the economic and philosophical language of objects as mathematical entities, probabilities, summations, and equations. Our subject is lost once again.

The division of labor, material and mental, alienate the consciousness of the consumer who comes to grips with this effect in the creation process at the *yakiniku-ya*. I doubt that this contemplation even occurs at the conscious level, however purposive the activity may seem. That the particular reflects the general has been a central proposition of this analysis, and one which is present in the creative act described. Self-realization expressed through the modality of creativity no doubt rests on the conscious application of both a practically oriented theory and a theoretically oriented practice, still at odds with each other in a world dominated by the conceived organization of knowledge. Appropriation, however, formulates the most elementary method of dissemination and resistance, where the strategy of the conceived meets the tactic of the lived. It is here that the visible and the in-visible clash, and from this space of embodiment that effective and affective challenges can be made to organizing discourses of power and domination.



#### **5.4 Environment and Body: Mad Cow, Industrialization, and Challenge**

The case has been made that appropriation, being a specific form of embodied knowledge, faces its conceptual colonizing and dominating counterparts in the area of everyday life. Squaring off, the body is reduced when it is colonized and dominated by these conceived logics which materialize in spatial practices and representations. Similarly, conceptual forms, when materialized and practiced, always engender contradiction, for if they did not, change would only be brought about strategically. The body, the subject of everyday life, is this contradiction enacted. Tactically expressing its desires, wants, pleasures and pains, the body confronts the structuring strategies of power that circumscribe its physical parameters. When overly monological, this strategy loses contact with the lived tactics it needs to perpetuate itself. Portending collapse, strategic systems must always have recourse in incorporating the embodied challenges that call in to question the legitimacy of the strategy.

Industrialization, as a strategy fabricated from the logic of expansion and accumulation, is one that has been naturalized the world over during the twentieth century. No postindustrial society exists, for all “developed” nations function on this logic, even if the manufacturing process has been offshored—someone is still making the objects of production and consumption. As industrialization of the agricultural sector continues apace, its byproducts manifest in myriad spaces across the globe.

Environmental destruction, methane gas emission from feedlots, and industrially induced diseases all make their way to the point of consumption, in the product that is consumed. The body, seeking sustenance and pleasure in the consumption of beef, internalizes these effects through the consumptive act. Here, science is not concerned with the individual

but the probability, not with experience but with prediction. Two sides which should be in dialogue, talk past each other, one from its hypostatized throne of “truth,” the other from its in-visible soapbox of “action.”

BSE in Japan, produced one of these moments for people to challenge this monologic disunity, though much action took the form of conceived projections, bans, and fear campaigns. Only when the national body was threatened by an invasive disease was the government responsive. Citizens, even before bans took effect, were roiled, cutting back on beef consumption due to the perceived risks associated with it. Though some of this debate has been nationalistic, for others it was a conscious expression of healthy eating practices that captivated them. However, the connection still has not been made, at the level of everyday life, that this industrialization process, when operating in the strategic realm, beyond the grasp of living, breathing people as a naturalized form, both generates environmental destruction and bodily harm in the form of cancers and diseases, of which the Japanese know all too well (atomic bombs, Minamata disease, *beri-beri*, etc.). For lasting changes, the recognition of this interconnection between the reduction of the body to industrial labor, to a conception, to the colonization and domination of society to its singular logic, to the exploitation and despoliation of nature, and, finally, to the prophetic destruction of the Earth’s ecosystems and their ability to sustain life permanently, needs to be perceived at the level of everyday life—for in the particular lies the general, and vice versa.

## CHAPTER VI

### CONCLUSIONS: BODY, SOCIETY, ENVIRONMENT, SPACE

*“Wherever there is a conflict there may—but it is not inevitable—appear a solution which transforms the opposed terms and puts an end to the conflict by transcending them. It is up to analysis to determine this solution, up to experience to release it, and up to action to realize it.”*  
Henri Lefebvre (1968a: 93)

#### **6.1 The Dialectic of Digestion**

The preceding analysis, on the purely conceptual level, has attempted to expose the clandestine contradictions inscribed in everyday spaces of Japanese gastropraxis by elucidating intersectional, interpolated representations of space, their strategic influences in shaping praxis, and the tactical enactment of those strategies. As the analysis has demonstrated, strategies and tactics function on different levels, even as they necessitate each other. Strategies are abstract (though they materialize), macro-oriented conceptual tools used to organize a society’s spacio-temporal scales and practices. Tactics, however, are the ways people, as individual actors, confront strategies and make use of their discourses. In societies integrated into the modern, global capitalist system, the strategy of the conceived has pummeled the everyday into submission—or it has appeared to do so—partly through domination and colonization by the commodity form, which subjugates that naiveté of the native to its uncompromising conquest.

The melancholic pessimism of those on the Left who subscribe to the technocratic thesis “There Is No Alternative” originates in their own short-sighted foibles and follies.

Their inadequacies lie in their wholehearted embrace of the same method and thought that has consigned them to obscurity and damnation. If there is no alternative for them, it is because they don the same pair of “objectivist” spectacles as those they abhor and detest; those who have sought to eradicate even the faintest inkling and iota of difference and contradiction both theoretically and socially. Only by superseding the superficiality of that method and thought—a condition of the superstructure—can we subordinate its superhuman implications to substantial critique. To reduce life to concepts and logic, a purely mental exercise, and consider it more real than the movement of people in their everyday lives as they navigate city streets, mountain passes, movie theatres, or grocery stores, is a trap in which sociologists of change have long been caught. In short, they favor coherence over contradiction (the engine of change) and the conceptual over the lived.

In reaction to this defeatism, an old paradigm with new clothes must make a comeback. It was Lefebvre who states that the dialectic is back on the agenda, not Marx’s and not Hegel’s, but one that “grasp[s] movement and non-movement in the *present*, [grasping] what it is that shifts and collides with that which does not shift” (1976: 14). Following Lefebvre’s lead, the dialectic has been resurrected again, after suffering a premature death at the hands of incompetent social theorists who scarcely understood its application and method. The dialectic of digestion, therefore, envisions gastropraxis as the mediating concept between the individual actor and the social whole, which channels through the medium of space and food on multiple levels, clashing and colliding with the consumptive body. Digestion, then, is both literal and metaphorical in this regard. The physical incorporation of food into the body shapes the individual, which then expends

that energy in her/his everyday activities, contributing back to the whole. It also implies the social digestion of individual activity, constrained by the contours of the social totality. The consumption of food is the production of the individual, which necessitates some sort of economical and cultural organization of social forces. The general and the particular meet in this act.

This dialectic of digestion affords us the opportunity to examine the manner in which logical components of forms, functions, and structures—or what we know from an “objective,” scientific approach—organize practical activity. These components produce the visible when they are organized politically and economically, shaping our perceptions of spaces and practices. The crucial component, however, is the dialectical analysis of these expressions of “abstract empiricism,” to borrow from C. Wright Mills (1959), emphasizing what these perspectives and conceptions systematically obscure and overlook, the irreducible remainder, or the in-visible. Our analysis, therefore, scrutinizes the façade of the conceived and the deep fissures it hides in salvaging the residual from its neglect in a logical positivism lacking the tools to deftly analyze it. This residue, the body, the lived, the contradicting messages of spatial rhetoric, the movement from domination to appropriation, and the slippage between the strategy and the tactic, surfaces in our analysis because we acknowledge its presence and its potentiality, as the real movement of actors and things in everyday gastropraxis.

Through this analysis we have unearthed the complexity of consumptive gastropraxis in two Japanese contexts, revealing blind spots and epistemic barriers to its perception. The larger question, however, still remains: How do we create affective bonds between social actors and environmentally sustainable methods of food

production? To presume some sort of plan could accomplish such a task would be foolish, a replication of the same conceptual maneuvers critiqued in the anteceding chapters. But this does not foreclose us from making a few general statements about possibilities for change and the channels in which they may travel.

## **6.2 Affecting Change: Key Moments**

As this thesis was being written, and to my own ignorance, Michael Carolan (2011) was gearing up to release a book entitled *Embodied Food Politics*. This book, which was telegraphed in his earlier manuscripts, sets out on a journey of embodiment, of “being with,” and of knowing food through more complex means than the reductive paradigms of sight and price. For if we are to expect durable social change to both our society and our food system, we need to understand the connections that people make with food, in all of their multifaceted glory. His is a criticism of representational mechanisms of change that obviate the affective and the cathectic. Food labels and party politics, which become affective on some level, never imbue actors with the same levels of knowledge they extract from direct experience. In fact, as they dislocate actors from presence with re-presentation, they also reduce the validity of the body’s sensuousness in producing its own erotic and embodied forms of knowledge. Food labels, particularly, are nothing more than images and signs, they abstract from the body and embodiment. I follow Lefebvre in his scathing reaction to such representational knowledge:

Wherever there is illusion, the optical and visual world plays an integral an integrative, active and passive, part in it. It fetishizes abstraction and imposes it as the norm. It detaches the pure form from its impure content—from lived time, everyday time, and from bodies with their opacity and solidity, their warmth, their life and their death. After its fashion, the image kills. In this it is like all signs (1991: 97).

Any social movement, which takes aim at changing the political-economic forms and structures of neo-liberal global food provision, must strike a chord with everyday actors and their affective, embodied knowledges. For the social scientist, this can be accomplished by producing a theory that both reflects the position of everyday life as a critical category and repository for potential change, as well as directs inquiry to the scrutiny of the lived. Theory and practice, the conceived and lived, are so far divided that the social scientist who does not assume the untenable position of “value neutrality,” so thoroughly demolished by the Frankfurt School—particularly Adorno in his debates with Karl Popper (Adorno 1976a, 1976b; Frisby 1972)—almost certainly recognizes the need to bring them into closer alignment. While this has been the trend in social research, particularly in Cultural Studies and ethnography, the critical component is perennially overlooked (Roberts 2006). For Lefebvre, and for me, this critical element is expressed through the volatility of pleasure, desire, embodiment, and *Eros*.

In the analyses presented above I have attempted to locate this volatility within the matrix of gastropoetical experience, one that evades pure codification and enumeration. Critique alone cannot change the world, but materializes as a motivating factor for change when it becomes recognized in practice. Strategy searches for ways to bring pleasure and embodiment under its aegis, as it painstakingly labors to close the circuit of everyday life and convert it to a calculable formula. Tactic, on the other hand, is the expression of actors as they seek out play and pleasure in the nooks and crannies of the circuit provided by the strategy—which they sometimes find or not. Eating, while still being a pleasant activity producing erotic, embodied knowledge, has increasingly become a chore in contemporary society. Instant noodles and fast food all point to the

burdensome position food consumption has become in contemporary everyday life constrained by industrial times and times of accumulation. But people put up with work, with hours of commute, with instant ramen, so they can earn enough money to go out for steak or martinis in a fancy bar every few weeks. Delayed gratification is the norm for working and middle class denizens, forced to sacrifice the present in order to enjoy the future.

Perhaps for many in contemporary society this condition is acceptable. Perhaps for others they have come to want to eat instant ramen or McDonald's cheeseburgers. For these people pleasure is the most solipsistic of expressions, almost an infantile disorder. For others it is social pleasure and camaraderie which characterizes and motivates their activities. A sense of identity conferred by food consumption, companionship, novelty, exploration, or a litany of other intriguing social factors correspond to this social embodiment of volatile entities. In reality, most people probably experience everyday gastropraxis somewhere in between. Coming to grips with pleasure, play, embodiment, and the erotic, as affective linkages expressed through gastropraxis, is paramount if the dialectic of digestion is to gain traction in non-academic circles. In other words, understanding the visceral connections to particular foods and practices of preparation and consumption will assist in correlating concepts and science with living, breathing, everyday bodies, their likes and dislikes, their limits and potentials. Solely relaying the messages of malnutrition, health effects, productive conditions, or environmental destruction is not affective enough, experiencing these phenomena is always more effective.



For the Japanese consumer, however, s/he is confronted by ideological aesthetic codes promoting harmonious interaction with nature, both as a spiritual entity replete with *kami* (spirits), or as an ideal, fluctuating universal. The ability to see beyond these aesthetics, to grasp their subordination to the industrial aesthetic, is only a preliminary step in fully recognizing the potency of a system predicated on pillaging both the human and natural worlds we inhabit in the name of profit. The nature aesthetic, while ideological, also structures the feelings and emotions one experiences while eating food. Could anyone, Japanese or not, even imagine eating a pizza inside sushi restaurant without a laugh? In this regard, the context of food consumption is just as important in impressing meaning on food as is the actual food itself and the people who consume it. For this reason, *yakiniku-ya* have been renovated to speak more cogently to Japanese cultural sensibilities.

Deconstructing aesthetic codes and the modalities of social interaction (appropriation, colonization, domination) at the point of consumption clears avenues for social change, the process of becoming, to realize itself as an inherently extant feature of any alienated activity. Urban living, distanced from forests and (traditional) farmland, tends to reduce the awareness of the individual's impact on the environment, both because s/he is physically removed from those ecosystems from which the material of everyday life is sequestered and because the impact of the individual on the whole appears less extensive. For the dweller of rural areas the opposite is true, s/he sees directly the consequences of their intercourse with the environment, but they also fail to see their footprint in the social whole. This typology is employed to show how physical distance affects environmental perception, ignoring the ideological barriers actors may

encounter. Each type demonstrates how position and propinquity shape consciousness about the world we inhabit. For urban consumers in *yakiniku-ya* and *kaitenzushi-ya*, envisioning their impacts on the environment through the foods they consume, typically mediated through the realization that they, the consumers, are particular manifestations the general, as a totality. Their historical condition as city dwellers, however, is predicated on the fact that they have already, both in antiquity and the present, resurfaced the face of the planet to suit their needs. As resources are drawn from across the globe to satisfy their needs and desires, urbanites creatively alter and destroy, by extension, the very ecosystems that provide them energy and pleasure.

The recognition of this violence, and the call to action against it, finds its outlet in diversified environmental movements active in contemporary Japan. John A. Tucker (2003: 177-178) highlights the complexity of the term “pollution” for urban Japanese, while noting the specific role CO<sub>2</sub> emissions have played in organizing urban inhabitants against Global Climate Change. Their proximity to acid rain and smog linked to industrialism and car exhaust has mobilized swaths of the population, en masse, against the exacerbation, on a global scale, of this condition. The moment of clarity will come, however, when people realize it is their way of life which is destructive, not just minor components of it. Accumulating resources and product from far away, transporting them, processing them, and distributing them to urbanites might fetch a pretty penny for the corporation, but, as a general condition globally, they are destructive acts. Pollution cares not for nation-state boundaries, for rich or poor, for Ugandan, Aussie, Russian, Canadian, or Japanese. It follows no supreme and irrefutable logic. Food production, particularly the resources that go into livestock production, is one of the largest contributors to both

Global Climate Change, as well as localized destruction to specific ecosystems. My contention, revealed through analysis, is that this destruction is visible (in-visibly) as one consumes food, but only from the dialectical position that takes the movement of the totality into consideration.

Though social change is bound to happen, unconsciously, as repetition engenders its own transformations, a conscious and affective connection to a project of change still remains problematic. Environmental degradation will remain a real concern for the globe over the next 25-50 years, if it is not already so, but how we go about resolving these problems will be up to future research projects, experiences, and actions to determine. All that this thesis can do, as a critical evaluation of gastrop Praxis in Japanese contexts, is speak to the epistemic (perceptual) barriers inhibiting dialectical realization of the particular in the general and the general in the particular, which arises, partly, from the separation of conceived knowledge from lived, embodied knowledge.

### **6.3 Openings and Closings**

Perceived and conceived spaces—representations of space and their mutually constituted spatial practices—reproduce and situate actors, practices, spaces and capital by edifying and materializing both physical structures of concrete and mortar and insinuating aesthetic codes and rhetorics. As an extension of this mental enterprise, this thesis merely replicates and refracts the currents transecting rotary sushi shops and Korean barbecue in Japan. The real goal of such an analysis is to usurp the hegemony of the representational, the conceived, and submit it to the gesticulations and somatic knowledges of lived experience, to the creative, poetic articulations of embodied processes. By examining

politically constructed epistemic barriers—both physical and representational—the cacophony of capitalist space, its self-contradictory lexicon of progress, freedom, translucency, and inevitableness, has been demonstrated to be at odds with the cultural forms onto which it grafts and subordinates. The same drive that seeks to expand capital accumulation by extending global sushi markets and the beef trade undermines the sustainability of both the cultural form and the natural resources involved in cultural and capitalist reproduction. Capitalist irony, therefore, shrouds itself in the conflicting visions it shouts in the spaces that it colonizes, dominates, organizes and produces.

In some ways this analysis is superficial, merely a mental exercise. The objective, however, has been to move beyond the technocratic, conceptual imagination of social scientists on their endeavors to impose “fixes” on the population from their secluded, sanitized sanctuary of abstraction, far beyond the hustle and bustle of real, social activity. If labeling schemes (fair trade, organic) and democratic politics fail in producing lasting change (environmentally, politically, and economically) it is because they have faltered in making affective connections with their target audiences. Furthermore, they presuppose and impute a sort of scientific rationality on the population at large, overlooking the fact that people live their lives below the level of pure thought, an everyday level inured and conditioned to specific aesthetic codes, habits and customs, more “real” to them than statistical modeling and logical empiricism. If enduring changes are to be made, especially in the political economy of food provision, then we must locate and uncover barriers reifying the gulf between individual activity, social praxis and the political, economic and environmental repercussions they engender. Only embodied, affective linkages that breach this chasm can satisfy the requisites necessary for more

egalitarian, more participatory democratic alternatives to industrial (global) food provision. In moving toward achieving this goal, this thesis has outlined a few of the potential pitfalls that everyday actors encounter in their gastropractical peregrinations through *kaitenzushi-ya* and *yakiniku-ya*. For effective and enduring changes to occur, actors themselves must come to see these barriers—to perceive the in-visible—and react to them accordingly; solely recognizing their existence does not guarantee that affective linkages have been made.

With that in mind, we close this analysis and relegate it to the obscurity of academia, where its practical potential will, most fairly certain, fail to be realized. But, like all forms of exercise, it has been fruitful for at least one person, the author, who has come to better articulate a critical theory of everyday life, which, undoubtedly, will serve as the foundation for his projected research agendas in the near future—though with a bit more refinement, I hope. The dialectic of digestion, which is perhaps nothing new, is a method that can be applied to almost any context of gastropraxis, though researchers need to be aware of the specific *content* of each context they analyze—formalism and structuralism are only facets of the whole. Dialectic, for this author, speaks to both form and content—which are endlessly in conflictive dialogue. Furthermore, this thesis, as outlined in the shortcomings postulated in Chapter III, leaves an expansive body of Japanese gastropractical forms for others to examine, with the hope that such a project materializes soon in the annals of academic research.

Similarly, since the empirical observations were conducted before the Japanese earthquake, tsunami, and nuclear crisis in 2011, future research will have to investigate the impacts of “natural” disasters on gastropraxis, its effects, what it alters, what it

synthesizes, and what it shrouds. At this juncture I can only speak to the short-term measures taken by the government to ensure that radiation of water and food supply remains a top priority at this point. The only materials available, presently, are government documents detailing this testing. Future research projects will need to pay special attention to these events if they are to comprehend the changes of gastropraxis in times of disaster and crisis.

Lastly, concerning methodology, this thesis has attempted to expand the sociological import of space as a situating technology. Space has oftentimes been overlooked in sociological research, rendered as nothing more than a container. No statistic can capture the diversity of space in a few variables, and thus, spatial sociology (geographic sociology, whatever one wishes to call it) is unique in that it requires the researcher to be attuned to both activity and its context. As GIS (Geographical Information System) becomes all the rage, the complexity of space is reduced to the logic of numbers, simple quantification. While this may be useful on some level, the spatial-dialectical approach pioneered here, with the help of scholars active and dead, complicates logical, quantifiable analyses of space and problematizes “space-as-container” ethnography. I hope to refine this approach in the coming years, validating its importance as a method of analysis for the sociological and social scientific community.

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