Spiritual Flavours: Reflections on using creative practice to explore food and religion in a multi-faith suburb

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Thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (Practice-Related)

University College London

By

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I, Laura Cuch Grases confirm that the work presented in this thesis is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis.

Laura Cuch Grases

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Abstract

This practice-related doctoral research comparatively investigates the relationship between food and religious material practices of several faith communities in Ealing, a suburb in West London. These include a Synagogue, a Sri Lankan Hindu Temple, a mosque, a Sikh Gurdwara, an Anglican church, a multicultural Roman Catholic church and an ethnically diverse Pentecostal church. The research is centred around the development of an arts project, *Spiritual Flavours,* which comprises a photographic series, a twenty-eight-minute film and a recipe photobook. Whilst the photographic series uses a formal approach to explore the spatial arrangements of commensality within religious buildings, the photobook and the film focus on personal narratives, bringing together a diverse range of intimate experiences of food and spirituality across both domestic and worship spaces. The film also produces a rhythmic and multi-sensory experience by creating visual and sonic synchronies and asynchronies across the three main protagonists through the use of the split-screen technique and the creative mixing of sounds of cooking and prayer. With a very interdisciplinary approach, drawing from visual cultures, cultural studies, and social sciences, the thesis analyses the kinds of knowledge that each of these visual elements produce individually and combined. Here, it specifically draws on literatures on material religion, on food, memory and the senses, and on performativity, to explore the centrality of food in everyday religious practices in ways that are inseparable from the material practices involved in the creative process itself. This forms the basis for further analysis of the way the project produces 'multi-faith' understandings of culinary religious practices as sensory, affective and embodied (spiritual) practices; as well how these intersect with other personal and socio-cultural dimensions, such as experiences of migration, identity, home and community. This research also develops an original exploration of the opportunities and challenges of visual practice as research practice. It contributes to understandings of participatory creative methodologies in how its outputs produce new multi-faith relationships and disseminate research knowledge that is accountable and meaningful to the participants and communities involved, as well as wider audiences.

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Impact Statement

This thesis contributes to emergent engagements between cultural geography and creative research practice. More specifically, it takes up Barad's performativity to analyse the use of creative practice for researching how people's and communities' faith practices are enacted with and through food.

Within the social sciences, the thesis extends geographies of religion, religious studies, and scholarship on food, expanding debates and curricula in the field of food and religion. This research presents unique comparative studies, involving seven different faith communities, of food and religious practices exposing nuanced and intimate interrelations between faith, gender, identity, migration and home. Through the making and dissemination of creative visual outputs, it reveals the importance of embodied and narrative affordances of food practices for religious education and intergenerational connections. It also produces an empirical understanding and aesthetic appreciation of the significance of material arrangements of commensality for how people negotiate gendered religious identities and make family at home and places of worship. Faith communities emerge as key sites for the development of multicultural identities and relationships through food within and across religious denominations.

The thesis also contributes to debates within Cultural Geography, and the social sciences more widely, on the value of creative research practices and methods. It expands understandings of their material performativity for accessing and producing sensorial, embodied, aesthetic and affective experiences, as well as for developing creative and collaborative relationships between academics and publics. Crucially, the *Spiritual Flavours* project makes an experimental contribution by bringing members of faith communities, researchers and audiences together. Through recipes and personal narratives, it mobilises visceral experiences of Ealing's multi-faith identity and heritage. The project effects a positive impact on participants' lives, as it recognises their domestic and worship spaces and articulates their views, culinary expertise and family histories as worthy of artistic attention. It also produces and communicates relationships of care and community, and promotes multi-faith dialogue within and beyond Ealing.

The research, and its creative outputs, evinces wider societal impact on culture and, potentially, public discourse by foregrounding and celebrating the lives, faith and culinary heritages of migrant and spiritually diverse people. Outputs of *Spiritual Flavours* have

been shared with faith communities, and exhibited in local cultural centres and high-profile arts institutions, including the Festival of Political Photography 2017 (Helsinki), and Tate Modern. The latter included a film screening Q&A with a research participant featured in the film, connecting academics, artists, communities and publics. The *Spiritual Flavours* book launch at The Photographers Gallery also gathered a diverse audience including research participants and relatives. *Spiritual Flavours* won the International Visual Sociology Association's Rieger Project Award 2020, and the film was nominated for the AHRC Research in Film Awards 2016, drawing significant media attention (see Appendix B). Finally, as an artistic culinary artefact, the *Spiritual Flavours* cookbook makes social science research available and accountable in novel visual and practical ways, circulating and disseminating to wider audiences and publics. Anyone who tries Sabiha's vegan *Super Dahl* recipe, amongst others, will experience, first-hand, the positive impact of this research.

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Elements submitted as part of this PhD

The visual practice elements of this PhD are submitted alongside this thesis in the PhD archival box. The box includes:

- The thesis.
- A set of A3 prints of the *Spiritual Flavours: Meals* series (with their captions printed at the back).
- One copy of the *Spiritual Flavours* recipe photobook.
- A DVD with the five-minute introduction and the full twenty-eight-minute version of the *Spiritual Flavours* film.
- A sample of the *Spiritual Flavours* poster and postcards.

All these elements are also submitted electronically for assessment and archival purposes.

Additionally, there is the *Spiritual Flavours* website www.spiritualflavours.com, where there are pictures of some of these objects, the images of the *Meals* series and the five-minute introduction of the film, as well as an archive of public engagement events.

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List of abbreviations

AHRC	Arts and Humanities Research Council
ECC	Ealing Christian Centre
ELS	Ealing Liberal Synagogue
MSF	Making Suburban Faith
OLSJ	RC Church of Our Lady and St Joseph
RHUL	Royal Holloway University of London
SKTAT	Shri Kanaga Thurkkai Amman Temple
UCL	University College London
WLIC	West London Islamic Centre

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Chapter one: Introduction

First encounters with faith and food

> Faith is a plate of food that is warm and steaming; that is spicy sometimes. Lentils, rice, vegetables... it's easy to digest. It comforts and it can be shared. It gets offered around, regardless of the day.

The significance of food within religious practices and the relevance of exploring the relationship of food and religion across different faith communities became apparent from the beginning of this PhD. The above quote is the result of a free writing task at the SLADE School of Fine Art (UCL), where I was asked to describe the concept of 'faith' as an object. This took place shortly after my first visit to various faith communities involved in the Making Suburban Faith (MSF) research project – I had just joined to undertake a practice-related PhD, focusing on 'domestic material cultures of multi-faith suburbia'. The team gathered in Ealing, and, in one day, we visited five of the seven faith communities. It was a crisp and cold January day. After visiting the three Christian churches, we went to the Sri Lankan Hindu Temple (SKTAT). There were many devotees finishing prayers and queuing for food. We were welcomed by one of the board trustees who insisted that we also eat. The winter sun was shining through the windows into the praying area where shrines with various deities were glowing in a range of pastel colours. We felt our energy recover as we sat on the under-flooring heated marble, and then in the temple hall area to experience a very spicy Sri Lankan sambar with dahl, rice and poppadoms.[1] Later, we visited the Ealing Gurdwara (Sikh temple), where a leading member of the community spoke to us about the significance of food in Sikhism and how Sikhs believe that one has to feed the body first to be able to focus on prayer and connect with God.

I can further trace back my interest in religious foods to my upbringing in a predominantly Catholic culture in Catalunya (Spain), and as part of a family invested in maintaining our cultural food traditions. I was always fascinated by the number of foods, especially desserts, which are eaten at specific times of the year, as reminders of biblical passages and events, or on particular days that celebrate the lives of Saints. As such, when visiting these communities, I developed a curiosity for exploring the similarities and differences

[1] The recipe of this dish is featured in the *Spiritual Flavours* recipe book, as part of this PhD.

of the relationship of food and faith, and I learned that food is a vital aspect of religious practices of faith communities. These food practices bear similarities to those of other faiths, but they also do things that are specific to each religious denomination. For example, cooking at the Langar (kitchen) in the Gurdwara performs an act of solidarity and selfless service (seva), which has a particular (theological and material) significance in Sikhism. The Christian Eucharist achieves the communion with Christ through the consecration and consumption of bread and wine. The ingredients of the Seder meal during Passover serve to retell the biblical story of the Exodus of Jews from Egypt. Bathing a Deity with milk at the Hindu Temple is an act that feeds and changes the Deity's wellbeing, which is specific to Hinduism. Lastly, breaking the fast with dates at the mosque performs a collective (spiritual and material) shift between fasting and non-fasting that is characteristic to Islam. These examples refer to official religious rituals but, given my research focus on domestic religious practices, I also became interested in unofficial food religious/spiritual practices, particularly those taking place at home. This includes food practices such as food charity, food restrictions and cooking practices, which are experienced spiritually when performed in accordance to religious beliefs and principles of individuals, families and communities. Here, I was interested in how these support social, communal and family bonds, lived religious experiences and education.

Several reasons further encouraged the focus of this research on the relationship of food and religious practices in these communities. First, my initial literature review (Desjardins 2015; Desjardins and Desjardins 2009; Desjardins and Silver 2013; Norman 2002, 2012; Wirzba 2011) demonstrated the scarcity of comparative research on food and religion across different faiths, as well as lack of scholarship on food and religion in the home, including women's central role in religious food practices. Additionally, recent scholarship on critical geographies of home (Blunt and Dowling 2006; Brickell 2012), emphasise the blurring of public and private, and the porous, imaginary, gendered, multi-scalar and contested qualities of home. In this sense, food practices emerged as a productive material culture, not only for the way they enact cultural and religious identities, but also to investigate connections between domestic, worship spaces and other multi-scalar geographies (e.g., countries and places of origin), as ingredients and dishes travel back and forth across these sites. Here, food appears to be unique in its capacity to traverse presumed boundaries between (corporeal) inside/outside, spiritual/secular, private/public, as well as between local, national and international geographies. Thus,

comparatively exploring religious food material practices held the potential for revealing similarities and differences of the intersection between faith, identity, gender, migration, and home, across different faith communities.

Given the visual practice driven approach of the research, a focus on food and religion is also relevant. While there is substantial visual work exploring religious rituals, apart from depictions of the Last Supper, there is a dearth of visual work specifically exploring the relationship between food and religion in contemporary visual practice. Furthermore, food emerges as a productive choice for visually exploring religious domestic material cultures, which moves away from existing research on display practices (Garnett and Harris 2011; McMillan 2009; Tolia-Kelly 2004a) of, for example, domestic shrines and religious iconography; thus, more easily circumventing a strongly representational paradigm. Since food is not an exclusively religious material/visual culture, a visual approach to researching domestic religious practices through food stresses the significance of social and material practices, performativity and material agency, echoing recent literature on material culture (Miller 2001a:4) and food geographies (Cook et al. 2011, 2013), as well as my interests and approach as a photographer.

Last, but not least, food is an inviting topic to engage in conversation with people from other cultures and backgrounds, as most can relate to food, which celebrates cultural difference and heritage. This has also been spurred by cookbooks and TV food programmes, especially since 1980s, that praise diverse or foreign food cultures (Bright 2017:13). Thus, food offers both a focus of research and a positive introduction for exploring further topics, such as biographical histories, home and religious practices. Many people were happy to open their homes to cook and share food for this research. Moreover, the focus on food also offered an opportunity to bring people from different faith communities together while, at the same time, revealing the various ways in which people's food practices enact religious difference.

Research aims and questions

In this research, I set out to produce a substantial body of work of creative visual practice that investigates the religious food practices of people of different faith denominations in Ealing, both in community worship settings and at home. In so doing, I have used different media, food media genres and creative approaches – photography, film, art/recipe books, as well as participatory research – to explore the kinds of knowledge of

food religious practices that creative practices yield; and how each of these highlight different themes, dimensions and understandings of the relationship between food and faith. Here, the substantive focus on food also becomes a vehicle for investigating the nuanced connexions between faith, identity, migration, community and home; at the intersection of age and gender. This research aims to address the lacuna of comparative research on food and religion across different faiths within religious studies, particularly within the home. It also contributes to the burgeoning interest in the social sciences in harnessing the potential of creative arts practices for accessing and exploring sensorial, embodied and affective experiences. These have received increasing attention both within Geography and within the Religious Studies field of vernacular and lived religion. In this sense, through the making and experience of the creative outputs, this research sheds light on the significance of food as a temporal, rhythmic and affective marker of religious practices. It also foregrounds how food practices, recipes and cookbooks operate as narrative devices for religious communities, identities and education, connecting people to other people, places and temporalities. Lastly, the research aims to expose the affordances of food-centred visual media genres for engaging with biographical histories and participatory research that brings into being new (multi-faith) relationships and imaginations that are accountable to the research subjects and audiences beyond the academic context.

As such, this research addresses the following key questions:

1. What kinds of knowledge does a set of visual arts practices bring to the understanding of food and religion in a West London multi-faith suburb?
2. What analytic themes emerge and are made possible through the interplay of practice-based research and food and religious practices?
3. How can creative research practices promote new (multi-faith) relationships and how can creative outputs be made accountable and meaningful to participants and communities through participatory methods?

The Making Suburban Faith project

This research was embedded in a wider research project, *Making Suburban Faith: Design, Material Culture and Popular Creativity,* led by Professor Claire Dwyer from the Department of Geography, University College London, and Professor David Gilbert, from the Department of Geography, Royal Holloway, University of London, and funded

by the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) between 2015-1019.[2]

Making Suburban Faith (MSF) explores the ways in which diverse suburban faith communities in suburban West London create distinctive places for worship, focusing both on the formal architectural spaces, rituals and performances of religious identity, and the rich everyday material cultures and practices of belief and belonging. Based in Ealing, this project focused on seven different faith community case studies selected to represent different faith and migration traditions. Funded through the AHRC's 'Connected Communities' programme, the focus of the research was on the ways in which faith communities, and particularly migrant faith communities, materialised and negotiated the aesthetics of faith, particularly exploring the creativity of suburban faith communities. The project included partnerships with artists and creative practitioners, which developed collaborative arts projects including: a textile art-work and exhibition; a school-student architecture project, and; a photographic and kite-making project on public space. In addition, Natalie Hyacinth's (2019) doctoral research on the music of suburban faith and the research reported on in this thesis, were central to the MSF research.

While my doctoral research constitutes a stand-alone research project, it is aligned with the multi-faith approach of the MSF project, and ties in with its overarching aim of exploring the different aesthetic and material cultures of diverse faith traditions and practices, as well as with the centrality of qualitative, participatory and creative methods (Ahmed and Dwyer 2017; Dwyer 2015a, 2015b; Dwyer, Gilbert, and Ahmed 2015; Gilbert et al. 2019). As such, this PhD aims to establish a dialog with the other MSF research elements and to contribute knowledge, specifically in the area of domestic material cultures and practices of different faiths, as well as how creative material practices, such as food practices, support the development of new forms of belonging, suburban faith identities and (multi-faith) relationships. Here, this research exposes the connections between domestic and community spaces, where worship spaces are often experienced as home. In this respect, *Spiritual Flavours* is unique in that it comparatively engages with all of the faith communities of the project and produces new diverse, multi-faith and creative imaginations of suburbia through food cultures; thus, supporting a key MSF aim of challenging common depictions of Anglo-Saxon suburbs as predominantly modern, middle-class, secular and mono-cultural (see also Dwyer, Gilbert, and Shah

[2] Grant reference: AH/M001636/1. https://makingsuburbanfaith.wordpress.com/

2013). Here, the choice of Ealing as a case study suburb for this PhD is significant. Ealing's renowned reputation for its quality and highly diverse food offer – as evidenced through popular international restaurants and food stores – makes this borough a rich case study for comparatively exploring the relationship between food, religious practices and suburban conviviality, at the intersection of migration, biographical histories, home and urban development. This relates to the borough's historical and geographical specificity as a desired well-connected suburban enclave, which drew not only emerging middle classes looking to move away from busy and crowded central areas, but also diverse populations from post-imperial migrations in the post-war period (Dwyer et al. 2013:405). These have concentrated and developed their religious spaces and communities (Gilbert et al. 2019:31). These faith spaces also attract car-commuting worshippers from neighbouring and farther areas through Ealing's proximity to main connecting roads (M25, M4 and A40).[3] This underpins the MSF project's interest in exploring the significance of Ealing's specific suburban context for the history, creativity and identity of its religious communities. Therefore, my PhD also makes an important contribution to the MSF wider project, by exploring the significance of food for these faith communities and individual worshippers in this locality. Here, it foregrounds the way their food practices contribute to Ealing's unique suburban (and religious) identity and creativity, and expose family, gender and community (suburban) interrelationships at a local, national and international level.

The faith communities in Ealing

The faith communities involved in MSF and this research are located in Ealing, and in close proximity to one another. The Ealing map (see Fig. 1), shows four worship places located off or on Ealing Broadway – a main road connecting Acton, Ealing, Hanwell and Southall (all part of the London Borough of Ealing). These include Our Lady Mother (Polish) Catholic Church close to Ealing Broadway station, which MSF aimed to engage but, eventually, was only present through one participant in this PhD.

[3] See chapter three for further details on suburban geographies of religion, including studies on suburban megachurches.

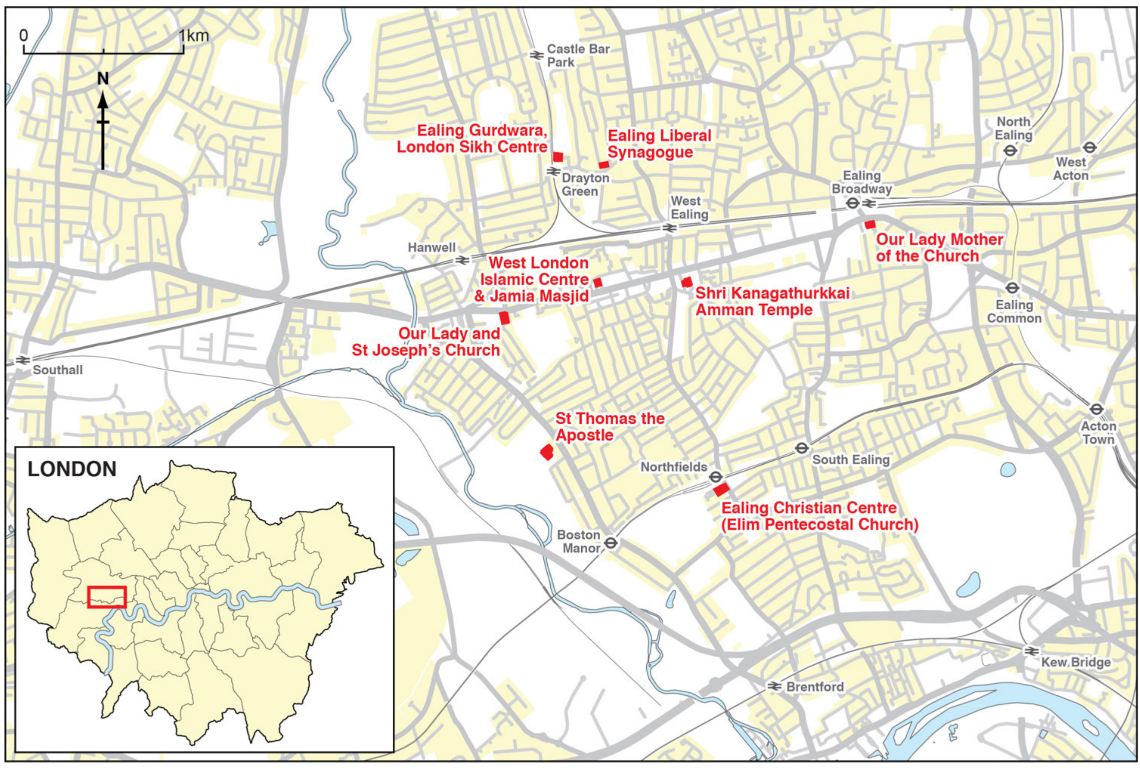

Fig. 1 A map of the faith communities in Ealing, West London. Created by UCL Geography Drawing Office

The first community, the Shri Kanaga Thurkkai Amman Temple (SKTAT), is a predominantly Sri Lankan Tamil Hindu temple. Converted from a former Baptist Chapel listed building from 1865, it was founded on 10th August 1991. The interior of the temple houses several deities in colourful sanctums along the walls with the Kanaga (golden) Thurkkai (or Durga) Amman (Goddess) at the centre (see Fig. 2 to Fig. 5) (Dwyer et al. 2015:482; Gilbert et al. 2019:24; Waghorne 2004:219).[4] On busy days in the week there are around 500 attendees at noon and between 300 and 350 in the evening. Other times, the number of attendees can reach thousands during special festivities.

Further West on Ealing Broadway, close to Hanwell station, is the Roman Catholic Church of Our Lady & St Joseph (OLSJ). It was built in 1967 in a post-war style to replace a smaller Victorian church (Ahmed and Dwyer 2017:380) and was renovated in 2010 to make it a "beautiful place of worship" (see Fig. 6 to Fig. 9).[5] Its parish grew from Irish labourers working on the Great Western Railway viaduct and was officially opened in 1853, after years of celebrating masses in private houses. Today, it is a multicultural community that congregates over 1000 people on Sunday masses.

[4] SKTAT website: http://ammanealing.org/

[5] RC Church of Our Lady & St Joseph website: https://parish.rcdow.org.uk/hanwell/about-the-parish/

The West Ealing Islamic Centre (WLIC), close to Ealing Broadway, is located halfway between SKTAT and OLSJ. It emerged from a community of Pakistani Muslims in Ealing who gathered in local homes for Friday prayers, until they raised enough funds to buy and convert a former catering warehouse into a mosque in 1996 (Dwyer et al. 2015:483). Since then, the demography of this mosque has significantly increased and diversified, including Somalis, Afghanis, Syrians, and Moroccans, filling the building and spilling into the carpark area for Friday prayers (see Fig. 10 to Fig. 13). After over a decade of fundraising, WLIC underwent a redevelopment project, currently in the final stages, to replace the warehouse (demolished in August 2017) with a purpose-built multi-storey mosque.[6]

Further north, within fifteen minute-walk, is the Ealing Gurdwara, London Sikh Centre. The neighbouring locality of Southall has a considerable Sikh population and the largest Gurdwara outside of India since the 1950s (Sri Guru Singh Sabha Southall).[7] Much smaller in size and in a quiet residential area, the Ealing Gurdwara was founded in March 2007 for the Sadh Sangat (true congregation) worship and meditation in Ealing (see Fig. 14 to Fig. 17). The Langar (kitchen) hall was renovated in 2017 and can cater gatherings of over 450 people, including Sikh wedding ceremonies.[8]

The Ealing Liberal Synagogue (ELS) is only three-minute walk to the West of the Gurdwara. A former 'tin tabernacle' Baptist church, it was consecrated as the ELS in May 1953 (Dwyer et al. 2015:480). Its congregation had been worshiping in hired halls and private homes over a decade. A fairly small congregation, the ELS adapted the sanctuary to home their Torah and rent its large central hall to a nursery during the week. In 2016, the ELS removed the original pews and carpeted the sanctuary area, making it a more polyvalent space that can host other group activities (see Fig. 18 to Fig. 21).[9]

Further south, on Boston Road, between Hanwell and Boston Manor Underground station, is St Thomas the Apostle Church, which was also a 'tin tabernacle' church until the current Grade II* listed church was built in 1933 by the celebrated architect, Edward Maufe (see Fig. 22 to Fig. 25).[10] St. Thomas was part of the Church of England's 'Forty-

[6] WLIC website: http://www.wliconline.org/
[7] Sri Guru Singh Sabha Southall website: https://www.sgsss.org/history-of-sri-guru-singh-sabha-southall/
[8] Ealing Gurdwara website: https://www.ealinggurdwara.org.uk/
[9] ELS website: http://www.ealingliberalsynagogue.org.uk/
[10] St Thomas' website: http://www.thomashanwell.org.uk/

Five Churches' campaign to construct places of worship in newly developed suburbs to address their perceived secularising effect (Dwyer et al. 2015:485; Gilbert et al. 2015). As part of Hanwell Parish, St Thomas had an important West Indian community in the 1980s and is currently a diverse congregation of around 120 people.

Finally, the Ealing Christian Centre (ECC), opposite Northfields Underground station, is based in an adapted (Grade II* listed) 1930s 'atmospheric' cinema, inspired in a Spanish village open courtyard (see Fig. 26 to Fig. 29). After the cinema closed in 1985, having briefly become a nightclub, it was purchased by the Elim Pentecostal Church and opened in 1996 (see Gilbert et al. 2015). ECC started as a close-knit congregation of around 200 people and has since grown into a community of over 1000 people from all over the world.[11]

[11] ECC website: https://www.ecc.org.uk/

Fig. 2 Preparations for the annual Chariot Ther Festival at the Shri Kanaga Thurkkai Amman Temple, 2017

Fig. 3 Puja during the annual Chariot Ther Festival at the Shri Kanaga Thurkkai Amman Temple, 2016

Fig. 4 Colourful sanctum decoration at the Shri Kanaga Thurkkai Amman Temple, 2015

Fig. 5 Quiet time at the Shri Kanaga Thurkkai Amman Temple, 2015

Fig. 6 Roman Catholic Church of Our Lady and St Joseph, 2016

Fig. 7 Good Friday mass at Our Lady and St Joseph Church, 2018

Fig. 8 Suspended cross at Our Lady and St Joseph Church, 2015

Fig. 9 Tabernacle of Our Lady and St Joseph Church, 2015

Fig. 10 The West London Islamic Centre, 2017

Fig. 11 Friday prayers spilling into the car park area at the West London Islamic Centre, 2017

Fig. 12 Friday prayers at the West London Islamic Centre, 2017

Fig. 13 Religious class in the women's praying area at the West London Islamic Centre, 2017

Fig. 14 Ealing Gurdwara, London Sikh Centre, 2015

Fig. 15 Service at the Ealing Gurdwara, London Sikh Centre, 2016

Fig. 16 Granthi by the Guru Granth Sahib at the Ealing Gurdwara, London Sikh Centre, 2018

Fig. 17 Main praying hall at the Ealing Gurdwara, London Sikh Centre, 2016

Fig. 18 Ealing Liberal Synagogue, 2015

Fig. 19 Sanctuary of the Ealing Liberal Synagogue before the removal of the original Baptist church pews, 2015

Fig. 20 Shabbat evening service at the Ealing Liberal Synagogue, 2016

Fig. 21 Seder meal for Passover at the Ealing Liberal Synagogue, 2017

Fig. 22 St Thomas the Apostle Church, 2016

Fig. 23 St Thomas the Apostle Church, 2015

Fig. 24 Palm Sunday mass at St Thomas the Apostle Church, 2015

Fig. 25 Palm Sunday mass at St Thomas the Apostle Church, 2015

Fig. 26 Ealing Christian Centre (Elim Pentecostal Church), 2015

Fig. 27 Ealing Christian Centre’s main hall, 2015

Fig. 28 Sunday service at Ealing Christian Centre, 2018

Fig. 29 New Year's Eve celebration at Ealing Christian Centre, 2015

Personal background and interdisciplinary ethos

Having studied media and photography, I moved to the UK in 2005 to do an MA in Photography and Urban Cultures in the department of Sociology at Goldsmiths, University of London. Since then, I have worked as a freelance commercial and documentary photographer, often working with diverse urban communities in London, such as Latin American and Bengali communities (see Frost 2007). My photographic projects typically involve social research, incorporating social science research methods, such as semi-structured interviews, participant observation and participatory action research. I have also been a Research Fellow in the departments of Anthropology and Sociology at Goldsmiths, where I conducted research on human organ transplantation, as well as contributed to the qualitative evaluation of socially engaged educational arts projects focusing on elderly people in urban regeneration settings and on parents suffering with mental health.[12]

Given the above, this research has a strong interdisciplinary ethos, both within the MSF multi-disciplinary project and through my interdisciplinary expertise and training. Furthermore, during this PhD, I received a UCL Cross-Disciplinary Training Studentship, which allowed me to audit various courses in the Anthropology department, including the MA in Ethnographic and Documentary Filmmaking. Additionally, my supervisory team is formed of cultural geographers and a visual artist. As such, this PhD brings together theory and research practice from social sciences (Geography, Anthropology, Sociology, Religious Studies and Food Studies), as well as theory and practice from visual arts (documentary and fine art photography, film, artbooks, and exhibition installations).

Creative visual practice, participatory approach and public engagement.

The visual arts practice in this research has aimed to achieve a finished project, *Spiritual Flavours,* that comparatively investigates the interplay between food and faith through its multi-sensory experience and curatorial value – rather than working as visual methods at the service of data collection. Thus, I have allowed each of the practice elements that

[12] See the evaluation report of the Serpentine Gallery project 'Skills Exchange: Urban Transformation and the Politics of Care'
https://static1.squarespace.com/static/556c4621e4b01e67824a2119/t/57ed099320099e1bdc3b367e/1475152293680/modalities_inners_single_02-%282%29.pdf;
and of the South London Gallery project 'Creative Families',
https://static1.squarespace.com/static/556c4621e4b01e67824a2119/t/57ed027b15d5db158d0213f6/1475150472460/Creative_Families_Report_b_0.pdf

constitute *Spiritual Flavours* to have enough space and freedom to develop their own creative rationale, visual language and discourse. These consist of a photographic series, a twenty-eight-minute film (alongside a five-minute introduction) and a recipe photobook. Working in complementary ways, these elements follow specific visual arts/media practice genealogies that people from the faith communities could relate to, such as architecture/interior photography, cookbooks and cooking programmes. Here, the photographic series uses a formal approach to explore the spatial arrangements of commensality (eating on the same table) within religious buildings. The photobook focuses on personal narratives, bringing together a diverse range of intimate experiences around food and spirituality across both domestic and worship spaces. The film yields a more rhythmic and multi-sensory experience by creating visual and sonic synchronies and asynchronies across the protagonists, through the use of the split-screen technique and the creative mixing of sounds of cooking and prayer.

The visual practice has encouraged collaboration with and between participants to a greater or lesser degree in each of the practice elements. I have sought to involve participants in various decision-making and editing processes, including a multi-layered approach to informed consent, whereby each participant has been able to check and request changes to the edited material before providing final consent.

Finally, the practice elements of *Spiritual Flavours* have also aimed to engage various publics, from the faith communities, to academic and wider audiences. In addition to the main creative elements, I produced the interactive installation *Spiritual Flavours Spice Lab*;[13] the *Spiritual Flavours* website (www.spiritualflavours.com); a series of printed materials, including posters and postcards;[14] as well as exhibited and presented the project locally, nationally and internationally (see Fig. 74 to Fig. 85, and further details in chapter two and in Appendix B). *Spiritual Flavours* also won an International Visual Sociology Association Rieger Project Award in 2020 (see Fig. 86, Fig. 87).[15]

[13] The *Spiritual Flavours Spice Lab* is an arts installation that I produced for the exhibition 'Ealing at the Tate: Making Sacred Space', at Tate Modern in May 2018, inviting visitors to create and narrate their own spiritual flavours by mixing herbs and spices and logging their experience on a notebook (see Fig. 78 to Fig. 80).

[14] See printed samples in the PhD submission box and in Appendix A.

[15] https://visualsociology.org/?p=6582

Thesis structure

In chapter two I present the rationale for the use of creative practices to explore visual, material and embodied dimensions of the interplay of food and religion. I start by situating the research within the field of creative geographies, as well as my methodological approach informed by notions of material performativity, which links this research to my previous visual practice and offers a development and theoretical contribution to how geographers are thinking about the value of creative practices for knowledge production. Here, I also discuss the methodological implications the ethics and positionality of my research. This is followed by a description of the research setting and the challenges I faced regarding access and a multi-site research field. Further, I describe the range of creative engagements and the individual creative methods employed in different contexts and phases, including a range of initial creative practices that informed *Spiritual Flavours*. I conclude by making an argument for the inseparability of the creative material practices involved in the research and the knowledge it produces.

Chapter three establishes a dialog between scholarship from the social sciences and visual projects which are concerned with the key interests of this research. This is divided into three main areas: 1) in/visible geographies of religion, drawing on geographies of religion and photographic projects that deploy different strategies to visualise (sub)urban faith communities; 2) how material practices perform religion, identity and home, which develops a parallel between photographic work and scholarship on: material and lived religion; sensuous, embodied and affective religious practices; as well as home, material culture and migration; 3) on food, which explores various dimensions of food, through literature and arts projects. These expose the significance of embodied and sensorial qualities of food practices for understanding food's role in gendered migrant/religious identities, memory, religious experience and education. The chapter ends by synthesising insights from across these bodies of literature and visual projects to summarise this project's key lines of enquiry.

Chapters four, five and six focus on the main outcomes of *Spiritual Flavours*, starting with the *Meals* photographic series, the recipe photobook and the film. The chapter order follows a creative encounter: first, introducing the faith communities through their material practices of commensality; second, connecting these to diverse people, through their recipes, life journeys and religious food practices at home, and; third, delving into a more in-depth experience of the multi-sensory, embodied and affective creative interplay

of food and religious practices in the film. Each of these chapters situates the creative outputs within genealogies of arts and media in order to echo media-specific discourses and conceptual frameworks for analysing the kinds of knowledge the creative outputs produced. Here, the *Meals* series yields new multi-faith understandings of communal religious commensality and sensitises the viewer to the affective capacities of their material arrangements. The *Spiritual Flavours* cookbook produces rich, nuanced and intimate multi-faith narratives of the interconnections between faith, identity, migration and home and intensifies a sense of community through the visceral experience of its dishes. The film develops an original sensory experience of the interplay between cooking, eating and praying, which further highlights and expands understandings of food as embodied, affective and rhythmic markers or religious practices.

Chapter seven first summarises the research aims, outputs and findings. This is followed by a more in-depth discussion of this thesis's contributions to the fields of creative geographies, geographies of religion and religious studies, as well as geographies of food and food studies. Here, I discuss how the engagement of this research with notions of material performativity provides new perspectives to understandings of methodological performativity of creative practices, of positionality and of the role of food in the enactment of religious practices and spirituality. Following this, I discuss how the creative outputs and the kinds of knowledge they produce (individually and combined) speak back to the research questions and substantive lines of enquiry. The key arguments and conclusions are then brought together from each of the chapters in order to draw out the way they foreground key themes of the relationship of food and faith, which run through the creative outputs and the thesis. I also reflect on how this research produces new (multi-faith) relationships, understandings and imaginations of suburban religious diversity and conviviality through food and visual practices, not least by bringing people of different faith communities, as well as audiences, together. I finish with concluding remarks on the key contributions of this PhD and further directions for the research.

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Chapter two: Visual and material practices as research practice

> Method? What we're dealing with here is not, of course, just method. It is not just a set of techniques. It is not just a philosophy of method, a methodology. It is not even simply about the kinds of realities that we want to recognise or the kinds of worlds we might hope to make. It is also, and most fundamentally, about a way of being. [….] Method goes with work, and ways of working, and ways of being. (Law 2004:10)

Introduction

This PhD began with a focus on domestic material cultures in suburban faith communities and, in approaching this research area, it became an investigation of how faith, religious practices and food are performed through material practices. In this chapter, I present the methodological rationale for the use of creative practices to explore visual, material and embodied dimensions of how faith is achieved through everyday material food practices at home and within community religious settings. The chapter first situates my PhD within the field of creative geographies and analyses the specific thematic and methodological arts-geography intersections in the research and the epistemic value of creative practice-based research. I then argue how this practice-based approach necessarily involves a methodological preoccupation with positionality. I also reflect on the ethical challenges and political dimensions of the research and methodological approach. This leads to a discussion of the methodological opportunities, challenges and implications of performativity with regards to method and to visual/creative practices. Here, I reflect on how my previous practice and trajectory, which incorporated notions of affect, embodiment and performativity, has informed the focus and methodological approach and contributions of this research. Following this, I describe the research setting, namely seven faith communities in West London, including the methodological challenges I faced regarding access, ongoing contact, and multiple research sites. Further, I describe the different contexts I engaged with, including: mundane religious practices; significant religious events; cultural and religious celebrations, and; a series of public engagement events, both produced by my research practice and by the MSF project. This section includes a discussion of my embodied positionality across different religious settings. The chapter then discusses the individual creative methods I employed and

examines these through the methodological prism of performativity and positionality. Here, I consider the knowledge produced by the research as an upshot of the wide range of creative outputs, including but not limited to *Spiritual Flavours*, as well as from the methodological processes involved in the making of these outputs. In conclusion, the chapter argues that the knowledge produced in this research is inseparable from the material and visual practices involved in the creative and practice-based methods through which the research is produced, which is understood both as performative and situated.

Creative research practice and performativity

Geography and creative research practice

There is a widespread call for 'rethinking', 'pushing' and 'enlivening' qualitative methods across the social sciences in response to the demands for methods that allow access to sensorial, material, everyday, emotional, embodied, affective and non-representational dimensions of social life (e.g. Gregson and Rose 2000; Thrift and Dewsbury 2000; Back and Puwar 2013; Lorimer 2013). Within human geography, this impulse to expand conventional disciplinary methods has contributed to the discipline's increasing overlap with arts practices (see Dwyer and Davies 2010), which has seen in recent years a proliferation of collaborations with artists (such as in MSF); the adoption of creative and artistic practices as research methods beyond conventional visual research methods (VRM, Pink 2001, 2015; Rose [2001] 2016), including the adoption of dramaturgical performative methods (e.g. Latham 2003); and the rise of practice-based research and doctorates, where geographers develop creative skills and creative practitioners engage in academic research (De Leeuw and Hawkins 2017; Hawkins 2014).

This PhD sits at the intersection of disciplines, of faith communities, and of collaborative practices, and can be seen to be part of geography's creative (re)turn (De Leeuw and Hawkins 2017).[16] De Leeuw and Hawkins (2017) make a distinction between geographers collaborating with artists or deploying their own skilled artistic practices, and geographers who use a broader range of participatory and visual research methods (VRM) 'in a manner more clearly informed by social science methods as forms of record,

[16] This is the first PhD following an official-defined practice-based route in Geography at UCL, which was formally established by Claire Dwyer, during my second year.

archive, or speech acts, thus underplaying the aesthetic intent and possibilities' (2017:308).[17] While they emphasise that this boundary is not 'to be explicitly policed', they point to the need for further study of the significance of the political implications of the aesthetic of those geographies focusing on creative and artistic practices. This resonates with my experience as a documentary/fine art photographer with a parallel background in media studies and sociology, where I produce artwork where the affective capacities of engaging with the work have a role in illuminating a topic, both ethically and politically.

Hawkins incorporates contemporary arts theory to examine how 'geography-art relations' contribute to the (re)questioning of practices and concepts within shared thematic interests. Here, she identifies a particularly fertile area in the exploration of place, where 'changing epistemological assumptions' demand methods that allow for 'multi-sensuous and affective explorations' (2014:4), to which arts practices are particularly attuned to. This is central to my research as it is concerned with multi-sensuous suburban geographies of food and faith.

Arguably, my research is methodologically situated within what Rose and Tolia-Kelly (2012) identify as a site of emerging interdisciplinary research that privileges practice, in which two modes of enquiry, visuality and materiality, are in 'continual dialogue of co-constitution' (2012:4), responding both to the call for research to 'rematerialise' and to reflect on the 'more than representational' (Lorimer 2005). Rose and Tolia-Kelly affirm that '[t]his is research as *practices* (and methodologies) which remember that the politics of *doing* the visual are as material as matter is visual and that both are engaged beyond the ocular' (2012:3, emphasis in original). Here, materiality is not assumed to have fixed meanings and the concreteness of objects, 'but incorporates the poetics of rhythms, forms, textures, and the value of memory-matter engagement' (2012:5).

But what do arts research outcomes actually do? Drawing on O'Sullivan (2009), Hawkins argues that these perform 'art experiences as creative encounters with transformative potential' (2014:10). These might have aesthetic, signifying, affective and political effects, or a combination of all these. Here, creativity (and political responsibility) is dispersed; meaning it is constantly produced by engagements with the artwork, within various spatial and temporal contexts, including spaces of curation, exhibition, art critique

[17] See Pink (2001, 2015) and Rose ([2001] 2016) on the subject of VRM.

and critical analysis. Accordingly, I consider creativity, affective capacities, meaning, critical analysis and the political dimensions of creative practices in this research, not to rely on me or the creative outputs only, but to emerge as creative encounters within and beyond the research. As such, I view the creative practices of this PhD to be broader than those specifically engaged in making the three main *Spiritual Flavours* outputs.

This creative distribution draws attention not only to the value of the creative outputs, but also to the value of learning through 'doing' and the 'work in progress' of creative practices, as processes of discovery and embodied knowledge production (Barrett and Bolt 2010; Hawkins 2015). Barret (2010) argues that the embodied knowledge of the creative research is produced in action. Similarly, Hawkins (2015) analyses how her own 'unskilled' drawing in the field is productive of embodied geographical knowledge, and also how the aesthetics, material affordances and technologies of specific creative practices involved in making an artbook, for instance, enable processes of conceptual experimentation. This echoes my experience of developing the conceptual approaches for *Spiritual Flavours* through a set of initial creative practices, in dialogue with specific academic literature, as well as through consequent creative editing processes. This also resonates with what artist William Kentridge (2016) refers to as 'thinking in the material', where specific concepts and ideas are (re)questioned and transformed when meeting the materiality of tools, such as charcoal, ink or video. This creative encounter with the material is not always cognitive and might produce embodied knowledge through the development of craft skills (O'Connor 2005). Here, creative arts practices often entail a dialogue between processes of knowing and of not-knowing, where space is given to intuition (Beinart 2019), to skilled non-reflective embodied anticipation (O'Connor 2005), as well as to 'fold uncertainty' in how creative outputs produce and communicate research accounts (Dwyer and Davies 2010:8). This is not to suggest that traditional academic research is less creative or not materially embodied (Davies et al. 2005). However, it implies that the potential of arts practices for research lies in the way research subjects/questions are conceptualised and produced differently through the engagement with concrete and embodied artistic material practices and methods, which are not always cognitive or reflective, and which are performative of different creative encounters and effects. This includes the distributed affective capacities at play within these encounters (of doing, making, presenting, exhibiting, etc).

As such, the making of, but also the engagement with research visual creative outcomes

are materially enacted. The meaning and affective experience of the work is not fixed but performed within situated creative encounters such as in this research, for example, an exhibition at Tate Modern, a pot-luck book launch event with the participants, or the encounter within this thesis. This also correlates with the idea that research that produces creative outputs at the intersection of visual and material cultures is necessarily concerned with 'a situated eye, an attunement to the collective, multiple and embodied textures, sensibilities and productive meanings of the visual through the material, and vice versa.' (Rose and Tolia-Kelly 2012:4). Furthermore, it is in the situatedness of these visual/material (and embodied) creative encounters (within image production, analysis and visualisation) – as well as what these make visible (or not) – that the ethics, relations of positionality and politics of the research are enacted. Rose and Tolia-Kelly suggest that emerging research on visual/material practices is attentive to their consequences and ask:

> [W]hat is made visible? (And what is rendered invisible?) How is it made visible, exactly – what technologies are used, and how, and what are the specific qualities of the visual objects thus enacted? And what are the effects of those visualised materialities and materialised visualities, particularly for the people caught up in those practices, as researchers, and as those researched? (2012:9)

Relatedly, while arts practices within research are widely celebrated for engaging participants, often from marginalised groups (Dwyer and Davies 2010); and for taking social science research beyond academia, De Leeuw and Hawkins (2017) alert us of the risk of instrumentalization of arts practices to tick the boxes of impact agendas of neo-liberal universities. This involves engaging with the risks, responsibilities and politics within creative geographies, both in terms of the work and relationships involved in the making of these practices, as well as the potential effect and transformations they bring into the world (Hawkins 2015:245), which is often beyond the control of the researchers/artists.

As such, much of the focus of the empirical chapters is to critically examine how the creative practices and encounters in this research bring into being material/visual multi-faith understandings of the relationships between food and faith, and of suburban multi-faith conviviality through food practices. Here, the research not only reflects on the potential (and responsibilities) of the creative practices engaged in producing 'actively modest, contingent and partial' outcomes with ethical and political integrity at heart (Rose

and Tolia-Kelly 2012:3); but it also visually and materially contributes to ways of 'living differently in the world' (Hawkins 2015:264) by bringing people from different faith communities together. Thus, this research is informed by notions of performativity and contributes theoretical and empirical understandings of the value of Barad's posthuman materialist performativity, discussed in the next section, both for exploring the relationship between food and faith material practices, and for how geographers are thinking about (visual and material) creative practices as research practices.

Barad's materialist performativity

Notions of performativity provide a connecting thread with my previous work as an artist photographer and have conceptual implications relevant to this thesis. First, they underpin scholarship in various social science and artistic disciplines concerned with subjectivity, the body and embodied material and affective practices, which are central to my focus on material, affective and embodied geographies of food and religion (see chapter three). Second, they provide a rationale for the choice of methods and creative practices aimed at accessing and exploring such material practices and their embodied, sensorial and affective dimensions. Third, they help articulate a key methodological argument of this practice-led research, namely that it produces understandings of 'multi-faith' culinary religious practices that are inseparable from the material and embodied practices involved in the creative process itself. In this sense, notions of performativity highlight the kinds of knowledge that might emerge from the creative research practice, as well as to the ways in which different identities, subjectivities and bodies (for example, those of the research subjects/participants and of the artist/researcher), are co-constituted and performed. Thus, performativity is a productive idiom to critically think through positionality, the politics of bodies and ethical issues.

In this section, I trace the genealogy of performativity and how different scholarly disciplines have adopted it conceptually and methodologically, in order to clarify how I use this term and how it relates to my research focus and methodology. This is not intended as a complete analysis, but a schematic review with which I draw attention to specific writers (and disciplines) as emblematic of certain standpoints. In particular, I pay attention to the distinction between performativity understood as a process of becoming (e.g. Austin [1962] 1975; Butler [1990] 1999, 1993; Barad 2003; Pickering 2011), and the incorporation of performance and dramaturgical idioms within social science theories

and methods (e.g. Goffman [1956] 1959; Carlson 1996; Latham 2003). This has important implications for understanding knowledge production, agency, positionality and ethics, as well as the relationship between food and religious practices.

The notion of performativity is widely assumed to originate in the work of the philosopher John Austin, notably in *How to do Things with Words* ([1962] 1975). Austin argues that language brings reality into being by way of speech acts, which he terms 'performative utterances' or 'performatives' ([1962] 1975:6). For instance, he uses the example of a wedding to show how the uttering of the words "I do" or "I pronounce you husband and wife", creates a new social reality – marriage. In other words, marriage is achieved by the speech acts of the bride, the groom and the priest. However, Austin warns that, for speech acts to be effective, certain felicity conditions are required ([1962] 1975:14). For marriage, this means a religious setting (church), the necessary eligible actors (bride, groom and priest) and a legal framework that recognises the ceremony. Here, a parallel can be drawn to my research in various religious settings where, in addition to linguistic 'performatives', certain rituals involve 'material performatives', often with food, to achieve specific relations with the sacred, which also require certain conditions. For example, cooking in the Langar (kitchen) at the Gurdwara performs an act of solidarity and selfless service (seva), which has a particular (religious and material) significance in Sikhism.

Latterly, the feminist scholar Judith Butler, notably drawing on Austin and Derrida, introduces the notion of gender performativity in *Gender Trouble* ([1990] 1999). She argues that gender is not static, but constantly produced by the effect of (re)iterative language and discourse, which have the effect of stabilising or subverting gender norms. In *Bodies that Matter* (1993), Butler further links gender performativity to sex and the materialisation of bodies, which are continuously marked by the performative effect of the 'reiterative power of discourse to produce the phenomena that it regulates and constrains' (1993:2). Here, Butler's notion of performativity can be used to consider whether religious identities and bodies can be thought of as being performed, marked and materialised by religious discourse. This also leads to a question about the role of materiality, such as food, in performing and shaping religious identities and bodies.

Butler explicitly distinguishes between performance and performativity, as 'the former presumes a subject, but the latter contests the very notion of the subject' (Butler, Segal,

and Osborne 1994:33).[18]

> [I]t is unclear that there can be an "I" or a "we" who has not been submitted, subjected to gender, where gendering is, among other things, the differentiating relations by which speaking subjects come into being. Subjected to gender, but subjectivated by gender, the "I" never precedes nor follows the process of this gendering, but emerges only within and as the matrix of gender relations themselves. (Butler 1993:7)

This refutes the existence of an underlying, or 'backstage' subject, which exists outside language and who can choose its own identity.[19] This is ontologically different from understandings of identity and the self that draw on dramaturgical models, as exemplified by Goffman ([1956] 1959), which have informed much scholarship in the social sciences, including geography.[20] Within visual arts, the distinction between performance and performativity is further complicated by the theorisation of certain staged practices as 'performative'.[21] For example, in chapter six, see the discussion of Nichols' (2017) framework of the 'performative' mode of documentary filmmaking, which draws on performance, in contrast with Bruzzi's (2006:10) key argument that all documentary films are performative acts, 'whose truth comes into being at the moment of filming', which is informed by Austin and Butler's understanding of the performative.

In *Bodies that Matter*, Butler (1993) aims to move beyond a social constructionist approach to performativity that is reduced to language to a poststructuralist understanding of performativity that accounts for the significance of the materiality of the body and of the relationship between language and the body (Halewood 2003:18–20). However, in the preface, she admits her own struggles to keep a focus on the material body. Such

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[18] See Salih (2007) for a discussion of how Butler herself confuses this distinction at times in her own texts and how this has been a source of misinterpretation of her work.

[19] In the preface of *Bodies that matter* (1993), Butler recognizes the problem of cultural determinism that emerges with the negation of a pre-existing subject outside language and discourse. However, she explains agency as operating within processes of *resignification* – this is achieved through 'parody', in *Gender Trouble* ([1990] 1999)*;* and 'citationality' in *Bodies that matter* (1993), which are capable of subverting gender norms.

[20] See Thrift and Dewsbury (2000) for a classification of how human geography scholarship engages with different theorisations of performance and performativity.

[21] Within photography theory, scholars have explored the performance space of the photograph, as a historically staged medium (Grant 2010); notions of performative photography which draw on notions of performativity in relation to photographic practice within conceptual art (Iversen 2007); and literature exploring the relationship between photography, performativity and affect (Levin 2009).

theorising of the material has been criticised for being anthropocentric and not accounting for matter that is not inscribed by language, which 'leads to an assigning of a primary dynamism to the cultural, at the expense of the depth of the materiality of matter' (Halewood 2003:25). This, Halewood argues, reflects on the history of social sciences since their inception, as they are divorced from the material and biological world by defining as 'immaterial' its own object of study (2003:8). Furthermore, the concept of ontology 'has often been associated with essentialist claims that there is something fixed and neutral which operates behind the, supposedly, more superficial level of the social or the cultural' (2003:5). This explains the historical challenge for the social sciences to theorise and develop research methods that engage with materiality (e.g. Latour 1993; Halewood 2003), which are central for my research on the material practices of food and religion. Halewood also argues that, supporting critiques of Butler's account of materialisation for being anthropocentric, recent writers (e.g. Cheah 1996; Kirby 1997) stress 'the need to develop a non-essentialist ontology which recognizes the political implications of any attempt to account for the materiality of the body'; and that 'such accounts must retain the force of social constructionist descriptions of gender which have problematised essentialist accounts of 'sex'' (2003:6), while, at the same time, must overcome the distinctions of form/matter and nature/culture (2003:25).

In 2007, I became interested in notions of the body that problematised the above Cartesian binary (Blackman 2008). I wanted to explore non-cognitive, non-representational aspects of subjectivity, such as embodied and affective processes of becoming.[22] As such, I developed a trilogy of portrait projects – *Sleepless* (2008), *No Ma* (2009) and *Trans* (2011) – which have informed my understanding of the politics of bodies within creative practices, as well as more-than-representational (Lorimer 2005) approaches to researching food and faith.[23] *Sleepless* looks at people who sleep very little; *No Ma* is

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[22] According to Blackman and Venn (2010), affect is a register that can be characterised as non-representational, relational and performative and seeks to get at processes where 'bodies' become together (or not).

[23] Here, I use the term 'more-than-representational' (Lorimer 2005) to acknowledge that, although my research engages with non-representational dimensions of food, faith and visual practices – in terms of the material, embodied and affective relations these precipitate – as a photographer, I am also interested in the representational dimensions of visual work (for example, see my analysis of the *Meals* series in chapter four) and how these are defined through situated discursive and material practices, which are performative. As such, while the term non-representational is strongly associated, particularly within Human Geography, to debates that emerged in the nineties around non-representational theory through the work of Nigel Thrift (2007), in this thesis I do not aim to engage with the history of these debates. Instead, I simply refer to the

about women who are certain they will never be mothers, and; *Trans* is about how organ transplantation affects people's subjectivity.[24] Composed of a series portraits and biographical texts, each project showcases an embodied absence or experience that somehow transgresses the 'natural' or essentialist body and questions the dichotomies of body/mind, voluntary/involuntary, natural/cultural, as well as inside/outside. By contrasting totally different circumstances around the same phenomena, these projects prompt viewers to look at subjectivity in a relational way.

As in *Spiritual Flavours*, images were produced in a participatory and collaborative way, where qualitative interviews helped to propose and agree elements involved in the photographic process, which also informed the biographical texts. We decided on possible gestures (for example, holding objects), actions (for example, focusing on an emotion or taking the portrait after running a half-marathon), as well as locations (for example, a regular hospital waiting room or a canal boat where the person wanted to grow old). These were meaningful to the participants, but such significance was not directly represented in the images and was only made explicit in the biographical texts, displayed separately. As such, these projects examine the affective potential of a performative approach to portrait photography. This method does not assume that subjectivity is fixed, stable and available to be captured and 're-presented' by the camera but, rather, it recognises portrait photography as a relational process that enables particular bodies and subjectivities to emerge. This precipitated a shift in my practice towards a performative idiom. This does not necessarily imply a disavowal of the representational value of visual practice, but the recognition that such value is contingent on the (situated) creative practices involved, which enact bodies and realities, rather than simply re-present pre-existing ones.

This connects with the work of feminist philosopher and physicist Karen Barad (2003, 2007), who argues that 'it is possible to develop coherent philosophical positions that deny that there are representations on the one hand and ontologically separate entities awaiting representation on the other' (2003:808). Such ontological distinction characteristic of representationalism – namely, 'that which is represented is held to be

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non-representational in relation to non-cognitive, affective and embodied processes (Blackman and Venn 2010), and in relation to notions of material performativity, specifically through the work of Karen Barad (2003:804, see below).

[24] www.lauracuch.com

independent of all practices of representing (2003:804) – is, according to Barad, deeply ingrained in Western culture, giving 'excessive' power to language to define reality (2003:802). Instead, she reformulates the notion of performativity so that it 'shifts the focus from questions of correspondence between descriptions and reality (e.g., do they mirror nature or culture?) to matters of practices/doings/actions' (2003:802). Drawing on Bohr's experiments on quantum physics, she proposes a posthumanist and materialist account of performativity, where matter and phenomena (human and non-human, organic and inorganic) are 'co-constituted' through 'intra-actions' (2003:815). Barad introduces the neologism 'intra-action' – rather than 'interaction', which would imply pre-existent independent agencies – as signifying *'the mutual constitution of entangled agencies'* (2007:33, emphasis in original). She argues this conceptual shift is profound as '[i]t is through specific agential intra-actions that the boundaries and properties of the "components" of phenomena become determinate and that particular embodied concepts become meaningful' (2003:815). Barad understands the relationship between the material and the discursive as 'one of mutual entailment' and that 'materiality is always discursive' (2003:822). For Barad, discursive practices are not language bound, nor exclusively human, but are boundary-making practices. That is, 'discursive practices are the material conditions for making meaning' (2007:335). This is significant for critically thinking about both the ways in which food is involved in the enactment of faith and spirituality; as well as the role of the materiality of visual practices in producing knowledge and meanings, constituted through the discursive-material practices involved in the creative process. In this sense, Barad suggests that 'onto-epistem-ology – the study of practices of knowing in being' is a better framework for understanding 'how specific intra-actions matter' (2007:185) and adds that this necessitates an ethical dimension, 'something like an ethico-onto-epistem-ology – an appreciation of the intertwining of ethics, knowing, and being', since 'the becoming of the world is a deeply ethical matter' (2007:185). As such, Barad's ontological performativity, both helps conceptualise how practice-led research contributes to the production of phenomena and knowledge (within), and foregrounds questions around materiality, agency, positionality and ethics.

Within Barad's project, photographic practice may not be thought of as representing reality, but, rather, contributing to the production of reality, as it is involved in the causal intra-actions of discursive-material practices, which 'produce, rather than merely describe, the "subjects" and "objects" of knowledge practices' (2003:819). For instance,

the intra-active material-discursive practices involved in the project No Ma enact new boundaries of non-motherhood. These boundaries include, but are not limited to, using a new term ('No Ma') to categorise non-motherhood, and creating visual and affective human/non-human experiences of this category. In these continuous boundary-making processes (or 'agential cuts', in Barad's terms) particular embodied concepts of non-motherhood become meaningful (2003:815). The matter of 'No Ma' is locally bound through relational practices of self-assertion, comparison and differentiation, amongst other properties. Such boundaries become determinate through the intra-actions of discursive material practices that produce the project itself, as changing dynamic phenomena. These include the arrangement of the photographic prints in a gallery space; or the dynamic visibility of each woman's gesture of self-assertion, of looking into the camera, towards an audience who may be 'touched' by the accumulative effect of portraits and biographical narratives. This relates to an anecdote from an exhibition where a visitor told me that he felt "challenged, surrounded by all these 'looking women' in the same room, as if they created an entity that didn't exist before". In this sense, much of the content of this thesis is invested in analysing the causal effect of 'agential cuts' produced by intra-actions of human/non-human discursive-material practices involved in visual practice as research practice, which are the focus of the empirical chapters.

Thinking about my research through Barad's posthumanist performativity has important conceptual and methodological implications. First, it frames food and religious practices within the *intra-actions* of human and non-human *discursive-material* practices that perform (sacred) phenomena. These produce local boundaries, within which particular embodied spiritual/religious concepts (and other entangled concepts) become meaningful. Here, an important consideration is how Barad's ontology might call for a rethinking of the material/immaterial binary of the sacred/divine (see chapter three). Second, it provides an *onto-epistem-ological* rationale for the choice of methods and creative practices, aimed at being attentive and contributing to the *intra-actions* of *discursive-material practices* engaging food and religion, which perform new realities (phenomena) as part of a creative research process. Here, contribution to *intra-actions* of discursive material practices must be *ethical* through the choices made at every stage. Third, such *intra-actions*, which not only involve methods but also disciplinary approaches, determine the boundaries and properties that characterise the relationship between food and faith in each of the research/creative outputs, understood as relational

and dynamic phenomena. These also determine the various (changing) subjectivities, and (embodied) research knowledge performed through these outputs. Here, the various identities and subjectivities that emerge during the research process, including relations of positionality and of public engagement, are enacted through the intra-actions of human and non-human discursive-material practices involved, including those performed in the presentation of the creative outputs in various contexts.

In sum, Barad's posthuman performativity offers important insights for thinking critically about my research questions, methodology and practice. However, due to the complexity of the relationality of the terms in Barad's 'agential realist ontology', I do not aim to adhere to such terminology as the basis for the empirical analysis of this thesis. Instead, I will draw on specific key concepts and implications of her thinking throughout the thesis, mainly as tools for clarifying approaches and questioning specific assumptions and binaries entrenched in the representational tradition of Western culture (Barad 2003:806), within specific social sciences, and certain photographic and filmmaking genres. As such, from this point, I use the term performativity to refer to processes of becoming which engage discursive material practices, through which new bodies, subjectivities and phenomena are performed, enacted or come into being.

Barad's approach to performativity is part of wider debates within social research concerned with the performativity of method where the methodological implications of performativity are engaged and explored (e.g. Law 2004; Davies and Dwyer 2007; Lury and Wakeford 2012; e.g. Back and Puwar 2013). As sociologists John Law and John Urry point out (2004:7) methods have effects. In other words, methods in social and cultural research do not simply report on a 'reality' out there, but they inform and shape the very social on which they report. The performativity of method, as a critique of the representational idiom, is now so widely accepted that scholars have started to formulate it in more creative and generative terms. Drawing on 'inventive methods' (Lury and Wakeford 2012), Marres, Guggenheim and Wilkie propose a shift from performativity to 'inventing the social', to creatively, experimentally and intentionally 'contribute to the articulation of social phenomena' (2018a:25). Here, they propose to work in collaboration with creative disciplines such as architecture, arts and design in order to explore different ways of 'connecting representation and intervention' (2018b:22); but without ignoring the 'creativity of social life itself', as if it were 'a passive object of knowledge, control and optimisation' (2018b:24).

Research settings and relations of positionality

The participatory and collaborative character of the creative practice in this research has necessarily involved a methodological preoccupation with positionality and with the ethics and politics of participation. As the people who have contributed to the creative outputs are not anonymised, in addition to looking after their wellbeing during the making of the research/creative practices, I have paid particular attention to portraying people 'in good light', and enabling forms of participatory agency in the creative outputs. This has involved gaining consent and approval of edited materials (visual and textual), as well as inviting them to take part in any of the dissemination events. This reinforces the notion of distributed creativity suggested earlier, where certain editing practices have been performed in collaboration with the participants.

Given the ethical and political considerations of performativity explored above, this research necessarily performs a celebratory view of religious difference and conviviality through food, as opposed to enacting other more challenging and conflictive dimensions of both religious difference and creative participation. This is not to deny that these exist. Instead, I appreciate that some of these dimensions are somewhat visible in the creative outputs and others are enacted through gaps and silences in the research creative practices and outputs. Drawing on the work of Callon and Rabeharisoa (2004) who argue that silence should be considered central to the politics of participatory public spaces, Davies and Dwyer ask: 'In what ways do processes we stage oblige actors to perform particular manifestations of the public sphere and how do we make sense of silence in the context of qualitative research?' (2008:401). As such, an additional consideration, which links to the ethics and politics of representation and to my understanding of practice as performative, has been to recognise and contextualise the creative outcomes as emerging from a collaboration with participants and colleagues within this PhD.

Developing my research within the MSF project initially informed the comparative approach of my research, looking at different religious sites as case studies to explore suburban geographies of religion (see Dwyer 2015a, 2015b; Dwyer et al. 2013). While the faith communities involved are very different in history, culture, size, and levels of integration with the locality, the use of comparison in my research is treated methodologically as a productive, 'adventurous and creative' research practice (Deville, Guggenheim, and Hrdlicková 2016:27); one that is 'generative' of new concepts (and also, significantly in my case, of affective experiences within creative encounters), and is

productive of singularity and difference (Robinson 2016a, 2016b). Here, the research has not aimed to achieve symmetric comparisons between different faith communities, but different comparative formats have emerged through the rationale and specific discursive-material affordances of a range of creative engagements across the various settings.

These engagements have varied widely in terms of the intensity, temporality, breadth and the relationships developed across the different religious communities, which is partly as a result of what Hannerz (2003:201) refers to as 'being there… and there… and there!', when doing a multi-sited ethnographic research project. Here, working with seven different communities meant I had to spread out my presence and research practice across their various locations and also, at a later stage, across people's homes. The range of my engagements have also varied in response to the characteristics of each community, as well as the opportunities and challenges that have emerged within these. These depended on the different types of events they held, the changing levels of access I was granted within them, the fluctuations in ongoing contact, and the multiple and changing relations of positionality. Overall, I engaged in everyday religious practices and significant religious events; cultural and religious celebrations in the locality and beyond; cooking sessions in worship places and people's homes and; a series of public engagement events, both produced by my research and MSF (involving both religious and local communities, as well as national and international audiences). These ongoing engagements, and especially those relating to processes of exchange with the communities, often shaped the dynamic and co-constituted relations of positionality between the researcher(s)/artist(s) and the research participants at different times, with different people and within different communities. Here, I refer to relations of positionality (rather than just positionality) to emphasise my understanding of positionality within Barad's notion of performativity, where the properties and boundaries of human/non-human entities do not precede the experiments or phenomena, but are co-constituted by the intra-actions within the phenomena they contribute to determine. These are necessarily situated (both materially and discursively) and, importantly, emergent.

In the next section, I analyse situated opportunities and relations of positionality performed within specific creative practices. However, I want to discuss here some general considerations, which played out differently in various contexts. These demonstrate how (creative) material practices within the research dynamically shape and

transform the subjectivities and bodies of those involved; and in doing so, affect the relationships, ethics and politics performed. For example, I often visited and moved across different religious spaces and events on the same day (see also Hyacinth 2019:36). This made apparent how my co-constituted subjectivity and my relations of positionality across various research settings were transformed through embodied and affective material practices. These involved, crucially, the gendered wearing and changing of clothes in different religious settings. Here, I got used to wearing hijab and loose clothes to attend the mosque; or a colourful scarf to cover my head to attend the Gurdwara; and colourful clothes to go to the Hindu temple; as well as shoes that were easy to remove and put on in all three. These became part of my morning wardrobe decisions, which also needed to marry with those imposed by my photographic and filmic practice, such as wearing garments with resistant fabric and easy access pockets. I remember the strange feeling of putting on the hijab in the middle of the street, which became a routine, usually between West Ealing rail station and the WLIC, and of removing it again when turning into Ealing Broadway, after leaving the mosque on my way to the Hindu Temple. I recall wondering what people in the street might think when they saw me put and remove the hijab. I also remember interrogating my own contradictory experience and the politics of being perceived as Muslim in the street without being Muslim. As such, my various performed identities and subjectivities were always inevitably blended, multiple and hybrid.

At first, when my hijab arrangement looked clumsy, people at the mosque clearly recognized I was not Muslim. However, as I improved my skills, some people assumed I was Muslim and those who knew me started complimenting how I looked with the hijab. Once, one of the trustees exclaimed that I had become part of the community and that they loved having me around and taking pictures in the entire mosque, even in the men's areas! An elder added that this was because I "had become institutionalized", because I wore the right clothes and had a correct and discrete attitude, such as avoiding men's eye contact while taking pictures during prayers. This exemplifies changing perceptions of my position from 'outsider' to 'insider' (Merriam et al. 2001), by gradually adopting gendered clothing and behaviour norms. However, this intersected with other relations of positionality associated with my photographic activity, which placed me outside the religious sphere, but also gave me greater access to areas and activities that women in the mosque did not have access to. Thus, complicating categorisations of 'insider/outsider'.

Gregson and Rose (2000:448) reflect on the performative effect of their research for changing their everyday subjectivities (outside their academic work) through, for example, changes in their preferences of purchasing patterns, thus demonstrating 'the interweavings, the inseparabilities, and the uncertainties of academic and everyday subjectivities'. While they mainly articulate these changes through cognitive practices, in my experience of this research, the changes of my subjectivity (also seeping into my life) were performed through sensuous, embodied, material practices. Some of these are less obvious than clothing, but also conditioned my embodied presence and experience of the research (see Paterson 2009). For example, using different means of transport to get to Ealing and to move across the religious sites (i.e., driving vs. using public transport, depending on parking restrictions) not only provided different embodied experiences of the geographical location of these religious sites – these often attract people from across and outside London, such as the Hindu temple – but also enabled the development of certain relationships with members of the communities. For example, if driving, I always waited until the end of a Tisch (the Rabbi's dinner for the community) to offer Rabbi Janet a lift home. This was on my way back to South East London and gave us space for conversation. In another context, a worshipper from the Hindu temple invited me to a massive Pongal (harvest) celebration with a Tamil community in a remote place in south Croydon, as we could get there with my car. Similarly, the various photographic equipment I carried around also shaped my experience of being in these places (not least my body fitness), as well as how I was (professionally) perceived by the people within these communities. Significantly for this PhD, my body and relations of positionality fluctuated through the various eating practices I took part in these communities, such as, for example, the aforementioned Tish, where I often contributed food, or having the regular sambar, dahl and rice dish at 11.30pm at the Hindu temple. I engaged in conversations about the traditions at the temple, but also answered questions about my research, my background, my food culture or how far I lived from Ealing – 17 miles. This was perceived as proof of my commitment to the research, given I had to face a 1h15min commute after midnight, while still carrying the heavy photographic gear.

My relations of positionality also felt distributed by the connections with the people from the MSF team, which performed a certain resonance, or echo, across the field, forming a variable and multiple body of research. As a team, we were collectively contributing to the enactment of discursive-material practices and boundary-making that determined

plural meanings of multi-faith suburban creativity. For example, I started attending a regular monthly sisters' class and lunch with an MSF research colleague. As such, my presence was initially associated with hers. For a while, we formed the same (plural) research body, which folded simultaneous diverse relations of positionality, as she is Muslim of Bangladeshi background, while I'm not religious (although brought up Catholic) and from Spain. Being Muslim, my colleague was pressured by the community to adhere more strictly to Islam, while they did not have any such expectations from me. When I continued going to the mosque by myself, people asked for her with enthusiasm for a long time. This was also the case in other faith communities where my identity and relations of positionality were intrinsically associated to other team members. Equally, some participants in my projects have taken part in other MSF creative projects. As a team, we connected each other with different people and increased our embodied research presence and visibility across different sites. This also extended a network of trust by association to the project, which made the initial and ongoing access easier.

Natalie Hyacinth (2019), the other doctoral researcher in the team, critically analyses her research positionality, where race, nationality and gender played an important role in her relationship with people in some of these communities. However, in my own research, the most significant dimension has been my role as a photographer/artist, which has taken priority over other identity dimensions. Scholars within various social science disciplines – e.g. Visual Anthropology (e.g. Pink 2001, 2006, 2012; Pinney 1990; Wright 2003, 2018), Visual Sociology (e.g. Becker 1974, 1981; Chaplin [1994] 2002; Harper 2012; Jon 1998; Knowles and Sweetman 2004), and visual methods within Geography (e.g. Rose 2014, [2001] 2016; Rose and Tolia-Kelly 2012; Sidaway 2002) – have written about using photography to do research in different contexts. These have reflected on debates around the legacies of colonialism, the complex relationship between photography and truth, the extensive critiques to forms of lens-based processes of objectification, exploitation and othering, as well as critiques to ocular centrism. Some of these could be seen as relevant for my ongoing photographic practice in these communities, particularly regarding gender and race positionality, for example, at the mosque and the Hindu Temple. However, in this chapter, I argue for an understanding of relations of positionality as dynamic and constantly emerging, through the intra-actions of discursive-material practices. In my research, what became crucial in the various religious settings was to develop relationships of exchange, where the communities received some of my work

back. These relationships were performative in granting me access to community spaces and events and shaped the way people responded to my presence and work (I come back to this below, within the analysis of creative practices).

Nonetheless, I did have some anxiety around how not being religious might be perceived by the different communities. I was always afraid that people might not want to share with or trust someone who does not have a religious belief or a direct connection with the divine. As such, when people asked me about my religious identity, I usually replied that I was brought-up Catholic. There was a silence implied in my answer. However, at least, it indicated that I had a religious education and understanding. It also shifted the focus of the question towards its cultural dimension, rather than on spirituality and belief. I responded to further questions by clarifying I did not practice anymore, which also moved the focus towards notions of religion as practiced, in line with the theoretical approach of this research (see chapter three).

My Catholic upbringing involved a mixed religious and secular environment. It was infused with positive, but also quite negative experiences with religious institutions by members of my family, which influenced my views of religious institutions as potentially restrictive and oppressive. In this respect, doing this research, I have considered myself really fortunate for having had the opportunity to access, experience and be moved (sensorially, materially, affectively and personally) by some of the embodied qualities of being in these worship spaces and engaging with their activities with a focus on materiality and practice. I took so many pictures in some of these worship places, such as the mosque, that I became attached to the embodied experience of being there and meeting regular worshippers. However, while I often felt at home within these communities, I never felt I belonged or that (in most cases) I was seen to belong to these communities. This was partly, in some cases such as the Hindu temple, because of racial and cultural differences, but mainly because I normally always stood out as practicing photography (as opposed to practicing religion).

Research methods and practices

In this section I discuss the different creative practices and methods I undertook throughout the research. I start with a range of different sets of initial/ongoing image-making practices across different worship spaces. These contributed to my understanding of the centrality of food within religious practices and informed the methodological

development of *Spiritual Flavours*. Here, I pay attention to how these creative practices worked to explore and produce embodied, sensorial and affective experiences of religious material practices, which I further developed with a focus on the interrelationship between food and material religious practices. This is followed by an overview of the creative encounters involved in making and sharing the *Spiritual Flavours* project (further analysed in chapters four, five and six), including creative practices in people's homes; processes of composing, editing and curating the various creative outputs; as well as creative encounters as part of public engagement events. I also analyse in more detail how practices of exchange within specific faith communities shaped my relationships within these settings, which were pivotal for developing *Spiritual Flavours*.

These sets of practices combined image-making with more traditional social sciences methods, such as interviews, participant observation and participatory action research (PAR), in rather unstructured and flexible ways, or what Kimbell refers to 'bastardised methodologies' (Baker 2009:198; cited in Dwyer and Davies 2010:92). Kimbell's aesthetic and creative approach to research demands some initial uncertainty around the what, how and why of her creative practices (Kimbell 2011:87). Similarly, my choice of creative methods was not instrumentally premeditated but emerged within the development of various visual practices, influenced by my experience in documentary and fine arts photography. Although I present these as separate sets of creative practices, many were simultaneous and there were not always clear-cut boundaries between them.

Image-making within worship spaces

<u>Photographing interiors</u>

Soon after I started my PhD, an opportunity came up to co-write a paper for the journal *Interiors* with Making Suburban Faith co-investigator David Gilbert and other members of the team, which aimed to compare the architecture of two of the buildings of the different faith communities involved in the project: St Thomas the Apostle Church and ECC (Gilbert et al. 2015). With both buildings dating from the 1930s – a carefully designed Anglican church and an adapted 'atmospheric' cinema – the paper aimed to reflect on how these two different Christian communities related practically and theologically with these very different types of architecture. It also aimed to visually engage with the materiality of such places, by contrasting their interiors. As such, I spent time photographing each of the spaces, which allowed me to develop a visual relationship

with their spatial structure, furniture and materiality. I used a professional digital single lens reflex (DSLR) camera with a zoom lens (24-105mm) to ensure I could take a range of framings. These covered very wide-angle pictures that provided a feel for the airiness, capacity and scale of these spaces, to medium images of specific structural elements, furniture and decorative arrangements; to close-up shots of material details (see Fig. 30 to Fig. 42). Through this photographic practice I became aware that both communities had a significant emotional engagement with each building, which was demonstrated and produced through practices of decoration and maintenance.

This experience encouraged me to consolidate the visual practice of photographing interiors of the worship spaces, both as a research focus and as a method. It became a lens through which I developed an understanding about the spatial and material histories of these worship spaces. I also became sensitised towards the aesthetic and affective capacities of these interiors and their co-constituted visuality/materiality, which resonates with Beatriz Colomina's idea that 'buildings are not simply the subject or content of images but operate to produce images' (Christenson 2017:3).[25] I developed an intention of balancing my research concerns (providing enough detail for understanding the spaces and the activities within them) and a creative aesthetic pursuit (achieving a quality, a certain 'temperament' or 'mood' that might suggest an affective engagement with these spaces).

[25] There is a substantial amount of literature exploring how photography has produced original understandings, and aesthetic experiences of buildings and interiors, which have often influenced the practice of architecture and interior design itself (e.g. Pelizzari and Scrivano 2011; Redstone 2014; Pardo and Redstone 2014; Christenson 2017).

Fig. 30 Main hall at the Ealing Christian Centre (David et al. 2015:214)

Fig. 31 St Thomas the Apostle Church (David et al. 2015:215)

Fig. 32 St Thomas the Apostle Church (David et al. 2015:217)

Fig. 33 St Thomas the Apostle Church (David et al. 2015:217)

Fig. 34 Old ticket office at the Ealing Christian Centre (David et al. 2015:228)

Fig. 35 Main hall at the Ealing Christian Centre (David et al. 2015:219)

Fig. 36 Font in St Thomas the Apostle Church (David et al. 2015:221)

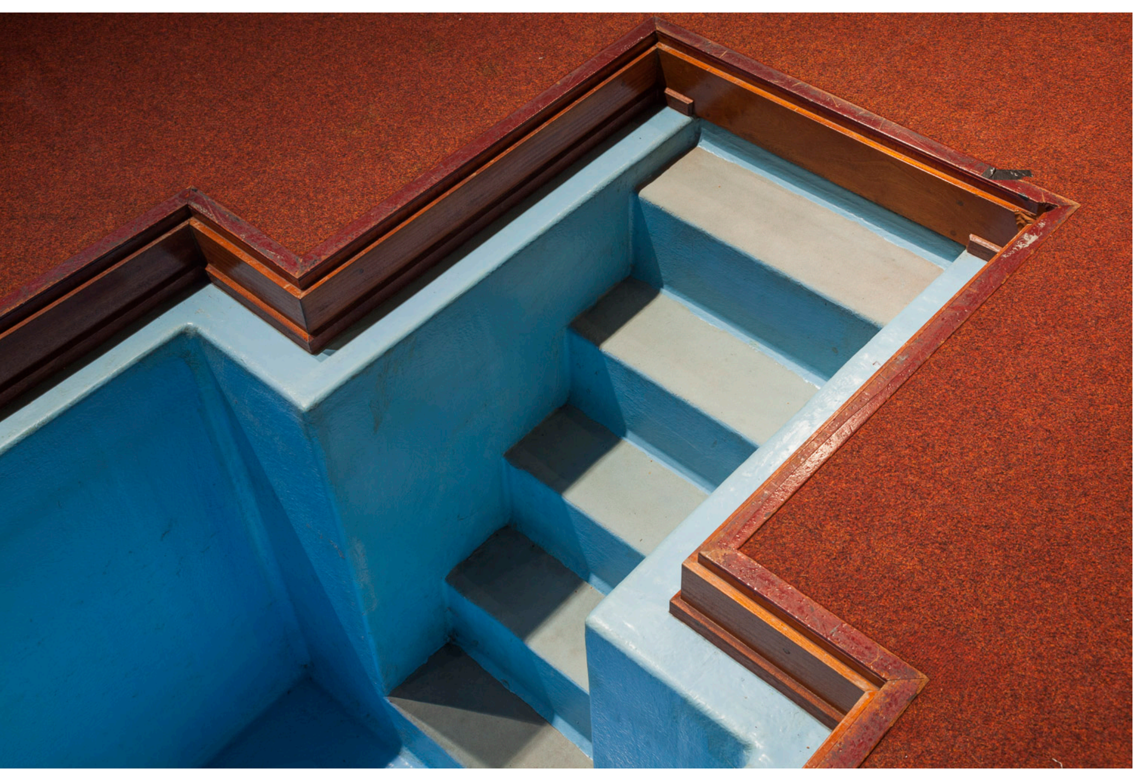

Fig. 37 Ealing Christian Centre's baptismal pool (David et al. 2015:221)

Fig. 38 Ceiling detail at Ealing Christian Centre (David et al. 2015:224)

Fig. 39 Ceiling detail at St Thomas the Apostle Church (David et al. 2015:224)

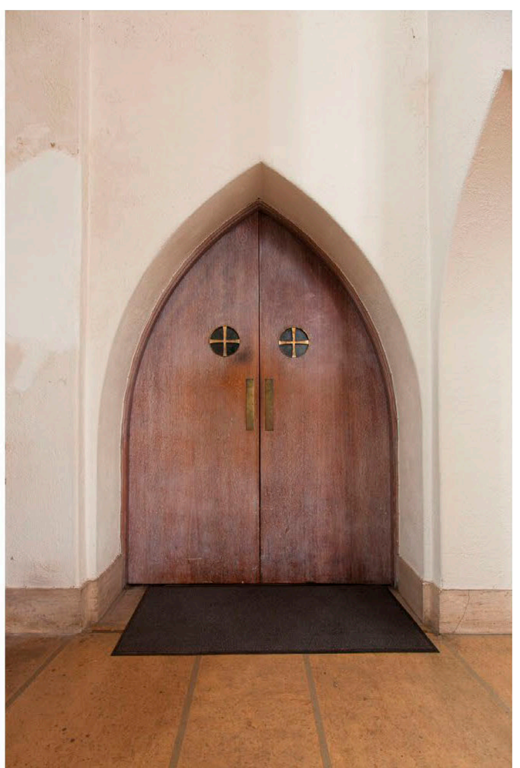
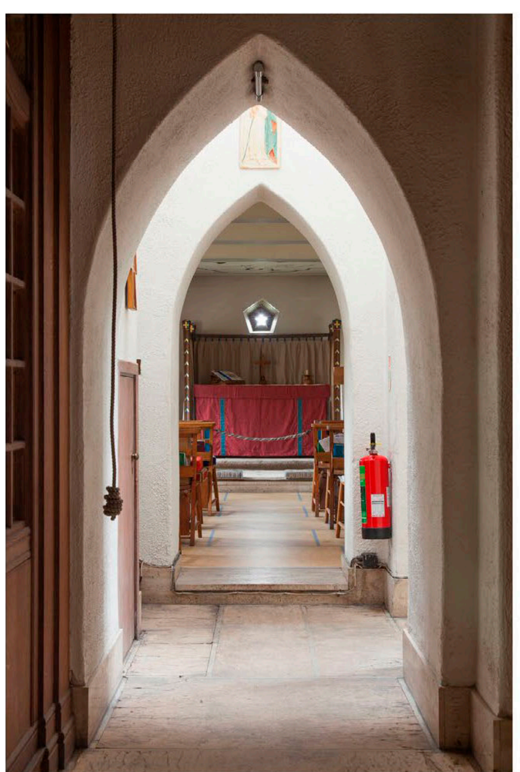
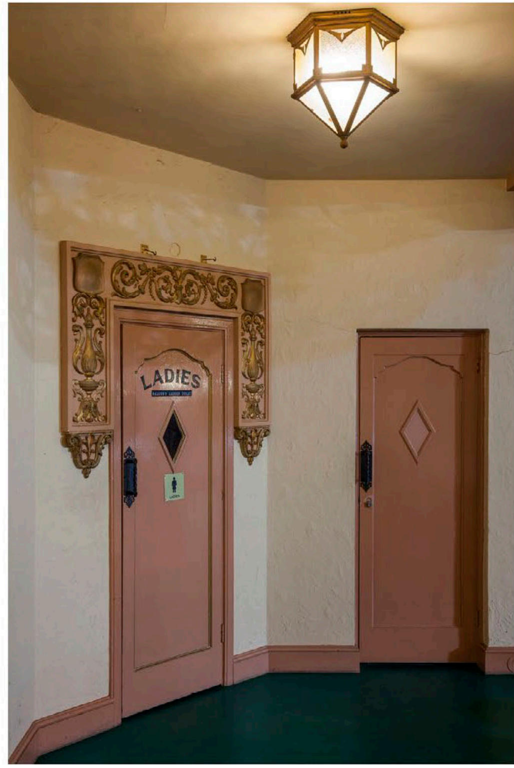

Fig. 40 Architecture and decorative features at ECC and St Thomas the Apostle Church (David et al. 2015:226)

Fig. 41 Ealing Christian Centre café (David et al. 2015:231)

Fig. 42 Palm Sunday at St Thomas the Apostle Church (David et al. 2015:231)

I further developed such focus by photographing the interiors of, an adapted warehouse WLIC (see Fig. 43 to Fig. 52). I no longer used my DSLR, but a new smaller mirrorless camera with high quality manual fixed focal-length lenses (35mm and 50mm). This increased image resolution and detail, as well as visual uniformity through the lenses fixed angle of view and perception of depth. I also incorporated a methodological approach of repeatedly photographing the same spaces and furniture over time, appreciating changes and variations. I became attentive to the sensorial and embodied experience of the space, including areas that one would not normally pay attention to, which, nonetheless, contribute to the affective, personal and social experience of religious spaces (see Fig. 49, for example, which engages with the embodied experience of the mosque's central staircase, its materiality and architecture).[26] I noticed the material arrangements that revealed various rhythms and temporalities of spiritual and social practices within these spaces, and aimed to visualise the collision of permanent and worn materials with unfixed objects involved in everyday religious/social practices (see Fig. 43 to Fig. 50). Choosing where to position the camera was crucial for making visible and emphasising certain material arrangements – for example, I remember struggling to find a point of view (i.e., a material/visual arrangement) that would translate my sensory experience of the men's gym (see Fig. 51; Fig. 52). As I could tilt the back monitor and electronically zoom in the display to check the focus, I was able to work without looking through the viewfinder which enabled me to keep observant of things going on around me. This constituted a new embodied way of photographing for me. Although I was used to photographing (handheld) at waist level with a twin-lens Rolleiflex film camera (for example, to produce *Sleepless*, *No Ma* and *Trans*), working with this mirrorless camera was different. I mostly used a wireless remote to trigger the shutter of the camera mounted on a tripod. This meant I could work separately from the camera, which co-constituted a much freer relation of positionality and subjectivity vis-à-vis this technology and my experience of the space, as well as other people's perception of my practice, potentially

[26] This methodological approach is informed by previous personal projects. For example, I photographed a house after I moved out. The owners allowed me to regularly return and take pictures of the refurbishing of the place, capturing material changes of the same exact bits of walls and corners. This reconnected me and transformed my embodied experience of that physical space, listening to the recurrent sounds from the street and neighbours and recognising old and new smells; a process of both reviving and unmaking the home I missed.

more fluid and uncertain of exactly how and when I was photographing.[27]

While ‘repeat photography’ or ‘rephotography’ (Rieger 1996) has been identified as a visual research method, its significance is associated to identifying social change across the images, often ignoring the performative effect (and value) of developing embodied and affective relationships with the ‘rephotographed’ subject – the material environment of worship spaces in this case – over time, through repetition and permutation. This also ignores the potential of these images as objects that contribute to affective relations within situated discursive-material practices of creative encounters (as argued above). In those worship spaces where I was left alone to take pictures, the process of ‘rephotography’ allowed me to develop a strong personal and emotional relationship with the interiors; one that might partly resonate with the emotional relationship that devotees develop with these spaces, when organising, arranging and restoring their furniture and material features, including those involved in food practices. This consolidated as the methodological and conceptual approach of the *Spiritual Flavours Meals* series (see chapter four).

[27] This also became my embodied method for photographing interiors, religious material culture and dishes at people’s homes, as part of *Spiritual Flavours*.

Fig. 43 Men’s praying area at the West London Islamic Centre

Fig. 44 Men’s praying area at the West London Islamic Centre

Fig. 45 Downstairs hall by the kitchen at the West London Islamic Centre

Fig. 46 Downstairs hall by the kitchen at the West London Islamic Centre

Fig. 47 Women’s praying area at the West London Islamic Centre

Fig. 48 Women’s praying area at the West London Islamic Centre

Fig. 49 Central staircase at the West London Islamic Centre

Fig. 50 Children's Eid celebration meal organised by the Jennah Youth club in the upstairs hall at the West London Islamic Centre, 2017

Fig. 51 Gym at the West London Islamic Centre

Fig. 52 Gym at the West London Islamic Centre

Photographing, filming and helping behind the scenes

Photographing interiors and being visibly equipped with a camera and a tripod, legitimised my presence in worship settings, particularly during quieter times. I was able to do participant observation, alongside my creative practice, observing the activities taking place 'behind the scenes' of the more intense and eventful times. I paid attention to the rhythms of attendance and of different material activities that take place at different times, as well as their organisation and some of the politics involved. These partly rely on the work of employees, but largely on creative voluntary work, which is often invisible or unrecognised by the wider congregation.

The significance of these creative material practices is a focus of MSF (Gilbert et al. 2019) and became central to my research, as I initially aimed to explore whether devotees experience worship spaces as 'home' (Blunt 2004; Bonnerjee et al. 2012) through their involvement in caring, maintaining and creative material practices.[28] As such, I initiated a visual project on 'behind the scenes' material activities, such as cleaning, caretaking, maintaining, cooking and decorating, which I termed *Looking After Faith*. I was interested in looking at: skill levels and professionalism; the hierarchical and gendered relationships involved; the sensorial and embodied dimensions of these practices, and whether they have a spiritual or 'numinous' quality (Otto 1917); thus, exploring the material boundaries (or blurring) between the sacred and non-sacred.[29] To this end, I used film to explore the sounds, motion, and rhythm of these embodied practices; and photography to visualise their material and spatial contexts. This did not become a finished project but, rather, an initial audio-visual approximation of the performance of material caring, creativity and maintenance within worship spaces, which I later incorporated as a key theme in *Spiritual Flavours*.

The reason for using the aforementioned mirrorless camera was being able to produce both high quality photographs and film. With no prior experience in moving image, the filming of caring and creative practices was ideal for developing my skills. The repetitive nature of these activities meant that I could explore and test different options and strategies (for example, exposure settings, types of frames, duration, handheld vs tripod,

[28] Scholars (e.g. Blunt and Dowling 2006; Watson 2009) suggest that creative and material practices often contribute to processes of home-making, particularly within migrant communities.

[29] See chapter three for a discussion on the complex relationship between materiality and immateriality within geographies of faith and the academic interest within religious studies in vernacular, everyday and material religion.

etc.) by repeatedly filming the same actions (e.g., flower garland making – see Fig. 53). Additionally, I could review the footage at home and plan to film the same activities on a different day. For example, I filmed a group of women that clean OLSJ church every week. After reviewing the footage, I planned much better points of view to emphasise the embodied, rhythmic and meditative quality of this activity, by producing visually rhythmic shots of embodied motion (e.g., placing the camera at the centre of the isle, from the back, to see the swaying of the mop from side to side, and the reflection of the wet floor; or horizontally filling the frame with consecutive bench rows, from a low perspective, to film a forward-bent woman sliding in and out of the frame, in each direction, getting slightly closer to the camera at every bench – see Fig. 54). Some of this footage became part of the *Spiritual Flavours* film. I also filmed food preparations at OLSJ, as part of the weekly soup kitchen (see Fig. 55), which was an excellent training for filming food preparation in general, but also for filming by myself the cooking of a priests' dinner, in that same kitchen, for the *Spiritual Flavours* film.

As part of the methodology of *Looking After Faith*, I engaged in doing many of these material practices myself, hanging out at the worship places and helping out, especially when these related to food. These included setting the table and cooking food for various events at ECC; serving food for the homeless at OLSJ; peeling vegetables at SKTAT; and washing dishes at the Gurdwara, ECC and OLJS. By actively helping out (and not just taking pictures), I gained wider acceptance amongst the leaders and worshippers in these communities. Here, my subjectivity and that of worshippers were co-constituted through skills exchange and the experience of fellowship from doing repetitive embodied actions together, which further legitimised my presence in these spaces. Furthermore, I also gained embodied knowledge of these activities, which later influenced the *Spiritual Flavours* film's emphasis on the embodied and rhythmic dimensions of repetitive cooking and praying (see the section on the film's focus on embodied practices in chapter six).

Finally, this ongoing body of work allowed me to develop relationships with the faith communities' gatekeepers, who had a central role as enablers of my creative practice (Sanghera and Thapar-Björkert 2008), and with the worshippers who perform these practices on a regular basis. Many of these people became the participants of *Spiritual Flavours*.

Fig. 53 Stills from footage of the flower garland making at SKTAT

Fig. 54 Stills from footage of the cleaning at Our Lady and St Joseph Church

Fig. 55 Stills from footage of the soup kitchen at Our Lady and St Joseph Church

Photographing religious celebrations and events

Since I first visited the faith communities, I started taking pictures of their celebrations and rituals. With a longstanding professional experience of documentary photography (e.g., cultural and music events, weddings, industrial reportage, urban photography) it was natural to document the life and religious practices within these communities. This involved a wide range of activities, from everyday mundane religious practices, such as regular religious services and social activities, to a litany of significant religious events, such as the Hindu Temple's annual Chariot Ther Festival, which attracts thousands of people. I also photographed outreach events and local/neighbouring religious and cultural events, such as Eid prayers in Ealing Common or the Shree Jalaram Mandir Greenford's Holi festivities.[30]

Taking pictures in these communities became my own way of participating in their activities and developing an understanding of their spiritual, and particularly material, practices. Within the framework of visual ethnography, the ethnographer is expected to study the meaning of the rituals, and the visual cultures of the communities performing them (Pink [2007] 2011). Often, however, I documented events without much prior knowledge about them (although always adhering to the communities' photographic codes of practice) and, in so doing, I aimed to gain understanding of these activities. At SKTAT, I often enquired about the theological meaning of specific rituals and material practices and found that many worshippers were unsure and suggested I speak with the Iyers (priests). Some people relate to these rituals for what they do, materially, without fully engaging with their theological meaning. This connected with my photographic focus on their sensorial, material and embodied qualities, also partly achieved through my choice of lens, framing and composition. Here, I used a range of techniques in different contexts. In general, during indoor religious celebrations I avoided disrupting with the flash, which meant I often used a tripod to photograph the atmosphere with slow shutter speeds or with high ISO (e.g., New Year's Eve celebration at ECC – see Fig. 28, Fig. 29 in chapter one). However, I normally used flash in festival and religious activities outdoors, as well as indoor social/community events, to mitigate challenging lighting conditions and to freeze motion (e.g., performers at the SKTAT's annual Chariot Ther Festival – (see Fig. 56 to Fig. 61).

[30] https://makingsuburbanfaith.wordpress.com/2017/04/04/shree-jalaram-mandir-greenford-holi-festival/

Throughout this research, I have produced an archive of thousands of pictures, with the Hindu temple and the mosque being the sites I photographed the most. I took many of these images without a specific creative intention, beyond documenting the lives of these communities, and as a process of discovery and knowledge production. A few of these images made it to the *Spiritual Flavours* cookbook and to some community and MSF publications (e.g. Gilbert et al. 2019). As such, the life and ethical responsibility for this archive extends beyond this PhD.

A related ethical issue was obtaining consent. Due to the fact that these communities often attract hundreds, sometimes thousands, of people in one day, consent at an individual level was impossible but, rather, negotiated with religious leaders, trustees, personnel, gatekeepers, worshippers who organised activities, etc. Except certain women at the mosque and a group of young girls at SKTAT who preferred not to be photographed, nobody objected. My practice co-constituted them as photographic subjects and, I can only imagine, this must have been irritating at times for some. However, it was always tolerated and, often, people seemed to enjoy the attention. Such continuous photographic practice was key in developing personal relationships over time, particularly through creative practices of exchange.

Fig. 56 SKTAT’s annual Chariot Ther Festival, 2015

Fig. 57 SKTAT’s annual Chariot Ther Festival parade, 2015

Fig. 58 SKTAT's annual Chariot Ther Festival parade, 2017

Fig. 59 SKTAT's annual Chariot Ther Festival parade, 2017

Fig. 60 SKTAT’s annual Chariot Ther Festival parade, 2017

Fig. 61 SKTAT’s annual Chariot Ther Festival parade, 2017

Interviewing, cooking and image-making in people's homes

The development of the *Spiritual Flavours* film and book shifted the focus from the community spaces to worshippers' domestic cooking and religious practices. Through interviews and cooking sessions, I aimed to pay attention to affective relationships with food, as a vehicle to explore notions of home, family, tradition, migration, adaptation, past and future aspirations and belief. This also shifted my photographic and film approach from making images of existing spaces, activities and events, to photographing and filming processes performed for the camera, with a staged dimension. This included, for example, (repeated) cooking actions, served dishes and table arrangements, as well as holding or displaying objects with different backgrounds. This might appear to echo the shift I described earlier from a representational idiom to a performative one. However, within Barad's ontological understanding of performativity, photographic and film practices are always performative, regardless of the degree of staginess of the lens-based subject.[31] As an arts photographer, I am keen to make visible the creative process and the relationships of material and social exchange involved in photographic practices, which occasion the 'representations' in the work (Durden and Richardson 2000). In this respect, all of the *Spiritual Flavours* outputs have a recognisable context of production, if only through their methodological comparative (or typological) approach.[32] Furthermore, the combination of interviewing, cooking and image-making implies a collaborative context and a doubling of my research process's performative effect, contributing to the achievement of both the dishes and the creative outputs – in chapters five and six, I analyse the performativity of these creative practices for exploring the relationship between food and faith. Such creative practices within people's homes also precipitated changing relations of positionality, where multiple subjectivities emerged: those of participant/cook and of researcher/artist, involving collaborative relations; those of expert and apprentice, involving relations of skills exchange; those of host and guest, involving relations of hospitality; those of interviewer and interviewee, involving 'confessional' relations (Finn 2004); as well as other co-constituted subjectivities informed by apprehensions of age, gender, race, religious values, work, marital status, etc.

Performing interviews during cooking sessions can be productive for accessing certain

[31] The tension between photography's indexicality and its performative character (Green 2003) is a fascinating subject that exceeds the scope of this PhD (see also Iversen 2007).

[32] See chapter three for an account of the significance the Bechers' typological work and influence.

memories through the sensorial and affective capacities of food, triggering specific topics and emotions (Longhurst, Johnston, and Ho 2009). However, in my experience, it often also introduced disruption, dispersion, and much longer interview recordings. So, separating the initial interview from the cooking session was more practical and, often, necessary for choosing the dishes (see chapter five) – albeit that this removed the material agency of cooking during interviews (e.g. Hitchings and Jones 2004). Instead, cooking sessions at people's homes were conducive for go-along informal conversations about their domestic religious practices, while being shown around and taking pictures of the religious spaces and material culture (Kusenbach 2003).

Some of these sessions were long, depending on the cooking process involved, and we shared food and learned about each other (Johnston and Longhurst 2012). This further developed my relationship with participants to a much more personal level; thus, gradually dissolving straightforward categorisations of positionality. Moreover, in the majority of cooking and interview sessions, I left people's homes with Tupperware containers full of food, blurring boundaries between my academic and personal life, through food sharing and consumption.

Composing, editing, curating

The *Spiritual Flavours* project involved lengthy periods of conceptualising through making, for example through the composition of the book, the editing of the film, by curating exhibitions, and through cooking. These allowed for reshuffling, reverberating, stretching, breaking, and transforming concepts and their experience, within creative encounters with food and the produced visual materials. For example, by designing the *Spiritual Flavours* book in collaboration with Joanna Brinton, I explored the relationship between food and faith through, for example, the choice of materials, the structure and layout, the relationship between images and text, the choice of typography and the numbering of the book edition (see chapter five). Here, it is possible to adapt the notion of *thinking* in the material (Kentridge 2016), to *comparing* in the material to refer back to the generative comparative approach of my creative practices, which is achieved through the material possibilities of specific creative outputs. For example, I used the split-screen technique in the film to juxtapose the three protagonists' embodied practices of cooking and I gave the same formal treatment to all of the recipes and participants in the book.

It is often through processes of thinking and comparing in the material that creative

outputs come into being, such as the series *Meals*, which emerged from curating an exhibition, as part of the Festival of Political Photography: Post-food 2017, in Helsinki.[33] The festival directors invited me to show the *Spiritual Flavours* film and proposed I also exhibit some pictures. At the time, I was still making sense of my image archive, using an Adobe Lightroom library catalogue. Going through it, I started to identify images of commensal arrangements in the various worship spaces, which led to the composition of the *Meals* series and its formal typological approach, devoid of people (see chapter four), as well as other types of imagery, such as dishes. Then, I used a 3D software, Sketchup, to reproduce the gallery space and develop various exhibition proposals. These responded to the material affordances of the gallery space and restrictions regarding budget, printing techniques, and mounting/installing. The various layouts I produced (see Fig. 62 to Fig. 64) conceptualised the relationship between food and faith differently, connecting or disconnecting certain materials. Some interconnected portraits with worship spaces and dishes. However, considering installing restrictions, the directors preferred a simpler layout, with separate portraits and worship spaces, and no dishes (see Fig. 65).

Finally, certain editing processes demanded that I work with printed materials outside the computer screen. For example, during the film editing, I printed small screenshots of different clips, which I cut to make a story-board timeline to help me visualise the narrative across full and split-screens. Similarly, for the cookbook picture editing, I was fortunate to be able to book lecture rooms at UCL, where I laid down various collections of small prints across multiple tables (see Fig. 66, Fig. 67). Being able to see all of the images at once and walk around these tables – by myself or with people who provided advice, such as my supervisors and colleagues – enabled the comparison of entire sections, making the editing process a creative process of encountering materials. This process defined the structure and order of the book and the selection of images within each section.

[33] https://www.pvf.fi/PVF17-Post-Food

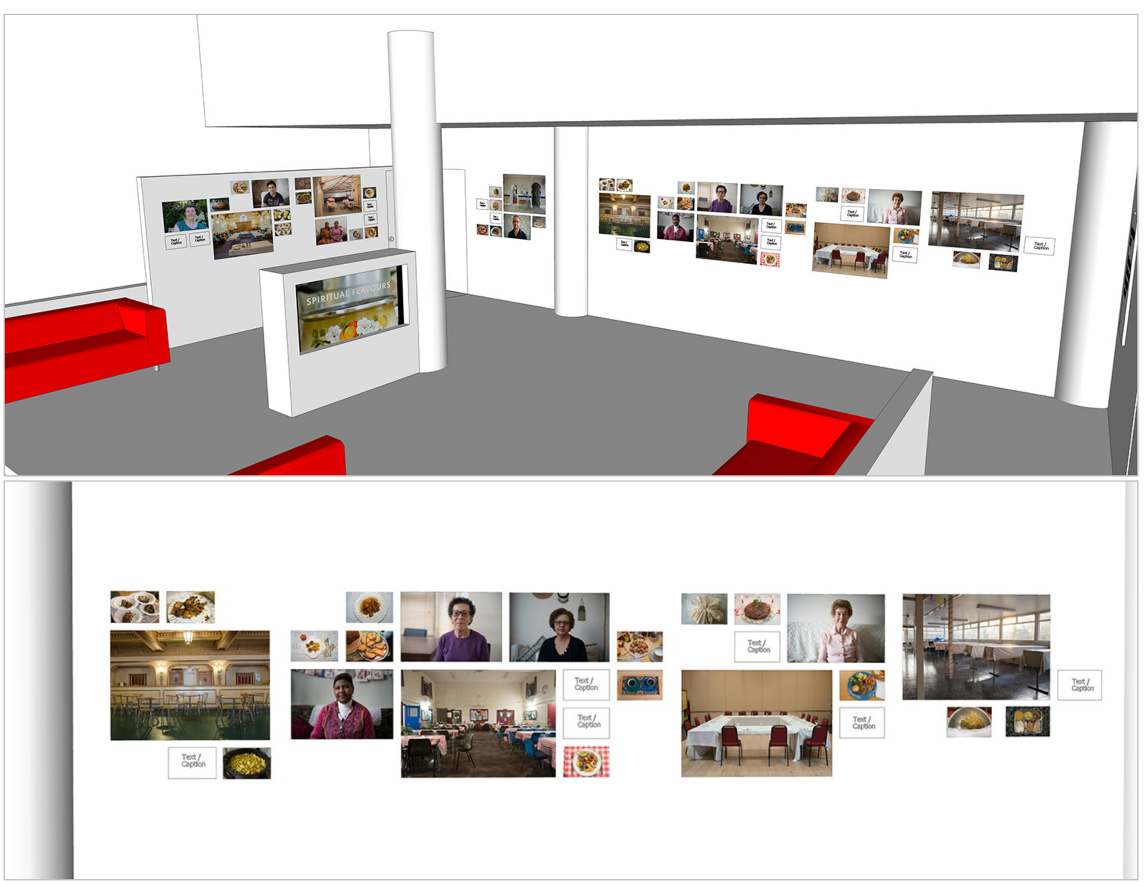

Fig. 62 First exhibition layout proposal, connecting worship spaces, portraits and dishes and creating a continuum, 2017

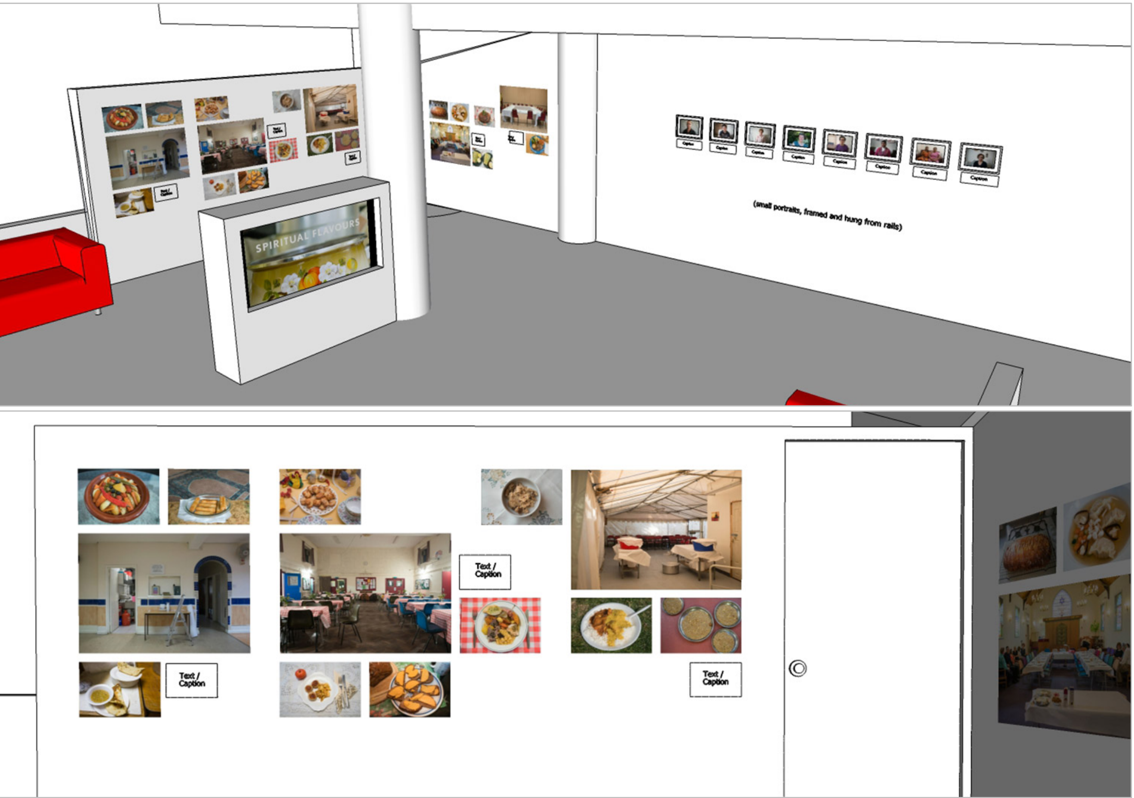

Fig. 63 Second exhibition layout proposal, separating portraits and combining fewer worship spaces and dishes, 2017

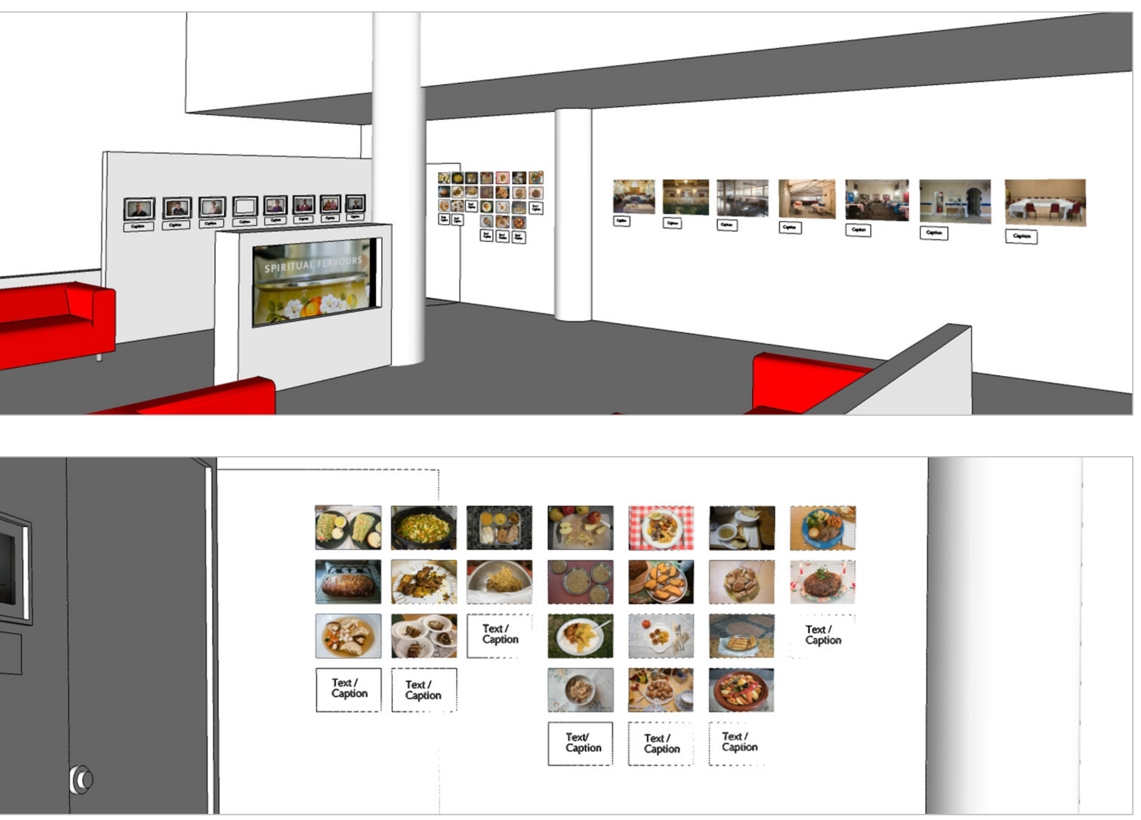

Fig. 64 Third exhibition layout proposal, separating worship spaces, portraits and dishes. Dishes are arranged by columns corresponding to the different faith communities, 2017

Fig. 65 Final exhibition layout with separate worship spaces and portraits, but no dishes, 2017

Fig. 66 Sharing picture selections for each of the sections of the *Spiritual Flavours* cookbook with colleagues at UCL

Fig. 67 Making picture selections for each section of the *Spiritual Flavours* cookbook at UCL

Sharing my work with the communities and participants

Some creative research practices were aimed at sharing my work with the communities. While reflecting on all the different outcomes of these exchange practices exceeds the scope of this chapter, I present a couple of contrasting examples that demonstrate how sharing my work became part of my creative methodology for developing relationships with these communities, finding participants for *Spiritual Flavours*, and engaging in conversations that fed back to my research interests.

<u>Sharing at the West London Islamic Centre</u>

My photographic practice at the mosque was enabled and encouraged by the community leaders and trustees who wanted images for public relations and promotional materials aimed at fundraising for a new building. This was part of a long-sought redevelopment process of converting the existing adapted warehouse to a purpose-built mosque. As such, my work also became a precious archive of the community and the building that people had worked so hard to convert into a functioning and welcoming mosque.

Providing visual materials gradually gave me access to most spaces and activities, enacting a flexibility of rules that overrode gender restrictions. The first occurrence was at an open mosque event attended by other faith communities. The mosque's interest in obtaining good quality images of the event resulted in a last-minute announcement welcoming female visitors to join the men's area during prayers (which was initially only offered to men), so that I would be allowed in to photograph this interfaith encounter. This relaxation of rules preformed through the granting of access to my practice expanded and consolidated over time, with top-down legitimacy backing, either via the implicit consent of photographing in front of the trustees and elders, or through explicit announcements via the mosque speakers.[34]

The run up to the building's demolition led to the development of a small collaborative project with MSF researcher, Nazneen Ahmed, who recorded worshipper's most fond memories at the mosque, while I took formal portraits in their favourite building spots. The goal was to produce a record of the community, a small artbook including portraits

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[34] While this institutional backing was present in most occasions, it also fluctuated. I sometimes found myself in situations where my status was no longer clear, such as during an iftar (evening) meal in the women's area during Ramadan, where no regular attendees were present and I had to reintroduce myself and renegotiate both the terms of access and photographic consent within that specific context.

of those who had given consent. To engage worshippers, I produced a photo album with initial portraits and pictures of the mosque's interiors (see Fig. 43 to Fig. 52). This exposed a performative effect of my practice when some people discovered some spaces they had no access to, by looking at my pictures. I recall a woman exclaiming: "Oh! So, that's what the men's area looks like! I've never been" This precipitated (or 'elicited', in visual research methods terms) conversations about the material organisation and structure of the mosque amongst community members, which questioned existing material boundaries and how these would play out in the new building.

Additionally, I created a series of private online galleries with a large selection of my work that the trustees and some leading women could view and share. This led to the publication of thirty-three of these photographs in a fundraising brochure. However, practices of sharing images with communities can also expose the tensions between the artistic, academic and community interests and expectations at play in the production of visual arts artefacts for public engagement. For example, when the building work started, I proposed to use the hoarding for a site-specific exhibition with images of the interiors of the demolished mosque, alongside portraits of the community. However, the creative value of the pictures of makeshift interiors did not match the image the trustees wanted to project in the local community, and the portraits were deemed vulnerable to vandalism and expressions of hatred speech in the form of graffiti. Conversely, the selection of imagery and graphic composition that the mosque suggested did not appeal to my creative endeavour. So, this initiative did not progress.

Sharing at SKTAT

A site-specific exhibition that did materialise was one at the Hindu temple. For nearly three years, I had photographed their activities, but I had been so busy developing work in all seven religious sites (in addition to making the film and book), that I had not shared my work with the temple community. As such, I reached out to the recently appointed Chair of the committee. He had been more supportive of giving me access to, for example, photographing in the kitchen (which I was not permitted before), and responded positively to the idea of having an exhibition of my pictures inside the temple during the twenty-five-day annual Chariot Ther Festival in August. As I was not allowed to add any furniture or objects, we agreed on existing available surfaces in the hall area I could use. After he approved my selection of images, I had these printed with the support of the MSF project fund. Then, Claire Dwyer and I installed the show, hanging pictures on

walls, noticeboards and furniture doors (see Fig. 68 to Fig. 73). I also designed a poster introducing myself, the exhibition, and inviting people to take part in the *Spiritual Flavours* project. As the spaces were limited and I had a much larger selection of images that could be of interest for different devotees, I also printed postcards that had a link to online galleries (also printed on the poster), which were available at the temple to take home (see Appendix A).

The exhibition transformed the space of the temple hall, some of the interactions within it and the relationship the committee and people had with me. The committee was very grateful and offered to pay for the exhibition costs. Many people looked at the show and commented on it. Two women thanked me for "making the temple look so pretty". Another woman felt one picture was inappropriate because I had cropped the priest's head. One picture went missing and reappeared many days later. I gradually became known as "the photographer" and people were responding to my presence in a much more forthcoming and positive way. In some festival events, I was suddenly asked to take portraits of key figures who wanted a picture with specific deities or with the festival priest, which was hired from Sri Lanka for the duration of the festival. During that year's chariot parade, I was given official accreditation from the temple and people were excited to be photographed by me, as they expected their image would be added to the show or exhibited the following year. People approached me to express their gratitude and I felt recognised and looked after in response. For example, there was a moment during the Chariot festival parade where water was thrown at the deities in front of the temple's entrance. I was unaware of this and I was holding my camera high in the air towards the excited multitude, when the priest paused for a moment to ask people to alert me to put the camera away before buckets of water were thrown in all directions.[35]

In addition to sharing my visual archives with the communities, I also organised screenings of the *Spiritual Flavours* film within events at these worship spaces, which were followed by discussions (see Fig. 217 to Fig. 219 in chapter six); and I gave a copy of the recipe book to each participant, each of the faith communities and their religious and organisational leaders. These were shared at a pot-luck dinner or by post (see Fig. 173 in chapter five).

[35] I was also allowed to help more with certain things, for example, cutting flowers for making garlands and, even, being instructed on how to make these, which is usually restricted to a specific Iyer (priest) or a group of regular female attendees.

In sum, what became apparent through my engagements with these communities was that practices of sharing and exchange – of my images, but also of my own home cooked food in food-sharing events (or by helping to cook) – performed a gradual transition from relations of positionality, within which particular boundaries were constantly re/negotiated, to relationships of personal recognition and mutual care. These also exposed some of the ways people relate to food and religious material practices.

Fig. 68 Exhibition of my photographic work at SKTAT during the annual Chariot Ther Festival parade, 2017

Fig. 69 Exhibition of my photographic work at SKTAT during the annual Chariot Ther Festival parade, 2017

Fig. 70 Exhibition of my photographic work at SKTAT during the annual Chariot Ther Festival parade, 2017

Fig. 71 Exhibition of my photographic work at SKTAT during the annual Chariot Ther Festival parade, 2017

Fig. 72 Exhibition of my photographic work at SKTAT during the annual Chariot Ther Festival parade, 2017

Fig. 73 A photograph went missing from my exhibition at SKTAT (which reappeared days later) during the annual Chariot Ther Festival parade, 2017

Wider public engagement

This research has produced a number of arts public encounters, not only to fulfil the requirement of accountability of the research, but significantly, as part of its methodology, to set up circumstances whereby the artwork is enacted anew through a distributed creative experience with the participants and wider publics; thus, performing new boundaries of the relationship of food and faith, within which particular concepts and affective experiences become meaningful. These included both solo and collective exhibitions at a local, national and international level; screenings in different academic and cultural settings; presentations in (photographic and academic) conferences and seminar series; as well as awards and media attention (see Appendix B for a full list of public engagement events, publications and awards).

Many of these events precipitated the production of material and conceptual configurations of the project at specific times. For example, the five-minute introduction of the film and the postcards of Betty, Aziz and Ossie (see the PhD submission box and Appendix A) were produced for the Utopia Fair at Somerset House, while the *Meals* series and the long version of the film were produced for the aforementioned exhibition in Helsinki. Similarly, the exhibition *Ealing at the Tate: Making Sacred Space*, offered a space of encounter between arts, communities and academia, for which I developed the participatory installation *Spiritual Flavours Spice Lab*, alongside exhibiting *Meals* and showing the film (see Fig. 78 to Fig. 82).[36] This introduced a new sensory dimension to the project, smell, and took the research into a (participatory) experimental and speculative terrain. Members of the public were invited to make their own 'spiritual flavours' by mixing herbs and spices from the spice lab and log their imaginations around these blends on a notebook. Conversely, finished creative outputs generated public engagement opportunities, such as the nomination of the five-minute film at the AHRC Research in Film Awards, the *Spiritual Favours* book launch at The Photographers Gallery (see Fig. 174 in chapter five), and receiving an International Visual Sociology Association Rieger Award 2020 (see Fig. 86, Fig. 87).

Some of these events showed the work within cultural centres that attract diverse local

[36] This exhibition was part of Tate Exchange Programme and was curated by the Centre for the GeoHumanities (RHUL) and Making Suburban Faith: http://geohumanitiesforum.org/event-making-sacred-space-18th-may/

communities, such as the cultural centre STOA, situated in the multicultural suburban neighbourhood of Puotinharju, in East Helsinki (see Fig. 74 to Fig. 77), and the Watermans Arts Centre in Brentford, next to Ealing (see Fig. 83 to Fig. 85). The latter made it easy for participants to take friends and relatives to the show, and for local acquaintances to recognise participants, by chance, in the exhibition, which filled both parties with pride. In Helsinki, visitors from local communities interacted with the work in different ways (see section on creative soundscapes of food and religion in chapter six). I also gave an artist talk to a diverse audience in the exhibition space and invited visitors to write comments on a notebook. In all these creative encounters I attempted to record, photograph, and annotate people's responses to the work, which have influenced my development and understanding of the project. These multiple contexts form a plurality of cross-disciplinary experiences, enabling different conversations and conceptual approaches, performing a constant recalibration of the project throughout the research, which was further interrogated and theorised in numerous presentations within academic settings.

Many of the participants attended these events and were able to share their experience of the project with wider audiences and publics. The most notable example was the screening of the film at Tate Modern, where one of the protagonists, Betty, accepted to join me at the Q&A. The audience was thrilled to speak with her and asked her many questions. This foregrounds the distributed creativity of both the artwork and these events as encounters, as well as the value of involving participants as spokespeople of participatory practice-based research.

Fig. 74 *Spiritual Flavours* exhibition at STOA cultural centre as part of the *Festival of Political Photography: Post Food 2017* in Helsinki

Fig. 75 *Spiritual Flavours* exhibition at STOA cultural centre as part of the *Festival of Political Photography: Post Food 2017* in Helsinki

Fig. 76 *Spiritual Flavours* exhibition at STOA cultural centre as part of the *Festival of Political Photography: Post Food 2017* in Helsinki

Fig. 77 *Spiritual Flavours* exhibition at STOA cultural centre as part of the *Festival of Political Photography: Post Food 2017* in Helsinki

Fig. 78 *Spiritual Flavours Spice Lab* installation view at Tate Modern, as part of *Ealing at the Tate: Making Sacred Space,* 2018

Fig. 79 *Spiritual Flavours Spice Lab* installation view at Tate Modern, as part of *Ealing at the Tate: Making Sacred Space,* 2018

Fig. 80 *Spiritual Flavours Spice Lab* at Tate Modern, as part of *Ealing at the Tate: Making Sacred Space,* 2018

Fig. 81 *Spiritual Flavours: Meals* at Tate Modern, as part of *Ealing at the Tate: Making Sacred Space,* 2018

Fig. 82 *Spiritual Flavours: Meals* at Tate Modern, as part of *Ealing at the Tate: Making Sacred Space,* 2018

Fig. 83 *Spiritual Flavours* exhibition at the Watermans Art Centre in Brentford, London, 2019

Fig. 84 *Spiritual Flavours* exhibition at the Watermans Art Centre in Brentford, London, 2019

Fig. 85 Participants Rose, Eileen and Betty read their own portrait captions at the *Spiritual Flavours* exhibition at the Watermans Art Centre, London, 2019

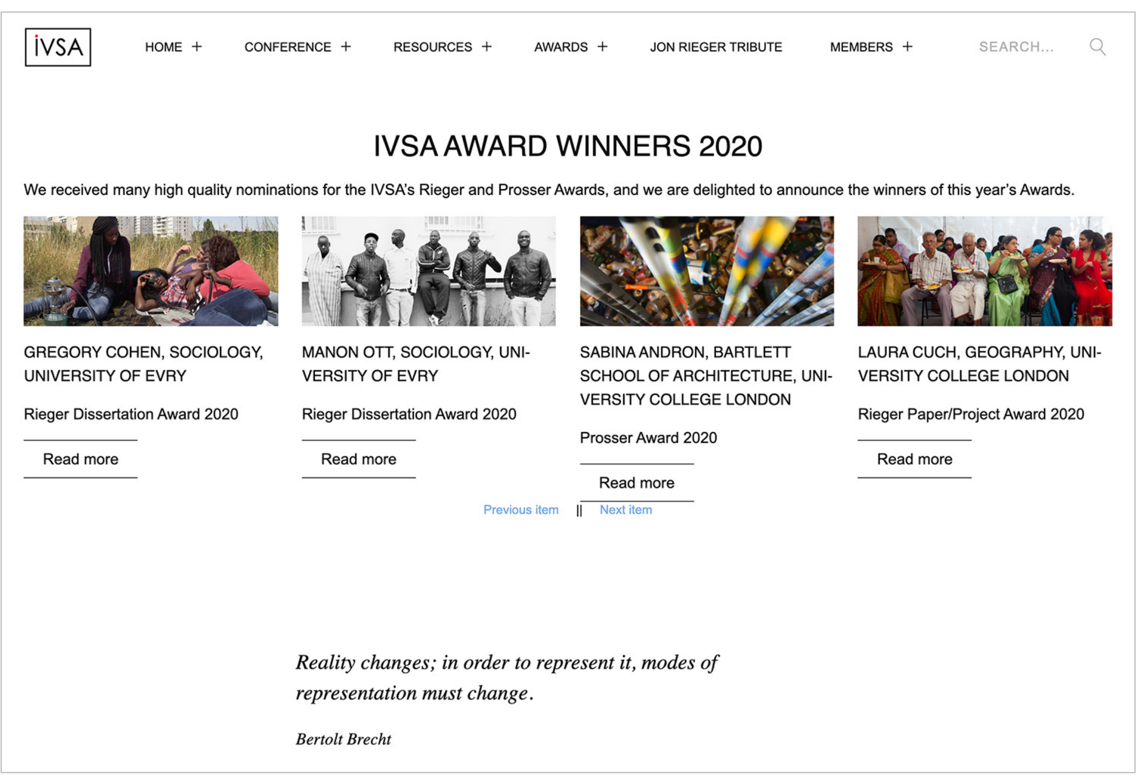

Fig. 86 Screen grab from the IVSA website
Source: https://visualsociology.org/?p=6574 (retrieved June 10, 2020)

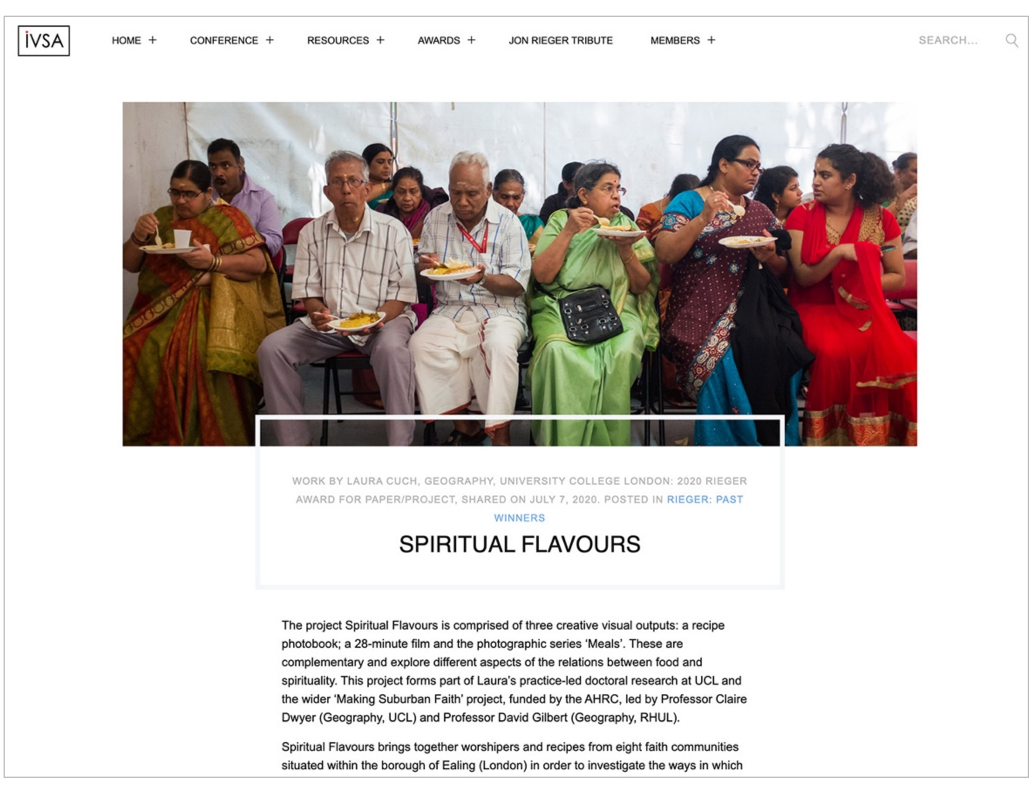

Fig. 87 Screen grab from the IVSA website
Source: https://visualsociology.org/?p=6582 (retrieved June 10, 2020)

Conclusion

My research practice is situated within creative geographies oriented towards accessing the sensuous, embodied and affective dimensions of material religious practices, especially involving food. It is also aligned with research exploring the co-constitution of the visual through the material and vice-versa, with a focus on practice. Similarly, the notion of the creative encounter is key for understanding the distributed, relational and constantly changing affective properties that are enacted at different stages of arts practices, including those within the creation, editing and dissemination of creative outputs. This notion also relates to how arts/creative practices exceed pre-determined frameworks of knowledge, and recognises their value as research practice, partly, for how they open up to uncertainty, intuition and not-knowing. Here, their specific material affordances enable thinking processes as situated and embodied forms of conceptualisation and knowledge production, including those engaged in generative forms of comparison, as exemplified in this research visual practice.

The methodology of this research is also rooted in my trajectory as an artist, informed by Barad's (2003, 2007) materialist notion of posthuman performativity, which, I propose, makes a valuable contribution for this thesis's focus on how religion is achieved through food material practices, as well as for how geographers are thinking about creative practices within research. This approach embraces performative understandings of subjectivity, methods and practices, which has implications for understanding positionality as relational and in constant co-constitution through material practices – these are necessarily discursive and have ontological and ethical implications.[37] In line with the notion of performativity articulated in the chapter, I have argued that the discursive-material practices involved in the various research settings have influenced my relations of positionality, mostly defined through image-making and sharing practices. These have occasioned changing co-constituted subjectivities (mine and that of the research subjects) across the different worship spaces and homes. Here, I have discussed the methodological challenges I faced with regards to access, ongoing contact, and multiple research sites, and how the situated creative material practices and the relationships they produce have performed the ethical and political dimensions of my research. I have also valued processes of exchange and participation within creative

[37] See the sections on contributions to creative geographies and understandings of positionality, as well as to geographies of religion in the conclusion chapter (chapter seven).

encounters as key for the development of relationships with participants and members of faith communities that move from relations of positionality to relationships of care.

In sum, I have discussed my research methods as situated within sets of interconnected creative practices that exceed the *Spiritual Flavours* project but constitute the breadth of my research practice. This has shed light on the performative effect of specific creative research practices and methods regarding knowledge production, changing relations of positionality and access to communities and participants. These creative practices and methods have included the conceptualisation, making and sharing of the *Spiritual Flavours* outputs, which contribute new positive imaginations of multi-faith suburban creativity and conviviality. These also demonstrate the inseparability of the knowledge produced by this research from the material practices involved in the creative process.

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Chapter three: Theoretical and visual intersections of sub/urban material practices of faith and food

Introduction

This chapter reviews and examines literature and visual practices in a dialogical manner around key thematic intersections or lines of enquiry, which have informed the development of this practice-based research into performative food and religious practices – here, I continue to engage with the theoretical approaches explored in chapter two in relation to creative geographies, Barad's posthuman materialist performativity and relations of positionality. These thematic intersections underpin the argument of the centrality and significance of food in religious material practices, for: 1) enacting religious families, communities and homes; 2) connecting people, temporalities and geographies of migration and; 3) producing affective and rhythmic markers of religious practices, education and identity. I start by discussing literature and visual projects related to the visibilities and invisibilities of sub/urban geographies, which underpin the multi-faith context and disciplinary setting of my research; as well as how these expose different understandings of religious places, spaces and practices that blur the boundaries between the religious and secular. In this section, I also address how religion, spirituality, 'sacred' and profane/everyday spaces and practices are understood in this study. This is followed by a discussion of the intersection of studies on material and everyday religion, home, migration and material culture, with special attention to notions of home as a distributed and unbound process. This brings attention to the performativity of material religious practices, which often involve food for enacting homes, families and communities, where various entangled identities (of gender, age, class, nationality, culture, and religion) come into being. I then narrow the discussion to food as a topic in intellectual and visual works in relation to migration, identity, religion, and memory. Here, I foreground the sensorial, embodied, rhythmic and affective capacities of food practices for performing religious experiences. Through the analysis of various visual projects, this chapter further demonstrates the argument developed in chapter two of the inseparability of the creative visual/material practices and the knowledge these produce.

In/visible geographies of religion

Since the 2000s, there has been a significant growth of geographical research on religion

(Kong 2010). In recent years, geographers have argued for the significance of exploring religion within cultural geography (e.g. Bartolini et al. 2017; Dwyer 2016; Maddrell 2009), mapping 'new' geographies of religion beyond the 'officially sacred' in ways that integrate and connect the politics and the poetics of religion (Kong 2001). They have also argued for allowing religion to 'speak back' to the discipline, in ways that contribute to new understandings of space and problematise assumptions, by contesting the traditional binaries of secular and profane, public and private and transcendent and mundane (Yorgason and della Dora 2009). This sits within the 'postsecular' turn across social sciences (see Beaumont and Baker 2011; Braidotti 2008; Habermas 2008), which has reclaimed the importance of religion within Western modern cities and societies. This has also influenced cultural geography where Yorgason and della Dora (2009:633–34), for instance, have noted the partiality of theories on public space that exclude its religious dimensions. Further, they have argued that an understanding of social life as secular should not be the assumed starting point, as religion is often necessarily present, even when apparently absent.

Dwyer, Gilbert and Shah (2013) have called for paying attention to the ways in which faith communities have created spaces within suburban geographies, which counter imaginations of Anglo-Saxon suburbs as modernist, materialist and secular projects. While there is substantial research on the emergence of suburban megachurches (e.g. Connell 2005; Ellingson 2007, 2010; Goh 2008; Warf and Winsberg 2010), the MSF project has aimed to explore the co-constitution of faith and suburbia, as enacted through material religious creativity, which has also been marginalised from the study of creative geographies (Gilbert et al. 2019). This includes the creativity involved in the re-adaptation and reinvention of buildings into makeshift places of worship (Dwyer et al. 2015) and how architecture contributes to the experience of numinosity and the sacred (Gilbert et al. 2015).

Critical debates and theories on sacred spaces, according to della Dora (2011:165), have followed theoretical mainstream trends in social sciences, such as 'structuralist', 'postmodern' (or 'poststructuralist') and 'more-than representational' approaches. Exemplified by the work of Eliade (1959), the structuralist approach conceptualises sacred space as 'ontologically pre-given', thus pre-fixed. Instead, the 'postmodern' approach led by anthropologists in the 1990s (e.g. Eade and Sallnow 1991) promotes understandings of sacred space as emerging through social relations. Finally, 'more-than-

representational' approaches to sacred space have encompassed research, including that of cultural geographers (e.g. Bartolini, MacKian, and Pile 2018a; Dewsbury and Cloke 2009; della Dora 2015; Gilbert et al. 2015; Holloway 2003, 2006; Maddrell 2009, 2011, 2016) which has engaged with 'the emotional, experiential and numinous aspects of sacred space' (Della Dora 2011:165) – which this research engages with too.

The subject of sacred space is also longstanding in architecture and interiors photography (Borden 2007) and explored through different visual formal styles, which also 'speak back' to the above conceptualisations of sacred space. Some of the most iconographic images of vernacular photography, exemplified by the work of Walker Evans, include black and white pictures of wooden churches in the American South during the Depression years (Evans, Brix, and Mayer 1991) (see Fig. 88, Fig. 89). Commissioned by the Farm Security Administration, Evans originally focused on vernacular architecture, interiors and everyday objects in an unprecedented frontal way (Pardo and Redstone 2014:18). According to Campany 'Evans understood that photography and architecture are related sign systems. Gathered as archives or arranged as sequences, images of buildings could be a path toward sophisticated statements about a society and the ways it pictures itself.' (Pardo and Redstone 2014:29). Thus, this interpretation of his work most strongly emphasises Evans' attention to the economic, social and cultural relations that make spaces sacred. Evans' indexical approach to vernacular architecture also influenced the work of Bernd and Hilla Becher, *Typologies* (2003) who, since the 1960s, photographed industrial structures as sculptural forms, without people, and presented them by types in grids of images, prompting the comparison of similar industrial architectural 'typologies' (Pardo and Redstone 2014).

The Bechers' legacy through their work (and teaching at the Dusseldorf School of Photography) influenced a generation of artist photographers who share a focus on architectural forms and interior spaces (Polte 2017), which is also evident in photographic series of religious places. Some photographers have paid attention to the experiential and numinous aspects of architectural form and contribute to a visual exploration of the poetics of sacred spaces. A contemporary example of a 'typological' photographic approach to official religious spaces in the UK is Peter Marlow's photobook (2012) with interior photographs of each of England's Anglican cathedrals with a formal approach that enhances the experience of architectural magnificence devoid of people (see Fig. 90). For curator Martin Barnes, Marlow 'captures the intangible essence of all form that is

generated by creative force: the enduring mystery of space within space' (Magnum Photos n.d.). Using a very different technique (a pinhole camera), Tom Hunter has photographed the *Prayer Places*, 2006-2011, of various faiths in the borough of Hackney (see Fig. 91, Fig. 92). The soft and pictorial quality of Hunter's interiors, according to Magdalene Keaney, questions a shared numinosity by giving them 'the assumed quality of a religious or ecstatic vision' (n.d.). As such, these two examples of photographic work engage with religious places similarly to the recent interest within cultural geography in 'more-than-representational' (Lorimer 2005) dimensions of sacred space.

Fig. 88 *Church of the Nazarene, Tennessee*, Walker Evans,1936

Image: © 2021, Walker Evans Archive, The Metropolitan Museum of Art. Reproduced under MOMA's terms of fair use of copyrighted material. Source: https://www.moma.org/collection/works/45245 (Retrieved June 10, 2021)

Fig. 89 *Church Organ and Pews*, Alabama, Walker Evans, 1936

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Fig. 90 Coventry Cathedral, St. Michael's. England, Great Britain, Peter Marlow, 2010

Image: © Peter Marlow / Magnum Photos. Reproduced courtesy of Magnum Photos
https://www.magnumphotos.com/theory-and-practice/photographing-english-cathedrals/ (Retrieved July 20, 2021)

Fig. 91 Suleymaniye Mosque, *Prayer places*, Tom Hunter, 2006-2011

Fig. 92 Shoreditch Tabernacle Baptist Church, *Prayer places*, Tom Hunter, 2006-2011

Images on this page: © Tom Hunter. Reproduced courtesy of the artist
http://www.tomhunter.org/prayer-places/ (Retrieved October, 2016)

'Hidden' geographies of religion

The historical marginalisation and invisibility of religion within cultural geography, for instance, as a subject of suburban and creative research, but also as the stigmatised identity of the positionality of the researcher (Yorgason and della Dora 2009:632) also echoes the framing of much recent photographic work aimed at exposing 'hidden' religious practices and the sub/urban sacred. Such work strongly emphasises the idea that 'sacred space is ordinary place, ritually made extraordinary' (Kong 2001:218), by drawing attention to the mundane, makeshift and adapted architectures of religious settings in the city. Here, religious practices are concealed behind non-religious or nondescript building façades.

Attention to everyday, nondescript and vernacular spaces forms part of a significant photographic tradition, which developed from the aforementioned work of Walker Evans. He influenced artists and photographers such as Ed Ruscha and Stephen Shore in the 1960s and 1970s who, like the Bechers, also adopted a frontal and "deadpan" form, the serial approach, and intentionally excluded people. Their work showcased everyday experiences of the built environment (Pardo and Redstone 2014:19) and gravitated towards peripheral spaces and structures, embracing motifs such as car parks, swimming pools, deserted streets and roadside architecture. These photographers elevated the everyday, prosaic and mundane, by photographing these spaces with the characteristic detail and focus of majestic landscape photography (Pardo and Redstone, 2014). Their work has informed much recent photographic work exploring the interiors and makeshift architecture of many sub/urban religious places/spaces, including the *Spiritual Flavours Meals* series (see chapter four).

A notable example of photographic work exploring in/visible geographies of religious adapted architecture is David Spero's photobook *Churches* (2007), which includes sixty-three photographs of the exteriors of makeshift churches, mostly Evangelical, in diverse urban areas (see Fig. 93 to Fig. 95). This connects with academic literature on the contested politics of religious identity reflected in the politics of planning permissions for religious buildings, especially for mosques (e.g. Gale 2005, 2008; Gale and Thomas 2018; Naylor and Ryan 2002). This is also a central theme in Nicoló Degiorgis' photobook *Hidden Islam* (2014), showcasing Muslim makeshift places of worship in North East Italy, which emphasises the inside/outside binary. Small black and white images of the exteriors of buildings (warehouses, shops, supermarkets, apartments,

stadiums, gyms, garages and clubs) contrast with full bleed colour images of what lies inside the spaces, mostly prayers, but also objects and interiors. The colour images are hidden behind the black and white pictures and only revealed by unfolding the page. This creates a visual narrative of Islamic worship that is not only invisible but appears isolated from other social relationships outside the community, accentuated by the absence of people in the exterior images (see Fig. 96, Fig. 97).

Fig. 93 United Church of the Kingdom of God, Finsbury Park 2003, Churches, David Spero

Fig. 94 Holy Pentecostal Church (Aladura), Peckham 2004, *Churches*, David Spero

Fig. 95 Hour of Miracle and Prayer International Church (HMPIC), Hackney Wick 2004, *Churches*, David Spero

Images on this page: © David Spero. Reproduced courtesy of the artist
http://www.davidspero.co.uk/churches/ - ts-176 (Retrieved July 21, 2021)

Fig. 96 Picture from the book *Hidden Islam* by Nicoló Degiorgis, 2009-2013

Fig. 97 Images of the book *Hidden Islam* by Nicoló Degiorgis, 2009-2013

Images on this page: © Nicoló Degiorgis. Reproduced courtesy of the artist
http://www.nicolodegiorgis.com/hidden-islam-3 (Retrieved May 25, 2015)

Similarly, Chloe Dewe Mathews' project, *Sunday Service,* 2014, explores the concentration of African churches in the south London borough of Southwark, which all display different types of adapted architecture (see Fig. 98). Sunday Service also emphasises the contrast between the vibrancy of religious practices inside adapted buildings and their 'unremarkable' external appearance. As Kong argues, it is possible to pass by these ordinary places without identifying them as religious, but experience them as 'numinous' (Otto 1917) once recognised as such. This shows how sacred places are 'intimately linked to states of consciousness' that might be experienced with a wide range of emotions (Kong 2001:218) – this is also significant for forms of ordinary material practices, such as cooking, eating and sharing food. More explicitly than Degiorgis, Dewe Mathews shows the visibility of these faith communities within the urban landscape, by taking portraits of worshippers in their smart, colourful Sunday service clothes in the street, outside their worship spaces, or at a bus stop. This mirrors my experience and the focus of MSF, which explores the interrelations and permeability of faith communities, as well as how religious practices (and associated material practices) seep out and are present beyond the confines of worship places – through public festivals, open events, inter-faith initiatives (involving food-sharing), and the concentration of national and ethnic clothes and grocery shops, as well as restaurants. This also resonates with the relationship between secular and sacred conceived as a continuum rather than a dichotomy (Maddrell 2009:690). Likewise, Liz Hingley's *Under Gods* (2011) produces a visual narrative of different dimensions of multi-faith practices and conviviality of the highly diverse suburban Soho Road, in Birmingham, where human and non-human elements, such as music, clothing and food, intermingle and expose the porosity of religious boundaries across practices and spaces, including shops, cafeterias, schools, street alleys, backyards and community centres (see Fig. 99 to Fig. 101).

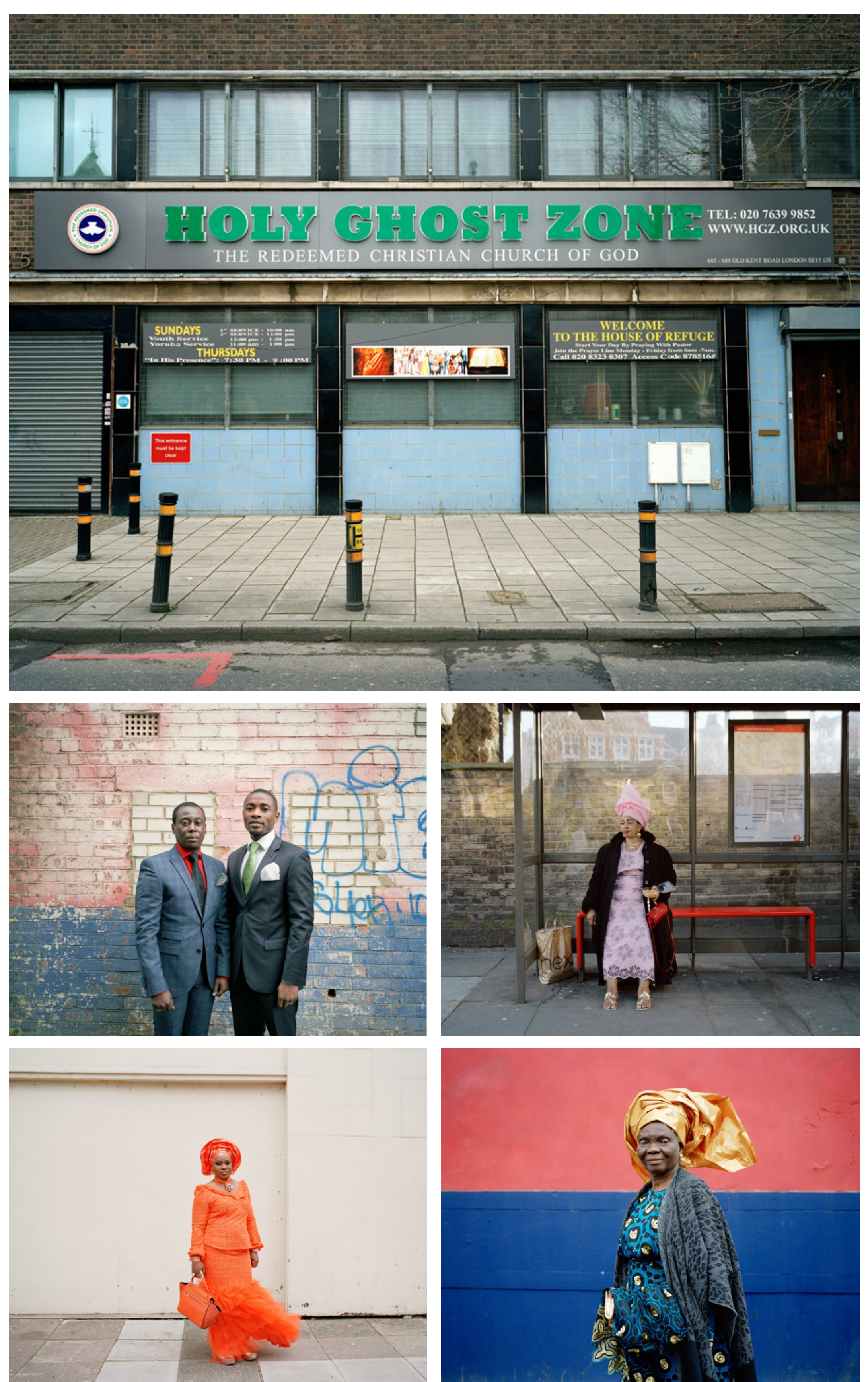

Fig. 98 Photographs from *Sunday Service* series, Chloe Dewe Mathews, 2014

Images on this page: © Chloe Dewe Mathews. Reproduced courtesy of the artist
http://www.chloedewemathews.com/sunday-service/ (Retrieved May 27, 2015)

Fig. 99 Mrs. Adina Clarke’s church hats, *Under Gods*, Liz Hingley, 2007-2009

Fig. 100 Soho Sweet Centre, *Under Gods*, Liz Hingley, 2007-2009

Fig. 101 Backyard, *Under Gods*, Liz Hingley, 2007-2009

Images on this page: © Liz Hingley. Reproduced courtesy of the artist
https://www.lizhingley.com/under-gods (Retrieved May 27, 2015)

This speaks to how the postsecular turn not only encompasses a revival of the focus on religion, but also recognises the pervasiveness of religious dimensions in everyday spaces that are often framed as secular. Much of this work asserts that spirituality is constitutive of everyday life (Dewsbury and Cloke 2009). The religious and sacred, understood as historically, politically and culturally situated and relational (Chidester and Linenthal 1995b; Jazeel 2018), might be enacted and made visible, for example, through dominant ethnicised aesthetics in architecture (Jazeel 2013); through fashion, such as veiling practices (Gökarıksel 2009); and through modes of secular iconoclasm (Howe 2009).

Strategies of hybridisation (Chidester and Linenthal 1995a:19–20) also take place through the adaptation of religious buildings for secular purposes, or for use by other religious denominations, which is the case with ELS and SKTAT in this research. Here, past religious practices and communities are present through the visuality/materiality (Rose and Tolia-Kelly 2012) of architecture, interior design and religious iconography (or their traces); thus, connecting different religious and secular communities, geographies and temporalities. Exemplifying this, Erlend Berge's project, *Bedehusland* (prayer house land, 2018) consists of a visual archive of the interiors of the disappearing traditional Norwegian prayer houses, many of which have been converted into private spaces, social clubs, skate parks and sheep sheds (see Fig. 102, Fig. 103). This project bears strong connections with my work on interiors and the *Meals* series (see chapter four). Its formal photographic approach is also performative of a specific sensorial, affective and aesthetic experience of this type of religious buildings and material culture; one which blends religious and secular everyday vernacular materiality, paying attention to material arrangements, often highlighting practices of commensality. Organised by region, these images visualise a geography of religion that connects Norwegian historical national and regional identities, with present changing dynamics of place and identity.

Fig. 102 *Bedehusland* (prayer house land), Nordland, Erlend Berge, 2018

Fig. 103 *Bedehusland* (prayer house land), Finnmark, Erlend Berge, 2018

Images on this page: © Erlend Berge. Reproduced courtesy of the artist
https://www.bedehusland.no/ (Retrieved February 25, 2019)

Berge's effort to record such history echoes that of cultural geographers Bartolini, MacKian and Pile and their collaboration with photographer Daniele Sambo to record urban places and histories that, otherwise, might be forgotten (2019:1120), exposing the hidden geographies of the British Spiritualist movement in Stoke-on-Trent, still alive at present (2019:1115). Their research assumes the challenge of visualising Spiritualists' practices that are not bound to specific material forms and, in so doing, engaging with different invisibilities: of missing historical and archival material; of Spiritualists' concealed practices within ordinary and private spaces; and of Spirit, which can communicate through and around the material but is simultaneously intangible and non-determinable. This links with the focus of my previous work *Sleepless, No-Ma* and *Trans* (see chapter two): how to photograph what we cannot see? Bartolini, MacKian and Pile's research project contributes to the enactment of a series of in/visible geographies of Spiritualism in Stoke-on-Trent. Through the creation of a 'Spirit Trail' they literally put the past and present of Spiritualism in Stoke-on-Trent on the tourist map, as an embodied walking route, which focuses as much on what is invisible and missing as on what remains (2019:1120). Additionally, the making of a photobook (2016), which covers a range of motifs – buildings, landscapes, full bleed images of surfaces and textures, domestic portraits and objects, and intentionally faded old photographs – produces visual accountability (Neyland and Coopmans 2014) of Spiritualism (see Fig. 104 to Fig. 110). This creates a certain aesthetic of fragmentation and multiple coexisting temporalities, which resonates with Spiritualists' view of materiality as pieces in the puzzle of life with Spirit (2019:1125). Thus, this visual narrative defines the invisible presence of Spiritualism and Spirit through visibly suggested absences. These connect Spiritualists' practices to different times (beyond contemporary worshippers' lifetime), expose geographies of urban change (2019:1121); and frame Spiritualism as visible, invisible and embedded within ordinary and everyday places, landscapes and material practices, while not being attached to them. Reflecting on Spiritualists' understanding of Spirit as detached from materiality, Bartolini, MacKian and Pile (2019:1121) have called for research that moves beyond the widespread focus on the material within geographies of religion. As such, this project resonates with arguments that the geographical focus on religion poses both methodological and ontological problems that overturn epistemological beliefs (Yorgason and della Dora 2009:631), requiring an engagement with different ontological assumptions (Dwyer 2016:759). This echoes debates (e.g. Jazeel 2018) about the notion of the religious set against the supposedly secular, as part

of the Judaeo-Christian ontological imagination, but not a feature of Islam nor Hinduism, for instance.

Fig. 104 Map from the book *Nature, Light, Truth* (Sambo et al. 2016)

Fig. 105 Morlan Road, 1925, Burslem, *Nature, Light, Truth*, Daniele Sambo, 2015-2016

Images on this page: © Daniele Sambo. Reproduced courtesy of the artist and authors (Sambo et al. 2016) https://www.dansambo.com/nlt (Retrieved June 10, 2021)

Fig. 106 Untitled II, High resolution scan of an old photograph found on-site, *Nature, Light, Truth*, Daniele Sambo, 2015-2016

Fig. 107 Untitled, *Nature, Light, Truth*, Daniele Sambo, 2015-2016

Fig. 108 A Butterfly in a Box, *Nature, Light, Truth*, Daniele Sambo, 2015-2016

Fig. 109 A Window, *Nature, Light, Truth*, Daniele Sambo, 2015-2016

Fig. 110 White and Blue, *Nature, Light, Truth*, Daniele Sambo, 2015-2016

Images on this page: © Daniele Sambo. Reproduced courtesy of the artist and authors (Sambo et al. 2016) https://www.dansambo.com/nlt (Retrieved June 10, 2021)

Implied in the question of the in/visibility of religious spaces and practices within (sub)urban settings lies the question of the subject of the gaze: for whom are these geographies of religion hidden or visible? Within two very different research contexts, transient material practices enact different visibilities of sacred and emotional-spiritual practices within (secular) public environments. In Singapore, burning sticks and leaving food to feed the spirits in a suburban town centre during the Hungry Ghost Festival, acts as transient aesthetic markers that produce a spiritual temporal and spatial imagination overlaid onto the homogenising narrative and secular state-defined urban space (Heng 2015). Their transient quality, Heng argues, contributes to their resilience, as they are more easily overseen and tolerated by the Singaporean State (2015:61). Food offerings and itinerant altars are visible to neighbours outside these ethnic communities, as well as people engaged in state-run public services. Crucially, however, they are visible to the Hungry Ghosts. Heng's night photographs use various sensorial and visual observational techniques, which engage with the imagined role and gaze of a Hungry Ghost. Thus, the project elicits a material/visual experience of a Hungry Ghost's invisible participation in the festival.

Likewise, in the UK, Maddrell (2013) explores geographies of bereavement and practices of memorialisation and argues that vernacular memorial artefacts, spaces and performances testify to the dynamic relationship with the absent-presence of the deceased, which ranges from remembrance to spiritualist beliefs (2013:511). These practices, which are informed by notions of caring, are framed as part of the model of 'continuing bonds', which recognises that grief and relationships with the deceased can continue throughout one's lifetime (2013:506). According to Maddrell, it is the transient markers and ephemeral traces of practices of memorialisation that evidence ongoing expressions of absence-presence; and that informal memorials in public spaces, such as roadside memorials, produce different emotional-affective experiences of those places. These rely on the visibility/materiality of the memorial, and of other elements which are also evocative of the absence-presence of the deceased for those who understand the circumstances around the memorial (e.g. a new crash barrier between directional traffic lanes after a tragic accident) (2013:517). These two projects are also significant for thinking how food practices, including cooking, eating, sharing food and recipes (as transient material practices in worship spaces and at home), can materially perform absent-presences of the divine and sacred, and/or of loved deceased people, a theme that

appears in all the elements of *Spiritual Flavours*. In the last section of this chapter, I discuss the significance of affective relationships with food for memory and practices of remembrance.

Im/material and emerging geographies of faith

The above foregrounds the complex relationships between im/materiality, religious epistemologies, and understandings of spiritual immanence/transcendence. This connects with longstanding theoretical debates between science and religion (see Whitehead 1925), as well as the relationship between research and spirituality (Dewsbury and Cloke 2009). Here, Barad's materialist agential realist ontology, which theoretically informs my visual practice methodology (see chapter two) is productive for understanding spiritual practices and epistemologies through the notion of posthuman performativity. This section has demonstrated that research and image-making practices are involved and defined within discursive-material practices that contribute to the co-constitution of the visibilities and invisibilities of religious geographies. As previously argued, this echoes my research and the MSF project, which perform specific visibilities of multi-faith suburban creativity and conviviality (see chapter two). Further, Barad's notion of performativity suggests that it is within agential discursive-material 'intra-actions' – human and non-human – that the 'components' of religious and spiritual phenomena are defined, and that particular religious and spiritual embodied concepts (e.g., experiences of numinous spaces, sacred objects, continuing bonds, or material clues of a Spiritualist puzzle) become meaningful (2003:815).

However, Barad's project also raises questions as to its suitability for researching religious positions and practices informed by theological dualisms that situate the soul, Spirit and the divine as transcendent – separate from bodies, materiality and the universe. Nonetheless, the debates on the entanglements between the study of religion and recent materialist ontologies, exceed the scope of this thesis (though see Keller and Rubenstein 2017). This reflects concerns within religious geographies which consider that the study of religion and spiritual practices demands openness to plural ontological assumptions (Bartolini et al. 2019; Dwyer 2016; Holloway 2011; Yorgason and della Dora 2009). Thus, despite challenges with intelligibility and uncertainty, Holloway calls for theoretically engaging with the theological in order to engage with 'the agency of gods' (2011:37), as well as with the affective registers of religious experiences, which opens up

a space 'for cultural geographers to explore the ways in which the divine is presenced or the sacred is made' (Dwyer 2016:759). Relatedly, Dewsbury and Cloke argue that spirituality may be theorised as immanent in its existence, as a 'constitutive force' of everyday life, 'cutting at that space between absence and presence, and manifesting itself at the immediate, and therefore non-metaphysical, level of the body' (2009:697). They state:

> [A] belief in the spiritual means that certain things happen that would not otherwise; certain affects are produced that make people experience very real and specific feelings. Certain performances and architecting of space produce actual bodily dispositions, leaving marks in the landscape of existence, and affective memories, or traces, within the body (2009:697).

Thus, a materialist engagement is relevant in so far spiritual experiences and practices are embodied – i.e. sensorial, emotional and affective – and people rely on material practices to worship, make sense of their faith, communicate their faith to others and connect with the spiritual and divine. This is regardless of whether the materialities (and spaces) involved are officially recognised as 'sacred' – i.e. 'of incomparable worth the value of which is non-negotiable' (Knott 2010:305) – or profane, ordinary, everyday and contingent – e.g., involving domestic furniture or printed symbols, such as in Spiritualist practices in Stoke on Trent (Bartolini et al. 2019). Arguably, Barad's notion of posthuman materialist performativity further contributes to scholarship exploring the situated roles and agency of *emerging* embodied and affective practices within religious and spiritual phenomena, and how food, in particular, is involved in enacting 'sacred' spaces and practices – i.e. how food is defined and involved in making faith in various contexts, including home –, as well as how these practices are entangled with other (human and non-human) dimensions.

Given the above, it is clear how religion, spirituality, 'sacred' and profane/everyday spaces and practices are understood in this thesis. This research is aligned with the aforementioned 'more-than-representational' approach to 'sacred' spaces and practices. These are not bound to pre-given structures or formally designated religious places, nor they are solely the by-product of economic, political and social relations, but 'sacred' space and practices emerge through performance and affect. Here, spirituality is not necessarily religious and religion is not always spiritual (Dewsbury and Cloke 2009:696).

Thus, my choice of the term ‘spiritual’ for the *Spiritual Flavours* project responds to its focus on both communal and individual religious-related food practices and experiences within and beyond the officially ‘sacred’ spaces and practices. Thus, the project aims to produce a space for exploring the relationship between food and spirituality, through an open and flexible engagement with the plurality of participants’ personal opinions and experiences. The creative and formal approach of the various *Spiritual Flavours* outputs also follows the aforementioned call for engaging with the everyday affective dimensions of spirituality, including the ‘different assemblages of movement, materialities, sounds and bodies’ (Holloway 2011:37) within faith practices involving food. This is also aligned with scholarship within religious studies on material, lived and vernacular religion, which I address in next section.

Material practices: Performing religion, identity and home

Material, lived, everyday and vernacular religion

As noted above, an area that has received increasing academic interest is that of ‘unofficially sacred sites’, including the study of practices and sites beyond churches, temples, synagogues and mosques (see Kong 2010). Research on Spiritualism (Bartolini et al. 2017, 2019; Holloway 2006) and on ‘spirituality-beyond-religion’, such as ‘New Age’ or ‘holistic spirituality’ (MacKian 2012:2), has placed ordinary spaces at the centre of everyday spiritual practices. Similarly, research on officially designated religious denominations has also emphasised the relevance of religious practices within ordinary spaces, for example through the phenomena of house churches (e.g. Kong 2002; Woods 2013). This forms part of the histories of some of the communities of this research, which started in households, such as the WLIC, OLSJ and ELS (Dwyer et al. 2015). Furthermore, it is also significant in the way that participants’ households operate as sites for individual and family prayers, religious identity-making and education, where food plays an important role (e.g. Garnett and Harris 2011).

The focus on religious practices beyond formal sacred spaces and religious institutions connects with recent interest in religious studies on everyday and lived religion, which considers religion and spirituality as a matter of individual experience and choice (Ammerman 2007; McGuire 2008c; Orsi 2003). Scholars have argued that the term ‘vernacular religion’ captures an understanding of personal and routinely practiced and experienced religion, troubling the boundary between ‘official’ and ‘folk’ religion

(Bowman and Valk [2012] 2014, cited in Gilbert et al. 2019:28). This work is informed by attention within the social sciences towards social practices (Knorr Cetina, Schatzki, and von Savigny 2001; Shove, Pantzar, and Watson 2012) and resonates with notions of plural truths and plural religious experiences, as well as the idea of truth informed by practice, developed by American philosophical pragmatism at the end of the nineteenth century, and popularised by the work of William James ([1902] 1985), notably in relation to religious experience. This is also closely connected to the emergence of scholarship on material religion (e.g. Engelke 2011; Meyer 2008; Morgan 2009), as well as on religious media (Lynch, Mitchell, and Strhan 2012) and visual cultures (Morgan 2012). This forms part of the 'material turn' in humanities scholarship (Buchli 2002; Jackson 2000) drawing on material culture studies in anthropology, which pays attention to processes of identity-making through objects and materiality (Miller 2001c). Together, 'material', 'lived', 'everyday' and 'vernacular' religion share a focus on objects, practices, spaces, bodies, sensations and affects (Hazard 2013:58) – moving away from an understanding of religion simply as a matter of belief and doctrine. As argued, this sits at the centre of my practice-led research and is consistent with performativity. As Meyer et al. argue,

> [m]aterializing the study of religion means asking how religion happens materially, which is not to be confused with asking the much less helpful question of how religion is expressed in material form. A materialized study of religion begins with the assumption that things, their use, their valuation, and their appeal are not something added to a religion, but rather inextricable from it (2010:209).

Exploring the potential contribution of new materialism for the material study of religion, Hazard (2013:58) argues that the three dominant approaches to religious materiality – emphasising symbolic value, material disciplines, and phenomenological experience – 'remain anthropocentric and beholden to the biases against materiality deeply entrenched in the study of religion'.[38] In this respect, Meyer (2019:620) also notes a lack of engagement by scholars of material religion with work on new materialisms, and the need for exploring their resonances and dissonances in ways that might acknowledge alternative epistemic idioms, beyond Eurocentric cognitivist viewpoints, such as those

[38] Here, 'new materialism' signals towards an heterogeneous range of theoretical projects, including Barad's 'agential realism' amongst other projects (though some of them do not use this label), which commonly 'move away from anthropocentrism in the study of materiality'(Hazard 2013:64).

from the Global South (2019:621).

Sensuous, embodied and affective religious practices

The focus on materiality, embodied identities and sensuous experiences is present across the social sciences, including sensuous geographies of religion, which have opened new lines of questioning into embodied experiences of the sacred (see prior section on im/material and emerging geographies of faith), joining anthropologists' interest in embodied experiences of religious rituals (Kong 2010:757). Likewise, documentary photographers have long been interested in religious rituals across the world. For example, the work of Cristina García Rodero, *Between Heaven and Earth*, n.d., is an extensive visual document exploring the connections between spirituality and the body in special religious celebrations and rituals across the globe, composed of dramatic black and white images of embodied experiences of religious material practices (see Fig. 111 to Fig. 113). This incorporates a fifteen-year long project, *España Oculta* (Hidden Spain, 1995), about religious rituals across Spain. Also in black and white documentary style, but focusing on everyday and lived religion, John Angerson's photobook *Love, Power, Sacrifice* (2007) showcases a Jesus Army community, and creates a narrative of ordinary faith composed of many moments of extremely intense embodied spirituality (see Fig. 114 to Fig. 117). With a different visual medium, Chloe Dewe Mathews' three-channel video installation *Congregation,* 2015, which builds on the aforementioned work Sunday Service, features Pentecostal celebrations in Peckham and Camberwell. This multi-sensory installation explores affective embodied experiences of collective worship, by combining, 'intimate footage of personal reflection, with large-scale shots of communal ecstasy' (Dewe Mathews n.d.) (see Fig. 118).

These projects speaks to research on affective atmospheres (Anderson 2009), and on affective, embodied and performative religious practices, such as the sensuous, vitalist, and affectual forces within the Spiritualist séance (Holloway 2006); rites of passage involving some version of pain (Morgan and Vakkari 2009), performing for the Gods (David 2009), practices of pilgrimage (Maddrell 2011; Maddrell et al. 2014; Maddrell and della Dora 2013; Maddrell and Scriven 2016; Rose 2010); spiritual experiences of cooking and sharing food (McGuire 2003, 2008d); as well as dancing and gardening (McGuire 2007).

Fig. 111 The Trinity, Lumbier, *Hidden Spain*, Cristina García Rodero, 1980

Fig. 112 Carnival of Jacmel, Haiti, *Between Heaven and Earth*, Cristina García Rodero, 2001

Fig. 113 Maria Lionza Cult, Silhouette, Venezuela, *Between Heaven and Earth*, Cristina García Rodero, 2001

Images on this page: © Cristina García Rodero | Magnum Photos. Reproduced courtesy of Magnum Photos
https://www.magnumphotos.com/photographer/cristina-garcia-rodero/ (Retrieved May 27, 2015)

Fig. 114 Jesus Army families prepare for a picnic during the annual Power Festival Weekend at Cornhill Manor, Northampton, UK, *Love, Power, Sacrifice*, John Angerson, 2007

Fig. 115 Laying on of hands, and group prayer at Cornhill Manor, Northamptonshire, UK, *Love, Power, Sacrifice*, John Angerson, 2007

Fig. 116 Wooden cross at a 'Celebrate Jesus' Easter rally, held annually in a giant marquee at Cornhill Manor, Northamptonshire, UK, *Love, Power, Sacrifice*, John Angerson, 2007

Fig. 117 Members of the Jesus Army give one another support during one of their services at Cornhill Manor, Northamptonshire, UK, *Love, Power, Sacrifice*, John Angerson, 2007

Images on this page: © John Angerson. Reproduced courtesy of the artist https://www.johnangerson.com/love-power-sacrifice-jesus-army/ (Retrieved May 25, 2015)

Fig. 118 Photographs of the three-channel video installation *Congregation,* Chloe Dewe Mathews, 2015

Images on this page: © Chloe Dewe Mathews. Reproduced courtesy of the artist
http://www.chloedewemathews.com/congregation/ (Retrieved May 27, 2015)

Maddrell's (2011) research on two pilgrimage walks offers a productive discussion for my research. Drawing on Edensor's work on geographies of rhythm (2010, 2011a) she introduces elements of Lefebvre's (2004) rhythmanalysis for understanding both static and moving experiences of pilgrimage; thus, linking rhythm with affective and embodied religious experiences. She adds: 'religious life and practice are often grounded in the rhythms of Sabbaths, holy days and patterns of observance' (2011:17). This supports the argument in my research that food-related embodied practices operate as affective and rhythmic markers of religious experience, in which the multi-sensuous, kinetic and rhythmic qualities of chopping, stirring, serving, scooping, chewing food and, even, washing dishes, punctuate and interrelate both special religious celebrations and everyday religious practices. This resonates with Maddrell's argument that pilgrims' rhythms are 'shaped by the worship or ritual as much as the demands of the topography, e.g. the pilgrimage being punctuated by monastic offices or the Muslim call to prayer' (2011:20; see also Holloway and Valins 2002:8). Drawing a parallel between the experience of cooking/eating and that of walking, food practices contribute to the 'rhythms of emotion and affect' in life, 'including grief, corporeal pleasure, spiritual fulfilment and reliving of childhood experiences, illustrating how emotion is associated with and triggered by particular places and evocations' (2011:25); or in my research, dishes and ingredients. In considering food practices as motion, Maddrell's reference to Sheller's idea that '[m]otion and emotion... are kinaesthetically intertwined' (Sheller 2004:221, cited in Maddrell 2011:26) is also fitting for thinking about the emotional, embodied and affective relationship between food and religious experience. This has informed the aim of the *Spiritual Flavours* film insofar as it attempts to create a multi-sensorial, rhythmic experience of the relationship between food and religion, expressed through cooking, religious sounds, and a particular emphasis on embodied motion and repetition. Here, food is understood as contributing to the performance of different embodied, sensorial and affective rhythms of religious worship and education (of various spatial and temporal scales), reinforced by cyclical repetition.

Other photographic projects draw on commercial photographic genres to explore aesthetic, embodied and affective dimensions of religious practices. Dominic Hawgood employs the style of advertising photography to produce highly staged and digitally enhanced images in his project *Under the influence,* 2015 (Fig. 119, Fig. 120). These showcase embodied re-enactments that mobilise and explore seductive sensations, body

gestures, technology and materials involved in Evangelical and Pentecostal worship (Souter n.d.). These are displayed alongside textual religious commands in an immersive installation involving colour lighting and different visual media, which creates an abstract, conceptual and highly aestheticized approach to the inextricability of media, performance, material practices and the body in Pentecostal community worship.

Fig. 119 Photographs from the series *Under the Influence*, Dominic Hawgood, 2005

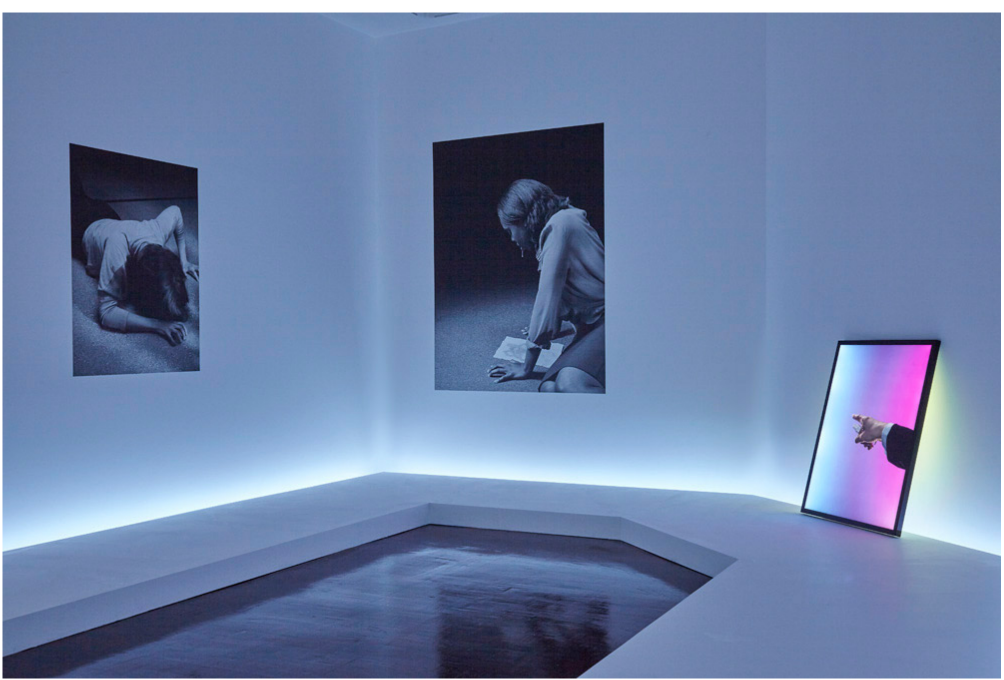

Fig. 120 *Under the Influence* exhibition view, Dominic Hawgood, 2005

Images on this page: © Dominic Hawgood. Reproduced courtesy of the artist
http://dominichawgood.com/exhibition-undertheinfluence (Retrieved October 2, 2016)

In a different setting and within a documentary register, Sophie Green has photographed Southwark's Aladura Spiritualist African congregations, often referred to as 'white garment churches' in her photobook, *Congregation* (2019), where she uses stylised imagery, close to fashion photography (see Fig. 121). Green combines formal portraits and choreographed compositions, which locate Aladura Spiritualist religious experience on the worshippers' bodies via the visual impact of their white clothing and posture set against urban and congregational backdrops. This echoes Gökariksel's (2009) research on veiling practices in Istanbul in which she notes how veiling is a performative expression of gendered subjectivities and bodies as sites of religious inscription. According to Yorgason and della Dora (2009:634) Gökariksel's research demonstrates how bodies themselves become religious or secular sites (rather than just signs) in the urban environment. This connects with Dwyer's research (1998, 1999c, 1999b, 1999a) on the complexities of identity-making, challenging embodied gendered stereotypes of young British Muslim women, as well as Hopkins' research on young Scottish Muslim men (2004, 2006, 2007, 2008). Both Dwyer and Hopkins pay attention to the formation of diasporic and hybrid religious identities at the intersection of age and gender, which also include national and cultural affiliations (Kong 2010:759, 761). With reference to Hopkins' (2008) work, Kong states that 'while young Muslim men might engage with factors thought to be 'global' or 'national', what matters are 'local' experiences, such as the character of the street, the placing of the home and the marking of the body' (2010:763). This mirrors Mahtab Hussain's photobook *You Get Me?* (2017), exploring male (mostly young) British Muslim identities (including himself), through collaborative local environmental portraits placed alongside anonymised personal testimonies (see Fig. 122 to Fig. 124). His portraits draw attention to gendered religious identities through the dynamic and entangled interplay of the image-making process, the subjects' body language, embodied material practices (clothing, jewellery, tattoos and hairstyle), objects and animals, and the (urban and domestic) built material environment. This kind of approach precipitates my own argument about the inseparability of the creative visual and material practices for exploring the relationship of food, home, religious practices and communities and their intersection with age, gender, diasporic histories and the specificity of the urban locality.

Fig. 121 Photographs from the series *Congregation*, Sophie Green, 2019

Images on this page: © Sophie Green. Reproduced courtesy of the artist
http://www.sophiegreenphotography.com/congregation-1 (Retrieved June 30, 2021)

Fig. 122 Shemagh, beard and bling*, You Get Me?* Mahtab Hussain, 2017

Fig. 123 String vet, two tears*, You Get Me?* Mahtab Hussain, 2017

Fig. 124 Black hat, black glove and bling*, You Get Me?* Mahtab Hussain, 2017

Images on this page: © Mahtab Hussain. Reproduced courtesy of the artist
https://www.mahtabhussain.com/work/you-get-me/ (Retrieved May 27, 2020)

Making religious homes

Home has been recognised as a key site for identity formation, emerging as an interdisciplinary subject across the social sciences and arts practices. There has been substantial amount of research into the ways that processes of identity-making, belonging and remembrance are produced and mediated through domestic objects and material practices. Anthropology scholars have regarded home as a primordial site within material culture studies (Buchli 2010; Cieraad 2006; Csikszentmihalyi and Halton 1981; Hurdley 2006, 2013; Miller 2001b; Pink 2004), which has significantly informed social science scholars, including cultural geographers looking at home and migration (Ahmed 1999; Blunt 2004; Datta 2006, 2008; McMillan 2009; Rose 2003; Walsh 2006, 2011, 2012, 2014). Artists and photographers have also extensively explored dwellings, domestic life and material culture, the scope of which exceeds this chapter.[39]

In the last two decades material culture studies have been increasingly concerned with how home transformations affect social relations, as well as the agency of materials, beyond the focus on symbolic value (Miller 2001a:4). Informed by approaches to material agency from Actor Network Theory (Callon 1984; Latour 1987, 1999) as well as the notion of assemblage (Deleuze and Guattari 1987), cultural geographers have started to consider non-human agency within homes (e.g. Hitchings 2003, 2004), and buildings as 'assemblages of heterogeneous materialities which (re)produce circulations of matter, labour and knowledge' (Edensor 2011b:240). These approaches are consistent with performativity and pertinent for understanding what foods *do* in religious practices, as opposed to simply looking at what they symbolize. This does not involve dismissing representation – meanings and narratives that emerge in relation to objects, which constitute processes of identity making, are central in the biographical stories of *Spiritual Flavours*. Rather, it involves understanding how representations are occasioned within discursive-material practices.[40] For instance, Hurdley's (2006) research on mantelpieces shows how the participants' narratives about their displayed objects are influenced by the

[39] See Perry (2013) and Racz (2015) on the subject of home within contemporary art, as well as two major collective photography exhibitions on home: *Domestic*, Fundación CajaMadrid, Barcelona, 2010 (https://www.photographicsocialvision.org/domestic/index.php?op=0&lang=eng) and; *Home Sweet Home 1970 - 2018: The British Home, A Political History*, Les Rencontres d'Arles, Arles, 2019 (https://www.rencontres-arles.com/en/expositions/view/771/home-sweet-home).

[40] See, for example, Pickering's argument that 'thinking about material performativity does not imply that we have to forget about the representational aspects of science' (2010:7)

interactions involved in the interview contexts in which they emerge. This is central in Zofia Rydet's photographic endeavour, *Sociological Record*, which comprises a comprehensive archive of domestic portraits and material culture, mainly in rural Poland, for over three decades since the 1970s. Taken with a wide-angle lens and flash, her images provide spatial detail and constitute a sweeping visual record of how religion, home and identity are materially entangled with geographic, socio-economic, political, aesthetic and embodied dimensions (see Fig. 125 to Fig. 127).

> I enter the home, look around carefully, and I immediately see something beautiful, something unusual, and I compliment it. The owner is pleased that I like it, and then I take the first photograph. Everyone has something in his house that is most precious to him. If I manage to notice this, then this person submits at once. I take advantage of this moment. I ask them to have a seat (this is very often a married couple) in front of the main wall, the most interesting one, the one most decorated with pictures and tapestries, and I take the photograph. The focal point in the village hut is the television set, which is on all day. There are generally few books. What is most precious (most often a portrait of Pope John Paul II) goes on top of the television. By now I have thousands of photographs of pictures of the pope in various settings (Rydet 1990).[41]

Fig. 125 Series: Objects and decorations, Podhale region, 1984, *Sociological Record,* Zofia Rydet, 1978-1990
Image: © 2068/12/31 Zofia Augustyńska-Martyniak. Reproduced under the terms of the CC BY-NC-ND 3.0 PL license: https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/3.0/pl/deed.en
http://zofiarydet.com/zapis/en/photo?page=6&photo=zr_01_012_22 (Retrieved June 21, 2021).

[41] http://zofiarydet.com/zapis/en/pages/sociological-record/discussions/rozmowy-o-fotografii

Fig. 126 Series: People in interiors, Biały Dunajec region, 1984, *Sociological Record*, Zofia Rydet, 1978-1990
Image: © 2068/12/31 Zofia Augustyńska-Martyniak. Reproduced under the terms of the CC BY-NC-ND 3.0 PL license: https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/3.0/pl/deed.en
http://zofiarydet.com/zapis/en/photo?page=2&photo=zr_01_006_06 (Retrieved June 21, 2021)

Fig. 127 Series: People in interiors, Biały Dunajec region, 1984, *Sociological Record*, Zofia Rydet, 1978-1990
Image: © 2068/12/31 Zofia Augustyńska-Martyniak. Reproduced under the terms of the CC BY-NC-ND 3.0 PL license: https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/3.0/pl/deed.en
http://zofiarydet.com/zapis/en/photo?page=3&photo=zr_01_007_29 (Retrieved June 21, 2021)

Domestic space has received significant attention from feminist scholars exploring gender relations and domestic work (e.g. Hanson and Pratt 1995). The kitchen has been exposed as a site where technological domestication (Cockburn and First-Dilić 1994) and gendered social regimes emerge (Hand and Shove 2004). Within cultural geography, Meah's (2014) research on the spatial dynamics of the domestic kitchen in different geographical contexts unsettles straightforward narratives of women's experience of domestic kitchens and foodwork as simply oppressive or empowering, and provides a nuanced understanding of the relational and co-constitutive relationship between space, gender and power. Meah and Jackson (2016) have also conceptualised the kitchen as a site for memory, gender identity construction and reproduction, through the embodied engagement with curation and display of valued objects and artefacts. Like Hurdley, they emphasise how objects have the capacity to relate to different temporalities, whereby the present is 'infused' by past memories and identities and future aspirations (2016:511). They also argue that gendered practices of decoration and maintenance are key for understanding the curation of objects in the domestic space, which mediate affective relations with other people and events, both past and future (2016:514). Similarly, Gregson, Metcalfe and Crewe (2009) have looked at how consumption, repair, maintenance and disposal of objects in the domestic space, expose the skills competence of those who own/use them and disclose the transference of values. This resonates with how family, cultural and religious values are transferred through cooking skills, tools and recipes (Sutton 2009).

Other scholars have focused on how visual culture, such as family photographs (Rose 2003) or landscape pictures (Tolia-Kelly 2004b) stretch domestic space to other people, places and times beyond the household. Tolia-Kelly argues that, stimulated through scents, sounds and textures, domestic objects constitute precipitates of 're-memories and narrated histories' of the past. These are often not directly experienced, but tap into oral, social histories and identities of diasporic communities, as 'historical artefacts of heritage and tradition' (2004a:314). This is important for considering how domestic religious material culture, including crockery, recipes and foods eaten as part of religious celebrations, connect individuals, families and communities to historical religious narratives and their cultural and religious heritage.

Engaging with these debates, the photobook *Basement Sanctuaries* by Gesche Würfel (2014), showcases multiple ways in which building basements in Manhattan have been

decorated by the superintendents (male and mostly migrants) in charge of maintaining them (see Fig. 128, Fig. 129). The images show how 'supers' have decorated the environment in which they live and work with personal objects – alongside workplace tools and technology – including furniture, pictures, paintings, maps, religious imagery, as well as residents' discarded objects. Portraits and interview excerpts are presented at the end of the book. The basement images, devoid of people, resonate with the notion of home as a process (Cieraad 2006; Walsh 2006) and the simultaneity and co-constitution of home-making and unmaking practices (Baxter and Brickell 2014; Brickell 2012, 2014). In this case, this occurs through diasporic migration, the maintenance and repair of stuff, objects and materials moving across apartments and the basements, as well as through practices of disposal. Basement Sanctuaries also echoes key arguments in critical geographies of home, notably that home can be both material and imagined; that experiences of home are produced through typically gendered relations of power, shaping people's identity, and; that home is open and porous, as well as multi-scalar (Blunt and Dowling 2006). Basement Sanctuaries exemplifies the idea that home is constituted at the intersection of public and private and of different scales (local, national, transnational), and that this intersection is geographically and historically inscribed (2006:26–29).

Blunt and Dowling (2006:27) also argue that home is where gendered relations of caring, domestic labour and affective belonging take place. This supports my initial research on (gendered) creative and maintenance material practices in worship spaces as processes of homemaking. It also relates to Sharma's argument that geographies of family and religion are mutually constitutive (2012:817), where 'doing' family entails processes of integration and adaptation within diverse religious communities. According to Watson (2009:319), this is achieved through adopting and adapting religious traditions; as well as forming small mixed groups, where playing games, eating and learning to cook staple dishes from migrant members facilitates integration (2009:324).

Fig. 128 Untitled 51 (tropics), *Basement Sanctuaries*, Gesche Würfel, 2013

Fig. 129 Untitled 55 (beethoven), *Basement Sanctuaries*, Gesche Würfel, 2011

Images on this page: © Gesche Würfel. Reproduced courtesy of the artist
https://geschewuerfel.com/Basement-Sanctuaries (Retrieved July, 2015)

On food

Recently, there is growing interest in the study of food across the social sciences and humanities. Counihan and Van Esterick (2013:2) argue that this is due, in part, to the contribution of feminism and women's studies in legitimising this research focus (Avakian and Haber 2005; Counihan 1999; Inness 2001a, 2001b, 2006; Parkin 2001; Weiss 2001); the increased awareness of the socio-economic and political relationships between food production and consumption; and because of the richness and scope of the subject of food, which 'links body and soul, self and other, the personal and the political, the material and the symbolic' (2013:2). This echoes Fisher's ([1943] 1989) argument of the inseparability of thinking about food, security and love. The interconnectedness of food takes on a particular expression within geography. According to Goodman (2016:257–58), it is a topic that stands at the forefront of post-disciplinarity, as 'it is impossible to separate out the notions of culture, space, economy, politics, and materiality with which it is so thoroughly imbued'.[42] Cook et al. also argue that food is a tangible and rich entry point to any issue of interest (2013:343; Cook 2006:656). This mirrors how my research employs food as a vehicle for exploring suburban faith, migration, home, community, and, family. In what follows, I sketch out specific literature and visual work that addresses such food-related thematic intersections.

Food, cookbooks, identity, migration and multiculturalism

Scholarship on cookbooks (e.g. Appadurai 1988; Bailey-Dick 2005; Chen 2014; Fuster 2015; Goldman 1996; Gvion 2009; Nakhimovsky 2006; Roth 2010) interrogates the way national, local and ethnic identities and notions of authenticity are constructed, enacted and mobilised through foodways, at the intersection of gender, class and religious identities.

It is worth noting the historical gendering of published cookbooks. Household books and encyclopaedias in the early modern era, which included food recipes, emphasised men's role as masters and the subordination of women as household managers responsible for directing the cooking (Notaker 2017a). During the seventeenth and eighteenth century there is a gendered division of cookbooks 'into those written by and for male professional chefs, and those written (largely) by women for female housekeepers' (Dennis 2008:3).

[42] See also Mintz's (1986) seminal work on the historical and colonial power interrelations of sugar production and consumption in relation to class.

This coincides with the promotion of certain forms of cuisine as art and science, from which women were excluded (Dennis 2008; Notaker 2017a).[43] The gendered division of labour into public and private spheres was further accentuated in the nineteenth century, when we find the beginnings of the celebrity chef culture, through best-seller cookbooks that credited restaurant chefs and maîtres d'hôtel (Notaker 2017a:41). Meanwhile, popular recipe books emerged as 'a symptom of the redefinition of femininity in relation to domesticity', partly due to new technologies lowering publishing production costs (Dennis 2008:6). Dennis (2008) notes that the rise of the cookbook market in the nineteenth century led to the development of today's cookbook format; and the gradual inclusion of colour illustrations in female-oriented cookbooks served to promote desirable lifestyles amongst middle-class housewives.

There is also a longstanding tradition of (predominantly religious) community or charity cookbooks, and commercially published religious cookbooks, which have historically contributed to define and redefine gendered religious identities (see chapter five). A contemporary example that is significant for my research is the photobook *Just Not Kosher: 21 Recipes from a Jewish Father with a Kitchen Habit Week1* (Morris et al. 2017), which, like the *Spiritual Flavours* book, explores religious identities, biographies and family anecdotes through recipes.[44] Most notably, this book also explores family, religion and intergenerational relationships by developing a memorable aesthetic experience of its distinct material/visual language, enabled through a collaborative process. This book consists of a beautiful collection of glossy cards with old family pictures and recipes by a Jewish father, artistically photographed in a playful, humorous and sculptural way by his son, and tested by other family members (see Fig. 130).[45]

[43] See Notaker (2017a) for an analysis of the historical processes which marginalised women from being hired as cooks and from the status of the chef as an artist, by being relegated to the domestic domain.

[44] https://www.justnotkosher.com/

[45] See chapter five for a more detailed review on a range of scholarship on cookbooks which has informed the shaping of the *Spiritual Flavours* cookbook.

Fig. 130 *Just Not Kosher: 21 Recipes from a Jewish Father with a Kitchen Habit Week1* (Morris et al. 2017).
Images: © Rick Pushinsky (photography) / Bernd Grether (graphic design). Reproduced courtesy of both http://www.berndgrether.de/projects/Just-Not-Kosher (Retrieved June 10, 2021).

Photography and other popular media has also contributed to creating national identity iconography through food (see Lebesco and Naccarato 2018). For example, Martin Parr's photobooks *British Food* (1995) and *Real Food* (2016) showcase close-up and highly saturated (flash-lit) images of popular British (and other national) ordinary foods, which exploit the tension between humour, nostalgia and, sometimes, disgust (see Fig. 131 to Fig. 133). These images constitute paradigmatic examples of photography's ability to create stereotypes and fetishized clichés, which, according to Bright (2017:15–16), can produce a sense of authenticity, especially when showcasing foods from other cultures.

Relatedly, recent literature within human geographies of food and migration have focused on the way food consumption exposes racial and postcolonial power relations (e.g. Cook and Harrison 2003). Such scholarship interrogates hooks' (1992) notion of 'eating the Other' (e.g. Bell and Valentine 1997; Cook, Crang, and Thorpe 1999); the commodification of 'exotic' ethnic cultures through practices of consumerism (e.g. Germann Molz 2007); and the mobilisation of ethnic and multicultural imaginations (e.g. Dwyer and Crang 2002; May 1996).[46] Scholars in other disciplines have also addressed these debates, including the politics of 'consuming authenticity' (Zukin 2008), 'food colonialism' (Narayan 1995) and 'anti-colonialist eating' (Heldke 2001, [2003] 2016, 2013).

Cook (2008) reflects on the possibilities for developing more complex narratives that disrupt the framework of 'Other-eating' and its assumption of a fundamental difference between "mainstream' and "migrant other" identities. Drawing on the work of Heldke

[46] See Cook et al.'s (2008) overview and discussion of the key debates within such scholarship.

([2003] 2016), Choo (2004), Duruz (2004, 2005), Bergquist's (2006) and Wagner (2007), Cook recognises the underestimated significance of memories and personal multicultural relationships of food exchange. These illustrate 'how people's hybrid – often migrant – identity practices involve making and eating foods 'authentic' to life stories, memories, imaginations and – maybe – foodsheds' (2008:9). This echoes Tanya Houghton's photographic project, *A Migrant's Tale,* 2016, which explores the relationship between food, migration, nostalgia and home (see Fig. 134, Fig. 135). The project has an explicit collaborative register by combining portraits, significant foods and objects carefully arranged into shrine-like patterns and biographical narratives. The project foregrounds how processes of remembering, telling, interpretation and the curation of food-related stories are productive of rich, changing, nuanced and hybrid identities.

This is also consistent with the multi-faith approach of the *Spiritual Flavours* book and film, focusing on food-related memories and biographical stories and how these enact migrant and religious identities. As Duruz (2005:66) argues, although imbued with power dynamics, amicable relationships of exchange involving food, ideas, experiences, knowledge and caring have the capacity to disrupt both the boundaries of ethnicities [and religion], and of the prevalent "mainstream" identity, while also untangling other identity dimensions, including class, gender and age (2005:68). Moreover, Narayan calls for considering the point of view of migrants to Western contexts when analysing the social meaning of 'ethnic food' in these contexts, which is central to the articulations of 'spiritual' food in my research.

Scholars have also stressed the significance of food, cooking and eating together as a key focus for exploring how transnational migrants adapt to new urban and social environments. For example, drawing on the work of Ferrero (2002), Bailey (2017:52) argues that migrants reconstitute their identity in the new countries they inhabit by transposing food and food practices from their homeland. Rabikowska and Burrell (2009; see also Burrell 2008a, 2008b) also explore the role of food practices for negotiating transnational journeys and lives of Polish migrants to the UK and their maintenance of relationships with family members left behind. Similarly, Petridou (2001:88) looks at how food practices evoke family and home as a 'sensory totality' amongst Greek students in the UK, by bringing or receiving staple and home-made food from Greece, as well as cooking and eating together. Here, gendered notions of care and family traditions are also mobilised through practices of cleaning and tidying-up, which has informed my research

interest in caring and maintenance practices within faith communities. Further, Law's (2001:267) research on female Filipino domestic workers in Hong Kong also shows the occasioning of gendered place and a 'sense' of home through regular public gatherings where taste, smell and texture of foods help embody a national subjectivity.

Finally, Johnston and Longhurst note the tendency of scholarship on food and diasporic migrant communities to focus on a single ethnic/cultural/national group and that there is scarcity of research exploring the everyday lived experiences of migrants' inter-ethnic encounters and place-sharing (2012:330), which this doctoral research addresses. Adding to existing literature on the 'visceral' dimension of the co-constitutive relation between bodies and food (Hayes-Conroy and Hayes-Conroy 2010), Johnston and Longhurst argue that different ethnic women migrants are able to establish affective ties between them and with the new places they inhabit, through cooking together in each other's kitchens and sharing food; negotiating with these practices feelings of belonging and exclusion (2012:325). Following research in Hamilton, New Zealand, with eleven migrant women of different nationalities – where they used the kitchen as a research setting for exploring complex multicultural relationships elicited through place and food-sharing –, they highlight the 'need to consider the way in which feeling, emotion and affect may be contagious and circulate amongst migrant women' (2012:326).

As such, the above scholarship exposes the centrality of food in everyday identity and home-making practices, which are gendered, cultural and political, but also, notably, sensory, embodied and affective. However, despite substantial scholarship exploring the relationship between embodiment, gender, food and identity within cultural geography on migration, the theme of food is not as present in literature on gender and religion (for example, Gemzöe and Keinänen 2016), suggesting a gap in the literature that this PhD contributes to.

Fig. 131 *Real Food*, Florida, 1998, Martin Parr

Fig. 132 *Real Food*, Somerset. Wells, England, 2000, Martin Parr

Fig. 133 *Real Food*, England, 1995, Martin Parr

Images on this page: © Martin Parr / Magnum Photos. Reproduced courtesy of the artist
https://www.magnumphotos.com/arts-culture/society-arts-culture/martin-parrs-real-food/ (Retrieved June 10, 2021)

Fig. 134 Christin. Korean Heritage. Born and raised in Canada. 7 years in London. *A Migrant's Tale*, Tanya Houghton, 2016

Fig. 135 Lamin. Gambian heritage. Born and raised in Gambia. 21 years in the UK. *A Migrant's Tale*, Tanya Houghton, 2016

Images on this page: © Tanya Houghton. Reproduced courtesy of the artist https://www.tanyahoughton.com/a-migrants-tale/ (Retrieved October 2, 2016).

Food agency, senses and memory

Food's cultural geographies (Cook et al. 2013) are increasingly concerned with the material dimensions of food and its agency (Bennett 2007; Mol 2008), which calls for paying attention to food-body relationships and visceral feelings (Hayes-Conroy and Martin 2010).[47]

> In the visceral realm, foods link up with ideas, memories, sounds, visions, beliefs, past experiences, moods, worries and so on, all of which combine to become material – to become bodily, physical sensation. If we can understand such sensation – how it forms, what it does to the body, how it can be shaped – then we might be able to understand and utilize food's differential power to affect bodies (Cook et al. 2011:113).

Likewise, Highmore (2008) calls for recognising the agency of food within sensual eating practices of intercultural life, which are both somatic and symbolic. Drawing on psychoanalysis (Winnicott 1964) and social aesthetics – as well as Narayan's (2013:184) positive appraisal of 'gustatory' or 'carnal relish' as non-ideational appreciative forms of contact with diverse "others" – Highmore (2008) argues that the intensities of eating and the material contact with food contribute to a sensual and 'alimentary pedagogy', capable of re-orienting sensual perceptions towards ethnic difference. Here, everyday eating and culinary enjoyment are considered key for social identity making (2008:388). Furthermore, subjects are in constant process of reconstitution and learning through playful, bodily habit and routines (2008:393–94).[48] Highmore (2008:393) quotes Benjamin's (1999:120) understanding of habit as emerging and developing through rhythmic and repetitive playfulness. This connects with the idea of rhythms of food practices as body motion, periodicity and repetition (as suggested above) but also, notably, as creative and playful visual, sonic, olfactory and tactile patterns. This is suggested in Sophie Calle's photographic series *The Chromatic Diet,* 1997, in *Double Game* (1999), comprised of images of monochromatic food menus – a different colour for each day of the week, except Sunday, which has all the colours/menus (to be eaten) together. Equally playful, Lorenzo Vitturi's photobook *Dalston Anatomy* (2013)

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[47] See also Lupton (1996), Probyn (2000) and Pichler (2016) on the subject of food and embodiment, and Mol (2008) on food and subjectivity.

[48] See also Guggenheim and Cuch (2018), and Voß and Guggenheim (2019) on 'experimental eating' as reflexive and embodied forms of tasting that have potential for democratising taste.

combines portraits of local people, street pictures, food and debris from London's Ridley Road Market as raw material for collages, sculptures and colourful still lifes (see Fig. 136 to Fig. 138). The project's multiple formats (photobook, exhibitions, website) produce aesthetic and rhythmic compositions of multicultural food and material culture from an East London market. This resonates with notions of sensuous multiculturalism (e.g. Wise 2010; Rhys-Taylor 2013) as (re)orchestrations of multiple senses (Highmore 2008).

Rhys-Taylor (2014:46) ethnographic research, also based at Ridley Road market, draws parallels with religious rites and festivals to highlight the centrality of smells and flavours within 'culturally formative rituals'. His work is informed by scholars exploring food and the senses (Classen 1990; Howes 1987; Howes and Classen 2013; Korsmeyer and Sutton 2011; Sutton 2010a), which recognise scent and taste as the most affective of all sensoria and having a key role for processes of embodied cultural attachment (Duggan 2011:118), particularly because of their connection with memory (Holtzman 2006:365). Most famously associated to Proust's (1934) experience of madeleines as catalysts for childhood memories, the topic of food and memory has received much academic attention, particularly by anthropologists Holtzman (2006, 2010) and Sutton (2011; 2001, 2008, 2009, 2010b, [1997] 2013, 2016).[49] Drawing on Bourdieu's (1977) habitus, Connerton's (1989) idea of bodily memory and Stoller's (1994) stress on embodied memories, Holtzman (2006:365) argues that food induces recollection cognitively, emotionally and physically. He relates the strength of food as a 'locus of memory' to the sensuality of eating, which 'transmits powerful mnemonic cues, principally through smells and tastes', and because of food's intrinsic capacity to traverse 'the public and the intimate' (2006:373). This might not be limited to the 'act of incorporation' – by which food is sent across the boundary between the world and the body (Fischler 1988:279) – but could extend to the sensuality of food preparations and rituals. Sutton ([1997] 2013:302) draws on Tim Ingold's work (2011) to link memory and embodied practical knowledge, such as cooking, and its transmission through (cooking) tools across generations (see also Meah and Jackson 2016). This is important for my argument that food practices operate as affective markers and non-linguistic mnemonic devices within religious experience (see also Duggan 2011).

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[49] See also Lupton's (1994) *Food, memory and meaning: the symbolic and social nature of food events*; and *Food and memory: Proceedings of the Oxford Symposium on Food and Cookery, 2000* (Walker 2001)

Fig. 136 Oad Osed, *Dalston Anatomy*, Lorenzo Vitturi, 2013

Fig. 137 Yellow Chalk #1&2, *Dalston Anatomy*, Lorenzo Vitturi, 2013

Fig. 138 *Dalston Anatomy* exhibition view, Lorenzo Vitturi, 2013

Images on this page: © Lorenzo Vitturi. Reproduced courtesy of the artist
http://www.lorenzovitturi.com/a-dalston-anatomy/ (Retrieved June 10, 2021)

Works on food and the senses have converged towards notions of synaesthesia, which considers the experience of the simultaneous activity of various senses (Howes 2006:162, 2011; Sutton 2010a:217, [1997] 2013:301). For instance, drawing on Kenna (2005), Sutton refers to an Orthodox Church service as a synesthetic experience through, for example, 'incense, basil and bread which are brought home by women church attendees to pervade the home with the tastes and smells of Orthodoxy' ([1997] 2013:301). Importantly, Rhys-Taylor (2014:47) draws on Classen et al. (1994:123) to highlight the socially integrative quality of taste and smell when culturally-bound sensations are communally experienced, which connects with *Spiritual Flavours* focus on the affective capacities of commensality.

Food, identity and commensality

There is a substantial amount of scholarship on practices of commensality ('eating at the same table', see Wise 2011:82). This comprises literature on the notion and history of commensality (Fischler 2011; Goldstein 2018; Hirschman 1996; Kerner, Chou, and Warmind 2015), as well as empirical research on practices of commensality (Bailey 2017; Danesi 2018; Ferdous et al. 2016; Giacoman 2016; Scagliusi et al. 2016; Wise 2011). Kerner and Chou (2015:2) note that early scholarship on commensality mainly focused on the social and psychological function of food obligations and prohibitions for uniting or separating social groups. Furthermore, according to them, much scholarship to this day has concentrated on the 'religious, ritualistic and sacrificial aspects', overlooking everyday commensalism.[50] Chee-Beng (2015:28) defines categories of commensality as: 'domestic', 'kin and communal', 'ceremonial and religious', 'political' and 'hospitality' (extending the 'domestic' category). In the religious category, commensal feasting is analysed in relation to the worship of Gods and sacrificial rituals, as well as in terms of reinforcing fellowship (2015:21).

In addition to these dimensions, two other key aspects of commensality for my research are: first, its capacities to mobilise emotion and social bonding (Appadurai 1981:494) through the communal sharing of sensual and affectual experiences with food (as suggested earlier); and, second, the way commensality defines and is defined by

[50] Kerner and Chou note that Simmel's (1997) emphasis on how common and mundane meals serve to establish social bonds was a pioneering attempt, as early as 1910, to analyse commensality outside feasting (2015:2).

gendered, social, cultural, moral and spiritual norms and power relations – both within formal religious settings and celebrations, and within mundane, everyday, religious and domestic meals. This relates to the notion of commensality as performative of cultural and religious education, as well as regulated by gendered and embodied power relations within institutions (e.g. Forero et al. 2009) and families. Here, the family context introduces gendered practices of care and micro relations of power through the early experience of eating together (Probyn 2000:35). This echoes Appadurai's notion of 'gastro-politics' (1981), articulated through the analysis of commensal power relations within moral, religious and family cosmologies in Hindu South India, which are also entangled with practices of religious hospitality (Chee-Beng 2015; Pohl 2005).[51] These power relations are also enacted through material practices other than just food. Fischler (2011:534) reviews the significance of the physical space and the size and shapes of tables for the social space of commensality. He argues that there are always rules and customs around eating practices that have to do with the arrangement of commensals. This is central for the multi-faith comparative approach of the material arrangements of commensality in the *Spiritual Flavours Meals* series (see chapter four).

Relatedly, Kerner and Chou (2015:21) note that the Last Supper is the most powerful visual representation of commensality within Western religious art (see also Albury and Weisz 2009; C. Young 1999; Varriano 2008), although imaginations of commensality are also associated with Greek and Roman banquets (e.g. Dunbabin 2003).[52] Thus, commensality and feasting are also recurrent themes in arts and literature (Goldstein 2018), such as in Anita Desai's postcolonial novel *Fasting, Feasting* (1999), contrasting food and family cultures in the US and in India, or Gabriel Axel's film *Babette's Feast* (1987), which explores the tension between food, carnal pleasure and religion. Contemporary artists Emer O'Brien, Greta Alfaro and Honi Ryan have developed work that unsettles conventional visualisations, associations and social relationships of commensality, by photographing the aftermath of banquets (*After The Salon*, 2011-13);[53]

[51] This follows a theoretical trajectory originated by seminal structuralist and semiotic perspectives within anthropology, which analyse food and eating as if it were language, reflecting wider social, cultural and moral systems (Douglas [1966] 2003, 1972; Lévi-Strauss [1964] 1969, [1966] 1997; Barthes 1972). This highly influential work also received criticism for being too static and essentialist (see Lupton 1996; Counihan and Van Esterik [1997] 2013; Atkins and Bowler [2001] 2016; Jones 2007).

[52] See Hirschman (1996:541) on the relationship between the banquet and the emergence of democracy in ancient Greece.

[53] https://kristinhjellegjerde.com/artists/57-emer-obrien/works/ (Accessed June 10, 2021).

offering a feast to predatory birds (*In Ictu Oculi*, 2009);[54] and orchestrating participatory silent meals (*The Silent Dinners,* 2006-2021);[55] respectively.

Food and religion

Much scholarship within sociology and anthropology on commensality and food-related issues – e.g. identity, purity, taboos, food prohibitions, hospitality and 'gastro-politics'– discuss religious practices, celebratory rituals, theological principles and dietary laws (e.g. Appadurai 1981; Douglas [1966] 2003; Goldstein 2018; Hirschman 1996). Scholarship specifically focusing on (or addressing) the relationship between food and religion exists both within food studies and religious studies (e.g. Anderson [2005] 2014; Feeley-Harnik 1995; Harvey 2014, 2015; Norman 2012; Notaker 2017b), including works from a theological perspective (e.g. Grumett 2013; Grumett and Muers 2008; Méndez-Montoya 2012; Robinson 2020; Wirzba 2011). There is also scholarship focusing on this relationship in various contexts (Di Giovine 2014; Howell 2018; Kissane 2018; Koepping 2008; Pérez 2016; Sack 2016; Stross 2010; Wood 2016; Zeller et al. 2014). However, within religious studies the 'theorisation of religion as foodways is in its infancy' (Harvey 2015:90). Norman (2012) offers a comprehensive review of existing scholarship on this subject, focused and discussed via Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, Judaism, and Christianity (with some references outside these traditions). He argues that, despite the risks of universalising in comparison, there is need for more research with a comparative analysis (2012:411), which supports the methodological approach of my research. Norman also notes that scholarship on food and Hinduism is largely concerned with 'temple worship and public foodways', and recognises the importance of researching "private" dimensions of food and religion, particularly in the home where women have a significant role (2012:414; see also McGuire 2003:107). Desjardins (2015; 2013) also emphasises the centrality of home and women for enabling religious food traditions and transferring them to future generations (see also Hirvi 2016; Veidlinger 2013). This connects with the *Spiritual Flavours* theme of intergenerational knowledge transmission, which includes faith-related recipes as forms of personal and family religious heritage (see also Brulotte and Giovine 2016).

Desjardins (2015; 2013) categorises the relationship between food and religion into: food

[54] http://gretaalfaro.com/work/inictu/inictu.html (Accessed June 10, 2021).
[55] https://silentdinnerparty.com/ (Accessed June 10, 2021).

offerings (see Wood 2008); dietary restrictions or laws (see Kraemer 2007; Shatenstein, Ghadirian, and Lambert 1993); fasting practices (see Buitelaar 1993; Walker 1991); food prepared for special religious occasions with prayers said over food (see Caplan [1994] 2021; Wallendorf and Arnould 1991) and; food charity (see Salonen 2016). One could add religious approaches to ethical food and the environment (see Van Wieren 2018). This provides a useful context for my research, where I pay attention to the similarities and specificities of these categorisations across the different communities and participants.

Finally, while much photographic work on religious practices includes images of food practices, I am not aware of many photographic and arts projects specifically addressing the intersection of food and religion – beyond artwork included in cookbooks that focus on specific religious food cultures (see chapter five). However, one impressive installation arts project is Antoni Miralda's *Holy Food*, 1984-1989 (2017:112), which includes a series of shrine-inspired displays of Santería food offerings to Yoruba Orisha deities, syncretised through assimilation with Catholic saints. Thus, this work creates an aesthetic experience that foregrounds the interdependency of food and religious ritual within Afro-Caribbean expressions of African religious legacy (see also Pérez 2016).

Food and art

The thematic intersection of food and art exceeds the scope of this chapter. However, it is noteworthy that, while there are exceptional and internationally acclaimed artists who have been at the forefront of food and arts for decades, such as Antoni Miralda (2017) or artist/chef Ferran Adrià, there is a recent burgeoning of interest in this area by artists and curators.[56] Since the start of my PhD I'm aware of two international photography festival editions focused on food and a third festival with a major group show on this subject.[57] Furthermore, there have been several recent curatorial programmes on the politics of food by contemporary arts institutions in London, such as a five-season programme, *The*

[56] See, for example, different interdisciplinary artistic platforms such as non-profit, cultural, interdisciplinary and open-structure platform, *Food Cultura*, founded by Antoni Miralda and Montse Guillén in 2007: http://www.foodcultura.org/en/, and; the arts collective Nyamnyam, created in 2012 by artists Iñaki Alvarez i Ariadna Rodríguez: http://nyamnyam.net/eng.php

[57] These are: PhotoIreland Festival 2021: https://2021.photoireland.org/programme/;
You Are What You Eat, Krakow Photomonth: https://2019.photomonth.com/en/portfolio/bunkier-sztuki-gallery/, and; Festival of Political Photography: *Post-Food 2017*: https://www.pvf.fi/PVF17-Post-Food;

Politics of Food, 2014-2021, at Delfina Foundation*,* (2019);[58] and the programme of events, *Radical Kitchen*, 2017-2018, at the Serpentine Gallery.[59]

In academia, it is worth noting the publication of edited/authored books on food and photography (Bright 2017), food in film (Bower 2004a), food in the arts (Walker 1999), food and literature (Shahani 2018), food and media (Leer and Povlsen 2016); food and popular culture (Lebesco and Naccarato 2018); and food and social media (Rousseau 2012).

Conclusion

In this chapter I have discussed visual and scholarly works relevant to the key themes and arguments of this research. First, I have examined how photography and cultural geography address (and perform) in/visibilities of sub/urban geographies of religion, highlighting processes of hybridisation and adaptation, and material religious practices outside formal religious settings. These works contest religious and secular distinctions, raise questions around the gaze and address the need to consider diverse ontological imaginations of the sacred. Here, I raise concerns about the suitability of Barad's posthuman materialist performativity (of discursive-material 'intra-actions', *within*) for researching religious and spiritual practices, which theologically imply the ontological transcendence of Spirit, Gods or the divine. However, I have also considered the value of a materialist performative approach in relation to: 1) scholarship in cultural geography which calls for paying attention to the embodied and affective registers of 'extraordinary ontologies that are presenced and performed in religious and spiritual geographies' (Holloway 2011:31), and which argues that spirituality may be theorised as immanent in its existence at a corporeal and non-metaphysical level in everyday life (Dewsbury and Cloke 2009:697) and; 2) religious studies scholarship on 'material', 'lived', 'everyday' and 'vernacular' religion, which explores personal experiences of how religion and spirituality are materially, ordinarily and routinely practiced (Ammerman 2007; McGuire 2008c; Orsi 2003). I have also discussed how different photographic genres and visual approaches echo scholarship that highlights the significance of material, sensuous, embodied, and affective religious practices. This scholarship and visual works inform the understanding in this research of religion, spirituality, and 'sacred' spaces and practices

[58] https://www.delfinafoundation.com/programmes/the-politics-of-food/

[59] https://www.serpentinegalleries.org/whats-on/radical-kitchen-2018/

as emergent through performance and affect, which is aligned with a 'more-than-representational' approach (Della Dora 2011:165). This also sheds light on how affective and rhythmic qualities of transient material practices are performative of dynamic markers of religious and spiritual experience and identities.

Following this, I have engaged with theoretical discussions on academic and photographic work that pays attention to material agency and explores (gendered) material cultures for un/making home, particularly of migrant people, through practices of display, decoration, care and maintenance. Here, home, religion and identity are performed through material practices that are entangled with gender and geographic, socio-economic, aesthetic and sensory dimensions. I have also discussed the notion of home as porous, multi-scalar and dynamic, as well as scholarship exploring the co-constitutive relationship of church, family and home-making practices (often involving food), which is relevant for considering how worshippers might experience community spaces as home, through food practices.

In the final section on food, I have explored the significance of food for defining gender, national and religious identities. First, I gave an overview of the gendered history of cookbooks and how these, alongside food photography and popular media, have been instrumental for mobilising religious, ethnic and national identities. Second, I address key debates around migration and multiculturalism that call for paying attention to: 1) personal histories, memories and relationships of multicultural exchange and; 2) the capacities of sensuous, visceral and affective relationships with food (and its material agency) for developing affective ties with place and with other migrants from different countries and ethnicities (Johnston and Longhurst 2012; Longhurst et al. 2009), as well as for redefining subjectivity and orientations towards ethnic difference (Highmore 2008). These debates are significant for my research in the following ways: 1) they signal the importance of (gendered) food practices within relationships of multi-ethnic and multi-faith conviviality, both within worship spaces and the locality; 2) they support the rationale for making a practical cookbook that offers a symbolic and somatic approximation to the religious "other"; 3) it recognises non-ideational visceral, sensual, physical and aesthetic relationships with food as fundamental for religious sociality and pedagogy. Thus, they support my research argument that food practices operate as sensual, affective and rhythmic markers of religious practices and education. This connects with scholarship and visual works on food, senses, synaesthesia and memory

that shed light on how sensuous, embodied and affective food practices trigger memories, produce feelings and emotional ties, as well as a sense of identity and belonging. Significantly, these may be experienced communally, for instance, within religious commensality (in worship spaces or at home). Here, food practices and embodied knowledge shape people's identities and may connect them with the 'sacred', with other people, with different geographies, temporalities, as well as with their cultural, historical, and religious heritage and values.

Finally, I have identified the scarcity of visual work that specifically addresses food and religion and how scholarship in this area has recently expanded its research breadth to consider a wider plurality of religious settings and denominations. It has also embraced a broader approach beyond the more traditional focus on feasting, fasting and food prohibitions, in order to consider other spiritually experienced dimensions, such as charity, nutrition and the environment. Such scholarship provides a useful context for this PhD, responding to the call for more comparative research, and contributing to the plurality of views and experiences of food and religion, especially in relation to home, gender and different age groups.

Chapter four: Communal material arrangements of commensality in *Spiritual Flavours: Meals*

While reading this chapter, please refer to the A3 size prints with captions, included in the PhD submitted archival box

Introduction

The *Spiritual Flavours: Meals* photographic series aims to foreground the significance of food and commensality for community religious practices. This series developed as the culmination of two initial and simultaneous sets of visual practice (discussed in chapter two). First, the practice of photographing the interiors of religious architecture; and, second, a series of visual ethnographies (involving film and photography) exploring various creative, caring and maintenance material practices, occurring 'behind the scenes' or during quiet times in the worship spaces. These exposed the abundance, diversity and centrality of food events and practices within religious communities, which informed my comparative research focus on the relationship between food and everyday religious practices.

As such, the series *Meals* emerged in response to my first two research questions. First, what kinds of knowledge does a set of visual arts projects bring to the understanding of food and religion in a West London multi-faith suburb? Second, what analytic themes emerge and are made possible through the interplay of practice-based research and food and religious practices? The *Meals* series produces visual knowledge that sensitises audiences to the aesthetic, atmospheric and affective value of spatial and material arrangements of religious commensality. Here, by contrasting different faith settings, the series also contributes understandings of distinctive, as well as common features of commensality across various faith communities, precipitated through the series' consistent focus, formal approach and displayed information. The series also highlights specific themes of the relationship of food and faith in community worship settings, such as their rhythmic patterns and temporalities; the gendered organisation of food practices and of the work involved; the gastro-politics (Appadurai 1981) of commensal spaces; food restrictions and rituals of specific meals; the adaptation and celebration of migrant groups through food, and; theological principles around commensality.

This chapter starts with a description of how the format, technical and aesthetic approach, as well as seriality of the *Meals* series – informed by interiors, vernacular and typological

photographic genres – elicits particular visual engagements, imaginations and sensory understandings of religious commensality. I also provide an overview of the way this series has been shown in different contexts. Following this, I discuss how each individual image (and caption) emerged through my ongoing visual research practice on food events in the seven faith communities. This covers the significance of the showcased events and the rationale for their choice (informed by research findings, visual/material features, fieldwork practicalities, editing processes and feedback from community members), as well as the interplay between images and captions and how this precipitates particular themes and experiences of the work. It also includes an analysis of the formal and aesthetic qualities of each of the seven images (such as framing, composition and lighting) and how these enable particular interpretations of the relationship between food and religious practices, specific to each community. Here, I draw on Candida Höfer and Lynne Cohen's visual and technical approach to photographing interiors, in order to discuss how particular elements within my visual practice produce notions and visual experiences of absence/presence, rhythm, temporality, atmosphere and numinosity. I also discuss my visual approach in relation to scholarship on material arrangements of commensality, which reference depictions of the Last Supper, to analyse the symbolic power of some images in this series.

The chapter ends with some conclusions on how my research on the spatial and material arrangements of commensality within worship spaces performed through visual practice offers particular insights and sensory, aesthetic and affective apprehensions of the commonalities and differences of food and everyday religious practices in these communities, which produce new plural, vernacular and multi-faith imaginations of religious commensality.

Meals **as a series: A new multi-faith imagination of religious commensality**

The series *Meals* consists of seven photographic exhibition prints (50x75cm) showing food-related events and spaces with captions. There is one image for each of the seven faith communities involved in the research. Thus, the series comparatively introduces each of the faith communities. Except for the ELS, the pictures deliberately focus on non-worship areas which, nonetheless, are significant for the religious lives of these

communities.[60]

This series taps into the iconography of religious commensality and deploys visual strategies to draw attention to the spatial qualities and aesthetics of food-related events and spaces. As discussed in chapter two, I took many of the pictures in this series as part of my initial practice of photographing the interiors of religious architecture and of various material practices, occurring ‘behind the scenes’. These practices entailed both technical and affective performative dimensions, which I discuss in chapter two. The *Meals* series, however, was only conceptually and formally defined through the process of curating an exhibition of the *Spiritual Flavours* project in Helsinki, which I also discuss in the section of composing, editing and curating in chapter two. This intentionally involved moving away from a documentary register of depicting food practices in action (i.e., people cooking, serving and sharing food). Instead, these images, devoid of people, use a formal approach that draws from architecture and interiors photography and the visual tradition of vernacular photography. Notably, they communicate peoples’ relationship with these spaces through their absence. A clear reference is the work of Candida Höfer and the way she imbues the interior public buildings she photographs (theatres, palaces, opera houses, libraries, etc.) with human activity, despite its absence. Discussing people’s absence in Höfer’s work, Constance W. Glenn argues that

> The “truth” of these views is in the uncannily correct way they capture the essence of the life of the space – not through depicting the appropriate activity being played out, but through the option to freely approach on our own terms, relishing the absence of an explicitness that stifles imagination. (Höfer et al. 2004:13)

Similar to Höfer’s approach, the religious spaces in *Meals* are presented frontally, in a “neutral” head-on manner. This follows a photographic tradition initiated by Walker Evans’ objective documentary approach in the 1930s (see chapter three). Drawing on this tradition and the contemporary blurring of documentary and fine-art photographic styles, I aimed to deploy a “neutral”, distanced and quasi typological style to visually explore commensality in religious spaces. This allowed me to create a comparative and reflective space for relating social dynamics and spirituality through the spatial and material

[60] The image of the WLIC showcases an area that is not specifically designed for worship but is regularly used for prayers.

arrangements of food events (Fischler 2011), thus producing a multi-faith visual category of communal religious commensality.

Due to low light conditions, all the interiors in *Meals*, with the exception of the Gurdwara and SKTAT, were photographed with a tripod in order to use a narrow aperture and a slow shutter speed. This combined with a wide-angle lens achieves focus in all parts of the image (through a great depth of field) and allows the viewer to appreciate the interior material details, especially on large exhibition prints. The tripod also enables careful compositions, as it is possible to slowly adjust the camera height, shift and tilt, and achieve horizontal and vertical alignments and symmetric compositions. These features make images appear and feel static, balanced, peaceful, detached and seemingly "objective", inviting the viewer to take time to observe and question the significance of the material elements in the image and their arrangement within the space. This formal approach suggests action and temporality in different ways. In some cases, such as in ECC or the Gurdwara, it reinforces a sense of idle time; of things happening earlier, much later, or elsewhere. In other cases, it insinuates an immediacy of something that is about to happen, such as in the ELS picture, where everything is ready for the Tisch meal; thus, imbuing the space with suspended anticipation.

Another key aesthetic choice of the *Meals* series is its use of natural and ambient light. Commercial interiors photography often employs additional artificial lighting to create a particular reading and aesthetic of space. Many artist photographers have also used artificial lighting and multiple exposures to photograph spaces in theatrical, enigmatic and atmospheric sculptural ways.[61] These don't necessarily resemble what these spaces normally look like but are photographed (painted with light) in thought-provoking ways; thus, interrogating spaces by making them unusual, strange or uncanny. However, for the series *Meals*, I wanted to work with the existing available lighting to create an aesthetic sensorial experience of these spaces which prompts the viewer to interrogate their materiality, but is not far removed from their appearance when experienced in person.

This speaks back to the work of Candida Höfer and Lynne Cohen, who have mastered the possibilities of transforming the perception of spaces through the combination of available light, accurate compositions, and absence of people. Cohen photographed

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[61] See, for example, the work of Gregory Crewdson or Manuel Vazquez:
http://www.artnet.com/artists/gregory-crewdson/
https://www.manuelv.net/SERIES/BBC-LIGHTS-OUT/thumbs

vernacular spaces that people inhabit but tend to overlook, which appear strange, enigmatic and even fake in her images. She cleverly achieves this without hardly ever using any additional lighting, nor moving any objects in the scene (Cohen and Le Tourneux 2013:46). The *Meals* series is influenced by her way of prompting the viewer to reconsider ordinary environments and the choices underpinning their creation and arrangement; thus, exposing the interplay between the intent behind the furnishing and decorations of interiors and their material expression (Cohen and Thomas 2001:10). Similarly, the *Meals* series resonates with Höfer's way of choosing a perspective that optimises available light and the repetition of elements in order to create strong rhythmical compositions. According to Lombino, these 'explore the rich nuances of social systems revealed by her subjects and encapsulate the regimentation of institutional architecture' (Höfer et al. 2004:26). In Hoffer's work, like in the *Meals* series, we learn about human relations and interactions with institutional and communal spaces through the careful organisation and arrangement of repetitive architectural elements and objects. Thus, the *Meals* series produces knowledge of the interplay of spirituality, social relations and institutional and communal organisation of food practices, by visually responding and becoming sensitised to the design and adaptation of interior spaces and the arrangement of commensal materiality – this was also informed by the practice of photographing the interiors of worship spaces, where I became aware of how the arrangements and re-arrangements of furniture (e.g., tables, chairs, benches, prayer mats) revealed the social and spiritual relations that took place.

Relatedly, while human presence is articulated through the material qualities and (dis)order of commensal arrangements, the absence of people also contributes to the perception of a spiritual dimension of these spaces. This is partly achieved through their identification in the captions as religious places, which encourages an imagination of the devotees' experience and connection with the presence of the divine. However, arguably, it is also achieved through how the absence of people, as well as the quality of light, create a tension and a sense of time suspension, which imbue the spaces with a numinous quality and atmosphere. The associations between light and the divine are extensive in many religions and expressed in their celebrations, such as Diwali, the Hindu Festival of Lights. As such, in some images, especially those of the Gurdwara, SKTAT and OLSJ, I draw on Höfer's use of white ambient light and the colour white as key compositional features (Höfer et al. 2004).

As mentioned earlier, I formally developed *Meals* as an exhibition series to be shown, alongside the *Spiritual Flavours* film, in a cultural centre in the diverse neighbourhood of Puotinharju, in East Helsinki, as part of the Festival of Political Photography: Post-Food 2017.[62] The images were printed large (75x50cm) to allow for an appreciation of the material and decorative details of these commensal spaces (see Fig. 77, Fig. 82). Later, *Meals* has been exhibited in local art galleries, such as W3 Gallery in Acton in 2017 and the Watermans Art Centre in Brentford in 2019, as well as major arts institutions, such as Tate Modern in 2018 (see Fig. 74 to Fig. 85 in chapter two for installation views of *Spiritual Flavours* exhibitions, and details of all public engagement events in Appendix B). In all these venues, the images have been exhibited with captions. These are presented either in separate panels with image thumbnails or as A4 size laminated texts that visitors can read while exploring the show (see Fig. 74, Fig. 81). The captions serve a two-fold purpose. First, they provide details of the religious denomination of each faith community, the types of food events they hold and the different ways in which worshippers are involved – in each faith community, I first chose a relevant space/event to photograph and then developed a contextual narrative that communicates some of the empirical findings and key themes of the relationship of food and religion within each worship space. Second, they contribute to creating a space for imagination, between the factual but limited information they provide and the aesthetic and affective experience of the encounter with the images.

Seen as a series, a new plural and multi-faith imagination (or a kind of typology) of communal religious commensality starts to emerge. The comparative approach allows for an interrogation of the different spatial and material arrangements of food events in different faith communities. Viewers are invited to consider various dimensions of the relationship between food and faith: What are the contexts of these *Meals*? Are these spaces and the food involved sacred? Who and how many people attend these events? How often do they happen? Are they bound to specific religious, age and gender hierarchies? What kind of food is served? Do these communities follow any dietary restrictions or periods of fasting? Who cooks the food and who cleans afterwards? Both the images and the captions provide details that respond some of these questions and suggest similarities and differences between the worship spaces and food settings.

[62] https://www.pvf.fi/PVF17-Post-Food

Meals' single images: Exploring food practices in each faith community

The Ealing Christian Centre café area: Kitchen access and church as family

Fig. 139 Ealing Christian Centre, 2015. *Spiritual Flavours: Meals*. Photographic print, 75x50cm

At the Ealing Christian Centre (Elim Pentecostal Church), which is located in a 1930s cinema, a group of about forty men from the community attend church at 8am on a Saturday and then eat breakfast together every two months. This is usually a full English breakfast and pastries. Three women, who are actively involved in the church, volunteer and take turns preparing and serving the food in what would have been the cinema bar. Once a year, these women and other volunteers prepare the Appreciation Meal for over one hundred people who do some work for the church. This is served and eaten in the main hall.

The Ealing Christian Centre (ECC) building has a foyer with two separate staircases going down towards the main theatre hall. In the middle of the foyer, some central steps lead up to a café area, adjacent to the kitchen. The ECC *Meals* image shows this café space seen from the foyer and depicts the seating area in front of the bar, before access to the kitchen. This picture is a retake of one I took the first time I visited ECC, when I felt compelled by the aesthetic appeal of this space. With its golden fantasy décor over pink, red and creamy tones, which contrast with the green synthetic floor, the café has a unique look that appears simultaneously 'fake' in its fanciful original motives and 'real' in its period appearance. It seemed a fantastically strange space, which connects the church to

the building's origin as a 1930s atmospheric cinema, as it once was the cinema's bar/restaurant.[63] When I returned to ECC to photograph its interiors, I made sure to retake the picture with a tripod to get better detail and a more symmetric composition than in my first handheld attempt.[64] Despite the main hall's grandiosity with its balcony and Spanish villa decoration (see Fig. 35 in chapter two), this little café appeared to me as the heart of the building. Except in rare occasions, food and drinks are not allowed in the main hall and all food is prepared and served in this area – the picture shows a one-way system into the kitchen through the two doors behind the bar. Other pictures I took in this café area and kitchen show shared community kitchen utensils, such as kettles and hot water dispensers; as well as signs with good practice notices and names of church groups for different kitchen cupboards and utensils.

ECC is a large community (over 1000 devotees) and has very distinct worship groups. In this respect, as Hyacinth (2019) argues, although ECC might appear as a 'Black Majority' church at first sight – defined as comprising at least 80% of black worshippers and commonly characterised by charismatic worshipping styles such as speaking in tongues, and being situated in inner city adapted industrial buildings – the ECC is distinct in its suburban location and the composition of its worshippers, which include people from all over the world. This includes the Japanese Fellowship (ECCJ) and the Polish Fellowship (Elim Springs), which operate as separate congregations within ECC. Both these Fellowships have services at the same time (Sundays at 2.30pm) in their own languages. When I started my research, ECCJ routinely organised many community meals, as the pastor loves cooking, and they held their services at the relatively small foyer next to the café area. However, sometime after, the Polish Fellowship, which celebrated their services in the main hall, requested to swap spaces and ECCJ no longer had regular access to the kitchen (significantly reducing their food events), which the Polish community started to enjoy. This demonstrated how kitchen access determined preferences of worship spaces and the social opportunities of specific groups.

I aimed to photograph two significant food events: a bi-monthly Men's Breakfast and the annual Appreciation Meal around Christmas time. The Men's Breakfast was created to provide a regular inter-generational community space for men to share and discuss their

[63] The history of the building as a cinema is available at: http://cinematreasures.org/theaters/11190

[64] See chapter two and Gilbert et al. (2015) for a description of the work I did photographing the interiors of ECC and St. Thomas the Apostle Church.

spiritual and personal issues amongst other fellow members in the community, as well as pray and eat together, to develop friendships.[65] Typically, a group of twenty-five to fifty men of different ages attend an 8am Saturday service in the foyer, followed by an English breakfast in the café area. The breakfast is usually prepared by two or three female members of the community (usually women with a significant role in the church, such as Nicole, who has an administrative job at ECC, or Cora, who is a Pastor), who volunteer to cook the breakfast from 6am, serve it and clean up afterwards. The other event, the Appreciation Meal is organised every year in early December to show appreciation to over one hundred people who perform paid or voluntary work in the church. The food is also prepared voluntarily by church members. While the cooking is primarily led by women, men are involved in carrying foldable tables, setting them and serving/clearing the food. Because of the large group, this is typically held in the main hall. However, recently the community tried holding it in the foyer to avoid having to carry so much furniture and food into the main hall area.

In both of these events I offered to help the cooking in the kitchen. This allowed me to observe and photograph the events from the position of someone who experiences the meal partly as an insider. However, it also meant I missed the opportunity to photograph the set tables for the appreciation meal without people. At first, the hall lights were switched off and, later, many people were already seated or serving the food. Still, I took pictures of the event with people enjoying the meal. I was able to photograph the spatial arrangement of the Appreciation Meal, devoid of people, when it took place in the foyer.

However, having decided to use only one image per faith community, I chose the image of the café area. This is because, with its lighting imitating Spanish streetlight lamps and its fantasy decoration, this image challenges common preconceived imagery of Christian church halls. It also foregrounds the significance and centrality of this more "ordinary" space, while it brings attention to the unique aesthetic features that characterise this building, which form part of the affective qualities of the religious experience in this community (Gilbert et al. 2015). This resonates with Sharma's argument – drawing on the work of (Anderson 2009) on 'affective atmospheres' – that churches use strategies to create ambiance, for example, through welcoming people, art or music, 'in order to intensify, augment, and/or transform one's relationship with the spiritual or religious

[65] The event is advertised in the men's section of ECC website, as aiming to encourage genuine friendships: http://www.ecc.org.uk/connect/men/

community' (2012:825).

In this sense, the image of the café area uses symmetry and repetition of the arches and the tables to produce an aesthetic that emphasises the atmospheric décor, which although not originally designed and created for this congregation, metaphorically suggests some of the identity features of this church. Here, I composed the image to highlight various repetitions of three: three arches, three decorative rectangles and three lamps. While there are five tables with chairs, these are visually grouped into three. The decorative beams split the ceiling into three (left, middle and right) and the frame also divides horizontally into three sections: ceiling, bar and floor. Finally, some elements form a visual triangle, such as the three lamps or the top lamp with the table and chairs at the bottom of each side. This connects with the significance of the number three in Christianity, which is described in a guide about the Christian references embedded in the architecture and symbology of St Thomas the Apostle Church:

> This was traditionally the number for God in the Old Testament and for the Christians it was the number for the Trinity of God: God the Father, God the son and God the Holy Spirit. It was also the number for "the Third Day" an important day throughout the bible but particularly for the resurrection. Thus, imposing triangles on the plan of the building became a fascination of architects and is referred to a "Triangulation". [66]

Arguably, the composition of this image, particularly the 'triangulation' formed by the lamps – here light is associated with the divine – can make reference to the Holy Trinity and the significance of the presence and performance of the Holy Spirit for Evangelical worshipping within an ordinary space. Additionally, the congregation is personified by the groups of tables and chairs, which are metaphorically lit by Father, Son and Holly Spirit.

I was also interested in how this image could speak to the experience of 'church as family' as discussed by Sharma (2012). She argues that Christian churches often use the term 'family' (and function as such) in order to promote a sense of belonging for the community. The two events described in the image caption frame commensality as a relational practice that promotes kinship and bonding (e.g. Fischler 2011; Goldstein 2018)

[66] http://www.stthomashanwellchurch.org.uk/media/resources/st_thomas_hanwell_guide_revised.pdf

between people from different nationalities and ages, which is aligned with ECC's identity as: 'a family of many nations with a heart to build a community where everyone is valued and where there is something for everyone, whatever your gender, age group or interests'.[67] Indeed, ECC promotes and supports gendered and intergenerational spaces and practices, as reflected in events such as the Men's Breakfast. The organization of the Discipleship into small 'cells' is also gender segregated.[68] These are smaller groups of people who live close by and gather regularly, usually once a week, at one of the cell members' home or, if local, sometimes at ECC.[69] A worshipper explained to me that cells "are like home churches" to enable people to pray and share their problems in smaller groups because the church is so big and has so many members that one can feel lost in it and not be able to connect with other people.

As such, the picture of the café makes reference to the structure and ethos of ECC. The arrangement of tables and chairs into smaller units can symbolise the cells, the different gender and age-related Discipleships or the different national Fellowships within the Church. These appear united as one big family by the presence of the Holy Trinity, but also by the social and performative practices of eating and praying together in one space.

[67] http://www.ecc.org.uk/connect/

[68] The second tab of the ECC website after 'Home' uses the term 'connect' and is sub-divided into the following gender and age-based sections: Our people (pastors and staff), Men, Women, Youth, and Children.

[69] Much of ECC's congregation lives in Ealing, but many of its worshippers live and commute from West London outer boroughs.

The Ealing Gurdwara Langar Hall: A space of meditation and contestation

Fig. 140 Langar, Ealing Gurdwara, London Sikh Centre, 2015. *Spiritual Flavours: Meals*. Photographic print, 75x50cm

In the Langar (kitchen) of the Ealing Sikh Gurdwara (temple), like in any gurdwara, vegetarian food is served to all visitors regardless of faith, colour, age, gender or social status. This was started by the first Guru (Guru Nanak Dev) in 1481 to advocate the principle of equality between all people. In the Ealing Gurdwara, food is offered twice a day and most of the work involved in the Langar is performed by volunteers, except for one person who is employed. Although it is traditional to sit on the floor in a row to eat, at the Ealing Gurdwara there are also sitting and standing tables with the spirit of being more inclusive with those who struggle sitting on the floor.

The institution of the Langar or free kitchen was initiated with the blessings of the first Guru, Guru Nanak Dev, in 1481 to advocate the principle of equality between all people and is an integral part of every Gurdwara. Everyone, regardless of their social status, caste, creed, sex or religion, sits side by side on a mat spread on the floor and eats the food that has been cooked in the kitchen by volunteers doing seva (selfless service). This way of partaking in food is called Pangat, which has had a great spiritual significance since the origins of Sikhism and is still practiced today to get the blessings of the divine in Sikh temples throughout the world (Singh 2014:208). Sitting on the floor to eat together plays an important role in Sikhism to uphold the values of sameness and equality between all humans and provide a safe sanctuary where everyone is welcome. Food is normally

served twice a day every day of the year. Each week, one or more families volunteer to provide and prepare the food in the Langar and everyone in the family is encouraged to help with the preparation or the serving of the food.

At the Ealing Gurdwara, the Langar hall (eating space) has an area with two mats that run along in parallel almost across the entire room and an area with a row of consecutive standing tables. The first time I visited, a beautiful winter sunlight was shining through the windows and gave the space a peaceful atmospheric quality. I took a picture of the standing tables area towards the windows, which produced a beautiful flare from the sunlight shining through the slightly dirty glass of the windows, also reflecting on one of the tables. Although handheld and taken rather spontaneously with a small portable camera, the lighting in the image is so evolving that I decided to use it as the final image for the *Meals* series.[70] As such, I edited it digitally to make sure horizontal and vertical lines do not tilt, in order to produce a sense of order and balance. The lower window frames, placed above the middle of the picture, divide the image horizontally between the indoor and outdoor space, through the windows. The heavier visual weight of the larger closer tables on the right is balanced by the visual prominence of the columns to the left, which give stability to the composition. There are diagonal lines that lead the viewer's gaze towards the far end of the room, where there are stacked blue chairs and traces of human presence in the form of drying clothes over the last row of tables. This gives a domestic touch to the space, which is perceived as a lived environment at an idle time.

This temporality resonates with the calm and quiet winter feel suggested by the naked tree branches outside and the almost faint sunlight. The space seems to lay peacefully dormant, bathed in the light's whiteness, which reflects on both the floor and the ceiling, expanding our perception of the outside within the indoor space. This connects with Höfer's aforementioned skill of using white light in her compositions which, according to Lombino (Höfer et al. 2004:25), at times seems to blur or melt away architectural features through the bouncing of abundant light. She argues, this is reminiscent of artist Uta Barth's work, who photographs interiors full of natural light, seeking to provoke an emotional response from the viewer and using 'light as a tool to evoke a meditation on space itself'. Both Höfer and Barth, she adds, share the gift of exploring spaces

[70] While I took the different images in the *Meals* series at different times with different cameras (Fuji X100T, Canon 5DMII and Sony A7RII), I used a similar lens focal length and I digitally edited them to give the series a consistent feel.

emotionally through luminosity and blankness, but Höfer achieves this not just with images of minimal spaces, but also with images of spaces full of details and repetitive objects, managing to create 'works that embody at once both abundance and emptiness', 'by emphasizing the symmetry and alignment inherent in her subjects' (Höfer et al. 2004:25).

This strongly relates to the *Meals* image of the Langar hall, where there is a tension between the whiteness and emptiness of the space and the busyness of repetitive elements in the composition. Some elements in the composition break its silence. The repetition of elements (e.g., tables, table legs, window frames, columns) and the crossing of multiple lines provide the composition with a sense of cadence and rhythm. All these create patterns that start to eco the bustling activity of the many people that occupy this space. The very few colourful elements (the blue chairs, the multi-coloured flags, the red decoration spiralling up white columns) also bear testimony to this space as a busy site of celebration. Despite the empty and quiet interior, the viewer is also invited to imagine it full of life, colour and action. The caption too suggests a version of this space buzzing with people, when food is served twice a day. Thus, while imagining such activity at the same time as looking at this predominantly bare picture, the viewer relishes the privilege of observing each little detail and experiencing this space at its quietest time. Here, the aforementioned use of light as a meditation on space acquires a religious dimension, as meditation is a core practice within Sikhism (Singh 2014:120). Through light and whiteness, the picture brings spiritual awareness and emotionally connects the viewer to a numinous and meditative experience of the Langar hall. Significantly, although the Gurdwara has an industrial look from the outside that is suggestive of a possible architectural adaptation (see Fig. 14), it was purposely built as a Gurdwara. Thus, contrary to the prayer hall, which has no windows (see Fig. 15 and Fig. 17), the Langar hall was designed (intentionally or not) as a luminous-numinous space.

However, this is no longer the case. Shortly after I started my research, the Gurdwara refurbished the Langar hall into a larger space, making this first image irreproducible. I was sad to see that with this transformation the windows are rather small and the sunlight no longer shines through into the space, rendering it quite dark, even during daytime. The disenchantment I experienced with the aesthetic transformation of the space somehow mirrored the feelings that some worshippers expressed at different times while I was photographing the space. They were critical of the fact that the Langar hall is increasingly

being used primarily as a social space for family celebrations (e.g., birthdays, weddings), rather than a spiritual place. These events, involving special food arrangements by the celebrating family, usually take place over the weekend, occupying the entire hall for the day. In these occasions disposable plates and cutlery replace the traditional stainless-steel trays, which are normally washed by worshippers as an important part of doing seva (selfless service) and as a performative expression of the principle of equality.

As such, the *Meals* picture of the Langar hall also makes reference to the notion of the Langar as a site of contestation. Desjardins (2009) discusses the controversy that emerged in the 1990s in Gurdwaras throughout British Columbia around whether people should change the traditional practice of eating on the floor for eating on chairs and tables. This divided the communities between people who wanted to maintain their practice as close as possible to Indian customs and their Sikh identity, and those who preferred adapting to Canadian culture. According to Desjardins, another adaptative challenge in Canada relates to the tradition of men and women sitting in separate rows to eat versus mixed sitting.

These adaptative challenges illustrate how religious principles are performed and codified through (often gendered) spatial and material practices. In this respect, the Ealing Gurdwara seems to have an open and inclusive approach, enabling the possibility of eating on the floor, on standing tables or on a couple of sitting tables, which are available to the elder and disabled. I have also observed both mixed and separate gender sitting on the mats. Similarly, the expansion of the Langar hall suggests openness to adaptation, as it enhances the Gurdwara's capacity to function as a community and a social space, as well as a religious space, which could increase membership and financial support for the community. In this sense, the picture of the Langar hall can be seen to offer insights into the spiritual and social dimensions of this space, as well as into the Gurdwara's past and future aspirations.

Rabbi Janet's Tisch at the Ealing Liberal Synagogue: A colourful compromise

Fig. 141 Rabbi's Tisch, Ealing Liberal Synagogue, 2017. *Spiritual Flavours: Meals*. Photographic print, 75x50cm

At the Ealing Liberal Synagogue, Rabbi Janet organises a Tisch every first Friday of the month, which is a dinner that she offers to the community, followed by a discussion on a chosen topic or an activity. Typically, she likes to cook a fish soup with Shkedei marak (soup croutons) as a starter, which she enjoys serving personally. Members of the community also bring dishes to share and all the food has to be kosher ("fit" or "proper"), according to Jewish food rules and restrictions, kashrut. The Tisch always starts with a kiddush, which is the reciting of a Jewish prayer and blessing over a cup of wine, typically just before the Sabbath evening meal. The prayer also involves salt and two loaves of challah bread, which are then shared and eaten with the starter.

The *Meals* picture of the Ealing Liberal Synagogue (ELS) depicts a U-shape set table in the sanctuary, ready for the Rabbi's Tisch – a dinner that the Rabbi offers to the community –, which takes place every first Friday of the month. The first time I attended a Tisch, I met Ossie who later contributed to both the *Spiritual Flavours* film and recipe book. He always helped Rabbi Janet with food preparations. Rabbi Janet liked cooking a traditional fish soup with Shkedei marak (Jewish soup croutons) as a starter, which she enjoyed serving herself. Ossie normally made a dish too and other members of the community brought dishes to share. All the foods that people brought had to be kosher ("fit" or "proper") according to Jewish food restrictions, kashrut, and were placed on a separate table for people to help themselves after the starter. The Tisch starts with a

kiddush, which is the reciting of a Jewish prayer or benediction over a cup of wine, typically just before the Sabbath evening meal. The prayer also involves two loaves of challah bread, which are then shared and eaten with the starter.

At the ELS, once people have finished eating deserts, there is usually a theme for discussion or an organised activity. It can range from announcements and topics of concern for the community; to supporting a fundraising organised by a member of the community; to having guests from other faith communities or the local borough. Thus, ELS is an active, open and engaged community that to seeks to develop social, cultural, political and religious relationships with organisations outside of the community on a local, national and transnational level. I gradually attended and photographed other celebrations such as Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, Purim, Hanukkah, Passover or Sukkot, which usually involve specific dishes or food restrictions and rituals. I also attended regular Friday services. However, out of these events, the monthly Tisch was the one that most clearly offered the community a regular space for engaging with external issues and groups.

Within the first year of my research, the ELS decided to remove the pews in the sanctuary (see Fig. 19), which were original to the adapted (Baptist) church. I observed that celebrations that involved sitting on a table to eat started taking place in the sanctuary. However, those involving eating food in an informal (and potentially messier) way, with children nibbling and running around such as for Purim, the eating arrangements continued to take place in the hall. For *Meals*, I was interested in taking a picture of the dining setting of a Tisch in the Sanctuary, as I felt it encapsulated the various functions of a synagogue, as a house of worship, a house for assembly and a house of study. I had already taken a picture of a Tisch commensal setting, but with people sitting and conversing while waiting for the dinner to start.[71] As such, I decided to re-take the picture without people. It was December and the arrangement was very different from the one in my first picture. There were less people expected to attend and the tables were arranged into a small square shape. Staring around 6-7pm, it was already dark, and the Jewish motifs of the coloured stained glasses did not show. The chairs around the table were all purple and, overall, the furniture, the lighting and the colours gave a sense of a much

[71] This picture appears in Ossie's section in the *Spiritual Flavours* cookbook (p.150-151).

more enclosed environment than in the first version (see Fig. 142).[72]

Fig. 142 Rabbi's Tisch, Ealing Liberal Synagogue, 2015. *Spiritual Flavours: Meals*. Photographic print, 75x50cm

As such, the following June I retook the picture once more, which became the final image for the series. This and the previous image are valid depictions of the commensal arrangements of Tisch at the ELS. However, side by side, perhaps they metaphorically symbolise different faces or sections of this community. The first, more serious and solemn image might be associated with the older generation directly connected to the origins of the synagogue, which was founded by the Jewish Kindertransport children who evacuated Germany and arrived in the UK in WWII. The second, more colourful, with brighter light and more modern chairs, could be associated with the younger sector of the community, composed of second and third generations, who have grown in the UK as Liberal Jews and who are taking the lead and responsibility of preserving the community for their children and future generations. Thus, I felt the last version is more successful in producing an attractive and detailed image of the interior of the sanctuary, but also in communicating the ethos and spirit of the Rabbi's Tisch cheerfully led by Janet.

[72] This image was part of the *Spiritual Flavours* exhibition at STOA in Helsinki (see Fig. 77) and replaced by the final one in exhibitions since 2018.

The visual impact of the image relies on the harmony produced by the symmetry of elements. The main stained-glass window displays a star of David and a menorah at the top centre of the image. There is also a wrought iron star of David over the doors of the Ark (where the Torah scrolls are kept) and two different Menorahs on either side of the image. Thus, one can easily identify the interior as a synagogue. The lateral windows, the perpetual plaques, the candelabra ceiling lamps, the rafters and even the radiators mirror each other in the scene. However, the symmetry is not perfect. The U-shape table was not set right at the centre, so the framing is slightly shifted to the right to avoid cropping the right side of the table, and the two candelabra on the table are not aligned with the centre of the ark. The elements at the edges of the frame are not cropped exactly in the same way. It seems the image is lacking precision. I took another almost identical image where I stepped slightly to the right to achieve perfect alignment. I cropped in the beams at the top corners, the lamps at the edges of the frame, as well as the white/brown boards on each side. It is a cleaner image, but it necessarily also cropped the right side of the table. Eventually, I chose the 'imperfect' slightly wider shot. The subtle misalignment produces some tension, which in my opinion gives an impression of a less formally staged image. It also reminds me of the community's Liberal approach. Many of its members told me that they observe the rules of Judaism to a degree that is practical in their lives. Although the food that people make for the Tisch observe the rules of Kashrut, many of the ELS worshippers don't strictly follow these rules outside the synagogue. The different realities of family, work and the demands of the everyday contemporary life in London often imply different levels of religious commitment and compromise.

The picture of the Tish also resonates with Fischler's (2011) exploration of the social space of commensality through an analysis of its physical space, including the arrangement and shapes of tables. By interrogating the spatial arrangement of the Tisch and its materiality – in the disposition of the tables, the type of furniture, the decoration on the walls, the level of order and disorder, the crockery on the tables, etc. – one starts to imagine the community that inhabits the space and shares a meal together. The point of view is high enough to appreciate the crockery arrangements and the modern praying books on each plate. In the exhibition size print it is possible to read some of the community values handwritten on the whiteboard on the right edge of the frame (live meaningfully, stay engaged, always negotiate, show sympathy, find chutzpah, be happy). Thus, the image suggests the synagogue's Liberal, open and inclusive approach. Even the

multicoloured chairs might be associated to the LGBTQI+ rainbow flag.

Finally, the balanced combination of daylight and indoor lighting (tungsten), which clash in colour temperature, also produces a slight tension. The brightness of white daylight makes the space look frozen in time, while the warmer indoor lighting anticipates a dinner that should only start a few minutes before sunset, in order to mark the beginning of the Shabbat. This blend of types of lighting imbues the space with an ambivalent temporality that is forever suspended, and which is emotionally charged with anticipation for something spiritual to unfold.

Shri Kanaga Thurkkai Amman Temple: Cycles of chaos and order

Fig. 143 Shri Kanaga Thurkkai Amman (Hindu) Temple, 2015. *Spiritual Flavours: Meals*. Photographic print, 75x50cm

At the Shri Kanaga Thurkkai Amman (Hindu) Temple, a full-time employed man, helped by other male volunteers, cooks vegetarian food that is served daily after the noon and the 8pm service (Pooja). Typically, the meal includes rice with vegetables curry and dahl. The number of people attending can regularly vary from fifty to three-hundred, depending on the time and day of the week, and can reach thousands during special festivities such as New Year. For such occasions, food is served in an adjacent tent, rather than inside the temple, and many people volunteer to help peel and cut the vegetables. For the chariot festival, as part of a twenty-one-day festival in the summer, deities are paraded in three chariots and the temple organises the provision of free food for over 15.000 attendees, which is served in the nearby park, Dean Gardens.

Vegetarian food is always present at SKTAT. Fruit, milk, yogurt, Pongal (a kind of rice pudding), sweets (such as laddu) are offered to the deities in the temple by the Iyers (priests), as part of the temple's regular worshiping celebrations or following the request from devotees. Once such food has been offered and blessed by the deities, people take it with them to share with their family and loved ones. With rare exceptions, food that is offered to the deities is cooked and prepared by the Iyers in their kitchen.

As suggested in the image caption, vegetarian food is also cooked at the temple in a different kitchen, which is served to devotees after the noon and the 8pm puja (service). Typically, the meal includes rice with sambar (mixed vegetable stew), dahl and poppadoms. There is a cook, Siva, who is employed full-time to prepare sufficient food for all the people that attend each puja.[73] The number of attendees vary depending on the day and time in the week and the yearly calendar of celebrations. On Tuesdays and Fridays, which are considered the most spiritually significant days, there are around 500 attendees at noon and between 300 and 350 in the evening. On Saturdays and Sundays, there are 300 to 400 people at noon and 100 to 150 in the evening. Other days are quieter and Siva cooks for 100 to 150 people in total. At times, the number of attendees can reach thousands during special festivities such as the New Year or important celebrations for specific deities (see Fig. 3). On such occasions, food is served in the adjacent tent, which is shown in the picture, rather than in the hall inside the temple. Due to the huge amount of food required at these events, many people volunteer to help peel and cut vegetables, as well to serve the food.[74] For the Chariot Festival, part of a twenty-one-day festival in the summer, deities are paraded in three chariots and the temple organises the provision of free food for over 15,000 attendees, served in the nearby park, Dean Gardens.

During the multiple times I have eaten at the temple, people have shown pride in the spice strength of the food, characteristic of South India and Sri Lanka, and smilingly asked me if I could cope. In other occasions, people praise Siva's cooking skills and say that the food at the temple tastes better than at home. Siva, jokingly, responds that this is because the food is blessed by the deities. For some people, this food constitutes their main meal of the day. Many traditional ingredients, such as the autochthonous red rice, jaggery

[73] Siva is one of the *Spiritual Flavours* recipe book contributors with his recipe of Samba, dahl and poppadoms (p.130-132).

[74] See photographs of serving and eating food in the temple's adjacent tent in Siva's section in the cookbook (p.133-135).

(unrefined solid brown sugar from India and Asia) or cinnamon from Sri Lanka are used in the food and also sold to the attendees at special events. During my time spent at the temple, a few people told me that they attend, not for spiritual reasons, but because they enjoy the social dimension of its rituals. For many, sharing food is a central part of this. Alongside wearing the traditional clothing, speaking Tamil and partaking in traditional festivals and social rituals, the eating of traditional food is a powerful marker of their belonging and shared history, and provides them with a sense of home in a foreign country. Thus, the choice of the adjacent tent as the picture for the *Meals* series connects with the significance of the strong affective experience of eating traditional food together, which bonds Sri Lankan Tamils as a diasporic community that shares a difficult and painful history.

This space is the only space in the temple used exclusively for the purpose of eating. A door in the temple hall opens to a makeshift corridor that leads to the entrance of the tent area, from where I took the picture. The corridor continues along the temple and exits into the street. During busy celebrations, the temple operates with a circular one-way system in place. People enter the temple from the main entrance and exit trough this corridor after having eaten. On extremely busy days, which are not uncommon at SKTAT, people form long queues and it is difficult to access and navigate the different temple spaces. The logistics of hosting a really high volume of events and number of devotees throws the spatial and material arrangements of the temple into a constant flux between chaos and order, which is sensorially accentuated by the worship music and chanting, burning scents and the sounds and smells of food provision.

The picture of the interior of the tent visually reflects on this tension between chaos and order. At first glance, the space appears chaotic, with objects left around randomly: a large cooking pot and plastic wrapping on the floor; portable tables supporting plastic tubs of food do not seem to have a specific allocated spot; and the paper tissue covering them is not neatly laid. At the bottom right corner, there is the handle of what could be a wheel cart that has just been left there. The makeshift nature of the tent, as well as the cheap floor materials, add a temporary feel to the space as an interior. The only more ‘permanent’ wall on the right has a locked door (suggesting restricted use) and displays chipped painting around the door wooden frame, which adds to the feeling of messiness. However, in the way I composed and framed the picture, there is also order and stability within the apparent chaos. The symmetric axis between the two-colour food tubs is shifted

to the right which, alongside the door, the ceiling lamp and the cart handle, add visual weight to that side of the image. However, the perspective lines of the tent structure, as well as the triangular geometrical shape of the top of the far wall of the tent are shifted to the left, which visually counterbalances the image towards the left. The visual weight of the only solid wall and door on the right is also compensated for by the weight of the larger mass of tent fabric on the left and the sunshine reflections on it, which draw the viewer's attention.

Contrary to the aesthetic of the temple's interior, which is extremely colourful (see Fig. 4, Fig. 5), the interior of the adjacent tent is mostly white. Similar to the image of the Langar hall in the Gurdwara, this picture is another example in which the use of white and available white light is significant to the way the structure of the interior is organised in the image. The whiteness of the tent matches that of the wall and of the paper tissue that supports and covers the food colour tubs. The space, waiting for the moment when the food will be served, appears suspended in time like some other *Meals* images and, through its blankness and absence of people, it is also imbued with a sense of numinosity. In those places where the sun shines through the white fabric, the tent seems to be pierced by the divine, especially on the far wall where the slightly rounded sun reflection occupies the very centre of the image (another instance in which light is associated with the divine). This reflection sits directly above the rows of burgundy chairs (the most direct reference to this community's human presence), which are also centred in the frame and topped by the triangular shape of the tent (a form symbolic of a home or a temple), forming a balanced composition. This might suggest the presence of the divine over people who sit to share food in a temple. The reflection also mirrors the sunshine glowing in the only image that hangs on the wall and is, therefore, associated to its visual spiritual tone. In the picture, there is a human silhouette in a meditation posture, sitting on the sand and facing the sunset over the sea horizon. 'Silence please…' is written over the sun. The message is reinforced by another text in red underneath that says 'please respect our neighbours' and an emoticon suggesting silence. The predominantly yellow colour of the image is harmonically balanced by the red and the blue colours of the tubs, which we can assume that contain food by the way they're covered with paper and by the presence of the cooking pot. The image conveys the spiritual dimension of ordinary commensality in the temple.

St Thomas the Apostle Church's Hall: Inclusion and adaptive dexterity

Fig. 144 Caribbean and International evening, St Thomas the Apostle church, 2016. *Spiritual Flavours: Meals*. Photographic print, 75x50cm

In the1980's, St Thomas the Apostle Anglican church in Hanwell had a significant West Indian community. In an effort to integrate and celebrate the community, members began organising a yearly Caribbean Evening, where a group of women would cook traditional Caribbean food for other community members. The event also involved West Indian, games music and dancing. More recently, this has become the Caribbean and International evening, where other people also cook traditional dishes from their countries of origin.

The church hall of St Thomas, featuring in the *Meals* series, was built three decades after the church was consecrated in 1934 and has a theatre stage and a kitchen and two smaller adjacent rooms. The church is considering redeveloping the hall and is undertaking an online survey through its website. St Thomas The Apostle Church forms part of a 'High Church' or Anglo Catholic tradition, which gives importance to liturgy, ritual and the material culture of religion and emphasises the connection with historical traditions of the Church. As such, the architecture of the church was designed to express these ideas. However, it is important to point out that, led by Father Robert Chapman, this congregation also has an open and increasing liberal ethos (Hyacinth 2019:100). In this sense, while the building of the church embodies the traditionalist spirit of the community

through its careful design as a sacred space, the church hall might suggest the congregation's liberal and open ethos.[75]

The hall is used as a place for gathering and refreshments after Sunday mass and as a place for the activities of the various church groups, such as the toddlers' group, the children's religious school, and various other girls and mixed youth scout groups. These are open to boys and girls of all faiths or no faith at all. The hall also hosts events for the 50+ group (e.g., a Christmas dinner), and for the whole community such as the Christmas fair, the Annual Christmas Pantomime, the yearly Caribbean and International Evening, and sporadic workshops (e.g., the Christmas wreath making). The hall is also available for hire and, on a regular basis, hosts: a Mahila Sangam women's group weekly gathering; English classes; body fit Zumba classes; Taekwondo classes; Hanwell Neighbourly Care pop-in sessions, and a Hanwell Homeless Concern weekly soup kitchen (also held in OLSJ on a different day).

As part of my research, I initially photographed various food-related events in the hall and became particularly interested in the Caribbean and International Evening, as it links with the history of the community. As stated in the image caption, in the 1980s St Thomas' congregation had a large West Indian community. The 'Caribbean Evening' started as a yearly event where a group of West Indian women from the congregation cooked traditional Caribbean food for the rest of the community. The event also involved West Indian games, music and dancing. This was part of an effort to integrate and celebrate this community within the congregation, at a time when racial tensions towards black and Asian ethnic minorities were a pressing issue and a source of political and social unrest.[76] As a result of the recent regeneration process of the local area in the past two decades, much of the local West Indian community has gradually moved to more affordable areas. Additionally, St Thomas church follows the general attendance decline experienced by contemporary Anglican churches (Hyacinth 2019:101). These two processes have seen an aging and decrease of the West Indian population in this church.

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[75] St Thomas' website has a section on the significance of the church for the community and includes a downloadable pdf with a comprehensive guide to its architecture, which contains multiple references to biblical texts:
http://www.stthomashanwellchurch.org.uk/media/resources/st_thomas_hanwell_guide_revised.pdf

[76] Please refer to the *Spiritual Flavours* cookbook section on Rose and Eileen's (both from the West Indies) for a biographical account of their experiences of racial abuse in the public sphere and working environment in London.

Hence, the 'Caribbean Evening' changed to the 'Caribbean and International Evening', which celebrates the diversity of the entire congregation by inviting everyone else to bring dishes from their countries of origin. In this sense, St Thomas exemplifies Watson's (2009) notion of 'adaptive dexterity', being the openness of an institution, such as the church, to hold different cultural practices. She explores how traditional Christian churches in Marrickville, Australia, aim to foster a sense of belonging amongst migrant members, who often face strange and hostile social contexts, by partially adapting their own traditional practices to migrants' cultural differences. Some of her case studies demonstrate the success of cooking and sharing food between different congregation groups for enabling cross-cultural 'mixing-up people' and forging new connections within and across these groups.

As such, the picture of the Caribbean and International Evening at St Thomas' church hall speaks to this church's 'adaptative dexterity'. Like other *Spiritual Flavours Meals* pictures, the composition relies on a symmetrical approach to generate a sense of stability and formality. Also, like in the picture of the Langar hall, the repetition of elements (tables, chairs, windows, doors and notice boards) creates visual rhythm and suggests the presence of a large congregation that will be eating together. However, in this case, the absence of people feels strange and incoherent with the presence of small lit candles on the tables. These imply human presence and bring temporal immediacy and anticipation of an event that is about to happen. As in the *Meals* images of SKTAT and ECC, there is a visual, embodied and symbolic association between light and the divine, as the candle flames infuse the image with spiritual warmth, similar to how votive candles imbue Christian churches with the warmth of wishful and hopeful spiritual offerings (particularly in Anglican, Lutheran and Roman Catholic churches). This connotation is reinforced through the association of this hall with a church. In contrast to the candle lights, which contribute to an intimate atmosphere, the cooler main light sources on each side walls reveal the space as a large community hall. The high ceiling and windows, the basketball net, the numerous notice boards, the versatile wooden flooring and the presiding clock at the top centre of the image reinforce a sense of looking at a hybrid social and religious interior, where many different activities, both religious and secular, take place. The 'adaptive dexterity' of the space itself is evident in its architectural structure, furniture and decoration.

Another key element of the composition of this image is colour and pattern. On the one

hand, the red and white checked pattern tablecloths give structure to the entire image and provide a sense of uniformity. This repetitive motif suggests that the space is organised with a certain amount of order and normativity. There is a decorative decision in placing vases with flowers to make the tables look nice and in the way the tablecloths hang forming triangular shapes at the far end tables. The congregation's attention to the commensal arrangements follows a prescriptive logic that connects with their care for traditions and preserving rituals. However, while the colour arrangement of chairs reinforces a sense of normative order, their chromatic contrast, between them and against the dark red tone of doors and notice boards, suggests plurality and difference. Visually, there is norm, pattern and balance (each colour block seems to be in balance with the others), but there is also diversity. This matches the idea of the church being traditionalist but also liberal and open. Such openness is further emphasised by the green chair at the foreground, near the image centre. Its position, moved away from the table, breaks the norm. In the *Spiritual Flavours* recipe book, there are a few references to religious and cultural traditions oriented to feed the 'stranger', such as cooking extra food, serving an extra plate or leaving an empty chair for unexpected visitors; as well as the Caribbean tradition of having an open house during Christmas celebrations, with people constantly visiting each other. Thus, the green chair, which is slightly tilted towards the viewer, can be read as an open invitation to join the dinner, no matter who the person might be.

West London Islamic Centre: Food, gender and space (re)configurations

Fig. 145 West London Islamic Centre, 2017. *Spiritual Flavours: Meals*. Photographic print, 75x50cm

As part of Islam's codes of conduct for eating, which were recommended by the Prophet Muhammad, eating together is considered a form of receiving Allah's blessing and a way of promoting human interaction and bonding. Sharing food is also encouraged as it upholds the values of charity and equality. After twenty-five years in an adapted warehouse and more than fifteen raising funds to build a new multi-storey mosque, the Ealing Mosque celebrates its last meal and prayers before the demolition of the current building starts. This mosque's halls have witnessed so many meals before: from a regular women's lunch that follows a monthly lecture and discussion; to breaking the fast meals (iftar) every night during the month of Ramadan; to children's lunch to celebrate Eid.

During the first months of my PhD, my engagement with the West Ealing Islamic Centre (WLIC) had mainly gravitated around a group of women that attend a monthly class followed by a shared lunch. I photographed them serving food and eating, as well as the interior of the hall devoid of people, with round tables and randomly arranged chairs (see Fig. 46). However, for the *Meals* series I chose an image that was somewhat different to the others. Rather than showing spatial and material arrangements of communal commensality, it showcased the food area by kitchen entrance (see Fig. 146). I was interested in this image because it shows a different aspect of the material arrangements of food in worship spaces by focusing on food preparation through an informal image of

the kitchen area.[77]

Fig. 146 West London Islamic Centre, 2016. *Spiritual Flavours: Meals*. Photographic print, 75x50cm

I was also interested in how it reveals some of the community's decoration choices to adapt the old warehouse to make the building feel more like a mosque, such as the 'Moorish' blue tiling of the right door frame and across the room. The image also shows how the sill of the serving hatch window, which is shut, is used to display a framed poster of the names of Allah and to hold various Quran books, which follows the recommendation to place the holy book above the floor. These religious objects are visually emphasised by the hatch window frame in the middle of the picture and are surrounded by ordinary food-related objects. Above the window, a laminated sign is taped to the wall: "Please keep Masjid hall and food area tidy. Please put rubbish in the bin". Below the window, there is a basic table with disposable plates, cups and forks, as well as a roll of paper tablecloth leaning on the table edge. Randomly, before de table, there is a small ladder. These elements, together with business of objects in the kitchen, seen through the door, provide the image with an ordinary, everyday and vernacular feel (things have not been arranged for the picture or for any particular event). The opposition

[77] This image was part of the *Spiritual Flavours* series (see, for example, Fig. 77) until replaced by the final picture since July 2019.

of the fan and the speaker on each side of the top of the frame also make reference to the kinds of material and spiritual practices in the mosque.

This image caption suggested connections between the community, home and local businesses through food:

> Every last Wednesday of the month, a group of approximately twenty to thirty women meet at the Ealing Mosque (West Ealing Islamic Centre) to attend a religious lecture, discuss related topics and eat lunch together. A local Pakistani restaurant typically prepares and delivers the food for free. However, sometimes, women in the group take turns to cook at home and bring the food for everyone else. When the lunch is over, the men at the mosque eat the leftovers.

This caption highlighted how this group of women periodically nurture each other spiritually, intellectually and by preparing/sharing food. Thus, it foregrounded the intellectual and political implication of Muslim women, which is often invisible (Ali 1992), and their leading role at WLIC (Dwyer, Ahmed, and Cuch 2017). Once a month, the hall's adjacent to the kitchen is reserved for these women's lecture and lunch.[78] After it finished, I often took pictures of the space and, more than once, I was urged to leave because men wanted to come in to eat the leftover food. Again, I was keen to include this detail in the caption, as men eating women's leftovers seemed to upturn traditional practices and assumptions around gendered hierarchies within Muslim families and communities – in some Muslim contexts, such as Argobba people in Ethiopia, women cook and serve food but are expected to eat last from whatever food is left (Kifleyesus 2002:253). As such, although WLIC is clearly gendered, with certain areas restricted to men or women, I became interested in how food practices mediate the use of specific spaces, such as the kitchen area, where both men and women prepare food (sometimes together, if they are part of the same family); as well as the hall, which varies in its gender rules. While there has been substantial attention to issues of gender inclusion in mosques (Brown 2008; Gaber n.d.; Ozyurt 2010); there is less attention to how everyday practices, such as food practices, temporarily dissolve and reconfigure the established gendered norms.

As I continued photographing the mosque, I witnessed the adaptability of the use of halls,

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[78] A photograph of the monthly lecture features in the *Spiritual Flavours* recipe book (p.84).

both as an extension of praying areas when these get full (e.g., during Friday prayers and Eid prayers), and for a range of food-related events, on the occasion of religious and community celebrations. Here, the specific nature of each event determined the gendering of these two spaces. For example, some fundraising events were organised by and for women, which involved the selling of home-made food and cakes, as well as cloths and bric-a-brac stalls (Dwyer et al. 2017). Both the ground floor and first floor halls were used to host non-gendered funfair days, which included food, toys and clothing stalls, as well as a barbeque stall (run by men) and a bouncy castle in the parking area. As part of the community's outreach activities, the mosque also held regular "CommuniTea" events, which welcomed neighbours, other faith communities and local MPs, to have tea and cakes in the mosque, amidst speeches and exhibition displays about the pillars of Islam. Another significant outreach event, which welcomed people and organisations outside the community, was an open iftar, which is the evening meal after breaking the fast during Ramadan. In such occasion, the ground floor hall was used by women and the first-floor hall by men. Tables and chairs were set for the guests (such as a fire brigade team, invited after the tragic events at Grenfell Tower), while the regular worshippers ate on the floor, in the traditional way. I also photographed an Eid celebration lunch organised by the Jennah Youth Club (see Fig. 50) and the last community meal as part of a series of farewell activities the day before the mosque closed to start the demolition of the building.

All these community meals and food-related events confirmed the religious significance of eating together for Muslim people, which follow codes of conduct that were recommended by Prophet Muhammad. In addition to the etiquette regarding cleanliness, hygiene and saying prayers before and after each meal, it is considered that having food together promotes human interaction, understanding and bonding and constitutes a form of blessing from Allah.[79] This is particularly significant on certain occasions, such as Eid or when breaking the fast during Ramadan (Tayob 2017). As such, I decided to change the *Meals* picture of WLIC, in order to highlight the importance of commensality for this community and to match the focus on eating arrangements of the series. I discussed

[79] Multiple websites discuss the Muslim food etiquette and the spiritual significance of eating together and sharing food:
https://seekersguidance.org/articles/forgotten-sunnas-shaykh-jamir-meah/forgotten-sunnas-sharing-meals/
http://www.thepenmagazine.net/islamic-food-habits/
http://muzlimbuzz.sg/eat-together-sunnah/
https://musliminc.com/eating-etiquette-for-muslims-4014

various picture options with Sabiha Raza, a senior member of the community and one of the participants of the *Spiritual Flavours* recipe book. She agreed with my two favourites because they show the mats for eating on the floor, which she felt is more distinctively Muslim, rather than showcasing table and chair arrangements.[80] The final choice between these two images was not easy. The first image (see Fig. 147) is from one of the iftars and shows horizontal plastic tablecloth strips over the praying mats with dates for breaking the fast.

Fig. 147 Photograph considered for inclusion in the *Meals* series

The second one (and my final choice, see Fig. 145) was taken at the farewell meal before the building demolition and depicts white paper tablecloth with water bottles and cups over the praying mats, which converge towards the end of the room. I initially found the first image visually stronger and preferred that it featured dates, rather than plastic bottles. However, Sabiha, who thought both images were taken on Iftar meals, told me that water was most important after a whole day without drinking and that many worshippers carried dates in their pockets for breaking the fast at the right time. The timing is crucial. This is

[80] My picture archive revealed that those meals at WLIC which were part of religious rituals (such as breaking the fast or eating before or after prayers) were arranged on the floor. However, those meals that were part of social or educational events involved tables and chairs, which were also available to people from outside the community, who were invited to religious meals.

why the tablecloths are placed over the praying mats, as there is very little time between breaking the fast with water and dates (right after sunset) and Maghrib prayers (when the tablecloths are quickly removed), which are then followed by the Iftar meal. Some people prefer to go home to have iftar or to wash before going back to the mosque for the final Isha prayers. In this sense, I was interested in the prominence of the clock in the first image, which signals the approaching sunset. However, it is a flatter and more minimal image than the rest of the series. The second image was Sabiha's favourite because it shows the dimension of the gathering, bringing many people together, which she felt is a significant aspect of this type of meals. Although slightly less punchy, the final image emphasises the spatial dimension and architectural features of the hall, displaying a certain amount of decay of the ceiling boards and a dirtier rectangular area on the far wall, suggesting something framed, like a notice board, that has been removed. The picture reveals the characteristics of the mosque as an adapted warehouse and highlights the importance of that specific meal as a marker of the building farewell for the community.

Formally, this image follows the aesthetic approach of the *Meals* series. Taken with a tripod, it seeks to achieve great detail. The blue tiling line cuts across the image at the centre, forming a horizontal axis that provides stability. The line formed by the middle row of bottles, which invisibly extends towards the speaker above, also forms a vertical axis which cuts the image and the horizontal axis right at the centre of the picture. While the ceiling structure shifts the visual weight to the left, the electronic clock on the right wall and the praying mats pointing towards Mecca, lead the viewer's gaze to the right. The various white structures (symmetric paper tablecloths; opposite windows/door and radiators; the skirting boards) articulate the composition of the space in contrast to the colourful praying mats, which match with the wall painting colour palette. Through the repetition of bottles along the paper cloth, the paper plates, the red chairs piled on the left far corner and the few shoes by the door, the picture is full of human presence, despite its absence. The large number of full bottles also imbue the space with the anticipation of a big crowded meal. Like in the picture of the synagogue, the tension between the daylight and artificial light produces a temporal ambiguity that, in this case, is punctuated by the time marked by the clock on the right wall. It's uncertain whether it's early morning or a bright summer evening, which is only made clear by the caption.

Our Lady and St Joseph Church: Voluntary work and table hierarchies

Fig. 148 Deanery Dinner, Our Lady and St Joseph Catholic Church, 2016. *Spiritual Flavours: Meals*. Photographic print, 75x50cm

The Deanery Dinner is an event where all the parish priests from the parishes around the Ealing area come together. This happens in a different local church each time, which means that it takes place at Our Lady & St Joseph Catholic Church once or twice a year. The priests normally arrive at ten o'clock and, whilst they have a meeting, a group of about six to eight women prepare the meal, serve it, and clear up afterwards. When the work is finished, the women sit and also have a meal together with what is left over. In the same room, a small group of parish members, typically six or seven, volunteer to offer lunch for the homeless every Wednesday, which also takes place in two other local churches on Mondays and Fridays.

The hall at RC Church of Our Lady and St Joseph (OLSJ) was designed as a multi-purpose space. It has a little stage area for performances, as well as a built-in kitchen, a bar and, even, a disco ball. Having been brought up Catholic in Spain, I was surprised to discover the bar – a characteristic feature of Irish Catholic church halls – where alcohol is served at certain times/events, such as the Sunday bingo evenings or the tea dance every last Friday of the month. The main hall area divides into smaller spaces with sliding panels, which enables smaller/cosier settings and simultaneous activities. This was the case when I took the *Meals* picture of OLSJ, as the dining table was being set up, while the priests invited to the meal were having a meeting in the space behind the partition wall. The caption clarifies the occasion portrayed, the Deanery Dinner, which is a

recurring event.

I photographed other food-related events in this hall, including the yearly Christ the King International Celebration and the Good Friday Walk of Witness procession lunch, organised by Churches Together in Hanwell.[81] The first is similar to the Caribbean and International evening at St Thomas' church, as it is also intended to celebrate the congregations' diversity through the national food of their members who bring a dish to share. This yearly event also includes some entertainment, such as the performance of Irish dance. The latter brings people from local Christian churches in a procession that carries a large wooden cross to commemorate Jesus' crucifixion. The procession stops at each of the participating churches, ending at OLSJ, where people sit together to have refreshments and eat soup, bread and cheese. Additionally, I regularly helped with the food preparation at the weekly lunch for homeless people at OLSJ. Three community members, Doris, her daughter Mary, and Mary's husband, Charles, organise the logistics of the provision of food, as part of Hanwell Homeless Concern, which also takes part in a Methodist Church on Mondays and at St. Thomas on Fridays. Doris was involved in starting this soup kitchen at OLSJ twenty-six years ago. The regular group of volunteers include Doris and Mary, who do the cooking from 11am; Charles and Harry, who serve the food and; Ruby, Anne and Cathy, who wash the dishes and tidy up. Their motivation ranges from having something to do during retirement to having a spiritual dimension, which follows the predicaments of the bible by helping those in need. When I filmed and photographed their work, they always seemed to have fun, even when the rush of food demand became a bit stressful. There was a constant flow of jokes and friendly interaction between them and with the people who came in to eat.

I was interested in the contrast between the Deanery Dinner and the soup kitchen meals and I wanted to compare their religious motivations, work involved, status, temporality and physical arrangement. This informed the image caption, which describes the different nature and frequency of these events and highlights the fact that the same interior space, furniture and kitchen equally serve to feed local priests and homeless people. I also

[81] Churches Together in Hanwell is one of the 2000 church groups that form part of Churches Together in England. This is national ecumenic instrument that gathers a broad range of churches drawn from the Anglican, Catholic, Pentecostal, Charismatic, Orthodox and Lutheran traditions, as well as Free Churches, Quakers and others. The aim of Churches Together is to develop mutual understanding and promote collaboration to serve God's mission: https://www.cte.org.uk/

wanted to recognise the gendered voluntary work involved, with an only female group for the Deanery Dinner. Although not explicit in the caption, the work behind soup kitchen is gendered too, as the only two men do the serving, while the women do the cooking, cleaning and tidying-up. These two events also have in common the good atmosphere in the kitchen. Betty expresses this in the *Spiritual Flavours* film, which also features the Deanery dinner, when she says that what she enjoys the most from doing the work is the company of the other volunteers and having a "good old chat". This is hinted by the caption statement that the women that cook the Deanery dinner sit (presumably on the same table) and eat the food that is left.

The picture of OLSJ church hall is successful in prompting the viewer to interrogate the spatial and relational aspects of commensality and consider issues of inclusion/exclusion, hierarchy and gender (Fischler 2011; Goldstein 2018): Where and what kind of meal is it? Who is invited and who is not? What sort of food will be served and who will cook it? Of all the images in the *Meals* series, arguably, this most strongly incites these questions, being the most abstract and symbolic. Partly, this is due to the simplicity and austerity of elements in the frame. Not only is the image devoid of human presence, but also of other things, such as decorative objects or religious iconography. The table, only partially set, is the protagonist of the image. The white of the tablecloth stands out from the background and creates a balanced symmetric geometric form, visually punctuated by the inner Isosceles trapezoid shape right at the centre. Like in other images in the series, the composition is powerfully articulated by white colour. This has significance as, in Christianity, white is symbolic of goodness, innocence and purity and is the liturgical colour of Christmas and Easter. In contrast, the similar beige tones of the flooring and the partition wall form an almost continuous backdrop for the table shape. The setting around the table is revealed as an adaptable space by the high ceiling and the panelled wall. The door frame on the left (which is mirrored on the right) discloses the flexible nature of the partition wall, as the floor carpet elongates and there are more chairs of the same type in the space behind. This opening gives depth to the image and grounds the table motif into a 'real' and 'lived' space. If it were shut, it might look overly staged in comparison to the other images in the series. Instead, the clash of types of lighting between the hall and the space behind adds a feel of rawness and messiness, while the small cropped round table at right edge also contributes to a sense of "authenticity".

The image visual strength also relies on symmetry and balance. This symmetry is broken

by a missing chair at the front left corner of the table, tilting the visual weight of the composition towards the right. However, this is counterbalanced by the visual weight of the chair we see through the door, which directs the viewer's gaze to the left. Also, despite the wall panel lines are not perfectly parallel, the horizontal silver band across the wall provides further stability to the composition. It is noteworthy that many people who have looked at the *Meals* series have identified OLSJ church hall as Christian before reading the caption and some told me it reminded them of depictions of the Last Supper, which represents the introduction of the institution of the Eucharist (C. Young 1999). Here, the visual approach of the image matches the harmony and balance of Renaissance Paintings, which were the first ones to popularise the Last Supper as an independent pictorial subject from the Passion of Christ (C. Young 1999). The most famous depiction, that of Leonardo da Vinci for the refectory of the Convent of Santa Maria delle Grazie in Milan, was painted from a higher point of view than those of that period, in order to show more of the table top and the meal (Varriano 2008). Similarly, I have used a slightly higher point of view in two images of *Meals*, including this one and the ELS Tisch, as I wanted to show the elements on the table in more detail. Like in other images in the series, the tableware and the chairs add rhythm to the composition and are suggestive of human presence, as well as anticipate that a meal is bound to take place. The red colour of the chairs creates a strong visual contrast with the rest and could be symbolically associated to the blood of Christ and the Eucharist, which is hinted by the wine glasses set against the red chairs.

This image also emphasises the significance of the physical arrangement and shape of tables for understanding social relations involved in commensality. Drawing on the work of Jean-Claude Sagne, Fischler (2011:534) argues that religious communal settings provide an empirical source for understanding the effects of spatial commensality. Long rectangular tables that have a prominent seat in the middle of one side, like in depictions of Last Super, promote 'vertical commensality', which draws participants' attention to one person. In contrast, 'horizontal' commensality has no leading position, such as with circular and square tables, which maximise equality between participants and foster empathy and bonding. In this sense, the Deanery Dinner was set to promote equality by using individual tables to form a square shape. However, the frontal and symmetric approach of the image, as well as the fact that the chairs are more concentrated at the further side (five, as opposed to three) with one chair at the centre, provides some

resemblance to the popular imagery of the Last Supper; thus, signifying a more hierarchical arrangement. This suggest the tensions of this particular faith community, which is characterised by fairly horizontal and grass-roots initiatives and involvement from the diverse groups within the congregation, while it is simultaneously ruled by its hierarchical religious organization.

Conclusion

This chapter has focused on the development of the photographic series *Meals*, and how this creative work produces different kinds of knowledge and analytical themes about the relationship between food and faith in a multi-faith suburb. By visually exploring spatial and material arrangements of commensality within worship settings, this work produces epistemic approaches and understandings of this relationship, which demonstrate the centrality of food-related events for the religious and social lives of these communities and highlights commonalities and differences between them. Through this work's creative encounter, the *Meals* series sensitises the viewer to the aesthetic and affective capacities of material arrangements of food in worship spaces and contributes new, diverse, vernacular, suburban and multi-faith imaginations of communal religious commensality.

I have analysed how the formal qualities of this series draw from photographic traditions and genres such as interiors, architecture and vernacular photography. These use ambient light, symmetry, frontality and balance to create static and suspended compositions. Here, the aesthetic and 'typological' (comparative) approach, alongside the captions, produce a quiet, reflexive and, even, meditative space. This prompts the viewer to carefully consider and imagine the significance of the elements inside and outside the frame; thus, inviting them to question various dimensions of the interplay of spirituality and a number of activities involving the collective preparation and consumption of food. Moreover, the images have been taken with great depth of field, rendering everything in focus, which favours visual scrutiny and contemplation, especially when seen as exhibition prints.

The people involved in these food practices are absent in the pictures but are suggested through material objects and arrangements of tables, chairs, crockery, decoration, as well as by the visual rhythm produced with the patterns and repetition of these elements. This human absence contributes to the aforementioned reflective space and imbues the images with a sense of numinosity, also precipitated by the spaces' association with specific

religious denominations. This is, in some cases, reinforced by a sense of suspended temporality. This emerges from the clash of different types of light and the tension between people's absence and the presence of elements that suggest something is about to happen.

The captions, which are informed by my initial research photographing interiors and "behind-the-scenes" creative material practices, illustrate both the importance of food related events and spaces, such as halls and kitchens, and how these mediate and determine when these events and other religious practices take place. Similarly, photographing various food events and practices has brought attention to the gendered voluntary work that these entail, which is made explicit or hinted in the captions, as well as people's motivations for doing it, including spiritual and social reasons. This voluntary work has exposed some of the politics around the use of food related spaces, the blurring of boundaries between sacred and non-sacred food practices, and how material practices engage with various religious principles and experiences at different times and in different ways. It has also shed light on how food practices influence the adhesion to certain religious and gendered norms within worship spaces, making them more flexible. Thus, in line with scholarship on commensality, *Meals* reveals food spaces as sites of contestation, where food practices are performed through power relations, which are entangled with (gendered) hierarchies, motivations, beliefs, idiosyncrasies and norms.

Through the visual and aesthetic experience of the encounter with each image, this series foregrounds how the affective capacities of eating together, in community, partly rely on the spatial and embodied atmosphere of spaces of commensality, expressed through decoration and material arrangements. Here, I have considered how affective commensal practices contribute to developing family-like relationships and bonding across different generations. Food practices also play a key role in the communities' efforts to integrate diverse national and ethnic groups; as well as for developing networks with external groups and communities at a local, national and international level. Thus, food practices operate as significant markers of religious and cultural identity, belonging and difference.

Finally, in this chapter I have also demonstrated different ways in which the various creative processes involved in the production of the *Meals* series, including image-making, sharing, editing and selecting, constitute forms of data and knowledge production. Here, I have used creative decision-making, visual interpretation and speculative analysis as productive research methods in order to render visible and explore

specific questions, associations and ideas around food practices and commensality in worship spaces.

Chapter five: To cook or not to cook: The *Spiritual Flavours* recipe photobook

While reading this chapter, please refer to the Spiritual Flavours recipe photobook, included in the PhD submitted archival box.

Introduction

In this chapter I discuss the process of creating, producing and sharing the *Spiritual Flavours* recipe photobook and the kinds of knowledge, conceptual arguments and reflections that emerged from this creative process. The photobook brings together recipes from people who are members of the faith communities involved in the project. Its ethos is to bring people together through the shared language of recipes – creating a community of participants, collaborators and audiences – in order to foreground and disseminate the spiritual and biographical significance of food, as well as the (multi-faith) diversity of contemporary suburban London. The book is organised in sections around the contributors. These include recipes, visual narratives and biographical texts, which work in parallel to explore the myriad of (personal) ways in which food and faith interrelate. Thus, food becomes a vehicle for exploring notions of home, family, tradition, diversity, migration, adaptation, past and future expectations and belief.

I start the chapter by reviewing interdisciplinary literature on cookbooks to situate the *Spiritual Flavours* book as a community/recipe photobook. This includes a discussion on the hybridity of this genre and how cookbooks – often including biographical narratives – have been involved in shaping, performing and negotiating gendered roles (see chapter three), as well as social, cultural, religious and community identities. I consider the relationship between visual material, the symbiotic history of food photography and the cookbook genre, cookbooks as platforms for academic research and activism, as well as arts cookbooks. This leads to an analysis of the *Spiritual Flavours* cookbook as an artefact, and the rationale for its material quality, design and style. Here, I reflect on decisions around various narrative elements, such as structure, voice, photographic and literary style. I also examine the creative and collaborative processes involved in making and editing the book, including the relationships developed with the contributors, which were mediated by the practicalities of visual arts, culinary material practices and their daily lives.

This is followed by a section focusing on the interpretations and experiences of the

relationship between food and faith that the book yields. This includes a discussion on how the design, layout and interplay between images and texts articulate notions, as well as produce imaginations and experiences of diversity, locality and the intersections of religious culinary practices with other life and social dimensions. In the context of literature on what cookbooks 'do', and the choices made in the creative process, I argue that the book performs an original exploration of the interrelations between food religious practices and other individual, family and social dynamics and histories, through its multi-faith and heteroglossic narrative. It also uniquely foregrounds the fluidity and blurring of boundaries between the public and private and between the religious and secular, as well as the significance of the sensorial and embodied qualities of food practices for understanding how these enable, support, affectively mark and achieve religious practices. This connects with the significance of the book as a practical cookbook and the view that cooking and savouring its recipes have the potential to transform people's orientation towards religious difference, in ways that are simultaneously cognitive, embodied and visceral.

Finally, I discuss how the process of making and sharing the *Spiritual Flavours* book was an original way of producing, disseminating and experiencing social research knowledge, which is both accountable to participants and incorporates their feedback. Here, I argue that the book promotes multi-faith conviviality through creative processes of food sharing. I conclude by reflecting on how the book enriches understandings of the everyday sociocultural life of multi-faith suburbia, by connecting the sensorial, the personal and the communal through visual and textual associations and contrasts across different experiences.

The cookbook as a narrative device: Historical frameworks

Making a cookbook seemed an obvious creative means for exploring culinary and religious practices of people living in close proximity who are from diverse backgrounds, nationalities, ethnicities and religious denominations. A cookbook would allow me to explore visually the everyday material practices of the personal religious 'foodways' of people from these communities, whilst bringing them together in the publication, by collating their visual narratives, biographical stories and culinary traditions in a comparative way.

To reflect on the cookbook, despite its unique multi-faith focus and its geographical

specificity, it is important to situate it within particular histories, styles and genres of cookbooks. Doing so informs the analysis of how the book operates as a sociomaterial narrative device or, in other words, how the interplay of its genre-informed content and design creates discourses that are simultaneously culinary, cultural, ideological, political, socioeconomic, academic and artistic.

The *Spiritual Flavours* cookbook is hard to classify. It is certainly a cookbook, understood as a collection of recipes. It is also a photobook, a biographical non-fiction book and a community recipe book. This issue became obvious when I registered an ISBN number for the publication and I had to choose BIC subject categories, which became: WBA (General Cookery and Recipes – nested in Lifestyle, Sport and Leisure); BGX (Biography: Religious and Spiritual – under Biography and True Stories); AJB (Individual Photographers – nested in Photography and Photographs, inside Arts) and; JSFG (Urban Communities – nested in Social Groups, under Society and Social Sciences). This classification challenge has been a common feature of cookbooks according to Notaker (2017), who explores whether they constitute (or not) a literary genre, since the origin of Modern (Western) cookbooks in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries. He notes this is evidenced in various library and bibliographic cataloguing systems (2017a:168). Cookbooks were originally associated with medicine, following medieval manuscripts that often included both culinary and medical material and, later, to the domain of agriculture and 'household books' or 'economic literature' from the fifteenth century. In 1876, the Dewey bibliographic classification decimal system, still used in libraries over the world, included '641 Cookery', as part of '640 Domestic economy'(2017a:171).

Notaker argues that this emphasised the distinction between cookbooks and literature, and that cookbooks are difficult to define because of the inclusion of other food-related information, especially since the emergence of *gastronomic literature* in the nineteenth century amongst the French elite. This elevated the practice of eating as art, and the cultivated figure of the *gourmand* as a food connoisseur, in contrast with the figure of the cook, historically associated with the work of servants and of low social status (2017a:172). Gastronomic literature was usually not written by cooks, but mostly by educated men who often applied their expertise in other literary genres, such as essays

and poems, to writing about different themes related to food.[82] These authors are not grouped through their formal writing attributes, but rather 'their basic attitude to what was called the "pleasures of the table"'(2017a:177).

However, the distinction between gastronomic literature and cookbooks is not always clear (2017a:173). Notaker cites Mennell's statement that some cookbooks that include many different materials 'seem intended to be read as literature' (2017a:182), meaning they are intended to produce enjoyment for the reader, rather than simply used for cooking. But he also draws on Phillip Gillet to assert that 'many readers find a similar pleasure in ordinary cookbooks with recipes' (2017a:182). Many scholars have explored this idea of the cookbook to be read for pleasure, rather than purely for cooking – also referred to as 'library vs kitchen' by Pennel and Auden (Notaker 2017a:182) – and analyse how additional literary and visual materials contribute to cookbooks' desirability and success (Bower 1997c, 2004b; Culver 2012; Dennis 2008; Dutch 2018; Leonardi 1989; Theophano 2003; Zafar 1999). Notaker concludes that, while the diverse style of gastronomic literature makes it hard to accept as a literary genre, cookbooks formally constitute a genre because they have recipes as a common literary form, in addition to the inclusion of material from other literary forms. However, this solution is complicated by the question of '[h]ow much of this material can be included before the book ceases to be a cookbook?' (2017a:183).

I asked myself this same question when I decided to make a recipe/photobook. I was interested in the possibilities of including other materials in combination with recipes. Here, the process of choosing the types and the number of additional materials, as well as whether the actual recipes were necessary was key for considering the purpose of the book and the kinds of knowledge and multi-faith understandings of the relationship of food and faith it could contribute. My decision to make it a practical cookbook was significant for incorporating the equalising language of recipes, their performative effect and the way they can disseminate research knowledge in an accessible, practical and visceral way, which I discuss later in the chapter.

[82] Notaker (2017a:176) draws on Stephen Mennell who defines the key themes of gastronomic literature: 1) correct practice: menus, service, sequence of courses; 2) diet: what constitutes the proper form of cookery for good health; 3) history: myths, biography, anecdotes about cooks, and cooking; 4) nostalgia: the evocation of memorable and notable meals and menus.

Cookbooks for looking.

The use of the recipe and the cookbook format as an artistic narrative device in the *Spiritual Flavours* book follows a popular tradition within the arts, evidenced by F.T. Marinetti's ([1932] 1989) *Futurist Cookbook*, or Salvador Dalí´s ([1973] 2020) surrealist cookbook *Les dîners de Gala*.[83] The presentation of cooking and food as an artistic expression is a recurrent theme in cookbooks, particularly from the nineteenth century, and the interest in presenting food to please the eye can be traced back to the middle ages (Notaker 2017a:265).[84]

Given the attention of the *Spiritual Flavours* project to gendered power relations of religious culinary practices, it is important to consider the historical gendering of published cookbooks (see chapter three), which gradually changed partly through their form, including illustrations and photographs. According to Dennis (2008), male oriented cookbooks from the seventeenth and eighteenth century included an increasing number of precise drawings of lavish and elitist food. Such books evolved into cookbooks that might be considered 'artbooks'. In contrast, female-oriented volumes included few illustrations, (corresponding to their 'lowly status as household manuals'), presenting food in less romantic and spectacular ways (2008:5) and characteristic of plainness and economy (Mennell, 1996, in Dennis 2008: 5). These books continued to shift understandings of cooking towards a creative and fashionable endeavour (Humble 2002:330) in the twentieth century and, after WWII, started to overcome the societal stigma of 'the sensual pleasure of food' (Mennell, 1996, in Dennis 2008: 9); which gradually generalised cookbooks as aesthetic and sensual artefacts (2008:9).[85] This was supported by the development of commercial colour glossy photography, which anticipated food's pleasure by emphasising the material, textural and sensorial qualities of food; thus, marking the beginning of 'food pornography' or 'gastroporn' (2008:11).[86]

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[83] There are numerous examples of artist photographers using the cookbook format as a creative output. See, for example, Katja Jug's artist cookbook *Hermes Koch Buch* (2013), combining recipes, poetic narratives and enigmatic images (https://www.katejug.net/).

[84] The beginning of the circulation of written recipes is attributed to the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries in the form of manuscripts. Alongside Bibles, cookbooks were the earliest mass-produced books after the invention of the press, which rapidly became specialised (Dennis 2008:2; Notaker 2017a).

[85] Notaker (2017a:278) addresses the subject of taste and pleasure and argues that '[t]he capital sin of gluttony was a question not just of eating too much and too often but also of finding pleasure in food that was too elaborate.'

[86] Dennis refers to 'food pornography' or 'gastroporn' as the way '[t]he vicarious sensual thrill of the visual stimulation of food photography, often accompanied by evocative and descriptive text, and its high-class

Photography also stimulated the reader's appetite through fantasy food, 'exotic atmospheres' and exciting lifestyles that rendered cookbooks as a visual medium for leisurely and indulgent escapism (Dennis 2008:12). The genealogy of food as a photographic subject is the focus of Bright's (2017) *Feast for the eyes*, in which she explores the evolving field of food photography within the history of art and cookbooks to the present day. She argues that in numerous cookbooks, photographs have become more important than the recipes and that many function as 'coffee-table' books, rather than cooking manuals (2017:18).

This is important because in creating the *Spiritual Flavours* book, which I discuss in the next section, I was challenged to make this often highly gendered format into a gender-inclusive recipe photobook. Similarly, I aimed to foreground the sensory and affective qualities of material religious practices through close-up and abstract shots of food, cooking and praying (which are more extreme in the film), without making the cultural and spiritual lives of participants appear exotic or aspirational. This connects with how the *Spiritual Flavours* book combines visual, practical and biographical material at the intersection of recipe and photobook, as well as with the theme of how visual arts and media influence the way societies engage with food (e.g. Bower 2004a; Bright 2017; Lebesco and Naccarato 2018; Leer and Povlsen 2016), as discussed in chapter three.

A significant example of a photo-recipe book, which illuminates some of the ways the *Spiritual Flavours* book works, is *The Photographer's Cookbook* (Hostetler 2016) by renowned photobook publisher Aperture. The book presents an edited version of an unfinished project made by Deborah Barsel in 1977, who, whilst working at the George Eastman House Museum, made an open call for photographers to submit their favourite recipes and food-related photographs. The book, showcasing pictures and recipes from famous photographers/artists, is 'a virtual time capsule of the photography community in the 1970s' (2016:9), thus connecting with the theme of cookbooks as a form of nostalgia (Supski 2013). Notably, the photographers included Stephen Shore and William Eggleston, who were both influenced by the formal style of Walker Evans' vernacular photography (see chapter three). They developed the genre through colour photography and quotidian subjects, including ordinary meals and diners as emblematic of

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equivalent, the cookbook as *objet d'art*, are paralleled with the physical and mental gratification of sexual pornography.' (2008:11, emphasis in original)

contemporary American lifestyle (see Bright 2017:148–51).

This publication suggests interesting parallels with the *Spiritual Flavours* book. Both compile recipes by people with a common denominator. Here, the significance and interest of each recipe is reliant on the subject behind it and how the recipes and pictures speak about who they are. Hostetler argues that 'reading (and cooking) a photographer's favourite recipe gives us insight into that individual's personality, tastes, and background' (2016:10) and adds that details about the food they enjoy 'cast their subjects in familiar terms, and the recipes thus bring the reader and cook closer to the photographers and their art. […] In this respect, the sharing of favourite recipes can be a great humanizer' (2016:11). Such humanising effect is also mentioned in the introduction of the *Spiritual Flavours* book, as it is an important element in relation to the inclusion of the actual recipes (which I return to later). Arguably, *The Photographer's Cookbook* could have existed with only the pictures of photographers' favourite foods. However, including the recipe texts, which contain tips, valuations and biographical information, recognises that these have a significant personal value (Berzok 2011; Chen 2014). Most importantly, however, the book proposes that the reader might gain a better understanding of these photographers by making and savouring their favourite food. This connects with the kinds of knowledge that the *Spiritual Flavours* book contributes and notably one of its key arguments (2019:7), and of this chapter, namely that being aware of a dish personal and spiritual significance for another, whilst oneself experiencing the taste, smells and texture of the food is a central aspect of the affective experience of eating it. This links with the relationship between food practices, embodied knowledge and experience, which is central to literature on food and memory (Holtzman 2006; Pilcher 2016; Sutton 2001) and on lived and material religion (McGuire 2008d:107), explored in chapter three.

Negotiating community, collective and biographical identities

As mentioned previously, the *Spiritual Flavours* book explores the relationship between food and religious practices through religious community, family and individual identities. A sense of a 'multi-faith' collective identity emerges at the intersection of these, which is associated to the diversity of the suburban locality. The book uses different visual strategies and narrative elements, such as 'sequence', 'description' and 'voice' (Culver 2012:33) to explore and express these types of identities, exposing ways in which they interrelate, which I come back to later in the chapter. This can be situated within

cookbooks that develop, support or challenge different kinds of collective and community identities, ideological views and values (gender, class, religious, political, racial (for example, Avakian and Haber 2005)) as well as within the genre of biographical cookbooks.

An important reference in relation to how the *Spiritual Flavours* book promotes a notion of a multi-faith collective identity, is how cookbooks have historically functioned as tools to define and redefine geographically inscribed religious identities, by emphasising or de-emphasising religious dietary restrictions as ways of promoting religious difference. For example, after the Reformation in Christian Europe, cookbooks that included certain recipes for fasting days were published in different regions depending on whether they were Catholic or Protestant (Notaker 2017a:220).[87] Similarly, Jewish cookbooks' approaches to kashrut dietary restrictions reveal how different migrant groups and communities aimed to reclaim, reform or assimilate their Jewish identity (Ferguson 2012; Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1997; Nakhimovsky 2006; Notaker 2017a; Roth 2010; Solomon 2014).

The aim of *Spiritual Flavours* to celebrate and value domestic cooking as an expression of local religious and cultural diversity also connects with (and speaks back to) the way cookbooks have helped in the construction of national and regional identities, distinguishing between 'high' and 'low' cuisine and developing a taste for growing urban middle classes, as well as promoting stereotypes and 'food-based characterisations of the ethnic Other' (Appadurai 1988:15), thus becoming 'narrators of ethnicity' (Gvion 2009). Some scholars have been critical of how cookbooks reproduce colonialist relations, involving processes of cultural appropriation (Goldman 1996), often enabling the experience of 'eating ethnic' without actually engaging with these cultures (Heldke 2013), while others counter this argument by asserting that such practices of consumption are essential for the financial survival of these ethnic communities (Narayan 1995). Relatedly, Chen (2014) has framed cookbooks from ethnic minorities as high-profile opportunities for dignified forms of communication with mainstream audiences, which challenge racial prejudices and invest their writers with authority and pride and the potential to celebrate their culture. These, she argues, generate inter-cultural dialogues where processes of adaptation, translation and assimilation take place, giving way to new

[87] Notaker's (2017a:219) describes how Protestants moved away from fasting traditions, which they did not consider a fundamental issue.

hybrid culinary cultures (see section on food, migration and multiculturalism in chapter three). Such positive framing is crucial for how the *Spiritual Flavours* cookbook celebrates the culinary cultures and religious, national and ethnic identities showcased, by placing the contributors as experts and investing them with a sense of affirmation and ownership – this is mostly visible through their portraits and narratives expressing their views. Here, the book produces a multicultural dialogue through its religious and cultural diversity, and a hybrid voice, emerging from the mediated creative process (through the use of the third person and the unified photographic point of view).

According to Culver (2012), a strong and distinctive narrative voice is a key element that makes cookbooks pleasurable. Furthermore, much of the success of cookbooks relates to the stories they tell through evocative language and how writers weave their personal experiences, judgements, opinions and sentiments among their recipes. This is significant for how the *Spiritual Flavours* book promotes empathy and engages with identity-making processes around a notion of multi-faith conviviality. Culver draws on Nigella Lawson's (1998) cookbook *How to Eat*, which is structured around contemporary women's concerns and lifestyles. By including stories of cooking failure, Lawson uses a confessional tone to advise on female concerns in a non-judgemental way, which aims to connect, affirm and validate a certain female identity.[88] Culver argues that Lawson includes her favourite tastes and cooking methods, as well as narratives of her past, turning her various identity elements into a story, 'as part of a written "selfing" process'(2012:45). This, she adds, provides a familiar context that readers can respond to by creating their own identity-making narratives through food. These story-telling dynamics are central to the way the *Spiritual Flavours* book presents people's religious identities through (visually and textually) detailed familiar narratives around food that readers can easily relate to. Peoples' relationships with food and spirituality are articulated through a 'confessional' biographical style that foregrounds their everyday culinary/religious practices and environments in a non-idealised way.

This connects with how the *Spiritual Flavours* book uses biographical narratives to provide an understanding of spiritual relationships with food that are concrete and specific to the participants' sociocultural, historical and personal contexts, rather than treating this

[88] Culver (2012:44) draws on Finn's (2004) definition of "kitchen confessional" as a distinct literary genre that allows for an exploration of female identity and voice and questions whether kitchen confessions function as oppressive narratives or as narratives that can instigate change.

subject in a generalising and abstract way. This resonates with scholarship looking at how autobiographical narratives in cookbooks produce concrete gendered and political discourses that challenge cultural stereotypes through the authors' specific social context, their community history and political circumstances, thus blurring the boundaries between the individual and the collective (Goldman 1996; Zafar 1999).

The study of the inclusion of recipes in historical and biographical literature offers interpretations for the significance of the narrative role of the recipes in the *Spiritual Flavours* book: Kelly argues that recipes 'provide verisimilitude for the stories, and the stories explain the food' (2001:254). Clark suggests that the recipes in Shage's (1982) novel *Sassafrass, Cypress and Indigo* function as 'historical and literary narratives that form an archive that preserves the epistemological and aesthetic connections among black women in the Diaspora' (2007:151). Lawless'(1997) study of Esquivel's (1989) novel, *Like Water For Chocolate,* shows how recipes are used to break literary and ideological boundaries in relation to women's domestic role, by opening the space of the kitchen to the public realm in the novel, and to the space of the audience outside the novel. Similarly, Tompkins (2013:443) analyses *The Alice B. Toklas Cookbook* (1954) and argues that recipes, which consistently interrupt the narrative flow, introduce the temporality of the present tense and invert 'the hierarchical relationship between history and the quotidian'.

Finally, family and community cookbooks passed down through generations are also analysed for their auto/biographical dimension, as they reveal one's family history and upbringing through clues about the personality, preferences and social contexts of mothers and grandmothers. These are found both within the textual narratives (for example, in handwritten recipes or in community cookbooks, which contain dishes and stories that people have a personal relationship with); and within their physicality, through the ways they have been compiled, personalised, annotated, worn and stained (Berzok 2011; Busch 1997; Romines 1997). People can have a strong emotional attachment to family recipes and cookbooks (Bell 2009; Chen 2014), which are often perceived as one's matrilineal heritage (Berzok 2011; Bishop 1997; Romines 1997). This is an important theme in *Spiritual Flavours* that is revealed through people's recipe choices, which foreground the interrelation of family, religious and culinary heritage.

Cookbooks for communities, activism and social research

The *Spiritual Flavours* cookbook also links with the tradition of community cookbooks,

or fundraising cookbooks, which are published by local groups (religious communities, associations, clubs, etc.) that compile the recipes of their members to celebrate their foodways and values and/or to raise funds for a cause. Traditionally, a large proportion of these cookbooks have been created by women within religious communities (Bower 1997a; Busch 1997; Kelly 2012) and are interwoven with religious identities (Ferguson 2012:700).[89] Before the 1970s, there has been little academic attention to these cookbooks, until feminist scholars emphasised their significance for understanding the culture of communities within specific social contexts, and, most notably, women's lives and their participation in the public sphere (Bailey-Dick 2005; Bower 1997a; Busch 1997; Hartman 2003; Romines 1997).[90]

Bower (1997b) has studied the narrative elements of this genre, such as the setting and characters, which I reflect on later in the chapter. She also identifies various plots, including the overarching 'home plot', which makes visible the construction of domestic lives and rituals outside conventional patriarchal representations, which is central to the way the *Spiritual Flavours* book (visually and textually) exposes people's 'home-made' religious/culinary family cultures. Two other connected stories are the 'integration plot' and the 'differentiation plot' which articulate the achievement/acceptance of communities within the wider society, as well as their difference from other groups (e.g. 'professional, ethnic, religious or geographic' (1997b:40)). These resonate with *Spiritual Flavours*' attention to religious food practices aimed at integrating diverse groups within communities or reaching out to other local groups via open events, inter-faith meals, food charity, etc.

One of the most common and persistent plots is that of 'moral or religious triumph', which 'is used to define woman's role as a moral centre of the home and/or to demonstrate the ways that food rituals can reinforce religious teachings' (1997b:43). This is central in the *Spiritual Flavours* cookbook, which portrays a range of experiences where food practices are involved in providing children with a religious education. A last plot, the 'historical plot' (1997b:44), commemorates (and educates in) the history of communities, often through adversity, which likewise features in the personal stories of the *Spiritual Flavours*

[89] See Kelly (2012) for a historical overview of the development and breadth of this genre in the United States of America.

[90] Margaret Cook (1971) is often acknowledged as the first academic to investigate the genre of community cookbooks with *America's Charitable Cooks: A Bibliography of Fund-raising Cook Books Published in the United States (1861- 1915)*.

book contributors, which are intertwined with historical events. Bower also highlights dominant themes, such as the speaking out of voices that have been publicly silent; and women's power within the home (1997b:47). This theme is central to much literature on how community cookbooks have enabled a platform for women's voices (Bower 1997a, 1997b; Theophano 2003); the writing of their own history (Bishop 1997; Clark 2007; Zafar 1999), the creation of alternative or counter collective memories (Eves 2005), and women's intervention in the social fabric of their communities, thus generating impact in society (Bailey-Dick 2005; Ferguson 2012; Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1997). This plot is also present in the *Spiritual Flavours* cookbook, as some stories challenge gender stereotypes where men have central roles in culinary and religious domestic practice. The book also counters the marginalisation of plural religious voices (and embodied presence) within presumed secular mainstream media and visual arts platforms, where participants feel recognised by institutions and audiences through the book. For example, the *Spiritual Flavours* book launch at The Photographers' Gallery bookshop in central London was attended by many of the book's contributors who felt proud to be there and have pictures taken as the protagonists of the book (Fig. 174). Conversely, the bookshop employees told me they were very pleased with the diversity of the audience, which is often absent in their events.

Scholars have also looked at how recipe books help create (and reconfigure) communities and gendered roles within them, including gendered narratives that are both restrictive and empowering (Bishop 1997; Ferguson 2012; Romines 1997). Bailey-Dick introduces the idea of 'kitchenhood of all believers' (2005:163), namely the capacity of ordinary people (mainly women) to shape and shift the boundaries of Mennonite communities and identity through their cookbooks and culinary cultures, due to the ubiquity of food practices (in contrast with more official theological channels). Moreover, Ferguson argues that community cookbooks intensify members' sense of belonging to the community, not just by the collective efforts involved in making and distributing these books; but, significantly, 'at a corporeal, somatic level' (2012:698), through the sensorial experience of cooking and eating their recipes.

In this sense, the *Spiritual Flavours* book draws on various elements of community cookbooks but, rather than reflecting on a single religious community, it is original in the way it reimagines a multi-faith community with people from diverse, open and porous religious groups, who identify with the local multicultural identity. Thus, the book is

performative of real and imagined inter-faith relationships around the notion of 'spiritual food', the experience of locality, the creative collaborative processes, as well as through its dishes. Here, the way it brings people from different faith communities together – through the juxtaposition of their recipes and stories, and, in person, through creative practices and sharing events (explored later in the chapter) – also situates the *Spiritual Flavours* cookbook as a quiet form of activism, as well as social research.

Although many of the cookbooks discussed so far have a socio-political dimension, certain cookbooks have been theorised for their explicit activist purpose. For example, Hartman (2003:30), has analysed various commune cookbooks that formed part of the counterculture of communes in the United States in the 1960s and 1970s, which made food into a political issue. Bagelman, Nunez Silva and Bagelman (2017:373) also provide examples of activist cookbooks by feminist groups in support of their causes, such as those published by the US suffragist movement or the Cincinnati Lesbian Bureau, as well as cookbooks aimed to bring awareness on hunger. A recent strand of multicultural and inclusive activist cookbooks are, for example, aimed at raising funds for humanitarian crisis, such as #CookForSyria or *Together: Our Community Cookbook* (The Hubb Community kitchen and HRH The Duchess of Sussex 2018) in support of families and neighbours of the Grenfell tower in London.[91] Although the *Spiritual Flavours* book does not aim to raise funds, it resonates with the multicultural approach of these cookbooks and the way they participate in projects of cultural understanding.

Bagelman, Nunez Silva and Bagelman's interest in activist cookbooks is related to 'the generative possibilities they hold for stimulating political conversation and promoting social justice by democratizing modes of production and space of authorship' (2017:373). They propose cookbooks 'as a tool for doing research' (2017:374) within a participatory action research (PAR) framework. Their analysis emerges from an arts-based cookbook they co-produced, *Critical Cookbook: Unsavoury Ingredients in Canada's Brunch Capital*, as a collaborative project between scholars, activists, artists and migrant workers, which collectively documented the living conditions and experiences of social exclusion of Mexican farm workers from one branch of Canada's Temporary Foreign Worker

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[91] See also the *Heart & Parcel* cookbook (Heart & Parcel and Lupton 2019): https://heartandparcel.org/2019/05/01/heartandparcelcookbook/; and the *Hot Bread Kitchen Cookbook: Artisanal Baking from Around the World* (Rodriguez and Turshen 2015)*: https://hotbreadkitchen.org/,* both supporting the empowerment of migrant people.

Program (TFWP) in Victoria. With their choice of a cookbook format, they hoped to stretch academic conversations beyond traditional academic spaces, and to raise public awareness by circulating the book locally. Moreover, by 'experimenting with the visual cookbook as a method for research that places primacy on storytelling' they also aimed to shift 'exclusionary discourses' (2017:392), by introducing the migrants' stories into people's intimate spaces, homes and kitchens, from which they are excluded. They conclude that the cookbook's most significant impact was the way it stimulated connection, which revealed 'the cookbook as not a product, but part of a wider academic–activist process for bringing people together and setting the table for change' (2017:393).

This makes an interesting reference point for the *Spiritual Flavours* project, not only because it uses the cookbook as a platform for arts-led social research, but also because it presents an alternative participatory and collaborative processes. The *Critical Cookbook* employs participatory authorship whilst *Spiritual Flavours* maintains control over the conceptual and creative direction, which led to developing stronger relationships between artist and participants, rather than transversal relations between participants. It also helps interrogate the ways in which *Spiritual Flavours* subverts exclusionary narratives, such as challenging the idea of suburbia as primarily white, secular and middle-class (Dwyer et al. 2013; Dwyer, Tse, and Ley 2016; Shah, Dwyer, and Gilbert 2012), or by inviting people outside these faith communities (including the reader) to access the participants' homes, foods, places of worship and life stories, whilst participants' stories also enter the readers' kitchens.

Making the *Spiritual Flavours* cookbook

The book as object

With the burgeoning of self-publishing in the last two decades, photobooks have also become experimental artefacts, pushing the creative possibilities of the interplay between images, design, printing techniques and materials. As such, in consultation with the book designer, Joanna Briton, I first studied various options for articulating the concept of the book through its visual and material design features. For example, we considered grouping all the recipes in one section with a different paper (or as detachable cards) and placing other types of contents in separate sections (portraits, pictures of food preparation, domestic interiors, religious spaces, etc.). This structure aimed to produce a direct comparison of specific identified dimensions, akin to qualitative data analysis. However,

it became clear that the strength of the project was the possibility to immerse into individual narratives and appreciate concrete ways in which food and religious material practices are intertwined with other personal relationships, structures, and (temporal and spatial) dimensions.

In order to support this, the book is structured in sections based on the contributors, like personal profile 'capsules', or windows into their culinary and spiritual worlds. The reader is still able to compare different experiences, but from a holistic understanding of how these play out in each particular case (which I analyse further below). Additionally, not having to match the same dimensions for every participant provided freedom to adapt each individual narrative to people's specific circumstances. Such individual focus enables an appreciation of the diversity of the relationship between food and religion, not just across faith communities but also within faith communities, where an individual's age, gender, nationality, profession, family background and personality can play an important role. As such, I decided to sequence the different capsules in a fairly random way (rather than grouping them, for example, by their faith community), which visually intensifies the reader's experience of diversity in the book, but also moves away from a plot that could lean towards the stereotyping of religious and ethnic identities.

Choices on the format within each section were also crucial for constructing a conceptually coherent and balanced comparative structure, in terms of scale and significance. I decided that each section would be a visual and narrative journey from a dish/recipe to a portrait. In between, the reader would discover associated domestic and community religious and culinary practices, as well as personal material culture and biographical events. Although with some flexibility, this approach democratises the presentation of the relationship between food and religion between participants and faith communities from the prism of the culinary, the communal and the personal experience.[92] Here, each capsule is separated and introduced by a full bleed double spread image with the contributor(s)' name(s), which depicts a fairly abstract motif from the cooking; thus, placing the focus on food as a material process, rather than on the finished outcome.

The style of the book characterises it as an arts/community/recipe photobook for a general audience. While it is female authored and the majority of participants are also women, it

[92] The flexibility of this format can be seen in Rose and Eileen's section, which parallels two dishes and stories together.

borrows a mixture of formal features characteristic from fine art books, photobooks and contemporary cookbooks that target men and women alike. Its design features – so called 'perfect' cloth binding, hard covers with an embossed matt picture, heavy paper and high printing quality – are fairly widespread features within the photobook market and suggest fine production and artistic value.[93] As such, the book moves away from the norms of vernacular community cookbooks which are typically low budget, whilst celebrating their culinary creativity and value as worthy of fine art books.[94]

The thick but relatively small (18x24cm) size format allows for a more intimate handling than some larger types, such as mass-produced thematic/retrospective arts books from established publishers. Its potential value as a collectible, self-published artist book is mobilised by being a signed and numbered edition of 132 copies.[95] This associates the logic of arts collection to the spiritual theme of the book. For example, on multiple occasions I have encountered people who wish to get numbered edition copies with the number of their year of birth. Thus, it is possible that someone who is Christian would desire to have the number 3, 6 or 12 because of the significance of these numbers in the Bible; or a Hindu might desire a Deity's birthday or the number 108, which is considered sacred.

This demonstrates how the book aims to communicate and embody spiritual dimensions through design and material choices, and connects with the view that cookbooks are artefacts that people develop personal relationships and attachment with (Chen 2014). The size, the ribbon marker and the simplicity of the cover, with just the *Spiritual Flavours* title in capital letters recalls the Bible.[96] Also, the bright saturated cover colours can be associated with sacred and celebratory colours in Hinduism, Sikhism and Judaism; thus, aiming to express religious diversity (see Fig. 149). These colours also suggest the

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[93] This format has also been used by high quality production contemporary commercial cookbooks such as Nigel Slater's *A Year of Good Eating: The Kitchen Diaries III* (2015)

[94] Initially, we considered using a soft-cover, spiral-bound format that would reference traditional cookbook designs, or a ring folder with dividers, in the spirit of the classic fascicle cookbook, which permitted the inclusion of people's own recipes (see Bright 2017:12, 118).

[95] This is underscored by the riddle (or haiku) written on the credits page at the end, alongside the copy's edition number and the signature (Cover: Yellow odd numbers | Red even numbers | Blue multiples of six), which makes it possible to figure out with precision the cover colour of each numbered copy and the total of copies in yellow (66), in red (44) and in blue (22). Here, the hidden mathematical correspondence of these numbers might be associated with numerology and perceived as mystical.

[96] The material and metaphorical association of some cookbooks to the bible is recurrent, as exemplified in Romines (1997) and Hartman (2003)

theme of food, as very similar yellow and red-orange tones occur with spices in a number of food pictures in the book (for example, the first image in Sabiha's section, showing the simmering of turmeric and chilli coloured sauce, p.206-7). Equally, similar saturated tones to the blue cover appear in multiple images depicting food containers and the kitchen table-top depicted in the embossed image on the back cover.[97]

The fact that this image (see Fig. 150, Fig. 151) does not show any food, but only the messy trace of food preparation with flour, a yellow plastic cup and a teaspoon, scattered on the surface of the table, moves the book away from the commercial cookbook genre and positions it more firmly as a fine art/photobook. However, because the picture is on the back cover, this is not clear right away. Seen from the front, the two words "*Spiritual Flavours*" set the theme of the book around the relationship between spirituality and food. Turning the book over reveals the image (in fine art/documentary style), which situates the viewer in a kitchen environment, and emphasises the book's focus on food-making as an everyday material practice. Here, the hand traces on the scattered flour invoke an imagination of children's playfulness – we learn inside the book, the significance of this table in relation to childhood memories of helping make macaroons for Passover.[98] Furthermore, the white flour connects with the spiritual symbolism of the colour white (reinforced by the white title) and, potentially, associated with spiritual material culture, such as the holy ash in the Hindu temple. However, it is not until we flick through the book that it is revealed as a cookbook.

[97] The blending of the table colour with the blue cover plays with visually expanding the space of the image, while creating a stark contrast with the other two cover colours (see Fig. 150).

[98] See also the participant's feedback quote on the subject of this table in the conclusion chapter.

Fig. 149 Front covers of the *Spiritual Flavours* cookbook (2019)

Fig. 150 Back covers of the *Spiritual Flavours* cookbook (2019)

Fig. 151 Back cover image of the *Spiritual Flavours* cookbook (2019)

Finally, there was the issue of how to communicate the locality of Ealing as a binding element between different contributors and faith communities. This raised the following questions: how is locality defined and experienced through diverse religious culinary practices, and, how can this be articulated in the book? I considered various visual options, such as introducing images of Ealing's suburban material fabric, suggesting key local landmarks, as well as printing a map of Ealing on the end papers of the book, thus metaphorically wrapping its recipes/stories. However, I realised these options diluted the visual language of the book, which is centred around specific personal experiences. I concluded that the local context was best articulated through the biographical texts, which provide nuanced narratives of the interconnectedness between participants' migration journeys, their reasons for living in Ealing and for attending their worship communities, and their culinary/religious practices. Additionally, the book creates, following Ferguson, a 'sapiditary community' (2012:698) that is geographically inscribed through the association of recipes to the religious communities in Ealing. As such, Ealing is expressed through both the contributors' life stories and their dishes.

Collecting the recipes

Between April 2016 and March 2018, I invited participants to contribute recipes that are significant to their spirituality, but also to their personal histories, and their own ways of practicing, celebrating and experiencing religion. The book comprises twenty-eight recipes distributed over eighteen sections. While I had initially planned to gather three recipes from each faith community, the book's personal focus undermined the logic of an equal distribution, which was complicated by the fact that three out of the seven faith communities are Christian. Instead, having a variety of demographic characteristics, experiences and backgrounds became more important. I met most contributors by attending their worship spaces. Out of twenty-four people involved, eighteen are female and six are male. At the time they took part, their ages ranged from eight years old to seventy-nine, with representatives of all age ranges in between. The book's introduction describes their different community involvement, religious observation and cooking experience and highlights their generosity of time and pre-disposition to help others as a common denominator (p.7).

Taking part in the project involved an initial conversation about food that is significant to their faith and life history. I asked them whether there were any foods that constituted part of their religious rituals, including whether they adhered to any religious dietary restrictions or periods of fasting. I also enquired about meals for special religious celebrations at home or within worship spaces, and whether they performed any food charity. I was also interested in learning about their background and why they had chosen to live in Ealing and join their faith community. Sometimes, they had a clear idea of the dish they wanted to contribute and, other times, the decision emerged from these conversations, which formed the basis of the book's biographical texts.

The cooking of the chosen recipe normally took place on a different day (usually in their homes), when I would also take a formal portrait and photographed the cooking process, the finished dish, and any other elements that seemed relevant or suggested complementary dimensions to their story. This included but was not limited to cooking utensils, kitchen and home interiors, table arrangements, the serving of food, family interactions, celebrations and personal rituals, domestic religious spaces and objects, as well as home prayers. As discussed in chapter two, the performative dimension of interviewing while cooking was not productive in my research, as the cooking process caused disruption and dispersed the focus of the interview. However, the cooking sessions

were conducive of 'go-along' informal conversations (Kusenbach 2003), when I was shown around people's places while talking about their domestic religious practices. This enabled me to take pictures around their homes with their consent. I also took pictures of contributors in their worship spaces. Two sections (Siva, and Chisato and Aogu's) are entirely based at the worship spaces, as their recipes are mainly linked to the contributors' involvement in these communities.

Practicalities and visual language of Spiritual Flavours

Making the cookbook required responding to its specific creative parameters, as well as developing collaborative relationships, which involved negotiating different people's desires, circumstances and their expectations around the creative process and outcome. Here, participants' pre-conceived notions and experiences of cookbooks, community cookbooks and their imagined audience also came into play. For example, Ossie chose the traditional Jewish chicken soup, but transformed it to demonstrate his sophisticated cooking skills as he dreams to become a celebrity chef, while Aziz simplified his Tagine recipe with a British audience in mind.

While I approached individuals, I also welcomed groups of family members and friends, particularly when these relationships were significant to the stories behind the recipes, or when participating in the project became an opportunity to cook with (or for) someone else, as part of bonding with loved ones or as an opportunity to perform longed-for activities. This mediated the research interactions and the narrative around the dish. Naomi, for example, was excited about reconnecting with her Jewish heritage and invited her Aunt Jacqui to demonstrate how to make the Passover macaroons she remembered from childhood, while getting her eight-year-old daughter, Elkie, involved. In two other instances, pairs of friends, Rose and Eileen, as well as Maryam and Farida, wanted to participate together for the fun and pleasure of sharing their cooked dishes with each other. Similarly, Vadivu wanted to cook sweet Pongal when her daughter Thanujah visited because she loves it. After the cooking/photographic session, they proposed attending the Hindu temple in Wimbledon because Thanujah has fond memories of going there as a child and she was excited to show me how different it is from the one in Ealing. Rose and Eileen proposed that we go to the Blue Mountain Peak food store in Acton, which specialises in Caribbean products, to show me all their favourite foods from home while buying the recipe ingredients. Similarly, Arda invited me to visit her mother in her

care home during Easter, as *choreg* were her mother's favourite Armenian sweets. As such, two key themes in the book are the ways in which food and cooking practices connect people with relatives and friends, often across generations and temporalities, and the intergenerational transmission of heritage and identity.

This was consistent with my methodological approach – informed by the notion of performativity (see chapter two) – and how the kinds of knowledge produced through making the *Spiritual Flavours* book followed (or are inseparable from) the practical opportunities occasioned by the creative research process. These emerged at the intersection of the practicalities of participants' everyday lives and the creative material practices of cooking and photographing. Such logistics were key decisive factors for the selection of dishes and events. For instance, Mohamed and Ayah, who both work full-time and have three children, invited me to break fast with them during Ramadan on their daughter's Islamic calendar birthday. This meant that the time and effort spent in preparing traditional elaborate dishes, as well as my presence as a guest-researcher-photographer, was fitting for this special occasion when the children could stay up late. Other dish choices were influenced by the opportunity to provide visibility to specific culinary events in the book. For example, the choice of Sabiha's Super Dahl (p.209) recipe brings awareness to a charitable endeavour to support orphans in Sierra Leone and features the family's longstanding tradition of opening their home to the local Muslim (and non-Muslim) communities. As such, the creative and often arbitrary (or self-interested) choices that were made responded to what was possible in practical terms. These reveal the interconnectedness of food and religious practices with everyday family, community, social and professional dynamics. In this sense, participants could not present their views and experience on the subject from a theoretical, abstract or even idealised point of view. Instead, they had to perform such relationship in practice, thus having to articulate their experience of food and faith through creative, hands-on, material and temporal arrangements.

As such, I developed a photographic visual language that aimed to explore the subtle and nuanced interrelationships between materials and the various dynamics at play. Here, I combined images with a fairly descriptive and straightforward documentary style with more formally framed imagery of finished dishes, materials, interiors and posed portraits. While the first type shows the material contexts and dynamics of situated cooking and religious practices, the latter provides a quieter space for the viewer. Thus, the book plays

with the tension between these two styles, opposing dynamic, spontaneous and apparently genuine slices of reality, with still, reflective and staged shots. Images of objects that are clearly arranged for the camera but include a 'spontaneous' action also achieve this. For example, the image of the coconut pyramids dish which includes Elkie's hand reaching out to take a macaroon (see Fig. 152). Other images achieve this tension via the 'genuine' gesture of participants holding an object still, in context, for the picture. For example, the holding of the Easter basket in the street (see Fig. 153), the display of the menorah (see Fig. 154), or the presentation of the wooden moulds to make maamoul (see Fig. 155).

Fig. 152 Coconut pyramids, *Spiritual Flavours* cookbook (2019:116)

Fig. 153 Easter basket, *Spiritual Flavours* cookbook (2019:78)

Fig. 154 Naomi’s menorah, *Spiritual Flavours* cookbook (2019: 120–121)

Fig. 155 Arda’s maamoul wooden moulds, *Spiritual Flavours* cookbook (2019:176–177)

Finally, some images of objects (without human action) display this tension between apparent authenticity and deliberate staging as they have very formal compositions (sometimes acquiring a poetic or symbolic quality), but their material arrangement clearly shows a ‘genuine’ human intervention. For instance, the messy wooden bowl and mallets (see Fig. 156), the upside-down mug over a pot lid (see Fig. 157), the encounter of a perforated carrot and a courgette (see Fig. 158), the split dough resembling ears (see Fig. 159), and the arrangement of chestnuts on a chopping board of my own recipe (see Fig. 160), the latter a subtle nod to the traditional popularity of sculptural food photography (Bright 2017:17).

The photographic tension between staged images and the documentation of ‘real’ life is

a central feature of the photographic style of the book (and equally important to the strength of the portraits, which appear authentic in their self-awareness). This visual approach is important for how it demonstrates that, while the research process is mediated, collaborative and to a certain extent 'staged' for the camera, the material practices involved in the cooking/photographing process occasioned both imagined and genuine insights of people's relationship with food and faith.

Fig. 156 Wooden bowl and mallets for making mochi, *Spiritual Flavours* cookbook (2019:89)

Fig. 157 Sabiha's cooking pot, *Spiritual Flavours* cookbook (2019:211)

Fig. 158 Carving carrot and courgette balls, *Spiritual Flavours* cookbook (2019:246)

Fig. 159 Split dough for two Challah bread loaves, *Spiritual Flavours* cookbook (2019:44–45)

Fig. 160 Chestnuts ready for baking, *Spiritual Flavours* cookbook (2019:144–145)

A collaborative editing process

After collecting the recipes, I began editing the materials and developing a narrative language. This followed the principle that each contributor's section should have a similar number of images and amount of text, in order to engender a sense of equality across the contributions. However, I was also keen to incorporate differences and avoid having a too formulaic and repetitive narrative – for example, different sections have slightly different lengths and number of recipes. Like in my previous work, there was a dialogical relationship between editing the images and texts, where I made an initial selection of images that informed the writing of the biographical texts, which, in turn, helped finalise the image selection. However, each type of narrative had to work autonomously, in parallel.

After the initial edit, I shared the images and texts with the participants. This was an opportunity for them to make any changes or corrections and to flag any images they preferred not to be published. Sometimes, this opened a negotiation about the inclusion of certain pictures, for example, in relation to the visibility of domestic mess, or around requests for image editing/manipulation. At other times, we made decisions about removing certain information that participants felt could be sensitive with regards to their imagined audiences (mainly other family members or people from the local communities). This also led to a collaborative process with some participants. For example, I shared some of the images with Sabiha, who enjoyed providing advice on different options. When she saw the different images of Farida praying in Maryam's living room, she pointed at one image and exclaimed: 'this is the true image of a Muslim household! You have the kitchen, the woman praying at home and the frame with the ninety-nine names of Allah, which every Muslim house has'. This helped my final choice (see Fig. 161) as the other options did not include the ninety-nine names of Allah.

Fig. 161 Farida prays at Maryam's house, *Spiritual Flavours* cookbook (2019: 170–171)

The question of narrative voice was important. I decided to write both the biographical texts and the recipes in the third person as a strategy to both universalize and distance the point of view across the book, rather than using the contributors' direct voice, in first person, or interspersing quotes from them. I reasoned that using their direct voice would fragment the cookbook's point of view and dilute the concept of an artist-led mediated project. Here, my presence as the researcher-artist-photographer is the nexus that brings everyone in the book together, and the single voice/point of view acknowledges the mediated quality of the creative practice. For instance, one contributor got very involved in editing her text which led to it acquiring a different voice. She included many more personal comments and observations within the recipe text, as well as a different tone for appealing to the audience. So, eventually, we worked collaboratively to make sure it would blend in with the other texts. Furthermore, including participants' written verbatim quotes would have made more apparent the differences in taste, culture, literacy, education and class. While these differences exist, they are expressed through the choice of the recipes, through the contributors' possessions and domestic material culture, and through the details in the biographical texts about their background and occupation.

Making a practical cookbook entailed 'writing-out' details and textures of personal embodied practices with food, through the process of homogenising the recipe texts,

including measuring units, and structuring the language, which sadly had the effect of losing much of their original voice and style. This was necessary to provide clear cooking instructions without assuming the audience would have much prior culinary knowledge of these dishes, which could be very familiar for some people and completely alien for others (unlike many community cookbooks). Furthermore, many participants did not have written recipes for their dishes – meaning I had to write some of these myself – and cooked them without the use of measuring tools, relying instead on their hands, sight and own judgement. This is reminiscent of the history of cooking and its transmission as a practical and oral tradition (Notaker 2017a), as well as the idea that culinary practices are often learned/memorised through embodied processes rather than cognitive ones, or ‘‘incorporating practices’, namely ‘ways memories come to be embedded in a person’s bodily experience’ (Connerton in McGuire 2008d:107). For instance, Arashpreet made the effort to write the recipe for parshad. However, when following her own written instructions, she got the proportions wrong and had to start the dish again. She could not believe that this happened, as she knows how to make parshad by heart.

As such, writing the recipes required a significant task of translation, which involved having to contact the participants on multiple occasions to seek clarifications on the cooking process (I tested many of the recipes myself). Being unfamiliar with the specialist language of recipe writing, I eventually sought the support from a food editor, who made editing suggestions around the structure, style and wording of the recipes.

Reading and experiencing *Spiritual Flavours*

Design and multi-faith entanglements with food

The *Spiritual Flavours* book, and the Making Suburban Faith project, both address a key question concerning the field of material and everyday religion, namely, where does the sacred begin and end? Or rather, in this instance, are foods considered sacred and, if so, which foods, when and how?

In the introduction of the book, I highlight the challenge of qualifying food as ‘spiritual’ food, as many of its recipes are prepared and consumed outside religious contexts. However, the book features many dimensions of the relationship between food and religion, which have been studied by social scientists.[99] These range from foods directly

[99] See chapter three for a discussion on how different disciplines have approached the relationship between

involved in religious rituals, to dishes cooked at home for religious celebrations, to food events that connect worship and domestic spaces, as part of social/religious initiatives, such as community pot-luck dinners or charity events. In this sense, the *Spiritual Flavours* book offers an overview of the myriad of ways in which food is involved in religious practices, with a unique particular and comparative approach by contrasting individual and personal everyday experiences, which are revealed through the interplay of the visual and textual narratives. Here, the contributors' spirituality and life histories are told through their food, the work and utensils involved in making it, the materiality of their homes and worship places, the spiritual practices that take place in them and the ways these are narrated.

Furthermore, in the introduction, I emphasise how exploring the relationship between food and faith demonstrates the lack of clear-cut boundaries between the public and the private as well as the religious and the secular. The book provides a unique and nuanced understanding and experience of how the boundaries between these binaries are often dissolved or complicated within religious food practices. Through the recipes and their stories, we learn that some people participate in religious practices involving food for reasons other than their spiritual meaning, while other people attribute spiritual value to certain non-sacred dishes or practices, involving cooking or sharing food (see, for example, Akin's section). The visual narratives expose how religious food material practices are embedded and coexist with other secular material practices and that the way individuals materially negotiate these boundaries are arbitrary, personal and fluid. For example, Arashpreet reserves a specific pot to cook parshad, which is never used to cook meat, and covers her hair and recites prayers or mantras to herself whilst cooking it, even when she makes parshad purely as a pudding. Thus, the book contributes to the understanding of the ways in which eating and sharing food might be personally experienced (or not) as 'spiritual', particularly within unofficial religious practices. In the book, the degree to which these various practices are regarded as spiritual by the contributors is often open to interpretation. However, the way these are contextualised within their stories provides a sense of their spiritual value.

The book's narratives demonstrate that people's decisions to differentiate some practices as spiritual from other everyday practices are 'situated in the context of family and

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food and religion and the gap in scholarship looking at this relationship comparatively (Norman 2012).

communal relationships' (McGuire 2008d:109). Thus, *Spiritual Flavours* foregrounds how there are often closer similarities between culinary religious experiences of people of similar gender, age, background and family circumstances than those of the same religious denomination. The texts provide explicit details about the significance of each dish for people's faith and religious observance, but also for their personal lives, showing how their religious practices are entangled with understandings and experiences of home, family, community, heritage, diversity, migration, adaptation and expectations. For example, Carolyn's decision to purchase a Challah bread marked the start of Shabbat celebrations at home and her participation in her husband's Jewish traditions and the ELS community by baking Challah bread herself from then on, therefore resolving a multi-faith family issue. Thus, the texts highlight how the ubiquity of food and its capacity to move across different spheres (Holtzman 2006) are central to how food practices mobilise, articulate and perform religious practices. Working in parallel, the pictures situate the contributors' culinary and religious practices within their specific personal, familiar and community settings and activities. These provide a (visual) experience of these individual, social and religious entanglements through their material, aesthetic and affective qualities, which open the stories up to further readings and interpretations; particularly as some elements are disclosed and others are not.

The distinction and interplay between cognitive knowledge/experience (enacted in the book through the text) and sensorial knowledge/experience (occasioned in the book through its visual and material features) is fundamental to the contributions that this PhD makes to the understandings of the subject of food and faith; namely, different ways in which food embodied practices serve as affective markers that evoke, punctuate and perform religious rituals, narratives and identities. As such, one of the main challenges of the design of the book was developing a visual layout that would suggest that the different materials – the recipes (with their dish image) and the visual and the biographical narratives – run in parallel and are equally important. I wanted to avoid the perception that the images illustrate the text or that the text simply captions the images. The solution was not straightforward, since a direct correlation emerges as soon as text is placed underneath an image. With the creative expertise of the designer, we decided to have a width of text for the biographical narratives that would be narrower than that of all other texts. This biographical block of text flows as a continuous column, across pages, always on the same side within each section (either on the left page or right page), to suggest an

unbroken narrative, even if interrupted or, rather, punctuated by double-spread and single-page images.

While the visual and textual narratives in the book tend to coincide, addressing the same elements in the story, often they also complement each other, producing gaps and omissions that create space for imagination. Here, the reader is invited to fill in these gaps with their own experiences, but also with elements from the other stories across the book. There are ample examples where specific elements from one story are addressed, reinforced or contradicted in either the text or the images of a different story, thus creating an heteroglossic narrative on specific elements of the relationship between food and faith. Some of these connections serve to provide detail and expand the imagination around specific religious practices involving food. For example, Arashpreet's text talks about the room with the Guru Granth Sahib (the Sikh holy book) in her family house back in Punjab and the daily rituals and prayers that took place, including preparing the bedding clothes for the book (p.21). In Agya's section, there is a picture of their praying room with the Guru Granth Sahib (in which she and her daughter-in-law pray and meditate in every day – see Fig. 162), which helps us to imagine what a domestic Sikh praying room might look like in Arashpreet's story. Conversely, Arashpreet's text provides more detail of the daily religious practices that take place in such room, including vegetarian food offerings. This also connects with Vadivu and Thanujah's section, where there is a picture of the praying room at Vadivu's home (see Fig. 163). Vadivu and her family, like Arashpreet's family, offer vegetarian food to the deities. However, despite these similarities, the presence of the sacred through the religious material culture of these two rooms (Agya's and Vadivu's) suggests a fairly different religious ritual and experience, which is perceived through the aesthetic and affective qualities of the images of these two spaces.

Fig. 162 Praying room in Agya’s home with the Guru Granth Sahib, *Spiritual Flavours* cookbook (2019:202)

Fig. 163 Praying room at Vadivu’s home, *Spiritual Flavours* cookbook (2019:106-107)

As such, a key contribution of the book is how it connects the reader with the visual and sensorial aspects of religious food practices, enacted through the creative practice and encounter. Some of the stories describe embodied sensations of preparing food and the layout succeeds in connecting these narratives with visuals of participants involved in these embodied processes. This resonates with Pilcher's proposal of borrowing the concept of 'embodied imagination' as 'a useful means for conceptualizing the connections between sensory perceptions of food such as flavour, warmth, and satiety; the material work of preparing and consuming food; and cultural and social abstractions' (2016:862). This is useful in thinking about the ways in which spiritual practices involving food might constitute affective and embodied experiences, which meaningfully combine both cognitive and cultural experiences of spirituality with sensorial ones (Holtzman 2006).

In this sense, the making of the book revealed the strong significance of sensorial experiences of food for getting children involved in religious customs and practices. Both the visual and biographical narratives show how a choreography of food practices within and around religious events, often involving gatherings with other children from communities and extended family, are a fun and, according to Naomi, 'easy' way of passing on religious traditions and introducing children to religion. Here, we read from Jacqui's story that 'the really fun part was to get your hands into the eggs and coconut mix, squidging everything around,' (p.122) and Carolyn speaks about 'being intuitive and using her hands, like a kid playing with mud and enjoying the messiness' (p.51). In parallel, we see Elkie involved in making macaroons with her hands (see Fig. 165), but also children making mochi at ECC (see Fig. 164) or Noah helping Carolyn to braid the Challah (see Fig. 166).

As such, an original feature of the book is how it provides sensorially rich narratives of the links between the personal experiences of food and religious practices, and their entanglement with wider practices within communities. Cookbooks offer fascinating insights into both the public and the private sphere and help us understand the connection between the two (Chen 2014:489). Siva's section, for example, manages to illustrate the links between the religion and history of Sri Lankan Tamil people, the personal and biographical events in Siva's live, and his (and other people's) sensorial experience of attending the temple, which includes food, smells and the visual intensity from the temple's multi-coloured and golden decorations and from people's traditional saturated colourful clothes.

Fig. 164 Children making mochi at ECC, *Spiritual Flavours* cookbook (2019:94–95)

Fig. 165 Jacqui, Naomi and Elkie making coconut pyramids, *Spiritual Flavours* cookbook (2019:119)

Fig. 166 Noah and Carolyn braiding a five-stranded Challah bread loaf, *Spiritual Flavours* cookbook (2019:48–49)

Relatedly, the way the reader sensorially connects with the participants, their spaces and cooking practices is partly produced through two other design features: the use of image size and bleed (see Fig. 167). There are a series of large images of various sizes, placed differently across the double-spread layout, which, in the majority, have a bleed on one side (right, left, top or bottom – except for some floating ones). These serve a threefold purpose: 1) to provide richer detail; 2) to break the monotony of the layout, and; 3) those with one side bleed, to open the space of the image beyond the boundaries of the book, connecting with the material space of the reader/viewer. This produces a sense of entering the participants' communal and domestic spaces, which appear open or unbound (see, for example, pages 34-35, 80-81, 196-197, 212-213, 228-229 and 276-277). This also mirrors the traversing and subverting function of recipes in community, biographical and research cookbooks, explored earlier. Similarly, the section dividers, which are full bleed double-spread images of food preparations, connect all participants (and readers) with a shared imagination and experience of cooking processes.

As mentioned earlier, the designer and I debated whether the recipes should have a different visual and material treatment than the rest of the elements. Joanna struggled to combine the concept of the cookbook with the concept of the art photobook. So, I suggested that rather than trying to separate the cooking elements from the more ethnographic narrative, these needed to be integrated. Thus, the layout is characterised by the poetic use of white space (featured in many arts and photobooks), which both provides breathing space for both the images and texts, and unifies the visual language across all elements and sections. This reinforces the idea that the different dimensions (culinary, domestic, biographical, communal) are interconnected (see Fig. 168, Fig. 169).

Many of the aforementioned connections within and across different contributor sections, as well as between images and texts, stress how food is involved in processes such as religious identity-making, family and community bonding or, as argued, in providing children with a religious education; as well as the ways food is experienced differently by people from different gender and generations as part of embodied everyday spiritual practices. As already suggested, they also emphasise how food practices are used to narrate both formal and informal religious practices, where food often intervenes as temporal and affective markers that punctuate religious rituals.

Fig. 167 Examples of large images with bleed in the design layout of the *Spiritual Flavours* cookbook (2019: 273-274, 131-132, 34-35, 276-277)

Fig. 168 Examples of the use of white space in the design layout of the *Spiritual Flavours* cookbook (2019: 204-205, 93-94, 74-75, 26-27)

Recipes as practical, embodied and gustatory research knowledge

In this section I return to the initial question of the significance of making the *Spiritual Flavours* book a practical cookbook and the implications for knowledge production and dissemination. At first, I assumed the main interest of the book would be the pictures and biographical stories, while including the recipes would function as the focus and tangible evidence of a collaborative process. In hindsight, however, I regard the recipes as central to the project and a significant part of the knowledge emerging from the book.

While the selection of recipes is small, certain dishes suggest some of themes in the book through their attributes. Many are sweet and often made with traditionally expensive ingredients (ground almond, for example), and are thus indicative of their celebratory function. Some are 'small bites', which are easy to share with guests (for example, macaroons, choreg, panellets), and are quite elaborate to make, bringing people in households together (mostly women) in a collective cooking endeavour. Other dishes are inexpensive and easy to make in large quantities, such as dahls and vegetarian curries, to be shared in big gatherings. There are also many staple dishes which are typically eaten outside religious practices, such as traditional and national dishes (Afghan rice, tagine, akara, etc.), which are also cooked to celebrate religious events. However, beyond these similarities, there are few common features between the dishes in the book.

The non-linear structure of the recipes, which as mentioned reinforces the focus on individuals (as reflected in the table of contents) rather than on the qualities of the different foods, makes it clear that this book is not intended for the purpose of creating menus. As Notaker (2017a) argues, cookbooks' organisational structures are directly linked to the book's intended function for the readers. In this case, the function of the different materials in the book reminds me of Romines' interest in 'mobile texts', 'that can move from desk, shelf, computer to kitchen table' (1997:87). Here, the book's invitation to cook its recipes might necessitate a certain amount of curiosity and will from the readers to take the book from the coffee table, desk or library to the kitchen (though for some readers, perhaps, it is the other way around!).

Whichever way the audience engages with the book, the collection of actual recipes engenders a new category – 'spiritual food' – which is characterised by situated forms of religious and food practice as much as by the food itself. Bringing these recipes together in the book, not only involved a homogenising process, as mentioned earlier, but can be

thought as a process of translating complex spiritual relationships into 'understandable' and 'practicable' terms in the common language of cooking, accessible to people from various faith communities as well as people more generally.[100]

Similarly, it also creates a new interfaith community by bringing the local contributors together (in the book, but also in person through various sharing events), as well as a community that emerges as its wider audience. Here, I revisit Ferguson's idea of a 'sapiditary community', which is formed through the way community cookbooks 'intensify' a sense of community and belonging, not only through the way they are written, collected and passed on across generations, but also through the somatic and corporeal experience of their dishes (2012:698). As such, we might think of the inclusion of the recipes in the *Spiritual Flavours* book, as contributing to the book's potential for intensifying a sense of community around the notion and experience of 'spiritual food' by inviting readers to consider other people's relationship with food and spirituality (and one's own), not only through reading the book's stories, but also by trying its dishes (e.g. Highmore 2008). Here, as discussed earlier in the chapter, the affective experience of the dishes in the *Spiritual Flavours* cookbook is closely connected to their visuality/materiality in the book (see Fig. 168, Fig. 169).

Furthermore, not including the recipes would be denying the value of the participants culinary heritage and contradict the participatory ethos of the project. Notably, excluding the recipes would reject the practical, embodied and gustatory knowledge that they carry, which appears in the book as a fundamental aspect of the unique ways in which food practices operate as strong affective and temporal markers that punctuate and emphasise religious rituals, in conjunction with its symbolic power. In other words, it would negate the role of the food's materiality (smell, taste, texture) and the embodied/affective practices of food preparation, in processes involving individual, family, collective memory (and remembrance), as well as embodied, meditative and social experiences, by which food practices come to be experienced as religious and/or spiritual. Instead, experiencing people's dishes enhances the understanding of the dish's spiritual significance, which connects with the theme of the significance of embodied knowledge within religious food practices (McGuire 2008c).

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[100] Baily-Dick argues that Mennonite cookbooks are a 'place in which the Gospel is being translated into "understandable terms" for other cultures' (2005:163).

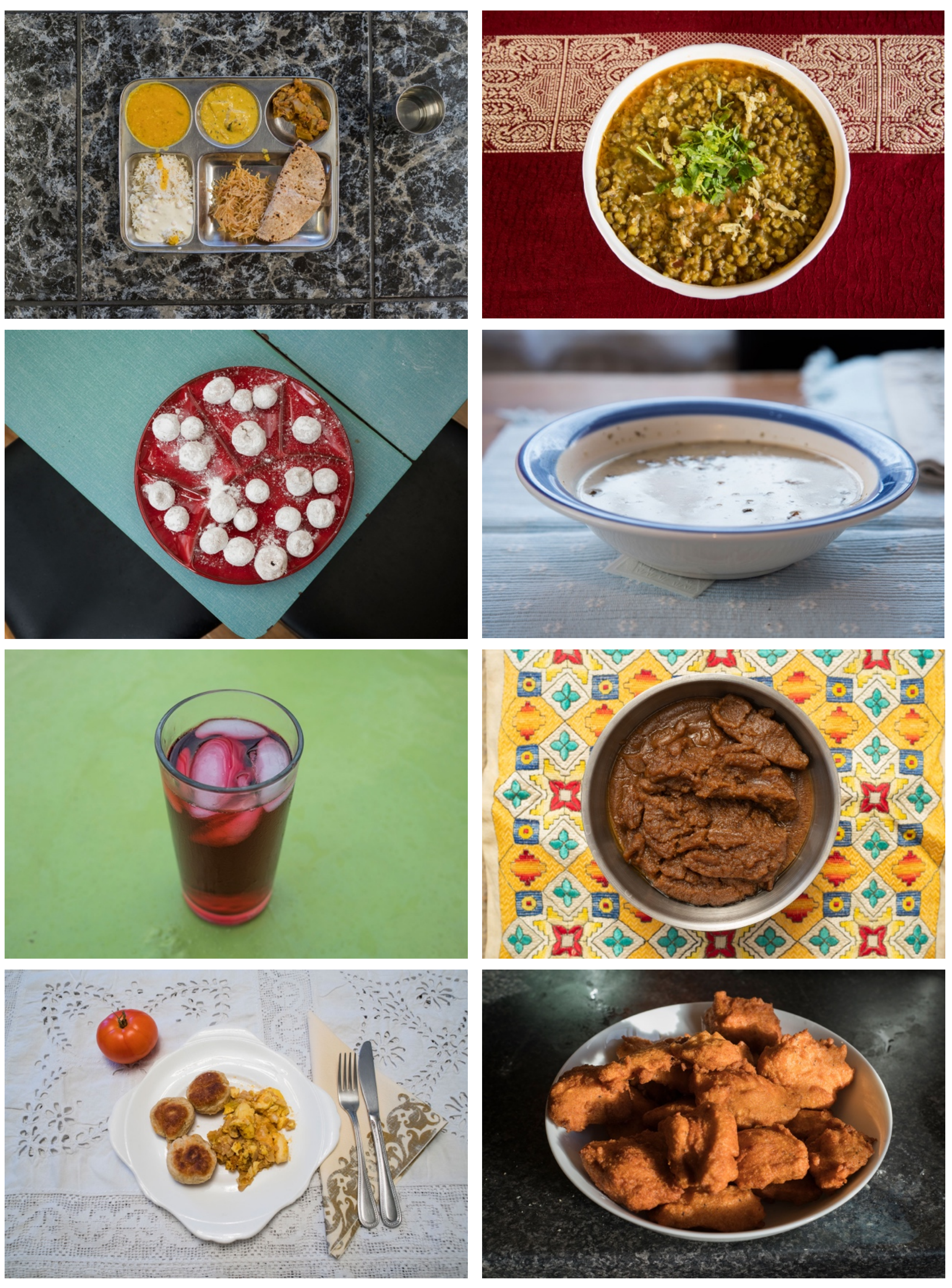

Fig. 169 Examples of images of recipes in the *Spiritual Flavours* cookbook (2019:194, 208, 116, 70, 28, 12, 123)

In my analysis of cookbooks, I have discussed how learning about specific people's recipes (whether they are part of our community, a celebrity, or someone who we simply don't know) as well as cooking and eating them, brings these people closer to the reader and humanises them in different ways. The way the book visualises certain everyday material practices and cultures – for example, the way Sabiha uses a mug to weight a cooking pot lid down (see Fig. 157); or the mugs with family portraits (see Fig. 170) in Mohamed and Ayah's vitrine, which replaces their formal portrait in their section; or learning about Siva's background while seeing him get a blessing on his 50th birthday (see Fig. 171), as well as having the opportunity to cook/taste his sambar recipe (see Fig. 172) – provides an intimate and humane understanding of the book contributors, and an appreciation of their everyday religious lives and difference.

As the book suggest, learning about a recipe and the meaning it has for someone else, who might be from a completely different background, while being able to cook and taste the actual dish (within one's own situated everyday material and personal circumstances), can be a transformative experience. In this respect, the *Spiritual Flavours* book is also a political book, providing a personal, humane and transformative understanding of religious difference and creating a community around the relationship between food and faith. While the book provides a fairly positive and unproblematic view of the conviviality of religious diversity, which could be a source of intellectual criticism, it also actively seeks to promote such conviviality through processes of food sharing.

Fig. 170 Ayah and Mohamed 's vitrine, *Spiritual Flavours* cookbook (2019:37)

Fig. 171 Siva receives Thurkkai Amman's blessing on his 50th birthday, *Spiritual Flavours* cookbook (2019:140–141)

Fig. 172 Siva's sambar and dahl served with rice and poppadoms, *Spiritual Flavours* cookbook (2019:131)

Sharing the *Spiritual Flavours* book

Scholars writing about cookbooks (Clark 2007; Lawless 1997; Notaker 2017a) tend to note the origin of the word recipe from the Latin imperative 'to give' and 'to take', involving an exchange. Bringing people together to share food, recipes and culinary knowledge as a way of understanding everyday religious practices sits at the heart of this project.[101] Here, the sharing of stories and recipes is a unique way of disseminating and experiencing social research and knowledge, making it accountable to the people involved, as it has the capacity to become part of their daily routines and everyday contexts, being shared with their families, sitting on their bookshelves and being used alongside other cookbooks.

To this end, this first edition of the book (132 copies) was produced and distributed to participants and faith communities, libraries and The Photographers' Gallery Bookshop where it sold out. As mentioned earlier, the book was launched at The Photographers Gallery Bookshop on 5th December 2019; an event which many of the participants attended (see Fig. 174). There was a previous private event organised with the generosity of David Gilbert, who offered his house in Ealing, where all the contributors of the book and other people from the faith communities were invited to celebrate its completion and take a copy with them. It was a moving and fun event, as people from most of the faith communities involved came together and shared their food and experiences of taking part in the project (see Fig. 173). Many of them brought homemade dishes, some of which were in the book, and many proposed we should continue meeting, by having a monthly potluck event. Those who could not make it received a copy by post.

Much of the contributors' feedback was that they did not expect such a substantial and beautifully produced book, with exclamations that I had made them look like "heroes". The delicious food people brought, the enthusiasm and celebratory atmosphere of the event confirmed the trust and good relationships that developed through the project, which I reflect in detail in the book's acknowledgements. In this respect, people from various audiences have told me that the book (and the film) communicates a sense of care and love through its treatment and narratives and from the participants' engagement. As such, the empathy and sense of trust that the book (and project) has created and

[101] It was with this spirit of sharing, of giving as well of receiving, that I wanted to include my own recipe in the book. While I don't consider myself religious, this recipe was part of my Catholic upbringing in Spain and it connects me to my family.

communicates is, arguably, one of its key outcomes, in terms of its impact. This is consistent with my methodological approach informed by Barad's (2003, 2007) materialist performativity discussed in chapter two. Here, I have argued that the knowledge produced in this research is inseparable from the material practices involved in the creative visual practice, which, in this case, have produced community, inter-faith dialogue and appreciation, as well as relationships of mutual care and trust, which developed through practices of exchange throughout the creative research process.

Additionally, for many participants, the book has a significant personal value, as it includes loved relatives no longer alive.[102] The cookbook is, after all, dedicated to the memory of my supervisor Claire Dwyer, who died just prior to the production of the final book print run, and with whom many people in the project had a longstanding personal relationship. This connects with scholarship on community cookbooks as platforms for memorialising people in communities (Romines 1997) and as objects with which people develop strong emotional ties (Berzok 2011; Chen 2014; Romines 1997). It also connects with Cotter's argument that members of communities can read their cookbooks as novels, triggering their imagination, because of the 'implicit alliances and knowledge' they share (1997:53). This links with how such cookbooks create communities through the enactment of mutual recognition and the way they affirm people's identity and respectability within these communities (Romines 1997:81). Here, contributing a recipe can be experienced an act of validation of one's identity and work, as well as a 'mark on history' (Bishop 1997:102).[103] Thus, through the *Spiritual Flavours* cookbook, the participants experienced public recognition and validation of their religious (and often migrant) identities as significant for the diverse and multi-faith history of the suburban locality of Ealing.

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[102] By the time of this event, Sabiha had lost her husband and Arda her mother.

[103] Bishop notes that 'for many women, a Relief Society cookbook was the only place they would ever see their names in print' and their work acknowledged (1997:95).

Fig. 173 *Spiritual Flavours* private book launch and potluck meal with participants in Ealing, September 2019

Fig. 174 *Spiritual Flavours* book launch at The Photographers' Gallery, London, December 2019

Conclusion

The *Spiritual Flavours* book demonstrates how food is deeply rooted in both faith communities and community members' spiritual practices, which is central in understanding the intersections of faith, migration, identity, home and community. The creative process of making the book has produced a unique comparative approach of these intersections, exposing the material and practical negotiations of everyday religious culinary practices. Moreover, the decisions around the concept of the book, its material qualities, structure, layout, style and narrative voice – analysed in relation to the history of cookbooks and different cookbook genres – articulates the relationship between food and spirituality in a manner that celebrates suburban religious diversity and privileges the specific perspective of individuals over a more generalised and abstract approach, thus aiming to avoid the stereotyping of gender, religious, national and ethnic identities.

As such, a key strength of the book is the ability to situate spiritual food practices within other complex and interrelated dynamics and processes by accessing concrete personal relationships through the interplay of recipes, biographical texts, images and flavours (if one cooks the recipes). Furthermore, it provides more nuanced understandings of the relationship between food and faith, by making connections across the different book sections focused on people of different age, gender, nationality, profession and religious denomination, which demonstrate, in some cases, closer similarities between people of analogous life circumstances than those of the same faith communities. Here, the use of the third person narrative, the homogenisation of the recipes, as well as a photographic style (generating a tension between the spontaneous and staged), reinforces the experience of the book as a hybrid mediated arts collaboration that narrates religious culinary practices both from an interfaith heteroglossic experience and a unified point of view.

Another key outcome in terms of the kind of knowledge the book produces is how it contributes a rich visual experience and understanding of the significance of the embodied and affective qualities of food practices for how they codify, articulate and punctuate religious practices. The book shows how these qualities intervene in processes of bonding, connecting with people and places across geographies of migration and different temporalities, and contributes to providing children with a religious education. The book also provides a cognitive and visual experience of how public and private religious spheres are connected through food practices, as well as the ways in which people

materially negotiate the boundaries between the religious and the secular. Here, I have reflected on the unique ways in which food practices and cookbooks cross spaces and boundaries (Holtzman 2006), including those between the contributors, the book and its audience through design features, as well as the performative appeal of the recipes, which always involves giving and receiving (Clark 2007; Lawless 1997). Furthermore, I have discussed how the *Spiritual Flavours* cookbook subverts certain exclusionary logics (Bagelman et al. 2017), for example, between different religious communities and publics, including those within arts institutions.

These are key arguments for the ways in which the recipes included in the book produce practical, embodied and visceral research knowledge, including personal, humane and transformative understandings of religious difference. This is also central to the book's ethos of bringing people together and placing them in a position of expertise and mutual recognition, through the common (translating) language of sharing culinary and religious knowledge. In this sense, I have explored the idea that the cookbook creates a community amongst contributors and audiences through its format and narratives (Bailey-Dick 2005; Bishop 1997; Cotter 1997; Eves 2005), but also that the recipes intensify a sense of community, in this case around the notion of 'spiritual flavours', through the somatic and sensorial experience of its dishes (Ferguson 2012).

Finally, the cookbook is a unique way of sharing, disseminating, making accountable and experiencing social science research knowledge, not least to the research participants, who are able to use the cookbook in their daily lives, and, in so doing, develop an ongoing personal relationship with it, beyond that typically associated with research outputs. Finally, I have also reflected on the significant impact of making the book, in terms of enabling relationships of friendship, care and trust, which are palpable through the book narrative and treatment, and support the continuity of the *Spiritual Flavours* 'community' beyond the academic research context and that of public engagement events.

Chapter six: The *Spiritual Flavours* film: A multi-sensorial experience of food and faith

Before reading this chapter, please watch the five-minute introduction and the twenty-eight-minute full version of the film Spiritual Flavours, submitted electronically alongside the thesis (if possible, please use headphones). All time references to specific scenes in the film refer to the full twenty-eight-minute version, rather than the five-minute introduction, unless otherwise stated.

Introduction

In this chapter I discuss the film *Spiritual Flavours* and how the different practice elements involved in the process of making it at different stages (from pre-production to post-production, as well as during its various screenings), have allowed me to creatively produce a multi-faith and multi-sensory experience (and knowledge) of the interplay of food and faith, which enhances understandings of the everyday material, sensorial and emotional geographies of food and religion.

The chapter begins with an analysis of the aims of the film and rationale for the choice of protagonists, narrative structure and style. This is followed by a description of the production context and logistics that enabled the making of the film – first, as a five-minute introduction and, second, as the full twenty-eight-minute final version (both available, as part of this PhD).

In the second section, I draw on film studies, particularly Nichols' (2001) theoretical framework for categorising existing documentary modes, to explore different kinds of knowledge and ethical questions that have emerged through the making of the *Spiritual Flavours* film. Here, I reflect on the film's participatory ethos, which brings the three protagonists together to cook and share a multi-faith dish, as well as the politics of this 'multi-faith' filmic encounter. Furthermore, I introduce the intentions behind adopting three principal features including the use of the split-screen technique, the expressive mixing of 'diegetic' and 'non-diegetic' sounds of cooking and praying, and the (re)enactment of certain actions/scenes by the protagonists.[104] On the one hand, these elicit an evocative, experimental and rhythmic quality, which produces subjective, embodied and affective interpretations of the protagonists' experiences of everyday culinary religious practices. On the other hand, they engender a highly mediated

[104] Diegetic sound is defined as that which belongs to the scene and can be heard by the protagonists. Thus, non-diegetic sound does not emerge from the scene and can only be heard by the audience.

comparative narrative, intended to reveal connections between food and religious practices, between the personal and the social, and across different stories, temporalities and faiths.

This discussion leads to a further examination of the editing process as a creative method for examining the relationship between food and faith. In particular, I analyse how specific editing decisions stimulate an emotional, aesthetic, sensorial and affective experience for the viewer. This, I argue, illuminates and enhances understandings of the embodied qualities of the relationship between food and spirituality. Here, I first reflect on the process and significance of developing the film's narrative through the choice of key themes and their emotional dimension for each character. Second, I explore how the film produces an original and expressive multi-faith and multi-sensory experience of the interplay of food and faith. Third, I discuss the ways in which the film foregrounds religious and culinary practices as rhythmic and kinaesthetic embodied practices. Finally, I provide an overview of the different places where the film has been screened and the responses and discussions that emerged within specific contexts and audiences in various social, community and artistic settings, which contribute to the production of 'multi-faith' knowledge.

Making the *Spiritual Flavours* Film

Although my visual practice prior to this PhD did not involve moving image, from the start of my research I wanted to explore the subject of food and religious practices through film. This connects with the popularity of food programmes exploring culinary cultures (see Ketchum 2005), but mainly follows my interest in bringing together soundscapes of religious and culinary practices (alongside visuals), in order to investigate this relationship from a multi-sensorial and creative approach.

The longstanding relationship between photography, recipe books and cultural understandings of eating and cooking (see chapter five) has also historically developed through other visual media, in films, TV programs, online platforms and social media, producing a cross-pollination of genres and styles (Bright 2017). The success and proliferation of cooking and celebrity chef programmes in the past twenty years (Matwick and Matwick 2014), and the significance of food in films (Bower 2012), as well as the emergence of the 'food film' genre within fiction, but also as a non-fiction counter narrative (Lindenfeld and Parasecoli 2018:29–33), are testimony to the interest in food

and cooking cultures as an evolving subject within forms of popular culture and moving image entertainment. As argued in chapter five, in the UK since WWII there has been a gradual embracing of the association between food and pleasure through the creation of visual imagery that aims to stimulate the senses. This is achieved through the use of close-up shots (both in photography and cinematography) emphasising food colours and textures, which have contributed to the development of the notion of 'food porn' (Lindenfeld and Parasecoli 2018:35). This is manifested in on-demand high production television programmes such as Netflix's series *The Chef's Table*, which uses highly aestheticized cinematography to elevate celebrity chefs' culinary designs to unique sensual eating experiences, which are intimately related to the chefs personal and professional histories and vision. What is interesting about this series' narrative approach in relation to the *Spiritual Flavours* film, is the way it connects the chefs' most emblematic dishes to meaningful events in their lives and their personality (see also Sutton 2008, 2014; Sutton and Hernandez 2007; on cooking and biographies).

The widespread popularity of these programmes made it easy to communicate the aims of the *Spiritual Flavours* film to the potential protagonists. Like the recipe book, the film threads personal narratives, with a focus on food and faith, through the preparation of a chosen dish. Thus, the film aims to develop an evocative association between the sensorial experience of making and tasting such dishes alongside their spiritual significance for the protagonists. These dishes are imbued with religious beliefs, memories of childhood, evolving experiences of family and home, community and social relationships, as well as personal and professional aspirations.

The choice of protagonists

Initially, I envisaged including people from at least five of the faith communities involved in the project to maintain a strong sense of diversity. However, upon meeting Betty, Aziz and Ossie in their respective faith communities – OLSJ, WLIC and ELS – who accepted the invitation to participate, I decided to focus the narrative on them for the following reasons. First, their differences in age, gender and background enabled me to develop personal, complex and nuanced narratives of the interrelationship of culinary religious practices with other dimensions (family, cultural, professional), which are gender and age sensitive. Second, their active involvement in a range of voluntary work in their faith communities connects with my initial interest in gendered 'behind-the-scenes' creative

and caring material practices in worship spaces, often involving food.[105] Thus, like the cookbook, by visualising such involvement, the film explores the connections between the protagonists' domestic religious practices and those in their communities, which are threaded through biographical accounts. Third, I decided to explore the split-screen technique to emphasise a comparative approach by juxtaposing three screens with the different protagonists' settings, thus creating visual and sonic synchronies and asynchronies between the parallel stories (discussed later in the chapter). While this is possible with more protagonists (for example, with a full four-way split-screen, as in Mike Figgis' *Timecode* (2000)), I preferred to have each 'split' at the same level, as it produces a stark visual contrast with the single full-screen scenes. Finally, having fewer protagonists allowed for deeper individual narratives and I felt having three stories provided a good balance between variety and depth. My only concern for my selection of protagonists was the focus on Abrahamic faiths. Including other religious denominations in the project, such as Sikhism and Hinduism, would have created a wider contrast in some respects. However, I prioritised the good fit of the protagonists' personal stories, rather than wider diversity, which is already present in the cookbook.[106] This is also consistent with scholarship on material, lived and everyday religion literature (Ammerman 2007; Engelke 2011; McGuire 2008c), which argues that the way people engage in religious material practices (including those involving food), is as related to their personal circumstances, preferences and background, as to the prescriptions of their religious denomination.

Length, scope and narrative structure

The production of the film was possible through additional funding granted to the MSF project by the AHRC Connected Communities programme, which involved the participation and premiere of the film at a three-day cultural event, the Utopia Fair.[107] The event, which was organised by the AHRC at Somerset House, in London, pre-determined the maximum length of the film to five minutes. The funding enabled the

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[105] Some of the footage included in the film was originally shot as part of the development of one of my initial bodies of visual work 'Looking After Faith', which I discuss in chapter two.

[106] During the editing of the film, I received training within the MA Ethnographic and Documentary Film (Anthropology, UCL), where it was suggested that the title should be 'Abrahamic Flavours'. However, I kept the existing title in accordance with the wider *Spiritual Flavours* project, which includes many people of non-Abrahamic religious denominations.

[107] https://www.somersethouse.org.uk/whats-on/utopia-2016

hiring of a filmmaker and editor to support the filming of certain scenes (mainly the cooking sessions, which required at least two people to operate the camera and record sound), as well as to edit the initial five-minute version. Laura Belinky took the editing role and shared the filming with Theo Ribeiro.[108] The funding also allowed for the commission of an original soundtrack by Joseph Rowe, composed with cooking sounds that I extracted from the cooking sessions' footage. He also introduced sounds from Tibetan singing bowls, which add a spiritual connotation to the mix. This is a central feature of the sensorial experience of the film, which I analyse later in the chapter.

After reviewing the footage, I realised I had enough material to make a longer film. As such, I decided to treat the initial five-minute cut as an introduction, to establish the narrative plot and style of the full version. Additionally, working with Laura Belinky on the short version, I developed the skills to edit the final twenty-eight-minute version myself. In order to communicate my vision for the short version to Laura, I developed a document with editing guidelines. These included key conceptual underpinnings for certain editing approaches, as well as suggestions for the narrative order, structure, and how/when to utilise the split-screen technique, in relation to thematic crossings between characters. Some of the discussions that emerged in the initial editing process were important for reflecting on the kinds of knowledge that could emerge with making this film. For instance, we discussed how the method for making a wider research-led film was different from Laura's experience of commercial documentaries that had well defined pre-written plots. Instead, I planned the filming sessions, structure, narrative threads across characters, and their additional scenes, in response to the filmed interviews and initial research. Thus, beyond the idea of exploring people's relationship with food and spirituality through the choice and cooking of a significant dish, the film did not have a pre-defined narrative arc. Consequently, the scope and narrative structure developed and evolved in the making of the film, during the production and post-production stages.

From the start, I was interested in the possibility of bringing participants together and engaging in a multi-faith conversation through a joint endeavour. I aimed to create a socio-material context that performatively produced multi-faith relationships and

[108] Theo operated the camera in Ossie's and Betty's cooking sessions, as well as Ossie's outdoor shopping scenes, while I directed and recorded the sound; and Laura recorded the sound in Aziz's cooking session, while I directed and operated the camera. I filmed the rest of the scenes by myself, including all the footage at the worship spaces, all the interviews, and the event in which the three protagonists meet.

knowledge, thus echoing the MSF project aims of exploring the challenges and opportunities for multi-faith spaces and collaborations within this highly diverse suburban context. Thus, I became interested in bringing the protagonists together to create, cook and share a multi-faith dish; one which, in their views, would be appropriate for most religious denominations. While the logistics for this were uncertain, I was also interested in how this event might provide a narrative arc for the film plot. Like in the cookbook, I would use the cooking of a dish as a strategy to visualise its spiritual connection to their contributors' personal histories – threading past, present and future temporalities. This would then come to a close by bringing the protagonists to cook and eat together, which would also foreground the participatory ethos of the project. While I envisaged using a community centre kitchen for filming, I was thrilled that Betty offered her own kitchen. This both solved multiple logistics and allowed for specific narrative connections in the film, which I discuss later.

Cooking and filmmaking as a bonding process

The making of the film required a substantial effort and commitment from the participants. Their familiarity with different food programmes and their own experience with TV and filmmaking production informed their expectations of what being involved would entail.[109] We agreed to do the interviews first and, on a different day, to film the preparation of their chosen dish in their homes. Partly because of my lack of experience with moving image, and partly as a result of my collaboration with Laura and Theo, the filming of the food preparation took much longer than expected, with each session lasting a whole day, rather than the estimated half. My plan was to take different angles/frames of the cooking actions as they took place in real time. However, Laura and Theo recommended asking participants to repeat certain actions for the camera, often multiple times, to obtain a range of editing material, which lengthened the process. The participants did not expect these sessions would be so long, but generously accommodated to support the project and, by the end of each filming day, they appeared as exhausted and invested as the film crew.

Ossie's was the first cooking session, and we also filmed him shopping in Ealing. As he

[109] Ossie was the most 'media-savvy', as he had contributed to an online food program and had been present in the film shoots. As such, he was conscious of how to speak and perform cooking actions/skills for the camera. Betty was also aware of filming processes and techniques as her partner Tony works as an extra in films; thus, she accommodated to the filming tempo and demands.

was eighteen, taking over the kitchen space of his obliging father's apartment for the entire day involved some negotiations. Aziz's session came next, and he was also extremely generous with his time and dedication. After many hours of recording him cooking, he was still willing to be filmed praying and reciting the Quran, which we repeated a few times. Without glasses, his eyes in this scene look watery, probably from tiredness. This can be read in the film as being emotional while praying, which I felt is consistent with his sensitive personality and thus contributes to the construction of his character in the film (discussed in the next section). Because Aziz was moving home soon, he gave us lots of gifts and food to take home. This felt like a real experience of his own cultural and personal sense of hospitality. Laura highlighted Aziz's clear empathy towards the project and myself, which is something I generally experienced from all participants. Furthermore, during the Q&A of the film screenings, people noted a positive and caring rapport between participants and myself as the filmmaker, though I am never in shot.

The third cooking session with Betty, was equally long and intense. I had reviewed her interview footage and realised I needed to expand on her description about her church involvement. As the Christmas pudding needed six hours to cook, we planned to film the additional interview material during that time. On the day, while we were preparing for this, I noticed a burning smell. The pressure cooker had exhausted the water inside, and smoke started coming out – Betty was cooking the pudding with calico cloth, as her mother did, for the first time in her life – and the entire bottom of the pot was completely black. It was already mid-afternoon, and Betty panicked that we might need to redo the pudding from scratch. Fortunately, it was only the sugar in the water that had burnt, and not the pudding itself, which sits higher in the pot. I asked Theo to film some shots with Betty while I scrubbed the pot. Once clean, we continued with the cooking process, but we realised we could not record the interview, as the microphones were picking up the sound of the pressure cooker spinning valve. So, we asked Betty's neighbour if she could continue cooking the pudding for half an hour. By the end of the day, it felt that together we had accomplished a great achievement, just like Betty's account of helping her mother make the pudding as a child.

To some degree, the sharing of both the filming and cooking experiences, as well as the challenges that we faced, and resolved, produced encounters and a level of bonding between researchers, filmmakers and protagonists which were enabled through the

material, embodied and affective practices involved in the cooking/filming process.

Working across different non-fiction film modes

The performativity of the material practices of cooking and filmmaking involved in the creative process of making the *Spiritual Flavours* film for producing different kinds of experience and knowledge about the relationship between food and faith is a central framework of this chapter and thesis. This approach speaks to scholarship on ethnographic and documentary filmmaking in different ways, which I explore in this section as a lens for analysing and situating the *Spiritual Flavours* film within wider debates specific to this media.

As with the recipe book, the *Spiritual Flavours* film resists categorisation and draws on various models, modes and styles. Since the film features the lives and views of actual people, it may be considered a documentary or non-fiction film. In this section I discuss the different features of the *Spiritual Flavours* film in regard to Nichols (2001) theoretical categorisation of non-fiction films. Bruzzi (2006:3) is critical of Nichols' genealogical or evolutionary approach to documentary models and his understanding of the 'performative mode', which draws on dramaturgical models of sociality (e.g. Goffman [1956] 1959; Carlson 1996). Instead, Bruzzi (2006:11,186) calls for incorporating Austin and Butler's notions of performativity within documentary film studies, and argues that documentary films are performative acts 'whose truth comes into being only at the moment of filming' and that documentaries are a result of the collision between the filming apparatus and the documentary subject (2006:10). According to Bruzzi, the increasing acceptance of this understanding of documentary finds its clearest expression in recent 'performative documentaries' that use overt performative techniques that acknowledge 'the enactment of the documentary specifically for the cameras' (2006:187), such as in the films of Nick Broomfield, Molly Dineen, Errol Morris or Nicholas Barker, for example (2006:186). Bruzzi's understanding of documentary films as performative resonates with the notion of performativity that I have outlined so far in this thesis in relation to my own practice: as creative processes through which new bodies, subjectivities and phenomena arise (see chapter two). Nonetheless, Nichols' categorisation, which is widely accepted within non-fiction film studies and higher education programmes (Bruzzi 2006:3), offers a productive framework for analysing the *Spiritual Flavours* film and engages with the specific debates and terminology within documentary filmmaking.

The *Spiritual Flavours* film shares elements with various models (which pre-exist film) and modes (specific to film) of non-fiction. For example, the way it is centred around the oral histories, personal experiences and biographical narratives of the protagonists, is commensurate with the 'Testimonial' and 'Individual or group profile/biography' models (2017:106–7). As it is also concerned with other cultures and has involved 'participant observation with subjects', as well as 'description and interpretation', some aspects of the film also resonate with the 'Sociology' and 'Visual ethnography' models (2017:106). In terms of specific cinematic modes of documentary, Nichols defines six categories: expository, poetic, observational, participatory, reflexive and performative (2017:108–9). These historically emerge within new ideological and social contexts and have epistemological implications for the cinematographers' understanding of how non-fiction films produce knowledge and their relationship to claims of truth. Despite his genealogic approach, Nichols (2010:110) stresses that none of these modes are superior to others and that new modes (or aspects of) are used alongside pre-existing ones. While films can draw from different modes, he argues that what defines the categorisation of a film within a specific mode is its dominance in the narrative structure of the film. In this sense, the film *Spiritual Flavours* shares some formal aspects with the observational and poetic modes, but its structure and concept are much more aligned to participatory and performative documentary film modes.

The observational mode

Some scenes in the film resonate with the observational mode. This is the case with the Tisch at the Synagogue or the Deanery dinner at OLSJ. These are presented as events that would have happened, seemingly, in the same way, regardless of whether the filming was taking place. The camera captures what unfolds in front of it 'without overt intervention' (Nichols 2001:109). We learn things about the relationship between food and faith just from observing these scenes. For example, we appreciate the kitchen design and technology in these two worship spaces, the size and shape of the dining table, how people sit around it and how food is served. We also get a feel of the atmosphere of these events through visuals of people eating and chatting, but also through the soundscapes of commensality. We learn about religious practices in these meals (the prayers during the Tisch or Rabbi Janet showing the Torah scrolls to her Muslim guests, for example). We also grasp the protagonists' role in these contexts, and their interpersonal relationships with other community members. This also applies to the scene of the cleaners and that

outside the mosque, where we can appreciate the rhythm and pace of these places through their soundscapes and the small but significant actions that unfold in front of the camera. For instance, when Betty walks across the altar to mop the floor, she pauses for a second in the middle and subtly bows her head towards the tabernacle (18:40, see Fig. 175) – a demonstration of the inseparability of the secular and sacred dimensions of cleaning the church in Betty's experience; and a detail that might have never come up in the context of the interview.

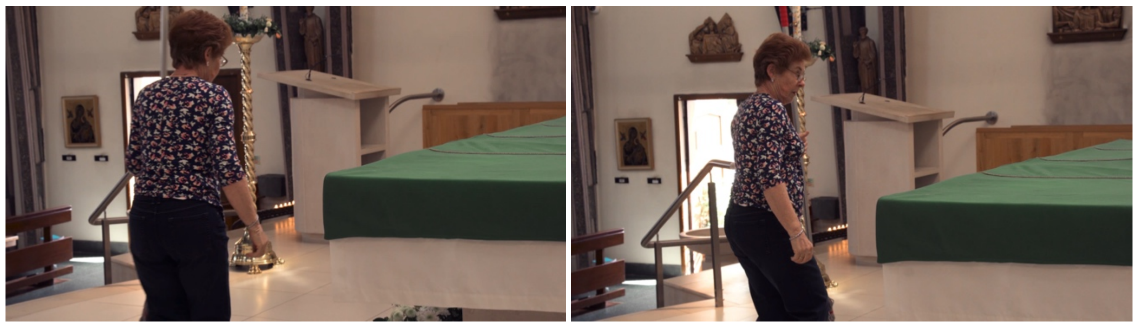

Fig. 175 Betty walking across the altar to mop the floor. *Spiritual Flavours* film, 2017 (18:44 and 18:45)

The observational mode has raised certain ethical issues regarding its voyeuristic nature, the veracity of its apparent neutrality and the question of 'unacknowledged or indirect intrusion' (2001:111), notably that people might behave differently according to their own imagination of what the filmmaker expects from them, which influences the way they are perceived positively or negatively by the audience. Further, Nichols (2001:111) argues that ethnographic and documentary films involve ethical obligations regarding the representation of the exoticized other, the efficacy of informed consent and the possible upshots of being filmed. The *Spiritual Flavours* film is sensitive to these issues, particularly in relation to avoiding the (often negative) stereotyping of religious identities and difference, as well as around issues of consent. The characteristics of how each of the different faith communities operate often make it impossible to know in advance (or communicate with) the people that are going to be present at certain events. As such, I often channelled the processes of informing and obtaining consent through the religious leaders and organisational gatekeepers in these communities. In some instances, people were informed and asked to provide consent on the same day, just before the filming started. Many people involved in these scenes were familiar with me and my research project, but there were also people I had not met who were expected to trust the community leaders and worshippers who had enabled the filming process. In this respect, I can imagine the difficulty for individuals to express any reluctance to being filmed, even

when they might have felt slightly conscious, unsure or uncomfortable about it. While these scenes mainly function to provide a flavour of the life in these communities and do not feature any sensitive activities, I recall overhearing the women cooking for the Deanery dinner telling each other to be mindful about what they said as Betty wore a radio microphone. This increased my self-awareness of the impact of my filming on this event (potentially adding stress to a situation where people were already dealing with some time and performance pressure).

The participatory mode

Recognising and embracing the influence of the presence of the camera within non-fiction film is, according to Nichols (2001), a key characteristic that emerged with what he terms the participatory mode (initially termed interactive mode). Out of his six non-fiction film modes, this is, arguably, the closest to the notion of performativity developed in this thesis – though he uses the term 'performative' for a different mode centred around dramaturgical processes. This mode's approach most closely connects with the idea that documentary films and the knowledge they produce (rather than re-present) result from the continuous intra-actions, to use Barad's (2003) terms, of human and non-human discursive-material practices within the filmmaking process (see chapter two). It also echoes Bruzzi's argument that documentaries are performative acts, since 'the camera can never capture life as it would have unravelled had it not interfered' (2006:10).

According to Nichols, this approach was developed by the pioneering figures in ethnographic cinema Jean Rouch and Edgar Morin in France in the 1960s, who used the term 'cinéma verité' (film truth).[110] Some scholars discuss cinéma verité as the continental European equivalent of observational filmmaking or direct cinema in the US, as these emerged thanks to technological developments that made possible lightweight and synchronous sound recording (e.g. Aufderheide 2007:44; Basu 2008:95–96). However, Nichols places cinéma verité separate from the observational mode, because of the participation of the filmmaker as a distinct protagonist in the film. In this mode, filmmakers treat knowledge as a result of the interaction and encounter between them and the participants in the film. Arguably, film truth emphasizes the performative encounter through film, rather than 'neutral' or 'detached' truth (2001:118). One of Rouch and

[110] Rouch and Morin borrowed this term from Dziga Vertov's title for his newsreels of Soviet society, kinopravda ("film truth") (Nichols 2001:118).

Morin's seminal films, *Chronicle of a Summer* (1961), was ground-breaking in the way it explored collaboration by including scenes where protagonists (people living in Paris during the summer of 1960) reflect on the film itself after viewing cuts. Rouch and Morin also appear on camera at the end of the film, deliberating on what they had aimed and learned (Heider 2006; Nichols 2001). In this sense, Rouch conceived film as a means of sharing, where he developed relationships with his research subjects that were built on processes of exchange (Colleyn 2005; Henley 2010). He always showed his films to the people who featured in them and regarded their feedback as fundamental to their exchange (Colleyn 2005:114). He also considered these feedback screenings as gift to them in return for their trust (Henley 2010:316).

The *Spiritual Flavours* film most explicitly shows its 'participatory' and collaborative aspects when the protagonists meet at Betty's place, view their cooking footage and talk about each other's recipes and stories (22:33, see Fig. 176). For me, it was very important to ensure that they were happy with all of the scenes I was considering including. As such, filming them watch their footage became an opportunity to include in the narrative this process of seeking their opinion and approval. Thus, without explicitly showcasing their relationship with me as the filmmaker, this scene best recognises this necessary relationship. Additionally, I organised various local screenings of the film (of both the five-minute and the full-length versions), often within events at the worship places, as a way of corresponding to these communities' trust and involving them in a conversation about the research. I considered their feedback for the final edit and as part of the knowledge that has emerged from the project.

Fig. 176 The three protagonists of the *Spiritual Flavours* film watching selected film rushes at Betty's place (22:33)

The use of formal interviews is also a common feature within participatory films. Interviews imply the encounter between filmmakers and subjects, which may or may not involve the filmmaker's embodied and/or vocal presence. Contrary to the cookbook, where I contributed a recipe and made my voice and presence visible, I was satisfied with this being implied in the film as the interviewer-filmmaker. Moreover, due to my lack of experience, it would have been difficult to put myself in the picture (Spence 1986), both in terms of capturing footage and achieving editing coherence. Nonetheless, I contextualise the film as part of the wider participatory project in the film credits, with references to the cookbook and the project's website, both featuring the recipes in the film.

According to Nichols, interviews, like oral histories, are treated as primary source materials (albeit carefully edited), which provide both emotionally direct compelling accounts and a wider perspective, without the use of 'voice-over exposition', characteristic of the expository mode (2001:123). In *Spiritual Flavours*, through the participants own voices we learn about the religious, cultural and personal value of their chosen dishes. We also learn about who they are and where they come from, their childhood memories of food, the ways their chosen dishes connect to other life events, how these intervene in their everyday family lives, social relations and religious practices, as well as certain hopes for the future. Notably, however, we also learn about the emotional significance of the different aspects of their stories through the tone and

emphasis of their voices and the pauses they make when they speak.

Another key collaborative event in the film was the challenge of getting the protagonists to cook together. While this setting is explicitly constructed, especially as it follows the screening scene, there is an expectation that some 'film truth', in Rouch and Morin's sense, emerges from the unfolding of this event for the camera. Here, the association with the genre of television food programmes also has an implied participatory dimension as it uses the recognisable canon of celebrity chefs (or ordinary people) cooking dishes for entertainment and educational purposes. The film links cooking with everyday religious practices and articulates food as a measure of day-to-day time. However, while we can imagine the protagonists cooking these dishes in everyday contexts, the visual style of the cooking footage, alongside the interviews, reveals that the protagonists are cooking these dishes for the camera, to tell us a story behind them. For example, Betty explains that she has not cooked the pudding for twenty-two years, since her husband died. However, we see her making the pudding as part of her involvement in the film. This activates new personal associations of cooking it again with her renewed sense of family, as she is now in a relationship with Tony. Similarly, Ossie's cultured reinvention of the traditional Jewish chicken soup emerges in response to participating in the project. The film features his enthusiasm for creating new recipes and how his involvement in the synagogue (like his involvement in the film) allows him to enact and develop his persona as a chef. This is consistent with the notion of performativity that runs through the thesis, as the film and the knowledge it produces are understood as the result of collaborative and performative processes that bring new sets of realities, relationships and memories into being, which shape our understanding of the relationship between food and spirituality.

The 'discursive-material' practices (Barad 2007) involved in making the dishes and the film perform a doubling existence. On the one hand, they achieve both the cooked (spiritual) dishes and the film itself. On the other hand, they foreground the mnemonic quality of the relationship between food and religious practices, as these spiritual dishes imbue the protagonists' present with different temporalities, through the material and affective experiences of cooking and making the film.[111] These creative material practices enact new relations, memories and future expectations. In Betty's case, for instance, the

[111] See the discussion on food, memory and the senses in chapter three.

processes of cooking and filming bring into being new skilled relationships with the Christmas pudding, as she cooks it for the first time using the calico cloth, like her mother, thus connecting her with embodied memories from childhood. They also produce new narratives and reshape the memories of overcoming her husband's loss by cooking the pudding again, which are equally linked to prior embodied memories and experiences of grief enacted through her ceasing to cook the pudding. Furthermore, cooking the pudding activates new experiences and memories of, for example, rescuing the pudding from getting burnt and asking a neighbour to help with the cooking; as well as the emotive prospect and imagination of savouring the pudding with her family in the coming Christmas celebrations.

In sum, the interplay of cooking and filming practices brings into being experiences of the relationship of food and faith, where food practices (the provision of ingredients, cooking and sharing food, for example) connect religious and personal experiences from the past with those in the present, and those imagined for the future. Indeed, Betty stored the pudding until the following Christmas and told me with great satisfaction and pride that she had shared it with many different family members. The pudding outlived the filmmaking process and further occasioned new experiences, relations and memories. I have often imagined Betty eating the pudding with her relatives and wondered about the stories she might have told about how it came into being, while savouring the seven-month aged dessert.

The politics of the filmic encounter

The scenes where Betty, Aziz and Ossie are together reveal 'the ethics and politics of encounter' of the participatory mode (Nichols 2001:118). Filmmakers typically develop strategies to create spontaneous moments and processes of exchange between people in front of, and behind, the camera.[112] My initial plan was to film the protagonists' discussion about a possible 'multi-faith' dish and how they might create an entire new recipe. However, in practice, they engaged more in conversation during the footage screening than when asked to collectively decide on what to cook. Aziz had come with an idea of a dish and Ossie and Betty were happy to go along with it. The making of the

[112] Henley argues that Rouch 'conceived of the camera as a catalytic instrument, one whose mere presence could provoke the subjects into producing a performance that revealed the beliefs, sentiments, attitudes and dreams that lay beneath the everyday surface of things and that, in the last analysis, were of primary importance in explaining the more visible forms of social behavior' (2010:340).

cous-cous dish engendered a new set of relationships: Aziz took the leading role in the cooking process; Betty, as the host, was busy providing anything that was needed; and Ossie negotiated his position between trying to make his own contribution to the recipe and following Aziz's instructions.

While everyone was extremely cooperative, this process was not free from tension, miscommunication and awkward moments. For instance, before the cooking began, Aziz and Ossie were talking about the recipe in front of the camera and Ossie proposed to use pine nuts (23:02, see Fig. 177). After a moment of uncomfortable silence, Aziz commanded that they were going to use almonds (rather than pine nuts), which Ossie reluctantly accepted. The tension was very palpable and led to Ossie proposing they could cook different versions of the dish (like in cooking TV programmes, such as *MasterChef* or *The Great British Bake Off*), but Aziz emphasised that the purpose of the event was to cook together. Once the cooking started, as Ossie humbly followed Aziz's instructions, this initial tension gradually dissipated. When editing the film, I decided to include the beginning of the conversation between Ossie and Aziz negotiating whether to use pine nuts or almonds. Some people who watched the first edits commented that they perceived awkwardness in this shot but associated it with Ossie and Aziz being uncomfortable in front of the camera. Following such feedback, I attempted removing it in later versions, but ended up reinstating it. I felt it was important that the audience experienced a certain level of discomfort during the viewing of this scene as, in my view, it provided a more honest experience of this 'multi-faith' cooking/filming encounter. I wanted to avoid creating a narrative that simply celebrated or aestheticized the collaboration between people from different faith communities, without hinting at any of the challenges involved. This shot is indicative of, and serves to highlight, the ongoing micro-power dynamics and negotiations that took place during the filming of this event.

Fig. 177 Aziz and Ossie negotiating ingredients for the recipe. *Spiritual Flavours* film, 2017 (23:15 and 23:19)

The adoption of the different roles in the cooking process also inevitably suggests

gendered and generational power relations. As suggested, there is a clear age-related hierarchy between Aziz and Ossie. Additionally, the two men take on the leading 'chef' roles, while Betty seemingly undertakes 'house-keeping' tasks, historically considered as 'inferior'(Notaker 2017a), such as providing the tools for the cooking or setting the table (see Fig. 178 to Fig. 181). A female colleague, who offered early feedback, told me she wished Betty was more involved in the cooking. While I understood this came from her desire to see a representation of gender equality, I felt the portrayal of gender roles in the film was commensurate with common power relations at play. As the host, Betty assumed an enabling and supportive role, which is coherent with her personality, always wanting to help others. She was happy to step back from the stove and look after everything else. After all, she was mindful of the popular saying that 'too many cooks spoil the broth'.

Fig. 178 The three protagonists of the *Spiritual Flavours* film cook together at Betty's place (25:11)

Behind the scenes, the filming of this cooking event was extremely challenging. The politics of the encounter involved other people and resources beyond the relationship with and between the protagonists. I had ring-fenced the small remaining budget for the editing of the five-minute film, so I had to film and record the audio by myself. On this occasion, I planned to record from three different radio microphones and a shotgun microphone. This required a different sound recorder with four microphone XLR inputs, which I was not familiar with (the recorder I had been using only had two). During the session, the microphones and the recorder kept presenting technical issues, which became a bit of a struggle. In addition, I was in charge of introducing everyone and managing the event.

Fig. 179 The three protagonists of the *Spiritual Flavours* film cook together at Betty's place (24:40)

Fig. 180 The three protagonists of the *Spiritual Flavours* film cook together at Betty's place (24:06)

Fig. 181 The three protagonists of the *Spiritual Flavours* film cook together at Betty's place (25:09)

Fortunately, Claire Dwyer, had offered to be there and get the necessary ingredients for the 'multi-faith' dish during a break and to support with any logistics needed. Her presence felt incredibly reassuring and, at the same time, because she was my supervisor, I felt slightly nervous about her observing me work and handle the event. We had bought plenty of snacks to start the day by sharing food together before the filming began. Aziz also brought home-made Moroccan makrot (semolina pastries stuffed with date paste) and meloui (rolled pancakes), both showcased in the film (22:02, see Fig. 182), which conveyed a sense of celebration, akin to the way foods serve to mark religious festivals.

Since this event involved so many people and activities, on this occasion I did not want to interrupt the flow by asking people to repeat any of the cooking actions. As such, beyond the staging of Ossie arriving at Betty's place, I filmed everything else as best I could in a fairly observational mode.

Fig. 182 Aziz's home-made Moroccan makrot and meloui. *Spiritual Flavours* film, 2017 (22:02)

The poetic mode and the split-screen technique

The filming of the cooking process in the protagonists' homes formally aligns with the observational and poetic modes of non-fiction film. In terms of cooking techniques and preparation, there is a tacit learning process by observing the protagonists make their dishes. However, the use of close-up shots, abstract compositions and visually attractive perspectives as well as the expressive use of the split-screen technique, also draw from the poetic mode. This mode attempts to elicit affective knowledge in order to understand

and see the world in new ways, by formally experimenting with the editing of images and using sounds in expressive ways, to 'explore associations and patterns that involve temporal rhythms and spatial juxtapositions' (2001:102). This 'stresses mood, tone, and affect much more than displays of knowledge or acts of persuasion' (2001:103). Here, filmmakers use their full creative control to generate new perspectives of their film subject (2017:108), which often lends to a discontinuous articulation of time and space.

In this sense, the split-screen scenes of cooking actions in the film might be thought of as characteristic of the poetic mode – these highlight similarities (for example, all peeling vegetables, 6:24, see Fig. 183), differences (different cooking actions, 3:11 and 11:57, see Fig. 184), or both (9:48, 11:50 and 12:00, see Fig. 185) between the protagonists. The split-screen technique is often used to provide different perspectives or show things happening simultaneously in different locations, which produces a tension between distance and proximity (Hagener 2008). Typically, split-screen scenes have shown two sides of a telephone call – a tradition that goes back to the 1913 silent film *Suspense* by Lois Weber (Hagener 2020:35; Talen 2002), and continues through films in the 50s and 60s such as in *Pillow Talk* (1959) by Michael Gordon, or more recently in the television series *24* (2001) by Cochran and Surnow (Hagener 2008; O'Connor and Talen 2004).[113] In Bizzocchi's (2009) analysis of the film *The Thomas Crown Affair* (1968) by Norman Jewison, he notes how some split-screen scenes showcase parallel actions by different characters, which share the same timeline and suggest a convergent space.[114]

[113] One of the most well-known early examples of the use of the split-screen technique is Abel Gance's Napoleon (1927), using his 'Polyvision' process (O'Connor and Talen 2004). Its various resurgence waves in the 50s and 60s and since the 90s in mainstream cinema have been associated to the development of various media technologies, such as the telephone, the television and digital media/internet (Hagener 2008), as well as social, cultural and artistic movements looking to break with conventional narrative forms and singular points of view (see Bizzocchi 2009; Rush 2007; Weibel 2003).

[114] Bizzocchi (2009), who argues that the split-screen technique has not received much theoretical attention despite its long history, investigates the poetics of the split-screen at three different levels: narrative, structural and graphic.

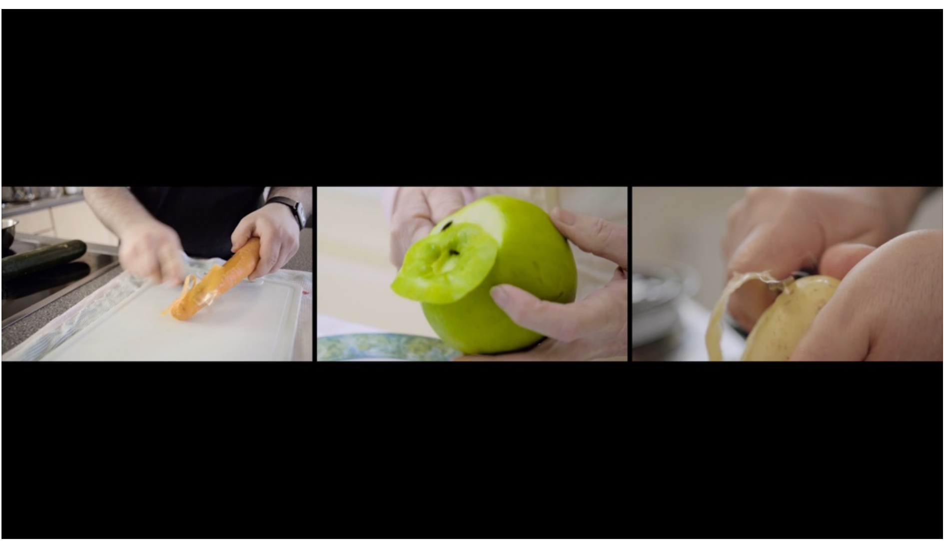

Fig. 183 Split-screen with similar cooking actions. *Spiritual Flavours* film, 2017 (6:24)

Fig. 184 Split-screen with different cooking actions. *Spiritual Flavours* film, 2017 (11:57)

Fig. 185 Split-screen with similar and different cooking actions. *Spiritual Flavours* film, 2017 (9:48)

However, in the *Spiritual Flavours* film, despite it visually converges into a shared final event, the use of split-screen suggests a simultaneity of parallel actions and locations that is poetic and metaphoric. For example, the very first scene of the three protagonists turning on their cooker implies that they are starting to cook and situates the viewer in their respective homes (0:04, see Fig. 186). Later, there is another scene where the protagonists simultaneously go about in their own kitchens (4:20), another juxtaposing close-up clips of their faces while cooking (00:23 and 3:27, see Fig. 187), and one in which each of the protagonists is praying (16:08, see Fig. 188). While these actions are synchronised across the three screens, it is obvious that this is constructed through the use of this technique, rather than actual simultaneous events. On a narrative level, this is clearly aimed at facilitating comparison and creating a double metaphorical space: that of the shared urban locality and that of a common religious experience through food.

In an embodied sense, the split-screen technique also aims to produce ‘visceral pleasures of the sensorium’ (Bizzocchi 2009:7), by experiencing the various cooking and praying visuals (and sounds) at the same time; as well as the satisfaction from the ability to navigate through the various screens – or what Talen refers to as ‘the art form of the glimpse’ (2002). This demands a higher level of interactivity and spatial awareness from the viewer (Bizzocchi 2009:16). Furthermore, like in the poetic mode, these scenes do not follow time continuity and correct cooking order, but have been edited to create an original aesthetic, affective and rhythmic visual and sonic ‘expanded’ experience of the protagonists’ cooking combined (see the discussion on the poetic editing of sound later in the chapter). Thus, on a structural level, these scenes affectively and rhythmically punctuate the single full-screen sequential narrative (organised around the spoken narratives). This aims to experientially convey an understanding of food practices as temporal, rhythmic and affective markers that punctuate religious celebrations and everyday practices.

Fig. 186 Split-screen with similar simultaneous actions. *Spiritual Flavours* film, 2017 (0:04)

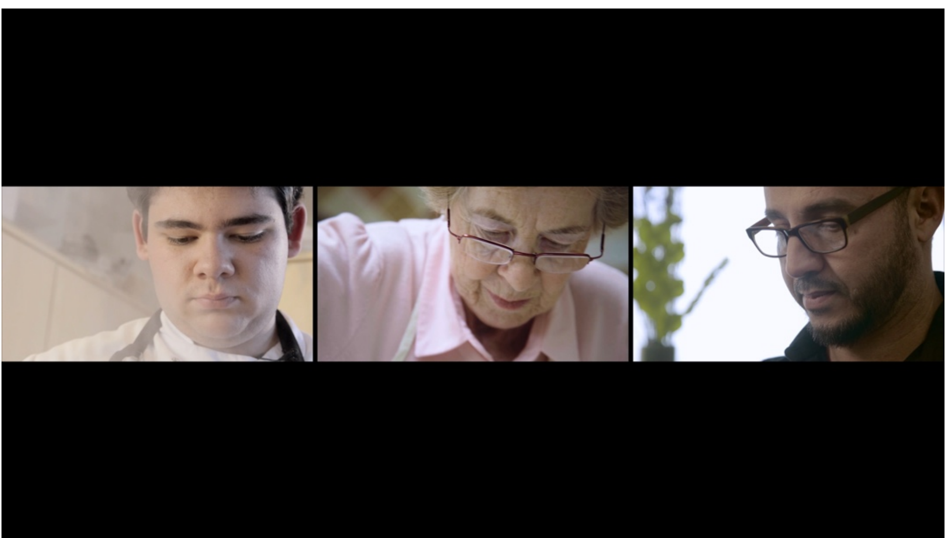

Fig. 187 Split-screen with similar simultaneous actions. *Spiritual Flavours* film, 2017 (0:23)

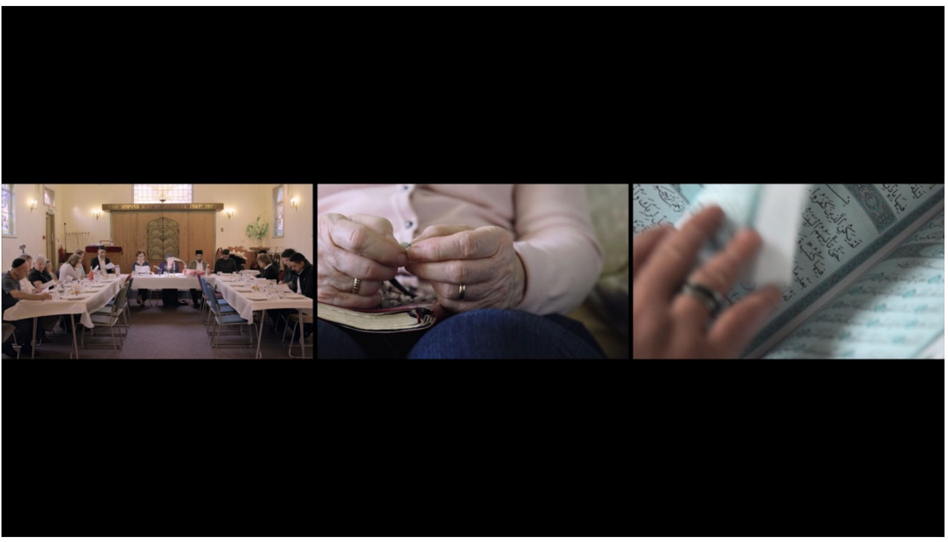

Fig. 188 Split-screen with similar simultaneous actions. *Spiritual Flavours* film, 2017 (16:08)

An important visual aspect of the use of the split-screen in *Spiritual Flavours*, is the fixed position and arrangement of the three screens as a triptych in the middle of the frame, with each character always occupying the same screen. Here, Betty is placed at the centre as the only woman, the eldest character and a pillar in the narrative, as she hosts the final gathering. The triptych arrangement evokes the tradition of three-panel paintings from early Christian art, Medieval and Baroque paintings, as well as this format's use in Christian altar pieces (see de la Rosa n.d.). This, according to Manovich (2002:322), constitutes 'spatial montage' in film, which contrasts with the sequential narrative developed with singular frame cinema and connects with the spatial narrative predominant for centuries in European visual culture. Through the juxtaposition of screens, spatial montage offers alternative narrative possibilities where 'time becomes spatialized, distributed over the surface of the screen' (2002:325).

In this sense, the split-screen technique performs a transformation of the off-screen cinematic space and the dissolution of a fixed point of view (Hagener 2008). According to Bizzocchi (2009:6), visualising frames within frames calls attention the technique and breaks with the key illusion of transparency or the 'suspension of disbelief' in cinema. Thus, it produces a 'hypermediated attraction' that is linked with the origins of film as 'cinema of attractions', where, for instance, early exhibition of commercial film included shorts that were spectacles to people unfamiliar with cinema, despite featuring mundane events. Further, the split-screen technique is also associated to the historical presentation of multi-screen installations as experimental innovations in World Fairs and large expositions (New York World's Fair 1964, or Montreal's Expo '67, for example) (Bizzocchi 2009; Hagener 2008; Talen 2002). The split-screen technique in also closely connected to the emergence of avant-garde experimental film since the late 1950s and 1960s and their culmination as the 'expanded cinema' movement, and the development till the present day of multi-screen art installations, characteristic of video art (Bizzocchi 2009; Rush 2007; Talen 2002; Weibel 2003; Youngblood 2013). As such, the stylistic approach of the split screen takes the *Spiritual Flavours* film into a more experimental territory and away from conventional food programmes. As a hypermediated process, it also foregrounds the performativity of the creative process as it brings into being an original experience of the relationship between food and faith through the way it is filmed and edited. In this respect, I considered editing the film for a multi-screen installation, rather than using a three-way split-screen, which would have taken the film further into

the territory of fine arts, requiring a gallery space for its viewing, and opening to the possibility of more immersive experiences of food and faith. However, I decided it was more important for my research to have a single screen edit to be able to show it locally within the various faith communities.

The performative mode

A limitation of the poetic mode is the possible disconnection with historical reality (due to its focus on the expressiveness of formal abstractions in composition, sequencing and editing). However, the way that *Spiritual Flavours* remains grounded with the protagonists' stories brings it closer to Nichols' definition of the 'performative' mode, in which 'we're invited to experience what it is like to occupy the subjective, social position' of the protagonists, often of underrepresented/misrepresented people and ethnic minorities (2001:132). This mode foregrounds

> a social subjectivity that joins the general to the particular, the individual to the collective, and the political to the personal. The expressive dimension may be anchored to particular individuals, but it extends to embrace a social, or shared, form of subjective response (2001:133).

In this sense, *Spiritual Flavours* produces a 'social subjectivity' of the interplay between food and religious practices. Through the combination of personal accounts with specific expressive techniques – such as visual metaphors, time discontinuity, and scene enactments – the film offers a subjective experience of food and faith that is simultaneously symbolic and affective, personal and social, individual and shared, as well as embodied. The film repeatedly uses cooking visuals and sounds as expressive devices and meaningful metaphors that reinforce, enhance and, in some instances, move away from the protagonists' spoken narratives. These contribute to the affective and emotional charge of their personal accounts, but also connect with wider common experiences, such as curiosity, education, childhood, grief, achievement, loneliness, sociability, etc. In the next section, I discuss how these metaphors are involved in the formation of each character.

Some shots specifically create transitional spaces that connect personal and shared experiences. For example, after Betty sets the Christmas table there is a close shot of a candle (13:25, see Fig. 189). The viewer sees and hears her light a match and the candle, which takes about ten seconds of near silence. Then she exits the frame and switches off

the light. A further audio and visual silence of four seconds follows, where there is only the flame shimmering and a little wax tear starting to form. Some elegant glassware and a bird figurine are still visible, which anchors this poetic image to Betty (her house decoration strongly speaks about her personality, style and quality of life (Miller 2001d, 2008) – some people have mentioned that they love Betty's 'colour palette', which is also apparent in the cookbook). However, the symbolic and affective power of this image transcends her story and connects with a shared spiritual experience, as the candlelight becomes a symbol of spiritual illumination and association with that which is divine, in a fairly universal way. Suddenly, Aziz's recitation of the call for prayer starts over this image, thus linking this scene to a different faith and personal story. After a few seconds, the visual switches to Aziz praying in his living room. The first time I watched this section, I recall holding my breath. It seemed the narrative stopped, and I felt moved and strongly related to all three characters. If watching the film on a big theatre screen in the dark with other people, there is a shared experience of silence and its breaking with Aziz's reciting. In hindsight, I could have left a couple more seconds of silence to further emphasise this embodied experience.[115]

Fig. 189 Betty lighting a candle. *Spiritual Flavours* film, 2017 (13:25)

Aziz's (non-diegetic) reciting sound returns again when he eats Tagine (14:43). The

[115] See Mike Figgis' description of the power of a shared affective (uncomfortable) experience in a cinema of the use of a real silence in his film *Leaving Las Vegas* (1995), as opposed to a 'room tone' silence (2003:1–2). See also Tabarraee (2013) and Raeymaekers (2014) on the use of silence in cinema.

blending of religious sound and everyday food practices reinforces his statement that everything in Muslim people's lives must be related to their worship to Allah, from their personal relationships to everyday practices of eating and drinking. Then, the non-diegetic sound of Aziz's reciting bridges back to Betty's home, and continues over a close-up of Betty reading her prayer book, her lips and eyes moving in silence (15:14). This suggests a metaphor for the shared experience of individual praying at home, which reconnects with Betty's subjective narrative of praying routines. This leads to the last use of the split-screen technique (16:00), which emphasises the shared experience of praying, while it maintains the specificity of each of the characters' context and relationship with faith. Ossie's screen showcases him singing during a Tisch at the ELS, while Challah bread is passed around, thus mixing food and religious atmospheres once more. Additionally, certain split-screen scenes of cooking processes, such as boiling, steaming and frying (11:49 to 12:11), act as metaphors for the passing of time, its 'measurement' and the rhythmic 'marking' of everyday life and, in this case, religious practice. This is further accentuated by the shift to the full-screen image of the slowing spinning pressure cooker (12:12) which gradually brings the temporality back to the present time.

The enactment of certain scenes and actions also connects the film to Nichols' performative mode, where films emphasise 'the subjective qualities of experience and memory that depart from factual recounting', often combining actual occurrences with imagined ones (2001:131). For instance, Betty's enactment of setting the table for Christmas dinner (13:12) creates the space for different temporalities and imagined possibilities, including different kinds of relationships (familiar, spiritual and social). This is evoked again during the film credits, which introduce future projections for each of the protagonists as she places the flaming Christmas pudding on the table (as if it were to be eaten, 26:44). Such re-enactment collapses memories from the past – of Christmases with her husband and children, and from childhood helping her mother make the pudding and sharing it with her nine siblings – as well as hopes for the future involving a renewed sense of family life with Tony. This projective space is also reiterated by the scene with Betty setting the table for the meal with Aziz and Ossie, which performs new social and multi-faith relationships through practices of cooking and eating together. Other enactments include Aziz praying (21:00) and teaching in the Mosque (20:52), and Ossie buying groceries (00:43), which contribute to their subjective and emotional characterisation discussed in the next section.

Researching food and faith through the editing process

In this section I further analyse the ways in which the film produces certain kinds of knowledge through decisions in the editing process, which explore the relationship between food and faith in different ways.

Defining the film characters

One of the initial tasks in the editing process was to try to make sense of the relationship between food and faith for each of the participants to develop their stories around the most significant dimensions form their oral accounts. First, I made an initial selection of interview clips. After transcribing each of them, I continued watching and, most importantly, listening to their words to appreciate the emotional quality of what they said: what do they speak more passionately about or in a most sincere and felt way? Exploring the relationship between food and faith through filmmaking influenced the way I engaged with the interview material, where I prioritised the emotional quality of clips over just engaging with their textual meaning, thus selecting those that were most emotionally engaging. I used this method to identify core themes and develop the basic components for each character, aimed at triggering an emotional response and identification process by the audience.[116] As such, I created an emotional chart for each of the protagonists where I colour-coded clips to visually identify their religious engagement, memories and family traditions, community engagement, as well as any of the above which were most 'felt' or emotionally strong.[117] This involved much time reviewing raw footage and selected clips to experience such emotional quality. This might be different from other social research methods where the researcher often only engages with the audio recorded material once to transcribe it, or none if transcribing is done by someone else. Laura, the editor, also commented that working in the context of a research project required much more attention, discussion and analysis of the significance of specific details/dimensions, than in commercial non-fiction films. There was more time spent on watching, logging

[116] Murray Smith breaks down the notion of identification within fiction film characters into a 'structure of sympathy' composed by three levels of engagement: recognition, alignment and allegiance. According to him, each of these concepts 'describes a narrative system that relates to character', which depends on the active response from of the spectator to produce various levels of engagement (rather than these being imposed on the spectator) (1995:39).

[117] This approach is also in line with recent work advocating the importance of exploring and developing an understanding of affective and emotional dimensions within human geography research (Anderson 2009; Davidson, Bondi, and Smith 2007; Pile 2010).

and colour-coding, as part of the process of discovering what the film should communicate and how.

In this way, we defined key themes that were most strongly and emotionally expressed by each of the characters: Betty's relationship with food and faith is most emphatically articulated through experiences of family relationships and home (from childhood and as an adult). Aziz's engagement with food is most strongly felt through the strict adherence to the norms of Islam, as well as through his longing for merit recognition and social acceptance. Finally, Ossie identifies with being a "foodie" and speaks most passionately about anything that has to do with cooking, being in the kitchen, eating or buying food. His involvement in the synagogue is driven both by culinary practices and socialising, which are intertwined. These themes are defined for each character from the start when the three-split screen shows Ossie buying groceries; Betty, at home, looking at her recipe book; and Aziz is reciting the Quran (00: 38, see Fig. 190).

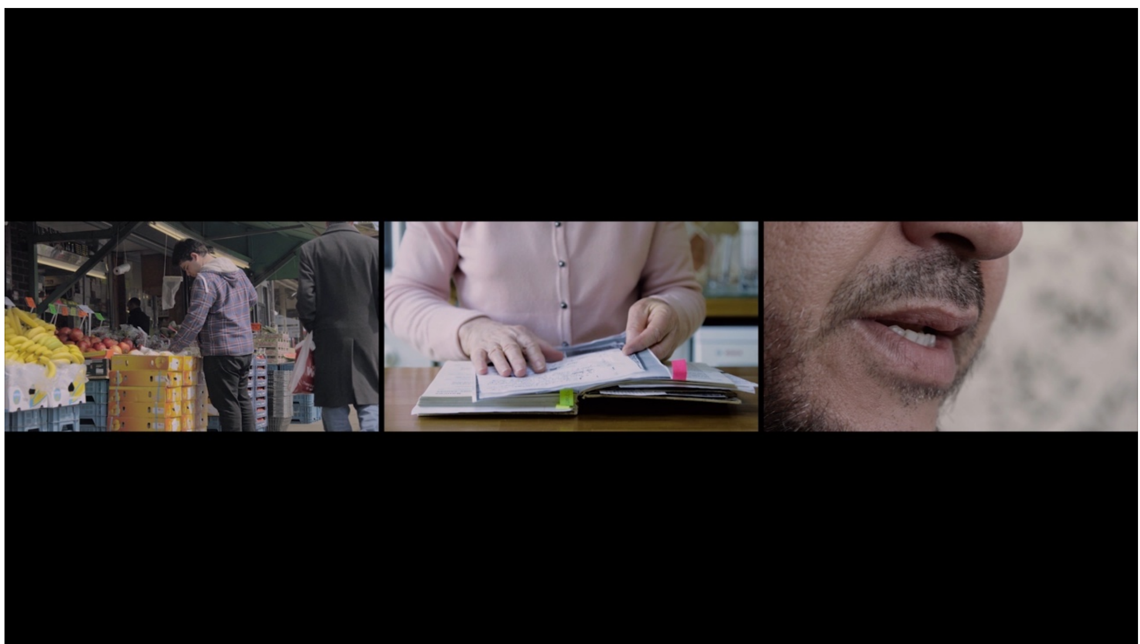

Fig. 190 Split-screen with Ossie buying groceries, Betty looking at her recipe book and Aziz reciting the Quran. *Spiritual Flavours* film, 2017 (00:38)

These key themes are the basis of the five-minute version of the film mainly structured around the split-screen scenes. For the final version, I also mapped the commonalities and differences between them and started developing a narrative order that would create thematic intersections. Here, I developed some split-screen scenes further, but I also

created thematic connections by cutting from one protagonist to another in full screen.[118] For example, both Betty and Aziz grew up within big families and I reinforced this connection by including clips of both of them talking about this. They also have a strong sense of spirituality and religious commitment, which is foregrounded by the aforementioned use of Aziz's reciting sound bridging between their praying scenes. They all communicate emotionally strong childhood memories of helping and learning to cook from their mothers. Aziz and Ossie also share a passion for cooking, which I emphasised by linking footage that shows their cooking skills. In order to facilitate these connections in the edit, I decided to keep the same narrative order logic for the three protagonists (from home, to worship spaces, to finally meeting together), since this enabled me to make associations between domestic practices, community practices and voluntary work with each of the characters, but also across them. Finally, while Betty and Aziz share a history of migration, Ossie grew up in Ealing. So, I decided to introduce the local context through his story, when he starts speaking about his love for Ealing's diversity, alongside the footage of him buying groceries. Due to his familiarity with film and TV narrative construction, he was also the most articulate in the way he spoke about meeting the others to watch the footage and cook together, which I thus used to introduce this event.

Selecting the cooking clips also involved classifying them (for example, cooking actions, body movements, facial expressions, etc.) and marking the most evocative or visually strong. While editing, I chose clips that provided visual metaphors that supported the emotional quality of the spoken words and the protagonists' key themes and attributes (over those that best demonstrated how to cook the dishes). For example, I interspersed clips of Betty laying the Christmas pudding paste, spoon by spoon, on the calico cloth, with interview footage listing her nine siblings (8:39). This creates a humorous scene, as the number of siblings surpasses anyone's expectations, which conveys, very simply, the intertwinement of family, food and religion. It also prompts an imagination of Betty's Irish upbringing: the close relationship between Catholicism and really large families at the time, and how big the pudding needed to be to feed "ten Kellies", as well as the kind

[118] Although the full-version incorporates new split-screen scenes, the majority of the additional footage is edited in single full-screen, increasing the time between split-screen scenes. These end when the film moves into the various community spaces, which is followed by the meeting of the protagonists (this encounter does not feature in the five-minute version). As such, the balance between full-screen and split-screen is different in the two versions. The way of transitioning between full-screen and split-screen is also different, as the full version transitions from split-screen into full-screen much more freely (for example, without having to isolate a character's small screen before going into their full-screen).

of everyday food they probably ate. Betty also recalls getting married and losing her husband and sense of family – which is a very emotionally strong and relatable experience – and how she stopped making the pudding as part of her grieving. This is edited with footage of making the pudding again, of her wedding album and other clips, such as the tying of the knot (symbolising the marriage bond, 12:31), trimming the cloth (a metaphor for the upkeep of family life, 12:40, see Fig. 192), or the pudding's calico cloth slowly deflating (suggestive of the withering of her sense of family, 12:50). However, the visuals of Betty preparing the calico cloth, which feel much more technical, create a dissonant contrast with her fond childhood memories of the "big fat pudding" when all the siblings wanted an outside piece to "get the skin on it". While the skin of the pudding and the calico cloth are causally related, Betty's speech and the visuals have different emotional qualities. This was flagged in an early feedback session. However, in my view, these visuals, particularly the clips where Betty uses blue rubber gloves, are metaphoric of Betty's profession, having worked as a nurse all her life (4:49, see Fig. 193). Her career is not explicit in the film (though it is in the cookbook) but is hinted at through her fastidious approach to cooking, which becomes slightly humorous; for example, when she measures the cloth with a ruler (8:32, see Fig. 194), draws a circle around a plate (8:37) and checks that the pudding mount is "not higher than the bowl" (9:10, see Fig. 191).

Fig. 191 Betty checks that the pudding is not higher than the bowl. *Spiritual Flavours* film, 2017 (9:12)

Fig. 192 Betty trimming the calico cloth. *Spiritual Flavours* film, 2017 (12:40)

Fig. 193 Betty squeezing the hot water out of the calico cloth. *Spiritual Flavours* film, 2017 (4:49)

Fig. 194 Betty measuring the calico cloth with a ruler. *Spiritual Flavours* film, 2017 (08:32)

The footage of Aziz working the dough, stretching it and shaping it as soon as it shrinks back (3:42, see Fig. 196), visually supports his childhood memories of family discipline, meals and eating schedules. His statement about Morocco's culture of family members always eating together around the table, is emotionally reinforced by a clip where he tenderly taps a group (family) of dough balls over his kitchen counter (3:38, see Fig. 197). In a different scene, he recalls how his mother encouraged him to cook Tagine as a child, and later bought him a prize to make him feel he "achieved something really big". The positive and emotional quality of his narrative is intensified by the beautiful visuals of layering the tagine dish, especially when arranging the colourful garnish ingredients (11:46, see Fig. 198). Aziz's prayer scenes at home and in the mosque, and the recurrent sound of him reciting the Quran throughout the film are expressive of the way religious norms encompass all aspects of his life. In the scene praying at home (13:44, see Fig. 195) followed by him eating tagine (14:42), I made a last-minute decision to swap the order of his (interview) voice-over, so that he would talk about Muslim food blessings during the prayer visuals and about religious norms of "the life of a Muslim" while eating the Tagine. This, I felt, further emphasises his point about the inseparability of religion from ordinary everyday practices.

Fig. 195 Aziz reciting the call for prayers. *Spiritual Flavours* film, 2017 (14:14)

Fig. 196 Aziz stretching the dough. *Spiritual Flavours* film, 2017 (3:42)

Fig. 197 Aziz gently tapping dough balls. *Spiritual Flavours* film, 2017 (3:38)

Fig. 198 Aziz placing the garnish on tagine dish. *Spiritual Flavours* film, 2017 (11:46)

Finally, Ossie's characterisation through his love for eating, cooking and experimenting with new recipes is expressed with clips that lavish his cooking skills and sophistication. This includes putting on his chef's jacket (2:40, see Fig. 199) and pulling his chef's knives out (14:40, see Fig. 200), pouring Methochel powder into a blender, or carving small balls from a carrot (9:53). His advanced cooking skills produce all sorts of rhythmic sounds. Notably, the tapping of the metal bowl with his carving knife (9:52) is also reminiscent of certain religious soundscapes and celebrations (through the use of bells). This provides an emotional tone that sets the scene for Ossie's narrative of being most happy in the kitchen and taking every opportunity to cook, which he links to his childhood curiosity for cooking processes. Here, the way he speaks has a very sincere and moving quality and feels less acted than in other clips. His personal and emotional connection with food and cooking can be seen as having a spiritual dimension. This is intensified through close-up shots emphasising the delicacy and refined methods of how he handles food – for example, when he carefully peels the inside skin of a small onion cup (10:06, see Fig. 201) and pours some sweet Kewpie mayonnaise (10:56, see Fig. 202).

Fig. 199 Ossie putting on his chef jacket. *Spiritual Flavours* film, 2017 (2:40)

Fig. 200 Ossie pulling out his chef knives. *Spiritual Flavours* film, 2017 (12:40)

Fig. 201 Ossie carving courgette balls. *Spiritual Flavours* film, 2017 (10:06)

Fig. 202 Ossie pouring Kewpie mayonnaise into a small onion cup. *Spiritual Flavours* film, 2017 (10:56)

Creative soundscapes and multi-sensory experiences of food and religion

The centrality of sound in the *Spiritual Flavours* film, particularly in how it amplifies certain everyday cooking sounds to create an emotive soundscape is commensurate with the increasing recognition in recent years of the importance of paying attention to 'the multiple sensory dimensions of objects, architectures and landscapes' within material culture theory (Howes 2006:161), as well as within social science research methods (Back and Puwar 2013; Crang 2003; Paterson 2007; Pink 2015). In addition to the split-screen technique, one of the key dimensions that contributes to the original multi-sensory experience of the interplay of food and faith in the film, is the way it creatively mixes sounds of cooking, eating and praying. As film editor and theorist Walter Murch argues, emotion, story and rhythm are equally important to sound and the affective capacity of soundtracks to elicit emotional responses in audiences (Jarrett 2000:7).

In this sense, the *Spiritual Flavours* film distinctly makes people feel the story and carries the narrative forward with its playful and rhythmic use of cooking and praying sounds. This is achieved, in great part, through the use of its original soundtrack, composed by Joseph Rowe, with the sounds I extracted from the footage. His piece had an initial soundscape section followed by a musical part, which started with a rhythmic shaker (originally from Betty tossing raisins in a bowl) and continued with a guitar and drums. However, I could only use the soundscape and shaker sections because when I tried to include the instrumental part (for example, when the protagonists cook together or in the credits) it felt as if I was injecting emotion to the film. Murch describes this effect when he argues that, while music helps direct or channel existing emotions, if the film relies on the music to create an emotion, the audience starts to feel manipulated (2000:9).

The distinctive soundscape of *Spiritual Flavours* is also achieved in the split-screen scenes through the intensity and rhythmic combination of the diegetic sounds from each screen, mainly focusing on cooking actions or praying. Notably, some split-screen scenes – the three cooked dishes (00:14), the protagonists' faces (00:25), their prayers (16:00) – also mix in the original soundtrack, as well as Aziz's voice reciting the Quran, which runs throughout the film. This works particularly well to provide an emotional quality to these poetic scenes, which counters Paul Hirsch's idea of the split-screen working primarily on an intellectual basis (Oldham 2012:189). In some scenes, there is a fairly loud, rhythmic and sometimes cacophonic soundscape of the three protagonists cooking at the same time (scenes at 3:10, 6:23, 9:47, 11:50 and 11:55). It is the power of the sound mix that, to a

great extent, engages the viewer sensorially and affectively in these scenes, while gradually delving into the individual narratives in full screen. The blending of cooking and spiritual sounds introduces rhythm and musicality and suggests the interplay of cooking and religious practices from the start. This operates in and on intellectual, sensorial, emotional, and affective dimensions, producing new experiential knowledge on the relationship of food and faith. This echoes Murch's argument that '[i]n the same way that painting, or looking at paintings, makes you see the world in a different way, listening to interestingly arranged sounds makes you hear differently' (Jarrett 2000:4).

Furthermore, a key aspect of this sonic experience is the use of diegetic sounds from specific scenes as non-diegetic sound in others. This echoing of sound creates an experience of familiarity: by the time the viewer hears the sound of specific cooking actions (Betty's beating of eggs or opening the bottle of Guinness, for example), these sounds have already appeared or will reappear a few times (although differently mixed with other scene sounds). This expresses the repetitive character of everyday food and religious practices, which are very similar but never the same, even when one cooks the same recipe or recites the same words. It also resonates with Rabbi Janet's words during a service at ELS, about the way reciting certain yearly prayers makes her feel at home and connect with her spirituality, because she performs these every year. This also connects with how everyday cooking practices have a spiritual or meditative dimension for some people. As such, the film produces a highly mediated parallel between culinary and religious practices, partly constructed through the repetition of cooking and praying sounds, which presents these practices as rhythmic markers of everyday temporalities.

Furthermore, the inclusion of the singing at the Synagogue, which overlaps with the recurrent sound of Aziz reciting the Quran, is aligned with scholarship exploring the significance and role of music and sound within religious practices (Beck 1995, 2006, 2014; Hyacinth 2019) and how religious spaces are performed through sound (McMurray 2014; Smith 2000). This is also expressed in the scene where Aziz prays and teaches at the mosque (20:40), where there is a repetition of his reciting of the Quran by his pupil but, also, there is a fading in of a different version of him reciting the same words with a two-second delay, which produces a reverberating effect.

Here, it is worth considering how the film transforms settings during film screenings and exhibitions, through the capacity of its soundtrack to occupy and engage spaces and bodies. Two examples serve to highlight this point. First, the premiere of the film in

Helsinki, where the open architecture of the STOA cultural centre allowed the soundtrack to permeate spaces throughout the building.[119] Here, I encountered a group of children listening to the soundtrack from another gallery space. They were attending Quran classes and proudly told me they were Muslim and had recognised and responded to Aziz's call to prayer, which led to a conversation about food, religion and identity. Second, a film screening at ELS after a Tisch meal where the accidentally high-volume setting of the portable Bluetooth speaker used to play the soundtrack, resulted in Aziz's recital of the Quran engulfing the synagogue. This was the scene where his voice breaks the silence of the aforementioned candle clip and it was a very powerful and strange experience to listen to his loud and clear reciting of the Quran in a synagogue. There was a very palpable tension, as one could also hear some people shuffling in their chairs, which made me wonder if they experienced these prayers uncomfortably or, even, as a sacrilege. These two examples demonstrate how the *Spiritual Flavours* film produces different embodied and affective encounters with food and religious difference through sound in different spatial contexts.

A focus on embodied practices

Though limited to the visual and the audible, the editing of the film produces a multi-sensory experience of the interplay between food and faith, as a vehicle for exploring the material, embodied and affective qualities of religious practices (McGuire 2008d, 2008a) and culinary practices (Korsmeyer and Sutton 2011; Sutton 2010a, [1997] 2013). The film features cooking and praying as routine practices that involve embodied knowledge, memory, the senses and synaesthesia (Sutton [1997] 2013), as well as a shared temporal, rhythmic and kinaesthetic quality.[120] This links with Nichols' (2001) performative mode of documentary, which promotes an understanding of knowledge 'as concrete and embodied, based on the specificities of personal experience', where 'embodied knowledge provides entry into an understanding of the more general processes at work in society' (2001:131). In this sense, the focus of the *Spiritual Flavours* film on embodied practices provides an intimate and personal experience and understanding of the (mutual) material-sensorial involvement of food and faith. This is achieved in different ways

[119] Festival of Political Photography: Post-Food (2017).

[120] See Paterson (2009:769) on haptic geographies and kinaesthesia; and chapter three regarding scholarship on food, memory and the senses.

through the visual treatment and edit.

First, many of the scenes of cooking and praying feature close-up framings of body parts engaged in these actions. There are many cooking scenes which focus on embodied gestures and motion, rather than the actual food, from the very first scene of the protagonists turning their stoves on, through close-ups of their facial expressions, to the skilled motion of their hands: kneading, spreading oil, stirring, squeezing, shaking, layering, peeling or chopping. This is particularly clear with Aziz's technique using a large chef's knife to cut out the edges of a sliced potato and the core of carrots (07:05 and 07:26, see Fig. 203), which shows the idiosyncrasy of his cooking methods. Similarly, the camera focuses on Ossie's tactile and olfactory experience, and the motion of his hands, when chopping a chicken breast (07:48 and 08:01), and mixing and smelling the gyoza paste (08:24 and 8:28, see Fig. 204). This continues with further close-up shots of Aziz's use of his hands to mix food (09:24 and 10:59, see Fig. 205) and to eat the tagine, informed by his own cultural and embodied knowledge. This connects with later shots, such as a hand dipping Challah bread into a bowl of soup at the Tisch (17:03, see Fig. 206) and Betty's way of delicately placing beef slices on a serving plate with her hands, after cutting them with great physical effort (19:20, see Fig. 206). In parallel, many clips of Betty and Aziz's prayers focus very closely on the motion of their eyes and lips (14:16, 14:21, 15:19, 15:23, see Fig. 207, Fig. 209), their facial expressions (00:31, 13:55, 15:14, 15:50, see Fig. 195, for example), their hand gestures (14:38, see Fig. 208) and the tactile experience of handling religious objects (00:26, 15:28, 15:47, 15:57, 16:08, see Fig. 208, Fig. 210 and Fig. 188, for example). With the repetition of these shots of cooking and praying (as with the expressive recurrence of cooking and praying sounds), the film reflects on habits and invests these routine actions with embodied, haptic and rhythmic qualities.

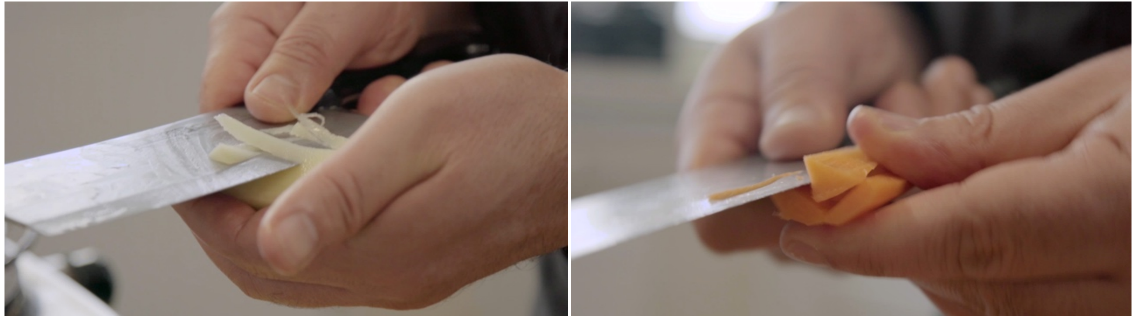

Fig. 203 Aziz cutting the edge of a sliced potato and the core of a carrot. *Spiritual Flavours* film, 2017 (07:05 and 7:26)

Fig. 204 Ossie mixing and smelling the gyoza paste. *Spiritual Flavours* film, 2017 (8:24 and 8:28)

Fig. 205 Aziz mixing chicken thighs and vegetables with his hands. *Spiritual Flavours* film, 2017 (9:24 and 10:58)

Fig. 206 Dipping Challah bread into a bowl of soup at the Tisch, ELS; and Betty slicing roast beef at the Deanery Dinner, OLSJ. *Spiritual Flavours* film, 2017 (17:03 and 19:20)

Fig. 207 Aziz praying. *Spiritual Flavours* film, 2017 (14:16 and 14:21)

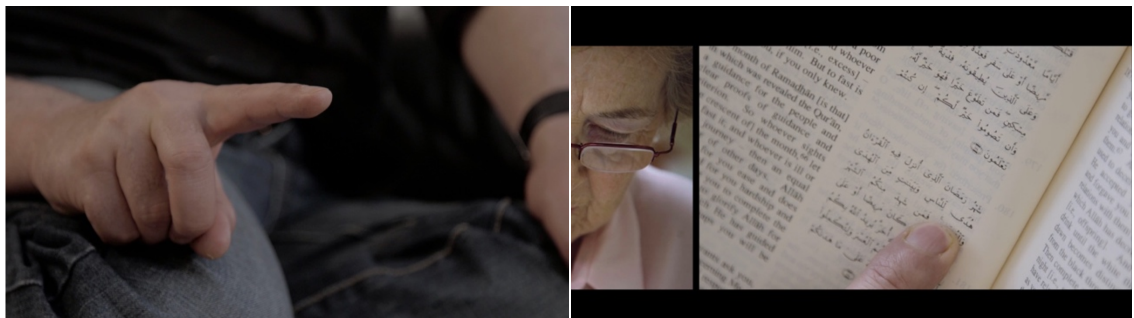

Fig. 208 Aziz praying in full-screen and reciting the Quran in the split-screen. *Spiritual Flavours* film, 2017 (9:24 and 10:58)

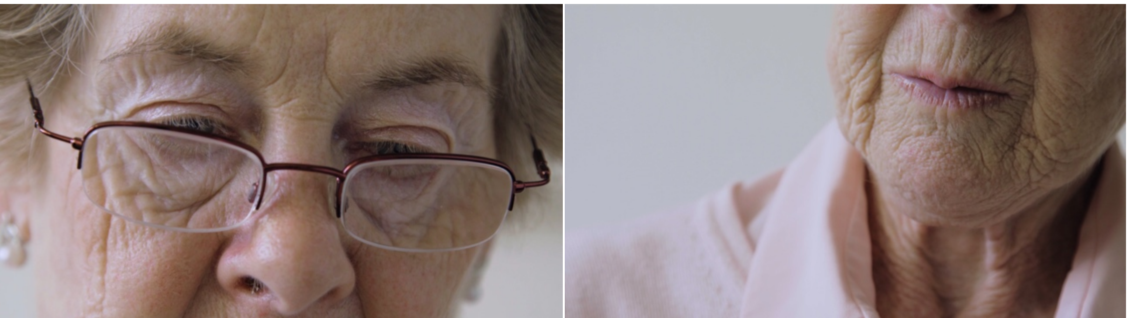

Fig. 209 Betty praying. *Spiritual Flavours* film, 2017 (15:19 and 15:23)

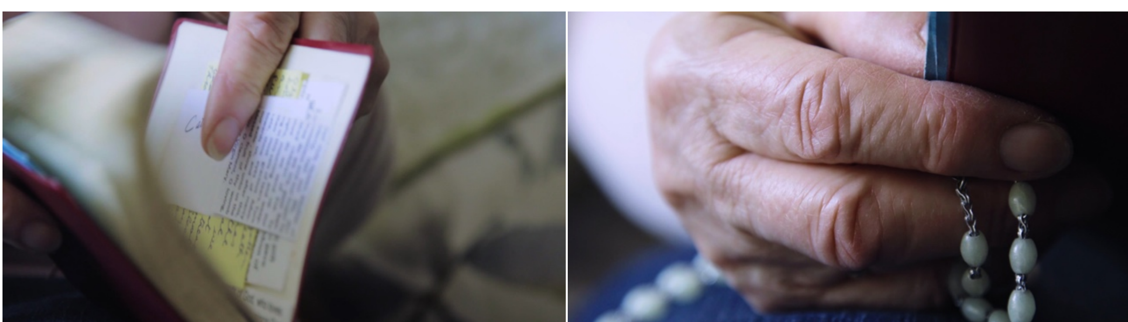

Fig. 210 Betty praying with her prayer book and rosary (15:27 and 14:47)

There are also wider shots of the repetitive embodied motion of culinary and religious practices, which involve some repetition, cadence or even a certain choreography, thus also bringing attention to the embodied, rhythmic and kinaesthetic quality of these practices. The most recurrent examples are the visuals of Aziz praying which visualise the choreography of the body postures involved, underscored by the recurrent sound of his prayers. Additionally, the way he graciously bounces off the floor at the end of his prayers at the mosque is also punctuated by the sound of a Tibetan singing bowl in the soundtrack. Other examples of choreographic embodied repetition include Betty's cadence in setting the Deanery dinner table (18:54, see Fig. 211) and split-screen scenes where motion is orchestrated across the sub-frames, such as in those involving cooking actions or when the protagonists move about in their kitchens (4:19, see Fig. 212). In other instances, choreography and repetition is achieved through the motion of different people in the same space. Notable examples include the staggered movement of people leaning forward to bring a spoonful of Rabbi's fish soup to their mouths (16:42, see Fig. 213) and, also during the Tisch, the choreography of arms helping themselves to food from various platters (17:12, see Fig. 214). The scene of the protagonists cooking together can be understood as 'choreographic', where the looping soundtrack of the shaker and other cooking sounds punctuates the action. As such, the emphasis on the choreographic, repetitive and rhythmic dimensions of culinary and religious practices is clearly constructed through the film's sonic and visual creative approaches, thus inviting the viewer to pay attention to the rich, personal and nuanced embodied experiences of the protagonists' material-sensorial engagements within these practices.

Finally, I decided against ending the 'eating together' scene with a discussion of the protagonists' respective meal prayers, which would have brought the comparison of food and religion back to the table, as a concluding point. Instead, I chose the clips where they photograph the dish (25:51, see Fig. 215) and express their joy from eating (25:57, see Fig. 216). This produces a humanising effect and connects with the notion of food agency, and the visceral experience of commensality, as a sensorial, affective and potentially transformative process (see chapter three). This also felt emotionally stronger, as everyone was happy in that moment, savouring the results of their collaborative work.

Fig. 211 Betty setting the table for the Deanery Dinner at OLSJ. *Spiritual Flavours* film, 2017 (18:58 and 18:54)

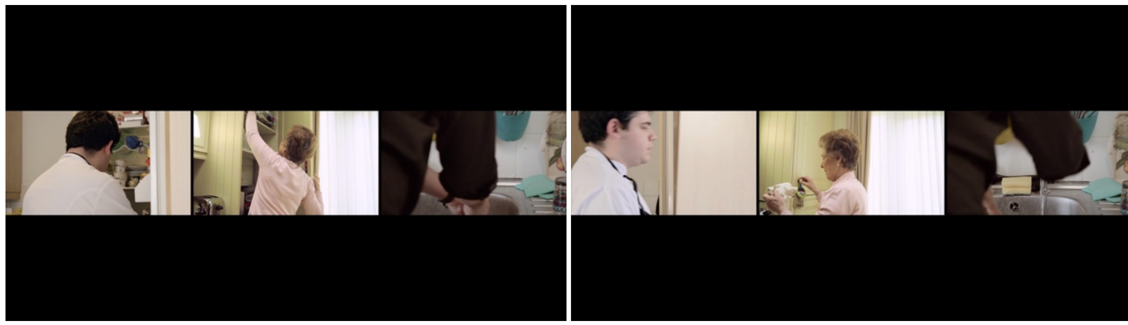

Fig. 212 The three protagonists going about in their kitchens. *Spiritual Flavours* film, 2017 (4:19 and 4:21)

Fig. 213 Rabbi's Tisch commensality at ELS. *Spiritual Flavours* film, 2017 (16:44 and 16:45)

Fig. 214 People helping themselves to food at Rabbi's Tisch, ELS. *Spiritual Flavours* film, 2017 (17:12 and 17:20)

Fig. 215 Betty, Aziz and Ossie taking pictures of the 'multi-faith' dish at Betty's place. *Spiritual Flavours* film, 2017 (26:51).

Fig. 216 Betty, Aziz and Ossie enjoying and complimenting the results of their collaborative cooking at Betty's place. *Spiritual Flavours* film, 2017 (26:57)

Responding to the film

So far, The *Spiritual Flavours* film has enjoyed the most exposure from all the outputs of the research. As mentioned, the initial five-minute version was premiered at the Utopia Fair at Somerset House in June 2016 and was later nominated for the AHRC 2016 Research in Film Awards, where it was acclaimed for the originality of researching food and faith through a creative approach to sound and the split-screen technique. Later, the film was screened in various contexts including: academic feedback sessions, seminar series and conferences; screenings at faith community events (see Fig. 217 to Fig. 219); screenings as part of *Spiritual Flavours* project exhibitions in international venues, such as Tate Modern and the *Festival of Political Photography: Post Food 2017* in Helsinki; and local arts centres such as the W3 Gallery in Acton and the Watermans Art Centre in Brentford (see Fig. 220 to Fig. 222).

The feedback I received from colleagues and tutors within media and film studies on the initial edit of the twenty-eight-minute version influenced the final edit. For example, I decided to remove a clip of the women who had prepared the Deanery dinner and who sat down to eat the leftovers after clearing the table. This is because they only appeared eating the soup, rather than the full roast, which the audience perceived as a relation of gender inferiority. Thus, I ended the scene earlier, with them 'taking a bow' and laughing. In some screenings, people experienced sadness because the protagonists seemed lonely, especially Betty and Aziz, as I had filmed them at home by themselves. Additionally, Aziz only interacted with one person at the mosque, as the cut did not include the shot of the vibrant atmosphere at the mosque. So eventually, I went back to film a shot of the busyness and vibrancy of the outdoor area of the mosque to suggest this element of sociality in Aziz's story. The scene of the tension between Aziz and Ossie around pine nuts and almonds raised much discussion, with some people proposing to remove it and others appreciating its value. A film tutor commented that the film generally felt set up and that it was unethical to place people in awkward situations and then use the material. However, I did not intentionally place the participants in a situation to film them being uncomfortable. Still, I tried removing it. However, I felt the tempo of the event was compromised and the narrative became artificially positive. In this sense, I perceived a general balance between people who questioned whether I had felt obliged to provide a positive narrative of religious difference through food, and people who sensed the tension throughout the multi-faith cooking event. Additionally, some people noted a melancholic

texture in the film which they said did not make it less beautiful.

In most screening Q&A sessions, people commented on the sensorial experience of the film, such as the visual quality of the close-up shots of food, but especially in relation to sound. Some people shared how specific sounds in the film, such as the Christmas pudding mixing with a wooden spoon, took them back to their childhood memories of helping make the pudding. A PhD student undertaking research on Jewish homes, noted that her research subjects often brought up memories of cooking, but rarely mentioned sound. She celebrated the film's sound as striking and pleasant, in contrast with real experiences of cooking, when "noise" can be unpleasant. In this sense, while the mix of diegetic and non-diegetic sound mostly produces harmonic experiences, I also intentionally created some disturbance, such as when Aziz's chopping sound bridges over to Ossie's chopping clip (7:28), thus interfering with Ossie's scene until a sharp knife movement cuts it off. This aims to create a certain spatial intrusion and connection across the stories to suggest the possibilities and challenges of multi-faith conviviality. Someone else found the scene of Aziz reciting over Betty's prayers the most striking moment in the film. She felt this produced an echo of an "alone voice" entering an "alone space" of prayer. According to her, the crossing of sound between characters made their voices become porous, linking their stories together until they meet. Notably, two colleagues also questioned whether Aziz reciting over Betty's prayers might offend people within the faith communities. However, in the screenings at the faith communities no one expressed any issues about this, and I received very positive feedback. At the synagogue, one person privately told me he felt the film was too long and a little biased, as Aziz was the only one who spoke during the final credits, thus it appeared to favour his religious views over the others. This was not accurate, as all three protagonists speak during the credits, which feature a desire from each of them for the future. However, I understood this person's point of view as Aziz is the only one who expresses a religious opinion, which is aligned with the thematic focus of his character around religious norms. Instead, Betty speaks about hopefully making the pudding in future Christmas celebrations with Tony, and Ossie about going to university to train as a cook.

People from the faith communities also attended screenings at public exhibition venues, such as W3 Gallery, Watermans Arts Centre and Tate Modern. I have particularly fond memories of the Tate Modern screening (see Fig. 221), not only because of its status, but because Betty joined me in conversation during the Q&A. People were excited to discuss

her own experience of being involved in the project. There were also people from the other faith communities, including Rabbi Janet (ELS), Father Robert and his wife, Arda and her husband (St Thomas'), as well as Sabiha and her daughter Aysha (WLIC), which I really appreciated – not least since Sabiha and Aysha were fasting for Ramadan and watched twenty-eight minutes of food preparation and eating!

In a screening at an inter-university audio-visual PhD seminar, someone asked about my intended audience, and whether the film was aimed at the communities, academia or the general public. Indeed, I had made the film with all these audiences in mind. However, someone else suggested that it was just as valid to consider my PhD examiners and thesis readers as the main audience, as the film provided detailed and nuanced understandings of the interplay of sensorial and material experiences of food and faith, and how these connect with the protagonists lives and the faith communities they attend.

Fig. 217 Screening of the *Spiritual Flavours* five-minute introduction film at the West London Islamic Centre, London, April 2017

Fig. 218 Screening of the *Spiritual Flavours* film during a Tisch at the Ealing liberal Synagogue, London, June 2017

Fig. 219 Screening of the *Spiritual Flavours* film at St Thomas' Church, London, October 2017

Fig. 220 Screening of the *Spiritual Flavours* film at the cultural centre STOA, Helsinki, February 2017

Fig. 221 Screening of the *Spiritual Flavours* film at the Tate Modern, London, May 2018

Fig. 222 Screening of the *Spiritual Flavours* film at the Watermans Art Centre in London, January 2019

Conclusion

This chapter has analysed the process of making the *Spiritual Flavours* film and how it enhances understandings of the everyday material, sensorial and emotional geographies of food and religion. I have discussed how structural, graphic and editing decisions aimed to create nuanced comparative narratives of the interrelationship of culinary religious practices with other age and gender sensitive life dimensions. Through visual and sonic synchronies and asynchronies threaded though biographical accounts, these narratives explore the connections between the protagonists' histories, their domestic religious practices and their involvement in worship spaces. I have also aimed at bringing people from different faith communities together to create a multi-faith space within and around the film that would suggest some of the opportunities and challenges of conviviality in a highly diverse locality.

In line with my methodological approach and the notion of performativity, and drawing on Nichols' non-fiction film modes, I have discussed how the film performatively produces new realities, relationships and knowledge. These shape our understanding of the relationship between food and spirituality by highlighting the mnemonic qualities of religious food practices and how these connect the protagonists with different temporalities and embodied practices. The film produces original and detailed knowledge through the observation of food preparations and religious practices at home and in the faith communities. This uniquely contributes to the project by expressing sociality, atmosphere, soundscapes, tempo, and embodied qualities of individual and communal religious practices and commensality. The chapter also discusses participatory issues and the politics of the filmic encounter and examines how the film conveys tension and foregrounds power relations, while also achieving empathy and humour. Here, I have argued for the significance of sharing the footage with participants and understanding filmmaking as a process of bonding and exchange, enacted through the material, embodied and affective practices involved in both the cooking and filming process. Equally, I have considered the feedback from various screenings as part of the research and I have analysed how it influenced my editing decisions.

The film's engagement with the emotional quality of the protagonists' personal stories (told through their own voice) and their embodied practices, has enabled me to develop a situated narrative around food and faith, which serves as a point of entry to wider social processes and common experiences. The chapter argues that the creative use of sound and

the split-screen technique allows for traversing spatial boundaries, and produces an original aesthetic and rhythmic (visual and sonic) ‘expanded’ experience of the protagonists’ cooking and praying. As such, I have partly linked the film’s research value to the affective multi-sensory knowledge it produces, through different sound and visual editing strategies and the embodied experience of watching it. This experience brings attention to food and religious practices as personal and habitual, embodied and kinaesthetic engagements, which further understandings of the mutual implication of material-sensorial culinary and religious practices as temporal, rhythmic and affective markers of everyday lived religion.

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Chapter seven: Conclusion

I grew up going to an Anglican church in Toronto. While I don't remember much of the upstairs church, the memories of the basement kitchen and community hall are carved in. Actually, just the other day I was telling my partner about the memories I have of using a hand operated apple peeler and corer to prepare the thousands of apples required for the hundreds of apple pies that would be made before Lent. The 'ritual of the apple pies' is more evocative to me, in the Proustian sense, than any of the religious services.
Email response to the *Spiritual Flavours* project website, 30th January 2021.

The Jacqui, Elkie, Naomi section is, almost beyond words for me, ... utterly DELICIOUS, if one can use such words to describe or comment on a section of a book!! I found all the people, recipes, and your comments in the introduction fascinating. The book itself, layout, yellow hardback of my copy, beautifully presented. I am so thrilled, truthfully, not only to get the chance to share with Naomi's and Elkie the whole 'memory making' of the baking together, but on top of that, to see my mother's green Formica table, part of my growing up, in a photo, in your study was almost tear-jerkingly awesome! What would my Mum say to see the family table still being used in this same way!!!!
When Elkie gave me the book, wrapped as a Chanukah present, many members of the Family were present at Naomi's parents' home... with a few far flown members 'face-timing' into the gathering coincidently just when we were all opening presents... I found myself showing my daughter, who lives in San Francisco, and my sister's daughter, in the Middle East, all the photos you chose for the book. And today I've just left the book at the home of the one brother of mine, and his family, who were away at Chanukah and hence knew nothing of the copy you gifted to me.
Email response from participant (Jacqui) after receiving the *Spiritual Flavours* book, 11th January 2020.

Summary of the research and contributions

In this thesis food is investigated as a central and productive aspect of religious material culture for understanding individual and family religious practice at home and within faith communities. This research sets out to develop a range of visual practices that employ complementary media to explore the ways in which creative methods elicit different understandings and experiences of food and faith in Ealing. I achieve this through the development of the *Spiritual Flavours* project, composed of: 1) the photographic series *Meals*; 2) the twenty-eight-minute film *Spiritual Flavours* (alongside the five-minute introduction); 3) and the *Spiritual Flavours* recipe photobook. These reach out beyond the geographical and academic context of this research, as illustrated in the epigraphs to this chapter, which quote responses to these creative outputs. Additionally, I produced an interactive installation, *Spiritual Flavours* Spice Lab; the *Spiritual Flavours* website;[121] printed materials, such as the *Spiritual Flavours* poster and various postcards (see Appendix A); as well as exhibited and presented the project locally, nationally and internationally (see Appendix B). Furthermore, the thesis involves a range of creative research practices that informed the *Spiritual Flavours* project and developed the necessary relationships that enabled its production. The analysis of this addresses the three research questions raised at the beginning of this thesis:

1) What kinds of knowledge does a set of visual arts projects bring to the understanding of food and religion in a West London multi-faith suburb?

2) What analytic themes emerge and are made possible through the interplay of practice-based research and food and religious practices?

3) How can creative research practices promote new (multi-faith) relationships and how can creative outputs be made accountable and meaningful to participants and communities through participatory methods?

While I have engaged with these questions throughout the thesis in relation to each of the specific sets of practices and visual works, in this conclusion I bring together the research findings and contributions that address these questions.

In what follows, I discuss how this research makes a range of theoretical, methodological and empirical contributions to the following fields: creative geographies; interdisciplinary

[121] www.spiritualflavours.com

scholarship on practice-based research and participatory methods; geographies of religion; religious studies; geographies of food and; food studies. I summarise these below, which I further substantiate in the rest of this section and chapter.

Through a theoretical and practical enquiry of the strengths and limitations of creative (participatory) methods, this thesis adds new perspectives to how creative geographies think about the value of creative practices for knowledge production. Theoretically, it develops understandings of the implications of posthuman materialist performativity (Barad 2003, 2007) for engaging with the potential and ethics of researching through 'doing', in ways that take into account non-human agency and the relational co-constitution of bodies and subjectivities, both of researchers and participants, as well as the ways in which specific concepts become determinate and meaningful (or come to *matter*). This research also strengthens methodological and empirical understandings of creative geographies by exploring different kinds of knowledge (embodied, sensuous, aesthetic, affective, biographical, poetic) of the relationship of food and faith, which emerge *in practice* through the development of a set of creative outputs that engage with personal and communal experiences of food religious practices. Here, I argue that Barad's project of a posthumanist materialist ontology illuminates how material practices within the creative processes of this research enacted and rendered visible multi-faith narratives and the significance of food within diverse suburban religious practices. Given the above, this doctoral research also reformulates understandings of the value of creative practices for reaching audiences beyond academia (see chapter two) by illustrating and reflecting on the performativity and ethics of creative research practices for enabling and developing new concepts and social (multi-faith) relationships. Notably, I argued that this research makes an original contribution to creative geographies, and cultural geography more widely, via the way it produces creative research outputs, such as the *Spiritual Flavours* cookbook, which become meaningful and accountable as part of the lives, material practices and environments of participants, communities and wider audiences – thus, having a life and impact beyond its geographical, academic and artistic context and timeframe, as exemplified in the epigraphs to this chapter.

This thesis also makes a series of contributions to geographies of religion and food, by providing a myriad of specific examples of the nexus between food, religious practices and multi-faith suburban conviviality. In particular, it explores how visceral, sensuous and embodied food practices occasion and are occasioned by religious practices, both at

home and within communities. Here, it demonstrates that these constitute an important dimension of suburban multi-faith identity, creativity and heritage, and have a paramount role in developing positive multicultural (and multi-faith) relationships. Thus, this research extends understandings of suburban geographies of faith, and of the material, visceral and embodied dimensions of faith practices involving food – including the material arrangements of commensality and communal food preparations within but also beyond the 'officially sacred' (Kong 2001). By exploring food and faith through creative practices, this research demonstrates that both the affective and storytelling affordances of food, recipes and cookbooks are particularly important for supporting and negotiating gendered religious identities, education and intergenerational connections. Furthermore, I argue that food practices operate as rhythmic and affective markers of religious practices with a mnemonic function. Additionally, through participatory engagement and biographical narratives, this research exposes the nuanced and intimate ways in which faith, age, gender, identity, migration, community and home intersect. In this sense, I develop Barad's notion of performativity in order to add new perspectives to understandings of both methodological performativity and the role of food in the enactment of religious practices and spirituality.

Academic contributions of this thesis

Creative geographies

A key contribution of this doctorate is the demonstration of the inseparability of the knowledge it produces from the material practices involved in the creative processes that have led the research. This is informed by notions of performativity as processes of becoming where realities are brought into being, as discussed in chapter two. In particular, this thesis mobilises Barad's posthuman materialist performativity as a productive lens for thinking about creative practices as entangled forms of knowing and being. It extends scholarship that recognises the value of creative practices for accessing 'more-than-representational' (Lorimer 2005) dimensions of various geographies, such as sensuous, bodily, emotional, aesthetic and affective experiences – notably, of religion (Bartolini, MacKian, and Pile 2018b; Holloway 2003, 2006; Maddrell 2009, 2011) and food (Cook et al. 2011; Highmore 2008). This is partly due to how creative practices open up spaces for uncertainty (Dwyer and Davies 2010:8; Kimbell 2011), intuition (e.g. Barrett and Bolt 2010; Beinart 2019) and embodied practices (O'Connor 2005) as processes that

guide research and knowledge production, which I developed through the creative research practices in this research (empirically analysed in chapter two, four, five and six).

As such, after Barad, part of the work of this thesis is to critically mobilise creative research practice as ontologically emergent and relational. Here, creative practices are involved in (human and non-human) discursive-material 'intra-actions' or *'the mutual constitution of entangled agencies*' (2007:33, emphasis in original) within which bodies, subjectivities and concepts are determined. Furthermore, this research makes theoretical, methodological and empirical contributions to the field of creative geographies by engaging *in practice* via Barad's call for an appreciation of how ethics, knowing, and being are intertwined (2007:185). This informed my choice of creative methods and ethical considerations– including participatory practices of exchange and a multi-layered approach to informed consent – as well as my reflective and, at times, speculative analysis of the *Spiritual Flavours* project.

This research also extends scholarship within Geography that argues for the value of situated research exploring the visuality/materiality of phenomena – in this case, of multi-faith food religious practices – by developing emergent perspectives through the performativity of (visual/material) creative research practices. In particular, I explore how visual/material reconfigurations at the intersection of food religious practices and of visual creative practices 'intra-act' and produce sensual/affective experiences, attributes and meanings. For example: through creative processes, visual/material, sensual/affective properties of commensality are made visible; dishes cooked for the camera become meaningful through spiritual and biographical narratives; suburban faith research bodies are co-constituted and made visible through food, religious and visual practices, and; new inter-faith relationships are (re)cognised and (re)configured.

This thesis asks: what are the visualities/materialities that occur through the creative practices and research process? These, I argue, are emergent forms of knowledge production which, in this case, are intimately connected and attuned to aesthetic, embodied and affective engagements with food practices as part of participants' faiths and religious cultures. Thus, the creative outcomes of this research engage with the visuality/materiality of the relationship of food and faith in ways that are in themselves intimate, aesthetic, intense and emergent.

Relatedly, the choice of a participatory approach to suburban religious diversity and conviviality was vital to the development of the *Spiritual Flavours* project and the new (multi-faith) concepts and relationships it *practically* achieves. In the making of the various creative outputs, this project brought friends and family members together – people wanted to cook with and for other people, buy groceries together, or take food to relatives. This simultaneously enabled and captured participants' relationship between food and faith as *lived* and materially and logistically possible within everyday contexts at home and within faith spaces, where other family and community dimensions intersect. As such, this research demonstrates the value of creative practices for exploring emergent forms of everyday (Ammerman 2007), vernacular (Bowman and Valk [2012] 2014), material (Engelke 2011; Meyer 2008; Morgan 2009) and lived (McGuire 2008b) religion. Moreover, my creative and participatory practices also brought people from different faith communities and different audiences together (general public, visual arts, and academia), creating a community around the concept and practice of *Spiritual Flavours*. Thus, this research explores the theoretical, methodological and empirical potential of creative practices for intervening – conceptually, aesthetically, materially, and affectively – in the phenomena it investigates. It 'invents the social' (Marres et al. 2018a) and embodies Barad's call for an 'ethico-onto-epistem-ology'(2007:185) (see chapter two). I have also discussed the challenges of assessing the impact of creative research practices, which extend beyond the control of the researcher and practitioner (Hawkins 2015).

In order to critically engage with what creative research practices 'do', it is useful to consider Barad's notion of apparatus, as 'the material conditions of possibility and impossibility', which 'enact what matters and what is excluded from mattering' (2007:148). She argues that apparatus specify 'agential cuts' that enact determinate boundaries, which are both semantic and ontic. This helps understand how exploring a research topic, such as food and faith in suburbia, will materially enact different realities and meanings if using different equipment – for example, a handheld camera with a flash to photograph religious interior spaces or a camera and a tripod instead. However, the apparatus is not limited to the specific instruments deployed, but includes methods and techniques, as well as discursive-material contexts. For instance, the different MSF creative projects involve different apparatuses: photographing and filming cooking processes at people's homes to investigate food and religious biographies; observing music practices within religious settings and taking ethnographic notes (see Hyacinth

2019);[122] exploring religious diversity through a participatory embroidery project (Dwyer, Beinart, and Ahmed 2019); or using architectural model-making materials to explore a topic within educational settings.[123]

Crucially, Barad (2007:148) argues that '[m]eaning is made possible through specific material practices'. Here, '[s]emantic contentfulness is achieved not through the thoughts or performances of individual agents but through particular discursive practices', which are not exclusively human. This corresponds to the view that artistic practices always exceed the researcher's parameters and frameworks of knowledge (Barrett 2010; Hawkins 2014), since they continuously become meaningful through the performativity of local/situated intra-actions of discursive-material practices – which also enriches understandings of the transformative potential of the 'creative encounter' (Hawkins 2014:10) as distributed and relational. Here, the various creative engagements of interdisciplinary making, editing, sharing and disseminating the work (such as filmmaking sessions, book design, presentations, screenings, exhibitions, launches, community events and private gatherings, in this case, often involving food) determine the situated embodied experiences with the work. For instance, the *Meals* series illustrates how the curation, sharing and dissemination of visual practice can contribute to the methodology and knowledge production of the research in material performative ways, as it was conceptually and formally defined through curatorial practice for an exhibition of the *Spiritual Flavours* project in Helsinki. The shape and meaning of the work were partly determined by non-human agency, such as the cultural centre and its location in a multicultural neighbourhood, the technical limitations of the space, and the festival's budget.

Therefore, part of the work of this thesis has been to critically consider the embodied and situated material practices involved in both the making and disseminating of the creative work, including the enactment of (ethical) co-constituted subjectivities and relations of positionality, the distributed sensorial and affective capacities within such creative encounters, and the political and ethical dimensions at play (for example, regarding the forms of labour, as well as participants' consent, agency and exposure).

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[122] See Hyacinth's (2019:50) account of how the visual/material presence of her notepad while doing participant observation in different religious settings enacted different relationships of positionality.

[123] See *Architectures of Shared Space* as part of MSF: https://makingsuburbanfaith.wordpress.com/projects/brentside-high-school-architectural-project/

Contributions to understandings of research positionality

One original contribution of this thesis resides in understanding how attending different religious research settings continuously transformed my relations of positionality and performed multiple, blended and hybrid identities and co-constituted subjectivities. These were occasioned through the embodied and affective dimensions and the practicalities of different clothing norms, religious schedules, locations, collective food preparations and consumption, as well as my own photographic practice and access (see chapter two). As such, this thesis also contributes to scholarship exploring the situated character of research practice and knowledge (Rose 1997), by challenging the notion of a single positionality (based on a fixed background and stable identity markers) and arguing for multiple 'relations of positionality' of both the researcher and participants, as dynamic and constantly emerging through the intra-actions of discursive-material practices. Furthermore, in chapter two, I discussed how working as part of a research team intensified the presence of its research aims and (creative) practices across the different faith spaces and locality, which collectively contributed to the enactment of discursive-material practices and 'boundary-making' that determined plural meanings of multi-faith suburban creativity. Our presence often entailed material practices of exchange (directly or indirectly) emerging from the creative and research practices.

Thus, I argue that, in my research, practices and relationships of reciprocity were more significant for determining dynamic relations of positionality than other identity markers, such as gender, race, age and religious orientation, which would, nevertheless, be present (see Hyacinth 2019:51). Notably, developing relationships where the communities received some of my work back enabled me to obtain access to community spaces and events and shaped the way people responded to my presence and work. Therefore, in my research, the binary of 'insider/outside' (Merriam et al. 2001) is not a productive analytical framework for my relations of positionality and how they shaped the research outcomes. Instead, it is more relevant to consider the different relationships that developed within different contexts of practice, including those of curiosity, tolerance, collaboration, recognition, negotiation, exchange, and support. These were performed within *discursive-material* practices involving (but not limited to) clothes, photographic and film equipment, sound recorders, cars, printed materials, cleaning products, community websites, exhibitions and film projections, potato peelers, people's homes and their gardens and lots and lots of food. While these relations were not exempt of

negotiations and silences, they ultimately developed into relationships of trust and mutual care. As such, in the process of learning through doing – or within participatory and entangled forms of knowing and being – I was privileged to meet people in these communities that I admire and with whom I have developed personal and, hopefully, long-lasting relationships, beyond identity markers and categorisations. My research is a product of these various human and non-human discursively and materially enacted relationships, including those involving other members of the MSF team.

<u>Contributions to the fields of geographies of religion, religious studies, geographies of food and food studies</u>

This research foregrounds food as a key material culture for the expression of multi-faith suburban identities and creativity, and contributes to scholarship exploring how faith communities create spaces, for example, through architectures and interior spaces (Gilbert et al. 2015; Naylor and Ryan 2002, 2003) and creativity (Ahmed and Dwyer 2017; Gilbert et al. 2019). It also contributes to scholarship that acknowledges Anglo-Saxon suburban geographies as specifically multicultural, religiously diverse and creative (Gilbert et al. 2019; Dwyer et al. 2013). Notably, it visualises suburban diversity through creative outputs, which uniquely engage seven different faith community case studies in one locality to explore the relationship between food and faith. This provides a rich empirical understanding of the myriad of ways in which food and religious practices relate.

The thesis also engages with discussions on and responses to the post-secular turn (Cloke and Beaumont 2013) within geographies of religion, where scholars have argued for the blurring of boundaries (e.g. Bartolini et al. 2017) or for an understanding of the 'continuum' (Maddrell 2009:690) between the secular and the spiritual/numinous (or non-secular) within everyday urban environments, bodies, practices, institutions and communities – a distinction which some scholars attribute to a specifically Judeo-Christian tradition (e.g. Jazeel 2018). In particular, this research empirically illustrates multiple ways in which the capacity of food to move across bodies and spaces contributes to define, reinforce and transition between – or, indeed, challenge the binaries of – sacred/secular, inside/outside and public/private. The creative outputs provide rich examples of how the potential qualities of food as embodied, occasional and transient, alongside its capacity to traverse these perceived thresholds, makes food practices a unique and fertile area for further understanding how experiences of sacred spaces and of

religious norms are (re)defined, but also made temporarily malleable, porous or 'unbound' (della Dora 2015) – including examples of how transient food events allow for a more flexible practice of institutional and gendered norms (as demonstrated in the *Meals* series captions and analysis in chapter four).

The above underlines the material performativity of discursive-material practices involving food – or the different 'local material resolutions of the inherent ontological indeterminacy' (Barad 2003:816) – which enact religious practices, identities and bodies. Thus, this thesis proposes that Barad's notion of posthuman materialist performativity is not only productive for understanding the performativity of the creative practices and methods employed, but also for exploring how food is engaged in enacting religious practices and spirituality. This enriches understandings of how 'the divine is presenced and the sacred is made' (Dwyer 2016:760). In this sense, the research empirically illustrates how religious practices are occasioned and materialised through food practices and vice-versa. This speaks to scholarship which seeks to investigate geographies of religion beyond the 'officially sacred' (Kong 2001) by exploring material practices with food at home and in 'non-sacred' spaces as embodied sites for the enactment of spirituality and religious identities and values. In this sense, this thesis might also be of interest to scholars who have noted the need for exploring the challenges and potential contribution of new materialism for the material study of religion (Birgit 2019:620; Hazard 2013:58).[124]

Relatedly, this thesis also recognises the limitations of Barad's materialist performativity for researching and understanding faiths and the sacred. This echoes scholars in geographies of religion who have argued for the need to include and be open to plural ontologies (Dwyer 2016; Yorgason and della Dora 2009) that resist reduction to, for instance, materialism (Bartolini et al. 2019:1121) and to remain open to spiritual affective registers and 'the agency of the Gods' (Holloway 2011:37). While Barad's materialist ontology is aligned with understandings of spirituality as immanent in its existence (Dewsbury and Cloke 2009:697), as argued in chapter three, it is seemingly incompatible with theological views that understand the divine as transcendent from *matter* and the universe, as it challenges the ontological condition of exteriority of (human an non-

[124] See discussion on im/material and emergent geographies of religion and on material, lived, everyday and vernacular religion in chapter three.

human) agency (2003:815).

This research also contributes to the scarcity of scholarship within geographies of religion which engages with both the 'politics and poetics' of religion (Kong 2001). It provides intimate and intense experiences and imaginations of the interconnections between the politics and poetics of food and faith practices – as empirically enabled and captured through the creative outputs – which, in turn, are inseparable from the politics and poetics of the creative practices themselves. This underscores the value of creative research for providing rich and comparative empirical material that visualises the connection between different geographical scales, across, for instance, community, family and the personal through food practices. This contributes to the dearth of research on food and religion that compares different faiths (Norman 2012:411). Importantly, it also contributes to the scarcity of research on food and religion in domestic spaces where women have a significant role (Norman 2012:414; McGuire 2003:107; Desjardins 2015). Notably, a central interest of this research is the visualisation of (gendered) embodied, sensuous and affective material food practices, which also contributes to the lack of scholarship on women, embodiment, religion, and food. In so doing, it extends research that recognises recipes and cookbooks as forms of embodied matrilineal (religious) identities and heritage (Berzok 2011; Kohn 2002; Romines 1997).

In keeping with the thesis's exploration of the performativity of creative practices, the project interrogates what cookbooks 'do' and therein makes an experimental contribution, which extends understandings of the potential of using cookbooks as research practice (Bagelman et al. 2017). Here, the *Spiritual Flavours* book creatively exploits the affective and narrative affordances of cookbooks to elicit a sense of a multi-faith suburban identity and community through food and biographical stories, which are intensified by the visceral experience of the recipes it collects (Ferguson 2012). This builds on scholarship exploring how recipes and cookbooks help define and re-define gendered religious identities (Bailey-Dick 2005; Bishop 1997; Romines 1997), which are rooted in biographical histories and stories, and which make (religious) communities (Bower 1997b; Cotter 1997). Cookbooks serve to connect people with other family and community members, but also to people and places left behind, due to bereavement and migration journeys. Thus, I argue that food, recipes and cookbooks are particularly relevant material cultures for how people enact the 'absence-presence' (Maddrell 2013:517) of people, identities and (religious) family histories in ways that are embodied,

affective and gustatory.

As such, this thesis also speaks to geographies of food exploring visceral experience (Cook et al. 2011; Goodman 2016; Hayes-Conroy and Martin 2010; Longhurst et al. 2009) and food's agency for changing orientations toward the "other" (Cook et al. 2013; Highmore 2008; Johnston and Longhurst 2012). Notably, this research empirically reveals multicultural faith communities as key spaces where people develop positive multicultural (and spiritual) relationships and conviviality through food practices and exchange. These, I argue, support the development of religious identities as inherently multicultural, which enriches geographies of religion and scholarship concerned with home-making practices and multiculturalism within religious communities (e.g. Watson 2009). Equally, the research provides empirical evidence of the centrality of food exchange for (multicultural) collaboration, networks, outreach and PR events with other faith communities and local groups (as shown in the film).

Given the above, through the development of each of the creative outputs, the thesis provides evidence of the different categories of the relationship of food and faith outlined by religious studies scholars (Desjardins 2015), such as: food offerings; dietary restrictions or laws; fasting practices; food prepared for special religious occasions and; food charity (see chapter three). Crucially, a key contribution of this research is the way it produces more intimate, personal and nuanced examples and accounts of these categories than conventional social sciences research. Within the practical logistics of making the creative outputs, complex and nuanced narratives emerged at the intersection of home, migration, identity, community and belief. These are imbued with sensorial, embodied and emotional dimensions, and challenge straightforward assumptions and stereotypes around gender, age, family and community relations. Thus, through creative practices, this research contributes new 'lived', intersectional, multi-scalar and multi-faith perspectives to everyday (Ammerman 2007), vernacular (Bowman and Valk [2012] 2014), material (Engelke 2011; Meyer 2008; Morgan 2009), lived (McGuire 2008b) and embodied religion (McGuire 2008a, 2008d).

Further, these nuanced narratives, I argue, suggest additional significant (sub)categories and findings of the relationship of food and faith across different scales: First, the *Spiritual Flavours* project illustrates that food is central for affective experiences of religious spaces (Anderson 2009; Holloway 2006) and for making family and home within them (Sharma 2012). This not only related to the visceral experience of the

incorporation of food itself (Fischler 1988:279), which in many instances is imbued with a sense of connection with the divine (Wood 2008, 2016), but also emerges through the aesthetic and affective capacities of material arrangements of commensality (as enabled and captured in the *Meals* series), as well as communal embodied practices of food preparation, serving and cleaning, which are closely connected with the politics of resources and voluntary work in these faith communities and follow gender and age hierarchies.

Second, as echoed in the epigraphs to this chapter, the *Spiritual Flavours* project reveals that the sensuous and embodied dimensions of food are central for children's religious experiences, memory and intergenerational connections within religious homes and communities (see Fig. 164 to Fig. 166). This constitutes another significant category of the relationship of food and faith, which is also important for how families negotiate religious identities and the politics of religious education within multi-faith homes.[125] This draws on (and extends) scholarship on the relationship between food, memory and the senses (Connerton 1989; Holtzman 2006; Sutton 2001, 2008, 2010a, [1997] 2013). In particular, this thesis shows that faith-related embodied food practices are powerful mnemonic devices, precisely as they entail both symbolic and sensuous/affective dimensions, as suggested by many of the participants' biographical narratives and childhood memories. I further argue that these operate as temporal, rhythmic and affective markers, which punctuate religious identities, narratives and experiences.

Finally, this thesis contributes to recent scholarship exploring filmmaking as a research method within geography and geohumanities (Bartolini and DeSilvey 2020; Bates 2014; Gandy 2021). More specifically, given that the *Spiritual Flavour*s film was edited using emotional methods, and that it creatively explores the interplay of everyday embodied rhythms of cooking, eating and praying (see chapter six), this thesis will interest scholars exploring embodied geographies, such as emotional geographies (Anderson and Smith 2002; Davidson, Bondi, and Smith 2007; Davidson and Milligan 2004; Pile 2010; Rose 2004) and geographies of rhythm in everyday contexts (e.g. Degen 2010; Edensor 2010); thus, contributing to understandings of rhythm within geographies of religion (Maddrell 2011).

[125] See, for example, Carolyn's decision to start baking Challah bread to celebrate Shabbat at home, in spite of her protestant upbringing in the *Spiritual Flavours* cookbook (p.47-53).

Key themes emerging from the interplay of food, faith and creative practices in *Spiritual Flavours*

Through the development of creative practices, this research has foregrounded the ubiquity of food in worship settings and domestic faith practices and has enabled a series of themes on the relationship of food and faith to emerge. In this sense, the project's focus on food practices became a vehicle for exploring the 'visuality/materiality' (Rose and Tolia-Kelly 2012) of a series of faith-related phenomena.

As such, following the central argument of the inseparability of the research knowledge from the creative practices, much of the discussion of the empirical chapters focuses on the way the specific material practices involved in each of the creative outputs produced different kinds of knowledge and narratives about the relationship between food and religious practices. This included an analysis of the position of these creative outputs within media and visual practice traditions, which carry assumptions for how people interpret and engage with the work. I also analysed how the conceptual, creative and practical decisions involved at different production stages mobilise specific points of view and sensorial and aesthetic expressions of suburban food religious practices.

Thus, chapters four, five and six, explore how each of the *Spiritual Flavours* outputs produce poetic experiences and nuanced narratives of how spiritual and hierarchical relationships within faith communities and at home are (re)negotiated through food practices at the intersection of gender, age, migration, religion, family and education. In each creative output, these experiences and narratives emerge through their comparative structure, design, materiality, composition, and the relationship between their sensorial and aesthetic qualities and the (biographical) texts. Furthermore, informed by notions of materialist performativity, I argue that the *Spiritual Flavours* project and thesis produce understandings of suburbia as multicultural, multi-faith and creative, which are reinforced through the project's connection with the wider Making Suburban Faith research project.

<u>Visualising food within religious practices</u>

This PhD has showcased multiple examples of the significance and performativity of food for achieving religious practices in all of the faith communities involved. Many of these examples refer to official religious rituals, but the aim of this research has also been to consider vernacular food religious/spiritual practices with a particular attention to home. This expands our understandings of how food practices also perform religious

communities, social and family bonds, personal religious experiences, as well as religious education. This includes food practices, such as food charity, food restrictions and cooking practices that are experienced spiritually when performed in accordance to people's religious beliefs and principles.

The *Spiritual Flavours* project title suggests the embodied quality of food as spiritual, which, at times, speaks to the material agency of the food itself. Furthermore, the project's various creative outputs interweave detailed narratives of personal, relational and distributed experiences and expressions of the spiritual dimensions of food, cooking and eating, as well as the ways these intersect with other life and community events and practices. As such, one of the key themes that runs through the *Spiritual Flavours* project is not only the centrality of food within religious practices of different faiths, but also the plurality of dimensions and experiences of this relationship, which is articulated, foregrounded and echoed across the various creative outputs.

First, the *Meals* series engages with the 'politics and poetics' (Kong 2001) of this relationship with an approach that is both factual and aesthetic, focusing on the range of food practices and the significance of commensality for the spiritual, affective and social life of these communities. This is achieved through the interplay of formal images of their interiors of commensality and the image captions. On the one hand, the captions engage with the politics of religious commensality by describing different food events and their theological, historical or social significance. These include religious, social, charitable and outreach events (both public and private), which enable the expression of religious identities, multiculturalism, inter-faith dialogue, and processes of adaptation and integration within the urban locality. Thus, this series presents the various faith communities (to different degrees) as porous, diverse and interconnected with other faith communities and groups, as well as politically and socially active at a local, national and international scale. Additionally, the analysis of the individual images in chapter four demonstrates that commensal interiors are both central and contested spaces within which the interests of diverse groups and community cultures are (re)negotiated; and that, often, religious practices and organisational norms are defined and made flexible around food practices. On the other hand, these images – devoid of people – produce a poetics of religious commensality, as they foreground, interrogate and compare their visuality/materiality, and suggest a shared 'numinous' and 'sacred' quality. These engage with aesthetic, atmospheric and affective qualities of commensal material arrangements

and rearrangements (including table shapes, decoration, architecture, lighting, interior design and adaptation). The images' frontal and typological style provides the necessary detail, distance and stillness for the viewer to observe and compare the similarities and differences between these commensal spaces. Here, in dialogue with the captions, they create a space for visual interpretation and spiritual recognition. Thus, the series produces a new multi-faith iconography and aesthetic imagination of religious commensality.

The *Spiritual Flavours* book and film also foreground the politics of the organisation of food-related activities, explored in *Meals,* through the experiences of individual people and families and the motivations for their involvement in these communities. Thus, the book and the film, which showcase people enjoying the same commensal events, complement the *Meals* series with a much more personal, intimate and experiential perspective, which also engages with people' food religious practices at home. As such, the three outputs together connect and provide a detailed and interrelated overview of the centrality of food religious practices across community spaces and homes. The strongly personalised and situated manner with which the book articulates religious diversity complicates clear-cut categorisations and distinctions across faith denominations, thus mapping a network of entangled relationships between food and religion. Similarly, the film complicates the distinction between private and public as it develops a parallel between cooking at home and in worship spaces, making these spaces appear closely connected through everyday rhythms of cooking, food sharing and voluntary work. Through their focus on the participants' biographical histories, both book and film demonstrate the variability and interrelation of food practices, life circumstances and rites of passage – such as migration, retirement or key birthday celebrations – and people's religious practices at home and in worship spaces. In both spaces, food practices appear as fundamental for how people socialise and affirm their national, cultural and religious identities. Food also emerges as central for 'doing' family (Sharma 2012) and community, bringing different generations together, as part of everyday and special religious practices and celebrations; as well as for educating children into religious and family rituals, traditions and histories.

Gendered narratives of food and identity across faiths

While gender does not constitute an explicit research question of this PhD, it has emerged as an important analytical theme of the *Spiritual Flavours* project and this thesis, which pay special attention to the way food religious practices are gendered. This is most

obvious in how the three outputs showcase the gendered organisation of cleaning and food-related tasks in worship spaces. This includes food preparation for religious rituals, usually restricted to men, and for community meals, which largely falls on women's voluntary work – unless undertaken by employees who are usually men.

The different comparative strategies of the creative outputs – and the way these complement each other – produce situated, complex and nuanced gendered identity narratives. In chapter five, I discuss the way the structure and layout of the book enables connections across different stories, in contrasting or complementary ways. These demonstrate that, in some cases, there are more similarities in the experiences of food and faith from people of the same gender, similar age and family structures, than between those who share the same faith. The film also foregrounds the significance of age, gender and socio-cultural background for people's personal experiences of food and faith.

In chapter five, I also discuss how, while the majority of the recipe book contributors are female, the design of the *Spiritual Flavours* book borrows production standards from artbooks, aimed at non-gendered visual arts and general audience. This supports the recognition of women and community-led cooking and cookbooks as worthy of arts status – as opposed to their historical association to a lowly valued culinary domain. The film is also made in the style of high-production food programmes that celebrate the artistic skills of famous cooks, which usually feature male chefs, and present cooking and eating as sensorial intense experiences. The protagonists' relationship with cooking broadly follows these conventional gender stereotypes, most evident in the display of their cooking skills and the power dynamics when cooking together. However, the film also suggests Betty's professional career as a nurse (made explicit in the cookbook), by visually emphasising her skilled and technical approach to cooking the Christmas pudding. The film also stresses the connection between food, faith, gender, embodiment and education through the protagonists' emotional childhood memories of being inspired, comforted and rewarded when helping and learning to cook from their mothers.

The personal stories in the book also articulate gender in relation to other life dimensions and recognise the racialised and gendered struggles that some of its contributors have endured. These shaped the circumstances of their migration journeys and their opportunities in the UK, at the intersection of different cultures and education. Many of the contributors' biographical stories, however, also challenge culturally and religious-bound gendered stereotypes in various nuanced ways. Similarly, the narratives in the film

render visible, as well as omit, other personal dimensions which add complexity to the relationship between food, faith and gender. As such, the *Spiritual Flavours* addresses this relationship from multiple situated perspectives, which aims to avoid stereotyping. This is aligned with scholarship on the complexities of religious identity-making and gender (Dwyer 1998; Hopkins 2004).

Multi-faith storytelling with food.

The *Spiritual Flavours* project translates religious practices, beliefs and community histories through the shared, vernacular and everyday language of food. In chapter five, I discussed how the cookbook's comparative approach produces a multi-faith heteroglossia, where all the different voices of the participants are equally considered. This is achieved through the visual and written language of food and recipes (see Fig. 169), as well as the shared (third person) narrator and photographic point of view, which have a levelling effect. This renders religious diversity accessible through participants' biographical accounts and the visuality/materiality of their personal religious food, cooking processes, domestic material culture and portraits. These are presented with a consistent visual language – using candid, abstract and symbolic imagery – which allows for making connections across different stories (see chapter five). The other outputs also translate religious difference and put stories and faith communities at the same level through visual strategies. This includes a high-quality production visual style and the split-screen technique in the film (see chapter six), and the frontal typological approach of the *Meals* series (see chapter four). The film and the book also merge food religious storytelling with the genre of biographical cookbooks and TV food programmes. As such, the research develops an original exploration of the performativity of culinary visual media practices as narrative platforms for interrogating diverse personal relationships with food and religion. This, I argue, enables a genuine space for people to open up in ways that are more personal and intimate than more conventional social science methods.

As such, the project demonstrates how food practices, dishes and recipes operate as storytelling devices of community and family religious identities and histories, which are central to religious celebrations and education. Within official religious practices, food appears to have a mnemonic function for evoking religious scriptures, historical events, and religious rituals. The narratives from participants also provide numerous cases of food being used to perform personal and family religious storytelling at home. For example, Agnes' section is fascinating for the abundance of playful Christmas family

rituals and anecdotes involving food, with which her family enact and retell their religious identity. Importantly, this theme is also elicited in the project through its own creative and collaborative practices with participants, around recipe choices, food-related activities, image and text composition and approval (including learning from participants during editing processes). This substantiates the argument of the value of creative practices, which use recipes as narrative devices, for exploring personal experiences of food and faith. Furthermore, through discussions with participants about their individual and family culinary religious traditions, the project attributes value to recipes as religious, cultural and family heritage; a value that connects with practices of remembrance and memorialisation. As argued earlier, this makes a contribution to geographies of migration and of bereavement, by providing understandings of the role of (transient) food practices for enacting 'continuous bonds' and 'absence-presence' (Maddrell 2013:506) of people, places and times left behind.

The embodied, temporal, rhythmic and affective experience of *Spiritual Flavours*

As argued earlier, the *Spiritual Flavours* project produces visually rich, sensorial, aesthetic and emotional knowledge of various dimensions of the relationship of food and religious practices. Notably, the film complements the book and the *Meals* series by providing a deeper emotional quality to participants' experiences through their own voices, through the visual, sonic and atmospheric appreciation of their religious practices and environments, as well as through visual metaphors. This kind of knowledge sensitises audiences to the most palpable key theme. This consists of food practices as temporal, rhythmic, embodied, and affective markers of religious identities, practices and spirituality. Temporality is expressed through details on the periodicity of food religious events in the *Meals* series' captions. It is also expressed in people's narratives, where specific dishes bring past and prospective memories into being, as well as in recipes and religious traditions, which are preserved, transformed and adapted throughout life cycles and biographical phases. Additionally, some narratives express embodied and haptic experiences with food and spirituality, such as meditative experiences (see, for example Akin and Agya's narratives of embodied spiritual experiences of cooking). These have rhythmic and affective qualities associated to laborious and repetitive motion, often performed in silence or with spiritual music. Furthermore, certain stories suggest the affective capacities of the consumption of food involved in spiritual and religious ritual, which, for example, makes food 'taste better'. Both the cookbook and film provide

multiple (visual, sonic and biographical) examples of participants' somatic, sensorial and embodied experience of food, expressed through smells, sounds, touch and motion.

Crucially, this theme is also enacted through the aesthetic, rhythmic and sensorial qualities of the creative outputs. These have equally emerged from material, embodied and sensorial engagements with food and visual practice. Thus, the outputs connect with notions of embodied knowledge, both in relation to cooking, eating and praying, and to the skilled embodied knowledge of creative arts practices. As noted earlier, the film develops an affective and rhythmic parallel between the embodied and cyclical character of both everyday praying and cooking. Notably, it emphasises sound and embodied movement as key to the affective and rhythmic qualities of religious food practices, which makes an empirical creative contribution to the call for exploring 'different sensuous sacred geographies' (Kong 2001:226). The film also produces an affective experience of commensality through choreographic motion and sound involved in the orchestration of serving, eating, chatting, singing prayers, and clearing dishes throughout community meals. This complements the way the *Meals* series communicates temporal, atmospheric and rhythmic dimensions of religious commensality through its visual engagement with eating material arrangements. The series achieves this by creatively using natural and ambient light, as well as rhythmic compositions that emphasise symmetry, geographical forms, patterns and repetition. In chapter six, I discussed how the film also uses creative strategies, such as the split-screen technique, the mixing and repetition of diegetic and (non)diegetic sound and its original soundtrack, to produce an 'expanded' multi-sensory experience, which precipitates embodied, rhythmic and affective understandings of the interplay of food and faith.

The film also emphasises the importance of the visceral experience of food for the theological significance of commensality as a form of practicing human equality and inclusion. This is expressed through the editing decision of ending the film with the protagonists' enjoyment of the 'multi-faith' dish they have jointly cooked, when they all became connected through the sensorial pleasure of relishing the results of their collaboration (see Fig. 216). This substantiates the value of filmmaking for exploring non-ideational, visual, sensual, material and aesthetic relationships with food. It also supports the argument in this thesis that these 'more-than-representational' relationships with food are fundamental for religious sociality and pedagogy, as well as for developing and maintaining personal, family and community bonds, where embodied experiences

with food foster connections with people, places and different temporalities.

Considering this and the storytelling affordances of food explored in the previous section, I argue that the strength of food practices as affective markers, which punctuate religious practices, lies in the conjunction of their narrative and symbolic capacities with their bodily and sensuous ones.

<u>Intensifying a multi-faith community through *Spiritual Flavours*</u>

Finally, the *Spiritual Flavours* project mobilises and intensifies an experience of multi-faith conviviality. It uses the appeal of recipes to invite participants and audiences to engage with religious difference by experiencing the aesthetic and symbolic significance these have for other people's spirituality and personal histories – as enacted in the creative work. This engages with the affective, embodied and sensorial capacities of faith-related food through the potential of cooking and savouring the participants' dishes (in addition to the aesthetic and experiential qualities of the creative outputs). This enables an empathic, humane, intimate and embodied relationship with the religious 'other'. Crucially, it potentially traverses religious, geographic, academic and domestic spatial boundaries, through cooking, sharing and eating the *Spiritual Flavours* dishes. Here, the idea discussed in chapter five, that cookbooks intensify a sense of community and belonging through the somatic and corporeal experience of their dishes, becomes relevant for how the *Spiritual Flavours* cookbook creates and potentially intensifies a multi-faith community in Ealing (and beyond) around the notion of 'spiritual flavours'. Thus, the project also produces and disseminates a sense of a creative and multi-faith local identity and heritage through the recipes and their flavours. This also supports the aforementioned argument that food serves to promote and negotiate multi-faith relationships, identities and conviviality within homes, worship spaces and the suburban locality.

Importantly, this theme is also enacted through the way the project produces inter-faith dialogue and community relationships itself by: 1) bringing people from different faiths together, to cook, share food and recipes; 2) creating 'expanded' visual, sonic and material multi-faith experiences and imaginations of religious commensality and conviviality; 3) intensifying these experiences through public engagement events (exhibitions, film screenings, the Spice Lab interactive installation, presentations, book launches), which bring together multi-faith participants and audiences to experience and discuss the creative outputs, while, often, also sharing food.

Closing remarks and further research

In this chapter, I summarised how this PhD develops new perspectives for practice-led social science research which, informed by Barad's notion of performativity, makes a novel contribution to creative geographies, geographies of religion, and Cultural Geography more widely. I have elaborated on how this is a productive theoretical framework for understanding how the research methods and visual creative practices, such as photography and filmmaking for instance, contribute to the creation of the realities they explore and the way research subjects, bodies and relations of positionality are defined. This shifts the methodological research focus from a preoccupation with how research methods and visual practice might mirror or re-present pre-existing, pre-defined subjects and social realities, to a preoccupation with what research methods and visual practices (including visual/material representations) 'do', as well as how they contribute to producing different kinds of knowledge through the material practices in which they are involved. These are situated and specific to the research context, setting and the creative research practices, and have ethical and political dimensions. This underpins the thesis's principal argument regarding the inseparability of the knowledge produced by this research from the material and creative visual arts practices that have led the research.

Following this, I argue that an important contribution of this research is that it makes visible the entanglement of the 'politics and poetics' (Kong 2001) of religious food practices within and across faith communities and across the homes of some worshippers. In this sense, there is scope for further research on the politics and poetics of material food practices that are typically undertaken by inter-faith initiatives, such as food charities. Equally, the way different religious communities engage with political, ethical and environmental forms of food supply and waste is an important area of potential further investigation, as well as the use of food for non-edible purposes within religious practices. Here, I suggest there is productive dialogue that can take place between those exploring the politics of commensality or 'gastro-politics' (Appadurai 1981) and those exploring the agency of food, including sensuous, embodied and affective relations (also, notably, beyond the experience of food incorporation) in regard to how religious food practices contribute to the making of sacred space.

The recognition of religious food practices, in this thesis, as a form of religious creativity and heritage, in conjunction with the performativity of material and creative practices, opens up more possibilities for further interdisciplinary research and multi-faith activities.

These may bring into being new relationships and experimental hybrid forms of religious identity and heritage. Creative interdisciplinary research has the potential to further contribute original experiences and understandings of the entanglement between the politics and poetics of food and faith, which may further question specific binaries, such as secular/sacred, public/private and cognitive/embodied. This is underpinned by how the *Spiritual Flavours* project demonstrates that food practices – such as faith-related recipes and rituals, international food community events and the making of community cookbooks – are a common feature of religious 'vernacular creativity' (Gilbert et al. 2019:26), and have a significant role in place-making within families, faith communities and their (sub)urban locality. Notably, I argue that the *Spiritual Flavours* project and, especially, the cookbook creatively enact and intensify an experience of Ealing's multi-faith identity, creativity and heritage.

Similarly, I show that public engagement events are integral to the way the creative practices and outputs in this research produce new understandings of the relationship of food and faith. For example, the dissemination of the *Meals* series in various exhibition contexts produced original multi-faith – visual, aesthetic and affective – experiences and imaginations of religious communal commensality, which expand the predominant imaginations of the Last Super in Christian cultures.

Additionally, the writing of this thesis elicits understandings of food religious practices and commensality through my own aesthetic, symbolic and speculative interpretation of each of the images in the *Meals* series. Here, I reflect on my empirical findings of food practices in each of the faith communities, as well as the knowledge emerging form the editing process and writing the captions (see chapter four). This process foregrounds the significance of food spaces for the religious and social lives of communities and the importance of the material arrangements of community kitchens – including their architectural and interior design, functionality and access – for how religious and social practices are organised. This is a subject that calls for further (multi-faith) creative, visual and ethnographic research. My analysis of the *Meals* series also recognises halls in religious buildings as fertile sites for further investigating the social and financial lives of religious communities, through a visual/material exploration of their interiors and material practices, which, alongside food practices, emerge as platforms for personal and community inclusion, adaptation and transformation.

I also argue that the narratives in the *Spiritual Flavours* project make an original empirical contribution to understandings of food and faith through the richness in qualitative – visual, sonic, atmospheric and biographic – detail, which also substantiates the value of creative research practices. Furthermore, the methodological engagement with performativity also supports a contribution of this thesis to promoting understandings of visual practices as much more than documenting the relationship of food and faith in a London suburb, but as part of a research process that produced relationships of care and a sense of multi-faith conviviality. The project developed positive, multi-faith and multicultural relationships, harnessing dialogue, empathy and trust. Moreover, as argued in chapter five, the actual recipes are a key contribution of this research. Being able to cook and appreciate these recipes (while simultaneously understanding their spiritual and biographical value), intensifies a sense of community around the notion of 'spiritual flavours' through the somatic, sensual and symbolic experience of the dishes.

Finally, this research contributes to understandings of participatory creative methodologies. Specifically, it explores the potential of participatory creative outputs for producing and disseminating experiences of social science research knowledge in ways that become meaningful and accountable to the participants and communities involved, as well as to wider audiences. This is most evident with the photobook, as community cookbooks are artefacts that people develop strong attachments with, and which are easy to show, share and distribute (discussed in chapter five). This attachment is partly through the way recipe contributors are placed in a position of expertise and recognition, which generated a sense of pride. It is also partly because the participatory methods involved in making the book enabled collaboration, sharing and the development of friendships.

Thus, through its circulation and longevity, the book has the potential to produce societal impact beyond both the academic context and the public engagement events of this research. As an object, the book has become part of the lives of the participants and communities. Participants like Jacqui, quoted in the epigraph to this conclusion, are moved by the portrayal of their history in an artbook and are keen to show and share it with other people. Furthermore, deeply personal events that took place during the development of the film and the book became part of the narratives of the creative outputs or part of the memories associated to them. The view that cookbooks commemorate loved ones who are no longer alive is a reality in this case. Two participants lost loved relatives who participated and feature in the book. The book is also dedicated to Professor Claire

Dwyer, who died just before the final print run. For these participants, for Claire's family, for the Making Suburban Faith team and for me, the recipe book is a precious object, which enables continuous bonds with people who are deeply missed and also, in this case, with Claire's academic and personal legacy.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Printed materials for public engagement

Spiritual Flavours Film postcards (A6)

Design: Joanna Brinton.

SPIRITUAL FLAVOURS A FILM BY LAURA CUCH

Since she married, Betty made Christmas pudding every year without fail. However, she stopped when her husband sadly passed away. For the film *Spiritual Flavours*, Betty has cooked the Christmas pudding for the first time in twenty-two years. In making the pudding, she has used the calico cloth in the way her Mum would have used it.

Find Betty's Mum's Christmas Pudding recipe at
WWW.SPIRITUALFLAVOURS.COM

Directed by Laura Cuch
Cinematography by Laura Cuch & Theo Ribeiro
Edited by Laura Cuch & Laura Belinky
Original soundtrack by Joseph Rowe

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WWW.MAKINGSUBURBANFAITH.ORG

Arts & Humanities Research Council

SPIRITUAL FLAVOURS A FILM BY LAURA CUCH

Aziz affirms that being Muslim is part of all aspects of one's life; anything you do, it must be your worship to Allah. Like many other Moroccan people, Aziz eats tagine every day after breaking the fast during the month of Ramadan. For the film *Spiritual Flavours*, he has cooked a chicken tagine and stuffed msaman.

Find Aziz's recipes for Vegetable Tagine and Stuffed Msaman at
WWW.SPIRITUALFLAVOURS.COM

Directed by Laura Cuch
Cinematography by Laura Cuch & Theo Ribeiro
Edited by Laura Cuch & Laura Belinky
Original soundtrack by Joseph Rowe

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WWW.MAKINGSUBURBANFAITH.ORG

SPIRITUAL FLAVOURS A FILM BY LAURA CUCH

Ossie is the youth coordinator of Ealing's liberal synagogue. His passion is cooking and next year he will go to university to train as a chef. For the film *Spiritual Flavours*, he has cooked his own refined version of the traditional Jewish chicken soup with a Japanese touch, inspired by Ealing's vibrant Japanese community.

Find Ossie's recipe of Chicken Consommé with Chicken Gyoza and Sweet Vegetables at
WWW.SPIRITUALFLAVOURS.COM

Directed by Laura Cuch
Cinematography by Laura Cuch & Theo Ribeiro
Edited by Laura Cuch & Laura Belinky
Original soundtrack by Joseph Rowe

MAKING SUBURBAN FAITH

WWW.LAURACUCH.COM
WWW.MAKINGSUBURBANFAITH.ORG

Spiritual Flavours foldable poster (A3)

Design: Joanna Brinton.

SPIRITUAL FLAVOURS

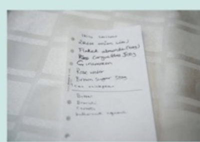
A PROJECT BY LAURA CUCH

THE PROJECT

Spiritual Flavours is a collaborative arts project with members of different faith communities in the area of Ealing and Hanwell, who contribute recipes that they relate to their spirituality and religious practices. Through interviews and cooking sessions, the project pays attention to affective relationships with food, as a vehicle to explore ideas about inheritance, tradition and belief. These sessions are the basis of a 'multi-faith' cookery photo book and a short film.

THE FILM

The film *Spiritual Flavours* interweaves biographical narratives and spiritual accounts from Betty, Aziz and Ossie (who belong to a Catholic church, a Mosque and a liberal Synagogue, respectively) with the experiences of cooking in their homes. The chosen recipes thread the narratives of past, present and future aspirations, spirituality and the everyday. The commonalities and differences between them are expressed through visual and sonic synchronies and asynchronies; and a variety of visual materials and formats make visible the nature of the film as a research process. At the end, Betty, Aziz and Ossie meet, cook and eat together.



THE BOOK

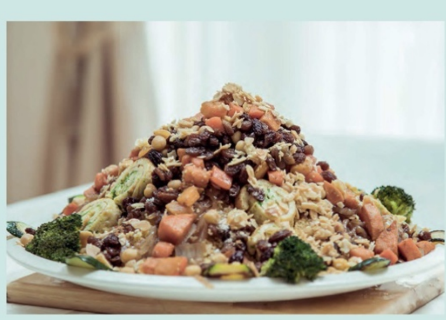
The photo book *Spiritual Flavours* includes recipes that people from diverse faith communities in Ealing have cooked for the Spiritual Flavours project. These recipes have been chosen because of their biographical and spiritual significance. The book, which is part of a research process, visually explores the relationship between food, faith and home, by intertwining portraits, biographical narratives, visual interpretations of such narratives, pictures of the cooked dishes and the food preparation, home interiors and objects, and Ealing landscapes.

THE ARTIST

Laura Cuch is a documentary and fine art photographer who has joined the project *Making Suburban Faith* to undertake a practice-led PhD where she employs photography and film to explore the domestic material cultures of faith in suburbia, with a particular focus on food and foodways.

MAKING SUBURBAN FAITH

Making Suburban Faith is a research project funded by the AHRC as a part of its Connected Communities programme, and is a collaboration between the Geography Departments of UCL and Royal Holloway. The project explores the ways in which suburban faith communities create space focusing on architectures, material cultures, rituals, music and performance. The project is based in Ealing in West London and focuses on diverse faith community case studies selected to represent different faith and migration traditions. These include a synagogue, a Sri Lankan Hindu temple, a mosque, a Sikh gurdwara, an Anglican church, a multicultural Roman Catholic church and an ethnically diverse Pentecostal church.



A MULTI-FAITH RECIPE

The three participants in the film *Spiritual Flavours*, Betty, Aziz and Ossie, met at a one-day workshop where together they developed, cooked and ate a dish inclusive of various different faiths.

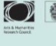
Find this multi-faith recipe, as well as the recipes each of them cooks in the film at www.spiritualflavours.com

WWW.SPIRITUALFLAVOURS.COM
WWW.LAURACUCH.COM
WWW.MAKINGSUBURBANFAITH.ORG

Image credits:
Cover: Betty sets the table,
RC Church of Our Lady & St Joseph, Hanwell
Left: Multi-faith recipe shopping list
Above: The finished multi-faith dish
All images Laura Cuch, 2016

Spirtual Flavours film credits:
Directed by Laura Cuch
Cinematography by Laura Cuch & Theo Ribeiro
Edited by Laura Cuch & Laura Belinky
Original soundtrack by Joseph Rowe

MAKING SUBURBAN FAITH



Postcards produced for the photographic exhibition the Shri Kanaga Thurkkai Amman (Hindu) Temple

Repurposed from Joanna Brinton's design.

SPIRITUAL FLAVOURS A PROJECT BY LAURA CUCH

As part of her doctoral research at Geography UCL, for over two years Laura Cuch has been taking pictures at the Kanaga Thurkkai Amman (Hindu) Temple with a particular interest in food, but also covering celebrations such as the chariot festival, its preparations and other everyday activities at the temple.

A selection of these images is on display at the temple during the last week of the Mahotsavam (Festival) 2017, as well as online at

For her project *Spiritual Flavours*, Laura Cuch is also making a photo cook book with recipes that are meaningful to people from different faith communities in Ealing, including the temple.

If you would like to contribute your own recipe, please contact Laura

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Poster (A3) produced for the photographic exhibition at the Shri Kanaga Thurkkai Amman (Hindu) Temple

Design: Laura Cuch

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Appendix B: Awards, publications, exhibitions, conference papers of thesis research and artworks

Grants and Awards

2020	Winner of the International Visual Sociology Association Rieger Project Award 2020.
2017	UCL One-Year Cross-Disciplinary Training Studentship to attend courses in the Department of Anthropology at UCL to attend the MA in Ethnographic and Documentary Film.
2016–17	Shortlisted for the AHRC Research in Film Awards 2016, London.
2016	AHRC Connected Communities Award for 'Food/Faith/Futures', as part of the Making Suburban Faith project.
2015–16	AHRC Doctoral Award, Geography, UCL.

Photographic Publications and Films

Cuch, L. 'Agnes' Recipe of Easter Żurek Soup with Blessed Salt'. Edited by Laura Mansfield and Elisa Oliver. Feast Journal, no. #2: Salt (February 2020). http://feastjournal.co.uk/article/agnes-recipe-of-easter-zurek-soup-with-blessed-salt/.

Cuch, L (2019) *Spiritual Flavours*. Signed Limited Edition 132 copies, London, UK. ISBN: 978-1-5272-4332-3.

Cuch, L. '*Spiritual Flavours*: Meals'. Edited by Laura Mansfield and Elisa Oliver. *Feast Journal*, no. #4: Spaces for Eating (2018). http://feastjournal.co.uk/article/spiritual-flavours-meals/.

Cuch, L. 'Arda's Choreg Recipe'. Edited by Laura Mansfield and Elisa Oliver. *Feast Journal*, no. #3: The Meal (2018). http://feastjournal.co.uk/article/spiritual-flavours-meals/.

Cuch, L (2017) *Spiritual Flavours.* Film directed and produced by Laura Cuch, London, HD, 28'.

Cuch, L (2016) *Introduction: Spiritual Flavours.* Film directed and produced by Laura Cuch, London, HD, 5'.

Exhibitions

2019 *Spiritual Flavours*, Watermans Art Centre, London, 4th Dec 2018 - 10th March 2019.

2018 *Spiritual Flavours*, in 'Ealing at the Tate: Making Sacred Space', TATE Modern, London, May 2018.

2017 *Spiritual Flavours*, in 'The Story Continues @ Home Ealing', W3 Gallery, June 17.

2017 *Spiritual Flavours*, Festival of Political Photography 2017: Post-Food, STOA, Helsinki.

Academic publications

Gilbert, D., Dwyer, C., Ahmed, N., Cuch, L., Hyacinth, N. (2019) 'Living, changing light': stained glass art and gendered creativity in the suburban church. Culture and Religion 26(1): 23–41. https://doi.org/10.1080/14755610.2017.1376695.

Guggenheim, Michael, and Laura Cuch. 2018. 'Encounter, Create and Eat the World: A Meal (Workshop)'. *EASST Review* 37(4):31–33.

Gilbert, David, Claire Dwyer, Nazneen Ahmed, Laura Cuch, and Natalie Hyacinth. 2019. 'The Hidden Geographies of Religious Creativity: Place-Making and Material Culture in West London Faith Communities'. *Cultural Geographies* 26(1):23–41. doi: 10.1177/1474474018787278.

Gilbert, David, Laura Cuch, Claire Dwyer, and Nazneen Ahmed. 2015. 'The Sacred and the Suburban: Atmospherics, Numinosity and 1930s Interiors in Ealing, London'. *Interiors* 6(3):211–34. doi: 10.1080/20419112.2015.1125616.

Academic conference and workshop organization

Cuch, L., Ferrari, D. & McNeil, J (2019, February) Cities of Light, Barcelona: Coexistence - Keynote: Itziar González; Session1: Who is the city for? Session 2: Home and Belonging. Co-organiser of this one-day conference, as part of Cities of Light Symposia, organised by the Urban Photography Association and Institut d'Estudis Fotogràfics de Catalunya, 21st -23rd Feb 2019, Barcelona.

Cuch, L & Ortigosa, J (2019, February) Urban Walk: Urban Transitions and Public Space. Co-organiser of this 3.5h walk, as part of Cities of Light Symposia, organised by the Urban Photography Association, 21st -23rd Feb 2019, Barcelona.

Cuch, L. & Stansfeld, K. (2018, August) Visual Approaches to the City: Mediating Everyday Landscapes - Session 1: Producing the Urban; Session 2: Exploring Identities, belonging and Everyday Practices and; Session 3: Cartographic Landscapes. Co-organiser of this three-session panel at the RGS-IBG Annual Conference, 28th-31st Aug, Cardiff University.

Guggenheim, M. & Cuch, L. (2018, July) Encounter, create and eat the world: a meal. Co-organiser of this workshop at the European Association for the Study of Science and Technology (EASST) 2018 Conference, 25th-28th July 2018, Lancaster University.

Cuch, L. & Hyacinth, N. (2016, March) Creative Approaches to Researching Religion in the City – Session 1: Embodied Practices and Narratives of Everyday Religion; Session 2: Exploring Faith through Participatory Public-Engagement Art and; Session 3: Negotiating Difference and Urban Space. Co-organiser of this three-session panel at the American Association of Geographers Annual Conference, 31th March – 4th April 2016, San Francisco, USA.

Academic conference presentations, seminars and guest lectures

Cuch, L. (2019, February) *Spiritual Flavours*. Presentation at the symposium Cities of Light, Barcelona: Coexistence, organised by the Urban Photography Association and Institut d'Estudis Fotogràfics de Catalunya, 21st -23rd Feb 2019, Barcelona.

Cuch, L (2008, October) *Spiritual Flavours* and Previous Work Presentation as guest speaker followed by a seminar, open to BA and MA Photography students, 3rd October, Kingston University, London.

Cuch, L (2018, October) *Spiritual Flavours* Film. Screening and discussion at Home and Religion: Space, Practice and Community from the 17th Century to the Present, 11th October 2018, Queen Mary University of London.

Cuch, L. (2018, September) Photographing the everyday sacred: Visual approaches to community research and public engagement. Paper presented at the 2nd

International Conference 'Photography in Academic Research: Images in the Post-Truth Era', 7th & 8th September 2018, Birkbeck University, London.

Cuch, L. (2018, August) *Spiritual Flavours*: using visual arts practice to explore food and faith in West London. Paper presentation at the session 'Visual Approaches to the City: Mediating Everyday Landscapes (2): Exploring Identities, belonging and Everyday Practices', RGS-IBG Annual Conference, 28th-31st Aug, Cardiff University.

Cuch, L. (2018, August) Negotiating the everyday sacred: Community and public engagement through visual and material practices. Paper presentation at the session 'Working with: participatory approaches in researching religions, spiritualties, and faith', RGS-IBG Annual Conference, 28th-31st Aug, Cardiff University.

Cuch, L. (2018, July) *Spiritual Flavours*: a visual project exploring food and faith in West London. Presentation at the symposium 'Welcome *to the* Fake*: Photography and the Politics of Authenticity', Photographers Gallery, 14th July, London.*

Cuch, L (2018, April) *Spiritual Flavours*: using visual arts practice to explore food and faith in West London. Presentation at the panel 'Food Geographies: Culture, Media, Politics', American Association of Geographers (AAG) Annual Conference 2018,10th – 15th April, New Orleans, USA.

Cuch, L (2017, December) *Spiritual Flavours* Film. Screening and presentation at the RHUL Landscape Surgery Seminar series, 5th Dec, London.

Cuch, L. (2017, July) *Spiritual Flavours*: A film about biographical narratives on food and faith. Paper presented at the Sociology of Religion Study Group Annual Conference 2017, July 12th-14th, Leeds, UK.

Cuch, L. (2017, April) *Spiritual Flavours*. Paper presented at the conference Engaging in Urban Image Making, 28 April 2017 at Goldsmiths, University of London, UK.

Cuch, L., (2016, October) Food, faith, home: Intersections between art, geographies of home and material culture. Paper presented at the conference International

Colloquium in Geohumanities “Closing Circles, Open Horizons, October 19th-22nd, Barcelona, Spain.

Cuch, L., (2016, September) *Spiritual Flavours*: A multi-faith photo recipe book. Paper presented at the conference 'Photography in Academic Research: Photography + (Con)Text’, UCL, 8th-9th September 2016, London, UK.

Cuch, L., Dwyer, C. and Ahmed, N. (2016, September) Cleanliness is next to godliness: the care and maintenance of the suburban sacred. Paper presented at ‘Sacred Stuff: Material Culture and the Geography of Religion (2)’, RGS-IBG Annual Conference, 30 Aug - 2nd Sept 2016, London, UK.

Cuch, L. (2016, July), Food, faith, home: Intersections between art, geographies of domestic religion and material culture. Paper presented at ‘Household Gods: Religious Domesticity in Britain Conference, 1700 to the present day’, Geffrye Museum, 15th July 2016, London, UK.

Cuch, L. (2016, June) Food, Faith, Home: Intersections between Art, Geographies of Home and Material Culture. Paper presented at ‘Practicing GeoHumanities: Research at the Intersection of Geography and Creative Practice’ Conference, 16th June 2016, Royal Geographical Society, London, UK.

Cuch, L. (2016, March) Food, Faith, Home: A visual exploration of religious and domestic material culture. Paper presented at the conference Session ‘Creative Approaches to Researching Religion in the City 2: Exploring Faith through Participatory Public-Engagement Art’, AAG Annual Conference, 31th March – 4th April 2016, San Francisco, USA.

Cuch, L. (2016, January) Food, Faith, Home: A visual exploration of religious and domestic material culture, Presentation at RHUL Landscape Surgery seminar series, 12 January 2016, London, UK.

Cuch, L. (2015, October) Making Suburban Faith: A visual exploration of the religious and domestic material culture. Paper presented at the symposium ‘Centre For the Study of Home: Postgraduate Study Day’, Geffrye Museum, 21st October 2015, London, UK.

Cuch, L. (2015, June). Photography, performativity and affect: a visual approach to the study of faith in London suburban homes. Paper presented at the conference '5th

International and Interdisciplinary Conference on Emotional Geographies 2015',
10-12 June 2015. Edinburgh, UK.