

HERBAL PRACTICE: A SYMBOLIC APPROACH TO ARTISTIC MEDICINE

(OR: THE ARTISTIC PRACTICE AS
REGURGITATING FINDINGS)



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FIG.1: CHILDREN'S
SCHOOLTRIP HERB-PICKING

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This is to certify that to the best of my knowledge, the content of this thesis is my own work. This thesis has not been submitted for another degree, or other purposes. I certify that the intellectual content of this thesis is the product of my own work and that all the assistance received in preparing this thesis and sources have been acknowledged.



Maria Ilieva

ABSTRACT:

This paper aims to research and study how traditional Bulgarian herbal healing and theoretical matter can influence artistic research and whether they can be applied as methods to the artistic practice, guiding it to take a more self-sustainable form. Herbal medicinal plants have been applied to the daily lives of generations upon generations of humans, as tools to aid and better one's health, as well as symbols in ritual practices across the globe. In this paper I am contextualizing herbal medicine within the scope of the contemporary artistic practice, through decomposing the process of using herbal medicine into three key steps: gathering, combining and ingesting. I apply art theory based on these topics, to compare the herbal and artistic worlds, using the symbolic, metaphorical aspect of herbal healing while keeping the logic behind it. Through this process, I aim at making a connection that strengthens the notion of the artistic practice both as a medicinal, as well as a deeply self-centric and self-sufficient practice.



FIG.2: SCHOOLCHILDREN
PICKING CHAMOMILLE. 1960s.

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AA.

An approximate scheme for determining the single dose of drugs according to the age of the patient¹:

from 25 to 60 years – 1 dose
 from 14 to 25 years – 2/3 dose
 from 7 to 14 years – 1/2 dose
 from 4 to 7 years – 1/3 dose
 from 3 to 4 years – 1/6 to 1/4 dose
 at 2 years – 1/10 to 1/8 dose
 at 1 year – 1/12 dose

As far back as we can go, it has been observed that humans interact with their direct surroundings: they find meaning in, and define themselves through it. Reacting to nature, one seeks the answers within it: a wooden house or a cave as shelter from harsh weather, leather as armor against the animal it comes from, and medicine against disease – a disease being a byproduct of living in said environment.

Primates are known to ingest herbs to treat illness, and perhaps learning from their example, humans followed. The oldest traces of medicinal plants used have been found at the Shanidar IV temple in Iraq², dating 60 000 years ago. We have written resources dating 5 000 years, categorizing hundreds of plants on clay tablets, found in Mesopotamia³. They have been used in Ancient Egypt,

1 Димитър Памуков. Христо Ахтарджиев. *Природна аптека*. (София: Земиздат, 1989) p.18

2 "A Neanderthal burial site dated 60–80,000 years ago which was excavated in 1957–1961. Archaeologists found the body of a man they named Shanidar IV, (...) buried with the flower heads of eight species of medicinal plants: Yarrow, Cornflower, Bachelor's Button, St. Barnaby's Thistle, Ragwort or Groundsel, Grape Hyacinth, Joint Pine or Woody Horsetail and Hollyhock. As none of the other 9 corpses were buried with plants, one belief was that Shanidar IV might have been a traditional healer". See M. Wilde.

3 Wikipedia Contributors. "History of Herbalism". *Wikipedia*. Wikimedia Foundation, 8 September 2019. Accessed 3 March 2023

India, China, Greece, and Rome – as well as in Thrace⁴.

In "Researches on Plants", Theophrastus calls Thrace the richest region of medicinal herbs in the world at that time, and Dioscorides gives us a detailed description of the herbs used by Thracians⁵.

One of the first written sources of the knowledge and application of herbal medicine in Bulgaria has been found in the "Six Days" of John the Exarch⁶, from the 7th Century AD. It describes specific herbs, such as hemlock, hellebore, mandrake and opium, and their widely-spread uses. The Bogomils were also known for their herbal remedies (10th C. AD), and their recipe books can still be found to date⁷. Notably, herbal practices have been popular in Bulgaria since the Middle Ages, with them being the basis of Bulgarian traditional medicine, and the herbal medicine we use today. After the fall of communism, due to privatizations of businesses as well as high unemployment rates channeling workers towards herb-picking enterprises, Bulgaria is currently the prime exporter of herbs in Europe⁸.

4 Thrace is the ancient name of the Balkan area south of the Danube River, west of the Black Sea, east of the Strimon River and north of the Aegean Sea – or, the current territory of Bulgaria. Bulgarians are thought to be direct descendants of the Thracian population.

5 See Discorides, *De materia medica*, pages 68–71. Refers to Dacia – the Transylvanian plateau with the Danube River and the Carpathian Mountains to the east and south; now central Romania (today the northwest portion of Bulgaria). And Macedonia – the south of the Balkanpeninsula including Greece, Bulgaria and North Macedonia.

6 Йоан Екзарх, *Шестоднев* (София: Наука и Изкуство, 1981).

7 The Bogomil medicine book "Zeleynik", compiled in the 10th–11th centuries, is the oldest recipe book preserved to this day describing ancient ways of treating with herbs. See sanusetsalvus.com, *Медицината на богомилите*, and Angel Arakov, *Зелейник (илачник)*. Богомилски Рецепти, *bilkoviprodukti.com*, 2009.

8 Kerry Ploetz and Blair Orr, "Wild Herb Use in Bulgaria", *Economic Botany*, vol.58, no.2, April 2004, p.232, and Ministerie van Landbouw, Natuur en Voedselkwaliteit. "Bulgaria Is the Largest Producer of Herbs in the European Union", *Nieuwsbericht*.

BOGOMIL
 RECIPES FROM
 "ZELEYNIK"
 ↓
 ON PAGE
 47

When collecting, processing and using herbs, several key principles are observed:

When only the leaves of the plant are needed, its fruits and flowers should not be plucked, so as not to injure it unnecessarily and leading it to lose its ability to reproduce.

Not to pick all the herbs (of one species) in a given area, but to keep specimens for further propagation.

To study the herbs carefully according to the descriptions and illustrations in the specialized literature, especially when the herbs have medicinally useless or poisonous counterparts.

Herbs are harvested only in dry weather (when there is not even dew on them) and dried in the shade and in airy rooms.

The use of herbs should only be on the prescription of a specialist phytotherapist.

Today, herbalism and alternatives to Western contemporary medicine have been coming up as a new trend, as a previously-forgotten, unseen self-healing magical practice (that will allegedly save our souls). Yet these practices have been very much alive this whole time, and have been implemented in more than half of the Earth's daily habits. Regarding herbalism in the Occident, it has deep roots in Celtic and pagan cultures. Unfortunately, these were severely wiped out or ripped from the mass' general knowledge, as a byproduct of Christianity and the church's efforts.

In this text I wish to go through customs, rituals, histories and uses for herbs within the Bulgarian culture, and through them, remedying, reconceptualizing and recontextualizing the contemporary artistic practice.

In phytotherapy, herbal concoctions are made to enhance or stimulate the body's normal functions. With this philosophy in mind, I will tackle today's artmaking and research processes. (a need for relatively long-term use, slow action, but lasting manifestation of results, fewer side effects – a.k.a. not a need for direct and enforced action, to "fix", but rather to "aid").

these principles were
not only kept to
in the old days,
but remain in
place for any
herb-gatherer
today.

HERBAL HEALING
WAS MOSTLY
ASSOCIATED WITH
BEING A WOMEN'S
CRAFT / KNOWLEDGE.
HENCE, LABELLED
AS WITCHCRAFT

→ check
"Caliban
and the
witch"



FIG.3 PHOTO OF GIRLS FROM HAR-
MANLI IN FOLK DRESSES ON MIDSUMMER.
JUNE 10, 1931



FIG.4: HERBAL PHARMACY

A.

You feel ill. Or your GP has just broken the news to you, you are ill. Or you show clear symptoms of illness. In any case, you are in need of medical attention.

OPTION 1: You make your way down to their clinic. I will avoid using terms such as healer, doctor, physician, witch, or others, for fear of being untrue to the essence of their practice; in Bulgarian, they are simply called лекар (lek-ure), a curer. You sit down, complain, and are handed an herbal prescription, or recipe, to follow for a specific amount of time. They have even handed you instructions on how to handle, cook and take them. With some, you have to be more careful. You make your way to the herbal pharmacy, acquire the needed, and begin your tedious, or maybe not so tedious, healing process.

OPTION 2: you go home. You complain to your relatives. An avalanche of advice falls upon you, and you manage to strain out the necessary. Compresses, infusions, actions. You make your way to the herbal pharmacy, acquire the needed, and begin your tedious, or maybe not so tedious, healing process.

OPTION 3: you already know what you need. You have not only heard it your whole life, but have also come across one, if not many, of the "Herbs and the Gathering of" books at your grandma's, or in your friend's house, or laying around the streets of the city, or in the second-hand bookshops. You make your way to the herbal pharmacy, acquire the needed, and begin your tedious, or maybe not so tedious, healing process.

If you decide to go with option 1, your prescription may look like so:

FIG. 3

that's where I found mine

when preparing do not use metal, except for a knife when peeling the garlic.
200g of 95° ethanol spirit is poured over

ТИБЕТСКА РЕЦЕПТА ЗА ДЪГОЛЕТИЕ

200гр.обелен и чукал чесън ,се залива с 200 мл. етилов спирт-95 градуса.

Остава се на тъмно да кисне 10 дни при умерена температура.

На десетия ден се прецежда и се оставя още 3 дни да стои ,за да се избистри.

При приготвяне на настойката ,да не се употребяват метални съдове и предмети,освен нож за обелване на чесъна.

Приема се по схема 30 мин.преди хранене в чаша студена вода или неварено маяко-50 мл.

200g peeled and crushed garlic. let it marinate for 10 days in the dark and at room temperature

take in accordance to the scheme (below). 30min before a meal in a glass of cold water or unleavened milk - 50 ml.

СХЕМА НА ПРИЕМАНЕ

ДЕН	СУТРИН	ОБЕД	ВЕЧЕР
Първи ден	Една капка	Две капки	Три капки
Втори ден	Четири капки	Пет капки	Шест капки
Трети ден	Седем капки	Осем капки	Девет капки
Четвърти ден	Десет капки	Единадесет капки	Дванадесет капки
Пети ден	Тринадесет капки	Четиринадесет капки	Петнадесет капки
Шести ден	Петнадесет капки	Четиринадесет капки	Тринадесет капки
Седми ден	Дванадесет капки	Единадесет капки	Десет капки
Осми ден	Девет капки	Осем капки	Седем капки
Девети ден	Шест капки	Пет капки	Четири капки
Десети ден	Три капки	Две капки	Една капка
Единадесети ден	Двадесет и пет капки	Двадесет и пет капки	Двадесет и пет капки

По двадесет и пет капки до края на курса на приемане на настойката.

Може да се повтори лечението най-малко след 5 години.

the method/scheme can be repeated minimum after 5 years.

SINCE WE LIVE IN MODERN TIMES, IT CAN ALSO BE SENT TO YOU AS A PDF



CLAVICEPS PURPUREA

RUBIA

CHAPTER 1. THE GATHERING OF

And subsequent taxonomy of;

Herbs to aid the integumentary and muscular systems: nettle roots, alkane, dioscorea communis, rubia, ivy, black elderberry, sanicle, lovage, wild garlic, paliurus, Madonna lily, peganum harmala, claviceps purpurea, daisy, anemone hepatica, bittersweet, cade.

"Before the tool that forces energy outward, we made the tool to bring energy home."¹

If you are suspicious of the quality of the herbs offered in your local pharmacy, you may take up the challenge of picking the herbs yourself. Bulgaria has the privilege of having its metropolises, as well as smaller towns, dispersed. The cities have enough space around them to let nature do its thing, and citizens have the opportunity to be able to reach untouched nature relatively easily, if only they are to make their way outside of the city's limits. In many cases, going to your local park can also offer many herbal options. However, you may opt for a more biological, artisanal alternative, and make your way to the mountain to search for what you need.

"If it is a human thing to do to put something you want, because it's useful, edible, or beautiful, into a bag, or a basket, or a bit of rolled bark or leaf, or a net woven of your own hair, or what have you, and then take it home with you, home being another, larger kind of pouch or bag, a container for people (...)"²

Accumulating is an evolutionary advantage, as we feel safer when surrounded by valuables and possessions that aid us in our survival. Collecting is not only a human trait, but is present in other beings as well – birds, hibernating mammals, ants – it has a clear biological function. As well as objects, Foster

nettle is often also found in parks. Some herbs however are only found in very specific geographical areas.

¹ U.K. Le Guin, *Carrier bag theory of fiction*, 1986. (Ignota Books, 2019), p. 30

² Ibid, p. 32

mentions in his essay, the Internet has normalized the collecting and compiling of information to the point where information itself can be viewed as a found object.³ Gathering today comes to span over various media and realms; whether that be physical, digital, sonar, thoughts categorized in one's mind (through a memory palace⁴). And whatever the medium, the goal remains to acquire a certain mass of things. These things then compile and link to create different types of volumes – a hoard, a collection, an archive.

Ursula K. Le Guin nicely synthesizes it in *The Carrier Bag Theory of Fiction*, and touches upon two aspects of gathering that I believe play a role in the aiding of the artistic practice – the act of gathering, and the container of the gathered (such as the archive).

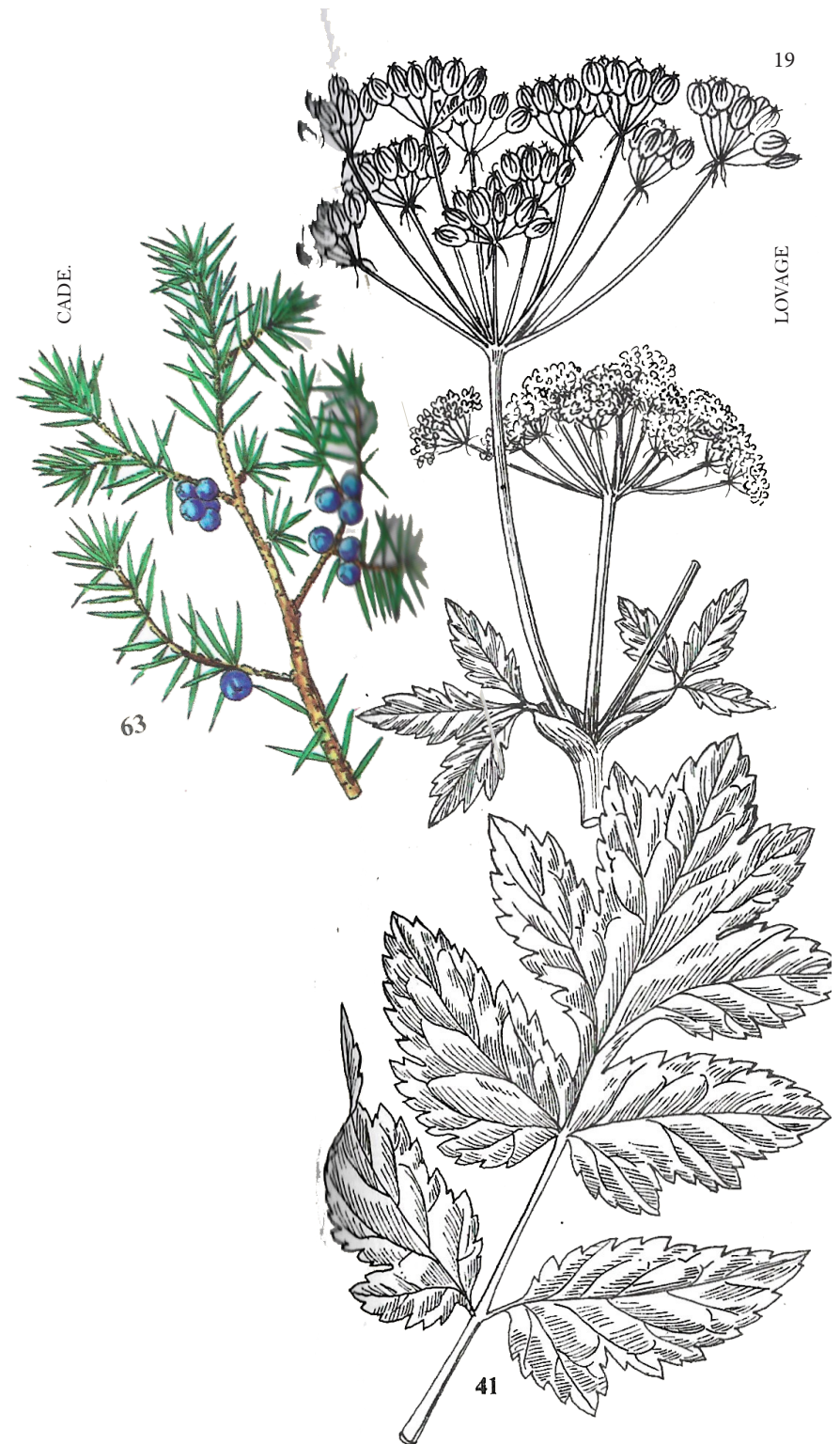
The act of gathering, even if it is with a specific goal in mind (e.g., finding berries, or information), tends to be a rhizomatic process. The appearance of *things* along the gatherer's path and gatherer's inherent disposition towards looking at the broader picture (everything can be useful, and anything can be needed at any moment) creates not so much a chain, or linearity, but rather a root system of findings that correlate to one another. And as with rhizome, the beginning is not what is important – rather, the movement and perpetual transformation is. Gathering becomes an act of continual transfiguration. The gathered, as the rhizome, has no boundaries assigned, but creates an open-ended decentralized structure- “...the carrier bag is a big jumbled mess of stuff. One thing is entangled with another, and with another.”⁵

And this entanglement we notice when our homes are overflowing with stuff; stuff that is valuable because of its contextual relation to the rest of the stuff, and because it triggers memories and knowledge embedded in its material.

3 Artspace Editors. “How the art world caught Archive Fever”. *Artspace*. 22. Jan 2014

4 The method of loci is a strategy for memory enhancement, which uses visualizations of familiar spatial environments in order to enhance the recall of information. Also called a memory palace.

5 Siobhan Leddy. “We should all be reading more Ursula Le Guin”. *The Outline*. 28. Aug. 2019



*"A simple feeling speaks about the value, the importance of everything ... this is the memory associated with all the events connected to each of these papers. To deprive ourselves of these paper symbols and testimonies is to deprive ourselves somewhat of our memories. In our memory everything becomes equally valuable and significant. All points of our recollections are tied to one another. They form chains and connections in our memory which ultimately comprise the story of life."*⁶

And as memories are tied to one another, so are objects, spaces. And so, a collection would take a lifetime to collect, following the logical course of amassing more objects proportionately to more memories. However, in some cases the collection is already predetermined in the collector's mind. As is the case with M. Thiers, 19th century French president and his cabinet of curiosities. The cabinet, and the meeting with the collector, is described in detail in *The cabinet of M. Thiers* by Charles Blanc⁷, where Blanc writes: "(...) before assembling his collection, he formed it as a whole in his head; he laid out the plan in advance, and has spent 30 years executing it ... M. Thiers possesses what he wants to possess... and what was the point? to arrange around himself a miniature of the universe..."^{8,9} This is less accidental gathering; this is more of a quest. A curious way of living, where things are considered as set in time and space, maybe. Or the universe seen almost as stagnant – where the drift of change does not affect the collector. Yet meticulously and dedicatedly assembling one's miniature universe can only speak of great emotional charge and a close relationship both with the objects and the universe – the universe in the object, the universe around the collector, the collector in the universe in the object. The Russian doll of collecting. *"For a collector (...) ownership is the most intimate relationship that one can have to objects. Not that they*

6 Ilya Kabakov, *The Man Who Never Threw Anything Away*, 1996, in *The Archive* (London: Whitechapel, 2006), p.33

7 19th century art critic, French

8 Walter Benjamin, *The Collector*, in *The Arcades Project* (The Belknap Pr. Of Harvard Univ. Pr. 2002), p.208

9 Charles Blanc, *The cabinet of M. Thiers*, p.16, <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k889818w/f22.item.zoom>, accessed 3 March 2023

*come alive in him; it is he who lives in them."*¹⁰

Gathering, collecting, owning – all become part of some innate urge to recreate and arrange in our caves miniatures of our little universes. Of our immediate environments, of what we find valuable and necessary. A process during which we form intricate relationships with each of the objects. Brâncuși did not sell his work in the years leading up to his death, he wanted to be surrounded by his stuff; he wanted to live inside it. And when he died his studio was kept frozen in time at that moment.¹¹

But is this object-collecting, record-keeping, just another attempt at keeping time still, is it projected escape from mortality? Is it creating an environment for yourself where you wish to lay yourself to rest in peaceful joy, in your static amassed universe, free of the passing of time? And how much do you need to collect to be able to call it thorough? I believe it is this train of thought that leads many to hoarding.

When talking about hoarding, maybe it is also useful to introduce a synonym of gathering: scavenging – to search for and collect anything usable from discarded waste; *"there are perhaps connections to be made between this fascination with archives and a widespread sense that within Western capitalist societies we are surrounded by stuff but uncertain about what is significant."*¹²

The dictionary definition speaks of hoarding as the act of storing valuables, however I believe the word currently connotes to something more hectic – an unorganized chaos of objects belonging to a singular individual, and carrying a great meaning for said individual¹³. The quantity (as it only becomes hoarding once the act becomes compulsive, and after reaching a certain volume of stuff) and the emotional connection the owner has to their paraphernalia is in the core of hoarding. The emotional bond can be defined through the sense of ur-

10 Walter Benjamin, *Unpacking my Library*, in *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections* (Mariner Books, 2019), p.10

11 Douglas Coupland, "Stuffed: how hoarding and collecting is the stuff of life and death", *E-flux Journal*, 2015

12 Sue Breakell, "Perspectives: Negotiating the Archive", *Tate Papers*, no.9, 2008

13 I have never heard of hoarding as a group endeavor.

gency and necessity one feels for the objects.

Hoarding comes with a very specific gluttony, and insatiability, an itch for more and more and more. And whilst it is not necessarily sinful, it is questionable whether this urge, desire, is positive. What we do know is that it is part of human nature.

"A dump not only devours everything, preserving it forever, but one might say it also continually generates something; (...) a certain enthusiasm arises, hopes for the rebirth of something."¹⁴

And as one continues to hoard and scavenge, the more one gets lost in the stuff. Coincidentally, the less one can think and function properly. But artists have come up with solutions - Louise Nevelson was notorious to have consistently collected things in her studio, and to have purged it consistently as well. Once she would reach a certain tipping point, she would throw everything away and start collecting anew.¹⁵ Warhol had a similar idea - where he stated that an artist should periodically pack everything up in boxes and send it to his warehouse somewhere far - at least to New Jersey (if living in New York).¹⁶

Douglas Coupland made a parallel between people's mania for gathering physical things, and curator's love for empty space¹⁷; curators hoarding, collecting, archiving empty space. And so human nature is present within those that resist materiality as well. Hoarding *space* would leave room for collecting thoughts or ideas instead.

But how could you send something you love (and could maybe need) away?

¹⁴ Ilya Kabakov. *The Man Who Never Threw Anything Away*. 1996. in *The Archive* (London: Whitechapel. 2006). p. 37

¹⁵ Elyse Speaks. "The Culture of Collecting". *Tate Research Publication*, 2016

¹⁶ Andy Warhol. *The Philosophy of Andy Warhol*. in *The Archive* (London: Whitechapel. 2006)

¹⁷ Douglas Coupland. "Stuffed: how hoarding and collecting is the stuff of life and death". *E-flux Journal*. 2015

A strong bond to their belongings is also a clearly defined trait in collecting. A collector's collection means the world to them. The collector, however, often admits to the necessity or usefulness of his collecting being null.

"(...) also, to a relationship to objects which does not emphasize their functional, utilitarian value - that is, their usefulness - but studies and loves them as the scene, the stage, of their fate. The most profound enchantment for the collector is the locking of individual items within a magic circle in which they are fixed as the final thrill, the thrill of acquisition, passes over them."¹⁸

And as such the collected become signifiers more than objects - carriers of connotations that are not read in the physicality of the object. A sign of all other knowledge, a memorial of knowledge. Signs to tell the story of living, the stuff living is made of. A memory and knowledge to which you are linked through said object - *"Collecting is a form of practical memory, and of all the profane manifestations of "nearness", it is the most binding."*¹⁹ And adding the singular object to the whole, the mass:

"What is decisive in collecting is that the object is detached from all its original functions in order to enter into the closest conceivable relation to things of the same kind. This relation is the diametric opposite of any utility, and falls into the peculiar category of completeness. What is "completeness"? it is a grand attempt to overcome the wholly irrational character of the object's mere presence at hand through its integration into a new, expressly devised historical system: the collection. And for the true collector, every single thing in this system becomes an encyclopedia of all knowledge of the epoch (...)"²⁰

And whilst this all has a whimsical quality to it, artists and collectors remain material beings, tactile animals, delighted by the physicality of life. Owning and making, having something in one's possession, is intricately material, haptic.

¹⁸ Walter Benjamin. *Unpacking my Library*. in *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections* (Mariner Books. 2019). p. 60

¹⁹ Walter Benjamin. *The Collector*. in *The Arcades Project* (The Belknap Pr. Of Harvard Univ. Pr. 2002). p.205

²⁰ Ibid. p.204. 205

But what differentiates the collection from the hoard is the criteria it must uphold in order to be called one: classification and categorization must, traditionally, be present. They give it its status, making it systematic, orderly; hence, seemingly holding knowledge. And knowledge was understood to be carried by "taxonomic systems, which order, rank, and define." And taxonomy comes to play a role, because "this was partly a way of imparting a degree of science to the activity, to combat any pejorative associations with the amateur that clung to terms like hobbyist and hoarder".²¹

Compared to a hoard or a collection, an archive is what comes closest to gathering with a taxonomy in mind. However, it does not claim to be pertinent. Archiving immediately connotes to the collection of something passed, or no longer happening; something no longer current but retained. It becomes "a set of traces of actions, the records left by a life—drawing, writing, interacting with society on personal and formal levels. In an archive, the [single document] would ideally be part of a larger body of papers including correspondence, diaries, photographs—all of which can shed light on each other."²²

Documents of life are found mainly in archives. Although collections and hoards also make up an extensive image of a life, traces of actions are not required (yet are allowed). These records of living make up a different overview; the artwork could be defined as a record left by a life, hence making work becomes a parallel to creating an archive. Self-historicization comes into play here, creating the gap between archiving and hoarding.

The archive is pushed further: carrying a necessity and an urgency – a greater societal goal; "the archive then takes the form of a collective memory bank"²³, that can be "found yet

21 Elyse Speaks, "The Culture of Collecting", Tate Research Publication, 2016

22 Ibid.

23 "At the other end of the scale, the change in name of the UK's Public Record Office to the National Archive suggests that the archives are not so much an instrument of state as a collective memory bank". See S. Breakell.

(I wonder if "hobbyist" is a degrading term because of its association with women's crafts, or vice-versa? (knitting, lace-making, quilting, cooking, are all "hobbies" rather than "arts".)

easy access to the past through archives of important personal memories stored on phones: photos, texts, files, etc.

easy access around for 24/7 access to nostalgia

constructed, factual yet fictive, public yet private"²⁴. This whole ordeal becomes a matter of autoethnography, writing the whole based on the individual. Self-historicization becomes a public matter.

"(...) a core principle of archival practice is to seek to be as objective as possible in what might be called the 'performance' archivists enact on the archive. This includes describing material neutrally, documenting what they do to the archive, and intervening as little as possible if an original order is discernible in the papers. Archivists aspire to a democratic facilitation, which seeks to give each researcher the same or similar experience of encounter. (...) Multiple readings of archive material are possible, through each user (...) having the same experience of encounter without disturbing the traces for others."²⁵

As a collection/hoard gives in entirely to subjectivity, here objectivity comes into play- and it is questionable how objective a personal archive can be. And as collective archives are often (if not always) based on a wide variety of personal archives, can one's life experience be objective truth?

It must be that not only gathering has become an impulse - also going through the gathered, arranging. The taxonomy of the gathered. It is not necessarily calling it collective nostalgia induced from easy access to the past - but rather a collective interest in revisiting, reflecting upon what has been gathered already, and what has been left as a trace of. And putting it into a new framework fitting the zeitgeist.

"Perhaps the most deeply hidden motive of the person who collects can be described this way: he takes up the struggle against dispersion. Right from the start, the great collector is struck by the confusion, by the scatter, in which things of the world are found. (...) The collector, by contrast, brings together what belongs together; by keeping in mind their affinities and their succession in time, he can eventually furnish information about his objects"²⁶

24 Foster, Hal. "An Archival Impulse." *October*, vol. 110, 2004, p.6

25 Sue Breakell, "Perspectives: Negotiating the Archive", *Tate Papers*, no.9, 2008

26 Walter Benjamin, *The Collector*, in *The Arcades Project* (The Belknap Pr. Of Harvard Univ. Pr. 2002), p.210

The archive and the collection are present both in the artistic practice as well as taking the role of the organizational structure of the exhibition. The hoard likes to keep to itself and remain in the studio.

But circling back to Le Guin:

"... The fitting shape of the novel might be that of a sack, a bag. A book holds words. Words hold things. They bear meanings. A novel is a medicine bundle, holding things in a particular, powerful relation to one another and to us."²⁷ A medicinal bundle holds the cure: an easy, clear access to the necessary remedy; the physical form and the signifier of the remedy. The remedy as gathered within a bundle.

In any case, if you are looking to gather herbs and have time on your hands, Bulgarian tradition recommends the 24th of June – the church celebrates St. John the Baptist on this day, but it is called Еньовден (Enyovden, Enyo's day²⁸) by the people. Traditions seem to stem from old Slavic pagan rituals, which originally were set on Midsummer's Day. The day is just as important as Christmas, Easter, or St. George's day, and whilst the herbs that are picked on St. George's day are used to heal animals, the ones picked on Enyovden are used to heal people.

Traditional medicine states that the herbs gathered before sunrise on this day are most potent, and herbalists must gather 77 herbs and a half – for all named human illnesses, and for the one that remains nameless²⁹. Especially black thorn, lady's bedstraw³⁰, sweet clovers, primrose and lemon balm gathered then will be used during the entire year. The gathering is done

27 U.K. Le Guin, *Carrier bag theory of fiction*, 1986. (Ignota Books, 2019), p. 34

28 Enyo is a nickname used на галено ("на галено" directly translates to "caressingly") for Йоан/Yoan – John.

29 For the 77 illnesses there is a cure, only for the unnamed one – not. There is an herb that helps though, but only certain herbalists can find and use it

30 Lady's bedstraw – еньовче (enyovche – small enyo's) in Bulgarian. Carries the holiday's name.

by "redemption" of the herbs from the Samodivi³¹ – a ritual consisting of old women making a circle of strainers holding the picked herbs and dancing around them, in complete silence, the „сключено хоро“ (concluded/tied horo)³². The gathered herbs are made into bunches, and those of lady's bedstraw are tied with a red thread. Often, women make the same number of bunches as they have family members and lay them outside to dry overnight. The bunches carry the family member's name, and in the morning, judging by how they dried, people tell what the health of the person it was named after will be the following year. Other bunches are hung on the house's eaves to guard against evil. The sick are smoked with, sprinkled with and drink potions of the herbs.

A large Enyo's wreath is made, through which people pass three times for health. It is kept until the following year. Young people walk under two dogwood trees with tied branches for health, women wash their hair in herb-infused water against headaches, and tie rye at their waist – for it not to hurt during fieldwork. The remaining herbs are made into wreaths and are divided on St. Vrach's³³ day. Medicinal bundles – holding them in powerful relation to one another, and to us.³⁴ The act of gathering (herbs) then becomes so important for people's health and wellbeing, that intricate rituals have been built upon for years. Arguably, the gathering becomes just as sacred as the taking of the remedy. Collecting things in medicinal bundles only amplifies their relation to us, the link between the gatherer and the gathered.

31 Samodiva – woodland fairy or nymph. At nightfall, they go to lakes, ponds, springs, strip naked, bathe, wash their clothes and spread them out to dry in the moonlight. Then they gather in a meadow in the most distant dense forests and play a barefoot magical dance all night. They love music, especially that of the kaval, so they often kidnap shepherds and make them play.

32 Хоро/horo – a type of circle dance. Bulgarians believe that each village has their own type of horo. They differ by the rhythm of the music and the steps taken. There are probably over one hundred types of horo dances in Bulgarian folklore.

33 On the 1st of July – the day of herbalists and curers, named after brother healers, Kosma and Damyan. Diviners, wise women and curers sort the herbs gathered on Enyovden. Women shouldn't work.

34 U.K. Le Guin, *Carrier bag theory of fiction*, 1986. (Ignota Books, 2019), p. 34

FIG.5
HORO, PLOVDIV 1926



Now that you have gathered all that was scattered, go home.
Take your receptables, containers and tools, and combine.

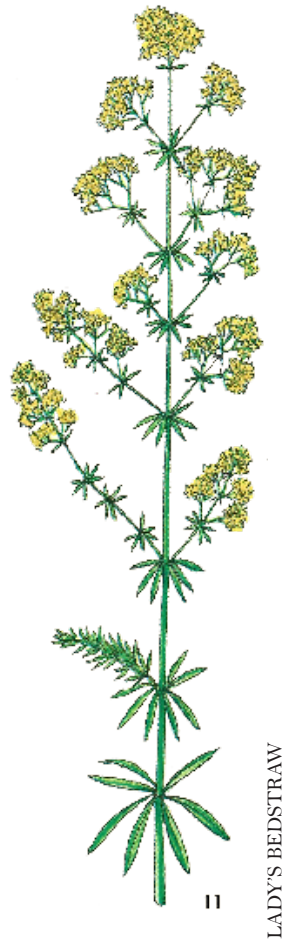
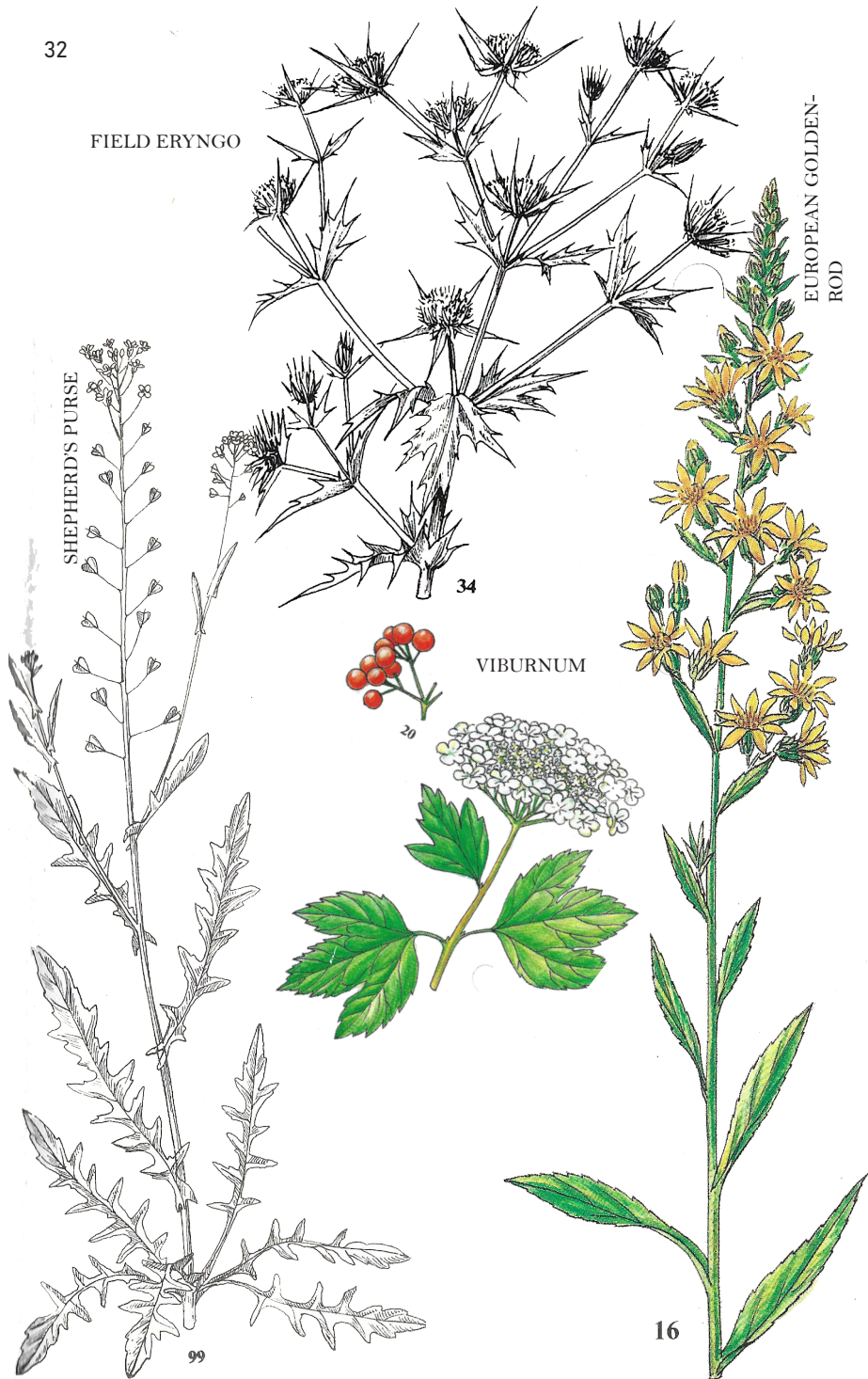


FIG.6 WARHOL'S TIME CAPSULE. TIME CAPSULE 10 CONTAINED RECEIPTS, CANCELED CHECKS, LETTERS AND OTHER PAPER MATERIAL THAT ANDY WARHOL SAVED FROM 1967 TO 1969

FIELD ERYNGO

EUROPEAN GOLDEN-
ROD

VIBURNUM

CHAPTER 2: THE COMBINING OF

Whilst writing down of;

Herbs for the endocrine and reproductive systems: field eryngo, peony, cerasus, quince, wild asparagus, European goldenrod, viburnum, astragalus glycyphyllos, parsley, shepherd's purse, prostrate knotweed, potentilla reptans, field larkspur, celery, lady's mantle, amaranth.

"This is how information passes among generations: formulas, or recipes, allow the constant re-creation anew. The work is reborn each time in its perfection. This does seem to make cooking a type of performance, like a musical score."

Take your tools and your findings, open a recipe, and combine to make the necessary mixture.

Combining may take a few different shapes, depending on the active substances, their solubility (in water, or oil, or spirits), or which part of the plant you are using. Preparing the right part of the plant is important, as the active substance is most easily drawn out if the herb is cut up properly. The bits should be smaller than 5mm for the flowers and leaves, smaller than 3mm for the roots and stems, and smaller than 0.5mm for the fruits and seeds. You can then continue to the making of the remedy – an infusion (made of leaves and flowers), a decoction (made of stems or roots), a tincture (no heat needed here), a poultice (important to grind up the plant rather than cut it), or an extract (not to do at home).

Recipes and written instructions are the main guidance one can get for all their combinatory aspirations. Yet as with most written matter, language and its limitations come into play, and the lack of presence of the author (the knowledgeable) near you creates a dialogue only between you and the page of text. Which in turn can cause distress, as language cannot cover all that exemplary gestures can. But only relying on

1 Martha Rosler. "What Type of Art is Cookery? Are the Great Chefs all Dead?". *e-flux Journal*, no.128, June 2022

face-to-face learning situations is not a solution, since it would be required for both parties to be in the same space. *Learning would become local*². And the goal of a recipe is to outsource and spread knowledge. The word *recipe* comes from the Latin *recipere* – meaning to receive or take. *Recipe* is *recipere*'s imperative voice, and this is embedded in its meaning, situating the recipe as the beginning of a set of actions, actions written in an accessible language, and to be followed from anywhere.

*"Gastronomy is a narrative, with a beginning (raw ingredients), a middle (their combination and cooking), and an end (eating). To get at the 'secret' of preparing unfamiliar food, the reader has to move through this narrative rather than focus on just the middle term; it is by imagining the whole process that you get outside yourself."*³

Gathering seems to precede another human impulse – the one to write recipes. Whether it is artists writing cookbooks or chefs being struck by art, the impulse stems from a specific button being pushed in all of us – where we suddenly feel like an exact knowledge in us has surfaced, and it must be transmitted. Artists have been toying with recipes, transmitting, and outsourcing knowledge or ideas. *A maker and their urgency to convey their specific knowledge.*⁴

A friend and I came together last year to collect our classmate's recipes. It was with a fundraising cause, and funnily enough, we precisely thought people's favorite recipes would paint the most extensive and honest picture of them. There is a transparency and vulnerability to one when sharing their

² Richard Sennett, *The Craftsman* (Yale University Press, 2008), p.179

³ Ibid, p.189; Further: "The writer of instructional language who makes the effort of sympathy has to retrace, step by step, backward knowledge that has bedded in to routine, and only then can take the reader step by step forward. But as an expert, he or she knows what comes next and where danger lies; the expert guides by anticipating difficulties for the novice; sympathy and prehension combine. This is Julia Child's method". See R. Sennett, p.186. I can almost see this as a metaphor for a method of artistic practice: it is by imagining the whole process that you get outside yourself.

⁴ Elena Braida, *The Carrier Bag of Recipes* (BA Thesis, Rietveld Academie, Amsterdam, 2021), p.29

* Dalinzi also
noted down painting
recipes

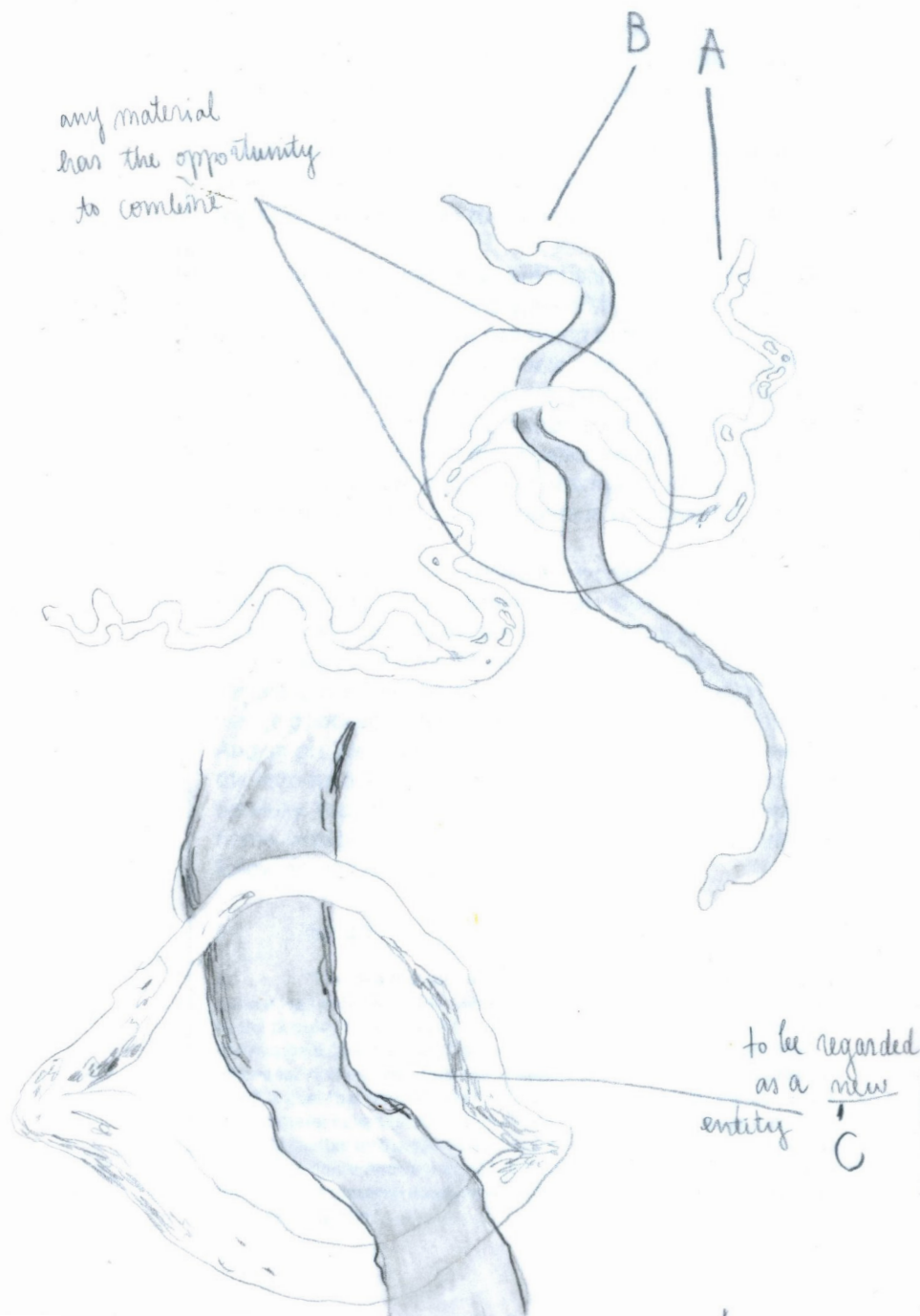
"Artists' cookbook,"

"manifesto of
futuristic cooking,"

"monet's table
georgia o'keefe's
cookbook,

Warhol. or Dalis
recipes;

"cooking with
Swiss"



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* Dalinzi also
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discretionary
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cooking with
Stonice



favorite recipe. I believe that comes with all that recipes entail: personal taste and preference, cultural background, amounts of dedication, care and time, commitment. The execution of it is just as telling – does one follow the recipe precisely, or as a vague guideline? These criteria can also be applied to *the writing of and putting together of a recipe*.

What is important to remember is that a recipe is not simply a mass of its individual components – it is their combination that leads to something of greater utility.⁵

With recipes, two pathways are observed: the culinary and the medical one. The culinary generally comprises of separate ingredients that are combined both physically and chemically, to create a new whole – an (edible) alchemical process⁶. The medical recipe consists of separate ingredients that are not physically combined; they are to be taken individually, with care. If the situation requires more than one type of ailment, the doctor and pharmacist make sure the chemicals do not become dangerous when mixed.

An herbal prescription creates an overlap however – it is both a culinary and a medical recipe. Many herbs require to be physically and chemically combined, but there must be a care taken to it – for the chemical compounds released in certain herbs react badly to others; or if treated a specific way (e.g., boiled instead of steamed), they can release toxins. And so on. We have looked at some herbal prescriptions in the introduction – those include herbs that need to be treated carefully. You also have the opportunity to make infusions at home, with herbs of a lesser potential toxicity. Then, you can follow an herbal *recipe*.

5 Ibid, p.8

6 "The idea that alchemy is the art that most closely imitates nature was debated at the universities in Paris and Oxford (...) Contrary to the popular misconception that the aim of alchemists was primarily chrysopoeia (the making of gold), there were numerous adepts who strove for nothing less than the imitation of the divine act of creation itself, a goal that spurred them on to attempt not only to imitate nature, but ultimately even to surpass it. This drive to transmute naturally existing matter into a synthetic concoction still influences artists today, especially contemporary artists who understand the processual transformation of material as an integral part of their work." See Staatliche Museen zu Berlin.

The medical prescription is an official document. Contrary to the culinary recipe.

The culinary recipe, or any other kind of informal instruction, has the opportunity to carry care for its reader. Here, the imperative voice can fade in order to make room for guidance and vulnerability. Here, the author can place themselves in the reader's position – the reader who does not have the habits and knowledge the author has. *"Expressive directions connect technical craft to the imagination"*⁷ – and the imagination of the reader is the main actor in this play. Without being able to imagine what the steps look like, or what is required of them, one cannot possibly begin to carry out instructions.

*"Cutting a chicken's sinew is technically like cutting a piece of string, but it doesn't feel quite the same. This is an instructional moment for her reader; 'like' but not 'exactly like' focuses the brain and the hand on the act of sinew cutting in itself. There is also an emotional point to lose analogies; the suggestion that a new gesture or act is roughly like something you have done before aims specifically to inspire confidence."*⁸

Hence, the author *"allows the contents (...) of the recipe to overflow the written language and reach the reader"*⁹, through allusions to acts and images the reader might already be familiar with. So, following these methods of imagining the outcome, and adding individual input to the written recipe (a reader's annotations, previous knowledge, etc.), a process of co-becoming emerges: the reader inhabits the recipe and the recipe inhabits the reader. Perhaps as the collector inhabits the collected.¹⁰

7 Richard Sennett, *The Craftsman* (Yale University Press, 2008), p.193

8 Ibid, p.185,186

9 Elena Braidà, *The Carrier Bag of Recipes* (BA Thesis, Rietveld Academie, Amsterdam, 2021, p.31

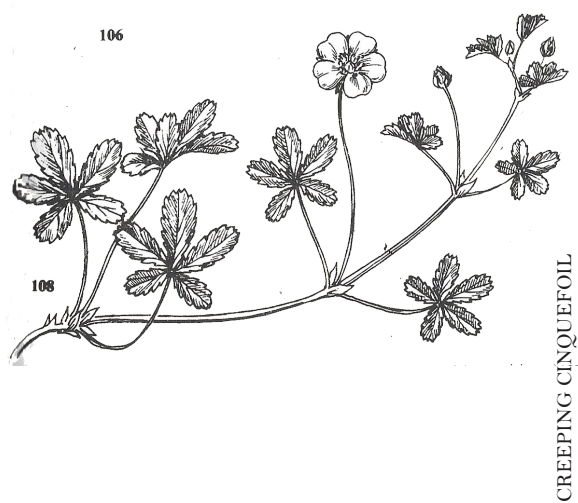
10 "For a collector (...) ownership is the most intimate relationship that one can have to objects. Not that they come alive in him; it is he who lives in them." – See W. Benjamin, *Unpacking my Library*: "The diner inhabits the creation, but then the creation, in the form of food, inhabits the diner" – See M. Rosler, "The Art of Cooking", *e-flux Journal*, no.65

But is this mutual inhibition serving a purpose? It seems that by carrying the things – recipes, objects, etc. – within you, it has a consistent, if not constant, say on future matters (or future artworks). *"Maybe, like the great classical—and Romantic—composers, the great chefs are all dead. Today's chefs often represent themselves as keepers of a great tradition rather than as brash innovators. Curators rather than creators."*¹¹ Martha Rosler expresses her worries through the fictional Julia Child. And indeed, with time, it seems *curators rather than creators* is what is left. In cookery as in art alike, the artist-as-curator is emerging stronger than ever, in physical as in digital spaces, as a publisher, as a radio-host, as a living-room gallerist. And with the grace of the internet and all digital archives and carriers of information, it seems that anyone today is able and wanting to combine all they come across, into a varied mix of information, images, and experiences. A carbon (maybe physical) copy of the unseen and unimaginable heaps of information we come across daily. So, one's work emerges as an amassed, curated, combination of all works seen or encountered a priori. The singular work as curated (a non-original recipe) and the body of work as curated (like a restaurant menu). The artist-as-gatherer leading to the artist-as-archivist leading to the artist-as-curator. The artist-as-recipe-writer becomes only one of the preliminary steps of curation: putting your own knowledge into steps to be followed.

In the process of transmittance, the actual combining and cooking become an act of furthering and combining knowledge through the individual. Filtering the recipe further through one more person, then becomes the transmitter themselves. Maybe knowledge truly never dies; it only transfigures and combines cyclically. The recipe then becomes a keeper of connotations, and following its nature – its format of transmissibility, being handed over from one person to the other – it is a carrier on its own.

"Because isn't its purpose neither resolution nor stasis, but

11 Martha Rosler, "What Type of Art is Cookery? Are the Great Chefs all Dead?", *e-flux Journal*, no.128, June 2022



12 Elena Braida, *The Carrier Bag of Recipes* (BA Thesis, Rietveld Academie, Amsterdam, 2021), p.32. Further: "(...) Thus the processes of contamination are part of the invitation that the recipe has in its meaning from the latin term *recipere*, as "things taken", and therefore it does embody all the information and ingredients everybody carries in their own carrier bag."



FIG.7 TSAR BORIS THE THIRD AND HIS WIFE IN THE MOUNTAIN WITH HERB BUNCHES.



BEARBERRY

90

BLACKTHORN

62

30

CHAMOMILLE

CHAPTER 3: THE INGESTION OF *Or the gluttonous devouring of,*

Herbs for the digestive and urinary systems: chamomile flowers, yarrow flowers, birch leaves, peels of pomegranate fruit, dogwood fruits, blackthorn flowers, bearberry leaves, mint leaves, smoke tree leaves, common juniper fruits, perforate St. John's wort stalks, chicory stalks, common gromwell.

"Eating is only accentuated living. Eating- drinking- and breathing corresponds to the threefold division of the body into solid, liquid, and gaseous parts."

*"'A' was for Lowdown Horse, stabled with a clutter of big black spiders that were dead & crisped like sincerely the nice tempura battered bangles of calamari – only cold and sort of a German forest."*²

The ingestion of the herbal mixtures is a whole ritual in itself. I once received a prescription that specified not only how to combine the herbs, but where I should place them (at the tip of my tongue), how much water I should drink them with (1 or 2 sips), and how often (every two hours for seven days). Or when ingesting the fruits/seeds, the prescription would specify that they should be swallowed whole – not chewed. With a bit of water, not too much. From this I deduced: the synthesis of the active substances within the herbs is in two acts; first with the other herbs during the combinatory period, and then with the body – during digestion. Clearly, equal attention should be paid to both.

Ingesting and food come in as an anchor to corporeality within this cacophony of gathered objects and semi-situated fusion recipes - grounding the body to its physical reality. As

¹ Novalis. *Philosophical Writings*, ed. and tran. Margaret Mahony Stoljar (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1997), p.101

² Ed Atkins. *Old food* (London: Fitzcarraldo Editions, 2016) p.17

gathering your universe around you lets you travel and move freely within the acquired and past, and as a recipe tells you how and where to go (and where it has been), eating must be done here and now. It reminds us that no matter how many concepts or imaginary spaces are at play, or how many physical objects we assign ourselves to (otherness as a carrier for the soul, kinship with or through objects), we remain physical entities.

Food, due to its absurdly ordinary nature, has been notoriously used in art to represent consumerism, and recently – economic and ethical questions, relating heavily to climate change and globalization. But what I want to look at is the moment after the food is made, transported, bought and served – and is now ready to be eaten. And as much as those consumerist, ethical and economic issues come up when eating as well, maybe it is no longer a mental process, but a digestive one; masticating on a history of growth. Food is the memory of soil, food is the currency of life³. Ingestion of matter of any sorts is both a conscious and unconscious act, coming from necessity but evolving into a process of internalizing; transforming the outside into the inside. Putting something, an other, on the in-side of the body. In this way ingestion and digestion become combinatory processes. An in-body alchemy; the metamorphosis of elements with a body in order to become a part of said body.

The process of ingesting is a consensual way of becoming one; through physical and chemical processes, it is the combining of matter with a pre-existing mass of other physical/chemical compounds. In the way one digests information or a happening, the gut seems to take the forefront in matters of intuition, feelings, and the body's natural processing mechanisms. *"The correlation between these two 'brains'—the state of gut and the state of mind (...)"*⁴

Within artistic research, or the artistic practice, one utilizes knowledge. The incorporating of said knowledge into the work or the research is the practice that needs to be formed.

3 Vandana Shiva, "Earth Craft – The Word for World is Soil", Royal Academy of Art, The Hague, 01 Dec. 2022

4 See The Glucksman, *Gut Instinct*.

But for incorporation to happen, one must understand; absorb. Framing comprehending as incorporation, as a kind of eating, leads us to assimilation. Derrida then recalls the concept of *Erinnerung* (meaning both memory and interiorization); *"Spirit incorporates history by assimilating, by remembering its own past. This assimilation acts as a kind of sublimated eating—spirit eats everything that is external and foreign, and thereby transforms it into something internal, something that is its own."*⁵ Eating as an act of physical remembering – memory itself as the internalization of outside knowledge. I believe this is one of the clearest examples of the abject⁶: the inside/outside boundary, the me/other. The juxtaposition towards which one's inert, impulsive reaction is either desire or disgust. Desire to consume and disgust to expel (out of the body – excrete, regurgitate).

The disgust and horror felt towards the other becomes easily projected upon the non-human. Non-human entities are not to be ingested (except if they're cute⁷), and if anything - they are to be kept at a distance. Perhaps due to city expansion and decades of urban living, the human has not only distanced itself from the natural world, but has also developed a desire to have as less direct contact with its organisms as possible, under the guise of hygiene. Yet the abject is manifested within the inside as well, and it gets tricky when thinking about organisms that help ingestion. Bacteria, microflora, and the whole microbiome within the body sustains ingestion - absorption, creating an interspecies interdependency. And interdependency it is - as the vast majority of bacteria (100 trillion) live in our gut. The rift between our relationships to microorganisms creates an abject-within-subject, outside-in-inside situation. But *"the microbiome is really important in terms of regulating your mood, in terms of regulation"*

5 Derrida, Jacques, with Daniel Birnbaum, et al. "An Interview with Jacques Derrida on the Limits of Digestion, *e-flux Journal*, no.2, Jan. 2009

6 Julia Kristeva, *Approaching Abjection*, in *Powers of Horror*, (NY: Columbia University Press, 1982), p.1 - 31.

7 "To some degree, our brains respond in a parallel way when perceiving cuteness and seeking food, and perhaps our psychological experience of wanting to bite arises from that physiological overlap". See Poltrack, Emma. "Why Do We Want to Bite Cute Things, like Adorable Newborn Babies?" *Scientific American Mind*, vol. 25, no. 6, Oct. 2014

*your intelligence*⁸, which are what the human being considers itself to be - emotions and thought. *"It is telling that we use the word 'culture' to describe the community of bacteria that transform milk into yoghurt."*⁹ What perhaps makes this situation all-encompassing is the exposome - completing the picture of one's biome.

*"You need to go into their homes and see the ways in which their being is scattered throughout the home. So, they're leaving bacteria at different parts of the home, which collect, which breed, which then come back into the body. So, in a sense, there's no separation between my house there, which is a built object, me here, which is a set of DNA."*¹⁰

The inside which is outside becomes inside again - in a loop. In this way gathering within one's home creates a whole new meaning - as everything within one's biome is coated in one's bacteria. Bacteria that are carried everywhere.

But Derrida then states - *"Everything shall be incorporated into the great digestive system—nothing is inedible in Hegel's infinite metabolism."*¹¹

Nothing is inedible.

All that is outside can be ingested, eaten, transformed. All knowledge can be overtaken. As - *"man does not in fact devour the object, but rather incorporates it abstractly, and thereby creates the inner space that is the subject (...) But the difference itself between what is one's own and what is foreign remains—understanding is still an assimilation."*¹²

8 Bowker, Geoffrey. "Rethinking Kinship." *POST GROWTH TOOL-KIT*, 6 Aug. 2020.

9 Ostendorf, Yasmine. "Non-Human Narratives: Stories of Bacteria, Fungi and Viruses." *Artists & Climate Change*, 22 June 2017.

10 Bowker, Geoffrey. "Rethinking Kinship." *POST GROWTH TOOL-KIT*, 6 Aug. 2020.

11 Derrida, Jaques, with Daniel Birnbaum, et al. "An Interview with Jacques Derrida on the Limits of Digestion." *e-flux Journal*, no.2, Jan. 2009

12 Ibid.

Understanding in itself is assimilation. Understanding brings forth a clarity (or unity) parallel to an ingestion - digestion - absorption sequence. And as nothing is inedible, this sequence is also true in our intersocial relationships. One of the biggest consumers of the human is, coincidentally, the other human, as Novalis puts it:

*"All enjoyment, all taking in and assimilation, is eating, or rather: eating is nothing other than assimilation. All spiritual pleasure can be expressed through eating. In friendship, one really eats of the friend, or feeds on him. It is a genuine trope to substitute the body for the spirit—and, at a commemorative dinner for a friend, to enjoy (...) his flesh in every bite, and his blood in every gulp."*¹³

Derrida then coins this as cannibalism, centering on the flesh, the meat that is consumed of the other. Maybe that's a bit raunchy for me. But Novalis reminds us that we shouldn't be quick to repugn the organic body; *"and are blood and flesh really so loathsome and ignoble?"*¹⁴ *"The body itself is apprehended and represented as an unfinished, indigestible figure which hesitates between identification and rejection and ultimately, between pleasure and disgust"*¹⁵

The body's direct confrontation with its materiality and physicality is perhaps why this assimilation, the understanding of the other, verges on cannibalism. *"In the past, I have spoken about the West's phallic 'logocentrism.'" Now I would like to broaden this with the prefix carno- (flesh): "carnophallogocentrism." We are all—vegetarians as well—carnivores in the symbolic sense."*¹⁶

Yet - what happens if one refuses to eat? If one disassociates oneself from the carnivorous and cannibalistic, if there

13 Novalis, *Philosophical Writings*, ed. and tran. Margaret Mahony Stoljar (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1997), 102-103.

14 Ibid, 102-103.

15 Michel Delville, *Food, Poetry, and Aesthetic of Consumption*. (ROUTLEDGE: New York, 2007)

16 Derrida, Jaques, with Daniel Birnbaum, et al. "An Interview with Jacques Derrida on the Limits of Digestion." *e-flux Journal*, no.2, Jan. 2009

is only disgust when thinking about ingestion? Han Kang explores such a possibility in *The Vegetarian*, where a woman decides to embrace a more “plant-like” way of existing. Starting from renouncing meat in her diet, she gradually makes her way to a fully passive way of living, photosynthesizing and becoming a plant. In this case, eating, being an action linked with the carnal, with desires, is difficult to speak of when the carnivorous is missing. Yet plants eat just as much as humans do – sunlight, vibrations, water, minerals. The method of ingestion is present. I’d like to extend Derrida’s statement: we are all – the natural world as well – carnivores in the symbolic sense.

Sometimes I feel that desire and disgust are motors for the artistic practice. Maybe this is rooted in its inherent materiality. The cannibalistic, the self-cannibalistic here, is in the understanding of the self within the material context of making a work. The ingesting of one’s own knowledge, the gluttony of the eating and vomiting and eating and re-regurgitating, looped. Eating as a method for artistic research, then.

But before calling ingestion a method, it is handy to see it as a process; we first encounter the sense of taste. And as much as one can consciously lift up the act of eating, it can also, very subconsciously, turn one into a free-liver, powered by our need to eat and our desire to taste. Taste is perhaps the gateway to gluttony. As gluttony overcomes the diner, the only goal and purpose of one becomes to absorb what is before them, and more.

But as Travis Diehl says, whilst commenting on Soylent, a powdered meal replacement – “*Flavor is the brute recipe, the chemicals that so prosaically trigger our tongues and noses in order to produce the more ephemeral, rarefied quality called taste.*”¹⁷ So, taste is the subjective aspect of flavor, and everyone is bound to experience food (knowledge) differently. Hence, the urge to eat is entirely self-directed and self-centered. Here is where the issue with food, or taste, as art comes in; “(...) *“they don’t seem to be about anything other than how things taste,” and that food itself “does not mean anything” (Korsmeyer 110–11) because it does not seem*

17 Travis Diehl. “Soylent Beige: the Middle Gray of Taste”. *e-flux Journal*. no.89. 2018

to refer to anything beyond itself...”^{18, 19}, It refers only to the sensation experienced by the eater, who is made aware that it is entirely their own.

And that is the difference between food and ingestion. Ingestion is about all that is outside of it, what it wants to add to its mass, and food seems to be solely about itself. Its content, its origin, its preparation. The glutton then becomes appetized by the food (the knowledge of the object, carried by the object), and seeks greedily, urgently, to become it (ingest it). Feels familiar to the collector. Only perhaps in a carnal (carnivorous) manner.

But one cannot be a gourmand for herbs, nor medicine. They are weighed, calculated portions to be taken somewhat reluctantly. Yet herbals must be ingested for them to work – if not through the mouth, through the skin. An ingestion of chemicals happens even through poultices placed or extracts smeared on the skin (an organ). I wonder whether there is a gluttony associated with health. A drive towards the ideal of the healthy, the safety of it. In Bulgarian the expression “жив и здрав”²⁰ is used daily, in any context. It is the best thing you can wish for somebody. Most, if not all, traditions involving herbs are solely for the purpose of achieving health (and not love or prosperity, for example).

To become healthy.

18 Michel Delville. *Food, Poetry, and Aesthetic of Consumption*. (ROUTLEDGE: New York. 2007)

19 Although this can be disputed. See Agnes Martin. *Writings*. p.16: “an artwork has only a tinting of what it attempts to represent to the artist and to responsive observers. It is not beneficial, nothing is gained from it, and it does not tell the truth. It is enjoyed or not according to the condition of the observer. A very small gesture of exultation.”

20 “Alive and healthy”. Best wishes for you to continue living in a healthy manner.

And so, herbs become a symbolic carrier of health - a signifier that is gathered and assigned meaning, even when physically bearing utility. Its physicality is transmitted through the recipe. This makes it a symbol forward enough for one to understand its functioning - and with this understanding comes an assimilation, an embodiment of health.

my dad, during our short and irregular phone calls, read something aloud to me, a passage he found relevant to share. I remember he was excited. I cannot recall where he was reading from. anyway, I believe he said - the artist has to be one, one practice, one person - it has to be in tune. I found it funny, to combine everything. Simply, and call it a practice. anyhow, we never spoke of it again

herbs for headache relief: primrose flowers, lindens flowers, common motherwort stalks, common verbena, field larkspur, sweet violet.²¹

²¹ all herbs checked and referenced from „Билки и Билкосъбирание“. В.Топалов, М.Гаврилов, Й. Янкулов. Изд. Христо Г. Данов, 1983, Пловдив

One's practice (living) is then comprised of,

Collecting and making sense, periodically, of your collection —
60g

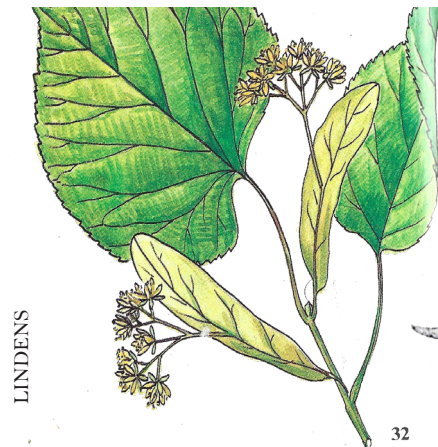
Adding and subtracting until a recipe forms. write and execute as many recipes as possible. — 37g

Eat. Take it all in and let it become you. — 37g

Find an adequate metaphor, make it make sense. maybe write it down —
12g

Pour 500ml boiling water over two tablespoons of the mix. Boil for 5-10mins. After it cools, strain and take in according to the dosage suitable for the age of the patient:

from 25 to 60 years — 1 dose
from 14 to 25 years — 2/3 dose
from 7 to 14 years — 1/2 dose
from 4 to 7 years — 1/3 dose
from 3 to 4 years — 1/6 to 1/4 dose
at 2 years — 1/10 to 1/8 dose
at 1 year — 1/12 dose



LINDENS



DOGWOOD

B.

RECIPES FOR TODAY'S SICK

TEA FOR THE CHEST / SPECIES PECTORALIS:

Radix althea, roots, peeled – 60g

Iris roots, peeled – 7.5g

Coltsfoot, leaves – 30g

Mullein, flowers – 15g

Thyme, stalks – 22,5g

Anise, fruits – 15g

Pour 500ml boiling water over two tablespoons of the mix. Boil for 5-10mins. After it cools, strain and drink one coffee cup 3-4 times a day. For 3-10 yr. children – a teaspoon 4-5 times a day.

CALMING TEA 1 / SPECIES SEDATIVE:

Valerianae, rhizomes with roots – 30g

Mint, leaves – 30g

Bogbean, leaves – 40g

Pour 400ml boiling water over a tablespoon of the mix, boil 5 mins. After it cools, strain, and drink a coffee cup 3 times a day before eating.

DIURETIC TEA 2 / SPECIES DIURETICA:

Smooth rupturewort, stalks – 19g

Horsetails, stalks – 18g

Sour cherry, stalks – 9g

European goldenrod, stalks – 9g

Birch, leaves – 9g

Restharrows, roots – 9g

Common juniper, fruit – 9g

Corn hair – 18g

Pour 4 teaspoons of the mix in 200ml of boiling water. After it cools, strain and drink 3-4 spoons daily.

*TEA FOR HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE / SPECIES ANTIHYPER-
TONICA:*

Horsetails, stalks – 15g
Common mistletoe, stalks – 30g
Hawthorn, flowers with leaves – 30g
Elderberry, flowers – 30g
Algae – 5g
Lemon balm, leaves – 5g
Mint, leaves – 5g
Savoury, stalks – 5g
Common motherwort, stalks – 25g
Wild pansy, stalks – 15g
Birch, leaves – 15g
Valeriana, rhizome with roots – 10g
Myrtle, stalks – 15g

Pour two tablespoons of the mix in 250ml boiling water. Boil for 5 minutes, let cool, strain. Drink 3 times a day, after eating.

*TEA FOR CARDIAC NEUROSIS / SPECIES NEUROSAE CAR-
DIALIS:*

Valeriana, rhizome with roots – 20g
Common motherwort, stalks – 20g
Thyme, stalks – 5g
Oregano, stalks – 5g
Lemon balm, leaves – 10g
Mint, leaves – 5g
Hawthorn, flowers, and leaves – 20g
Hops, pinecones – 5g
Lavender, flowers – 5g
Gorse flower, stalks – 5g
Lily of the valley, leaves – 5g

Pour 300ml boiling water over three tablespoons of the mix. Let cool, strain and drink three times a day before eating.

*TEA TO TREAT MOUTH INFECTIONS / SPECIES ANTISTO-
MATITICAE:*

Common comfrey, roots – 33,3g
Chamomile, flowers – 33,3g
Calendula, flowers – 33,3g

Pour 100ml boiling water over a tablespoon of the mix. Let cool, strain, and rinse the mouth manifold during the day.

*TEA FOR 8-10Y.O. CHILDREN WETTING THE BED / SPECIES
ANTIENURETICA:*

Agrimonia eupatoria, stalks – 30g
Hypericum, stalks – 30g
Alchemillae vulgaris, stalks – 30g
Blackberry, leaves – 30g
Bearberry, leaves – 30g
White mustard, seed – 40g
Horsetails, stalks – 40g
Yarrow, flowers – 40g
Ephedra, stalks – 40g
Common gromwell, stalks – 100g
Common poppy, flowers – 15g

Pour 200ml boiling water over two tablespoons of the mix. Boil for one minute, let cool, strain. Drink one wineglass every morning and evening after eating.

AROMATIC BATHROOM MIXTURE / SPECIES AROMATICAE:

Thyme, stalks – 20g
Oregano, stalks – 20g
Common juniper, fruit – 30g
Mint, leaves – 10g
Walnut, leaves – 20g
Chamomile, flowers – 30g
Lavender, flowers – 30g
Basil, stalks – 20g

Pour 500ml boiling water over five tablespoons of the mix. Let cool, strain, and pour in the bathtub.

FROM "ZELEINIK" - BOGOMIL RECIPE BOOK, 10C. AD.

He who has a curtain in his eye (cataract) should anoint mare's milk with honey and it will expel the curtain. If a person is cut or falls from a horse, so that blood flows from the hand, mix egg white and alum on the cut, and also drink this alum with milk.

If a person hiccups - to gnaw a head of cabbage.
When a person coughs, gets swelling and sputum, silky (soft) water to drink. If there is no silk water, wheat bran with dill, strain and drink with sugar

If there is a veil over the eye (cataract), burn a thorn from the forest on iron and sprinkle its ashes over the eye.

If someone's lip is cracked, mix flaxseed with honey, boil and apply.

For toothache, soak onion feathers in wine with honey, hold in mouth and drink the wine

In case of poisoning, drink every day on an empty stomach 29 grains of wild rose seed crushed in water or rub the entire abdomen with 20-30 crushed and dried grains.

For blockage of the urinary canals: Boil turnip leaves, drink the decoction, and while the leaves are warm, place them under the navel and tie tightly and it will drain. If it doesn't catch you, boil prostrate knotweed and drink it with wine.

If one has bloodshot eyes, to dry the tips of wormwood and mix them with egg white and apply to the eyes.

If someone is very thin, barely alive, on May 5 he should slaughter a cow, crawl on his elbows into the belly, all the way to his throat, and his illness will go away.

If someone snores while sleeping, tie a tin under the right arm.

If someone has a stomach ache, drink three cups of wood oil.

If someone has a heart stone, boil cabbage without salt and drink the water.

If someone has a wound, goat fat mixed with wax and applied, the wound will heal.

If someone's heart is unhealthy and not pure, wormwood should be mixed with aloe, then mixed with honey and eaten.

BABA VANGA - RECIPES FOR HEADACHE

HEADACHE - The head is washed with water in which wild parsley has been boiled.

HEADACHE - 2 kg of the wild millet plant is collected when it is waxy. This amount is distributed over about 10 days. A part of the wild millet is boiled in a large amount of water for about 10 minutes. When the water becomes lukewarm, the whole body is bathed. Repeat every evening.

HEADACHE (persistent) - In 600 ml. boiling water, boil for 5 min. 3 tsp. anise. Drink 3 times a day, 1 tea cup before meals.

HEADACHE (in children, stubborn) - A large bunch of dried

dwarf everlast is placed in a clean cloth bag and made into a pillow. After the child has slept one night on it, the herb is taken out and boiled. The water is poured on the child's head.

HEADACHE (chronic) - Boil savory in a large pot of water. In the evening, the head is immersed for 10-15 minutes in the water, and then the whole body is drowsed.

HEADACHE (and restless sleep) - Boil 1-2 leaves of St. John's wort in 2-3 liters of water. The head and body are watered with it several times in the evening.

HEADACHE (with ear pain, also in children) - 1 tbsp. sugar caramelizes. As soon as it starts to darken, pour 1 tsp. cold water. Stir and drink after the caramel has completely melted. 1-2 cups a day are needed.

HEADACHE (severe, after stress) - For several days, the patient should take 1 tablespoon of sugar on sand in the evening before going to bed, put it in the mouth and then drink 1 glass of water.

HEADACHE » Pour 1 teaspoon of stems and roots of wild gingers with 250 ml of boiling water. After cooling, strain and drink 1 cup each. h. 2-3 times a day.

» 1 valerian root, 2 stalks of yellow sweet clover and 1 stalk of nettle, finely chopped, are boiled for 15 minutes in 1 liter of water. The decoction is filtered and drunk at 1 tea cup 3 times a day before meals.

» 1 root of primrose, 5-6 hop cones, 1 root of valerian, 1-2 tips of yellow sweet clover and 1 stalk of nettle are boiled for 15 minutes in 1 liter of water. Drink 1 wine glass, strained, 3 times before meals.

» Mix half a tablespoon of thyme, 1 tablespoon of dandelion and forest angelica roots, lemon balm leaves, peppermint and black elderflower. Pour 1 tablespoon of the mixture in 250 ml of water, soak for 10-15 minutes and strain. It is drunk cold, several times during the day.



FIG.8 JAMIE NEWTON . 10-YEAR CHOP-STICK PAPER COLLECTION (15 SEPT. 2006 TO 15 SEPT. 2016)



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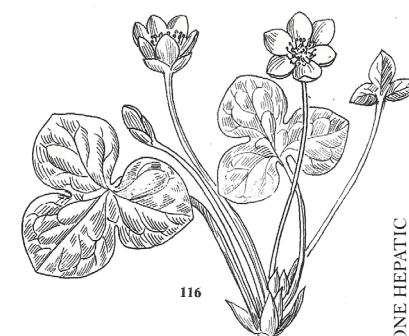
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ANEMONE HEPATIC

IMAGE SOURCES

FIG. 1 Снимка на ученици от ученическата кооперация в с. Дренов, Ловешко с ръководител Асен Матов. 1940 г., Lovech, digital scan, State Archives – Lovech.

FIG. 2 Lilkov, Ivan Petkov, Снимка на деца събиращи лайка. 60-те год. на XX в., published in „Червено знаме“ newspaper. Vidin, digital scan, State Archives – Vidin

FIG. 3 Снимка на девойки от Харманли в народни носии на Еньовден. 10 юни 1931 г., Haskovo, digital scan, State Archives – Haskovo.

FIG. 4 Билкова аптека “Сила за Живот”, Плевен, ул. „Иван Вазов“, Polomap, accessed 23 March 2023: <https://bg.polomap.com/%D0%BF%D0%B%D0%B5%D0%B2%D0%B5%D0%BD/5155>

FIG. 5 Снимка на празнично хоро на работническа юнашка чета в Пловдив. 1926 г., Пред старата сграда на Гимнастическо дружество “Тракийски юнак” (днешния площад “Дондуков-Корсаков” пред сградата на Радио “Пловдив”), Plovdiv, digital scan, State Archives – Plovdiv.

FIG. 6 Lauren Ober for NPR. *Time Capsule 10 contained receipts, canceled checks, letters and other paper material that Andy Warhol saved from 1967 to 1969.*, accessed 23 March 2023, <https://www.npr.org/2013/11/02/242174661/dead-bees-nail-clippings-and-priceless-art-in-warhols-time-capsules>

FIG. 7 Снимка на цар Борис III и княгиня Евдокия в планината

за билки. Б.д. 1922–1930s, digital scan, Central State Archives.

FIG. 8 Newton, Jamie. *10-year chopstick paper collection (15Sept2006 to 15Sept2016). “a photograph of this collection at 5 years was published here in Nov 2011”*, accessed 23 march 2023 <https://thingsorganizedneatly.tumblr.com/post/153349976328/submission-10-year-chopstick-paper-collection>

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