ABSTRACT

“ALL FOOD IS LIABLE TO DEFILE”: FOOD AS A NEGATIVE TROPE IN TWENTIETH-CENTURY COLONIAL AND (POST)COLONIAL BRITISH LITERATURE

by Katherine Elizabeth McKinnon

This thesis explores food as a negative trope in colonial and (post)colonial British literature of the twentieth century. Food, as a carrier of culture, serves as a useful tool for deconstructing hegemonic power relationships between the (post)colonized and (post)colonizing peoples.

Chapter One explores the abjection of a culture via the belittling of their food in Redmond O’Hanlon’s Into the Heart of Borneo. Jennifer Brennan’s Curries and Bugles is the focus of Chapter Two, which examines how ‘ethnic cookbooks’ can function to simplify cultures in an attempt to justify colonialism. Finally, Chapter Three analyzes how E. M. Forster, in A Passage to India, uses tea as a metaphor for the inequality of the colonial enterprise, which allows for an examination of the injustices of today’s globalization. This chapter argues for a redefinition of patriotism in the light of globalization and is ultimately an argument in support of Fair Trade.
“ALL FOOD IS LIABLE TO DEFILE”: FOOD AS A NEGATIVE TROPE
IN TWENTIETH-CENTURY COLONIAL AND (POST)COLONIAL BRITISH LITERATURE

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Katherine Elizabeth McKinnon
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Advisor ______________________________
Dr. Susan Morgan

Reader ______________________________
Dr. Yu-Fang Cho

Reader ______________________________
Dr. Nalin Jayasena
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DEDICATION

To my loving family: David, Candy, Sara, and Emily McKinnon.

And to my Grandma Marj who taught me how to bake pies.
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INTRODUCTION

* * *

Human beings make history by their actions on nature and on themselves. History is therefore about human struggle: first with nature as the material source of the wealth they create, food, clothing and shelter; and secondly, struggle with other humans over the control of that wealth. Labour, human labour, is the key link between the two struggles. It is labour, with all the instruments and accumulated skills, that makes wealth out of nature. The struggle among humans is over control of the entire organization of the production, exchange and distribution of the fruits of labour (96).

-- Ngugi wa Thiong’o, “In Moi’s Kenya, History Is Subversive”
Moving the Centre: The Struggle for Culture Freedoms (1993)

* * *

I was exhausted after a long flight, my first ever out of the country. (Not to mention it was November of 2001, and the armed officers who had protected my three-hour layover in Texas had made me feel more shaken than secure.) Seated at a large wooden table, I was the special guest of a few dozen people whose language I mostly didn’t understand but whose acceptance I craved. To my right, sat the boy whom I thought, at the time, I would certainly marry, and I was meeting his extended family, his entire extended family, on my first night in his country.

I was desperate to make a good first impression. Had they asked for a song and dance number, I would have gladly strapped on a pair of tap shoes and done my best to recreate my childhood recital performance of “Raindrops Keep Fallin’ on My Head.” Sans satin parasol even. Without the tool of language to aid in my familial fawning (I could only stiltedly say, “I wash your dishes, please? I make hot ice cream. Umm…deserts, please?”), I was left with my awkwardly large smiles and my constant nodding. In my desire for approval, I’m quite certain I came across as a dim-witted mime.

While I could not adequately express my pleasure at meeting my fiancé’s family with words, I was determined to demonstrate how grateful I was for their hospitality in my own Midwestern way: by eating absolutely everything that was put in front of me. A new meat eater, I had temporarily given up vegetarianism after a bout with anemia in college, I was less apt to check the ingredients of my meals before digging in. And although I have always been a cautious eater, this particular meal, I vowed to clean my plate. I might not be able to tell my hosts how much I enjoyed their cooking, but I would certainly show it.
The first course, soup, was tasty, but the broth carried a slap of something sour and unfamiliar. I could detect rice and a root vegetable, but I was surprised by the texture of one indiscernible ingredient, which was both chewy and furled. I held this strange piece of food against my soft palette, probing it with my tongue. Could it be a tougher cousin of the celery found in the States? I discreetly leaned toward my then fiancé and whispered, “What’s the chewy vegetable in the soup?” I listened as my question was translated to his mother then to his grandmother and back again. The man who first knew me as a vegetarian, the meat eater whom I had literally made brush his teeth, his “chicken breath,” before we kissed, turned to me with an apologetic, secretly amused gaze. “Boiled pigskin,” he said.

I have never had such a visceral reaction to a food in my life. Every part of me yearned to immediately spit this foreign substance from my mouth. However, wanting to make a good impression on my new family, I smiled and swallowed.

It was at that moment, or perhaps hours later when I still pictured the bloated pigskin further expanding in my stomach, that I realized how powerful our relationship with food can be. As a now-repentant vegetarian, I have become mildly obsessed with the question of what does and what does not constitute food. As a U.S. citizen, a Midwesterner, who often feels culturally othered by her food choices (Oh, but you eat fish, right? No? But tuna casserole’s okay? It’s not? Really? Are you sure?), I have also become acutely sensitive to how we view each other’s culinary decisions. For instance, what does it say about me that I felt sincere horror when eating a soup that my hosts would have described as comfort food? And what message was I sending when I returned to the States and shared this story with my family and friends? How about now, when I opened this thesis by telling you about my most vivid experience with food revulsion; what message did my disgust convey? You may have noticed that I did not reveal my then fiancé’s country or language. Did this exclusion help to protect his culture from a negative portrayal, or did this story lump all ‘foreign’ cultures’ foods together in a negative comparison of ‘Us’ versus ‘Them’?

I ask these questions because, as we shall see in the following chapters, food choice is directly tied to culture. While we assume the decisions we make about food are completely dictated by our taste buds, in reality, where we were born has much to do with what foods we choose to eat. However, countries commonly compare their food to that of other cultures in an attempt to establish their taste as superior, which is ludicrous because there is, of course, no
definitive correct or good food. While some foods contain more nutrients or less cholesterol-inducing fat, no food can make a person or a culture better. However, because countries often use food to establish their perceived cultural superiority, it’s important to interrogate these types of binaristic comparisons since historically, this sort of ‘Us’ versus ‘Them’ mentality has been used to justify violence, such as the violence and injustice of colonialism.

For example, in the seventeenth century, the British government and trading companies, in the imperial enterprise, began building an empire on which the sun never set. In the course of that enterprise, they generated and sustained racially-charged, ideological ‘Truths’ about non-Europeans, which they, along with other European nations, used to justify their colonial pursuits. By finding the rest of the world in comparison to their own ‘Superior’ culture: barbaric, highly sexual, exotic, erotic, violent, heathenish, and uncivilized, the British Crown was able to engage in imperialism by employing the guises of charity and a religious, civilizing mission.

Frighteningly, these ideas disturbingly continue to pulsate today in England and its most economically successful former colony, the United States. Do we, in the U.S., not hear these li(n)es from our political commentators, politicians, and neighbors: Their country is not good as ours because: they are violent, they are terrorists, they are extremists, they are uncivilized, they are uneducated, etc.? Globally, these are the same negative binaristic relationships that have also been used to justify the violence of today’s globalization. By analyzing how these damaging, fallacious stereotypes are created, we can work to expose them for what they are: dangerous, Eurocentric lies. And by analyzing the use of food as a negative trope in colonial and (post)colonial British literature of the twentieth century, this is precisely what this thesis sets out to do.

In Chapter One, I focus on Redmond O’Hanlon’s *Into the Heart of Borneo* (1984), a travel narrative in which O’Hanlon details his adventures searching for a perhaps extinct species of rhinoceros in Sarawak (a region of Malaysia on the island of Borneo). As Sarawak was once

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1 Throughout this thesis, I often use the pronoun “we” in an attempt to include my reader in the narrative. However, I recognize the potential for the use of “we” to be exclusive; for instance, in Chapter Two, I analyze Jennifer Brennan’s use of the Universal We in *Curries and Bugles: A Memoir and Cookbook of the British Raj* (2000). Brennan’s use of the pronoun works to privilege her audience, which is presumed to be from England or the United States. While I speak from my experience as a U.S. citizen (and in Chapter 2, specifically to other U.S. citizens about our economic policies), I hope you’ll find my words and messages welcoming as they are written in the spirit of inclusion.
under the control of England before gaining its Independence in 1963, O’Hanlon, as a British
citizen, is returning at a (post)colonial moment when his government is no longer in power. To
alleviate the anxiety of returning to a former colony of the Crown, O’Hanlon uses his narrative to
naturalize the once legally grounded hegemonic power relationship between England and
Sarawak by abjectifying the local food in an attempt to abjectify, and thus establish the
inferiority of, the local people.

During his journey, O’Hanlon relies on the help of his local Iban guides. Although the
Iban men who guide him are integral to his survival, O’Hanlon, throughout his narrative,
continually describes his guides’ food as disgusting and unpalatable. By abjectifying the local
food, O’Hanlon creates the sort of damning binaristic relationship discussed above: ‘Our
Superior Cuisine’ vs. ‘Their Inferior Muck.’ The violence of this rhetoric works to relieve the
British O’Hanlon’s (post)colonial anxiety by marking him as a naturally (although no longer
legally) superior subject in an independent Malaysia. By analyzing how O’Hanlon uses food to
support Eurocentric ideology, this chapter complicates the traditional notion of food as innocent
and demonstrates the importance of analyzing the trope of food in (post)colonial literature.

While O’Hanlon uses food to justify his superior status as an Englishman, food can also
be used to defend violent acts such as the violence of colonialism. For example, as we shall see
in Chapter Two, Jennifer Brennan uses her cookbook Curries and Bugles: A Memoir and
Cookbook of the British Raj (2000) to both justify the British occupation of India and to justify
her theft of her Indian cooks’ recipes. Brennan’s award-winning cookbook is a love song to the
British Raj, which splices memories of a childhood growing up in colonial India with the recipes
of the meals her cooks served to her family. Modifying Renato Rosaldo’s concept of
“Imperialist Nostalgia,” we shall see how the ‘Colonialist Nostalgia’ exhibited by Brennan in her
text encourages the reader to join in her celebration of the Raj and to overlook her theft of others’
recipes for her own financial gain.

This second chapter also considers the cookbook reader’s responsibilities when exploring
food from other cultures and advocates that we develop a vigilantly analytic relationship to
media, especially sources that seem to be working in our best interest such as cookbooks.
Because cookbooks seem so simultaneously technical and domestic, they have traditionally
existed outside the realm of academic discourse. However, as Curries and Bugles shows, these
texts provide excellent avenues for exploring how culture – via food – is perceived and disseminated.

While cookbooks have long held the reputation of being a safe, uncontroversial genre, food, in general, tends to also carry positive connotations in the United States. Loving food is ‘as American as apple pie,’ right? In fact, don’t most of ‘our’ holidays and many of ‘our’ traditions center around food? And while we, in the U.S., are aware that not everyone has the same access to food, that many go hungry, food is always seen as the solution, never the problem. Especially at the holidays, when we tend to overindulge in family feasts, we are taught to also remember to help feed the hungry. And yes, while I absolutely support efforts to end poverty and hunger in the United States, this thesis works to expand the conversation by asking the question, what’s keeping the world’s poor hungry?

This question is at the heart of the third chapter of this thesis, which analyzes how the production of food, the exploitation of labor in the world’s major cash crop industries (such as tea, coffee, cacao, etc.), works to keep the world’s farmers in cyclical poverty. As someone who has become active in the fight against the injustices of globalization through the Fair Trade movement, I have become especially concerned about who has food and who does not. I am also deeply invested in knowing who is producing the world’s food and under what conditions are they laboring. Food, though it may seem innocent, is deeply tied to the injustices of both colonialism and today’s globalization.

Chapter Three investigates the role of the cash crop industries in the colonial enterprise by analyzing E.M. Forster’s use of tea and tea parties as metaphors for inequality in A Passage to India (1924). This chapter exposes the unethical history of the tea plantations in India, as well as the current unjust labor conditions for tea workers. Sadly, the tea industry, whose roots of injustice can be found in the colonization of India, still continues to exploit its workers, as do most cash crop industries, which is why this chapter works to expose the injustices of globalization both in the cash crop fields and in the sweatshops of the multinational corporations. In line with Karl Marx, this chapter also calls for the workers of the world to unite by arguing for a redefinition of patriotism in light of the global community brought about by the imperial enterprise. One of the ways in which workers from so-called ‘First World’ countries can support workers from so-called ‘Third World’ countries is by purchasing Fair Trade certified products,
which this chapter argues is a possible solution for beginning the reform of our current unfair trade system.

Overall, the goal of this thesis is to complicate the traditional understanding of food as innocent and nourishing in order to position the negative trope of food as a useful tool for interrogating the hegemonic power relationships between (post)colonizing and (post)colonized peoples. The arguments presented in this project are very much in agreement with Aimé Césaire’s concept of the “boomerang effect of colonization,” that those who dehumanize others in order to colonize them (or belittle them, steal recipes from them, or exploit their labor), in actuality, end up dehumanizing, or defiling, themselves (41). This concept inspired the title to this thesis, “All Food Is Liable to Defile,” which comes from Julia Kristeva’s *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection* and references the ways in which, according to Kristeva, all food can potentially pollute “a clean and proper body” (75). While I will discuss Kristeva’s argument further in Chapter One in relationship to *Into the Heart of Borneo*, I have incorporated her line as the overarching theme of this project to highlight the negative roles food can play in colonial and (post)colonial contexts. Given food’s role in colonialism and in today’s globalization, studying the trope of food in literature can help us better understand how unequal relationships of power can be identified, deconstructed, and destroyed.
CHAPTER 1

* * *

“Oh God . . . How I Could Do with a Decent Meal”:

The Abjection of Iban Food in Redmond O’Hanlon’s *Into the Heart of Borneo*

When the eye sees or the lips touch that skin on the surface of milk – harmless, thin as a sheet of cigarette paper, pitiful as a nail pairing – I experience a gagging sensation and, still farther down, spasms in the stomach, the belly; and all the organs shrivel up the body, provoke tears and bile, increase heartbeat, cause forehead and hands to perspire. Along with sight-clouding dizziness, nausea makes me balk at that milk cream, separates me from the mother and father who proffer it.


* * *

Introduction

In *Into the Heart of Borneo*, published in 1984, Redmond O’Hanlon details his travels in Sarawak, a region of present-day Malaysia.3 Arriving in a post-independence Sarawak over a century after the introduction of English rule, the author’s expedition continues the legacy of foreign exploration and documentation of the island of Borneo. O’Hanlon, along with his friend, the British poet – James Fenton, tours the Rajang, Baleh, and Balui Rivers, conducting a clumsy search “‘to re-discover the Borneo rhinoceros’” (21). In chronicling his adventures in the jungle, O’Hanlon shares of his experiences with his local guides (Leon, Dana, and Inghai), Iban men from Kapit,4 who lead, protect, and feed him. Through the course of the travel narrative,

2 James Fenton’s remark after being given a meal of sebarau – a local fish – by one of his Iban guides (O’Hanlon 92).

3 In the early mid-nineteenth century, James Brooke, a British adventurer, traveled to Borneo and helped the Sultan of Brunei win a civil war. In return, he was given the title Rajah of Sarawak with the guarantee that he could bequeath his land and power to his heirs. After Japanese occupation and the devastation of World War II, the Brooke family succeeded power to the British Crown, which controlled Sarawak until 1963 when a committee from the United Nations allowed Sarawak to gain Independence and join Malaysia (*C.I.A. World Fact Book* 154; O’Hanlon 14-5; Walker 1).

4 As Vinson Sutlive Jr. explains, “the term ‘Iban’ [can be] used to describe members of [this] society who share a common language (with several dialects), common principles of social organization, and common norms” (5). However, Sutlive, who lived with the Iban of Sibu for eleven years, also writes that “the Iban show great diversity” (5). In this chapter, I will use the
O’Hanlon describes his diet of mostly fish and rice in increasingly critical and distasteful terms. To the British author, the food his guides procure and prepare for him is disgusting and unsatisfying.

Travel writers frequently present ‘native,’ ‘exotic’ foods to readers whose bodily reaction, a sense of empathetic nausea, allows them to physically connect to the narrative. To writers such as O’Hanlon, food is fact. Unlike skin color or facial features, meals are not charged with meaning. Into the Heart of Borneo records the regular meal-taking as an ‘innocent,’ ‘scientific,’ occurrence. I saw a snake. I ate a fish. However, since human tastes and distastes are culturally constructed, O’Hanlon’s disgust for Leon, Dana, and Inghai’s meals instructs us that Iban food is ‘inferior’ to that of British cuisine. And that the Iban people, in choosing to ingest ‘inferior’ food, to blend their bodies with the abject, are themselves ‘inferior’ to the British ‘Subjects.’

“‘Big Fat Hairy Roast Babi Inglang Pig’”5: Food – A Cultural Inheritance

Culture, not personal sophistication, dictates an individual’s overall food preferences (Fieldhouse 43; Lupton 29). O’Hanlon does not detest Iban food because he has an expertly refined palette. Rather, he criticizes the fish and rice given to him by his Iban guides because he was born in England, not Sarawak. Despite the fact that taste, much like gender performance, is a product of cultural norms, many societies use food choice as a premise for discrimination. In explaining how food revulsion contributes to xenophobia, Deborah Lupton, author of Food, the Body, and the Self, remarks, “Those who eat strikingly different foods or similar foods in different ways may sometimes even be thought to be less human” (Lupton 35). And it is precisely this designation of Leon, Dana, and Ingahai as “being less human” that allows O’Hanlon and his fellow adventurer and compatriot, Fenton, to be even ‘more British.’

So, why is it that countries establish binary relationships with other cultures in order to recognize their nationhood? In understanding why the British explorers would want to devalue the Iban food and thus disassociate themselves from their Iban guides, we should first consider the work of Edward Said. Though Said focused on the Western denigration of the Middle East, term Iban to refer specifically to O’Hanlon’s interactions with the Iban of Kapit, of which Dana is the chief.

5 O’Hanlon remarks that this line is “Inghai’s . . . longest speech to date” (135).
his theories of Orientalism have helpful applications for understanding O’Hanlon’s veiled racism in *Into the Heart of Borneo*. Regarding a society’s desire to devalue and ‘other’ another society, Said remarks:

the development and maintenance of every culture require the existence of another, different and competing *alter ego*. The construction of identity . . . involves the construction of opposites and ‘others’ whose actuality is always subject to the continuous interpretation and re-interpretation of their differences from ‘us.’ Each age and society re-creates its ‘Others.’ (331-32)

In order for the British explorers to maintain their Britishness, they need to subtly denigrate the Iban guides for their differences, so the English may shine as cultural ‘superiors’ by comparison. By describing their guide’s food as inedible (something a human should not want to ingest), O’Hanlon suggests, ‘They’ (the Iban people) are definitely not ‘Us’ (the British people) because we have superior taste.

Like Said, Ella Shohat and Robert Stam, in *Unthinking Eurocentrism: Multiculturalism in the Media*, also notice the unequal binary juxtapositions Western cultures use when describing themselves in comparison to those they view as ‘inferiors.’ In discussing the workings of Eurocentrism, an ideology that privileges Europe and Neo-Europe as the world’s greatest inhabitants, Shohat and Stam explain:

Eurocentrism bifurcates the world into the ‘West and the Rest’ and organizes everyday language into binaristic hierarchies implicitly flattering to Europe: our “nations,” their “tribes”; our “religions,” their “superstitions”; our “culture,” their “folklore”; our “art,” their “artifacts”; our “demonstrations,” their “riots”; our “defense,” their “terrorism.” (2)

With regard to *Into the Heart of Borneo*, we might easily add our ‘food,’ their ‘shit,’ as the Iban food in the travel narrative is described as anything but palatable.

Consider, for example, the British Fenton and Iban Inghai’s unofficial cooking competition, which occurs over halfway through the narrative once O’Hanlon has thoroughly portrayed the Iban’s food as disgusting (as we shall see in the following sections). Against warnings from his guides, Fenton, rabidly craving vegetables, attempts to prepare a gourmet meal of *terong pipet*, which Dana calls “little shits” (94). The British poet, as if he were starring on a cooking show, gives instructions as he prepares his dish, and he even surprises his audience by producing acceptable ‘Western’ plants – onion and garlic – from his pack. However, though
Fenton’s Western skills and ingredients mark his superiority, the British cook is no match for the ‘atrocious’ Eastern vegetable. Likewise, Inghai’s dish, as I shall discuss later in this chapter, generates even greater disgust from O’Hanlon.

However, rather than consider the fruit of the chefs’ efforts, I suggest we first examine the text’s depiction of their culinary skills. While Fenton carefully arranges his “batterie de cuisine,” Inghai, “perhaps inspired by the competition,” “huddled over his cauldron, stirring it with a stick” (96, 97). As O’Hanlon notes, “The cauldron itself appeared to be blowing blisters of bubble gum from its upturned mouth, chewing and steaming and puffing up fifty or sixty packets of white Wrigley’s at each burp of its greasy lips” (97). A grotesque description, especially when compared to Fenton “‘Fry[ing] onion and garlic until golden brown’” (97).

Though neither man receives rave food reviews in the text, in this direct comparison, using the binary reasoning articulated by Said, Shohat, and Stam, O’Hanlon wants the reader to recognize Fenton as the superior and more refined chef.

“The Horror of the Fenton”6

While Said, Shohat, and Stam recognize that cultures define themselves in binaristic relationships to one another, and Lupton suggests that food plays a definite role in these negative comparisons, what is it about food that allows it to elicit disgust? Like Lupton, Julia Kristeva, recognizes the divisionary properties of “food loathing,” which she calls “perhaps the most elementary and most archaic form of abjection” (2). In her evocative work, Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection, Kristeva introduces food revulsion as a means for understanding the abject’s menace to and confirmation of the ‘Self.’ Similar to Lacan’s concept of ‘the Real,’7 Kristeva describes human existence as beginning in a ‘choric’ period, a pre-lingual, pre-subjecthood state in which the infant cannot recognize the division between its body and that of

6 In trying to “mimic [the energetic] Leon’s diet,” O’Hanlon “force[s] [him]self to eat as much sticky, finger-gluing rice as Leon d[oes], to the great approval of the Iban and the horror of the Fenton” (O’Hanlon 54).

7 In “The Mirror Stage as Formative of the Function of the I as Revealed in Psychoanalytic Experience,” Jacques Lacan explains this first life stage – “the infans stage,” stating that “[‘the child’ is] still sunk in his motor incapacity and nursling dependence, . . . exhibit[ing] in an exemplary situation the symbolic matrix in which the I is precipitated in a primordial form, before it is objectified in the dialectic of identification with the other, and before language restores to it, in the universal, its function as subject” (1286).
its mother’s. As Kristeva explains, “food is the oral object (the abject) that sets up archaic relationships between the human being and the other, its mother, who wields a power that is as vital as it is fierce” (Kristeva 75-76). Uncomfortable with our once undefined bodies and identities, we rely on abjection to help us reaffirm the boundaries that give us our ‘subjeckthood.’ *My body is my own because I guard it against pollution, shit, pus. Because I am not a scab or mat of hair. Because I do not eat what is not food. Because I am not the ‘Other.’*

According to Kristeva, food, especially nauseating food, reminds us that we are not perfectly sealed human ‘Subjects,’ but instead have dangerously permeable boundaries. Of the body’s precarious permeability, anthropologist Mary Douglas, explains, “All margins are dangerous. If they are pulled this way or that the shape of functional experience is altered. Any structure of ideas is vulnerable at its margins. We should expect the orifices of the body to symbolize its specially vulnerable points” (150). Given this explanation, the mouth serves an expressly treacherous role because it must constantly accept foreign matter, be it the nipple we suckled in infancy or the food we must continually consume for survival. Not surprisingly, the material composition of food seems to help determine the threat, as viscous, sticky, and syrupy foods allude to our body’s fluid origin in sperm and egg and therefore pose a greater risk. For instance, to Kristeva, milk presents an especially significant threat, as it reminds us of our connection to our mother’s breast and to those early months of life during which we could not differentiate our body from hers. Although we experience anxiety from our uncomfortable recognition of this pre-subjeckthood, motherme/memother state (Kristeva’s *chora* period), through our rejection and expulsion of abjected food, we reaffirm our position as a separate, independent ‘Self’ (2-3; 12-5).

In *Into the Heart of Borneo*, O’Hanlon’s frequent, negative descriptions of his meals can be seen as a means to abject Iban food and thus subordinate the Iban people. In analyzing this process of abjection, I suggest we borrow and modify Kristeva’s *chora* period to identify a pre-British occupation state in Sarawak. A period when the British were unknown to the Iban and the Iban unknown to the British. A time prior to colonization, when both peoples were equal and

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8 Food is not the only material abject. According to Kristeva, the abject includes “what disturbs identity, system, order. What does not respect borders, positions, rules. The in-between, the ambiguous, the composite. The traitor, the liar, the criminal with a good conscience, the shameless rapist, the killer who claims he is a savior” (4). Kristeva also includes all bodily fluids, crime, pregnant bodies, fetuses, corpses, etc. in the abject.
the same in their un-acquaintance. In sharing communal meals with Leon, Dana, and Inghai, O’Hanlon faces anxiety-generating echoes of this pre-occupation *chora* period. A recognition of equality in consummation kinship.

To alleviate his unease, the British adventurer codes the Iban offerings as revolting. For instance, O’Hanlon calls sebarau, a species of fish and the main food staple of their journey, “a hair-brush caked in lard” (39). Likewise, the monitor lizard, which Leon catches and offers as a gift to the Kenyah people, reminds the author of “the stray chunks of solid matter in the effluvia one sees in England on an unwashed pavement outside a public house late on a Saturday night” (64). Served as leftovers in the morning, the lizard has “the smell a dentist releases when he opens up an abscess to drain it” (O’Hanlon 77). Through the British adventurer’s harsh descriptions, we hear the abjecting slur: *We have your food where I come from. We call it vomit. Pus. And we expel it from our bodies.*

If O’Hanlon were to accept Leon, Dana, and Inghai’s food graciously, as an unknown yet welcome sustenance, he might risk entering into a relationship of equals with his Iban guides. When meals are shared in ‘brotherhood,’ the post-colonial hierarchical binary of British ‘superior Subject’ / Iban ‘inferior Other’ could potentially dissolve. Instead, by casting off the Iban’s food as a horrid, unappetizing abject, O’Hanlon can detach himself from a relationship of pre-colonial equality, our re-imagined *choric* period, and define himself as a separate, individual British ‘Subject.’ Much like Kristeva’s ‘Subject,’ who might demand, *Take back your breast milk, Mama because I am an ‘I,’* we can imagine O’Hanlon’s text proclaiming, *Take back your “greasy rice” Iban because I am British* (56).

In abjecting Iban food, O’Hanlon not only marks his guides’ meals as obviously ‘inferior’ to that of the British but also, in doing so, questions the ‘quality’ of the Iban as a people. Leon, Dana, and Inghai eagerly and gladly feast on the food that O’Hanlon critically abjects. As Lupton astutely remarks in her analysis of Kristeva, “Food is both self and non-self simultaneously” (113). Using this logic, serbarau is a fish in the river, in the mouth, in the intestines, and out the anus. But isn’t a fish housed in the gastrointestinal tract part of the body as well? *When is a fish not a fish? When it’s a meal.* In eating the abject, what Kristeva calls “a boundary between nature and culture, between the human and the non-human,” Leon, Dana, and

9 The relationship is strictly a brotherhood since O’Hanlon does not introduce any developed female characters.
Inghai happily ingest and incorporate the abject into their bodies (75). This food, which O’Hanlon criticizes as not ‘naturally’ fit for human consumption, marks the Iban as ‘less’ than human and definitely an ‘inferior’ body to that of the ‘superior’ British ‘Subject.’

*But doesn’t O’Hanlon also eat the food he himself abjects? Doesn’t he incorporate the abject into his body as well?* Yes, however, O’Hanlon, in this argument of abjection as a form of ethnocentrism, being of a ‘superior’ British body, unlike the Iban, has the intellectual capacity to recognize and name the abject. As an Englishman, he is ‘smart’ and ‘refined’ enough to dislike his guides’ noxious diet. Instead of approaching the local food with open taste buds, O’Hanlon and his companion Fenton fantasize about omelets and gourmet pork dishes and repeat the mantra, “even this particular meal [will] all be over one day” (64). Furthermore, O’Hanlon does not conceive of the abjected food as being a part of his British body. Instead, the abject seems to have a separate, disturbing life of its own. For instance, after eating the monitor lizard, O’Hanlon feels its “tail . . . still gently whisking, from side to side, in [his] stomach” (65). Though he swallows, the author never assimilates the abject.

*“‘Multivite’” & “‘Alka-seltzer’”*: *Western Medicine as a Defense against Eastern Otherness*

Not only does O’Hanlon loathe and psychologically repel the food his Iban guides give him, but he also fights the abject with his arsenal of Western medicine. According to Kristeva, treacherous, abject food can pollute “the self’s clean and proper body” through the mouth (75). Remember, as Mary Douglas explains, we are most vulnerable at our margin’s – our body’s orifices (150). Recognizing this principle, within the first chapter of the text, O’Hanlon establishes the importance of guarding the mouth as prior to his voyage, during a private training session, a major of the Special Air Services tells him, “You’ll find the high spot of your day . . . is cleaning your teeth. The only bit of you you can keep clean” (5). However, with a daily intake of fatty, bony fish and oily rice, O’Hanlon’s oral “boundary” faces an onslaught of abject pollution (Kristeva 75).

To cleanse his vulnerable body, O’Hanlon administers himself a strict regimen of medicine, a symbol of Western civilization’s progress. For example, after eating an Iban delicacy of fishes’ intestinal worms, O’Hanlon declares, “I then secretly resumed my

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10 In visiting a Kenyah village, O’Hanlon and Fenton offer vitamins and indigestion medicine to the residents with the seriousness of a “shaman” (O’Hanlon 62).
prophylactic course of antibiotics with a Streptotriad, and, just in case the long, white, black-headed intestinal worms of the sebarau should reconstitute themselves in my own gut and attempt to make their escape to the river with a wriggle from my every orifice, I added a depth charge of codeine phosphate” (102). O’Hanlon takes this unnecessary precaution (to exterminate an already dead and digesting substance) because he has eaten the abject. *Birds eat worms. Fish eat worms. People do not eat worms. (Except some peoples do).* The Iban value the worms as a delicacy (similar to expensive caviar), and they generously wish to share this luxury with O’Hanlon and Fenton. However, the British “Subject” has been culturally trained to code worm-eaters as ‘not human,’ ‘animalistic,’ and ‘uncivilized,’ messages that O’Hanlon clearly conveys to his reader.

“Small and Quick as a Mongoose”¹²: Animalistic Characterizations

Throughout the text, much like in the worm feast illustration, O’Hanlon also uses food as a means to depict his Iban characters in animalistic terms. For example, when the guides first provide fish for the befuddled Englishmen who have never fished and are only capable of hooking each other’s bums, O’Hanlon remarks, “Taking their wooden harpoons from the canoe, Leon and Inghai dived into the river; and disappeared completely, like a pair of Great crested grebe” (38, emphasis added). Comparing them to birds, O’Hanlon insinuates that fishing comes naturally to these men from Borneo, so naturally, in fact, that they seem to morph into animals when hunting their prey. Likewise, in considering whether or not to arm wrestle Chief Dana, O’Hanlon reaches the conclusion that “[he] could have taken my arm off at the elbow . . . as easily as you twist a wing from a roast chicken” (155). Not only does the statement portray a sort of barbaric strength, but this food-themed simile also ties Dana to an anthropophagic act. *Why would the Iban chief want to tear a limb from the pudgy travel writer?* *Well to eat it, of course.*

In *Into the Heart of Borneo*, food serves a definite othering purpose, for as Kristeva notes, food marks “a border between two distinct entities or territories . . . [such as] the human

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¹¹ Likewise, on another occasion, when the British explorers eat serbarau for the first time and realize the fish is incredibly bony, Fenton reassures O’Hanlon, “‘Redmond, don’t worry, . . . if you need a tracheotomy I have a biro-tube in my baggage’” (39).

¹² O’Hanlon’s description of Inghai catching butterflies (95).
and the non-human” (75). To O’Hanlon, “Homo sapiens” (Englishmen) eat omelettes; animals (Iban) eat lizards (101). Using this logic, in returning to explore a post-colonized country, O’Hanlon offers culinary justification for Britain’s past rule over Borneo. In fact, O’Hanlon opens his text with an epigraph from C.D. Darlington’s *The Evolution of Man and Society* (1969), which begins, “The situation in Sarawak as seen by Haddon in 1888 is still much the same today” (qtd. in O’Hanlon 1). From the first page of his text, O’Hanlon encourages his readers to see the people of Borneo as ‘archaic,’ ‘uncivilized,’ and, as is introduced and repeated throughout the narrative, helplessly un-gastronomic. While functioning to distinctly mark his Iban guides as ‘animalistic,’ ‘abject,’ and ‘inferior,’ O’Hanlon’s description of their diet not only serves to confirm English ‘Subjecthood’ but also attempts to justify past colonization through British ‘superiority.’

“Was It Time to Stay at Home?”

In their journey away from the heart of Borneo and back into ‘civilization,’ the voyagers stop at a grocer’s in a small timber camp. O’Hanlon describes the “dingy little cavern” as “a miraculous place . . . [with] brightly-coloured packets on shelves; and tins with pictures on them; and food in corners. And no fish anywhere” (150). The British amateur explorers, who have battled the defilement of abject (Iban food) can now take refuge in the purity of Green Giant Sweetcorn and Guinness Stout.

Perhaps the most interesting aspect regarding the party’s discovery of the Westernized store is the stark contrast between their enthusiasm for cigarettes and beer when compared to the utter apathy O’Hanlon expresses for his unofficial ‘discovery’ of the Borneo rhinoceros – the reason for his expedition. For example, with regards to the store filled with “Peach Pieces and

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13 Sorely disappointed with the Iban diet and thinking about eggs, Fenton bitterly fantasizes about preparing an omelet away from Borneo’s wilds and poor cuisine: “A Spanish omelette, that’s what we need. In fact, I’ll make you a promise: if we ever get out of here I’ll make you a Spanish omelette; in my cool, comfortable, clean, spacious kitchen, entirely free of ants and mosquitoes and fish and snakes. I will cook you an omelette such as you never dreamed Homo sapiens would be capable of creating, and, after supper, your bloodstream entirely free of arak [an Iban alcohol] but saturated with Glenmorangie, you may pay a private visit to my best lavvy, whose bowl, as far as I know, has never seen a catfish” (O’Hanlon 101).

14 O’Hanlon’s question after receiving jungle training from the Special Air Services (O’Hanlon 6).
Pineapple Rings and Roasted Peanuts and Steak Chunks,” O’Hanlon and especially Fenton raise quite the ruckus (150). When the British explorers and their Iban guides approach the small timber camp, Fenton yells, “‘Stop! . . . Stop you crazy bastards!’” and “‘Cigarettes! Beer!,’” which “so instantly prov[es] [to O’Hanlon] [Fenton’s] status as Homo sapiens” (149). Regarding Fenton’s intense excitement, O’Hanlon remarks, “James sprang out of the boat with an agility, a set of unsuspected reflex loops, not used, I would imagine, since early childhood” (149). This scene in the narrative brings forth a sense of exuberance and passion not yet fully shown in the text, especially from Fenton who so far, has spent a great deal of time reading Les Misérables and fantasizing about eggs and vegetables.

In stark contrast to this consumer celebration, O’Hanlon’s travel narrative ends with a rather uneventful revelation. At the end of a chaotic visit to an Ukit camp, which involves a generational clash between the residents and a pregnant woman’s near fatality, O’Hanlon attempts to restore calm and conduct final scientific research by asking the local people if they recognize the animals from his illustrated biological encyclopedias. When one elderly man recognizes the creatures from his book of birds, an excited O’Hanlon decides to ask him if he’s familiar with the Borneo rhinoceros. After showing the Ukit man a photograph of the animal that prompted his exploration into Borneo, O’Hanlon concludes his book with this short passage:

The old man stiffened. His thumb came down on the page with a crack. He turned to our guide, his face alert, his thin muscles bunched, and he talked with a wild intensity.

‘He wishes to tell you, sir, ‘ said our guide, ‘that when he was young, when he was a man just like us, by the mountain known as Tiban, he killed eight of these with his own best spear.’ Our search had ended. (183)

O’Hanlon does not ask for further details. He doesn’t wonder if any descendents of these once prevalent Borneo rhinoceros still roam the mountains today. He doesn’t express joy at finding even distant proof of the perhaps extinct mammal’s existence. Instead, the travel writer’s less than substantial finding results in a hastened, anticlimactic ending.

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15 Interestingly, O’Hanlon follows this statement by comparing Fenton’s quick exit from the boat to that of “an arthritic gazelle” (149). However, unlike when O’Hanlon compares his Iban guides to animals, the travel writer’s description of the older Fenton is meant to be derisive and humorous. In contrast, the earlier comparison of the fishing Leon and Inghai to a diving bird is intended to appear serious and accurate to O’Hanlon’s reader.
Plotting the narrative arc of this text would lead readers to judge that of these two points of discovery – that of the Western store and that of a possible clue about the Borneo rhinoceros, O’Hanlon and Fenton’s return to ‘civilization’ (reunion with Western cuisine) truly marks the proper resolution of the text. Though the British explorers have faced peril and poor provender, when “Windy with sweetcorn, sloppy with peaches and pineapples, gritty with peanuts, [and] full of Eastern Guinness,” their adventures seem to conclude with a fulfilling (full feeling), celebratory ease (150). By elevating the discovery of a store selling Western food and devaluing the ‘discovery’ of the animal that prompted his trip to Borneo, O’Hanlon once again allows food to support a notion of British superiority. For after the horror of eating the Iban’s abjected food, nothing, even completing his quest, can compare to release from the intense dietary distress.

Furthermore, after their discovery of the store but before their discovery of the rhinoceros, when back in Kapit, the Iban offer O’Hanlon and Fenton “a meal [they] never forgets! [sic]” of roasted pig (155). Surprisingly, O’Hanlon, who litters his text with disparaging remarks about his guides’ food, gives no evaluation of this memorable dinner, perhaps because pork is familiar to a British palette and would not alarm or disturb the reader. Instead, Into the Heart of Borneo leaves us with the early images of the Iban’s more unfamiliar food as being that which disgusts and revolts, produces bile and unease, and generates the false assumption that the Iban body, the host of the abject, is ‘inferior’ to that of the British ‘Subject.’

As Graham Huggan notes when discussing Into the Heart of Borneo, O’Hanlon “[is] arguably less concerned with documenting the actual places [he] visit[s] than with setting up a playground for the acting out of [his] own, and [his] readers’, private fantasies” (Huggan 43). Private fantasies that include an intense sense of British ‘superiority’ regarding cuisine. While travel writers often season their stories with the trope of local food to add an ‘innocent’ flavor of the ‘exotic’ to their work, we should not forget that as Lupton explains, “Food and culinary practices . . . hold an extraordinary power in defining the boundaries between ‘us’ and ‘them’” (26). Though on one hand, O’Hanlon’s abject depiction of his Iban guides’ food engages our stomachs and thus sutures us to his narrative, he also succeeds in positioning the Ibans as an ‘inferior’ people with an ‘animalistic’ appetite. After the period when the British had lost control over Sarawak, O’Hanlon, with his disparaging, abjectifying rhetoric, relieves British anxiety

16 Though O’Hanlon continues his search for the Borneo rhinoceros after the feast, he is primarily escorted and fed by Thomas, a Kayan guide.
over lost power by continuing to promote the historical hegemonic power relationship of the colonial period. His words regarding the Iban food are a form of ideological violence, clearly proving that, when we travel, nothing, including the description of a meal, can ever be called innocent.
CHAPTER 2

* * *

“Requiem for the Raj”\textsuperscript{17}: Cookbooks and Colonialist Nostalgia

No Indian ever uses curry powder in his cooking. Nor do we mix our own, because if we did we would end up with our own blend of collective spices. Cooking again and again with the same blend of spices would make all dishes taste alike. It would be the same as taking a tablespoon each of dried thyme, basil, rosemary, tarragon, bay leaves, and allspice, putting them in a jar, shaking the jar, labeling it ‘French Spices,’ and then using a portion of this mixture for every French dish one made, from soup to salad. Also, since ‘curry powder is a blend of ground spices, it tends to get stale very quickly and lose its flavour. So one ends up with something that has the negative aspects of being standardized and somewhat rancid at the same time.

-- Madhur Jaffrey, \textit{An Invitation to Indian Cooking} (1973)

* * *

India assaults the senses. There is nothing subtle about her. It is the same with the food. The sensuality of texture, vivid colors, pungent aromas and tingling tastes demand attention, even one’s total concentration. The hardy and open-minded culinary explorers are weeded out from the mere voyeurs and dilettantes. In the same manner, there were those who sought to be part of the British Raj but whose sensibilities were offended by the challenge. Those who accepted and adapted and survived and went on to love the vast subcontinent and all it had to offer.


* * *

Introduction

As a vegetarian moving to a new town, especially a new town in rural Ohio, it’s important to check out the veggie options at your local grocery store as the alternative protein scene can tell you a lot about how much you’re going to enjoy your future dining experiences. Imagine my disappointment after moving to a small college town in Southwest Ohio to find that the veggie burgers were literally frozen to the shelf and would not budge. We’re not talking plain old freezer burn; the bottoms were encased in ice – not a promising alimentary omen. Now

\textsuperscript{17} Near the end of the introduction to \textit{Curries and Bugles: A Memoir and Cookbook of the British Raj}, Jennifer Brennan includes a “Requiem for the Raj,” a somber section chronically the sense of loss all felt (in her opinion) at the end of British rule in India: “The British no longer ruled the land. After the din of fireworks and mass celebrations died away and the turmoil of resettlement finally subsided, emptiness remained” (18). For, as Brennan’s narrative suggests, before the British came, India was an empty void.
imagine my pleasant surprise when I discovered that not twenty miles away from my apartment was the all-time treasure trove of foodie bliss: Jungle Jim’s International Market.

To put it simply, Jungle Jim’s is more amusement park than local market. What began as Jim Bonaminio’s roadside stand has evolved into a 300,000 square foot celebration of food, culture, and whimsy. For instance, strolling through the 1 ½ acres of produce, you’ll likely pass under the shadow of a gigantic, musical instrument playing animatronics band consisting of Trix Rabbit, Lucky the Leprechaun, and Buzz Bee from General Mills cereal fame. Did I mention they play on top of a large fishing boat and sing classic oldies? (Jungle Jims International Market).

Everywhere you look, Bonaminio (who goes by “Jungle”) has crammed his store with curiosities: a large, smiling soup can swinging over the “American Grocery” section (its own store within a store), an Elvis impersonating lion, or an antique fire engine serving as a roof for an aisle of hot sauces, some of them naughty by nature and housed on the top shelf behind doors labeled: “Adult Oriented Hot Sauces.” But the crème de la crème are the international sections, which, according to the store’s website, host “more than 50,000 imported grocery items from more than 75 countries and regions around the world.” Jungle Jim promises, “Comfort foods from home – wherever in the world home may be!” (Jungle Jims International Market).

While Jungle Jim’s does offer the diasporic communities of Cincinnati access to ingredients from their homelands, these homelands are presented as yet another amusing spectacle for the ‘general’ audience to consume. Moreover, the representations of the countries whose foods Jungle sells seem to adhere to U.S. stereotyping of these cultures. For example, while the United Kingdom is arguably goofy as it’s housed under Sherwood Forest complete with a talking Robin and his Band of Merry Men, the rest of Europe is picturesque. The back of the mega-market features a European Village, which includes countries such as Ireland, France, and Holland. The European Village boasts beautiful arches, cobblestone, brick facades, balconies, climbing ivy, and darling, hanging placards trimmed with gold. However, India, one of the largest international sections in Jungle’s realm, stands in stark contrast. According to the store’s website, if a foodie wants to find India, which is located “in the back, close to Robin Hood’s tree” (oh, the reach of the Raj), all s/he needs to do is to “just look for Jungle riding an elephant.”
One look at the cartoon Jungle, who wears a turban, carries a fringed parasol, and beams down larger than life from the back of an elephant, an elephant whose 3D tusks sprout boldly from the wall and into the store, will tell you that ‘there is something rotten in the state of Denmark.’ (Or not quite; at Jungle Jim’s, Scandinavia’s actually quite smashing with a slick black tile façade and a complimentary green roof.) But in all seriousness, in his portrait, Jungle is so obviously Caucasian, so obviously masculine, and so obviously in control of his domain, his domain being India. However, what is most problematic about this bizarre rendering of racial and political dominance is that if you know Jungle the man and you know Jungle Jim’s the place, especially if you consider yourself a hip and cultured foodie, this line of reasoning – a critique of the food lover’s paradise – seems downright iconoclastic. Which is why I’ve begun this chapter on ethnic cookbooks with an examination of this international market because I, admittedly, love Jungle Jim’s. To borrow Alvy Singer’s line from Annie Hall, “love is too weak a word for what I feel. I lurve [Jungle Jim’s].” It is the Disneyworld of food, and Jungle has unabashedly won my heart. To have access to Jungle’s food – bright, colorful, and exotic, I am willing to overlook images or ideas that might offend me in different contexts.

And it is precisely this sort of analysis which I suggest we apply to ‘ethnic cookbooks’ written by authors from (post)colonizing countries about the food of (post)colonized cultures, especially those cookbooks which attempt to simplify a culture’s cuisine so as to reinforce the logic of the colonial enterprise. It is also imperative that we recognize how ‘ethnic cookbooks’ can function to give readers from (post)colonizing nations the means with which to sample the ‘exotic’ and maintain a sense of ownership over a (post)colonized people via their food. Like grocery stores, even fun-filled, theme park-type grocery stores, cookbooks are not devoid of politics or ideology. Instead, academic discourse should interrogate the messages of cookbooks precisely because they feel so incredibly safe and instructional.

However, I do not want to insinuate that all cookbooks function to support an imperialist agenda. In fact, as scholars, such as Anne Goldman, Anita Mannur, and Parama Roy, have observed, cookbooks can also allow writers to celebrate the cuisine of their homelands, often giving voice to women.18 In fact, as Mannur notes in Culinary Fictions: Food in South Asian Diasporic Culture (2010); and

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18 For more information, see Anne Goldman’s “I Yam What I Yam: Cooking, Culture, and Colonialism,” De/Colonizing the Subject: The Politics of Gender in Women’s Autobiography (1992); Anita Manur’s Culinary Fictions: Food in South Asian Diasporic Culture (2010); and
**Diasporic Culture**, “Cookbooks in diasporic settings are rarely just about food. They are also a form of exchange to indicate how one might face the challenges of leaving home, how to negotiate the pull of nostalgia while also battling the implications of trying to assimilate” (62). And while there are many excellent cooking guides written by women (and men) from (post)colonized countries – for example Mannur and Roy both examine the work of Madhur Jaffrey – in this chapter, I will specifically address the topic of cookbooks written by members of a (post)colonizing country about a post(colonized) culture’s food (often referred to as ‘ethnic cookbooks’). Specifically, I will examine Jennifer Brennan’s *Curries and Bugles: A Memoir & Cookbook of the British Raj* (2000), an award-winning cookbook that praises the glory of imperialism. I dedicate much of this chapter to a close reading of Brennan’s text, so we can clearly see how a cookbook can be ideologically dangerous and worthy of our analysis.

“*This Is An Intensely Personal Book*”¹⁹: The Ethics of ‘Ethnic’ Cookbooks

Jennifer Brennan, cookbook writer, cooking school founder, restaurant owner, and world traveler, was born in England but spent her early childhood living in India where her father served the British Raj. Brennan shares of her family memories living in British India in her nostalgic text, *Curries and Bugles*, winner of the International Association of Culinary Professionals Literary Food Writing Award. Not new to the memoir/cookbook field, Brennan’s also published the following culinary guides: *The Original Thai Cookbook* (1981), *The Cuisines of Asia: Nine Great Oriental Cuisines by Technique* (1984), *One-Dish Meals of Asia* (1985), and *Tradewinds and Coconuts: A Reminiscence and Recipes from the Pacific Islands* (2000), which chronicles her experience living in Guam and traveling among the Pacific Islands. One might argue that Brennan, who has also lived in Japan, should have used her global experiences to develop a non-prejudicial appreciation for the communities she has visited. Instead, Brennan’s cookbooks, especially her most recent, *Curries and Bugles*, reinforces negative stereotyping and positions the European and neo-European cookbook reader as ‘superior’ to the people whose food they attempt to master and recreate for their dinner.

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¹⁹ The first line of Brennan’s preface to *Curries and Bugles: A Memoir and Cookbook of the British Raj* (1).

**Parama Roy’s “Reading Communities and Culinary Communities: The Gastropoetics of the South Asian Diaspora,” Positions: East Asia Cultures Critique** 10 (2002).
Brennan’s cookbook, a love song to the Raj, follows in the imperial tradition of justifying colonization as an act of manifest destiny. Published fifty-three years after India won its independence from England, Jennifer Brennan’s *Curries and Bugles* attempts to justify colonization with description aimed to reignite the faded glory of the Raj and portray the people of India as lazy (her family’s servants) and ‘exotic’ or ‘fierce’ (the other ‘natives’ Brennan and her family encounter). Through Brennan’s stories of lazy servants and her promises that the reader, with the text’s guidance, can improve upon Indian dishes, *Curries and Bugles* supports an invented ‘inferiority’ of the Indian ‘Other’ and the equally imagined ‘superiority’ of the historic British Raj families and their current recipe-book-reading descendants. By analyzing the rhetorical violence of Brennan’s text, which, although award winning, provides an appalling salute to imperialism, we will seek to understand how a cookbook such as *Curries and Bugles* can be used to excuse colonialism while simultaneously attempting to maintain control over a (post)colonized country via its food. However, first, we should perhaps more generally consider the ethics of the genre in which Brennan writes, the ‘ethnic cookbook’ written by a cultural outsider to other cultural outsiders.

As Janet Floyd and Laurel Forster explain in the introduction to their impressive collection *The Recipe Reader: Narratives, Contexts, Traditions*, “Cultures supposedly foreign to us are continually called up for our consumption in recipes” (1). The ‘ethnic’ cookbook literally allows the reader to consume the foreign ‘Other’ via her or his food while simultaneously masking the cookbook author’s incomplete and erroneous understanding of this ‘foreign’ culture. Similar to Redmond O’Hanlon’s descriptions of his Iban guides’ food, which we discussed in Chapter One, ‘ethnic’ cookbooks allow Europeans and Neo-Europeans to code recipes as ‘foreign,’ ‘exotic,’ and ‘sensual’ so as to reinforce their own positions as civilized subjects. As Floyd explains, some ethnic cookbook writers “use recipe books to construct Other less ‘developed’ regions for the consumption of a post-colonial audience well accustomed to situating their own national cultural identity in opposition to the primitive, the exotic or indeed the authentic” (128). Further, besides not only allowing Westerners from privileged countries to conceive of their cultures and palettes as discerning and superior, these cookbooks, like Brennan’s, can even reinforce imperial logic and excuse the injustices of colonialism. For as many an ‘ethnic cookbook’ suggests, *we cannot only make these recipes, we can improve them*. 
“Mistress of All She Surveys”**: Curries and Bugles – A Case Study

As a child and grandchild of British Raj officers, Brennan spent her youth on the India subcontinent, specifically in Punjab and Kashmir (2). Brennan, who, along with the publication of *Curries and Bugles*, opened up a San Diego Raj-themed restaurant with the same name, speaks only glowingly of India’s occupation by England. Rather than as a historical period of injustice and forced domination, Brennan describes England’s imperial control over India as pleasant and romantic.\(^{21}\) In fact, in the preface to her text, Brennan promises that her memoirs and recipes will “[celebrate] the food, people and places of the British Raj in India” (1). While she does hint at a life of struggle, the British characters in Brennan’s Raj fairytale seem to face their greatest challenges on the polo fields and tennis courts in a “vivid and exotic country” where “[t]o discover one’s own picnic spot was a high priority” (1, 12). Brennan’s depiction of the Raj could be equated to a perpetual Disneyland vacation or a fabulous cruise; she provides this list of her family’s daily routine during the months of pleasant weather: “Riding, tennis, picnics, gymkhanas, hunts and shoots, luncheons, Government House garden parties, cricket matches and teas filled the daylight hours. Dinner parties, fancy dress or costume masquerades, dances, mess-night dinners and balls occupied and illuminated the nights” (11). *Curries and Bugles* clearly and repeatedly presents the Raj as one big party with the British Crown as everyone’s favorite host. In Brennan’s text, colonialism isn’t bad. Colonization is cause for celebration. And you needn’t limit your exuberance over the theft of land and liberty, for Brennan even provides a recipe “splendid for hangovers” (53).

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\(^{20}\) Brennan presents this heading for a section on the “the mistress of the house” (“or *burra mem*)” (13). In *Curries and Bugles*, Brennan takes the role of *burra mem* over Indian cuisine.

\(^{21}\) Though Brennan does, on rare occasion, offer a more accurate depiction of the Raj, she often in the very next paragraph, if not the next sentence, contradicts her rare moment of clarity and refutes any seriously critical description of the Raj. For instance, in a section of her introduction, “The Raj triumphant,” Brennan astutely remarks: “the Mutiny [The Indian Uprising of 1857] left a legacy of racial hatred and the seeds of final separation were sown even before the period of greatest triumph [of the British, naturally]. As imperialists, the British began to treat the land and people, so carefully and slowly gathered into the fold, as conquered inferiors. They ruled India with the unshakeable conviction that they were supremely equipped to do so: by a sense of moral rectitude, a certainty of intellectual superiority and a patriotism firmly rooted in their country’s interests. In short, a sense of manifest destiny” (9). However, Brennan’s text as a whole works to contradict this rare moment of enlightenment as it decidedly depicts her Indian servants as “conquered inferiors.”
At this point, we may be asking, but how can Brennan possibly glorify the Raj in a text meant to celebrate the food prepared by Indian cooks? How can a writer praise the creation of Indian chefs while simultaneously supporting the colonization of their land, labor, and goods? To achieve this feat, Brennan wages two points of attack: belittling the people of India and claiming a superior understanding of their dishes. She uses this ideologically violent rhetoric to justify both the British colonial enterprise in England and her modern day theft of recipes that, in actuality, belong to her Indian cooks.

While Brennan does praise the food prepared by her family’s cooks, she also repeatedly stereotypes and simplifies them by offering multiple references to their ‘laziness’ and ‘inferiority.’ For example, to illustrate how the “made-in-advance qualities [of her eshepherd’s pie recipe] appealed to [Indian cooks], particularly when they had spent longer than they should in the bazaar,” Brennan concocts a story of her own cook running late with the shopping: “But the cook has overstayes his time in the bazaar. Hailing a tonga, he puts all his packages inside, hauling his bulk up after them, and clip-clops juldi-juldi (quickly-quickly) back to the kitchen of the bungalow in the British cantonment” (94, 96, emphasis added). Accompanying this story, Brennan includes a ‘comical’ drawing of the scene: a large-bellied cook riding in the back of a tonga, losing a fluttering chicken, a bunch of bananas, and a sandal in his haste. In this story, Brennan does not just offer a quick and hearty meal. Instead, she explains the ease of the recipe with a negative depiction of her cook as irresponsible with his time and uncontrolled in his eating. Further, to add insult to an already injurious depiction, Brennan adds this note, “Please use fresh meat, not leftovers. The khansamer sometimes made it with cooked meat but it was a poor substitute” (97). Although this is not quite the same as insinuating the European or Neo-European reader can improve upon an Indian dish (shepherd’s pie has it’s roots in the United Kingdom), this note does serve to give the Indian servant an inferior status, marking him as “a poor substitute” for a British subject.

However, in other instances, Brennan does overtly disregard her Indian cooks’ authority over their own cuisine while giving advice on how a Western reader could easily improve upon these dishes. For example, Brennan gives this preface to her “First-class chicken fricassée”: “While chicken fricassée has been known to grace the tables of the Indian dining cars as an entrée, this version is upscale; perhaps what the cooks would have liked to produce if they had had the time, energy and money. For us, it is easy, and we do not have to crouch between the
railway carriages to peel the onions either” (164, emphasis added). The Universal We, which Brennan utilizes frequently in the text, refers to her Western readers whom she privileges. We are “upscale.” We are talented and have the “time, energy, and money” to improve upon this originally unsatisfactory dish. Moreover, you would never catch us crouching on a railroad track. Why? Because superior people don’t crouch.

Sadly, this colonial rhetoric is repeated throughout the cookbook. In an equally telling example, when describing her “Dak bungalow murghi roast” and “Ros-tos onion chicken” recipes, Brennan notes, “these versions should be far more appetizing than their originals. Of course, we are also using tender, plump chickens, instead of tough old compound warriors, who exercised their sinews in stark terror while they were being chased around the dusty yard by the cook wielding the knife” (155, emphasis added). Not only does Brennan again use the Universal We to mark the Western reader as superior, capable of making a “far superior dish,” she also introduces the ‘violent native’ stereotype, which she applies to her knife-wielding Indian cook. Further, she blames the Indian cook’s stereotyped violence for degrading the quality of the meat. If she is not describing her family’s cooks as pudgy dilly-dalliers, they are knife-wielding menaces. Either way, she justifies her theft of her family’s cook’s recipes by depicting these chefs as not worthy enough to have legitimate ownership of their own dishes.

And it’s not only the cooks who face critique in Curries and Bugles. Brennan also subtly and repeatedly insinuates that the family’s other servants were habitually lazy as well; she mentions a “sleepy bearer,” a sweater who does his work “half-heartedly,” and a night watchman who, when called, would “[be] invariably asleep” (Brennan 50, 84, 254). Further, in describing how the British in India achieved “a simple process that we take for granted – moving air,” Brennan explains the job of the punkah wallah, a young boy who kept the family’s room cool by sitting outside in the heat and pulling on a rope attached to a punkah fan all afternoon. Describing the punkah wallah’s work, a laborious task that Brennan obviously takes for granted, the cookbook writer remarks, “If the boy was sleepy, he would lie down and tie the rope around his toe, languidly waving his foot. Sometimes the fan stopped, and the sweating occupant of the room would rush outside to find that the boy was asleep or had gone for a drink of water” (14). (God forbid the British occupier should have to “rush outside” when s/he was so busy being lazy. Darn those children and their thirst.) In the myopic nature of her text, Brennan further remarks that “[a]s an average of three rooms often needed cooling at once and as the punkah
boys naturally had to work in shifts, up to nine people could be employed for a simple process that we take for granted – moving air” (14, emphasis added). Yes, Brennan does recognize that many folks from privileged cultures take air conditioning for granted (those of us, of course, who can afford to cool our homes – or have homes to cool). However she fails to recognize, or at the very least address, the more pressing ingratitude for the work of the nine punkah boys who spent their days under the hot sun, pulling on a rope to cool her family. While she intends this anecdote to convey the difficulties of living in British India during the time of the Raj, instead, Brennan’s story reveals her unquestioned sense of racial superiority.

Indeed, Brennan’s entire text – both memoirs and recipes – functions on the assumption of white privilege. Reading Curries and Bugles, we can reach the conclusion that according to Brennan, the stream of nameless, faceless servants in her family’s employ owed her their service because of her white skin, wealth, and British citizenship. As a child, she seems to have been taught to take for granted the labor of her family’s employees, who when the family picnicked, “lurk[ed] discreetly behind the tress, ready to run forward at a moment’s notice to serve more refreshments or pour out more champagne!” (123). And as an adult, Brennan shows no sign of remorse for her family’s role in the Raj or gratitude for her servants’ labor, but instead, she celebrates colonial rule and continues to assume her white privilege, absconding and distributing at profit the recipes of the very cooks she, at times, insults.

Moreover, though perhaps one could argue that Brennan offers such a negative depiction of her family’s servants so as to convince herself that she should suffer no guilt for her unmerited role of privilege, no Indian citizen escapes Curries and Bugles free from criticism. For example, Brennan describes the nomadic people from whom she has stolen, via her cook, her “Baluchi carpet-wallah kebabs” recipe as having “Hawk noses and luxuriant beards [that] added to the impression of unyielding toughness, even cruelty” (67, emphasis added). Likewise, in describing the “Steamroller chicken” recipe she has stolen from the cooks at “The Qissa Khawani Bazaar in Peshawar,” Brennan warns her reader, “There is nothing delicate about this lusty dish, but the fiery and earthy tribesmen of the Frontier are not delicate either!” (127, emphasis added). Why might Brennan choose to rely on stereotypes of violence and hypersexuality to spice up her cookbook? Yes, she is utilizing racist rhetoric in an attempt to romanticize her narrative, but it is important to recognize that she is demeaning the people whose food she is stealing and selling to
a Western audience. Her denigrating language is not only an attempt to justify British colonial rule in India, but it also endeavors to excuse her modern theft of these recipes.

In addition to the violent and sexual images Brennan applies to the Indian people in her text, she also relies on animalistic, dehumanizing metaphors to objectify the people of India in her attempt to justify the British colonial enterprise. For example, Brennan equates women preparing for an Indian family wedding, which she describes as “the greatest show on earth for ‘people watchers,’” to “nesting birds,” “twittering and accumulating treasure” (210, 211). Perhaps the cookbook writer learned this Orientalist logic from her mother since when describing the wives of “top Indian officials” at garden parties, Brennan quotes her mother as noting, “The colours [of their “gorgeous salwar kameez and saris”] were so brilliant, they looked like tropical birds” (qtd. in Brennan 182). Similar to O’Hanlon’s use of animalistic terminology in *Into the Heart of Borneo*, which was discussed in Chapter One, Brennan’s comparison of the Indian people to birds, the women to exotic birds and the men to fierce hawks, works to position the native people as being inferior by being somehow less than human. It is this fabricated inhumanity that she uses in her overall attempt to justify her family’s and country’s domination of India, as well as her current theft of her cook’s recipes.

Clearly Brennan attained this damaging ideology during her childhood where, at the dinner table, “sometimes, conversation would revolve around the lack of a complete command of English that the servants or babus [clerks for the British government] had” (253). While we can perhaps feel sympathy for a childhood, which encouraged the acceptance of racist ideologies, by writing her prejudicial stories in an award-winning text, Brennan spreads the imperial message of white ‘superiority’ to a wider audience, hungry for the taste of the ‘exotic.’

After reading Brennan’s cookbook, littered with examples of pro-imperialist ideology, I cannot help but wonder what benefit do we, as readers, get from her text. Why do Europeans and Neo-Europeans want to see the Raj as a beautiful, romantic period in British history? Why do diners visit Raj-themed restaurants, partygoers attend Raj-themed celebrations, or viewers enjoy “Raj revival” films? (Rushdie 87). Why would anyone want to see this colonial period glorified? What are the motivations, what are the dangers, and how does this Raj Nostalgia manipulate the reader?

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‘Colonialist Nostalgia’ and the ‘Ethnic Cookbook’

To understand reader response to a celebratory Raj cookbook, we could, as we did in Chapter One, apply Edward Said’s astute observation that Western cultures need ‘Others’ so as to create their own identities in opposition to that which they see as foreign (331-32). Likewise, we could also follow the advice that Bob Ashley, Joanne Hollows, Steve Jones, and Ben Taylor give in *Food and Cultural Studies* by considering the work of Benedict Anderson in *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, which we will be discussing in further detail in Chapter Three. As *Food and Cultural Studies* proposes, “we define ourselves by a process of differentiation from ‘others’ . . .. The primary strand in the meaning of ‘us’ becomes ‘not them.’ Food is clearly instrumental in the identification of ‘other’ nations” (Ashley et. al 83). Anderson, as we shall see in the next chapter, suggests that national borders are arbitrarily created, which leads him to call countries “imagined communities” (6). As the authors of *Food and Cultural Studies* suggest, it is the anxiety toward this indefiniteness that drives us to build rigid national borders and can even incite us to violence in the name of patriotism. By deeming another culture’s food as ‘Other,’ something exotic to sample in the safety of one’s home, the reader can taste the ‘Other’ while asserting a national identity in stark contrast to the difference of the ‘foreign’ cuisine.

In addition to helping British readers reaffirm their sense of nationhood by comparing themselves to an exotic ‘Other,’ Brennan’s cookbook-memoir also functions to relieve the anxiety of living in a (post)colonizing country. After the legal end to British occupation, the law no longer dictated the hegemonic relationship of power between England and India. Instead, England sought to contend that the unequal power relationship between countries was natural rather than political. As we have already seen in Chapter One, negative stereotyping and binaristic comparisons helped to establish this racist ideology, which Brennan, as seen above, clearly utilizes in her love song to the Raj.

To fully understand the danger of this Raj Nostalgia so evident in Brennan’s *Curries and Bugles*, which, like the thrill of Jungle Jim’s International Market, is so dangerous precisely because it attempts to masquerade as innocent, we should consider anthropologist Renato Rosaldo’s concept of “Imperialist Nostalgia.” Rosaldo, in his article “Imperialist Nostalgia,” helps us begin to understand the violence of this sort of nostalgia, which he defines as “the colonial official’s curious longing for what he or she has destroyed,” which “attempt[s] to use a
seemingly harmless mood as a mask of innocence to cover [his/her] involvement with processes of domination” (120). Rosaldo spent years of his life studying the Ilongot people of the Philippines, and while he’s famously published works on their cultural practices, what is most useful for our analysis of Brennan’s Curries and Bugles is his above-mentioned article, which turns the focus onto those outsiders who have interfered with the culture: “an early-twentieth-century lieutenant in the Philippine Constabulary, . . . more recent evangelical Christian missionaries, . . . a turn-of-the-century anthropologist, [and] present-day anthropologists Michelle Rosaldo [his wife] and [him]self” (111). In analyzing the language these Westerners use to describe the changing culture of the Ilongot people, he notices a similarity: all of these outsiders speak of the original, lost culture with a sort of nostalgia that masks the role they actually played in the destruction of the culture about which they reminisce.

Rosaldo stresses that the danger of this “nostalgia[, which] conceals guilt” by “mak[ing] racial domination appear innocent and pure,” is that, like Brennan’s memoirs, it is often presented in the language of a beautiful childhood memory (109, 107). As Rosaldo explains:

Nostalgia is a particularly appropriate emotion to invoke in attempting to establish one’s innocence and at the same time talk about what one has destroyed. Doesn't everyone feel nostalgic about their childhood memories? Aren’t these memories genuinely innocent? Indeed, much of imperialist nostalgia’s force resides in its association with (indeed, its disguise as) more genuinely innocent, tender recollections of what is at once an earlier epoch and a previous phase of life. . . . The relatively benign character of most nostalgia facilitates imperialist nostalgia’s capacity to transform the responsible colonial agent into an innocent bystander. (108)

Is this not precisely how Brennan situates her cookbook? In Curries and Bugles, she surrounds stolen property – recipes that do not belong to her – with emotionally remembered tales from her childhood. While her masked ideology is offensive, Jennifer Brennan is not a bad writer, and the stories she tells are vivid and encourage her reader to share her fondness for the Raj. And therein lies the problem.

What is most interesting about Brennan’s Raj Nostalgia is that it does not fit neatly into the description of Rosaldo’s “Imperialist Nostalgia.” A true “Imperialist Nostalgia” would have occurred if Brennan, her family, or other officials of the British Raj were to have expressed a longing for the India that once was, the India that existed prior to the destruction of British
occupation. Instead, Brennan expresses nostalgia for the actual act of destruction, which is why I’d like to borrow and reshape Rosaldo’s concept of “Imperialist Nostalgia” and suggest that Brennan instead exhibits ‘Colonialist Nostalgia.’ She uses nostalgia, through her memoirs, both to change the rhetoric of colonialism from destructive to celebratory and also to overlook her theft of her Indian cook’s recipes. Moreover, she encourages her reader to share in her golden feelings for the Raj by relating the intimate details of her family’s day-to-day life.

“*The Raj Had Ended*”?23: Reader Responsibility

At this point, we may wonder, is it even possible for a cultural outsider to write a cookbook that celebrates the food of another culture, especially if this community has been colonized, without generating a type of violence? And further, what about the cookbook reader? What attitude must s/he bring to the kitchen so as not to consume a culture through cooking?

Thankfully, Lisa Heldke’s *Exotic Appetites* and “Let’s Cook Thai: Recipes for Colonialism,” both address another of Brennan’s works, *The Original Thai Cookbook*, and help us to begin forming answers to these questions. In *Exotic Appetites*, Heldke explores her role as a food adventurer, someone who likes to experiment with cultural cookbooks in the kitchen and try new ‘ethnic’ foods at ‘best-kept-secret’ type restaurants. (You get the impression that Heldke would most definitely be a fan of Jungle Jim’s.) However Heldke, a deeply reflective philosopher and feminist, felt uneasy about her “penchant for ethnic foods - particularly the foods of economically dominated cultures” and after a process of self-questioning, decided she had been engaged in what she’s given the name “cultural food colonialism” (“Let’s Eat Thai” 177). Of her experience analyzing her own dietary habits and their ties to colonialism, Heldke explains:

I had come to see my adventure cooking and eating as strongly motivated by an attitude bearing deep connections to Western colonialism and imperialism. When I began to examine my tendency to go culture hopping in the kitchen, I found that the attitude with which I approached such activities bore an uncomfortable resemblance to the attitude of various nineteenth- and early twentieth-century European painters, anthropologists, and

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23 According to Brennan’s “Requiem for the Raj,” “The vacuum left by the Raj was both psychological and physical” (18). However, the language of Brennan’s text implies that the ideologies established during the Raj have not indeed “ended” (18).
explorers who set out in search of ever ‘newer,’ ever more ‘remote’ cultures they could co-opt, borrow from freely and out of context, and use as the raw materials for their own effort at creation and discovery. (“Let’s Eat Thai” 177)

Inspired by her realization of her “cultural food colonial[ist]” mentality, Heldke urges diners and cooks to question their motives in selecting a recipe or restaurant and to position their choices within the historical and current global economic and political power struggles, which have traditionally favored the Western world. Like Heldke, I would argue that we need to be actively aware of the ramifications of the choices we make. We should ask ourselves, do we know the history of the countries represented both by the cookbook and by the writer? Does the text, at essence, represent an unequal power dynamic, and how does the author address the subjects of historic and/or current inequalities?

With a text like Curries and Bugles, the writer, Brennan, gives us early, clear hints as to her imperialist Raj sympathies. In fact, in her introduction, she describes the colonization of India as a woman being pursued by many suitors:

Imagine India as a talented and beautiful young girl, living in a rural area, remote from the focus of western civilization. She is discovered and then wooed by a cluster of impetuous, headstrong European gallants, who fight each other for her. Gradually one young Albion, resplendent in his East India Company regalia, prevails. He declares that he intends to make her his wife and proceeds to overpower her, stifling her objections. (5)

From the start, Brennan does not hide her pro-colonialist (and sexist) motivations; she goes on to describe the British invasion of India as a romantic, though at time contentious, marriage. However, what about ‘ethnic cookbook’ writers who generally want to celebrate the food of a culture they feel has been unfairly denigrated under the wheels and boots of the imperial enterprise? What issues must this writer consider when creating her/his text, and how should we, as readers, respond to this text?

As Lisa Heldke argues in “Let’s Eat Thai,” if outsiders to a culture want to write cookbooks featuring foods from another community, to avoid “cultural food colonialism,” they must include the cooks from that community in the writing process. Anything less would equate to stealing. As Heldke notes:

In the world of the ethnic cookbook, the cooking techniques of the Other become marvelous resources that can be scooped up, ‘developed,’ and sold to Us, without giving
much attention or credit to the [people] actually responsible for preserving and expanding this cuisine. Recipes become commodities we are entitled to possess when they are taken up into the Western cookbook industry; foods become ‘developed’ when they can be prepared in the West” (Heldke, “Let’s Eat Thai” 184).

Texts like Brennan’s *Curries and Bugles* offer this sort of ‘diamond in the rough’ dish philosophy: *Look what I found, polished, and give to you* (Heldke, *Exotic* 47). Instead, Heldke advises cookbook writers to consult with the cooks from whom they’ve been given or have stolen their recipes. Further, she argues that because of the unequal power relations between cook and cookbook writer, it is imperative that writer and cook “discuss the terms under which it would be justifiable for [cookbook writers] to publish [local cooks’] work, their skills and recipes” (Heldke, *Exotic Appetites* 179). According to Heldke, the cooks need to be made fully aware of the publication process, so they can decide whether or not they want their recipes to be included in the cookbook (*Exotic Appetites* 179). Heldke argues for collaboration rather than continuing the conquest of other culture’s foods.

While I fully agree with Heldke’s position, I would stress one additional point; the same scrutiny that we give to our culinary choices, we should give to all media that appears safe and apolitical. It is exhausting to consider the ethical implications of everything you see, read, watch, hear, or taste. It’s exhausting, but it’s important. As an example, consider the Anti-Defamation League’s curriculum on “The Pyramid of Hate,” which was designed to get teenagers thinking about how “Prejudiced Attitudes” lead to “Acts of Prejudice,” which lead to “Discrimination,” which leads to “Violence,” which leads to “Genocide.” Am I insinuating that a cookbook like *Curries and Bugles* or a painting of Jungle Jim atop an elephant will directly and inevitably lead to mass murder? Absolutely not. However, it’s the little things that we allow to go unnoticed or unchecked, which begin to slowly change the way we see the world: the off-putting or offensive joke told by a colleague, the film that glorifies colonialism or violently stereotypes people from the Middle East, the Islamophobic political commentator, the cookbook that praises injustice, etc. We need to be vigilant in our questioning of the li(n)es we’re told about people who look or sound different from us. People who were not born inside the invisible borders we use to fence off our nation. Indeed, we need to question the very binaries that encourage us to see the world as ‘Us’ and ‘Them.’ While it’s not easy to train ourselves to always deconstruct the potentially violent information we receive, developing an analytical
outlook is crucial to combating the racist ideologies that have fueled the violence of colonialism and, as we shall see in the next chapter, continue to fuel the injustices of today’s globalization.
CHAPTER 3

* * *

“This World Is Getting Too Much for Me Altogether”24

Or

Redefining Patriotism in Light of Globalization: An Argument for Fair Trade

* * *

They dazzle me with the tonnage of cotton or cocoa that has been exported, the acreage that have been planted with olive trees or grapevines.

I am talking about natural economies that have been disrupted – harmonious and viable economies adapted to the indigenous population – about food crops destroyed, malnutrition permanently introduced, agricultural development oriented solely toward the benefit of the metropolitan countries; about the looting of products, the looting of raw materials.

-- Aimé Césaire. Discourse on Colonialism (1955)

* * *

TEA is the Liquor of the Fair and Wise;
It chears the Mind without the least Disguise:
But Wine intoxicates, and wrongs each Sense;
Sweet, innocent, mild TEA gives no Offence

-- Duncan Campbell, from “Poem on Tea” (1735) – qtd. in The History of the Indian Tea Industry – Sir Percival Griffiths

* * *

Introduction

More than tea, I remember teabags as a child. Sad, deflated pillows staining small round plates; plates we only ever used for this purpose – never to hold up a teacup. My father often joked that he was saving the teabag for a future cup because he was Scottish and, therefore, cheap. More accurately, he gave these teabags a second baptism because he was raised by a woman who survived The Great Depression, or more specifically, a mother who was shaped by The Great Depression. A girl whose family lost their farm after they were forced to eat the seed

24 Said to Aziz by Fielding in Forster’s A Passage to India. After Aziz asks if Adela Quested “Is . . . a Post Impressionist,” Fielding responds, “‘Post Impressionism, indeed! Come along to tea. This world is getting to much for me altogether.’” As a result of Fielding’s comment, “Aziz [is] offended. The remark suggested that he, an obscure Indian, had no right to have heard of Post Impressionism – a privilege reserved for the Ruling Race” (Forster 70).
for the next year’s crop. A woman who learned to stock and save, to expect and prepare for impending catastrophe because she had already experienced it.

As a child, my grandmother’s home offered a trove of cached treasures – to my delight, all in mass-quantity: empty pill bottles; bread bag ties; used wrapping paper; old yogurt containers; pencils so short they took all your fingers to hold; fish scales from the taxidermist; vacant aquariums; abandoned bird cages; disintegrating, decorative rubber bats; the last slivers of bar soap given new life in jelly jars; and always, teabags on dainty saucers. Which in my own home translated into twice used, then forgotten teabags with a ripe tang and a dusty covering of mold. From an early age, I learned to associate tea with poverty, which given its history, was not very far off the mark.

The history of tea production is one of slavery and injustice, which was especially true in India during the time of British colonization. The use of tea in E.M. Forster’s *A Passage to India* (1924), set during the British Raj, provides a useful tool for examining the inequality that was inherent in the relationship between the colonizing and the colonized peoples. Within the novel, tea serves as a metaphor for the inequality of the colonial enterprise. Tea, specifically tea parties, plays an important social role in the fictional world of the novel as it did in the real world of the British Raj. In *A Passage to India*, Forster creates two ultimately doomed tea parties at which British and Indian citizens are expected to socialize. The complete failure of these events alerts the reader to the real cost of colonization – the theft of land, the exploitation of workers, and the impoverishment of nations.

Unfortunately, the brutality of the tea industry’s plantation economy still exists today. And sadly, the injustice and exploitation of workers in cash crop industries and in our sweatshop labor economy is the norm rather than the exception. The people of the so-called ‘Third World’ are too often considered an expendable source of cheap labor for the world’s multinational corporations. From the textile workers that sew our t-shirts to the child slaves who grow cacao beans for our chocolate to the trafficked children who weave our rugs to the men and women dying of cancer from the non-FDA approved pesticides used to perfect our roses, the multinational corporations of the so-called ‘First World’ countries are sending the message, “We
don’t care about the world’s most vulnerable and poor; we only care about making the most profit.’”

However, when we reflect on this epidemic of injustice, we know it’s not right; it’s not the way we want our world to function. The important question then becomes, why don’t we stand up to put a stop to the injustices of sweatshop labor and the exploitation in the cash crop industries? If we know human trafficking and physical and emotional abuse are wrong, why don’t we stand up against this cyclical, pervasive cruelty? While the ideological powerhouse of the advertising industry does much to distract us from the reality of this injustice, I would argue that something more is at work: fear.

We have been trained to fear our economy much like we would a natural disaster. Like an enraged bull or tempestuous sea, we are afraid to provoke our economic infrastructure with change lest we face its wrath and financial ruin. Further, we receive the message that to question the economic structures that keep the world’s most vulnerable people in abject poverty is an unpatriotic act, the act of a socialist, a communist. (As Dom Hélder Câmara so famously stated, “When I give food to the poor, they call me a saint. When I ask why the poor have no food, they call me a communist.”) However, economic policy is not a natural phenomenon but is rather people-made and can be people-changed.

Using the case study of slavery in the United States, I work to expose the misconception that we are powerless to restructure our economy no matter how much it conflicts with our ethics. With the end of slavery, our labor structure was drastically modified, and rather than having faced devastation, we became a world super power. Further, by exploring the creation and history of the unions in the United States following the abolition of slavery, we can see that workers have been able to greatly better their working and living conditions when they join in solidarity. Today’s workers are told that to be ‘True Americans,’ they need to stand by their fellow citizens. However, the needs of the average factory worker in the United States are more akin to their fellow workers overseas than they are to the multi-millionaire/billionaire owners of

25 Filmic References: For more information on sweatshop labor, see The National Labor Committee’s The Hidden Face of Globalization: What the Corporations Do Not Want Us to Know (2003); for more information about child trafficking in the cacao and rug industries, see True Visions’s Slavery: A Global Investigation (2000) and Bastard Film’s The Dark Side of Chocolate (2010); and for more information about hazardous working conditions in the flower industry, see Women Make Movies’s Amor, mujeres, y flores [Love, Women, and Flowers] (1998).
the world’s major multinational corporations. Yet, the owners of these multinationals pit the world’s workers against one another in a ‘race to the bottom,’ discouraging them from joining together in a union of solidarity.

Ultimately, though, while unionizing globally would better protect the rights and welfare of U.S. workers, along with the rest of the world’s workers, the question comes down to this: what does it mean to be an ethical country? Do we truly believe in the values of “liberty and justice for all,” and are we willing to work to ensure that all people, regardless of citizenship, are extended these rights? If we are afraid to stand up for social and economic change because we are scared of being branded unpatriotic, perhaps this means that we need to redefine patriotism in light of globalization. For through the very processes of globalization, we are economically knit into a worldwide community of global citizens whose daily choices impact one another. So if we recognize our status as global citizens who have a moral obligation to promote justice for our fellow world citizens who toil for our benefit, where do we begin?

While change cannot happen overnight, the rising call for change has begun to be addressed through the Fair Trade Movement. Fair Trade certification ensures that workers are paid fairly for their labor and are safe from hazardous working conditions. Through direct trade and cooperation, global workers are given a say in the trade process; they are treated with dignity and equity. Though we may feel powerless to effect change as individuals, by purchasing Fair Trade certified products, we are voting with our dollars for the restructuring our economy. We are standing up to say that we want our nation to truly reflect our values of liberty and justice.

The History of Tea in India

The history of tea in India is without a doubt a history of injustice. Before controlling the tea industry in India, England sourced their tea exclusively from China. However, China demanded payment in precious metals, which was acceptable to the British until they lost access to their supplies of Central and South American silver following the U.S. Revolutionary War. Not willing to drain their own supply of silver, England needed to find a product to offer China, which the country would be willing to accept in trade for tea. Relying on the addictive power of opium, the British merchants were able to use the drug to establish a more equal trade with China, though, of course, the dangerous, addictive powers of opium were much more detrimental to the Chinese people than the stimulant power of tea was to the British. The British East India
Company, after gaining economic control of India following the Battle of Plassey in 1757, used Indian farmers to grow the poppies for the production of opium for China. This change in crop production led to economic decline and increased hunger in India as farmers were producing less food for the country’s people and less cotton for the textile industry (Martin 141-43).

However, after losing their monopoly on trade with China in 1834, the East India Company began seriously turning to India for the production of their tea. Earlier, in 1823, Robert Bruce, a British trader, had ‘discovered’ tea growing wild in the Assam region of India, which the British government then annexed. (Later, the tea industry would develop in Darjeeling and Ceylon). While China’s tea industry focused on small farms and nationally guarded tea secrets, in India, the East India Company and the other tea companies that followed such as the Assam Tea Company, could utilize plantation labor and indentured servitude to increase their profits (Martin 154-56, 217). By 1889, India had replaced China as the biggest exporter of tea to England (Mair and Hoh 223). Of course, achieving this domination in the world’s tea market was only made possible through exploiting poorly paid, poorly treated laborers, including child workers.

Much labor was needed to clear and work the Assam plantations, so the tea companies turned to the poor people of Bengal. Facing famine in the 1860s from which nearly a million and half of their citizens had died, the Bengalese workers suffered cruel mistreatment from the tea plantation owners who profited off of their poverty and desperation (Martin 164; Mair and Hoh 216). As Victor Mair and Erling Hoh note in The True History of Tea, “Between 1863 and 1868, more than 100,000 people, mostly from neighboring Bengal, were imported to work on the tea estates of Assam . . . [I]mpoverished peasants were lured by unscrupulous agents with false promises and cash advances to sign contracts they could not read” (216). Conditions on the crowded boats, which transported the workers via river to Assam, were so dangerous that during the worst years, over half of the workers being transported would die before ever reaching the tea plantations (Martin 164).

Once the surviving tea workers reached the tea plantations, their lives became even more difficult. Forced to live in small, one-room huts and work incredibly long hours on little food, the laborers were often quite literally worked to death. As Laura Martin relates in Tea: The Drink that Changed the World:
Like the slaves living on Southern plantations in the antebellum United States, all the tea workers lived on the plantation and were completely dependent on the plantation owners for housing, food, water, and medicine. . . . [I]n general, conditions on the plantations were devastatingly difficult for the workers. Heat and insects were relentless, and there was rarely enough food for the laborers. The water supplies were often polluted and diseases such as malaria, fevers, diarrhea, dysentery, and cholera were rampant. (165).

Though the conditions on the tea plantations were deplorable and many wanted to return to their homelands, most laborers were forced to stay and face the injustice since workers who tried to escape the inhumane conditions could face arrest or beatings as labor laws penalized ‘absconders’ (Behal 159-62; Mair and Hoh 216; Behal 159-62). And since plantations were often isolated in the jungle, workers felt further trapped and unable to return to their homes (Behal 159).

Though they provided the labor, which grew the Indian tea industry into the high-demand commodity it is today, the workers, who were “always treated like working animals,” did not profit from their essential slavery (MacFarlane and MacFarlane 160). Instead, according to Alan Macfarlane, son of a self-declared *Memsahib* (a planter’s wife), as the “houses and clubs [of the British Raj] became ever grander, . . . labourers were suffering from severe anaemia, mothers died far too often, [and] children worked instead of going to school” (208). India and the Indian people did not profit from this wildly successful industry. Quite to the contrary, while “several hundred thousand” Indian workers died as a byproduct of the tea industry, “India was able to retain only 15 percent of the profits realized from these plantations – the remainder went to England” (Martin 166). This history of injustice in the tea industry clearly reveals the inequality at the heart of the colonial enterprise of the British Raj.

“*Come Along to Tea*”: Tea as a Metaphor for Inequality in *A Passage to India*

It is precisely this history of injustice in the tea industry that E. M. Forster references in *A Passage to India*. In the novel, tea and the parties at which the beverage is featured function as a metaphor for the inequality of the colonial enterprise. *A Passage to India* makes clear, the social interactions between the British and the Indian people, which involve tea, inevitably fail because tea cannot be disconnected from its history: the theft of land and the exploitation of workers by the British invaders.
In Forster’s most acclaimed novel, *A Passage to India*, Adela Quested travels to Chandrapore, India to visit the City Magistrate, Ronny Heaslop, whose marriage proposal she is considering. Accompanied by Ronny’s weary, wise, and outspoken mother, Mrs. Moore, Adela brings new ideas to the Chandrapore social scene of the British Raj. Forster’s Adela, while naïve (perhaps to the point of ignorance), has admirable intentions in wanting to see the “real India,” the India that exists beyond polo matches and poorly staged performances of *Cousin Kate!* at the Club (22). The fictional Chandrapore Club, like real Clubs in the heart of India during the rule of the Raj, only allowed entrance to British citizens (technically, the foreign invaders). As Dr. Aziz, a friend of Mrs. Moore whom Adela later wrongfully accuses of sexual assault, tells Moore, “‘Indians are not allowed into the Chandrapore Club even as guests’” (Forster 22). In deciding whether to marry Ronny and to make India her home, Adela wants to see the real people and life of this new land, the people who cannot obtain entrance to the social life of the Raj.

While Adela’s desire hints at an appetite to taste or consume an exotic ‘otherness,’ her interest stands markedly apart from the rest of the Chandrapore Club crew who look to the locals as a supply of servants with whom they hope to have the absolute minimum of social interaction. In fact, when discussing Adela’s “comic,” “amus[ing]” desire to “see Indians” (“‘Natives! why, fancy!’”), a shocked group of Englishwomen chastise Adela for her folly (25). One woman, Mrs. Callendar, goes so far as to further a former nurse’s racist dialogue with the cold remark, “‘Why the kindest thing one can do to a native is to let him die’” (Forster 25). Clearly, in Forster’s depiction of the British Raj, these invading colonists are able to assuage their guilt at having stolen from the Indian people by designating them as so ‘worthless’ they have no claim to their own country. *A Passage to India* allows Mrs. Callendar’s character to articulate the hypocritical British colonial logic: a victim (whom we have come here to civilize and save) is not really a victim if s/he would be better off dead.

The first time that tea enters the novel is at the “Bridge party,” which the Burra Shabib/Collector, Mr. Turton, throws in order to gratify Adela’s request. “A Bridge Party,” Mr. Turton’s “own invention,” which “amused all [the other colonizers] who heard [about] it,” as he explains, does “not [refer to] the game, but [rather to] a party to bridge the gulf between East and West” (26). Mr. Turton is quite proud of his “Bridge Party” idea though he’s never had the desire or the reason to test his creation on any other occasion as Adela’s craving for a ‘close
encounter’ appears obviously absurd, if not dangerous, to his social group. However, Mr. Turton, who bears the title of the Collector, thrills at the quaint notion of parading his ‘novelties’ before the remarkable Adela. Like a grand ringmaster, Turton exclaims:

Do you really want to meet the Aryan Brother, Miss Quested? That can be easily fixed up. I didn’t realize he’d amuse you. . . . You can practically see any type you like. Take your choice. I know the Government people and the landowners, Heaslop here can get hold of the barrister crew, while if you want to specialize on education, we can come down on Fielding. (26)

Turton’s language implies that the Indian people, like insects or animals, can be classified into “types” and paraded for the “amuse[ment]” of the British colonizers.26 Further, from the catalog of “types” that Turton offers, we can tell that his only real interactions with the people of India are limited to those individuals he must encounter through his work – members of the upper class. However, Adela does not wish to meet these, what she calls, “picturesque figures” but rather “those Indians whom [Mr. Turton] comes across socially – as . . . friends” (26). The only trouble, as Turton hastily explains, is that “[members of the British Raj] don’t come across them [Indian citizens] socially” (Forster 26).

Put simply, Mr. Turton’s first attempt to manufacture his great “invention” of the “Bridge Party” is a dismal failure. Tellingly, Forster’s narrator subtly offers tea as one of the culprits behind this debacle. Besides for Mr. Turton and Fielding, the liberal schoolmaster, only Adela and Mrs. Moore make a genuine effort to greet Turton’s guests. The rest of the Turtons’ friends show disdain for the Indian invitees. In fact, the Collector must force his own wife, Mary, to play the part of hostess though she grumbles, “Oh, those purdah women! I never thought any would come. Oh, dear! . . . Why they come at all I don’t know. They hate it as much as we do” (41-42). As for the English gentleman, to excuse their extreme lack of cordiality, Forster’s narrator relates, “The Englishmen had intended to play up better, but had been prevented from doing so by their women folk, whom they had to attend, provide with tea, advise about dogs, etc.” (47, emphasis added). Given this rare opportunity, the Englishmen are not able to “Bridge”

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26 For an interesting social critique on the history of human exhibition, see Coco Fusco and Guillermo Gómez-Peña’s film The Couple in the Cage: A Guatinaui Odyssey, which explores their performance art piece in which they exhibited themselves in a cage as undiscovered Amerindians and filmed their audience’s reactions.
the divide between themselves as colonizers and the Indian people they have colonized, in part, because their wives desire tea.²⁷

In the “Bridge Party” scene, tea plays a subtle, yet ironic, role. As we have seen, tea, much like cotton, is a staple crop, which represents the theft of Indian land and the exploitation of Indian workers by the British invaders. When we examine this passage closely, given the history of worker injustice during the period of the Raj, the British guests’ behavior takes on a callous, yet sadly humorous light. The British gentlemen are so busy serving their wives tea that they can’t be welcoming hosts. Remember, this tea was most likely grown locally by poorly paid, poorly treated, men and woman who would have absolutely no hope of ever stepping foot inside the Chandrapore Club. These are the workers who have been so completely pushed aside by the members of the invading British Raj (the colonizers who created the system in which these laborers toil) that they couldn’t even gain access to a party at which they would be ignored. According to A Passage to India, as a cash crop produced by the work and sweat of an exploited people, tea could never unite the colonizer with the colonized.

The disconnected dynamic represented at the Bridge Party is made clear when we apply Aimé Césaire’s equation: “colonization = ‘thingification,’” which he presents in Discourse on Colonialism (42). According to Césaire, colonization does not allow for “human contact, but [instead promotes] relations of domination and submission which turn the colonizing man [or woman] into a classroom monitor, an army sergeant, a prison guard, a slave driver, and the indigenous man [or woman] into an instrument of production”²⁸ (42). As Césaire suggests, there

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²⁷ Indeed, much of blame for the lack of cultural bridging in A Passage to India falls squarely upon the women: “[Mr. Fielding] had discovered that it is possible to keep in with Indians and Englishmen, but that he who would also keep in with Englishwomen must drop the Indians. The two wouldn’t combine. Useless to blame either party, useless to blame one another. It just was so, and one had to choose. Most Englishmen preferred their own kinswomen, who, coming out in increasing numbers, made life on the home pattern yearly more possible. He had found it convenient and pleasant to associate with Indians and must pay the price” (Forster 65-66). While the protection of White womanhood serves to drive the Indian and English men apart in the second part of the novel, in this scene, the wives’ desires (dog information and tea) are presented as trivial needs and, thus, work to trivialize the women whom Forster’s narrator blames for the lack of cultural bridging occurring between the colonizer and colonized at this tea party.

²⁸ While Aimé Césaire references the slavery endemic in the colonial enterprise in Africa, and while the European conquests in Africa and the Caribbean differed from their colonial
is nothing “human” about the contact between the colonizer and the colonized. There is only theft, suffering, and degradation. The brutality of the colonizing act necessitated a distancing from and de-humanizing of the colonized people. Thus, to the British people of the Chandrapore Club, those ‘natives’ deemed worthy enough to be invited to a tea party where they will be rudely disregarded are the ‘things’ with which one must occasionally, but regretfully associate. Those who planted, picked, and processed the tea, which theoretically should unite, but instead divides the British and Indian partygoers, are the ‘things’ which are to be used, disdained, and made invisible.

A more surprisingly destructive example of tea’s inability to “bridge the gulf between East and West” occurs later in the novel when the local, good-willed schoolmaster, Cyril Fielding, invites Adela over for a tea to “meet one or two [Indians],” Dr. Aziz and Professor Narayan Godbole (Forster 47). While arguably Fielding has much better intentions than Turton in planning his own gathering, even this well-meaning tea party ultimately leads to unpleasant outcomes, exposing the tension between colonizer and colonized. Though Turton’s bridge party is, quite frankly, doomed from the start, the reader hopes the good-natured intellectual Fielding will have better luck at hosting a proper meeting of the minds. However, while Fielding’s much smaller gathering (himself, Adela, Mrs. Moore, Godbole, and Aziz) seems promising, the ultimately ill-fated affair sours and leaves the partygoers feeling unsettled, metaphorically demonstrating that social interactions between oppressor and oppressed, no matter the circumstances, always carry the sting of inequality.

This second tea party is hampered by the unequal balance of power in India demonstrated by Aziz, a second-class citizen in his own country, who is painfully eager to ingratiate himself with Fielding. For instance, upon Aziz’s arrival at the tea party, Fielding is still dressing and has “stomped on his last collar stud” (67). Without hesitation, Aziz quickly and adamantly offers Fielding one of his own collar studs, a golden one from Europe, which was part of a set given to him by his brother-in-law. Lying to Fielding about having a spare in his pocket and desperate for approval, Aziz gives up the stud, which had held the back of his collar in place, a move that assured Fielding would be ‘presentable’ for tea but put him at risk of looking foolish in front of the other British guests. (In fact, Ronny, after picking up Adela from the tea, later laughs at the enterprises in South Asia, Césaire’s astute observations about the inherent demoralizing nature of colonialism also apply to England’s conquest of India.
memory of “the worthy doctor’s collar climb[ing] up his neck” and remarks “Aziz was exquisitely dressed, from tie-pin to spats, but he had forgotten his back collar-stud, and there you have the Indian all over: inattention to detail; the fundamental slackness that reveals the race”) (Forster 87). While this detail may seem trivial, Aziz’s actions show his realization that according to the mores of the British Raj, he has no place being invited as a guest into Fielding’s home, especially to an occasion like a tea party at which, as Ronny’s laughter indicates, Aziz is presumed not to have the required etiquette (e.g. dressing properly). This small, nervous act shows that Aziz would literally give the clothes off his back for the approval and acceptance of the British elite.

Indeed, Aziz and Fielding’s vastly different understandings of the men’s shirt collar, a necessary accompaniment to the proper tea party attire, also reveal the reality of the racial divide within the country. When a frustrated Fielding remarks, “‘Why in hell does one wear collars at all?,’” Aziz quite honestly responds, “‘We wear them to pass the Police’” (69). As Aziz explains, “If I’m biking in English dress – starch collar, hat with ditch – they take no notice. When I wear a fez, they cry, ‘Your lamp’s out!'” (Forster 69). In order to escape harassment by the police, Aziz must conform to the colonizers style of dress. This blatant discrimination is unjust and upsetting but takes on a more disturbing light when we consider Ngugi wa Thiong’o’s theory that the colonial regime depended on “the destruction or the deliberate undervaluing of a people’s culture, their art, dances, religions, history, geography, education, orature and literature” (Decolonizing 16). The British Raj did not simply penalize those wearing traditional, Indian dress to be brutes. Instead, the devaluing of native clothing was essential to the colonial enterprise since clothing conveys culture, and as Ngugi further explains in Decolonizing the Mind: The Politics and Language in African Literature, “Economic and political control can never be complete or effective without mental control. To control a people’s culture is to control their tools of self-definition in relationship to others” (16).29 England did not simply take over the tea fields, the cotton fields, and the government through force alone. Instead, the colonial

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29 Ngugi goes on to say, “For colonialism this involved two aspects of the same process.” In addition to “the destruction or the deliberate undervaluing of a people’s culture,” colonialism also relied on “the conscious elevation of the language of the coloniser. The domination of a people’s language by the languages of the colonising nations was crucial to the domination of the mental universe of the colonised” (Decolonizing 16).
regime worked to erode the culture, to ensure ideological power over the Indian people by devaluing their culture, in this instance their clothing.

Aziz’s nervousness and eagerness to be liked is further put to the test when Ronny comes storming into the tea party, ordering his mother and fiancé to return to the proper life of the British Raj: watching a polo match at the club. Interestingly, from this point, the aftermath of the doomed tea party begins to spiral out of control. In an attempt to gain back the sense of power he felt when engaging the original party of guests, Aziz reveals to Ronny that he knows Adela will not be accepting his marriage proposal, nor will she be staying in India; new information to Ronny. This unpleasant and unexpected disclosure leaves Adela feeling troubled and irritated. The two Indian guests also leave the party feeling out of sorts as both Aziz and Godbole fall ill shortly after, causing their friends to begin the rumor that they have been poisoned by the British colonizers. While this rumor is, of course, false, it foreshadows another false accusation, Adela’s wrongful accusation of Aziz for sexual assault. Though the rumor instigated by Aziz’s friends is quickly dismissed, the British Adela’s confused falsehood flames into a devastating trial in the second part of the novel.

During Fielding’s tea party, Aziz proposes the unfortunate Marabar Caves exploration, which leads to Adela’s confusion and her mis-experienced sexual violation. On the outing, believing she is alone in a cave with her host Aziz, Adela is overcome by the cave’s echo, and in her panic, experiences what she believes to be a sexual assault. After the lengthy trial that ensues, the trial at which Adela, with vivid clarity, realizes the error in her accusation, she seeks sanctuary at Fielding’s, the very location of the tea party, which led to the unhappy events. Fielding, questioning Adela about her detrimental error asks, “‘Can you remember when you first felt out of sorts?’” (266). Adela responds, “‘When I came to tea with you there, in that garden house’” (266). Fielding understatedly replies, “‘A somewhat unlucky party. Aziz and old Godbole were both ill after it too.’” (Forster 266). “‘A somewhat unlucky party’”? More like a disastrous and doomed party.

Why might Forster choose to reference the tea party as the initial destructive root that leads Adela to make her false accusation, a false accusation which instigates a trial, a trial that incites fury in Chandrapore, revealing the true hostility felt between the British and Indian people? Perhaps because tea, a product stolen through the colonial regime, is the perfect metaphor for highlighting the inequality of the British Raj. During the colonial period, as A
*Passage to India* argues, the colonized and colonizer could not commune as friends because they could never meet as equals. The reader is reminded of this fact when Mrs. Turton prefaces her introduction of Adela and Mrs. Moore to the Indian ladies at the “Bridge party” with the pompous statement: “‘You’re superior to them, anyway. Don’t forget that. You’re superior to everyone in India except one or two of the Ranis, and they’re on an equality’” (42). This pervasive, unjustified ‘superiority complex’ is precisely the reason the colonizer and the colonized could never form a truly equitable companionship. In fact, this point is made early in the novel as Aziz’s companion Mahmoud Ali explains, “‘It is impossible [for the British and Indian people to be friends] here [in India]’” (7). Aziz’s other friend Hamidullah qualifies this statement by theorizing that while “‘it is possible in England,’” friendship between English and British citizens is not possible in India because “‘[the British] come out [to India] intending to be gentleman, and are told it will not do’” (7). Instead, according to Hamidullah and Mahmoud Ali, the officers of the British Raj and their wives morph into arrogant, uncivil brutes and cheats.

Aimé Césaire’s *Discourse on Colonialism* again helps to shed light on this process by which the colonizers are transformed to incivility, what he calls the “boomerang effect of colonization” (41). According to Césaire:

> colonization . . . dehumanizes even the most civilized man[. ] . . . [C]olonial activity, colonial enterprise, colonial conquest, which is based on contempt for the native and justified by that contempt, inevitably tends to change him who undertakes it[. ] . . . [T]he colonizer, who in order to ease his conscience gets into the habit of seeing the other man as an animal, accustoms himself to treating him like an animal, and tends objectively to transform himself into an animal. (41)

In order to justify their actions in India, the British colonizers really did view the Indian people as less than human. The ‘animals’ whose land and power could be stolen. The ‘animals’ whose bodies could be brutalized through hard labor in the cash crop fields like on the tea plantations. The ‘animals’ who did not at all fit into their pretty picture of the British Raj: their clubs, their polo matches, and their tea parties. However, history has shown that the British conception of their own superiority, as Césaire argues, only functioned to morph them into the imagined ‘creatures’ they so despised.
Unfortunately, sixty-three years after India gained its independence from England, not enough has changed within the tea industry. Today, tea is still grown on plantations where workers face labor-intensive work for poverty wages. Child labor is still utilized, and due to the chemicals used on the crops, some “workers develop poisoning of the cardiovascular and nervous systems as well as the kidney and liver, blindness, memory loss[,] . . . premature senility” and death (Litvinoff and Madeley 31-32). Sadly, Forster, were he still alive, could continue using tea and tea parties as metaphors for inequality. What has changed is that the British corporations no longer openly flaunt their sense of superiority as they engage in this widespread labor injustice. Much like citizens of the United States who feel shame for their history of slave labor, many British citizens feel a similar pain for their colonial past. However, instead of reforming the labor injustices that were established by the British government and companies in India during the time of the Raj, major multinational corporations have realized that labor injustices now need to be concealed from the public eye.

As we may or may not know, this widespread exploitation is not exclusive to the tea industry, but instead is a prevalent feature of globalization. The world’s other major cash crop industries: coffee, sugar, bananas, cotton, cacao (for chocolate), etc., also utilize unjust pay and conditions, which keep workers in poverty. Agricultural workers in so-called ‘Third-World countries’ are not treated with dignity or equity. For example, while women reportedly love flowers, the flower industry, which notoriously pays its workers poverty wages, clearly doesn’t love women back. Over half of the women working in Ecuador’s flower industry have faced sexual harassment at work. Further, The U.S./Labor Education in the Americas Project and The International Labor Rights Fund also reports that “66% of Colombian and Ecuadorian flower workers suffer from work-related health problems. [Since p]esticide abuse is rampant – flower workers experience higher-than-average rates of premature births, congenital malformations, and miscarriages” (IRLF and USLEAP). And yet, these facts are hidden from the consumer, and we continue to give bouquets of flowers as signs of our affection.

Likewise, the chocolate industry, while it maintains a kid-friendly façade, relies on the indentured servitude and slave labor of trafficked children for the production of cacao beans. For instance, in 2000, we, in the United States, “ate 3.3 billion pounds of chocolate[,] 43% of which came from the Côte d’Ivoire] and spent $13 billion on it” (“Facts”). However, in the same year,
the US State Department reported that “some 15,000 Malian children work[ed] on Ivoirian cocoa and coffee plantations. Many [were] under 12 years-of-age, sold into indentured servitude for $140 . . ., and work[ed] 12-hour days for $135 to $189 . . . per year” (U.S. State Department). In fact, it is estimated that 284,000 children, many under the age of ten, work in the cocoa industry performing hazardous labor such as clearing forest and harvesting cacao pods with machetes and using pesticides and insecticides without protective gear (“The Chocolate Industry”). By buying from middlemen, multinationals corporations that peddle major cash crops (e.g. Hershey’s, Mars, Nestlé, Del Monte, Dole, Lipton, The J.M. Smucker Co. [owner of Millstone and Folgers], Kraft Foods [owner of Maxwell House], Starbucks, etc.) can claim plausible deniability and go on profiting unchecked from these documented injustices.

Sadly, child labor and trafficking is not limited to the cacao field but is a massive problem of our global economy in which, according to the International Labor Organization, 200 million children work, and a staggering 115 million at least, are subject to [the] worst forms” of child labor (“Facts on Child Labor”). The handmade carpet industry of South Asia also relies on this sort of child labor and has approximately 250,000 children working behind the looms. Many of these children, “ages 4 to 14,” have been kidnapped and sold into slave labor in which they are “forced to work as many as 18 hours a day to weave rugs destined for export markets such as the US. They are subject to malnutrition, impaired vision, deformities from sitting long hours in cramped loom sheds, respiratory diseases from inhaling wool fibers and wounds from using sharp tools” (“Child Labor”). Tragically, children who have been trafficked into the carpet industry also have a higher chance of being resold into the sex industry (“Child Labor”).

And injustice isn’t the exclusive domain of the cash crop field or the rug industry; the garment industry also shares in the abuse of workers to increase profit. For instance, consider the sweatshop labor of the clothing factories, where workers, mostly women, are made to work very long hours for very little pay and often face sexual harassment, threats, and unsafe working conditions. 30 As representative of the 3.5 million workers toiling in Bangladesh’s sweatshops, take for example the 2,500 workers, mostly young women, working in Chittagong’s Anowara Apparels factory. Anowara Apparels is one of the many garment factories in Bangladesh, “the

30 For more information see The National Labor Committee’s The Hidden Face of Globalization (2003), which documents the life of women garment factories workers in Bangladesh.
Sixth Largest Exporter of Apparel to the U.S.” (“Why Is Wal-Mart”). The women working in this factory make clothing almost exclusively for Wal-Mart, which reported 2010 Net Sales of 405 billion and an operating income of 24 billion (“Walmart 2010”). While the Walton family’s wealth continues to grow, the starting salary for the women working in the Anowara Apparels factory prior to the controversially inadequate November 2010 Bangladesh minimum wage increase was only 11 ½¢ per hour, with senior workers only making a maximum of 17¢ per hour. Every hour, the women each made ten pairs of jeans; for each pair they made, they were paid less than 2¢. Ironically, Wal-Mart’s old slogan, “Always Low Prices” more accurately reflects the abject poverty in which these women lived and will continue to live on the grossly inadequate new minimum wage of 21¢ an hour, than their new slogan, “Save Money. Live Better.” Wal-Mart’s new campaign promises are not offered to the Bangladeshi women who make the merchandise for their stores and “can only afford to rent miserable one-room hovels in slum neighborhoods” (“Why Is Wal-Mart”). Wal-Mart, and the other major multinationals, could easily bear the economic burden of paying their workers a living wage for their labor, but instead, they are seeking the highest profit possible. Perhaps they should try a more accurate slogan: Money Matters. People Don’t.

Putting a Stop to the Epidemic

Clearly, we can’t expect the multinationals to police their own behavior since they are primarily motivated by profit, not human rights. Instead, we need to begin demanding change as consumers if we want to reform the injustices of globalization. However, if we acknowledge

31 While Wal-Mart is an easily recognized human rights offender, most major textile corporations (Nike, Disney, The Gap, etc.) rely on the injustices of sweatshop labor to build their wealth.

32 While a definite improvement from the minimum wage of 1,662 taka ($23) a month, which had remained unchanged since 2006, Bangladesh’s new minimum wage of 3,000 taka ($42) a month, effected on November 1, 2010, is considered grossly inadequate and prompted protests from garment workers. The workers were only asking for an hourly minimum wage increase to 5,000 taka ($70) a month (or 35¢ per hour) when the actual living wage rate has been estimated by the Asia Floor Wage Campaign to be just over 10,000 Taka ($139) a month. However, since the garment industry constitutes 12 billion dollars of Bangladesh’s exports, the government seems to have responded to pressure from the multinational corporations to keep the minimum wage unfairly low (“Bangladesh: Government Must Support” and “Bangladesh: The New Minimum Wage”).
that 1) free trade has led to an epidemic of ongoing crimes against humanity and 2) the people of the United States really do not want to be culpable for widespread human suffering, then how can we explain why the majority of U.S. citizens have not called for an end to sweatshop labor, modern-day slavery, and cruel farming practices overseas? While I will offer a larger argument detailing how patriotism may prevent us from uniting globally as workers, let’s first briefly analyze the messages we have been given by major corporations who engage in exploitation.

While we are generally aware that our multinational corporations flourish through labor injustice, this system of continual cruelty is not often or thoroughly reported to the general population. Instead, we spend our evenings watching news reports of foreign threats spliced with advertisements, which promise us happiness if only we weighed a little less, could get rid of our wrinkles, could attract a beautiful partner, could be a better parent, etc. These million dollar ad campaigns lessen our self-esteem while offering new clothes, candy, diamond jewelry, or a sports car as the quick fix to our mediocrity.

I want to stress that I am not arguing we are an excessively vain people who, when given time to reflect, would care more about the fit of our pants than the poverty of the woman who stitched them. However, I would assert that the advertising ideological state apparatus has manipulated us into feeling so inadequate that we have been duped into focusing our attention on the promise of a more attractive appearance, and hence, a happier life. In fact, according to Marx and Engels, in *The German Ideology*, we cannot avoid falling into the trap of these arbitrarily concocted notions of beauty as:

The ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas: i.e., the class which is the ruling material force of society is at the same time its ruling intellectual force. The class which has the means of material production at its disposal, consequently also controls the means of mental production, so that the ideas of those who lack the means of mental production are on the whole subject to it. (Marx and Engels 47) Clearly, we can see Marx and Engels’s argument at work in the marketplace. Since fashion (“the mental production”) changes from season to season, we have to keep up and buy the latest trends (“the materials produced”) if we want to fit in. For instance, regarding the textile industry, we,

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the consumer, do not decide what designs are in style, instead we are “subject to” Chanel, the Gap, Nike, etc. and must conform and purchase if we want to attain the advertised promises of beauty and popularity. Likewise, while chocolate, flowers, and diamonds actually represent child slavery, dangerous use of non-FDA approved pesticides, and human atrocities in civil war, come Valentine’s Day, Hershey, FTD Direct, and De Beers’s ad campaigns will convince us that their products are the truest way to communicate our love.

Yes, we allow ourselves to be blinded to the truth; however, it’s not our fault. As Paula Mathieu explains in “Economic Citizenship and the Rhetoric of Gourmet Coffee” (her insightful examination of how companies, such as Starbucks, rely on scotosis [“willful blindness”] to market their wares), corporations, through marketing, can so completely dazzle our attention, we do not look to the true means of production at the periphery of our vision. Instead, we obsess about filling the needs that these advertisements create (beauty, popularity, the newest, hippest product, etc) and allow ourselves to forget about the labor injustice. And while we may feel above all of these false promises, we are up against billions of dollars in advertising campaigns. As Jean Kilbourne reports in Can’t Buy My Love: How Advertising Changes the Way We Think and Feel, “The average American is exposed to at least three thousand ads every day and will spend three years of his or her life watching television commercials” (58-59). We have been bombarded for so long with so many lies disguised as truth, it’s hard to disentangle the right from the wrong.

The Only Thing to Fear Is Fear Itself

Deconstructing the ideological myths that multinational corporations send us through their ad campaigns may give us a new awareness as consumers, a gaze from which we can realize that we do not, in fact, need new products in an attempt to attain impossible (and invented) standards of beauty, masculinity, femininity, etc. However, let us further our analysis of worker exploitation and ask ourselves, could there be a bigger explanation, a larger issue, which prevents us, as U.S. citizens, from calling for an end to epidemic labor injustice? Perhaps the answer is fear.34

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34 As Fielding thinks in A Passage to India, “Fear is everywhere; the British Raj rests on it” (Forster 192).
While we are the “home of the brave,” we are also a nation that fears financial insecurity (and in our post-9/11 reality, national insecurity). We are a country that has survived a life-changing economic depression, which has forged in us a history of loss. While we do want to make ethical choices, we feel powerless to effect change and are afraid of what might happen if the change actually occurred. We don’t want to support sweatshop labor, but what would happen if we couldn’t afford to clothe or feed our kids?

It doesn’t help matters when the corporate world feeds us the lie that the economy is like a fragile biosphere, that if we rock the boat, we just might drown. As David Ransom explains in *The No-Nonsense Guide to Fair Trade*, corporate CEOs have fed us, the consumers, the line that the market, much like the climate, is a delicate force of nature to which we should show a wary sort of respect and avoidance: “You can’t buck the market. As with rain forests or the ocean tides, you meddle with trade at your peril. Morality simply doesn’t come into it” (8).

Corporations say that we cannot allow ethics to question our capitalist agenda, especially in these hard economic times. In fact, those who question the capitalist regime are branded as unpatriotic, un-American, activists, agitators, and troublemakers. However, Ransom dispels this myth with the explanation that “[m]arkets and trade are human constructs and are therefore susceptible to human failings – not least in this respect, that by aspiring to infallibility they are less able to learn from their mistakes” (8-9). While, in our current economic environment of fear, Ransom’s argument seems shockingly revolutionary, let’s consider a similar statement made during the Great Depression by Franklin D. Roosevelt at his address to accept the Presidential nomination in July 1932: “Our Republican leaders tell us economic laws – sacred, inviolable, unchangeable – cause panics which no one could prevent. But while they prate of economic laws, men and women are starving. We must lay hold of the fact that economic laws are not made by nature. They are made by human beings.” And this human experiment of free trade has produced monstrous results.

*Slavery: A Case Study*

But how do we know that we can risk restructuring the market to promote equity and justice? As a case study, let’s consider the institution of slavery in the United States, the widespread abduction, buying, selling, beating, raping, and torture of human beings for nearly 250 years. Let’s remember the generations of slave owners who committed perverse physical,
mental, and emotional abuse, which we now recognize as a deplorable crime against humanity. During the early 1800s, while many, especially in the North, opposed slavery, these same people, often also designated it as a ‘necessary evil.’ How else could the South continue to cheaply produce the cotton that supported its economy?

In fact, the Southern slave states repeatedly used this economic excuse to refute arguments for abolition. For example, Vice President John C. Calhoun, an outspoken supporter of the institution of slavery who shortly before his death in 1850, when acting as Senator of South Carolina, prepared a now-famous speech, “The Clay Compromise Measures,” to present during the debate surrounding the Compromise of 1850, which helped to temporarily delay the Union’s fracture.35 In the speech, Senator Calhoun wrote:

Every portion of the North entertains views and feelings more or less hostile to [slavery]. Those most opposed and hostile regard it as a sin, and consider themselves under the most sacred obligation to use every effort to destroy it.

Indeed, to the extent that they conceive that they have power, they regard themselves as implicated in the sin, and responsible for not suppressing it by the use of all and every means. Those less opposed and hostile regard it as a crime – an offense against humanity, as they call it and, altho not so fanatical, feel themselves bound to use all efforts to effect the same object; while those who are least opposed and hostile regard it as a blot and a stain on the character of what they call the ‘nation,’ and feel themselves accordingly bound to give it no countenance or support. On the contrary, the Southern section regards the relation as one which can not be destroyed without subjecting the two races to the greatest calamity, and the section to poverty, desolation, and wretchedness; and accordingly they feel bound by every consideration of interest and safety to defend it.

While Calhoun had previously posited slavery as a moral practice in his famous 1837 Senate speech, “Slavery a Positive Good,” what is most ironic about his 1850 speech is that he does not

35 Since he was gravely ill, Calhoun did not actually deliver this speech, which was delivered instead on March 4 by a colleague. Calhoun died later that month on March 31 (Brinkley 382).
in any way attempt to defend the institution of slavery on moral grounds.\textsuperscript{36} Yes, Northerners, you may call slavery a “sin” that God has “obligat[ed]” you to “destroy,” “a crime – an offense against humanity,” “a blot and a stain on the character of [our] ‘nation,’” and while I won’t debate these arguments, I will point out that we’d be in a serious social and economic pickle if we abolish slavery just because it’s unethical.

In all seriousness, Calhoun’s argument comes down to a simple pronouncement of fear: Northerners, we can’t afford to consider your moral quandaries because abolishing slavery would economically devastate us. (“If we rock the boat, we’ll surely drown.”) Even his choice of language, “greatest calamity,” serves to tie the humanitarian-based evaluation and modification of economic practice with natural disaster.

We hear similar rhetoric in the “Declaration of the Immediate Causes which Induce and Justify the Secession of the State of Mississippi” (1861):

Our position is thoroughly identified with the institution of slavery – the greatest material interest of the world. Its labor supplies the product which constitutes by far the largest and most important portions of commerce of the earth. These products are peculiar to the climate verging on the tropical regions, and by an imperious law of nature, none but the black race can bear exposure to the tropical sun. These products have become necessities of the world, and a blow at slavery is a blow at commerce and civilization.

Besides elevating the practice of slavery to planet-stabilizing importance, the state of Mississippi clearly again borrowed the frightening power of nature: the old “an imperious law of nature” made us do it. \textit{We wish we didn’t need slaves, but that darn sun, ouch! Clearly, we have no choice; morality has no role to play here. It’s a two-player show, and The Economy and Climate

\textsuperscript{36} In his 1837 Senate Speech, “Slavery a Positive Good,” Calhoun paternalistically described the institution of slavery as historically and morally grounded: “I hold that in the present state of civilization, where two races of different origin, and distinguished by color, and other physical differences, as well as intellectual, are brought together, the relation now existing in the slaveholding States between the two, is, instead of an evil, a good – a positive good. . . . Compare [the slave’s] condition with the tenants of the poor houses in the more civilized portions of Europe – look at the sick, and the old and infirm slave, on one hand, in the midst of his family and friends, under the kind superintending care of his master and mistress, and compare it with the forlorn and wretched condition of the pauper in the poorhouse.”}
are our leading stars. Calhoun and other Pro-Slavery advocates’ vehement belief that an end to slavery would forever cripple the South prevented them from considering Slavery in the light in which we now see it: as a shocking injustice and shameful period in our country’s history.

Yet, the Emancipation Proclamation, the Civil War, and the Thirteenth Amendment, though they brought an end to the institution of slavery, they did not throw the United States into the feared economic decline from which it would never recover. And today, we face a similar moral dilemma: should we stand up for what we know to be right regarding the injustices of globalization? Ransom draws a clear connection between the institution of slavery in the United States to the sweatshop economy of today: “From the point of view of America’s cotton barons, slavery must have looked like an advantage to beat all others – without it they’d have been out of business. The freedom to indulge in it was as stoutly advocated then as free trade is today” (Ransom 12). On which side of history do we want to be remembered? (see figs. 1 & 2).

Figs. 1 & 2 On Left: Film still from Slavery: A Global Investigation (2000), showing a teenage

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37 Further, the state of Mississippi, by calling the abolition of slavery “a blow at civilization,” clearly contributes to the ideology of colonialism: that colonialism and slavery were beneficial to peoples of Africa since the European presence brought religion and civilization to the continent.

38 I do, however, fully acknowledge that the South did face a serious period of economic hardship after the war. However, this period cannot be blamed on emancipation but rather was an expected byproduct of a grueling civil war, which was followed by an immediate economic restructuring. We have no way of knowing how the outcome would have differed had the Southern states willingly chose abolition and partnered with the North to economically plan for the elimination of slavery.
boy from the Côte d’Ivoire who was beaten after attempting to run away from the cacao farm where he’d been working as a slave. On Right: Photograph from the National Archives from 1863 (165-JT-230), showing Peter, a former slaver who had been beaten by his master.

Today, we are horrified and ashamed of our history of institutionalized slavery. We honor the abolitionists who worked to bring about its end. And today, while we may fear being branded un-American agitators for questioning the injustices of free trade, we must remember that while “the rise of abolitionism was a powerful force, . . . it provoked a powerful opposition as well. Almost all white southerners, of course, were bitterly hostile to the movement. But even in the North, abolitionists were a small, dissenting minority whom most whites viewed as dangerous radicals” (Brinkley 359). It’s not always easy or popular to stand up for what you know to be right. However, we must ask ourselves, how will future generations view our economic support of sweatshop labor and child slavery? How do we want to be remembered by our children and our children’s children? And if we do recognize that it’s time to take a stand now to change the way our goods are manufactured, where do we begin?

*Unionization: Power of the People*

Let’s start by acting to eradicate the fear, which prevents us, as workers, from uniting globally by examining how the unionization of the world’s workers would actually help the working class in the United States. Multinational corporations know that solidarity among workers helps to equalize the balance of power, which is why unions have been the historical enemy of the factory owner. By pitting workers against each other, the owner can prevent his employees from uniting for better working conditions and pay. As we will see, while union-busting of the late 1800s and early 1900s attempted to divide workers based on race, modern workers are pitted against each based on nationality.

Today, workers are told that given the climatic nature of the economy, they can’t afford to look outward toward the needs of laborers in ‘foreign’ countries. Workers in so-called ‘First World’ countries are pitted against workers in so-called ‘Third World’ countries in a ‘race to the bottom’ to see who is willing to work for the least amount of pay in the worst possible conditions. U.S. workers are taught to see the sweatshop laborers, the *maquiladora* workers with
fear or anger, as the ‘foreigners’ who steal our jobs. They are taught to value low wages as
better than no wages with the constant threat that they might lose their employment over the
border or across the ocean. However, as we shall soon see, the needs of the textile worker in
Kentucky and the sweatshop laborer in Bangladesh are not at odds. The only odd thing about the
situation is the disturbing lack of basic human compassion on the part of the corporate owners
who glut themselves on the sweat of the poor. But before we make an argument for the affinity
between workers in the so-called ‘First’ and ‘Third’ Worlds, first, let’s consider the historical
importance of integrated labor unions in the U.S. despite owners’ attempts to pit African
American and Caucasian workers against each other as enemies.

Before the widespread formation of unions, part of the reason the South had such a
difficult time recovering economically after the Civil War was the poor Caucasian southerners’
refusal to unite with the newly emancipated African American citizens. As Jerrold Packard
eloquenty explains in *American Nightmare: The History of Jim Crow*:

Ignorance compounded what would become the ultimate tragedy of Reconstruction.
Centuries of assumed superiority was buried as deeply in the majority of poor Southern
whites as it was in their economic betters who lived in the substantial houses of the cities
and gracious mansions of the plantations. Had the exploited whites ever been led to a
realization that political cooperation between themselves and blacks in voting against the
moneyed classes; control might have opened undreamed-of opportunities, the postbellum
South might well have avoided a century of social injustice and its place at the bottom of
the American economic ladder. (53)

Uniting to control the vote in the South could have allowed the poor workers to reform
landownership laws in order to more equally redistribute wealth, power, and opportunity.
Similarly, uniting as workers to demand equity and fairness did, in part, help the poor southern
sharecroppers to call national attention to the injustices in their industry and to win reform.
Fearing the growing voice of the poor, but now united, workers, landowners relied on racism to
sow dissension among the sharecroppers and tenant farmers.

The early labor unions recognized that the landowners and factory owners’ greatest
weapon was to divide their workers in terms of race. For example, in 1934, when Clay East and
H.L. Mitchell were first working to organize the Southern Tenant Farmer’s Union (STFU), a
union of poor tenant farmers in Arkansas that formed in opposition to the landowners’ theft of
money owed to them by the Agricultural Adjustment Act, the question of integration entered the
discussion. An African American tenant farmer who had been a member of the segregated
Colored Tenant Union gave the resounding verdict: “There ain’t but one way for us . . . and
that’s to get together and stay together” (qtd. in Conrad 86). The founding members of the
STFU agreed, and from the start, the union was racially integrated. Of course, the landowners
used this racial unity as a weapon in their union-busting efforts, and according to Mitchell, these
landowners would “[say] to their white tenants, ‘You don’t want to belong to an organization
that takes in “niggers’’” (qtd. in Conrad 95). While the legitimate shared experience of poverty
should have automatically united the laborers, the wealthy landowners knew that given the
pestilent racism in the South, an inherited disease, stemming back centuries, they could best fight
the unions by inciting racist ideology.

Likewise, wealthy factory owners also used the ideology of white supremacy to
discourage the formation of industry-based unions. For example, the American Federation of
Labor (AFL), though not always inclusive of African American workers, did recognize:
that the practice of paying unequal wages to blacks and whites was the main method used
by Southern factory owners to justify menial wages for all. “You may not be making a
lot,” mill owners told white employees, “but you’re still making more than the niggers.”
For many Southern laborers – especially Klansmen – this distinction was one of the few
sources of self-esteem they had; and they feared losing it through unionization more than
they valued the prospects of a higher income. (Wade 260)

Land and factory owners depended on a mutual history of racist ideology to keep their poor
Caucasian workers economically oppressed. By slightly elevating those workers who shared
their privileged skin color, the rich bourgeoisie reinforced racist logic and gave their white
laborers a reason to hold their heads high despite the poverty and class inequality of the war-torn
South. However, this systematic racism, “at least you’re still making more than [your African
American co-workers],” despite being morally objectionable, often also prevented the poor
Southern workers from uniting and demanding more equitable treatment and pay.

In reality, besides a difference in melanin and the social benefits such a difference
granted, the poor white sharecroppers, tenant farmers, and factory workers had little in common
with their wealthy employers (see table 1).
Table 1
Working and Living Conditions of Poor African American Laborers, Poor Caucasian Laborers, and Wealthy Caucasian Owners in the Late 1800s and Early 1900s in the United States

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Late 1800s / Early 1900s</th>
<th>Poor African American Sharecroppers, Tenant Farmers, and Factory Workers in the United States</th>
<th>Poor Caucasian Sharecroppers, Tenant Farmers, and Factory Workers in the United States</th>
<th>Wealthy Caucasian Plantation and Factory Owners in the United States</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Working and Living Conditions</strong></td>
<td>• Work long hours, performing physically difficult, manual labor. • Dependent on job to support family and therefore, may fear to complain about unfair treatment. • Does not have job security.</td>
<td>• Work long hours, performing physically difficult, manual labor. • Dependent on job to support family and therefore, may fear to complain about unfair treatment. • Does not have job security.</td>
<td>• Hire workers to perform all of the physically difficult, manual labor. • As the boss, does not have to worry about unfair treatment or job security. Does have to worry about the overall financial success of the business. • Does not have to worry about the day-to-day economic survival of his family.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

UNITY = Similar Working and Living Conditions. 
UNITY = Shared Racial Heritage. (RACISM)

As we can see, poor farm and factory workers, although not always united based on race, did share a definite kinship based on working and living conditions. Unlike the wealthy land and factory owners, workers faced physically demanding labor for which they were often poorly compensated. Dependent on their menial salaries to support their families, they weren’t always able to speak up for their rights, especially when divided from fellow workers based on race. However, history has shown us that when Caucasian workers unite with African American workers (and Latino American, Asian American, Native American workers), through solidarity, they are able to effect great change in their working conditions, job security, and pay. While unions were once seen as ‘Communistic,’ ‘un-American’ groups to be feared, they are now seen
as the backbone of our workforce, the organizations that defend American workers and protect American jobs.

*Patriotism: The New Racism*

Today, workers are still divided. While in the late nineteenth and early to mid-twentieth centuries, *racist ideologies* prevented workers from unionizing, modern corporations rely on *patriotism* to discourage workers from uniting globally. For instance, the Walton family, the multi-billionaire owners of the Wal-Mart and Sam’s Club fortunes, would have the average U.S. citizen believe that because we were born on U.S. soil, we have more in common with them than we do with the poor workers overseas who make products for their chains. Or at least that because we owe our allegiance to our ‘own people’ first and foremost, it’s all right for us to focus on the low price of a product rather than on the people who produced it.

And yes, in some ways this is true. Unlike the workers in Bangladesh who sew the jackets sold in their stores, workers in the US live on more than a dollar a day. Most of us do *not* face abject poverty. However, as evidenced in Table 2, the average US factory worker’s or farmer’s relationship with their work more closely resembles that of the sweatshop laborer in a ‘developing’ country than that of the millionaire or billionaire owner of the multinational corporation for which they both labor (see table 2).

Table 2
Working and Living Conditions of Poor Workers in So-Called ‘Third World’ Countries, Poor/Middle-Class Workers in So-Called ‘First World’ Countries, and Wealthy Owners of Major Multinational Corporations in the Late 1900s and Early 2000s

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Late 1900s / Early 2000s</th>
<th>Poor Sweatshop Workers, Agricultural Laborers, and Modern-Day Slaves in So-Called ‘Third World’ Countries.</th>
<th>Poor/Middle-Class Factory Workers and Farmers in the United States and in Other So-Called “First World” Countries.</th>
<th>Wealthy Owners of Major Multinational Corporations.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Working and Living Conditions</strong></td>
<td>• Work incredibly long hours performing physically difficult, manual labor. Often these hours extend past the legal.</td>
<td>• Work long hours performing physically difficult, manual labor. • Dependent on job to</td>
<td>• Hire workers to perform all of the physically difficult, manual labor.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
workday. Workers are not always compensated for this additional time. Further, workers are not often paid fairly for their labor. Likewise, the pace of the work is often brutal.

- Completely dependent on job to support family and therefore, may fear to complain about unfair treatment. May have no other options available.

- Does not have job security and may not be allowed to unionize.

UNITY = (Relatively) Similar Working and Living Conditions.

UNITY = Shared Nationality. (PATRIOTISM)

- As the boss, does not have to worry about unfair treatment or job security.

- Does not have to worry about the day-to-day economic survival of his family.

Michael Barratt Brown gives voice to this shared unity in *Fair Trade: Reform and Realities in the International Trading System* by stating, “The people in the First World in the North have suffered from many of the same forces at work, from exploitation by the same companies, as their brothers and sisters in the Third World of the South. There are rich and poor, exploiters and exploited, in the underdeveloped South as there are in the developed North” (11). However, why do we feel such kinship with the wealthiest people in our country, people who never have to worry about putting food on the table, affording necessary medical procedures, or sending their children to school? Why do we identify with folks who could, quite literally, heat their homes (no, mansions) by burning money? Simply because we pledge allegiance to the same flag, celebrate the same holidays (many of us), eat similar food, and speak the same language (if, of course, we speak English)?

**Redefining Patriotism**

Much to the benefit of the multinational corporations, we have been trained to allow national borders to control the people with whom we identify. However, we should analyze why we allow arbitrary, invisible, political lines to dictate the individuals whom we feel obligated to
protect versus those people whom we feel free to ignore or even harm. As we briefly discussed in Chapter Two, contrary to the rigid, immutable concept of national borders, Benedict Anderson, in *Imagined Communities*, offers a new definition of nation as “an imagined political community – and imaged as both inherently limited and sovereign” (6). According to Anderson, nations are “imagined because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion” (6). These lines we have seen crisscrossing our globe from an early age; the names of states, capitols, and countries we memorized, located, and labeled seemed as permanent as the lakes, mountains, and oceans we also identified. This knowledge from youth that Sacramento and Tallahassee belonged to us, were a part of us, though we may never have been to or even met anyone from California or Florida, seemed natural and sacrosanct. Similarly, we also knew, just as strongly, that the exotic locales with names that stuck in our mouths and stumbled from our lips were a distant, foreign, other, something separate, detached, and less valuable. However, just like the economy, these lines were people-made and have been and still can be people-changed. While a sense of shared culture and language may unite us, our sense of community is arbitrarily and randomly assigned.

If national borders are nothing more than lines drawn on a map, why do we allow these invisible squiggles to dictate the people and places to which we show allegiance? And does this questioning of our nationhood bother us? Did I not earlier argue, citing Ngugi, that at the heart of colonization was “the destruction or the deliberate undervaluing of a people’s culture”? (*Decolonizing* 16). Is it not dangerous to deconstruct a culture’s sense of unity and self-identification via nationhood? Perhaps, yes, but we enter into dangerous territory when, as Anderson explains, a nation “is imagined as a community, because, regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, [we conceive of the nation] as a deep, horizontal comradeship” (7). When people kill and are killed because of national borders, when people commit, overlook, diminish, or conceal injustice because of national borders, it is time to analyze the sense of comradeship that motivates these acts.

While honoring the language, cultures, and customs in and within nations, we need to reconsider our understanding of our community, the people whose well-being we sustain, support, and defend. Who are the people with whom we truly share a sense of kinship? As previously discussed, U.S. workers do have much more in common with the global community
of workers than they do with the multi-millionaire/billionaire owners and CEOs of the world’s major multinational corporations. However, allegiance to country, to ‘our own people,’ has prevented us from clearly seeing the community to whom we should truly give our loyalty and support. Instead, we should redefine our understanding of patriotism to reflect our growing global community. This re-focusing of allegiance would help to protect the world’s workers and would allow the U.S.’s economic policy to better reflect the morality to which we aspire.

US citizens have long been told in our homes and in our schools, on our televisions and from our politicians, that we need to first and foremost protect the prosperity of our own nation. As John F. Kennedy told us in his Inaugural Address, we should “ask not what [our] country can do for [us]; [we should] ask what [we] can do for [our] country.” While we’d like to consider the welfare of workers overseas, we have our own problems, our own people, our own needs to address. However, as Marx would argue, the needs of workers in ‘developed’ nations and the needs of the workers in ‘developing’ nations are not at odds; they are interdependent. According to Marx, “The proletarian is without property; his relation to his wife and children has no longer anything in common with the bourgeois family relations; modern industrial labour, modern subjection to capital . . . has stripped him of every trace of national character” (215 – 16).

Working people, especially those working in sweatshop conditions, must labor to survive. Providing for family frequently overshadows job satisfaction. Likewise, putting food on the table, unfortunately, is often a bigger preoccupation than shared leisure time. Regarding their day-to-day lives, worries, and priorities, the wealthiest few do not have much in common with the majority of working people. For this reason, Marx would argue, “The working men have no country” (224). Instead of pledging allegiance to the rich and disconnected few, men and women workers should join in global solidarity based on their shared living and working conditions. As Marx would plead, “Working men of all countries, unite!” (241).

By uniting globally, laborers could improve their working conditions. Workers in ‘developed countries’ are currently in this ‘race to the bottom’ against workers in ‘developing countries’ because we have allowed multinational corporations to pit us against one another. We feel we cannot expand our unions internationally or consider the needs of global workers when making our purchases because we must protect American jobs from the foreign threat. However, it is precisely this fear that prevents us from attaining healthy working conditions, fair pay, and job security for all. Industry is shipped overseas because companies are able to abuse the local
economies, resources, and peoples of more vulnerable nations completely unchecked. Instead, if US workers and consumers raised their voices in solidarity, uniting globally with the workers all over the world, we could better achieve dignity, equity, and security for our global workforce.

Reclaiming Our Ethical Principles

But what if we are still wondering why we should risk adjusting a system that if not working great, is at least working fairly well for many of our own citizens? Perhaps we feel uncomfortable redefining our sense of patriotism. Or perhaps, we may be wondering why, as the little guy or gal, it’s our responsibility to make change? In response, we must first remember, that as Paulo Freire unequivocally explains, “‘Washing one’s hands’ of the conflict between the powerful and the powerless means to side with the powerful, not to be neutral” (122). A point Salman Rushdie echoes in “Outside the Whale”: “If resistance is useless, those whom one might otherwise resist become omnipotent” (97). To function as if change is hopeless is to ensure that no change will happen. To function as if the powerful are unstoppable is to ensure that they will never be stopped. Moreover, allowing injustice to go unchecked does not leave us innocent. According to Freire, if we know of injustice and do nothing, we are culpable. If we know children are being trafficked, women are being locked inside factories, farmers are being robbed of a living wage, workers are being exposed to harmful, illness-inducing pesticides, and we do nothing, we are guilty. And the reason we may find this statement unsettling is because deep down, we fear it may be true.

Further, while the legitimacy of national borders and the concept of nationhood has been questioned by theorists such as Anderson, the United States, as a country, has developed under the shared and defining principle of “liberty and justice for all.” We feel uncomfortable knowing that our citizens’ purchases and many of our U.S. citizen-owned multinational corporations contribute globally to poverty and injustice for most. We want to consider capitalism a wellspring of ingenuity, new jobs, and healthy competition. However, Free Trade, what Marx calls “naked, shameless, direct, brutal exploitation,” needs to be re-evaluated and re-structured to make sure it truly reflects the values of the people (206).

As Césaire states, “a civilization that chooses to close its eyes to its most crucial problems is a stricken civilization” (31). One of the “most crucial problems” we face today is epidemic injustice and cruelty in the Free Trade system. We inherently know that child slavery
is wrong. We know that women should not be locked in sweatshop factories to make our towels and t-shirts. We don’t need to be lectured on the immorality of these acts. And we really don’t want to be the sort of country that supports the abuses of sweatshop labor and the injustices in the cash crop industry. Even in these tough economic times, we can’t ignore our most basic sense of right and wrong. Instead, let’s again remember the words of Franklin Roosevelt who in his Second Inaugural Address (1937), while facing the economic hardships of the Great Depression, declared, “The test of our progress is not whether we add more to the abundance of those who have much; it is whether we provide enough for those who have too little.” More recently, at the start of the current U.S. economic decline, during President Obama’s Inaugural Address, he maintained that “we can no longer afford indifference to the suffering outside our borders, nor can we consume the world's resources without regard to effect. For the world has changed, and we must change with it.” So if we know we need to change, and we know it’s time to change, where do we start?

**A Solution: Fair Trade**

Although as a society, we have allowed the injustices of globalization to carry on primarily unchecked, the people of the United States, through democracy and freedom of speech, have the power to make our voices heard. We can elect public officials who pledge to fight against global labor injustice, and we can urge our representatives to create and vote in favor of legislation that offers the most vulnerable people in our world the freedom and justice they so deserve. We can support global unionization efforts, and we can also contact the world’s major multinational corporations and ask that they honor our values of liberty and justice in their overseas production. However, how can we make trade fairer in our daily lives? Especially if we feel disillusioned by the political process or want immediate involvement in the reform of trade, what power, do we, as average citizens, have?

Thankfully, Fair Trade certification allows consumers the opportunity to let their money promote their ethics as they support workers’ rights to fair pay and working conditions. Fair Trade certification officially started in the Netherlands as a response to the massive decline in coffee prices in the 1980s. However, even as early as the 1940s, average citizens in the United States and Europe, many of them church folk who wanted to live out their religious beliefs or members of nonprofits committed to social justice, began partnering with artisans overseas and
selling the work of these talented artists for fair prices in our markets. (DeCarlo 65-81). What started as concerned citizens trying their best to make the world a better place on a limited scale has today become an interconnected movement of international organizations that investigate and certify companies and products as Fair Trade, so consumers can make informed, ethical decisions in their day-to-day purchases (DeCarlo 65-81).

So, what exactly does Fair Trade mean? By purchasing Fair Trade products, consumers can be sure that the products they are buying adhere to the definition of Fair Trade, which was agreed upon by F.I.N.E. (the four main Fair Trade Organizations: the Fairtrade Labelling Organizations International, the International Fair Trade Association [now the World Fair Trade Organization], the Network of World Shops, and the European Fair Trade Association):

“Fair Trade is a trading partnership, based on dialogue, transparency, and respect, that seeks greater equity in international trade. It contributes to sustainable development by offering better trading conditions to, and securing the rights of, marginalized producers and workers – especially in the South. Fair Trade Organizations (backed by consumers) are actively engaged in supporting producers, in awareness raising and in campaigning for changes in the rules and practices of conventional international trade.” (qtd. in DeCarlo 3)

Fair Trade brings the workers into the discussion. Instead of placing workers in a competition to see who is willing to work in the most deplorable conditions for the least amount of pay, Fair Trade give farmers and artisans the space to help set a fair price for their work. Moreover, Fair Trade represents partnerships between producers and merchants. Fair Trade merchants commit to paying a fair price even when the market declines and paying more when the market rises. In fact, Fair Trade merchants commit to always paying an additional premium, which goes toward building up the communities of the local farmers and artisans. At its core, Fair Trade is about supporting the men and women who grow our food and craft the products that fill our homes.

Today, with Fair Trade certification labeling, we can be sure that our purchases don’t contribute to economic injustice (see figs. 3, 4, & 5).
Figs. 3, 4, & 5: On the Left: The Fair Trade Certified Mark, which is found on Fair Trade products sold in North America. In the Center: The International Fair Trade Certification Mark, which is found on Fair Trade products sold all over the world, especially in Europe. On the Right: The Fair Trade Federation Mark, which is found on non-food products such as clothing or jewelry. This mark indicates that the Fair Trade Federation has found that the companies manufacturing and selling the products adhere to Fair Trade practices.

Much like the Certified Organic labels, these Fair Trade marks allow consumers to easily recognize Fair Trade products in their local grocery stores. Buying Fair Trade is as easy as checking for the label. And for folks living in rural areas who might not have the same selection of Fair Trade products in their stores, with online retailers and organizations, like Global Exchange, Equal Exchange, Ten Thousands Village, and SERRV, Fair Trade products are only a click away.

While some may argue that Fair Trade is unrealistic for them because it does cost a little more than mainstream products, we should remember that: 1) Fair Trade products are hand-made, unique, and of a higher quality than the average mass-produced product; 2) Fair Trade products generally do not cost more than similarly priced, higher-quality products (for example, coffee lovers understand why the better-tasting Starbucks costs more than Millstone); and 3) The price of a Fair Trade product more accurately reflects the actual time, work, and talent of the farmer or artisan who deserves to be fairly reimbursed for their skill and labor. Further, it is also important to remember that the Fair Trade movement is not asking you to make an all or nothing commitment. For instance, I personally first committed to Fair Trade after viewing the film *Slavery: A Global Investigation*, which exposed the use of child slavery in the cacao industry and
showed footage of a rescued child slave who had been severely beaten after attempting to run away. Seeing the still open wounds on the boy’s shoulders, ribs, and back, and hearing that none of the children interviewed had ever even tasted chocolate made me personally decide that I never wanted to eat chocolate again if it could have been harvested by a trafficked child. While I committed to purchasing only Fair Trade chocolate, as a graduate student on a limited income, I wasn’t able to incorporate Fair Trade into my life as fully as I later would once I had entered the workforce fulltime. However, by changing our lives in even little ways, switching to Fair Trade coffee, drinking a Fair Trade tea, purchasing a Fair Trade scarf, we can help the lives of the world’s farmers and artisans in big ways.

It is also important to understand that Fair Trade is not anti-market, anti-capitalism, or un-American. In fact, as Peter Singer and Jim Mason explain in *The Way We Eat: Why Our Food Choices Matter*, “Paying more for a fair trade label is no more ‘anti-market’ than paying more for a Gucci label, and it reflects better ethical priorities” (Singer and Mason 164). And while Singer and Mason’s argument is correct, buying Fair Trade does contribute to economic growth, as someone who decided to make the commitment to buying only Fair Trade clothing when living on a Catholic high school teacher’s salary, I can personally avow that buying fashionable Fair Trade apparel from retailers like Fair Indigo, Mata Traders, or Ethos Paris is much more affordable than paying for the big name labels like Gucci, which are featured on the covers of *Vogue* and *Cosmopolitan*.39

Further, as more and more people begin purchasing Fair Trade certified products, we will create a demand for Fair Trade as we send the world’s multinationals the message that we care about the people who grow our food and make our clothing. As Jackie DeCarlo so eloquently explains in *Fair Trade: A Beginner’s Guide*, “When consumers make conscious decisions about how to spend money on items that do not depend on the exploitation of human labor, the destruction of the environment, or the homogenization of culture, they are voting for the kind of world they want to live in. And, they are engaged in creating that world” (5). Consider the Certified Organic market. When I was a kid, organic was a kind of chemistry college students

39 It is important to recognize, however, that many U.S. workers living below the poverty line would most likely not be able afford to support the world’s workers by purchasing Fair Trade Certified products. For more information about how one corporation, Wal-Mart, pits the world’s workers against one another in this vicious cycle of poverty, see the documentary *Wal-Mart: The High Cost of Low Price* (2005).
had a hard time passing; now, even Wal-Mart carries organic products: vegetables, clothing, and even baby formula. Examining Wal-Mart’s track record with human rights and labor injustice, we can assume that Wal-Mart didn’t begin carrying organic products out of a sense of moral responsibility. Rather, the people demanded, and to stay competitive, Wal-Mart had to supply. As consumers, we do have the power to right the wrongs of labor injustice.

In a time when our country’s so deeply divided across party lines, it’s important to understand what Fair Trade is and is not. Fair Trade is not just for those who identify themselves as religious, even though it does more closely reflect the tenants of the world’s major religions than does the widespread labor injustices of globalization. Likewise, Fair Trade is not only for folks who identify themselves as democrats or liberals, but it does more closely represent the democratic ideals of liberty and justice for all. Fair Trade is for anyone and everyone who cares about the world’s people, especially those people who are the most vulnerable. Fair Trade is for those who recognize that human trafficking, slavery, and sweatshops labor is wrong and who are willing to stand up against worker injustice by voting with their dollars to make trade fair. Fair Trade could easily be for you.
CONCLUSION

* * *

The truth is that there is no whale. We live in a world without hiding places; the missiles have made sure of that. However much we may wish to return to the womb, we cannot be unborn. So we are left with a fairly straightforward choice. Either we agree to delude ourselves, to lose ourselves in the fantasy of the great fish, for which a second metaphor is that of Pangloss’s garden; or we can do what all human beings do instinctively when they realize that the womb has been lost for ever – that is, we can make the very devil of a racket.


* * *

This thesis has discussed how food often works as a negative trope in colonial and (post)colonial literature, exposing the inequalities inherent in the relationships between people from (post)colonizing and (post)colonized countries. For example, by portraying his Iban guides’ food as disgusting and unpalatable, Redmond O’Hanlon, in Into the Heart of Borneo, abjectifies the people who have welcomed him to their land and helped him in his exploration. By qualifying Iban food as not only non-food but as putrid and taboo, the British adventurers are able to cement their self-created status as ‘Superior’ and ‘Civilized.’ For what culture would knowingly choose to eat fish reminiscent of “a hair-brush caked in lard” or leftover lizard tail that smells like a decaying tooth? (O’Hanlon 39). What people would find the parasitic worms writhing in the belly of a fish to be a delicacy? Who would want to ingest ‘filth’ into their body except a non-civilized person? Despite his self-deprecating humor, O’Hanlon’s travel narrative clearly and decidedly draws the ultimate conclusion that there is an essential inferiority in a culture whose dietary staples are so outright disgusting. And it is precisely this binaristic rhetoric, our exquisite cuisine is superior to your gross grub (not to mention the superiority of our religion, medicine, language, etc.), which was used to excuse the imperial enterprise and continues to excuse the injustices of today’s globalization.

Likewise, while in Chapter One, we saw how non-Western cultures’ food can be abjectified as a means of casting the ‘Other’ as ‘inferior,’ hence justifying the imperial enterprise, Chapter Two detailed the use of ‘ethnic’ cookbooks to further justify colonialism by simplifying and stereotyping a people through the simplification of their food for a Western audience. By offering a culture’s dishes as easily reproducible, cookbook authors from imperial countries allow their readers from (post)colonizing countries to still feel a sense of ownership
over a (post)colonized culture via their food. For instance, Jennifer Brennan’s *Curries and Bugles: A Memoir and Cookbook of the British Raj* celebrates the Raj as a picturesque, scrumptious time in British history. (British history, of course, diminishing all sense that an Indian history continued during the time of the Raj.) While sharing stories of ‘simple,’ ‘lazy,’ and ‘inferior’ servants, Brennan essentially tells her readers, *The Raj was a magical time, and now that I’ve packaged all of Indian cuisine in my award-winning cookbook, you can recreate the wonder of the Raj in your own kitchen.* For the very reason that they seem harmless and apolitical, cookbooks deserve academic analysis for it is essential to expose the messages hidden among the recipes.

Further, while Chapters One and Two examined food as a substance to be eaten or prepared, Chapter Three traced a food source back to its actual cultivation. Exploring the role of tea and tea parties as a metaphor for inequality in E. M. Forster’s *A Passage to India*, Chapter Three exposed the injustices in the tea industry both past and present. However, as we discussed, the exploitation of labor does not exist solely in the tea plantations but instead fuels the cash crop industries and our current sweatshop economy. Chapter Three also discussed our shared kinship with workers overseas, which is often hidden by our fear of the economy’s instability and the patriotic pressures we face to put the needs of our own people – even the wealthiest owners of multinationals – first. By complicating ideas of nationhood, I called for a redefinition of patriotism in light of globalization and also offered the Fair Trade movement as a possible step toward reforming the injustices of the imperial enterprise.

I have focused on food as a negative trope in colonial and (post)colonial literature, as something that is slurred, simplified, and stolen, in order to interrogate the historically unequal power relationships between the so-called ‘First’ and ‘Third’ Worlds. Like food, which has been customarily viewed positively (as a nurturing substance, created in the safety of the domestic space), the British Crown positioned their imperial enterprise as ethically and spiritually grounded (as a mission to bring civilization and light to a dark world). This thesis works to complicate both of these assumptions by removing food from its positive contexts and studying the negative aspects of food as a literary trope.

I end this thesis with a line that has spoken to me since my days as an undergraduate student: Althusser’s warning that “ideology never says, I am ideological” (“from ‘Ideology’” 56). Reading Althusser’s words for the first time, something rose up in me that did indeed say,
“‘That’s obvious! That’s right! That’s true!’” (“from ‘Ideology’” 54). Years later, I give this line to my students while we’re studying advertisements. I explain that when (insert famous celebrity of the moment) endorses cologne, he is not directly telling you, “This is all a scam. I don’t wear this stuff myself. You’re only buying this because you want to be as handsome and as popular as me.” No, instead, his silent image tells you aren’t handsome enough, you aren’t strong enough, you aren’t good enough, but could be if only you purchased this over-priced product. My students recognize the truth in Althusser’s ideas, and when they write papers about their childhood toys, they bring a new, critical gaze to a previously safe entity: Barbie, who taught the girls about dieting, high heels, and weddings and G.I. Joe, who taught the boys that physical strength and violence equate masculinity.

Like our toys, for many people, food traditionally kindles warm memories of holidays, culture, tradition, celebration, etc. But like toys, food can also mask destructive realities: for instance, the cash crops that incited the colonial enterprise and continue to keep the world’s poorest and most vulnerable people in a state of abject poverty. While this thesis does not intend to destroy our love of food, my intention is to use the relatable trope of food as an access point through which to interrogate the ideological ‘Truth’s’ that work to naturalize the hegemonic power relationships between the (post)colonized and (post)colonizing people. For inequality and injustice, we simply should never stomach.
WORKS CITED


