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‘Culinary Cultures’: Theorising postcolonial food cultures

This chapter reflects on the theory and practice of using food studies to teach across global spaces on a staff research-led, undergraduate option ‘Research Now: Culinary Cultures’ as part of a larger programme of embedding decolonisation of the curriculum in Literature Studies at York St John University. The core aims are:

- to equip final year students with the necessary research skills to make effective critical interventions in the study of literature,
- prepare students for post-graduate or professional fields,
- develop students’ insight into the importance of active research on the development of the discipline
- develop skills in reflective writing as a means to engender critical self-reflexivity
- (University-wide) to introduce students to global perspectives and prepare students for global citizenship.

‘Culinary Cultures’, takes global foodways and food histories as its focus, is deliberately interdisciplinary and draws on literary and non-literary texts and multiple theoretical approaches (e.g., literary and cultural studies, cultural geographies, postcolonial theory, ‘follow the thing’ methodologiesⁱ), in order to introduce students to a wide range of concerns pertaining to food narratives. It also, crucially, encourages students to make real life connections to wider concerns such as migration, interculturalism, transnationalism, globalization and decoloniality.

In planning and teaching this strand, I draw upon Mexican food studies scholar Meredith E. Abarca’s view that “food can function as a medium of understanding existing theories and creating new ones”ⁱⁱ, providing a more concrete way to engage with difficult and sometimes abstract ideas. Taking philosopher Lisa Heldke’s theory that food is a “thoughtful practice: a cognitive process inseparable of practice”ⁱⁱⁱ Abarca posits (after bell hooks), an “engaged pedagogy”^{iv} based on the “critical analysis of food activities [in] food narratives”. This can be undertaken within different courses (Literary Studies, Literary Theory, Women’s Studies) but always connects the personal and social dimensions of food and brings together theory and practice (for example, in students’ reflective practice) to develop what Abarca terms a “food consciousness”. For Abarca, as for myself, food narratives are “food-centred texts that frame the design of my undergraduate courses... where food is the focal point of theoretical discussions” and can include “personal stories, those of students’ and those found in culinary memoirs, images and passages kneaded into the pages of literary works (novels, poems, short stories, autobiographies); food moments that move the plot or provide the setting in films; food representations in popular culture and advertisements...scholarly materials from the interdisciplinary field of Food Studies.”^v The following chapter suggest some teaching strategies which can be used as part of an engaged pedagogy which acts to decolonize the Literature Studies curriculum.

Decolonizing the Curriculum at York St John

Our first-year syllabus at York St John includes a mandatory module, ‘Canonicity’, which focuses on breaking down the concept of the literary canon, and asking students to problematize what can be considered ‘great and good’ literature. Another introductory module, ‘Theorising Literature: Identity and Power’ works to give students the critical

vocabulary to talk about race, ethnicity, colour, religion, gender, sexuality, disability, and questions of nationhood and national identity. Even on core skills modules, the majority of short primary and secondary texts set are by writers of colour. This is a quite deliberate decentring of the ‘whiteness’ of the curriculum. We set this curriculum in order to ‘normalize’ cultural diversity in the texts which students encounter from the very outset of their university study and to ensure that every student has the chance to ‘see themselves’ in the texts, voices and critical approaches studied across the module.

In their second and third years, students can choose modules such as ‘Writing the Caribbean’ which disrupts the idea that the Caribbean is ‘out there’ and separate to ‘Britishness’ and to British literature by showing how the two have always been globally, culturally and historically connected or ‘From Harlem to Hip-Hop’, a module which traces the development of African American literature and culture from the Harlem Renaissance up to Beyoncé’s *Lemonade*. Other modules that seem to follow a ‘traditional’ and ‘canonical’ syllabus work to challenge and destabilize the past as a ‘safe space’ of white privilege. Britain – and British literature – was always a transnational, multicultural space and the study of the past – as well as the contemporary – is more accurate, relevant, and vital when we understand that ‘canonical’ literature does not *reflect* the reality of the historical world any more than it does our present world.

Whilst our students have the opportunity to read ground-breaking work from a wide range of contemporary writers of colour, we foreground the fact that decolonisation does not only occur in contemporary writing – nor should it affect only the primary texts studied. Students also engage with scholars and critics of colour, exploring how the system that *produces* literary value must also change in order for those values to be properly critiqued, widened, and reconsidered. Importantly, our modules do not exclude more canonical writers. However, we ensure that our students are encouraged to read canonical works with an understanding of their literary merit *and* the social, cultural, and political dynamics which have historically safeguarded and perpetuated the dominance of these voices and the ways in which contemporary authors, critics, and our students may question and interrogate this process. It is crucial to consider *how* the canon is read and studied, as well as what else is read alongside ‘expected’ texts. Whilst we don’t think students be able to demand what is on their University reading lists, we do believe that we should be willing, as academics, to engage in a meaningful dialogue with our students about what should and should not be included, and why.^{vi}

Diversification vs Decolonization of the curriculum

Diversification and decolonization of the curriculum are interrelated projects but each has a different scope and aims. The former is welcome but is frequently uneven and/or does not go far enough. Diversification can become a largely performative gesture (both individually and institutionally) which is tokenistic and superficial, a box-ticking exercise which does nothing to address the deeper issues of systemic racism and other entrenched biases and inequalities which can affect how students are able to be and thrive (or not) in academic spaces. Such historical biases also determine whose knowledge and perspectives are viewed as normative and which individual ‘knowledge producers’ are privileged within the academy.

Decolonization of the curriculum, by contrast, is predicated on the fact that English Studies itself (and the polyvalent and contested language upon which it is based) emerged as a colonially constructed discipline and the recognition that the English curriculum still (re)produces colonial biases. “Coloniality prevails in [many of] our institutions and English

remains the largely unquestioned medium of learning.”^{vii} The decolonizing process requires a more radical approach to making changes, changes which are genuinely deconstructive and sustainable over a longer term. Decolonising involves scrutinising our pedagogies as well as our reading lists: the curriculum constitutes not just *what* is taught but crucially *how* it is taught also. In this respect, decolonizing the curriculum can be seen as just the start of a larger, much more radical process of decolonising the academy. Basil Bernstein’s (2000) theories on the curriculum are useful here. Bernstein takes Latin America decolonial theory and applies these concepts to the politics of knowledge transmission – who decides what is knowledge? Who legitimises it? Bernstein understands pedagogic discourse as divided between institutional discourse (e.g., the curriculum) and regulative discourses – the values, practices way of being/ moral values which underpin discourse. One is the content of curriculum, the other the deeper practices and politics of knowledge underpinning it. This chapter focuses on both.

Introducing ‘Culinary Cultures’

‘Culinary Cultures’ starts from the premise that making food and storytelling are intimately linked cultural practices which can tell us much about each other. Indeed, both often use a shared critical vocabulary (plot, production and consumption) and they both depend on an audience of sorts (i.e., you tell a story *to/cook for* someone). Food connects us to identity in some intimate and important ways and the module offers students opportunities to think about food and narrative in relation to the body, class, gender, ethnicity, caste and religious/spiritual beliefs, as well showing how food links us to ‘home’ and how food travels diasporically and globally. The module also affords opportunities to think about recent debates about ‘tradition’, ‘authenticity’ and ‘cultural appropriation’ and how such terms are used and contested in relation to food through some specific case studies.

‘Culinary Cultures’ is divided into three main units of study:

1. In weeks 1-3 key concepts and methodologies in food studies are introduced, using a selection of short texts (essays, short stories and poems) as case studies. These include extracts from *Poetry on a Plate* (2004), and *The Virago Book of Food* (2006). Peter Jackson and the CONANX group’s *Food Words* (2015) is used to set short reading suggestions on key terms relevant to the texts/s and issues discussed each week and students are asked to make notes in advance of class. This provides a consistent, current and internationally-based theoretical core to the module, alongside other set primary and secondary materials. Rick Flowers and Elaine Swan’s *Food Pedagogies* (2015) is a useful starting point for teachers new to this area.

2. In weeks 4-7 we start to think about specific literary texts: Margaret Atwood’s *The Edible Woman* (1969) and Vietnamese-American Monique Truong’s *The Book of Salt: A Novel* (2003) and more complex representations of food and food-related issues. Although Atwood is undoubtedly a canonical writer, this first novel with its clear second-wave feminist, white North American context, provides a useful starting point from which to launch critical discussions about food, gender and sexuality which are then usefully problematised by *The Book of Salt*. Truong’s novel explores food, bodies and queer sexuality through the historiographic lens of a fictionalised account of real-life modernist writer Gertrude Stein and her partner Alice B. Toklas and their (differently) queer cook, the imaginary Bihn. Rather than seeing Bihn simply as the racialized ‘other’ who rather crudely represents the ‘dark side of modernity’ – as much a constituent of the Stein-Toklas domestic household as of the larger

Euro-American project of modernity - Truong explores the complex imbrications of race, class, sexuality and desire in her characters through a hauntingly beautiful novel about exile, migration, memory and desire. This is a challenging novel which significantly complicates the mainly white and heteronormative exploration of bodies, food and desire in Atwood's late 1960s novel; it also opens up for discussion, wider issues of orientalism and 'the exotic', eurocentrism, transnational travel and the complexities of 'home' for the postcolonial and/or transcultural subject.

3. Weeks 8-12 constitute a case study of Caribbean foodways and food narratives. It includes a selection of extracts from texts of different genres including Barbadian writer Austin Clarke's culinary memoir, *Pigtails and Breadfruit* (1999), Trinidadian novelist Sam Selvon's *A Brighter Sun* (1952). A research-informed case study of British-Caribbean celebrity chef and entrepreneur, Levi Roots and his Reggae Reggae brand and issues of cultural appropriation in Jamie Oliver's 2018 'Jerkgate' completes this unit of study.

Seminars provide the main discussion-focused basis for teaching on this module and are specifically structured to develop students' abilities to articulate individual perspectives, debate interpretations, and participate in the creation of a research community. Occasional short lectures feature, but the main emphasis is on shared active learning and the seminar format. Private study is the primary mode for this module, through which the student learns to develop skills of independent research and apply the general skills of literary analysis to the specific field of the research strand. In particular, they are encouraged to keep a regular reflective journal which is then used to write a reflective commentary as part of the final assessment.

Unit 1:

In the first week, students are introduced to the interdisciplinary area of food studies and the specific study of food and literature. As an introductory activity I ask students to look at a selected poems/short extracts in clusters thematically organised around kitchens, cooking as 'magic' and cross-cultural food encounters. I also introduce the use of *Food Words* as module reader and ask students to note:

- How useful the term is for researching food and literature?
- Does it relate to any of the module texts? How?
- What are its limitations?
- What further questions do you want to ask?
- How far are the examples/ case studies from different cultures? What difference does this make?

In the next class we start to map some foundational ideas in Food Studies. I ask students to read and make notes on Mary Douglas's classic sociological study, 'How to Decipher a Meal' (1971), alongside Roland Barthes' iconic essay on food, gender and French cultural identity 'Steak and Chips' from *Mythologies* (1957) and extracts from Pierre Bourdieu's *Distinction* (1984). Key words for student research from *Food Words* include **cooking**, **eating** and **taste**.

I present a short lecture introducing the field of food studies, its origins and some key terms and methodologies, including selected theoretical writings on food of Claude Levi-Strauss, Roland Barthes and of Pierre Bourdieu on cultural capital. The lecture includes several 'stop and discuss' moments and ends with small group work on specific extracts, including a wonderfully provocative piece on the politics of 'chip butties' (French-fry sandwiches) from British cookery-writer Nigel Slater's *Real Fast Food* (1993); this enables students to apply

and debate in a more concretized form, some of the ideas raised in the extracts from Levi Strauss, Barthes and Bourdieu.

We also look at the role of food and memory from a literary perspective by undertaking a workshop activity on Proust's famous 'madeleine moment' from the first section of his long autobiographical work, *À la recherche du temps perdu* (1913-27). Close analysis of this extract is paired with students' own 'madeleine moments' as a holistic teaching strategy. This facilitates discussion of the importance of food, affect and memory and the possible value of auto/biographical approaches can be integrated into the study of food and also prepares students for the study of a 'culinary memoir' later on the module.

In the final week of the unit, we focus on the research questions:

- What does it mean to study food?
- What kind of methodologies are used?
- What are the links between food and literature and is there a shared vocabulary?

Students research key words **materialities** and **practice** and we think about ways we can use these new key terms in our study on the module. They also read and make notes on African-American critic, Doris Witt's essay 'From fiction to foodways' (2007) as a way of opening up discussion of food in a culturally different context and starting to think about the global ramifications of food, not only in the black diaspora but in general. Witt's essay is useful not only for its fascinating case studies of African American cookbooks (another genre we discuss on this module) but for its incisive proposals for an intersectional methodology, one which can be modelled and used in other contexts too. It is quite deliberately placed early on in the module to counter the Eurocentrism of theoretical sources used so far and to show that BAME producers of knowledge are equally important. It is not just primary texts which need our scrutiny but the theories and practices which we put into action in literary studies.

Unit 2

In this unit we focus on specific literary texts and to consider how food, consumption and the body are connected, as read through a number of critical-theoretical frames. There are two classes on each novel, the first of which is centred on disordered eating and the body in *The Edible Woman*. Students read and make notes on keywords: **body** plus another from **appetite, anxiety, consumption, convenience** and **advertising** and are tasked with reporting back on these term in class. A seminar worksheet is used to focus discussion starting from Margaret Atwood's own comment on her writing that:

The body as a concept has always been a concern of mine... I think that people very much experience themselves through their bodies and through concepts of the body which get applied to their own bodies. Which they pick up from their culture and apply to their own bodies. ^{viii}

A warm-up exercise asks students in small groups to make a spider diagram or word cloud to collect all the words which they associate with the word 'Body' and to share with the group in discussion. They then look at all or a selection of the following extracts from *The Edible Woman* and consider what do they have to say about food/ eating/ consumption/ the body/ (dis)embodiment/ American culture (are these issues universal?):

- Chapter 1, Marion and the Seymour surveys (18-20) “I had begun to peck...their opinions asked.” plus, chapter 3 (25-27) “when I had climbed down...has something happened?”
- Chapter 4 Marion’s visit to Clara and Jo’s for dinner
- Chapter 6 Marion meets Duncan on door-to-door ‘Seymour survey’ (48) to end of chapter “He rubbed one of his eyes...”
- Chapter 17 Marion and Peter go out for dinner (the steak scene)

Students are then asked to critically engage with extracts from different kinds of writing on bodies and disordered eating and to link these insights to the novel. The extracts include one from Susan Bordo’s *Unbearable Weight* ([1993] 2002) on anorexia nervosa which reads the illness as part of a larger (gendered) mind-body dualism in western societies and as culturally constructed rather than simply pathological. In this extract, Bordo locates the illness within:

a dimension of protest against the limitations of the ideal of female domesticity (the ‘feminine mystique’ Betty Friedan called it) that reigned in America in the 1950s and early 60s – the years when most of their mothers were starting homes and families [and] the era during which women had been fired en masse from the jobs they had held during the war and shamelessly propagandized back into the full-time job of wife and mother.

Bordo argues that:

the anorexic is terrified and repelled, not only by the traditional female domestic role – which she associates with mental lassitude and weakness – but by a certain archetype of the female: as hungering. Voracious, all-needing and all-wanting. It is this image that shapes and permeates her experience of and her hunger for food as insatiable and out of control, which makes her feel that if she even takes one bite, she won’t be able to stop.^{ix}

This can be paired with an extract from the more recent *How to Be a Woman* (2011) by feminist journalist Caitlin Moran in which Moran argues we need to demythologize the “furiously overloaded word...Fat” and “to be able to ...talk about what it is, and what it means, and why it’s become the big topic for Western women in the twenty-first century...”^x

Anticipating *The Book of Salt*, students are asked to research key words **sex**, **gender** and **emotion** from *Food Words* and to think about how they can be linked to Atwood’s novel with a particular focus on the characters of Marion and Duncan as differently gendered ‘disordered’ eaters. Students choose a secondary source on this text from recommended critical reading and write a short annotated bibliographic entry, summarising the argument and evaluating its usefulness for a reading of the novel.

The next two classes focus on *The Book of Salt* (2004). This intriguing novel is in part a fictionalized account of the real-life experiences of American modernist writer Gertrude Stein and her lover, the writer Alice B. Toklas, in France during the early decades of the twentieth century. Stein was already an established and revered modernist writer who entertained transnational writers, entertainers and artists such as T.S. Eliot, Ernest Hemingway, Charlie Chaplin, Matisse and Picasso at her Paris ‘salon’. From 1908, when she went to live with Stein in Paris, Toklas acted as Stein’s muse, domestic support and secretary and was central in establishing Stein as a literary personage. Both women loved to eat and to entertain and

both wrote about cooking and food. Stein had published a fascinating book of prose poems called *Tender Buttons* in 1914 which includes a section on different foods. After Stein's death Toklas' published a celebrated cookbook, the *Alice B. Toklas Cookbook* (1954) to raise urgent funds to save Stein's collection of paintings. Contemporary Vietnamese-American writer Truong draws on these intertextual sources and introduces a fictionalized queer Vietnamese in-house cook in her novel, based on a line in the *Cookbook*, mentioning the hiring of a Vietnamese cook: "[He] came to us through an advertisement that I had in desperation put in the newspaper...: "Two American ladies wish . . ." In so doing, she brings new readings of food, culture, migration and sexuality into play.

In preparation students research key words **kitchens**, **work** and **gourmet** and the lives and writings of Stein and Toklas. Key research questions include:

- What kind of writers were they?
- What was their attitude to food and eating? (A key word here is gourmet)
- How should we read Toklas' cookbook and how does it combine literature and food?
- What do you make of Stein's modernist prose poems in *Tender Buttons* (1914)?
- Why do you think Truong chose these real-life figures as source materials for her novel?
- What does *The Book of Salt* have to say about the connections between food, cooking and art/writing?

A worksheet focuses class discussion onto a series of textual locales and concerns. The first set of questions on intertextuality, food and writing (and food writing) requires students to discuss the questions above in small groups, based upon their preparatory research into the lives and writings of Stein and Toklas. A second question asks students to engage with a critical reading of Toklas's cookbook in terms of the role of intertexts and the linked themes of hunger and desire in Toklas' cookbook. For this, I use a short extract from Sarah Garland's article "' A Cookbook to be read. What about it?'" (2009) in which she argues that:

Toklas's highly involved, expensive and often impractical recipes provide a meditation on wider and more complex desires than just bodily hunger, particularly at the time of Toklas and Stein's stay in occupied France and after Stein's death in 1946... The paper finds antecedents for both the quality of 'obstinate and homely shrewdness' in Stein and Toklas's texts in the brusque and authoritative women's voices captured in nineteenth century cookbooks and suggests that through the fetish status of the nouns in both recipes and in poetry Gertrude and Alice use the reciprocal making and writing of food to articulate, represent and direct desire.^{xi}

How far is this a useful way to think about the link between hunger and desire, food and sex in *The Book of Salt* (and its intertexts)? Another task is to compare 'Murder in the Kitchen' an extract from Toklas' cookbook on the killing of a pigeon with the equivalent passage in Truong's novel (chapter 7, 64-70). I get students to discuss the main differences? Who narrates? What is the effect?

Another class focuses on food, sex desire in relation to the characters of Bihn, himself a queer postcolonial subject, as he moves (and cooks) across different cultures. Students prepare keywords **exotic**, **foodscapes**, **time** and **memory** and read the introduction to Graham Huggan's *The Postcolonial Exotic* (2001). They are also asked to consider:

- What is the function of the Vietnamese cook, Bihn, in the novel? How is he represented?
- How does the novel connect food, appetite and sex?
- How does it navigate cultural difference and exoticism?
- What is the role of time, space and memory in this novel?

Guided by a worksheet, students are asked to think about the relationship between Toklas and Stein in terms of the interrelatedness of the term ‘appetite’ to food and sex. Drawing upon ideas from Said’s *Orientalism* (1978) and Huggan (2001) they are also asked to think about the ways in which the novel positions Bihn as a colonial and queer intersectional subject. Oppression and power are experienced by Bihn very differently in different locations (Saigon, Paris) and this is significant. Who has agency and who is able to resist being dominated or overpowered by others in the novel? We consider the role of sex and food as they relate to Binh’s (and other characters) state of exile and longing in *The Book of Salt*. Some specific passages which can be used to focus discussion include:

- The significance of salt in the title. Opening pages and main themes of novel?
- Binh’s culinary resistance (19)
- Erotics of relationship between Stein and Toklas conducted through food (27)
- Binh starts affair with Chef Bleriot at Governor General’s house in Saigon (62-3), Bleriot’s relationship with Binh (123) “the rules he set for me.... Never saw.” Comment on different kinds of power relation operating here.
- Link between Binh’s cutting (self-harm), mother and cooking (72-3). How should we read the split blood in his mistresses’ meal?
- Meal Binh plans for lover Marcus Lattimore (Sweet Sunday Man) (77-9, 149-50) food and stories linked “I cook for him, and he feeds me, that is the true nature of our relationship.” (213)
- Bihn and man on bridge/ Ho Chi Minh bond over meal at Chinese restaurant (96-9)
- Dr Chauffeur’s advice on ‘curing’ Binh’s homosexuality (128). Link to spices. Traces of racist and sexologist discourses
- Bihn reflects on his otherness and identity (142)
- food and language (11-12, 19, 34) the beef and ‘pear not pear’ (pineapple) (211)
- Pigeon scene (218) – how it links to earlier passage on dying birds (67-8) and Binh’s mother having been given “wings” in death (230)

We then undertake an exercise on food and sex in popular cultural texts from Warren Belasco’s *Food: the key concepts* (2008). It’s possible to teach this in different ways but I ask students to find passages on food and sex in popular culture to bring to class for discussion.

Unit 3

Leaving the study of non-Western texts to the end of a module can signal a hierarchy of privileged texts within the curriculum. However, on this module I deliberately teach a range of short Caribbean texts last, as they build upon and help to critique what has come before. I give a lecture introducing key issues in Caribbean foodways based on my own research and discuss research planning, research ethics and research methodologies (including oral history and ethnography) using the case study of my ‘Kitchen Talk’ oral history project conducted in Barbados in 2018. Students prepare keywords **space and place, race and ethnicity** and read

a series of critical sources including chapter 1 of Hannah Garth's *Food and Identity in the Caribbean* (2013), the introduction to Sarah Lawson Welsh's, *Food, Text and Culture in the Anglophone Caribbean* (2019) and her chapter, 'Caribbean Cravings' (2018a).

To discuss the idea of food as intimately linked to identity, we focus on extracts from two Caribbean texts. The first, *Pigtails and Breadfruit* (1999) (named after two classic Caribbean dishes) is a 'culinary memoir' of a 1930s childhood and life 'through food' by Barbadian-Canadian writer, Austin Clarke. The text examines the role of food in forging identity, the role of female figures in Clarke's (culinary) life and other ways in which food and creativity are linked in the Caribbean and its diaspora. With close focus on the first chapter, I ask students to think about:

- The genre of life writing and its main characteristics.
- How Clarke uses his 'culinary memoir' to link foodways and food memories to race, ethnicity, class, gender, nation and 'tradition'?
- What is culinary 'tradition'?
- Significance of subtitle 'Rituals of Slave Food'?
- How does this text complicate the idea of a single Caribbean cuisine?

A Brighter Sun (1952) is an early novel by Indo-Caribbean writer Sam Selvon, in which he traces the adulthood of his protagonist Tiger amidst a time of great change for his native island of Trinidad during WWII. The novel features some striking scenes of eating, feasting and fasting, including a Hindu wedding feast and a special meal put on specially for his American employers by Tiger and his wife. We think about cross-cultural confusions of the latter scene and the ways in which (racial, religious and cultural) identity is coded in terms of food practices.

Preparatory reading includes the key words **class**, **tradition** and **authenticity** as well as Arjun Appadurai's 'How to Make a National Cuisine' (2008) which focuses on the role of printed cookbooks in the standardization of an 'Indian' cuisine and Chapter 5 of Bob Ashley et al, *Food and Cultural Studies* (2004) on 'The National Diet'.

In the final part of the unit, we consider the contested nature of the terms 'tradition' and 'authenticity' through the cookbooks of British-Caribbean celebrity cook and entrepreneur Levi Roots and the issue of cultural appropriation through selected products by British celebrity chef Jamie Oliver. Students prepare key words **celebrity cooks**, **convenience** and **globalization** and read Chapter 11 of Bob Ashley et al (2004) on TV Chefs, Sarah Lawson Welsh, 'Cooking Up a Storm' (2014) and 'Why Jamie Oliver's Jerk Rice is a recipe for disaster' in *The Conversation* (2018). The case study on Roots encourages students to consider the commodification of diasporic Caribbean food culture and unravel the complex local and the global forces at play in the marketing of food products and cookery writing as 'authentically' Caribbean. Questions include:

- Does the Reggae Reggae phenomenon reflect a welcome trend in deterritorializing ethnic foods in Britain as part of a new 'culinary cosmopolitanism' or should it be read as a less helpful reification of 'ethnic' food?
- Roots constructs a version of Caribbean cuisine which travels well in the global marketplace but in doing so, does he overwrite the geographical variables and historical complexities of Caribbean foodways with a new homogeneity and new constructions of 'authenticity'?
- What does it mean to be 'authentic' in culinary terms? How are ideas of 'home' and 'culinary tradition' mobilised in *Reggae Reggae Cookbook* (2008)?

Conclusion

This chapter has shown how a module which offers a research-informed, cross-disciplinary introduction to food and narrative, centred around world texts across a range of genres, can offer some strategies for decolonizing the curriculum, as part of a longer and more sustained process. As the student authors of a 2017 blog post ‘Decolonising SOAS^{xiii}: what’s all the fuss about?’ remind us:

Decolonising the curriculum’ can mean many things and is not something that happens overnight; it requires a sustained and serious commitment within the institution and across the sector...^{xiii}

To answer those who ask ‘why now?’ or seek to critique the newly energised wave of decolonising activity in our current moment:

We might remind ourselves that contestations over the politics of knowledge are as old universities themselves, and in this sense the present student campaign is itself a manifestation of that fusty academic tradition – to challenge received wisdom, to ask questions about society and to generate the insight needed to change the world.^{xiv}

Suggested further reading:

Unit 1: Archer et al eds (2014), Ashley et al (2004), Belasco (2008), Lee Brien and Piatti-Farnell eds (2018), Counihan et al eds (2018), Rowe (2015), Shahani (2018), Watson and Caldwell eds (2005).

Unit 2. Delderfield (2019), Lupton (1996), Orbach (1984) and (2002), Sceats (2004), Sanchez Grant (2008), McWilliams (2006), Parks (2011), Cairns (2015) and Jovanovski (2018). Posman et al eds (2017), Shaughnessy (2001), Stein ([1954] 2000) and (1914). Xu (2008) and Cheng (2019), Balirano et al eds (2019), Counihan and Van Esterik eds (1999), Coleman (2011) and the 2013 *Diacritics* interview with Monique Truong.

Unit 3: Beushausen et al eds (2014), Lawson Welsh (2019) and (2018a), Wilk (2006), Balirano et al eds (2019) and Sen (2005).

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ⁱ One example is sugar, the commodity which shaped the modern Caribbean.

ⁱⁱ Abarca, "Food Consciousness," 215.

ⁱⁱⁱ Heldke, "Foodmaking as a Thoughtful Practice", 214

^{iv} bell hooks, *Teaching to Transgress*.

^v Abarca, 216

^{vi} This section is based on a blog post for the YSJU Literature blog, and was jointly authored by Dr Anne-Marie Evans and myself. <https://blog.yorks.ac.uk/englishlit/whats-going-on-demystifying-decolonising-the-curriculum/> My thanks to Dr Evans for allowing me to reproduce extracts here in an edited format.

^{vii} Kathy Lockett, Advance HE webinar on Decolonizing the Curriculum, March 2020.

^{viii} Margaret Atwood, *Conversations*, 187.

^{ix} Bordo, *Unbearable Weight*, 102.

^x Moran, *How to Be A Woman*, 110.

^{xi} Garland, abstract to “A Cookbook to be read” 2009.

^{xii} School of Oriental and African Studies

^{xiii} Decolonising SOAS np <https://www.soas.ac.uk/blogs/study/decolonising-curriculum-whats-the-fuss/#:~:text=First%2C%20'decolonising%20the%20curriculum',about%20how%20the%20world%20is.&text=Second%2C%20'decolonising%20the%20curriculum',how%20they%20write%20about%20it.>

^{xiv} Decolonising SOAS np