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## Pepper Pot and Callaloo: Caribbean Cuisine as Embodiment of "Otherness" and Resistance

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PEPPER POT AND CALLALOO: CARIBBEAN CUISINE AS  
EMBODIMENT OF “OTHERNESS” AND RESISTANCE

by

SHEINA SENAT

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the Honors in the Major Program in English  
in the College of Arts and Humanities  
and in the Burnett Honors College  
at the University of Central Florida  
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## **Abstract**

The thesis intends to analyze the Caribbean as more than "elsewhere" in modernism through food research. The Eurocentric viewpoint is that the islands are the "other" and that the Caribbean's contributions are not central to the past and present. Representations of food in Caribbean literature reveal dualism, such as Western/African in the tropic's identity, and this dualism can lead to identity issues. Chapter 1 analyzes Caribbean cuisine's mosaic origins from Indian, European, Native, and African influences. Food imagery in Caribbean literature does not separate the Caribbean from its complicated past. However, it notes that the islands should embrace their differences while being cautious of foreign identity dominance. Chapter 2 explores the Caribbean's continuous modernity with other powers. Continuous modernity is established from the beginning of the plantation system, and the pattern of colonial trade remains apparent in the Caribbean's current import dependency. The chapter analyzes how constant interactions with global trade leave the islands with food insecurity, sometimes leading to revolutions or resistance. The section suggests self-sufficiency in the islands by strengthening domestic food production and reshaping past trade patterns.

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## Chapter One: Introduction

The Caribbean is a broad and culturally rich region with African, European, and Asian influence from groups such as the British, Dutch, French, Indian, Chinese, and Spanish. Food research is also wide-ranging, including cooking, produce, agricultural trade, and symbolism in literature. Food research can be overlooked for its simplicity; on the contrary, food creates a synergy beyond the human body by affecting how society flows. Food is the backbone of culture, politics, economics, and history. This paper examines food and its impact on Caribbean culture. Food analysis in the 21st century enforces a limited and linear cultural identity narrative. Moving away from a linear narrative shifts the focus from periodization, which allows Western influence on cultural identity to be decentralized. This decentralization allows multidimensional narratives to unravel, which results in authentic cultural revelations. Food allows for a cultural examination wherein it reveals agony in a civilization that would not otherwise become explicitly expressed. This exposes dilemmas in culture and reveals a pattern of oppression. Applying a global approach to modernity allows for an incorporative narrative that includes the Caribbean, and this inclusive narrative reveals a continuous modernity wherein the West and the "other" are in constant relation with each other. These relations can be hierarchal, subjugating the tropical region to Anglo-European principles. The idea of continuous modernity embraces the history of the Caribbean and the region's heterogeneity. This link between food and expressions of discontent, longing, and oppression bears obvious relation to postcolonialism. In this way, post-colonial theory underpins this thesis. While I cannot hope to conduct a fully post-colonial reading of representations of food in Caribbean literature, my thesis argues that inherent to these representations is the understanding on the part of the texts' writers and readers that food is a way

of expressing some of the torments, sufferings, and political issues involved with being under colonial rule.

Cuisine allows for an in-depth look at society and the disproportion of power in global and local relations. In *The Oxford Handbook of Food History*, Pilcher defines the growth of gastronomic literature as a factor in consolidating French national identity. Cookbooks help to define "the nation around Parisian standards and incorporating the rest of the world according to its hegemonic dictates" (Pilcher 45). This view establishes that cultural identity is founded on gastronomy and that literature, whether cookbooks or cooking in novels, can foster nationalist pride in a country.

### Pepper Pot

In *The Oxford Handbook of Food History*, Yong Chen notes that food is the marker of cultural identity and meaning. The pepper pot became the cultural identity of the Caribbean. The pepper pot is representative of the sovereignty that food brings to a region because it helps to establish a distinct identity which is especially important during colonial rule. The Guyanese pepper pot recipe combines meats such as pork, venison, cow heels, and tails. It also includes scotch bonnet peppers and Cassareep, a liquid from the cassava root. The stew originates from West Africa, but in the Caribbean, ingredients such as Cassareep are added because of the Arawak traditions on the island. These ingredients are emblematic of survival, resistance, and adaptation. Pepper pot is not only a Guyanese dish, but there are versions of the recipe in "Jamaica, Antigua, Anguilla, Montserrat, Haiti, Guadeloupe, Martinique, and St. Vincent" (Goucher 26).

The stew is introduced to other parts of the world, such as the United States of America. The Caribbean version of the dish became an American favorite, and it was even published in an American cookbook in 1792. This shows that the Caribbean narrative is not only elsewhere, but its culture affects colonial powers and their cuisine. Yong *Chen* further comments on the oppressive aspects of food. While food can be a marker of cultural identity and resistance, food can also be a marker of "political oppression and economic exploitation of racial and ethnic minorities" (Chen 429). This statement establishes a broader view of the relations between the Caribbean and other powers. Food reveals a circular pattern of oppression in the Caribbean; this exploitation is evidence of the Caribbean's impact on Western modernity. The Caribbean is viewed as an alternate modernity and peripheral to modernism. However, international trade proves different as agricultural export from the Caribbean has always provided resources to other parts of the world, and the islands have a part in developing the first world economy. However, the West Indies' contributions are undermined because the rules and boundaries of international trade have been powerful nations' hands. Their use of the tropics for economic yield has kept the tropics in a recurrent pattern of dependency.

While Pilcher and Chen describe food concerning contemporary contexts, this thesis explores Caribbean literature through the lens and time period of literary modernism and the experimental literary movement that is generally accepted to have taken place between 1910 and 1945. However, this thesis shows how some of the timings and geographic locations assigned to modernism need revising. Many of this paper's texts were published outside the 1945 boundary line. As discussed below, the Caribbean has always been seen as "other" to the literary modernism in North American or European metropolises such as New York, London, and Paris.

The following chapter summaries examine representations of food in Caribbean literature to redress this erroneous understanding of the Caribbean and its rich and diverse modernisms.

### Planetary Modernism in Caribbean Food Studies

The Modernism movement was "make it new. Modernism was resistance" (Martell et al. 3). However, post-modernism pushes away from modernism's elitism and Eurocentric reconcentration. These movements attempt to move away from the singular center of society, but planetary modernism embodies a multi-spatial and multicultural interpretation. In her recent study, *Planetary Modernisms (Modernist Latitudes)*, Susan Stanford Friedman discloses that planetary modernism helps to unsettle the idea of the West as the embodiment and foundation of modernity. It establishes the concept of a broadened modernity that moves beyond space and time. Friedman notes that modernity is "not reducible to utopic progress and dystopic devastation; modernity... often incorporates both ends of the spectrum" (Preface). The spectrum is a global relational perspective that includes Western and non-western narratives. An expansive and inclusive narrative distorts the idea of the Caribbean as the periphery. According to Mary Lou Emery, the Caribbean has been placed as "elsewhere" in modernity and is seen as marginal to modernism. Emery notes, "European histories have found historical contributions to modernity of enslaved and colonized people to be unthinkable"(51). Pushing the West Indies into the embodiment of the "other" is to cement authority, and the paper attempts to break the boundaries of this authority by embracing diversification in the Caribbean. The relationship between the region and the West is imbalanced or in "open totality," a concept coined by Glissant, wherein "all cultures are shaped by one another but not in equitable or mutual



relationships" (Emery 57). The West Indies is at the crux of modern civilization as they shaped Anglo-European civilization's foods as simple as cake because their trade system provided sugar to the West. Inversely, the West has a domineering relationship with the Caribbean, and a side-by-side analysis of colonial and post-colonial relations shows the recurrent pattern of dependency in the islands. Therefore, the benefits and relationships between these modernities are not always balanced or mutual. There must be a shift from periodization into a protean space where linearity does not constrain the Caribbean's narrative. A specific period contributes to a linear narrative that keeps the Caribbean marginal and redirects the focus to the "Anglo-European." Delimiting periodization removes a central narrative and presents a multifaceted narrative.

Food connects the past and the future, revealing the hidden facets of society. In *Modernism and Food Studies*, the writers analyze Hemmingway's excessive mention of food in his works. Food is used to communicate "what characters prefer not to say, what cultures dare not, and what the concept of civilization cannot express in words" (Martell et al. 58). Cuisine is ancient evidence of cultural progress. Food history expresses the concerns of a society that are not explicitly expressed.

Colonialism's impact on current patterns of agricultural trade is understated. The agricultural history of the Caribbean can be traced to before European interaction. The Arawak cultivated many crops, such as "beans, corn, cassava, and pumpkin" (Beckford and Campbell 6). However, colonialism brought social hierarchies among crop cultivation in the 15th century as the slave trade provided workers to harvest crops. Food diversification did not benefit the plantation economy and fostered a hierarchy of land by favoring high-income-yielding crops.

Food studies help to "dismantle high/low binaries, unsettles social distinctions, and promotes alternative economies" (Martell et al. 4). Concentration on food research helps to see the gaps in Caribbean history, and it helps to embrace the complexities and origins of the West Indies. Embracing the complexities of Caribbean society can be linked to Edouard Glissant's idea of *opacité* wherein "subjects and cultures are coevally inscribed in a new framework of nonhierarchical coexistence...opacity once constituted a barrier; it is now a permeable one" (Murdoch 888). Murdoch's take on the idea of opacity initiates mutual recognition and respect among the Caribbean and the West. Opacity seeks a network or connections of the West Indies with other countries without the hierarchy barrier. Food studies in Chapter 2 reveal the perplexity in establishing a distinct cultural identity due to the fight between duality and dominance in the West Indies. Chapter 2 also reveals the contributions of women in breaking the strongholds of hierarchy in the Caribbean. Chapter 3 explores the recurrent patterns of dependency in agricultural trade and tourism. It emphasizes the continuous modernity wherein the Caribbean has an unforeseen and stagnant relationship with the West. Therefore, chapter 3 also suggests import dependency break from patterns of hierarchy.

## **Chapter Two: The Embodiment of “Otherness” and Forgotten in the Caribbean**

The Caribbean is a culturally mosaic region that is impacted by global powers. The islands have been culturally impacted by African and Asian cuisine, such as Chinese and Indian. However, colonialism shapes the social domains of the Caribbean, thereby influencing the palates of the island with a hierarchal food structure. Standardization of food goes beyond the colonial period and is transformed into globalization that is "managed by 'industrial' powers" (Glissant 148). In *Poetics of Relation*, Édouard Glissant's outlook on the standardization of food is that "whether consented or imposed, it is necessary to renew the visions and aesthetics of relating to the earth" (148). Observing the Caribbean's food relation with global powers unveils an internal and external hierarchy. The internal or social hierarchies in countries like Haiti are divided by class and race. The word "Andeyo" in Creole means "out there" or outside, referring to Haiti's countryside.. Marylynn Steckley highlights racial divides in "Eating Up the Social Ladder: the Problem of Dietary Aspirations for Food Sovereignty" wherein the people who reside in "Andeyo" are often associated with poverty. At the same time, the bourgeois live in towns and cities. This distinction goes beyond race because it is apparent in the food patterns. Foods associated with nwa (black) people in the countryside are deemed inferior and are swapped for imported foods often associated with renown and wealth. For instance, most peasant class eat pitimi(sorghum or millet), boiled yam, boiled cassava, smoked herring, and cornmeal, and these meals are deemed inferior to foods such as imported spaghetti and imported rice. Steckley further notes that Haitian people began to use "Maggie...(MSG) laden-bouillion cube

[which] began to displace traditional herbs...imported citrus powder and imported vinegar" (556) instead of limes grown in the country.

Another example of an internal hierarchy is in the works of anthropologist Richard Wilk; he narrates a situation in Belize wherein he visited a Belizean couple that promised to make him an authentic Belizean meal that grew in the country. The dinner consisted of imported food, such as tortillas from Guatemala and stewed beans imported from the United States of America. The global impact on Belize engulfs the authentic identity of the country, and the country's cooking "has emerged through an explicit contrast with an externalized "other" (Wilk 246). The Caribbean Island's local and internal relations are conflicted by global influence.

George Price, a leader of the Peoples United Party, advocated against British rule. Belize was granted limited governmental authority in 1963, and Price used this advantage to decolonize the people's minds through cuisine. Price proposed that the people of Belize should "eat less imported wheat bread and more of their products, drinking fever-grass tea and sweet potato wine, and eating pupsi and crana(abundant local river fish) instead of imported sardines" (Wilk 250). Price's speech received considerable opposition because the politician spoke of a personal topic. Food is the marker of identity and is fundamental to human survival. The suggestion to change the country's food is an intimate request. The opposition argued that PUP, the pro-British party, would not provide its citizens with the best resources if Belize became independent because of Price's food suggestion. The opposition emphasizes the idea of food as the fuel for the human body and how imported foods such as grains and imported fish were better suited for the people's diet than river fish or fever grass. The preference of the opposition is stemmed from a usurped

palate wherein the food hierarchy in Belize is not imposed but consented. This leads to a need for more awareness of external influence on people's tastes.

The external hierarchies, extensively discussed in Chapter 2, are usually invisible, repetitive, and non-transparent because their origins date back to the colonial period. Their strongholds persist in contemporary times through import dependency, which sometimes fosters the ideas of inferior foods. A Barbadian author, George Lamming, expresses concern about food culture by stating, "how do you decolonize the eating habits of a people who have surrendered their very palates to foreign control" (Campbell 14)? This comment is in response to the Ministry of Agriculture in Jamaica switching the country's diet to foods from first-world countries. This leads to a dominant colonial palate in these countries, and the people that farm the land are deemed inferior. In Evan Jones's "The Song of the Banana Man," the farmer wakes up every morning to plow in the fields and plant, yet he is underappreciated as a tourist white man:

Says, 'You're a beggar man, I suppose?'

He says, 'Boy, get some occupation,

Be of some value to your nation.'

I said, 'By God and dis big right han

You mus recognize a banana man" (lines 6-10).

The lack of government subsidies, equipment, resources, and economic incentives reduces the farmer socially. The poem is ironic in asking the farmer to bring value to the nation because farmer support is a strong backbone for the nation. The ideals of the tourist man, a foreigner, are mirrored in the West Indies society where farming is pitiable and subservient. Evan Jones highlights the importance of the farmer's job, which aligns with this thesis that sets to

embrace "otherness" or, as Alpana Sharma notes, "the articulation of difference-racial, ethnic, cultural, historical [and] gendered" (18). The idea of elsewhere is the product of a hierarchical system, and this paper undermines the concept of "elsewhere" by embracing "otherness." This means embracing Caribbean society's undermined, obscured, and excluded parts, such as the local cuisine, domestic farmers, peasants, and vendor women. The obscured act as resisters to hierarchy, and resistance transforms and preserves Caribbean identity. This paper explores Glissant's idea of renewing the vision of relations with the earth, and this relationship points to hierarchy and opacity. Opacity is done by breaking hierarchies in internal and external systems of the Caribbean and embracing diversity. Embodying "otherness" helps to see the income gaps in the West Indies and food dependency. It notifies the multi-spatial Caribbean identity in which this third space outside the islands fortifies the distinct Caribbean identity and resists its oppressive social boundaries. Also, it notes the contribution of women as a bridge or connection to "otherness" because of their potential to foster food security.

#### Dichotomies that Point to the Obscured

This section explores the fusion of dichotomies such as oral/written and Caribbean/European. To elaborate, Alessandro Portelli notes that "oral historical narratives are narrative sources," when oral narrative and written narrative are combined, it allows for a broadened view of Caribbean literature. Folk tales or oral tales are used as a marker of authenticity in Caribbean history because it links "to African cultural roots, which were predominantly oral rather scribal" (Frydman 1962). Anansi tales are a type of oral narrative in

the Caribbean along with food transmission. Food knowledge and recipes pass down generations orally, and this transmission of knowledge resists assimilation.

Derek Walcott, a St. Lucian writer, uses several dichotomies in his poetry. A poem such as *Omeros* fuses the Caribbean with Homer's *Iliad* to emphasize the atrocities and impacts of slavery on the region. In the poem "The Star-Apple Kingdom," duality is apparent as Walcott transforms the Caribbean into a dual landscape of Caribbean/European as the speaker states:

There were still shards of an ancient pastoral  
in those shires of the island where the cattle drank  
their pools of shadow from an older sky,  
surviving from when the landscape copied such subjects as  
Herefords at Sunset in the Valley of the Wye.  
The mountain water that fell white from the mill wheel  
sprinkling like petals from the star-apple trees,  
and all of the windmills and sugar mills moved by mules  
on the treadmill of Monday to Monday, would repeat  
in tongues of water and wind and fire, in tongues  
of Mission School pickaninnies, like rivers remembering  
their source, Parish Trelawny, Parish St. David, Parish  
St. Andrew, the names afflicting the pastures,  
the lime groves and fences of marl stone and the cattle (Walcott lines 1-14).

The earth and the resources of the Caribbean Island are transformed into spaces that detail the continual oppression of the Caribbean people. There is duality in the land as the

speaker notes that the cattle drank from shires, and that is representative of colonial presence in the Indies as the speaker notes "Herefords at Sunset in the Valley of Wye" (line 5), which points to the cattle that graze the lands of England and the Wye Valley in England. Later in the poem, the speaker creates an imagery of the cattle grazing land on the islands and portrays sunsets as changing the "drinking Herefords to brown porcelain cows on a mantelpiece." Sunsets in this poem signify the passing of time, and the live cattle or the presence of colonial influence is now transformed into an emblem or statue that presides on a mantelpiece, denoting that colonial influence resides over the West Indies. The older sky in line 3 also represents a time past, but the names given to the Jamaican island, such as Parish Trewlany, denote the imperial's continual presence. The sugar mills moved by mules refer to the former colonial sugar industry that is etched in the island's memory, and the island is reminded of it as black kids recite names like Parish Trelawny, notorious for sugar estates and sugar mills. Jason Frydman states, "Walcott demonstrates that often the folk is classical, the local is cosmopolitan, and the oral is irretrievably intermeshed with the written. Walcott's intertextual practice suspends the dialectical contest between such categories, conjuring world literature made from the relays between them" (2041). The intermeshing of folk with the classical and the written with the oral leads to multicentric modernity. Walcott's intertextuality represents the hybridity of the Caribbean, and his poetry expands into world literature that displays hierarchies and resists commodified consumption. The poet represents the locals by transforming the poem into a cosmopolitan and transnational piece that gives voice to what Frydman calls the "disappearing life" of the locals. Walcott embraces "otherness" while using "literary representations to preserve a resistant local 'incommensurability'" (Frydman 1826).



In "The Star-Apple Kingdom," Walcott embodies the articulation of difference in the figure of resistance, which is:

one of a flowing black river of women  
who bore elliptical basins to the feet of pauper  
on the Day of Thorns, who bore milk pails to cows  
in a pastoral sunrise, who bore baskets on their heads  
down the haemophilic red hills of Haiti,  
now with the squeezed rag dripping from her hard hands  
the way that vinegar once dropped from a sponge,  
but she heard as a dog hears, as all the underdogs  
of the world hear, the pitched shriek of silence.

Vendor women or saleswomen are in the lower rank of the social class that carries baskets of merchandise on their heads. In Haiti, these "machan" or saleswomen carry baskets on their heads, walking for hours chanting in a song to advertise their products like chestnuts, Haitian patties, oranges, herbal drinks, roasted peanuts, mangos, and Haitian Kenep (Spanish lime). These hustlers are undermined in Caribbean society due to their distinction as part of the lower class, but the higgler women or vendors are gatekeepers of Caribbean identity. The vinegar that once dropped from the sponge suggests the holy sponge dipped in vinegar and given to Christ. The sponge is compared to the rag in the woman's hard hand as it symbolizes sacrifice and pain, similar to the pain Christ endured. I interpret that the vendor women are synonymous with a savior that is silenced. As the embodiment of that silence, these women are the in-between space or the interspace where Caribbean identity is preserved.

In *Breathe, Eyes, Memory* by Edwidge Danticat, daffodils that came from France are transformed in Haiti as they became "the color of pumpkins and golden summer squash, as though they had acquired a bronze tinge from the skin of the natives who had adopted them" (20). This is an example of a blended identity that cannot escape the pains of colonialism, and the flowers are transformed by mother nature in the same way women transform natural ingredients into distinct Caribbean cuisine. A global outlook of a diverse landscape broadens the scope of history from a linear perspective and allows for the forgotten subjects of Caribbean history to resurface. The forgotten subjects are women in slavery and their contributions to resistance and cultural distinction.

Chris Campbell writes about the relationship between food and women. Women play a fundamental role in resistance in the colonial Caribbean. Black women's contribution to the plantation economy is forgotten. However, they contributed to anti-hegemonic and anti-imperial society wherein women took the position of "informal labour of Afro-Caribbean "higgler" women, who, from as early as 1672, have been documented as buying and selling edible staples from their provision grounds on Sunday markets in public spaces" (Campbell 69). These women break the mold of a viewpoint of a restrained Caribbean that has been only subjugated by hegemonic control. As Chris Campbell mentions, a "counter-hegemonic" experience commences as black women make their own income to allow for economic freedom and take control of their society.

In "Congotay! Congotay! Global History of Caribbean Food" Candice Goucher details women's vital role in creating the "first global food culture" (163). Women have commanded the kitchen space since the plantation period, and in post-colonial times women helped preserve

identity. In colonial times, the enslaved women or cook kept the African heritage alive in their control of the communal area, and "the African cook was empowered to select menus, procure food, and decide the style of food preparation" (Goucher 161). The cook was responsible for food distribution, and the food in contemporary periods comes from experimentation and adaptation inherited through the cook.

Women can play an important role in developing food security in the Caribbean. Beckford writes that woman "play important roles in all farm-related activities from land preparation to marketing, and their activities often add value to farming. They contribute a higher proportion of labor in agricultural sector than men but their participation in decision-making is limited" (81). Although limited in research, the role that women play in farming and agriculture adds value to the Caribbean lands. Their contributions can help close the income dependency gap in the islands by providing structure to domestic production. Women add value because they grow food at home and sell it to their localities. Expanding this business to different localities would strengthen the food sector and shift the perception of domestic production. They can break the molds of hierarchy by refusing standardization.

#### Transnational Identity as Boundary Breaker

Caribbean identity is multi-spatial, encompassing North and South America and across the Atlantic Ocean. Immigrants can reshape the constraints and boundaries of a faraway land. For instance, Richard Wilk writes that genuine Belizean cuisine is a concept that began abroad in the United States and slowly influenced Belize. Food's connection goes beyond space and allows an appreciation of society's "other" and obscured aspects. Migrants look to food, similar to how

"the initial break from the mother compels the infant to repeatedly attempt to fill the gap" (Plaza 467). Migrant Trinidadians fill the void of the mother by conjuring a space that reminds them of home. Roti shops in North America and Europe serve popular Trinidad Street foods such as roti and doubles. The doubles, a combination of two flatbreads served with curried chickpeas, spicy pepper sauce, cucumber, and chutneys, is emblematic of home and connects the Caribbean to outside spaces.

A negative relationship with the mother shows how food is synonymous with pain and hardships left behind in the West Indies. Sophie in *Breath, Eyes, Memory* returns to Haiti and prepares a meal of rice, black beans, and herring sauce, which she compares to her meals in the U.S, where she ate "frozen dinners, samples from global cookbooks, food that was easy to put together and brought me no pain" (Danticat 150). Sophie avoided the reminder of her past by breaking her relationship with food and avoiding the pains associated with her mother. Food that connects culture and intensifies cultural identity is also a reminder of the societal oppression which had pushed the migrant away in the first place.

This aspect of transnational identity that resists the Caribbean is present in Jamaica Kincaid's short novel *Lucy*. Lucy leaves Antigua for the U.S. as an au pair for Mariah's children. Lucy is the boundary breaker because she observes the differences in her society; this makes her seem aloof and weird. For instance, Lucy's mother tells her the story of Jesus Christ multiplying fish and bread. Lucy inquires, "how did Jesus serve the fish? boiled or fried?" (Kincaid 26). Lucy is different because she always observes the small details and questions the social constraints of her society while refusing to abide by the hierarchal domains of society. The U.S. and Antigua are symbolic mothers. The protagonist views Mariah as her extended mother and sees

representations of her Antiguan mother in Mariah. Lucy escapes Antigua to leave behind an imperious mother, but as Jennifer Nichols notes, "some of the structures from which she seeks asylum have no national borders" (191). The hierarchal structures of patriarchy, racism, and income inequality are present in Lucy's trip to the U.S., similar to the one in Antigua. Lucy, who resists her domineering mother in Antigua, also resists Mariah's attempt to assimilate her into the United States.

Resistance to assimilation is also apparent in Marlene Phillip's *A Genealogy of Resistance*, where Ti Miss Maam harvests cocoa to provide for her family. This is a reverse relationship because "the Caribbean works to feed the mother country when normally the mother takes care of and nourishes the child" (Houston 107). Ti Miss Maam provides cocoa to the British and is disregarded as a critical contribution to global food production. The mother is important in looking at the Caribbean in expanded modernity because the mother reveals the distorted relationship between hegemony and colonized countries.

This is evident in Edwidge Danticat's *Breathe, Eyes, Memory*, which shows women/mothers' effect on assimilation. Sophie moves to the United States, and she cooks "rice, beans, and herring sauce...I even used the mortar and pestle to crush onions and spices to add those special flavors she liked" (Danticat 76). The mother should be the one cooking and helping Sophie feel connected to her cultural heritage in Haiti; however, the daughter takes on the role of the mother.

Mortar and pestle are specific tools in the Caribbean country of Haiti which uses the tool to cook foods such as "epise," which crushes vegetables and spices for meat marinades. It crushes beans, millet, onions, garlic, and other varieties like spices. Sophie uses the pestle to

break her flesh, and this violent act is to resist the tests that her mother performs on her to make sure that Sophie is a virgin. The pestle preserves culture in a new country by cooking in the same style as the home country and is also used to break violent patriarchal patterns of culture. This symbolizes the relationship between women and hegemony because women have long used food to resist the oppressive strongholds of patriarchy and economic exploitation.

### **Chapter Three: Food Fosters Dependency and Cultural Revolution in the Caribbean**

Plantationocene is the observance of the plantation by realizing the interplay of capitalism with imperialism and colonialism. It establishes that capitalism is rooted in racialism that began in the 15th century. As capitalism evolved, the racial boundaries remained, keeping the Caribbean in a dependency loop. This concept is established in *Refiguring the Plantationocene* by Michael Warren Murphy, and this chapter sets to analyze Murphy's suggestion on plantation research. Michael Warren Murphy suggests that "scholars should certainly attend to the various modes of resistance to plantation power, in both the past and the present... finally, we want to suggest a sixth area of research is needed, one that would speculate about the future of the plantation as the tropics expand along with global climate change" (410). There are several resistances to plantation power in the Caribbean, such as the resistance of Haiti to large plantation farms after their historical revolution and Grenada's resistance to the cycle of import dependency through a cultural revolution. The plantation system impact will remain the same in the Caribbean if the islands continue to rely on other countries for imports and underestimate the importance of domestic food production in economic independence. Agriculture used to be a major contribution to GDP in the islands, but tourism has taken over the contribution to GDP. Tourism has the same detrimental effects in the Caribbean because it continues to foster import dependency. The future of the tropics can be changed to an autonomous agricultural sector through self-sufficient farming.

### Resistance to the Plantation

*Masters of the Dew*, a novel by Jacques Roumain about peasants dealing with a drought, can be viewed locally and globally. Manuel, the novel's main character, proclaims, "fifteen years I spent in Cuba, fifteen years, every day cutting sugar cane, oui, every day from sunrise to dusk-dark" (Roumain 22). A local view of the novel does not question why Manuel seeks work in Cuba instead of staying in Haiti. The novel, set at the beginning of the century, has a history that goes back to the Haitian revolution in the 19th century. Haiti was once the leading sugar producer globally during colonial times. According to Craig Palsson, "after the slaves gained their freedom from the brutal regime and the country declared independence in 1804, sugar disappeared from the economy" (513). The shift in sugar production came from the former slave nation's resistance to the colonial regime that promoted a brutal plantation system to enrich the economy and sugar production worldwide. The data shows that from "1900 to 1960 sugar accounted for 76 percent of Cuba's export value, 51 percent of the Dominican Republic's... sugar contributed to only 5 percent of Haiti's exports" (Palsson 515). The drastic shift in production can be attributed to several factors, such as cultural values and policies. Sugar cane production became efficient with a new mill system that needed large plantations to maximize profits and time when harvesting and processing sugar. Other Caribbean lands, such as Cuba and Puerto Rico, successfully incorporated the new mills' method in their sugar industry; however, Haiti had laws that made it impossible for large plantations to cultivate sugar. Haiti created a new structure by redistributing the land into small farms; for example, the average plantation has "250 acres, after the redistribution, the few estates that cultivated sugar were on fields smaller than 40 acres" (Palsson 523). The laws made it difficult for foreigners or purchasers to aggregate the land into a



plantation. Along with increasing transaction costs to accumulating small farms, laws required a foreigner married to a Haitian wife to give property rights to the wife, and later, laws revoked the citizenship of women married to foreigners. Palsson notes that "successfully breaking away from that [slave] economy was a source of national pride... the cultural resistance made Haitians more comfortable working on sugar plantations abroad rather than at home" (517). This mentality to resist the plantation passes down to generations, and it explains Manuel's venture to Cuba, which is based on the cultural pride of not succumbing to the same slave economy before the revolution. The Guyanan poet John Agard writes of the agitation of rebellion in his poem "Pan Recipe," where he states:

cut bamboo and cure

whip well like hell

stir sound from dustbin

pound handful biscuit tin cover

cover down in shanty town

and leave mixture alone

when ready will explode. (Agard lines 13-19)

The narrator begins the poem with the lines "First rape a people/simmer for centuries" and then progresses with violent cooking methods such as whipping and aggressive handling.

Tension builds as the steps of the recipe continue, and the pains of the oppressed people are

tossed aside and covered in a big pot. Covered down in a shanty town denotes that the people have been mistreated and stripped of their natural resources as they are pushed off to slums. This "pinch of pain" (line 5) and the fact that they have been simmering for centuries have warranted the pot to explode. This can be translated into the persistent culture of resistance in Haiti because the aggravation and pain for centuries have pushed the island to defend itself. A symbol of this resistance is soup joumou which is served on Haiti's Independence Day. Eaten on January 1st, the soup defies the old plantation rules wherein the enslaved people could not eat squash.

There remains a continuous cycle of oppression despite these attempts to escape the plantation. Julia Gaffield's work "The Racialization of International Law after the Haitian Revolution" writes of Haiti's struggle to gain international recognition as a politically independent state. The new nation attempted to build its relations with other powers to establish a formal acknowledgment. However, the international community answered unfairly as they evolved their requirements to join the "family of nations." International powers loosely defined the requirements for a nation to be civilized or uncivilized. Haiti attempted to establish relations with the catholic church for equality in international law, and when the country was recognized by France in 1825, there were conditions. The nation was required to pay France with the consequences of reinvasion if there was no payment. In these instances, Gaffield observes that "non-European or non-Euro-American countries were not in the family, but they were forced to abide by the rules under the watchful eye of the existing member states, which declared themselves the arbiters of international law to which everyone was accountable whether they received benefits or not" (Gaffield 867). These principles or rules to be in the "family of nations"

persists into the 20th and 21st century and the Caribbean is under the watchful eye of other nations which contributes to continuous modernity wherein Anglo-European nations and the Caribbean are in constant relations with each other.

### Import Dependency in the Caribbean

*Masters of the Dew* details the mass migration of youth to other countries like Cuba, which promise more income in their fruitful sugar cane plantations. This feeds workers into the global economic system and deprives Haiti of hard-working men. Manuel claims that "we betray the soil and receive his punishment: drought, poverty, and desolation" (Roumain 30). The soil punishes the people of the country for leaving the land. The novel has an underlying theme: Manuel symbolizes a savior who returns to the country to deliver the people from barrenness and drought. Manuel proclaims that he wants all peasants and "all the negroes of plain and hill, all united...a great big coumbite of farmers, and we'll clear out poverty and plant a new life" (Roumain 64). Manuel finds water and brings life to the region, which signifies that the return of farmers will increase food security and help to eliminate poverty. The problem with food security persists today as domestic production declines due to migration and competition from imports.

According to Beckford and Campbell, food insecurity is characterized by a loss of "productivity in land, labor, and management in the agricultural sector resulting in a capacity to supply food competitively...the very high dependence on imported food and the uncertainty of food arrival associated with external shocks" (29). The loss of labor is detrimental to the rural areas of a country, and farmers are forced to leave due to the competition with imports. The

country's agricultural infrastructure is weakened and this leaves the West Indies in a hierarchical dependence.

Haiti was proficient in producing rice and getting most of its supply from the Artibonite region of the country. According to M.J. Cohen, rice was eaten regularly in the 1970s and 1980s. However, the country faced "pressure from the international financial institutions... to reform its economy keeping with the prevailing "Washington Consensus"- a package of policies include trade liberalizations, privatization of public enterprises, and balanced budget" (Cohen 601). This ties in with the previous mention of non-European countries having to abide by international rules and criteria wherein internal economic affairs are affected by foreign influence. In the 1990s, while Haiti was in turmoil, the country's new government under President Aristide was pressured into economic reform by cutting the "tariff on imported rice which dropped from 50% to 3%" (Cohen 601). The cutting of tariffs has detrimental impacts on Haiti's domestic production because the cheap rice outcompeted the rice from the countryside. This pushed some farmers out of the market, and some moved abroad, which weakened domestic production. Also, U.S. rice imports competed unfairly with the farmer's produce in Haiti, destroying the local farmer's livelihood.

In Kamau Brathwaite's poem "Bread" the poem focuses on the poverty of the Caribbean people as they chase a dream that leads to disappointment. The poem begins with bread and dream being personified and coming to life as "slowly the white dream wrestle(s) to life/hands shaping the salt and the foreign cornfields" (lines 1-2). However, the dream fails as the people "howl all day for its savior who needs its crumbs as fish" (lines 17-18). This poem can be applied to the local food harvest in rural areas. Bread signifies chasing a foreign dream that does not fit

the rural mindset and does not help satisfy the people's hunger. M.J. Cohen notes that U.S. assistance or aid aims "to change the rural Haitian mindset 'to make agriculture a business rather than a social activity" (603). According to Cohen, rural social activity is important because of the lack of technology to harvest. The social activity allows for help in harvesting like a "coumbite" system that promotes collaborative labor. The aim of turning agriculture into a business is the same "white dream" that the people chase in Brathwaite's poem, but the result is disappointing. The rice farmers in Haiti cannot effectively compete with the global food powers as "the dream [is] less clear/the soil more distant... more hard to reach w/ penn-/ies" (Brathwaite lines 23-24). The U.S. food assistance helps temporarily by feeding people experiencing poverty, but it competes with the country's rice farmers, leaving them unable to provide for their own.

Lynn Marie Houston mentions the struggle to "make do" in Caribbean societies. A reliance on imports leads to constant struggles in rural communities. A 2021 USDA report on Agricultural trade in the Caribbean shows that the total imports of consumer-oriented products were \$2.5 Billion, and the U.S. contributes to 48% of the imports to the islands. The report details that most, if not all the, "food must be imported, as domestic production is limited" (USDA). Agricultural trade in the Caribbean is similar in the past and the present. International trade in the colonial period exported primary crops "such as sugarcane...nutmeg, arrowroot and pimento in respectively, Grenada, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, and Jamaica" (Beckford and Campbell 5). Meanwhile, food was imported for the plantation, and certain foods were "eaten by the masses such as flour and salted fish, and consumer goods" (Beckford and Campbell 6). A prioritization of the extensive plantation system over the small farm system is apparent during colonial rule, and this model fosters food import dependency in the contemporary, which has

harmful effects on food security. The colonial period used arable lands for primary crops; the other crops not prominent for exports were produced in the hillsides. This structure is persistent in the contemporary as small-scale farmers need access to the best lands, which does not incentivize farmers to develop mass production that would provide sustainability to the country.

Adam Fajardo analyzes Claude Mckay's novel *Banana Bottom* gives an inside/local meaning to the global food system. The novel is about Bitia Plant, a young woman who returns to Jamaica from abroad and shows that the global food system's effects on small farmers fluctuate. In the novel "Banana Bottom, farmers are in fact practicing sound Western capitalism: replacing sustenance polyculture fields with export monoculture fields is the theory of trade known as 'competitive advantage' that can be traced back to both Adam Smith and David Ricardo. In a post-colonial situation, however, the cards are stacked against the small producers, who despite their economically rational actions end up subject to the whims of the global market and the weather" (Fajardo). The farmers are practicing plantation system techniques by prioritizing export crops. However, the crops are the planter's primary source of income, and any adverse global crisis or local weather will ruin their livelihoods. The Plant family in *Banana Bottom* lacks a diversification of crops because they are bound to the global model of food production. This constant dependency can be met with resistance and revolution.

#### Cultural Revolution to Fight Dependency

Grenada's revolutionary party established in 1979 with Maurice Bishop as Prime Minister main goals was to reform their country's internal structure. According to John S. Brierley, the People's Revolutionary Government (PRG) "was based on socialist principles and

aimed to establish a new economic and political order for Grenada, one that was no longer solely dependent on the west in these matters” (40). Grenada aimed to be independent through agricultural reformation and accommodate their tourist sector with the locals. The PRG planned to diversify their crops with non-traditional export crops “such as mangoes and eggplant... to ensure an intra-island supply of locally produced crops; and to supply fertilizer to farmers at reasonable prices and ensure its distribution island wide” (Brierley 47). This would make the island sustainable as it would be able to feed its own people and the reforms would incentivize farmers with the proper equipment or resources for food production. The short-lived government, which ended with the U.S. invasion, effectively increased the food supply in the country, and the price of local foods decreased. There was also an increase in “exports of fruits and vegetables, mainly to Trinidad” (Brierley 51). The island’s independence is characterized in Merle Collin’s poem “Callaloo” as the speaker states:

All o' we  
in all o' dis worl'  
so mix up  
like callaloo  
an' yet  
so not like callaloo  
an' dat is why  
de change  
an' de promise  
of de change

is sweet an' strong(Collins 106-116).

Callaloo is mixed up with different ingredients such as peppers, garlic, onions, and other different spices, much like the Caribbean with its diverse influences. Grenada is mixed in the same way that Callaloo is, but the revolution that fosters changes allows Grenada to have its autonomy and distinguished identity. The poem written in creole has the same diverse characteristics of callaloo as it embodies the oral and literary forms. Furthermore, the promise of change and the PRG's reform is a source of pride for the speaker whose head is held high in the air:

becus de world is yours

an' you know is yours

an' you not goin' be

meek

meek

meek

an' wait to see

if

somebody

goin' let you

inherit the earth

becus you know arready

is yours (Collins lines 46-59).



Grenada's initiative to increase its local production is a way for the country to take control of its land and trade. The speaker symbolizes that the meek do not have to wait for permission to inherit the land is synonymous with the PRG's determination to break from import dependence and provide for themselves using local produce. Prime Minister Maurice Bishop highlights this as he aimed for tourism to "mean a greater saving on foreign exchange, more jobs... better prices and guaranteed market for our farmers and fishermen" (Brierley 49). The tourist sector can be reliant on imports for food services in hotels and restaurants; however, securing local produce in the country allows for food security and income independence for farmers. The revolution also emphasized support for Grenadian food instead of imports. The United States had several reasons to invade the country, one being that aimed to save U.S. citizens on the island after the execution of Maurice Bishop, and the reality was to stop the communist principles from spreading in the Western hemisphere. Non-European countries like Grenada are expected to abide to international law imposed on them, which often leaves their borders susceptible to invasion by global powers. The U.S. invasion and involvement returned Grenada into a cycle of dependency. According to USDA, Grenada continues to rely on imports as the United States' top 3 exports in 2022 to Grenada include wheat, corn, and soybeans.

### Continuous Modernity

Continuous modernity refers to the progression of time from capitalism, colonization, industrialization, and post-independence where the Caribbean is in a recurring relation with the West. The West Indies is in a cycle of dependency of imports since the colonial period.

This relation is an “open totality” where the Caribbean and the West are not in a mutual relation and the relation is hierarchal.

In *A Small Place*, Jamaica Kincaid comments on tourism and the trade cycle. The novel emphasizes the cluelessness of the tourist as they sit down for dinner, and the narrator states, "It's better that you don't know that most what you are eating came off the plane from Miami. And before it got on a plane in Miami, who knows where it came from? A good guess is that it came from a place like Antigua first, where it was grown dirt-cheap, went to Miami, and came back" (Kincaid 14). Small Caribbean farmers impact the food on foreign tables, and the global food system returns the food for sale in tropical regions. Each region influences the other, but economic exploitation undermines the impact of the Caribbean on the global system.

In the USDA food report, tourism is one of the main sources for food imports demand in the Caribbean and “U.S. tourists account for roughly 50 percent of all tourists visiting the region, bolstering demand for U.S. foods” (USDA). This implies that the region accommodates their import to suit American taste which shows that the West Indies is in a continuous pattern of feeding to the desires of the West even in their homeland. Food independence can break this boundary, and this can be done by transforming the Caribbean’s economy and tourist sector. For instance, techniques to reshape agriculture include “regenerative low-till and no-till conservation agriculture, multistrata agroforestry, silvopasture, tree intercropping, use of tropical staple trees, and multi-crop gardening systems known as conuco, an Arawak term” (Sheller 1446). Techniques such as conuco protects the land from soil erosion which allows crops to grow effectively and cushion the impacts of climate change. Much like Grenada’s revolutionary reform, the Caribbean can break the recurrent bounds of hierarchy by embracing the

distinguished local crop production in the region. Emphasizing climate efficient farming methods and planting diverse crops can sustain the locals in the region and this method will contribute to food security as well as separation from a hierarchal trade system.

## Conclusion

Caribbean culture is a mosaic; its cuisine indicates the region's ambiguity. Gastronomic studies reveal the hidden and unstated aspects of Caribbean culture. In the Caribbean, food unveils a struggle to create a distinct cultural identity and is a way to resist assimilation by colonial powers. The struggle with a distinct cultural identity stem from a dominant colonial palate wherein Caribbean palates are deemed inferior. The paper takes on the idea of opacity, wherein the Caribbean and global powers are in an imbalanced relationship with each other. Opacity looks to promote diversification, complexity, and "otherness." Food research applied to opacity pushes a resource for breaking hierarchy strongholds. Derek Walcott represents the duality of the Caribbean well in his poems, as African and European characteristics are comingled on the same island. Duality allows for an inward reach into the forgotten aspects of Caribbean cultures, such as female influence. This paper finds that women are important in breaking these strongholds of hierarchy because they are the antidote or opposite of dominance. Their contributions and potential are ignored as higgler, and vendor women are seen as inferior. However, women in the Caribbean contribute to domestic food production and often are undermined in this sector. Incentives from the government and from the country would expand local female sellers' businesses, which would indirectly fight food dependency—reading the Caribbean with a feminine gaze point to the representative mother. The representative mother is a symbol of the Caribbean as a motherland with global powers as a helicopter mom that dictates the boundaries of the Indies. Immigrants resist food assimilation in the foreign country and sometimes resist or call out the oppressive strongholds in the former country.

Economic exploits in the Caribbean expose a cycle of dependency that breaks apart communities. The analysis of economic exploitation in the global food system shows the circular impact that the Caribbean and hegemony have on each other. The import dependency is recurrent and forces cultural revolution and resistance. Thus, gastronomic studies display the unknown and help establish the concept of continuous modernity and an embracement of "otherness." The perspective is that the Caribbean is not "elsewhere" but everywhere, constituting "all" parts of modernity. This continual presence in modernity concurs with subservient relations with global powers, and embracing otherness will change a recurring history of codependence in the region.

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