

Spice, Culinary Tourism, and Expressions of Whiteness in London, England and Nashville,
Tennessee

By

Sarah T. Shultz

A dissertation submitted

to the School of Graduate Studies in partial fulfillment of the

requirements of the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy in Folklore

Memorial University of Newfoundland

May 2023

© Sarah T. Shultz 2023

Abstract

Using curry in East London in the United Kingdom and hot chicken in Nashville, Tennessee as case studies, this dissertation explores how ideas of spice and heat in “ethnic” foodways become linked to conceptions of authenticity and exoticness within the context of culinary tourism. Drawing on scholarship of folk narrative, culinary tourism, critical whiteness studies, and vernacular rhetoric, among others, I investigate the ways in which the concept of spice is used rhetorically in ongoing conversations about links between “ethnic” foods and cultural appropriation, identity invention, and representation from both local and touristic perspectives. I have concentrated mainly on how specifically white racial identities are expressed through the consumption of spicy food within the context of culinary tourism, in which “ethnic” foods are a primary attraction and are often understood to be non-white. This investigation includes historical context on both curry in east London and hot chicken in Nashville, interviews with locals, culinary tourists, and tourism professionals, participant observation on culinary tours in east London, and analyses of online restaurant reviews in each location. An analysis of these collected materials reveals that consumers in both locations share a frontier orientation towards the act of consuming spicy foods that utilizes aspects of the white racial frame (Feagin 2013), and consumers use the concept of spice to signify that they have had an experience that is sufficiently or insufficiently exotic. In both locations, the concept of spice also opens up opportunities for individuals (both locals and tourists) to push back against master narratives created by tourism agencies and local governments that oversimplify their lived experiences and understandings of history.

Acknowledgements

I could not have completed this project without the guidance and support of many people. First, I would like to thank my thesis advisor, Dr. Diane Tye, for her keen insights, warm encouragement, and willingness to meet with me once a week for the past three years. I would also like to thank the members of my committee, Dr. Holly Everett, Dr. Mariya Lesiv, and Dr. Kelley Totten. Their input was invaluable to me throughout this process, and I am very grateful to them for their support, suggestions, and patience. My examiners, Dr. Jillian Gould, Dr. Joy Fraser, and Dr. Lucy Long all provided me with thoughtful feedback which has made this work much stronger, and I would also like to thank them for their suggestions. I have been so lucky to be a part of the Memorial University Folklore Department, where I have also benefited from the guidance of Dr. Sarah Gordon, Dr. Daniel Peretti, and Dr. Cory Thorne, and have been inspired and supported by my fellow graduate students.

To all of the tourists, guides, restaurant owners and employees, locals, visitors, and fans of curry and hot chicken: thank you for generously sharing your thoughts with me both in-person and online, and for taking the time to be a part of this project, even during a global pandemic.

I received financial support for this project via a MUN Scotiabank Bursary Award for International Study, Bowring/Harlow Scholarship, and a Very Reverend Edward and Marjorie Rusted Harlow Travel Award, all of which made it possible for me to conduct fieldwork in east London, and via a Scholarship in the Arts Doctoral Completion Award from the MUN Faculty of Social Sciences, which supported me through the writing and revising process.

Finally, I would like to thank my family: Christine Tiberio, Terry Shultz, and Ellen Tiberio Shultz, as well as my partner, Colin Sharpe, who have been with me every step of the way.

Table of Contents:

Abstract	Pg. ii
Acknowledgements	Pg. iii
Table of Contents	Pg. iv
Chapter One: Introduction	
1.1 Introduction to Study	Pg. 1
1.2 Beginnings	Pg. 2
1.3 Research Questions	Pg. 4
1.4 Literature Review	Pg. 7
1.4.1 Foodways Studies, Culinary Tourism, and “Ethnic” Food: Difference and Distinction	Pg. 7
1.4.2 Whiteness	Pg. 21
1.4.3 Vernacular Personal Narratives and their Rhetorical Uses	Pg. 27
1.4.4 Spicy	Pg. 39
1.4.5 Folkloristic Contributions	Pg. 52
1.5 Methodology	Pg. 54
1.6 Chapter Outline	Pg. 58
Chapter Two: Eat Like a True Londoner: Approaches to Selling Diversity on Brick Lane	
2.1 Chapter Introduction	Pg. 60
2.2 Why Indian Restaurants on Brick Lane?	Pg. 62
2.3 In Promotional Literature and Local Media	Pg. 78
2.4 Culinary Tours on Brick Lane	Pg. 84
2.5 Locals and Tourism Professionals	Pg. 97
2.6 Conclusions	Pg.117
Chapter Three: Adventurous Play and Negotiations of Spice in Culinary Tourist Reviews of Indian Restaurants on Brick Lane	
3.1 Chapter Introduction	Pg. 119
3.2 Two Categories of Indian Restaurants in the United Kingdom	Pg. 120
3.3 Dishoom Shoreditch and Aladin Indian Restaurant	Pg. 123
3.4 Online Reviewers as Culinary Tourists	Pg. 128
3.5 Common Themes: Determining Value	Pg. 132
3.6 Common Themes: An Exotic Experience	Pg. 135

3.7	Common Themes: Waitstaff as Helpful Guides	Pg. 138
3.8	Common Themes: Conclusions	Pg. 142
3.9	Rhetorics of Spice	Pg. 144
3.10	Discussion: Culinary Tourism in Online Spaces and Structural Inequality	Pg. 151
3.11	Conclusions	Pg. 163

Chapter Four: Mapping Space and Playing with Stigma: Local Rhetorical Uses for Hot Chicken

4.1	Chapter Introduction	Pg. 168
4.2	History of Hot Chicken as a Dish and Tourist Attraction	Pg. 169
4.3	A Changing City and a Blossoming Destination for Culinary Tourism	Pg. 173
4.4	A Changing Landscape	Pg. 179
4.5	Feeling/Culture of the City	Pg. 181
4.6	A Changing Food Scene	Pg. 183
4.7	Hot Chicken	Pg. 187
4.8	Playing with Stigma	Pg. 196
4.9	Conclusions	Pg. 222

Chapter Five: Hot Chicken and Cultural Appropriation

5.1	Chapter Introduction	Pg. 229
5.2	Hot Chicken in the Local Media	Pg. 230
5.3	Prince's Hot Chicken Shack and Hattie B's Hot Chicken	Pg. 237
5.4	Tourist Experiences of Hot Chicken in Nashville, Tennessee	Pg. 244
5.5	Conclusions	Pg. 271

Chapter Six: Conclusions

6.1	Conclusions	Pg. 277
-----	-------------	---------

Bibliography	Pg. 289
---------------------	----------------

Chapter One:

Introduction

Introduction to the Study

This study focuses on two dishes that are important in their respective locations—curry in east London, England and hot chicken in Nashville, Tennessee—to explore how ideas of spice and heat in “ethnic” foodways become linked to conceptions of authenticity and exoticness. According to bell hooks, “The commodification of Otherness has been so successful because it is offered as a new delight, more intense, more satisfying than normal ways of doing and feeling. Within commodity culture, ethnicity becomes spice, seasoning that can liven up the dull dish that is mainstream white culture” (hooks 1992: 21). This dissertation considers this statement in two different contexts, exploring intersections of the concept of spice with issues of power, choice, and understandings of authenticity in culinary tourism in order to explore whether or not participating in culinary tourism ever provides participants with opportunities to resist structural inequality, or if culinary tourism always functions to uphold unequal power dynamics.

Using curry in east London, England and hot chicken in Nashville, Tennessee as case studies, I investigate the ways in which the concept of spice is deployed rhetorically (Burke 1935, 1945, and 1977, Abrahams 1968, Howard 2005, Gencarella 2009 and 2011) in ongoing conversations about cultural appropriation, identity invention, and representation from both local and touristic perspectives. How and why are certain foods selected over others to become representative of a place or cultural group? Who decides? How does meaningfulness (Long 2015) develop and shift over time and for different audiences? Because I am addressing these questions from a folkloristic perspective, I am most interested in how individuals—residents and

visitors—pick up the threads of these debates and use them in their own constructions of sense of place and identity. My hope is that a better understanding of how spice helps a small set of culinary entrepreneurs and tourists make sense of and order the world at a micro level will provide some insight into how culinary tourists and tourism industry professionals create, maintain, and contest the connections between specific foods, people, and places more generally.

Beginnings

The questions that underlie this dissertation began to take shape in a course on cultural tourism that I took during my time as a PhD student in the Folklore Department at Memorial. For my final research paper, I focused on hot chicken as a form of culinary tourism in Nashville, Tennessee. I had been splitting my time between St John's and Nashville, where my partner was doing a PhD in Economics at Vanderbilt University, and I enjoyed eating the extra spicy fried chicken, served on a slice of white bread with dill pickle slices on top, that is promoted as the city's signature dish. For the purposes of my paper, I was particularly interested in its origin story: that hot chicken was created by a woman as an act of revenge on her philandering spouse (I will return to this story in more detail later in this thesis). I planned to research this narrative: what meanings did it hold for locals? What about culinary tourists? Did it count as a kind of local legend? Were there theories about who the woman was? This story was attached to Prince's Hot Chicken Shack, the first restaurant to serve hot chicken in Nashville. I wondered if there might be similar stories connected to other hot chicken restaurants in the city. It was with these questions in mind, which mostly dealt with folk narrative, that I began reaching out to locals and tourists for interviews and analyzing online reviews of hot chicken restaurants.

During the research for my term paper, however, my focus quickly shifted away from this origin story to a debate that was taking place in the local media and in online hot chicken fan communities at the time about hot chicken and cultural appropriation: the dish, which was originally created and sold by Black Nashvillians, had recently become more popular as a result of new restaurants like Hattie B's and Party Fowl being opened by wealthy white locals in parts of town where tourists spent most of their time. This had increased the visibility and popularity of hot chicken, and it had become a symbol of Nashville. But some argued that the outside success of these new hot chicken sellers, and the resulting popularity of this food, amounted to cultural appropriation. Because of the large number of articles published in the local media about this at the time, most of the people I interviewed for the paper were more interested in debating whether or not hot chicken's newfound popularity amounted to cultural appropriation than in discussing its origin story, so I followed this thread in my research. I found a similar focus on race and cultural appropriation emerged in the online reviews I analyzed. Additionally, I noticed that the heat associated with hot chicken seemed to open space for discourse about perceived racial differences that might otherwise have been deemed inappropriate. This is a subject I will return to in Chapters Four and Five of this dissertation.

I was still thinking about these themes a year later when I had the opportunity to spend an extended period in London. At the time, I was looking for a topic for my dissertation and still wondering about the connections between culinary tourism and cultural appropriation; more generally, I was curious about food's relationships to structural inequality. Spicy food seemed to be a promising vehicle to explore these links, especially because there is surprisingly little published folkloristic scholarship about it. My work on hot chicken had focused mostly on the burning feeling that is derived from ingesting capsaicin, but "spicy" also has a more general

meaning of strong flavors, and the obvious connection to spices. I was intrigued by the claim made by British Foreign Secretary Robin Cook in a 2001 speech that curry was England's national dish, and in the debate this remark caused in the British media. Given that London is "a global capital and important culinary centre, which has acted as a magnet for immigration during the past 150 years" (Panayi 2008: 10), it seemed like the perfect place to explore the concept of spicy food. Because east London has long been home to overlapping waves of immigrants from various parts of the world, I decided to focus my fieldwork there. I soon narrowed my site down to Brick Lane, sometimes referred to as "Banglatown." Brick Lane is an important historical landmark as well as a popular tourist destination that is home to over 36 curry restaurants. Indian food, marketed as extremely spicy, is a major culinary attraction in east London's Brick Lane.

As a middle-class white American who has always been interested in food, particularly in trying new foods while visiting new places, I consider myself both a foodie and a culinary tourist. For these reasons, I feel uniquely situated to explore connections between exploratory eating (Long 2004) and issues of social power, as well as the relationship between the leisure activity of culinary tourism and expressions of white racial identity. Because culinary tourism is an important pastime to me, I also feel compelled to think critically about how my actions as a culinary tourist may simultaneously contribute to and resist systems of inequality.

Research Questions

In this study, I adopt a folkloristic perspective to examine how curry and hot chicken came to prominence within the tourist industries of London and Nashville, and the meanings contained in master narratives and counter narratives (Shuman 2005) that have arisen around them among tourists and locals. I approach the culinary narratives in general, and the rhetorical role of spice in particular, with the larger goal of shedding light on how touristic and local

identities are constructed through an engagement with foodways that integrates food traditions of cultural minorities, cross cultural personal experience narratives about cuisines, and the performances and processes of culinary hybridity. I ask how identities are conceptualized as normative and/or resistant to broader cultural ideas about globalization, diversity, and cosmopolitanism.

This work compares master narratives about place and culture presented to culinary tourists by the tourist industries of London and Nashville with counter narratives created by city locals and individuals who work within the service industry. I seek to uncover the rhetorical strategies of propagators of both forms of narrative, as well as to interpret the symbolic significance of curry in London and hot chicken in Nashville, respectively. Additionally, I explore the personal experience narratives of culinary tourists in both locations in order to discover how their experiences fit within the master and counter narratives of the tourist industry and locals. I draw on research gathered through participant observation conducted on food tours and at food festivals in London and Nashville; in-depth interviews recorded with representatives from their tourism industries, restaurant employees and owners, and culinary tourists; and textual analyses of online reviews of specific, representative restaurants from TripAdvisor, Yelp, and Google Reviews, to argue that culinary tourism is inextricably linked to matters of identity for representatives of all three groups in both locations.

This analysis investigates what narratives about curry in London and hot chicken in Nashville reveal about how cultural difference is perceived and marketed for consumption, and more specifically how the concept of spice features in these narratives to convey ideas of difference and race to audiences. In analyzing the marketing and consumption of spicy foods to and by culinary tourists, I am especially interested in learning about the various ways in which

this consumption can play a part in the creation and maintenance of specifically white, middle-class identities. In the pages that follow, I investigate the following three questions: First, how is this form of tourism related to structural inequality and hegemonic whiteness? Second, does culinary tourism provide opportunities to resist white supremacy, or does it always function as its instrument? Most important from a folkloristic perspective that emphasizes a focus on the everyday, expressive and aesthetic communication that is central to the construction and maintenance of individual and group identities, how do individuals understand their culinary touristic actions within the larger context of racial inequality, if they acknowledge that context at all?

To answer these questions, I reference scholarship from a variety of fields, including foodways, particularly culinary tourism; vernacular narrative; and critical perspectives borrowed from areas such as critical race theory and whiteness studies. In the next section, I review some of this literature that shaped my thinking and that forms the foundation of the study. I begin with scholarship on foodways in the field of folklore, paying special attention to works that focus on culinary tourism. Because the histories of curry in London and hot chicken in Nashville have both been informed by issues of immigration, ethnic difference, and neighborhood rezoning, in this section I also briefly consider some of the ways power differentials are linked to food, especially the concept of “ethnic” food. Because the perspectives of critical race theory and critical whiteness studies are two areas that have helped me think through these aspects of difference and Othering in foodways, I go on to provide a brief survey of work in these fields that has influenced my analysis. Vernacular narrative is also at the core of my work, and I provide a short review of the role of personal experience narrative in folklore scholarship before turning to a survey of folkloristic works on vernacular rhetoric. Finally, I conclude my cursory

introduction to bodies of literature that form the foundation for this study with a section on analyses of spice and spicy food, and a meditation on the specific contributions a folkloristic perspective can bring to discussions about culinary tourism and systemic inequality.

Literature Review

Foodways Studies, Culinary Tourism, and “Ethnic” Food: Difference and Distinction

Food studies, “the study of the relationships between food and the human experience” (Miller and Deutsch 2009: 3), often examines connections between food and social and economic power (Mintz 1996, Ray and Srinivas 2012, Pottier 2014, Maguire 2019, Counihan, van Esterik, and Julier 2019). In the field of folk studies, this concern with food and power has resulted in examinations of how majority cultures respond to and make use of the cuisines of minority cultures, often referred to as “ethnic” foods. Because of its emphasis on difference and outsider status, the concept of ethnicity is always political (Turgeon and Pastinelli 2002). In the field of folklore, ethnicity is, in part, understood to be an identity based on the perception of a heritage that exists within a larger cultural identity (see, for example, Brown and Mussell 1984, Oring 1986, Lockwood and Lockwood 1991, Long 2018). While Susan Kalčik contends that “By ingesting the foods of each new group, we [Americans] symbolize the acceptance of each group and its culture” (Kalčik 1984: 61), not everyone shares Kalčik’s optimism. Other folklorists, like Roger Abrahams and Mario Montaña, argue that the concept of “ethnic” food itself Others the culture whose food is considered ethnic, and, by extension, exoticizes them.

They see most presentations of “ethnic” food as oversimplified and adapted to suit the tastes of the dominant culture (Abrahams 1984, Montaña 1997).

The idea of showing acceptance for a social Other through the consumption of their cuisine is tied closely to the idea of cosmopolitanism. Cosmopolitanism, the result of closer connections between the physical world, the market, and online communities brought about by late-stage capitalism and globalization, is usually understood in one of two ways: as the ideal of global citizenship that transcends allegiance to the nation state¹, or as a specific, open attitude toward difference (Binnie et. al. 2006: 13). This second aspect of cosmopolitanism, as an attitude toward difference, is especially relevant to the present work. As Binnie et. al. explain, openness to difference is a practice which “involves a set of skills which are applied in the encounter with difference” (Binnie et. al. 2006: 8). By its very nature, the practice of skillfully interacting with difference entails an element of risk:

Yet this practice remains one where risks are overcome by the ability and willingness of the cosmopolite to make sense of and move through different societies, gathering not only knowledge of the particular culture in question but also enhancing a disposition and attitude that reduces the shock of the new or the different in other circumstances. The cosmopolite therefore becomes skilled in navigating and negotiating difference (Binnie et. al. 2006: 8).

Because of its relationship with travel, cosmopolitanism is often associated with cultural elites, especially those of higher socio-economic classes, who are mobile and interact with different cultural groups for both business and leisure².

¹ According to Kwame Anthony Appiah (2006), this ideal of global citizenship is understood to have an ethical dimension: cosmopolitan citizens should view themselves as globally connected, and they should meet unfamiliar cultural practices with seriousness and an open mind.

² This connection between cosmopolitanism and elitism can have negative connotations. “Cosmopolitan” or “cosmopolitan elite” have historically been used as anti-Semitic slurs, and they are increasingly being used as dog whistles for members of far right groups in the United States (see the American Jewish Community’s “Glossary of Anti-Semitic Terms, Phrases, Conspiracies, Cartoons, Themes, and Memes” 2021).

Binnie et. al. note, however, that while this elite form of cosmopolitanism is the most visible, and often the most celebrated, it is not solely an attribute of the economic elite. Migrants who move from one country to another in search of a better life could also be considered cosmopolitan, for example, even though they usually are not. The focus on movement as a prerequisite for cosmopolitanism does not apply equally in every circumstance. Middle class individuals and families who move away from the suburbs to cities which are perceived to be more multicultural are often considered to be cosmopolitan, while migrants are not: “By implication, the middle classes are often held up as cosmopolitan in their attitude and engagement with differences, precisely through being more mobile and less likely to succumb to the immobile attitudes of the ‘non-cosmopolitan’ classes” (Binnie et. al. 2006: 11). This suggests that it is the attitude towards difference rather than the travel to experience it that matters most in performances of cosmopolitanism. Referencing Rofe (2003), Binnie et. al. contend that urban centers of gentrification can provide members of the middle class with “a global sense of place” in which commodified encounters with differences like “ethnic restaurants, import stores, international media and architectural forms” are especially important (Binnie et. al. 2006: 15).

I want to focus specifically here on the importance of “ethnic” restaurants to the creation of urban spaces which are considered to be cosmopolitan. Food has always been an important marker of social distinction. As Pierre Bourdieu points out, “Taste, a class culture turned into nature, that is, *embodied*, helps to shape the class body” (Bourdieu 1984: 34). In his book *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste*, Bourdieu posits that food choice is one way in which members of different social classes distinguish themselves from one another and perform membership in their own classes. He identifies a preference for light, delicate foods in the professional classes that defines the popular taste in contrast to heavy, more fattening items.

Bourdieu mentions ethnic fare specifically here, arguing that “teachers, richer in cultural capital than in economic capital, and therefore inclined to ascetic consumption in all areas, pursue originality at the lowest economic cost and go in for exoticism (Italian, Chinese cooking, etc.) and culinary populism (peasant dishes)” (Bourdieu 1984: 32).

Bourdieu was writing about a different time and cultural context, but his observations about the culinary tastes of teachers are closely aligned with the food choices of members of the cosmopolitan middle class today, as food continues to provide a means to achieving social distinction that does not require a great deal of money. Highly educated but underpaid, the members of today’s middle class could also be said to have greater quantities of cultural capital than economic capital. In the 2015 book *Foodies: Democracy and Distinction in the Gourmet Foodscape*, sociologists Josée Johnston and Shyon Baumann explore the culture of modern day “foodies.” The authors define a foodie as “somebody who thinks about food not just as biological sustenance, but also as a key part of their identity, and a kind of lifestyle...For foodies, food is a key part of the story they tell themselves and others about who they are” (Johnston and Baumann 2015: 1-2). Foodies are individuals who occupy what Johnston and Baumann refer to as the “gourmet foodscape.” They describe “foodscape” as a way of looking at “how our cultural understandings of food and the food system are mediated through social mores and cultural institutions like the mass media” (Johnston and Baumann 2015: 3).

The “gourmet” foodscape which foodies inhabit is not necessarily a foodscape of fully elite, high end dining experiences and the cultural mores that go along with those kinds of experiences. Instead, it is a foodscape that is surrounded by “phenomena” such as “food television programming, the obsession with celebrity chefs, the glossy food-porn, the food blogs, and the general obsessions with culinary pursuits” (Johnston and Baumann 2015: 2). Individuals

from all walks of life have access to the gourmet foodscape and the potential distinction it can provide. Johnston and Baumann note that

In the field of cultural sociology today, it is widely recognized that cultural elites—including gourmets—have exited a period of straightforward cultural snobbery and entered an ‘omnivorous era where the traditional divide between high-status highbrow culture (e.g., opera) and low-status lowbrow culture (e.g., country music) has eroded...In this context, terms like ‘foodie’ have emerged as a counterpoint to the cloistered world of high-culture food snobs. (Johnston and Baumann 2015: 3)

Tracing the history of the American foodscape from the 1940s to the present, Johnston and Baumann argue that the past seven decades have been host to a significant shift in attitudes towards gourmet food. An emphasis on French fine dining in the 1940s was gradually replaced by a more democratic approach to French cooking and a simultaneous interest in other national cuisines in the 1960s due to changing immigration patterns. A kind of “backlash” to this democratization followed in the 1980s, with food again being tied directly to conspicuous consumption and the rise of celebrity chefs on television. This shift was followed by concerns about health and issues of globalization, which led to the institutionalization of the organic foods movement in the 1990s.

Assessing the gourmet foodscape of the present day, the authors note that “When you enter foodie terrain, you frequently encounter democratic ideas: everybody should have access to good food, anybody can be a foodie, delicious cuisine can be found anywhere in the world, even (or especially) in the poorest of places. At the same time, some of the most highly valued foods and food experiences—the foods and meals that provide maximum distinction—are far from universally available” (Johnston and Baumann 2015: 14). They identify two attributes of dining that are used to determine whether the consumption of a food will lead to social distinction in the

contemporary gourmet foodscape: authenticity, understood in terms of the local, organic, and sustainable; and exoticness, understood in terms of the unusual, bold, and daring.

While the exotic cannot be reduced to only the ethnic, Johnston and Baumann do point out that one of its aspects is social distance, which is often closely related to ideas of an ethnic or racial Other, that can be, but is not always, tied to the Anglo West's history of colonialism: "the key point is that we need to contextualize the besotted food adventurer's quest for the latest exotic cuisine within a historical pattern of colonial Othering, as well as contemporary neo-colonial realities of economic and cultural inequality" (Johnston and Baumann 2015: 90). They note that the forms of distinction used by present day foodies are most accessible to people who are both from a higher economic background and white: "This exclusivity has a class dimension (e.g., the price obstacle), but it also has an important racial dimension. For example, despite the embrace of 'multicultural' cuisine within an expanding gourmet foodscape, dominant foodie culture in the United States continues to position a particular demographic—namely, white and relatively affluent—as the 'normal' eater" (Johnston and Baumann 2015: 16). While in theory anyone can be a foodie, the gourmet foodscape positions whiteness, specifically a middle-class, Anglo-Protestant form of whiteness, as the default norm, and, as will be explored in greater detail throughout this work, promotional materials aimed at selling culinary experiences as exotic to potential consumers from this perspective. This understanding of white as the norm in the current gourmet foodscape has significant implications for the status of the "ethnic" restaurant in the Anglo Western world, not only in North America, but also in the United Kingdom; it is visible in the culinary tourism of both east London, England, and Nashville, Tennessee.

It is useful to view participation in foodie culture as a form of everyday leisure. Leisure, commonly understood to be anything that is done during time when one is not working, was originally the domain of those of specific higher social classes who were excluded from doing certain forms of manual labor (Veblen 1899/2016). The Industrial Revolution made it possible for a wider variety of individuals from all social classes to have both the free time and the expendable income to spend on activities that are purely recreational such as dining out, traveling, or playing sports, although there is a great deal of debate about how much freedom to choose people of various social classes have when engaging in leisure activities (Rojek 2005, Spracklen 2009 and 2011). While this increase in leisure time created superficial similarities between those of higher and lower social classes, knowing what to spend one's time and money on was an important way by which it was possible to distinguish between social groups (Bourdieu 1984).

Alongside class differences, racial differences come into sharp relief within the context of leisure activities. Social scientists like Sander Gilman (1985), Susan Fiske (1993), and Anoop Nayak (2003 and 2006) have explored the role of stereotypes, particularly racial stereotypes, in understandings of leisure. Stereotypical ideas of what is different or Other heavily inform what travelers seek out to experience; for this reason, leisure activities such as travel are always expressions of power. Today, people engage in leisure in "...a context of mass education, mass communication and mass tourism that presupposes a different relationship between the individual, leisure behavior, and citizenship" (Rojek 2005: 4) than in the Modern period.

The sociologist K. Spracklen (2013) argues that the West, including North America, Canada, and the United Kingdom, constitutes an imagined community³ built largely on the stereotyping of exotic Others. Of tourism specifically, Spracklen notes that for people of color, options on where to travel are often limited by fears of encountering racism in ways that white people's travel are not. Furthermore, "...all tourism is predicated in an unequal relationship, where those with money and cultural capital exchange it for an experience in a place where people have less money; and nearly all tourism is associated with the movement of rich, white, Westerners into other spaces that are routinely stereotyped in some way or another so that the tourist sees what they want to see" (Spracklen 2013: 44). Culinary tourism, discussed in more detail below, is one such leisure activity where the exoticization⁴ and the (often racial) stereotypification of Others is a central aspect of how the experience is framed, and the same people Johnston and Baumann identify as foodies would most likely be considered culinary tourists from a folkloristic perspective.

Spracklen points out that in the West, "ethnic" food "refers to styles of food...that supposedly represent an authentic culinary tradition from some country (or region) foreign to the country in which the white person using the term lives" (Spracklen 2013: 152). In the United Kingdom, he asserts, "ethnic" food means Chinese or Indian cuisine. He goes on to suggest that "The hegemony of whiteness turns hybridity and change in the food eaten by people into fixed, unchanging ethnic categories associated with outsiders and foreigners," (Spracklen 2013: 152), a point originally made by bell hooks in *Black Looks: Race and Representation*. In a chapter

³ This term was originally coined by political scientist and historian Benedict Anderson (1983), who explored how print media, especially written in vernacular rather than elite language, contributed to the rise of capitalism and nationalism.

⁴ For more on how issues of exoticism and racism have been approached in the field of tourism studies, see *The Routledge Handbook of Tourism Geographies* (2012).

investigating the contemporary valuation of diversity and multiculturalism, hooks writes that “When the dominant culture demands that the Other be offered as a sign that progressive political change is taking place, that the American Dream can indeed be inclusive of difference, it invites a resurgence of essentialist cultural nationalism. The acknowledged Other must assume recognizable forms” (hooks 1992: 26).

As the references to Kalčik and Montaño above indicate, the debate about whether or not current beliefs concerning the value of multiculturalism will cause “cultural, ethnic, and racial differences [to] be continually commodified and offered up as new dishes to enhance the white palate—that the Other will be eaten, consumed, and forgotten” (hooks 2015: 52), specifically in the context of the concept of “ethnic” food, has been interrogated in the field of folklore. Kalčik surveys the ways in which foods can be used to exclude and demonstrate ranks between individuals and within groups, as well as how foodways can be used to manipulate understandings of history and politics. She explains that “Because foodways encode so much about social events and interactions and the groups involved in them, specific foodways often come to be associated closely with the groups that practice them” (Kalčik 1984: 53). While there are potential dangers in this elision between people and foods, Kalčik sees potential for food to serve as common ground between disparate groups of people, as noted at the beginning of this literature review.

On the other hand, in the essay “Appropriation and Counterhegemony in South Texas: Food Slurs, Offal Meats, and Blood,” Mario Montaño explores the attitudes towards and consumption patterns of specifically white Americans in relation to Mexican foods. In the past, he argues, “Mexican food symbolized everything that was degenerate and despicable about the conquered Mexican population” (Montaño 1997: 51), while the rise in popularity of Mexican and

Tex Mex restaurants of the present signifies not acceptance but domination: “In incorporating folk foods, the dominant culture can succeed in neutralizing, reinterpreting, and setting boundaries that separate ‘acceptable’ foods from those perceived as disreputable or threatening. (Montaño 1997: 62). Writing on this same topic a few years later, Amy Bentley (2004) echoes Montaño’s points in the book chapter “From Culinary Other to Mainstream America: Meanings and Uses of Southwestern Cuisine.” Here, Bentley identifies three ways to understand “the nature and function of Southwestern cuisine”: as a form of cultural domination by Anglo Americans, as a kind of resistance to this domination by Mexican Americans, or as a way to nostalgically view the history of the American Southwest and, by extension, of the West more generally (Bentley 2004: 210-213). Surveying the ways that Southwestern cuisine has been changed to be less spicy, more focused on meat, and simplified in order to appeal to Anglo American tastes and be conveniently accessible to as many people as possible, Bentley suggests that “Because food is an extraordinarily powerful way to transmit ideas, power, and social status, the popularity of Southwestern cuisine can be convincingly interpreted as an act of cultural hegemony, an appropriation of borderlands foods in the hopes of neutralizing the power and voice of people, particularly Latinos, in the region” (Bentley 2004: 215).

Bentley goes on to suggest that the romanticized nostalgia for the past that is symbolized in Southwestern cuisine effectively erases the people who were hurt and oppressed by this history, replacing them with versions of their cuisine that are almost unrecognizable. However, she also says that “In one sense such events as cultural foods nights and ethnic food fairs sponsored by schools, churches, and civic groups can be regarded as contributing to this culinary neutralization and cultural domination; they can also function as just the opposite. Such food events can be and are sites for positive and constructive communication” (Bentley 2004: 221).

Culinary tourism is an area of study where the question of food's potential as a bridge between cultural groups, and of its limitations in facilitating real harmony in this area, can be fruitfully explored. Generally defined as "food and drink motivated travel" (Everett 2016: 11), culinary tourism is more generally characterized within folklore studies as "the intentional, exploratory participation in the foodways of an other—participation including the consumption, preparation, and presentation of a food item, cuisine, meal system, or eating style considered to belong to a culinary system not one's own" (Long 2004: 21). Here, the Other is defined in relation to the tourist, and can include any combination of characteristics of an individual. This broader definition of culinary tourism makes it possible to better investigate the various ways that individuals engage with the foods of other groups, as one is often able to explore new foodways without physically leaving home. In the first chapter of *Culinary Tourism*, Lucy Long argues that "...foodways may be one of the fullest ways of perceiving otherness. Sightseeing is only a partial engagement with otherness, whereas culinary tourism, utilizing the senses of taste, smell, touch, and vision, offers a deeper, more integrated level of experience. It engages one's physical being, not simply as an observer, but as a participant as well" (Long 2004: 21).

For Long, anyone who is curious about the foodways of an other can be a culinary tourist; this role is not defined by membership in any given identity group. However, she does provide several different ways of defining the Otherness that the culinary tourist consumes: culture, region, time, ethos/religion, and socioeconomic class (Long 2004: 24). The identity of the culinary tourist is essential in the formulation of the Other, and a person from any walk of life may find themselves in either role. Of the concept of "ethnic" food specifically, Long notes that people will often seek out restaurants they understand to be ethnic both at home and while

traveling to engage in the kind of adventurous eating she defines as culinary tourism. There are several benefits for adventurous eaters at “ethnic” restaurants:

They [ethnic restaurants] also provide a relatively safe environment for trying a new cuisine. Certain health and safety standards have to be met in order to operate legally, and an adherence to mainstream aesthetics and ethos are usually expected. Also, the exchange of food in this context is a business transaction, although it may include a sharing of friendship or an expression of cultural identities. Rejecting the food then, is not a personal affront to the owners, making it possible for customers to select and consume dishes according to their tastes, values, or circumstances. (Long 2018: 319)

This list of benefits suggests that the main draw to “ethnic” restaurants may be the fact that a culinary tourist can eat a version of “ethnic” cuisine that is not too strange, and that can be eaten without forming a personal relationship with the people serving it. One could argue that the culinary tourist holds on to all the power in this interaction.

These benefits certainly do not seem to be in keeping with the deeper, more physically integrated experience she describes in *Culinary Tourism* (2004). Because tourism is explicitly linked to globalized systems of commerce and is focused on the experience of encountering a social Other, it provides an excellent opportunity for looking at intersections of inequality and political power. “Food and Identity in the Americas,” a special issue of the *Journal of American Folklore*, uses culinary tourism specifically as a means of applying a folkloristic perspective to these larger social issues. Its Introduction, also written by Long, suggests that culinary tourists “use that food to sample the experiences of an Other, to explore their relationship to that Other, or to better define the boundaries between themselves and others. In doing so, they negotiate their own identities and develop strategies for balancing the public with the private, the political with the aesthetic, and the social with the personal” (Long 2009: 7).

Focusing on “ethnic” restaurants (those that clearly advertise “the national or regional cuisine of another land”) in Quebec City, Quebec, Laurier Turgeon and Madeleine Pastinelli note

that people do not have to travel outside of their hometowns in order to engage in the performance of adventurous consumption of the culinary tourist. Arguing that foodways are a kind of inverted geography, they suggest that “by eating in a large number of ethnic restaurants to diversify their experiences, clients are expressing the desire not only to eat the metaphoric other, but also to explore the entire world and consume it. The encounter with other cultures as a means to enhance intercultural awareness and understanding gives moral legitimacy to the consumption of geographies” (Turgeon and Pastinelli 2002: 259).

Pilaf, Pozole, and Pad Thai: American Women and Ethnic Food, edited by Sherrie A. Inness, while not explicitly a folkloristic work, explores the connections between exploratory eating and power imbalances in a way that is closely related to folkloristic studies of culinary tourism. The collection explores “...the roles ethnic food plays when it crosses boundaries and is consumed by people from different cultural groups” (Inness 2001: 7). One of the contributors, Lisa Heldke, surveys the link between exploratory eating and colonialism in the chapter “Let’s Cook Thai: Recipes for Colonialism.” Here, Heldke analyzes an array of “ethnic” cookbooks produced mainly for North American consumers. She refers to what she calls “cultural food colonialism,” a penchant for “ethnic” foods that emphasizes the new, the remote, and the exotic without much engagement with the cultures the foods come from. Informed by the work of Renato Rosaldo (1989) on imperialist nostalgia, Heldke suggests that novelty is a highly prized component of American culinary tourism for three reasons. First, and most obviously because the novel is often entertaining. Second, for Heldke, the exotic and the authentic are elided, and the presence of one signifies the Other: “So, in a three-step process, that which is novel to me ends up being exotic, and that which is exotic I end up defining as most authentic to a culture” (Heldke 2001:181). Finally, there is the belief that the consumption of the exotic confers

exoticism, or, more precisely, social distinction, onto the consumer. Heldke's analysis reiterates the points made by Long in the Introduction to the special issue of the *Journal of American Folklore* cited above that adventurous eating is an activity that is often more focused on the eater and their culture than it is on getting to know members of another culture through their cuisine.⁵ While I make distinctions between tourists (visitors who travel from elsewhere) and locals in my analyses of both east London and Nashville, I view local Londoners and Nashvillians as culinary tourists even when they are dining in their own cities, in keeping with the work of scholars like Long and Turgeon and Pastinelli, who view culinary tourism as a form of exploratory eating that can take place in any location.

When thinking about culinary tourism, it is important to keep in mind that it is both an activity that individuals choose to engage in for a variety of reasons, and an industry (Long 2020). This thesis explores promotional literature, culinary tours, and other materials produced by the tourism industry in two different locations, and it analyzes individual acts of culinary tourism on the part of visitors to both east London and Nashville. It is also important to remember that there is a difference between foodies, discussed above, who make exploratory eating a central part of their personalities, and culinary tourists, who may or may not fall into this category. However, when culinary tourists consult food media or online restaurant reviews to decide where to eat in an unfamiliar city, they are most often participating in foodie discourse in the gourmet foodscape as described by Johnston and Baumann (2015), cited above.

⁵ The nature of this project, situated as it is within the discipline of folklore, means that much of the research is focused on more individual, everyday interactions between culinary tourists and the foods and others they explore. For a more macro view on how culinary tourism might affect the cultures whose foods are being presented for display, see Mak, Lumbers, and Eves 2011. Their research suggests that while globalization and its attendant focus on culinary tourism are widely understood to threaten the integrity of local foodways, the potential for increased interest and revenue in economically depressed markets promised by globalization can lead to revitalization and reimagining of traditional foodways.

Whiteness

When exploring connections between culinary tourism, leisure, and systems of power and inequality within the context of assumptions that culinary tourists are usually white, the perspectives of critical race theory and critical whiteness studies are helpful. Critical race theory, which posits that inequality based on racial difference is built into the structure of American society, has as its main focus two major objectives: first, to understand the creation and maintenance of white supremacy in America, and especially the connection between the maintenance of white supremacy and the American legal system, and second, to use this understanding in order to change the system (Crenshaw, Gotanda, Peller, and Thomas 1995: xiii). Its approach to these objectives is informed by a set of core beliefs: that racism is routine rather than aberrational, that it serves the interests of the dominant group, that race itself is a social construction that is constantly in flux, one that intersects with other aspects of an individual's experience and identity, and, finally, that minority status confers competence to speak about race and racism (Delgado and Stefancic 2017: 8-11). Issues of race, especially of race and inequality, came up often in conversations about culinary tourism in London and Nashville, as well as in online reviews of restaurants in both locations. Critical race theory and critical whiteness studies offer informed perspectives with which to understand the various waves of immigrants who settled in and subsequently moved or were forced out of east London's Brick Lane, or the difficulties Black-owned businesses like Prince's Hot Chicken Shack have faced in finding permanent locations in Nashville, as will be described in greater detail in Chapters Two and Five, respectively.

This study draws on the writing of scholars working specifically on the constructed nature of whiteness and its role as the normative standard against which all others are defined (Delgado and Stefaniec 2017: 86), while whiteness itself often escapes definition. In this work I follow Ruth Frankenberg's definition of whiteness as "First...a location of structural advantage, or race privilege. Second, it is a 'standpoint,' a place from which white people look at ourselves, at others, and at society. Third, 'whiteness' refers to a set of cultural practices that are usually unmarked and unnamed" (Frankenberg 1993: 1). I am especially interested in how conceptions and experiences of whiteness relate to scholarship on tourism that posits that tourists are looking for authentic, even exotic experiences (MacCannell 2013, Urry 1992), particularly in the case of culinary tourism (Inness 2001, Turgeon and Pastinelli 2002, Long 2004, Germann Molz 2007, Buettner 2008, De Jong and Varley 2017).

While scholars like Pamela Perry (2001) among many others have argued that whiteness is an invisible or unmarked category, and that this invisibility is a major source of the enduring power of white supremacy, scholars of whiteness have worked to further refine and contextualize this argument, and to interrogate the extent to which whiteness is really invisible, particularly to white people themselves, in recent years. Sociologists like Frankenberg (2001) and Marcus Bell (2021) contend that scholars need to focus on specific, local, contexts when studying the formation of white identity. There are several situations in which white people may in fact be fully aware of their whiteness, most of which have to do with interactions with people of color (see Gallagher 1997 on momentary minority status, for one example). Joe Feagin (2013) argues that a major part of the performance of white identity involves racist jokes and stereotypes, which are shared as a kind of cultural capital that cements bonds between white people. These racist performances, particularly those involving Black people, are such a prevalent part of what

Feagin calls the white racial frame, that he identifies these activities as “the anti-black subframe” of the white racial frame. Feagin categorizes this aspect of the white racial frame as an obsession:

Yet other research on white thought and behavior demonstrates this centrality of African Americans to the contemporary white frame. In recent field studies that I and my colleagues have done, white interviewees and whites who kept diaries have revealed that black Americans are central to their and other whites’ identity and everyday thinking. In these studies black Americans are often the non-European group that obsesses or preoccupies a large proportion of whites. (Feagin 2013: 101)

Sociologist Matthew W. Hughey (2012) argues that there is both a dominant idea of whiteness that is shared by most Americans, and several more localized, context-specific ideals of whiteness. Hughey calls the dominant, shared concept of whiteness “hegemonic whiteness,” and argues that this idealized conception of whiteness is created and maintained when white people make distinctions between themselves and people of color, as well as with white people who perform whiteness incorrectly. Jardina (2019) posits that dominant identities like whiteness tend to remain invisible unless they are activated in response to perceived threats to the group. She argues that the election of United States president Barack Obama in 2008, circulating narratives about the decline of the white population, and lingering resentments about the perceived unfairness of affirmative action have all led to an increased sense of identity among white Americans in recent years.

Whiteness's status as unmarked relies in part on the two related commonsense (Burke 1935) beliefs that whiteness is “normal,” and that whiteness is rational (Perry 2001). According to Perry, white people exercise power when they claim that they have no culture: white Americans do not see themselves as having ties to the cultures and traditions of their European ancestors, which makes it possible for them to align their racial identity neatly with the Western

ideals of progress and nationalism. Tukufu Zuberi and Eduardo Bonilla-Silva build on Perry's ideas about white hegemony in their work on what they call "White logic", a way of seeing the world they claim is shared among many white people. According to Zuberi and Bonilla-Silva,

White logic:

assumes a historical posture that grants eternal objectivity to the views of elite Whites and condemns the views of non-Whites to perpetual subjectivity; it is the anchor of western imagination, which grants centrality to the knowledge, history, science, and culture of elite White men and classifies "others" as people without knowledge, history, or science, *as people with folklore but not culture*. (Zuberi and Bonilla-Silva 2008: 17, emphasis mine)

Wendy Hui Kyong Chun (2012) suggests that racial segregation is itself a form of technology, one that creates and naturalizes extreme feelings of difference where none truly exist. The social construction of race makes it possible to shape the physical world in accordance with ideas of difference that have no basis in the physical world. As the idea that there are inherent physical differences between the races that would justify these organizations of space have been systematically disproved by physical and social scientists, the overt use of racist language and ideology has mostly fallen out of favor in the West. However, as critical race scholars point out, this change in overt ideology has not translated into meaningful change in terms of how space and resources are allocated. Feagin (2013) suggests that in the United States, in addition to overt discrimination against people of color by white people and institutionalized economic and other social resource inequality that contribute to systemic racism, there is a third factor, a worldview "that was generated to rationalize and insure white privilege and dominance over Americans of color" that he refers to as "the white racial frame," referenced above, which is a "centuries-old worldview that has constantly involved a racial construction of societal reality by white Americans" (Feagin 2013: 4).

Building on the idea of the white racial frame, anthropologist Jane H. Hill contrasts the views of critical race theorists with the folk theory (D'Andrade 1995) of racism in Western culture.⁶ According to Hill, "People use folk theories to interpret the world without a second thought. They are a part of everyday common sense. But they are also more than this. Since common sense is valued, folk theories and categories are not only taken for granted, they are also objects of considerable intellectual and affective investment" (Hill 2008: 5)⁷. Because they seem so obvious, so a part of "what goes with what," to take inspiration from literary theorist Kenneth Burke, people hold deep emotional attachment to folk theories, and are often resistant to any suggestion that they might be incorrect. In the case of the folk theory of race, Hill identifies three major assumptions that are commonly held to be true in North American culture: First, the folk theory holds that race is a biological fact rather than a social construct. As a result, there are certain differences in physicality and personality that are understood to be essential to all members of a given race. Second, racism is not a structural problem, but a personal one. Racism is the moral failing of certain disreputable individuals rather than the shared responsibility of society. Finally, the folk theory of racism maintains that prejudice is a natural human trait. In other words, people tend to prefer their own kind, and shy away from the unfamiliar, and it is natural that they should do so (Hill 2008: 6-18). Together, these three elements of the folk theory of race and racism obscure the ways in which inequality is built into the framework of society and constitute a worldview of white racism (Smedley 1993) that remains invisible based on the notion that all of its elements are simply common sense.

⁶ It is important to note that the use of the term "folk" here is not synonymous with its meaning in folkloristics.

⁷ While Hill's work is focused mainly on the United States and Canada, I believe her observations about how white supremacy is constituted and perpetuated in the everyday speech of white people and in media discourse can be fruitfully applied to white Western culture.

Because critical race theory posits that inequality is built into the structure of American society, I draw on folkloristic works that interrogate the different roles folklore itself has played in systems of inequality throughout its history (Fox 1987, Abrahams 1993, Anttonen 2005, Whisnant 2009, Naithani 2010, Moody-Turner 2013, Noyes 2016). In attempting this analysis, I am attempting to answer calls from within the field of folklore to incorporate the perspective of critical race theory into folkloristic research. There are a few proposed approaches to this task. I am responding directly to those, like folklorist Anand Prahlad, who asks “...where are all the articles and books about the ‘non-exotic people,’ for example, white professionals in business, law, the tech industry, politicians, the entertainment industry, suburban enclaves, and so on?” (Prahlad 2021: 260).

Prahlad points out that by focusing mostly on the lives and customs of marginalized people while ignoring those most like themselves, white folklorists have continued to propagate a racialized power dynamic that has existed since the beginning of colonization: “In doing so, they [folklorists] reinforced their whiteness, power, and privilege by erasing it, thereby establishing it as the norm and as the only legitimate point of reference” (Prahlad 2021: 260).⁸ Ebony L. Bailey illustrates how folklorists, along with other social scientists, helped to construct links between whiteness and modernity by using Black Americans as a kind of cultural foil that symbolized savagery. Bailey urges folklorists of all races to identify and study the construction of race in their work, as well as the “mechanisms that denigrate, devalue, and dehumanize Blackness” (Bailey 2021: 386). One of the goals of this work is to contribute to the scholarship

⁸ Not all folklorists agree with Prahlad’s assessment. It is true that there have been several folkloristic studies of cultures that might be considered “non-exotic,” depending on the perspectives of both the researcher and the reader. Folkloristic studies of occupational folklore, which explore various work groups in a variety of contexts, perhaps provide the best example of studies of the “non-exotic” in folklore. However, as Prahlad points out, folklorists have tended to focus their studies on not only racial Others, but also on economic Others. There has been a tendency in the discipline to exoticize both race and class.

of the folklore of white middle class Americans and English people. What role does engagement with spicy foods as culinary tourist attractions play in the construction of specifically white identities for participants?

Vernacular Personal Narratives and their Rhetorical Uses

This dissertation is informed by folklore's long involvement with the study of narrative, particularly folkloristic work on personal experience narrative as first introduced by Sandra Stahl in the 1977 special issue of the *Journal of the Folklore Institute* "Stories of Personal Experiences." Narrative collection and analysis have always played an integral part in the discipline of folklore, but until the 1970s, folklorists concerned themselves only with narratives considered to be traditional, broadly understood to mean having an existence in the past and a collective character (Stahl 1977). By design, this meant that personal narratives, defined by James A. Holstein and Jaber F. Gubrium as "extended speech acts about substantial or compelling aspects of life—relationships, work, illness, trauma, or conflict" (Holstein and Gubrium 2012:1), were not considered part of the purview of folkloristics.

The gradual shift in folkloristics starting in the late 1960s towards looking at folklore as emergent performance to be analyzed rather than material to be collected and compared changed the way scholars viewed folk narratives. In "A Rhetoric of Everyday Life: Traditional Conversational Genres," Roger Abrahams focused on the kinds of folk speech William Bascom used as a contrast for the longer, more involved prose narratives that were the focus of "The Forms of Folklore" (1965). Specifically, Abrahams analyzed two shorter forms of folk expression: proverbs and superstitions (which today would be called expressions of folk beliefs). Building on the work of sociologists and sociolinguists who demonstrated that conversations

tend to have a traditional structure, Abrahams argued that proverbs and superstitions allowed people to express traditional or folk attitudes. For this reason, the conversational genres are of great importance to the study of expressive culture more generally, “for it is through such traditional forms that the basic situations of society are often put into practice” (Abrahams 1968: 47). This focus on the expression of folk attitudes in everyday conversation laid some of the groundwork for the inclusion of the personal experience narrative as folklore, as it shifted the discussion away from the consideration of only myths, legends, and folk tales, which, whether believed to be true or false, were almost always about events that did not personally include their tellers or audiences.

Richard Dorson and Sandra Stahl co-chaired a panel on personal experience narratives as a folk narrative genre at the 1975 American Folklore Society Annual Meeting in New Orleans (Stahl 1977: 5). Stahl argued that “...personal narrative’s folkloric credentials is developed through a discussion of such stories as examples of folkloric performance, as representatives of an established oral storytelling tradition, as narrative embodiments of traditional attitudes, and as recognizable items in their tellers’ repertoires” (Stahl 1977: 6). In this study I analyze the personal narratives of tourists, locals, and tourism industry workers about their connections to the two dishes under consideration.

Additionally, I am interested in analyzing reviews posted by members of each of these groups online as a form of personal experience narrative in which traditional attitudes are often expressed and debated. These reviews often reference one another, as well as the prevailing master narratives about curry or hot chicken, with posters, particularly those who identify themselves as local Londoners or Nashvillians, collaboratively building counter narratives about their cities and cuisines. John A. Robinson (1981), Jack Santino (1983), Amy Shuman (2005),

and Kate Parker Horigan (2018) have all explored aspects of how groups shape and derive meanings from the personal narratives of individuals with both liberating and constricting results, although not within the specific context of online spaces.

Several scholars have examined this tension between acceptance and exploitation in the consumption of “ethnic” food within the context of online personal narratives and other short forms of online communication about eating while traveling. In the 2007 article “Eating Difference: The Cosmopolitan Mobilities of Culinary Tourism,” sociologist Jennie Germann Molz analyzes the online narratives that tourists post to various websites about their travels. Her specific focus is on culinary tourists who she defines as those who use the consumption of unfamiliar cuisines as part of the exploratory process of travel (Germann Molz 2007: 77-78). She finds that this process is about performing a sense of adventure for other members of one’s social group rather than using food to get to know another cultural group. She also suggests that “...culinary tourists are eating the Other (as something distinct from their own culture), but they are also eating the differences between various Others; differences that are often produced *and* consumed through mobility” (Germann Molz 2007: 79).

Holly Everett’s article “Vernacular Health Moralities and Culinary Tourism in Newfoundland and Labrador,” investigates touristic conceptions of the foodways of the Canadian province of Newfoundland and Labrador. Everett explores the history of the “goofy Newfie” stereotype and points out that as Canada’s most recent and remote province, Newfoundland and Labrador has functioned as “a canvas upon which visitors often express a longing for various romantic ideals of traditional cultures” (Everett 2009: 30). Conceptions of Newfoundlanders as quaint, silly, and inferior to other Canadians, the tendency to project a nostalgic longing onto the province, and increased media coverage of the obesity epidemic in

Canada during the early 2000s all influence how visitors to Newfoundland and Labrador experience and write about the foodways of the province. Everett suggests that despite Newfoundland's longstanding berry picking and foraging traditions, tourists focus mostly on (and are deeply disturbed by) the supposed prevalence of fried foods in Newfoundland and Labrador, which they equate with unclean living and tend to view as exotic, despite the prevalence of similar foods in their own home states and provinces:

Although the contemporary province of Newfoundland and Labrador is a modern society fully integrated into Canada, tourists often perceive the area as set apart from the rest of North America in space, time, and development. Such paternalism—a key component of the imperialist project of which travelogues have been a “major linchpin” (Gilbert and Johnston 2002:10)—continues to find expression in exoteric criticism of local foodways. (Everett 2009: 44).

Everett's focus on how tourists interpret the foodways of Newfoundland and Labrador makes it possible to see how individuals in one given set of circumstances experience differences in geographic space and social class while engaged in acts of culinary tourism.

Anna de Jong and Peter Varley (2017) also explore expressions of class consciousness within online culinary tourism discourse in their analysis of touristic consumption of the deep-fried Mars bar in Scotland during a specific culinary tourism marketing push called the Year of Food and Drink. Using discourse analysis, de Jong and Varley find evidence of distinct associations with social class and morality in both the marketing materials and online discussions of culinary tourism in the country: “Policy discourses work to reframe the paradox between Scotland's high quality food and well-publicised low quality diet through the alignment of ‘bad’ diet with the working class” (de Jong and Varley 2017: 217). While tourism policy tries to marginalize foods that do not fit within current parameters of social distinction like the deep-fried Mars bar, de Jong and Varley find that culinary tourists are still quite interested in trying this dish, framing it as an exotic, almost extreme experience to try one. This framing of the deep-

fried Mars bar effectively maintains the boundaries of taste and class constructed by tourism policymakers.

Scholars of online discourse surrounding culinary tourism and foodways have also examined how participants create and play with ethnic and racial identities. Viewing online posts like tweets as analogous to shorter, conversational types of folk speech like the joke, Sheila Bock (2017) analyzes hashtag humor, specifically the hashtag #PaulasBestDishes, during the scandal following a lawsuit brought against Paula Deen by an employee citing racial discrimination, as a kind of folkloric performance that can offer means of resistance to dominant narratives, in this case surrounding the issue of race. Bock suggests that the media coverage of the lawsuit revealed two common assumptions about racism in contemporary America: first, that racism is a phenomenon that can be located exclusively in the South, and more specifically in the past. Second, that racism, when it does occur in the present day, is an individual problem, an indicator of moral failure in specific people (Bock 2017: 151). These observations echo the findings of scholars like D'Andrade (1995) and Hill (2008) on the folk theory of racism in North America. Bock illustrates how Black twitter users used the Paula's Best Dishes hashtag not only to ridicule Deen, but also to resist this master narrative by calling attention to both the historical whitewashing of Black people's contributions to American, specifically Southern, cuisine, and by making Blackness visible by using the hashtag to call attention to important figures in the Black community.

I hope to build on this existing literature in ways that will add to the conversation on the relationship between food and power. Food plays a central symbolic role in both personal and group identity (Jones 2007). While this study is based on participant observation and interviews with individuals who are connected to the culinary tourism contexts I am studying here in a

number of different ways, the global Covid-19 pandemic made it difficult to conduct this traditional form of fieldwork consistently. As a result, I am including analysis of reviews of restaurants in both locations, as well as of food tours that take place in east London. In looking at online reviews of Indian restaurants in London and hot chicken restaurants in Nashville, there is an opportunity to trace how individual experiences of the meaningfulness (Long 2015) of food are shaped by personal taste as well as in dialogue with the views of other online reviewers and the greater foodie discourse (Johnston and Baumann 2015) that can be found in travel literature and advertising copy of the tourism industry.

The context of online restaurant reviews provides additional layers of meaningfulness to mentions of spice in these samples. Taking place as they do on websites like TripAdvisor and Yelp, which emphasize experiences of travel, the reviews can be considered a form of travel writing. As Louise Pratt (1992) notes, travel writing was a crucial part of the empire building project of the West from the Age of Exploration up until at least the 1980s. Travel writing gave both writers and readers a sense of ownership over places far from their homes. This connection between travel writing and empire has continued into the present day (Holland and Huggan 1998, Gilbert and Johnson 2002).

Travel writing that is exclusively published and consumed online weds this connection with empire building with the explicit racialization of colonial subjects. In anonymous interactions online, the default assumption is that all users are white unless otherwise specified (White 2006). When explicit representations of non-white racial and ethnic groups are included in online spaces, these representations are often highly stereotypical and negative (Nakumura 2009). Finally, Internet access itself is not as accessible to people of color as it is to white people, a circumstance that is only the most recent instance of the needs and contributions of people of

color to technological advancement being discounted (Fouché 2012). A number of scholars have explored online reviews of travel destinations specifically as forms of travel writing, analyzing the tastes of reviewers as a group (Onorati and Giardullo 2020), the connections between social media posts about travel and colonialism (see Jamerson 2017 and Smith 2018 for two examples), and expressions of a kind of digital racism in online reviews of “ethnic” restaurants and restaurants in neighborhoods understood to be ethnic (Zukin et. al. 2014, Karaosmanoğlu 2014)⁹. The present work is meant to build on the findings of these contributions, applying a specifically folkloristic perspective that pays special attention to the felt meaning of food and its symbolic role in the creation of a specifically white folk group identity.

In analyzing both the interviews I conducted, and these online restaurant reviews as personal experience narratives in which shared traditional attitudes of Western culinary tourists might be expressed, I draw on the work of folklorists who have explored the realm of vernacular¹⁰ rhetoric as my primary frame of reference. In pursuing an enquiry into vernacular uses of rhetoric, most folklorists have found the work of the American literary theorist Kenneth Burke to be instructive. Burke’s work on rhetoric offers much to the study of folk performances, so much of which are constituted of forms of verbal art. While rhetoric, usually understood as speaking or writing artfully, or in a way that is meant to persuade listeners of something, Burke provides several important interventions in the monograph *A Rhetoric of Motives*. He makes the point that rhetorical motives are often at play in situations not generally understood to belong to the realm of argument. This is because rhetoric, often understood as persuasion to specific

⁹ For a comprehensive survey of perspectives on food writing on Instagram from the field of food studies, see the 2022 anthology *Food Instagram: Identity, Influence, and Negotiation*, edited by Emily J.H. Contois and Zenia Kish.

¹⁰ In using the term “vernacular” I am following the work of past scholarship which views the term as referring to “the commonplace” (Lantis 1960), and vernacular rhetoric specifically as non-institutional discourse (Ono and Sloop 1995), as well as a way of studying rhetoric that pays special attention to the homey, commonplace, or in-group characteristics of rhetorical communication (Howard 2005).

actions or inactions, is more often persuasion to adopt specific attitudes towards things or events (Burke 1945: 50); as a result, rhetoric lies at the heart of a great deal more of everyday conversation than we might realize.

This view of rhetoric as persuasion to specific attitudes is closely linked to the concept of identification: Burke argues that persuasion to a common attitude is most often achieved through an appeal by the speaker to either common ground with their audience, or a negative identification with some outside group. This can be achieved by shaping one's argument to be in line with the values of a given audience, or by demonstrating that one is a member of the group by speaking in the "commonplaces" associated with this group: "Here is perhaps the simplest case of persuasion. You persuade a man only insofar as you can talk his language by speech, gesture, tonality, order, image, attitude, idea, *identifying* your ways with his" (Burke 1945: 55). These commonplaces of communication are drawn from Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, and Burke notes that in the modern age, they might be thought of more accurately as "attitudes or values" (Burke 1945: 56).

Here, Burke seems to be referencing what we might consider folklore. A few pages later he connects his work directly to folklore when he states: "Meanwhile, again, the thought of the timely topic reminds us that sociological works reviewing the rise and fall of slogans, cliches, stock figures of folk consciousness, and the like, impinge upon the rhetorical motive" [Burke 1945: 63]). His emphasis on shared, common attitudes seems primed to be fruitfully applied to Stahl's (1977) concept of the personal experience narrative as expressing traditional attitudes: Stahl does not directly reference the role of rhetorical persuasion in her groundbreaking work on the traditionality of personal narratives but joining the two perspectives together provides an

excellent opportunity to explore processes of group formation through narrative in a vernacular context.

Burke argues that identification should be considered as significant an aspect of rhetoric as persuasion, and connects rhetoric solidly with the constitution of social groups:

Particularly when we come upon such aspects of persuasion as are found in 'mystification,' courtship, and the 'magic' of class relationships, the reader will see why the classical notion of clear persuasive intent is not an accurate fit, for describing the ways in which the members of a group promote social cohesion by acting rhetorically upon themselves and one another. As W.C. Blum has stated the case deftly, 'In identification lies the source of dedications and enslavements, in fact of cooperation.' (Burke 1945: xiv)

In attempting to persuade an audience to identify with oneself, or, alternatively, to convince listeners that one is a member of the same group, Burke suggests appealing to a shared sense of piety, or "common sense," is a strategy often employed. For Burke, piety is considered "...a system-builder, a desire to round things out, to fit experiences together into a unified whole. Piety is *the sense of what properly goes with what*" (Burke 1977: 100). Again, this idea is closely related to the field of folklore, which so often is interested in the kinds of things people "just know" and are likely to pass on informally to other members of their social groups.

Abrahams (1968) argued that rhetoric, when successful, could best be understood as persuasion that is both affective in its form, and compelling in the way it is performed for audiences. Thus, a rhetorical approach to folklore would include both attention to the techniques of persuasion used, and to the effect of the specific performance of folklore in which the persuasion was taking place. This focus on specific rhetorical performances is in keeping with the larger performance turn in folkloristics that was taking place at the time of his writing. Abrahams makes the point that all expression is meant to influence listeners in some way, and furthermore that folklore, because it is so closely linked to the concept of tradition, "uses

arguments and persuasive techniques developed in the past to cope with recurrences of social problem situations (Abrahams 1968: 147).

Exploring proverbs and riddles, he notes that folkloristic expression is used when the folk group is under attack, and “uses persuasive techniques developed in the past to argue for adherence to the middle way already tested by past usage” (Abrahams 1968:148). This is done, especially in the case of proverbs, to proscribe future actions. The artful way they are expressed (a stitch in time saves nine, for example, has a pleasing rhyme scheme), along with their status as traditional “old sayings”, gives the impression that at some point in the past, much thought has already been put into how to address whatever situation the proverb is addressing (a penny saved is a penny earned as a prescription to be thrifty, for example). As a result, the proverb seems to give authoritative advice on how to deal with many everyday situations. Burke (1945) makes a similar argument about the persuasive nature of common, artful phrases when he points out that people often find themselves entertaining arguments whether or not they accept the basic premises because the arguments are structured in a way that is pleasing and familiar (Burke 1945: 58).

Abrahams is looking specifically at short, traditional conversational genres (the riddle and the proverb), while Burke is dealing more generally with rhetoric’s role in all aspects of communication. These ideas about the persuasive nature of both traditional narrative content and recognizable form are also highly relevant to studies of the personal experience narrative. As mentioned, Stahl points out that personal stories can express traditional attitudes. She also notes that while the content of these stories is not traditional in the same way that the content of a folktale or a legend would be, they may be told in a traditional way. Labov and Waletzky (1997) identify five major components of successful personal narratives: orientation, complication and

result, evaluation, resolution, and coda. Thus, both the content and the structure of personal narratives can have a great deal of persuasive, i.e., rhetorical power. However, most studies of vernacular rhetoric do not focus specifically on its role in the personal experience narrative, and most folkloristic studies of personal experience narrative do not address the concept of vernacular rhetoric directly, although they often look carefully at the role of personal narratives in the regulation of individual behavior and the constitution of folk groups (Kalčík 1975, Santino 1983, Basso 1984, Baldwin 1985, Georges 1987, Wachs 1988, Thomas 1997, Bennett 1999, del Negro 1997, Allen 1998, Shuman 2005, Lawless 2010, Borland, Sawin, and Tye 2017, Parker Horigan 2018).

Robert Glenn Howard (2005) examines online performances of folklore, specifically the placement of the “Sinner’s prayer” in online retail websites. He uses this as an example of how some folk performances may seem to be about persuading an audience over to a specific point of view, but they often have a secondary motivation which in some cases overshadows the first: to demonstrate insider knowledge and points of view to persuade audiences that the performer is already a member of a specific social group. Howard sees vernacular rhetorical theory as the study of the “influence of informal social learning on communication” (Howard 2005: 177), and concludes that “The perspective of vernacular rhetoric suggests that individuals express their motives implicitly in their communications based on socially learned rhetorical strategies” (Howard 2005:184)

Stephen Olbrys Gencarella defines rhetoric as “aesthetic communication that is strategic or tactical and that is performed for persuasion and identification, thereby contributing to the constitution of the social order” (Gencarella 2009: 173). Drawing on Burke’s concept of piety, he conceptualizes all folkloric performance as a rhetorical action that constitutes groups of people,

emphasizing its status as an articulation of power over its more commonly noted attributes as a tool for persuasion, argumentation, or knowledge production. He argues that “A rhetorical appreciation of folklore focuses attention on its participation in the inevitable antagonisms that constitute political reality” (Gencarella 2009: 179). In addition to the constitutive form of rhetoric, Gencarella suggests that rhetoric can also function critically; it is sometimes possible to read critiques of the social order in folk performances. This is a point he pursues further in the 2011 article “Folk Criticism and the Art of Critical Folklore Studies,” in which he suggests scholars view criticism as breaking the linkages of identity and association (Burke 1977) that make up the common knowledge, or piety, of a given community when they are no longer accurate, or contribute to unequal exercises of power. This work attempts to contribute to the body of scholarship on vernacular rhetoric by joining these concepts with the work of scholars of critical race theory and critical whiteness who have utilized similar perspectives such as D’Andrade (1995), Bonilla-Silva (2003), Hill (2008), and Nakamura and Chow-White (2012), many of which are referenced in more detail above.

In addition to contributing to the study of online personal experience narratives by applying the concept of vernacular rhetoric to their content, this study also brings together the fields of vernacular rhetoric and foodways scholarship. Burke’s concept of piety can be fruitfully applied to Lucy Long’s understanding of meaningfulness. In the Introduction to *The Food and Folklore Reader*, Lucy Long differentiates between meaning and meaningfulness in relation to foodways research:

One of the central questions addressed by this more recent folklore scholarship on food is that of meaning. What do certain foods mean, not only on a large cultural and social scale but also to individuals. It is helpful here to distinguish between “meaning” and “meaningfulness.” The former refers to an intellectual, cognitive understanding of what something represents that is created and shared publicly. “Meaningfulness” (sometimes called “felt meaning”) refers to what it means

personally to an individual; that is, what memories and emotions it evokes for them...Folklore scholarship, while attending to the more public meanings of food, generally emphasizes the meaningfulness of a product, practice, or tradition to specific individuals or groups. (Long 2015:13)¹¹.

Essentially, folkloristic studies of foodways contribute unique perspectives to the field of food studies for a number of reasons. First, the methodology of ethnographic fieldwork, an approach folklorists share with anthropologists and sociologists, is here focused on the meaningfulness specific individuals and groups find and make with the food systems they interact with. Second, there is an understanding that this meaning-making is an emergent process that is continuously contested and negotiated by participants. Third, folklorists recognize that this meaning-making process can be applied to any food product, not just those prepared domestically in traditional ways. This focus on the felt meaning of foodways for individuals and small groups has been fruitfully applied to the study of culinary tourism, and I hope to build on this existing research by exploring the meaningfulness of spice for culinary tourists as well as London and Nashville locals. Food is a powerful symbolic tool. In the chapters that follow, I pay close attention to its presence in narratives created by both advertisers and culinary tourists, looking specifically at how it is used rhetorically to invite audiences to identify with the particular form of white racial identity, as the gourmet foodscape these advertisers and consumers inhabit takes whiteness as its default baseline.

Spicy

In seeking to apply the folkloristic concept of the meaningfulness of food, I look specifically to the descriptor “spicy” in the context of Indian restaurants in east London and hot chicken restaurants in Nashville, Tennessee. Here I draw on the approach of Jennifer Rachel

¹¹ For a more developed approach to the concept of meaningfulness in food studies, see Long’s 2017 chapter “Meaning-Centered Research in Food Studies” from *Research Methods for Anthropological Studies of Food and Nutrition* Volume II, edited by Janet Chrzan and John Brett.

Dutch, who looks at master narratives concerning foodways in *Look Who's Cooking: The Rhetoric of American Home Cooking Traditions in the Twenty-First Century*. Dutch compares narratives about the disappearance of home cooking and the serving of healthy whole foods within the day-to-day cooking activities of her family and those of other Americans, noting that these narratives of “the death of home cooking” obscure the complexity and creativity of people’s home cooking techniques, which often involve utilizing processed and prepackaged foods. She argues that online cooking content, both posted recipes and comments about these recipes, serve as a kind of counter narrative. They provide users with a space to emphasize the creativity and ingenuity they utilize in their home cooking, whether they live up to the ideals of slow and whole foods currently emphasized in the media. Her work is especially relevant here because she considers group narrative techniques as well as the role of the Internet as a mediator between mass and vernacular cultures.

Food is a critical part of how many people come to understand their identities, attempt to communicate these identities to others, and, simultaneously, sort others into understandable social categories (Jones 2007). Often, this process of sorting others into identity groups using food relies heavily on stereotypes. Abrahams (1984, 1993) points out that there are a number of characteristics that are often attributed to those understood to be outsiders to any given social group that serve to dehumanize them and link them more closely with the animal world than humanity: “The characteristics associated with earthiness and naturalness, under only slightly modified formations, are attributed equally to savages, to barbarians, and to simple agrarian folk” (Abrahams 1993: 28). Abrahams calls these traits “deep stereotypes,” and provides a list of four major categories that includes, along with “earthiness,” plain speaking, and a liberated attitude towards sexuality, “a strong sense of what to cook and eat, which is native to the region and

which represents the particularities of the topography and the climate (again negatively recoded as being uncultivated, raw, and often referring directly to eating unclean matter, such as feces, carrion, other humans)” (Abrahams 1993: 28). Spicy food, with its characteristic burning heat and its reliance on plants native to specific, colonized and exoticized parts of the globe, has often served as a marker of significant distance between members of different cultural groups over the course of history.

In discussing spice, I am concerned mostly, but not exclusively, with spices that impart a feeling of heat or piquancy to the eater. While many people use the terms “hot” and “spicy” interchangeably to describe piquancy in food, others draw a strict distinction between the two. When interviewing a local hot chicken fan in Nashville, Tennessee, I was sternly criticized for using the word “spicy” to refer to the dish. My interviewee informed me that since hot chicken derives its piquancy from capsaicin rather than black pepper, I needed to refer to it only as “hot”, and never “spicy,” as this was incorrect. While I acknowledge these points, throughout this dissertation I use the two terms interchangeably, as most people do in everyday conversation.

It is worth pointing out, however, that there are indeed two main sources of piquancy that can be added to food. The first, the *Piper* family, of which black pepper, *Piper nigrum*, is the most popular today, are dried berries that can be found on climbing vines (Rowe 2009: 282). While it is not widely considered to be extremely piquant today, pepper was a social status marker in the medieval West. Their exorbitant price, strong flavors, and associations with the far East made spices as precious as jewels, and pepper was the most important of all, because it was often used as a form of currency and understood to have great medicinal value. Sushila Narsimhan writes: “Of all the spices, black peppers, particularly India’s Malabari peppercorns, have been historically the most significant because they were also used as commodity money for

their intrinsic value” (Narsimhan 2009: 122). Their high value in the East and high price made spices like pepper deeply desirable in the West:

Pepper, cinnamon, and nutmeg were status symbols for the ruling class, emblems of power which were displayed and then consumed. The moderation or excess with which they were served attested to the host's social rank. The more sharply pepper seared the guests' palates, the more respect they felt for their host. This symbolic value appears also in the use of spices beyond meals and banquets. They were presented as gifts of state, and were bequeathed together with other heirlooms; in fact, pepper frequently took the place of gold as a means of payment. (Schivelbusch 1992: 7).

It was the high status of pepper and other spices that led to the Age of Exploration, and Christopher Columbus's “discovery” of America and its many unfamiliar forms of produce, including the chili, a brightly colored, spicy fruit that derives its heat from capsaicin, a chemical which is found mostly in its seeds and the pith that contains them (Walton 2018).

Chilis, which resemble the confusingly named long pepper that is native to India and was familiar to medieval people in the West, were incorrectly labeled as peppers, and the name has stuck. As Caroline Rowe (2009) points out, merchants shipping goods to Europe from the New World had every incentive to label as many products as “peppers” as they could get away with, as pepper was so strongly associated with wealth and prestige.¹² As Wolfgang Schivelbusch describes, in medieval times, spices like pepper were associated not only with faraway lands, but with the Biblical Paradise:

The one thing that pepper, cinnamon, cloves, nutmeg, ginger, saffron, and a whole series of other spices had in common was their non-European origin. They all came from the Far East. India and the Moluccas were the chief regions for spices. But that's only a prosaic description of their geographic origin. For the people of

¹² Rowe also makes a compelling argument for considering peppers and chilis as interchangeable that goes beyond accident or intentional mislabeling for profit. She points out that pepper, which derives its heat from piperine, and chilis, which get theirs from capsaicin, both produce a burning sensation in the mouth, both have certain medicinal qualities, and both are technically toxic substances. Since both pepper and chili create a burning sensation with alkaloids, she “...propose[s] that it is this particular feeling, the sensation of burning, heat or pain in the mouth, leading to a rush of endorphins, which is the true meaning of ‘pepper’” (Rowe 2009: 289).

the Middle Ages, spices were emissaries from a fabled world. Pepper, they imagined, grew, rather like a bamboo forest, on a plain near Paradise. (Schivelbusch 1992: 6).

Chilis, incorrectly labeled as peppers, spread from North America throughout the world and quickly became integrated into the cuisines of places like Portugal, India, China, and Africa (Walton 2018).

Interrogating food's ability to serve as a mediator of difference by focusing on the rhetorical role of spice in both face-to-face interviews and online reviews is appealing for many reasons. Most generally, as has been noted above, spice has long had associations with the plush, the exotic, and the divine in the Western imagination. However, this association was not, and is not now, wholly positive. Spices became more widely available as global trade increased, and as a result they became less highly sought after, and their association with the divine was replaced with a sense of them as a commodity. Eventually, spices fell out of fashion in favor of blander fare in Europe (Schivelbusch 1992: 13-14). Symbolically, spices held a tenuous position. As Turner (2004) points out, their very association with wealth and prestige also meant that spices were connected with "...the deadly sins of pride, luxury, gluttony, and lust" (Turner 2004: xvii). Chilis specifically were met with suspicion because of their deep red color when ripe: "Since ancient times Europeans have associated red with fire, peril, anger, and blood, with spiritual danger and mortal wounding, and the color's cultural meanings have allowed chilies to become emblematic of hot-bloodedness, a choleric disposition, and a potentially hazardous sexual allure" (Walton 2018: xvii-xviii). In the eighteenth century in Britain, "Hot spicy food was condemned as overly stimulating and likely to arouse dangerous passions and lusts" (Collingham 2006: 135) and fell out of favor for a time.

To revisit Abrahams's concept of the deep stereotype as it relates to diet, it seems reasonable to assume that these negative traits associated with spice would adhere to members of cultures in which they are most heavily consumed. Mario Montaña's work, referenced above, provides an example of this in North America, noting that

Mexican food was considered unhealthy and unfit for human consumption. Because it was unpalatable, very spicy, and irritating to the Anglo stomach, said Anglo Texans, coyotes and buzzards passed up the dead bodies of Mexicans to feed instead on the bodies of horses and Texans. According to one account, wild animals passed over Mexican corpses during the Mexican War because they were full of red pepper...The red pepper, or chile, in particular, was used extensively to refer to Mexicans in a derogatory manner. (Montaña 1997: 51)

This example is noteworthy for two reasons. First, a diet of chilis places Mexicans below horses in the Texas Anglo imagination. Abrahams points out that deep stereotypes involving the consumption of items considered to be non-foods leads to the dehumanization of those who consume them. In this case, the abjection is taken a step further, as the consumption of spicy food disqualifies one not only from humanity, but also from being consumed by reviled scavengers such as coyotes or buzzards. Eating chilis, then, renders one lower than carrion. Second, in this example we can see the total elision between person and pepper, as Montaña notes that chilies were often used in the construction of racial slurs.

This association between people and chilis is common. Bentley, also referenced above, argues that while the use of the chili in racial slurs has fallen considerably out of favor in recent years, the image of the chili is often used as a tool of colonization in the American Southwest:

In short, the chile pepper, along with its cousins the howling coyote and sprightly mischievous *Kokopelli* (the flute-playing ancient Hopi god of fertility), have replaced the sleepy Mexican under a huge sombrero taking a siesta in the shade of a cactus as icons of the region. The net effect contributes to the exorcising of the actual people and complexities of the region—American Indians, Mexican Americans, and Mexican nationals—and what remains is a warm, romantic feeling connected to the Southwest” (Bentley 2004: 214).

In her analysis of the “staged authenticity” of American Thai restaurants, Jennie Germann Molz argues that “More than any other ingredient, the chili pepper has come to stand for Thai-ness. Thai restaurants understand this equation, and spiciness is indicated in every menu. The Thai restaurants in this study use the chili and spiciness as measures of authenticity” (Germann Molz 2004: 57). While Germann Molz focuses on the chili as a symbol of authenticity, I think it is safe to extend this analysis a step further. Common sense would seem to dictate that the closest one could get to the “real” or authentic Thailand and Thai cuisine would be by actually going there to visit and making connections with Thai people. However, in American Thai restaurants, menus use the chili pepper and the concept of spicy food more generally to signal authenticity to potential patrons. As in Bentley’s analysis of the American Southwest, in this context, the chili pepper comes to replace actual Thai people. “Thai food,” and, by extension, “Thai person,” come to equal spice.

Finally, Hamilton (2015) explores how the Datil pepper has become both a highly marketable product to lure culinary tourists to St. Augustine, Florida, and an important symbol of ethnic identity for a section of the local population who are descended from Minorcan¹³ laborers: “Widely accepted folklore connects the pepper’s earliest seeds to the arrival of the Minorcan laborers. Some St. Augustinians recount tales of Minorcan immigrants sewing Datil pepper seeds into articles of clothing before boarding ships to the Florida colony. For nearly one hundred years, these stories have contributed to an assumed history of the Datil” (Hamilton 2015: 60). The Datil pepper has come to symbolize a portion of the local population descended from Spanish immigrants, and many believe that these ancestors carried Datil seeds with them to their new home. However, locals simultaneously believe that Datil peppers can only be found in St.

¹³ Minorca (also known as Menorca), is an island in the Mediterranean Sea. It is one of the Balearic Islands off of Spain’s eastern coast.

Augustine. Thus, the pepper can provide locals with a link to a distant past while also anchoring them firmly to the place where they currently live, apparently without causing any cognitive dissonance. In each of these examples, the presence of spice in a cuisine becomes confused with the people who consume it, albeit in different ways. In exploring understandings and rhetorical uses of spice within the context of culinary tourism surrounding Indian food in east London and hot chicken in Nashville, Tennessee, I am in part attempting to understand how the concept of spice is connected to consumers in each location.

The symbolic ambivalence surrounding spices and spicy food is perhaps understandable. Studies have been written attempting to make sense of the well-established and consistently increasing popularity of an eating experience that mimics the sensation of burning the tissues of the mouth (see Spence 2018).¹⁴ The sensation is immediately and viscerally unpleasant, yet many people seem compelled to seek it out repeatedly once they experience it for the first time. This burning sensation has been ascribed its own various symbolic significances in different contexts. Alex Rhys-Taylor (2018) recounts how the consumption of an extremely spicy pepper led to the resolution of a conflict between a shopkeeper and an irate customer at a corner store in East London, describing how the unexpected heat and subsequent dopamine rush of the pepper instantly cured the mood of the customer and provided a bonding opportunity between her and the man who owned the store (Rhys-Taylor 2018: 25-28). Additionally, in Western culture, the unusualness of spice paired with the burning sensation it produces make its consumption a way

¹⁴ It is a common misconception that capsaicin burns the mouth, doing harm to nerve endings that then become numb and make it possible for a person to consume increasingly spicy fare. Capsaicin “effectively tricks the organism into thinking it is being burned. It does this by binding to a receptor in our sensory neurons known in the scientific shorthand as TRPV1, or transient receptor potential vanilloid type 1...This group of receptors is principally what enables the body to detect extremes of temperature, the contact of acidic or corrosive substances, or the effect of any kind of abrasion or chafing. That message, when transmitted to the brain via TRPV1, persuades the neural system that the organism is undergoing damage and alerts it to avoid the source of harm” (Walton 2018: 21).

to signal masculinity (see Buettner 2008, Spence 2018, Walton 2018). The early scholar of food studies and culinary tourism Heather Schell argues that culinary tourists in New Orleans, Louisiana seek out the sauces and spicy foods famous to the city to have some kind of visceral physical experience of the Other:

Consuming hot sauce distills the value of ethnic¹⁵ dining to its most potent expression. It offers proof that the cultural experience we crave has really been delivered. We can physically, palpably feel ourselves ingest this foreign essence, and we therefore know that it is real. The peppers are permanently damned, and now we can empathize. We literally feel bad for them and for the people they represent. Having suffered for them through an authentic dining experience and politely contributed to the coffers of the New Orleans tourist industry, we need do no more. (Schell 2001: 215)

Schell's meditation on the appeal of spice, specifically for culinary tourists, neatly combines many of the symbolic themes associated with it over the course of history. Eating hot sauce in New Orleans is authentic, and doing so allows us to empathize with the people (not the same people as the tourists, who are implied to be white, echoing Spracklen [2013]) most associated with it. The peppers that provide much of the heat are "damned," and tourists are willing to travel away from home and pay for the experience of being burned, all of which accords with both positive and negative associations with spice dating back to at least medieval times. It is worth noting as well that Schell's analysis seems to assume that culinary tourists are engaged in culinary tourism in order to gain a better understanding of a cultural Other.

As mentioned earlier, when referring to piquancy, there are two main sources: pipari and capsaicin. While the two are different, they have many important characteristics in common; both produce a burning sensation in the mouth, to different degrees. Spice has an ambivalent symbolic background: associated with the exotic, with paradise, luxury, greed, sin, pain,

¹⁵ Schell defines ethnic food as "...those cuisines designated by nation or ethnicity of origin, as distinguished from those described defined by ingredients or method of preparation" (Schell 2001: 201).

masculinity, sexual impropriety, addiction, authenticity, and, perhaps most consistently, with others, it is perhaps an ideal lens with which to view the parameters and limits of culinary tourism's usefulness as a means of bridging cultural differences.

Spice's usefulness in this endeavor goes beyond the metaphorical. The popularity and pursuit of spice is directly responsible for modernity (Schivelbusch 1992), global capitalism (Rowe 2009), and also for colonialism: "The global spice market, which started with the discovery of the Americas some 550 years ago, can be seen as one of the triggers for European expansion...Set against the profit of the Western world, it is a tragic history of the numerous colonies, battles and wars, exploitation of local people, and destruction of natural environments" (Karg 2018). The allure of Indian spices led to a fascination with India and the East more generally in the Medieval west that began with the crusades and eventually resulted in the violent colonization of present-day India. Narsimhan identifies pepper specifically with violent conquest. She describes Vasco de Gama's betrayal of Samuthri Raja, the Hindu ruler of Calicut, who had welcomed him to his kingdom: "After the discovery of a sea route to India, naval expeditions became annual events. The sight of lush green pepper vines in Malabar aroused imperialistic ambitions and Vasco da Gama returned to India in 1502 with an armada of 20 warships. He did not even spare his old friend, Samuthri, and bombarded Calicut" (Narsimhan 2009: 18).

The violent conquest of Calicut, motivated by a desire to gain greater control of spices like the Malabari peppercorn, changed how Westerners viewed the East. Long considered a place rich in both culture and material wealth, and physically close to paradise on Earth, it was increasingly understood to be a land of raw resources available for the taking. This attitude led to the creation of trading posts throughout the region by the Portuguese, and fierce competition

between various European countries for control of these areas: “European discovery of the spice-regions, in short, also meant the beginnings of global conflict” (Narmsimhan 2009: 21). While Portugal and Spain held control over the spice routes for a hundred years, by the end of the sixteenth century, first the Dutch and ultimately the British were able to wrest control by 1600 (Narmsimhan 2009: 23).

By the time the British East India Company began operation, what is now India had already been introduced to the Chili pepper by the Portuguese, and the southern region of Goa had adopted it into the local cuisine with alacrity, but it was not adopted in other areas until nearly two hundred years later (Collingham 2006: 71). Because of its association with both pepper and chili, Indian cuisine today is widely understood to be very piquant. While this is true in some regions, it is certainly not universally the case.

Soul food, the culinary tradition created by the melding of African and European foodways within the context of slavery, particularly in the American South, is also often understood to be spicy: “Most important to the nature of soul food is the African tradition of using spices to make food more interesting. The hot malagueta or guinea pepper is the most dominant spice, but other peppers include *pili-pili* and the red pimento, both of which are capsicum peppers of American origin” (Whit 2007: 48). Hot chicken can be best understood as a food born out of this same context. Indeed, Dollye Ingraham-Matthews, owner of one of the oldest hot chicken establishments in Nashville, argues that hot chicken should be called “soul-food hot chicken...because it developed in the Black community. When you say Nashville hot chicken, it’s like taking it away from where it came from once again. Stealing that identity” (Martin 2021: 160).

The connection between identity and spice has been explored above. Most often, it seems that when spicy food is connected with identity, it is done in a way that tends to dehumanize the people who are understood to consume it, and to take over outsider understandings of the cuisines it belongs to: where heat enters, nuance is lost. One could expect that given these circumstances, overly spicy foods might be classified as private by the communities that consume them: “Even so, not all ethnic foods are deemed appropriate for public notice. Most cultures have certain well-liked foods...which members think project a derogatory image of themselves, symbolizing poverty, peasant origins, or the willingness to consume foods of doubtful origin. These dishes are reserved for private consumption” (Kaplan, Hoover, and Moore 1998: 131).

That this is not the case when it comes to promoting curry and hot chicken to culinary tourists can be explained by the current contours of the gourmet foodscape. Johnston and Baumann (2015) identify authenticity and exoticness as the two primary factors useful in creating distinction using food at the present time. Work like Jennie Germann Molz’s “Tasting an Imagined Thailand: Authenticity and Culinary Tourism in Thai Restaurants” demonstrates how symbols of spice like the chili pepper come to symbolize authenticity for would-be consumers. Spicy foods, particularly those which include capsaicin, with their strong, burning flavors, are also exotic. Johnston and Baumann “suggest a twofold characterization that emphasizes how exotic foods are predicated on (1) social distance; and (2) breaking norms” (Johnston and Baumann 2015: 95). Spicy food, thought to “belong” to cultures other than the white, middle-class background culinary tourists are generally understood to share, and norm-breaking in its levels of heat, fulfills both criteria for exoticness. Indeed, Johnston and Baumann

note that “the valorization of exotic food commonly references spice” (Johnston and Baumann 2015: 105).

Additionally, the appeal of curry in east London and hot chicken in Nashville for culinary tourists is, I believe, partly based on the possibility for customizing the experience: curries and hot chicken can be ordered mild, medium, or hot, and during fieldwork in both locations I noticed that menu items often provide a ranking of the heat level of the dishes on offer, as well as suggestions for other items, such as mango lassis or coleslaw, to help consumers deal with the heat. This preference for spicy food that can be quantified and controlled in both locations provides support for Johnston and Baumann’s observation that “strong exoticism, based on prominent forms of social and geographic distance, is less frequent in foodie discourse than the weak form of exoticism associated with food and people who are only somewhat socially and geographically distant from American foodies” (Johnston and Baumann 2015: 100). The dishes advertised in each location: curry, a British invention meant to fuse Indian flavors with recognizable British food practices like combining vegetables and a thick, gravy-like sauce, and fried chicken, rather than more unfamiliar fare such as, for example, chitlins, further support the preference among present-day foodies for weak rather than strong exoticism in their dining experiences. As Doris Friedensohn expresses it in her meditation on being an American culinary tourist in Mexico:

As a tourist, I crave new knowledge and intense experiences—up to a certain point. I want to expand my boundaries without losing them. I want adventure and safety, too. At middle age, I am willing to put my waistline at risk for unusual foods and culinary happenings, but I am cranky about infection, digestion, and bowels. It’s one thing to buy an ‘alien’ object as a souvenir, another to ingest it. (Friedensohn 2001: 166)

There is an inherent level of risk associated with eating spicy food that is a major source of its potential to serve as an unusual experience: “Experimentation had its risks and dangers—

the dangers of ordering a dish that was too spicy, too full of ‘weird’ foods—but that risk was just part of the experiment, part of the adventure” (Heldke 2003: vx). Eating spicy food on Brick Lane in east London or at hot chicken shacks in east Nashville is an adventure that provides the allure of risk without the consequences: as will be explored in more detail in the chapters that follow, encounters with spice are always clearly demarcated and managed in such a way that tourists very seldom encounter a dish that is too hot to comfortably consume, and if they do, there is always a restaurant employee nearby with a readily available solution and a backup option. At least, this is the case in establishments that most culinary tourists seem to favor in their online reviews, and consider worth spending time and money in frequenting. This is another theme that will be addressed in greater detail below, particularly in Chapters Two and Three.

The foodies Johnston and Baumann describe in their work on social distinction, authenticity, and exoticism, seem closely related to the group Lisa Heldke identifies as “food adventurers, “those people for whom eating is an expedition into the unknown, a pursuit of the strange” (Heldke 2003: xxi). Heldke describes this group as people who feel they do not have a culture of their own, often Euroamerican, Christian, and middle class (2003: xx-xxiv). The culinary tourists (and, at times the culinary tourism professionals) I focus on in this thesis share these characteristics. In reflecting on their relationships with spice in two specific site case studies, I hope to contribute to culinary tourism scholarship. Spice’s symbolic and cultural history makes it an especially important subject for studies of culinary tourism.

Folkloristic Contributions

A folkloristic perspective, specifically its understandings of the concept of meaningfulness and of personal narratives as traditional expressions of larger cultural worldview

(Toelken 1996), can help reveal how individual people understand their relationships to and roles in maintaining and contesting racial, ethnic, and class boundaries. On the other hand, folklore's emphasis on the individual and small group, the everyday, and the humble (Noyes 2016) means that at times it struggles to address larger cultural phenomena. Here, I join folkloristic approaches to the work of critical race theory and critical whiteness studies with the goal of contributing to understandings of how individual people experience and conceptualize their relationships with food, race, and class in everyday life.

My hope is that in considering the online restaurant review as a kind of personal experience narrative, that is in some ways closely aligned with earlier forms of travel writing, this work will also contribute to folk narrative scholarship. My intention is to help expand folkloristic understandings of the forms personal narratives can take, following in the footsteps of other scholars of culinary tourism who have used online materials. Additionally, in focusing on the connections between vernacular rhetoric and Stahl's description of the personal experience narrative as a form of folk narrative that reflects traditional attitudes, I hope to build further connections between folkloristic perspectives and the study of foodways more generally. In her work on food adventurers, Heldke describes them as tending to have a specific attitude towards food and eating. Heldke defines attitude as "individual embodiments of culture-wide ideologies" (Heldke 2003: 5) and provides three aspects of attitudes many food adventurers have that she considers to be food colonizing: "their often obsessive interest in and appetite for the new, the obscure, and the exotic; and their treatment of dominated cultures not as genuine cultures, but as resources for raw materials that serve their own interests. These two elements are linked together by a third element that plays a supporting role: the adventurer's intense desire for authentic experiences of authentic cultures" (Heldke 2003: 7).

These food colonizer attitudes, which Heldke links more broadly to other forms of consumption beyond the comestible, are central to the construction of the white, middle-class identity Heldke identifies as characteristic of food adventurers. In the pages that follow I argue that these attitudes are traditional aspects of middle-class white identity, and that they are expressed rhetorically to constitute a specifically white cultural group (Gencarella 2009) in online reviews and everyday conversation about consuming spicy foods by white people for the specific purpose of creating and maintaining a white identity. At the same time, eating and talking about spicy foods does provide some potential moments for resistance, and critical engagement with whiteness. As Heldke puts it: “Understanding attitudes in this way means that when two people engage in what is ostensibly the same activity but with different attitudes the activities are *not* the same in the two cases. A group of people eating in an ethnic restaurant are not all doing the same thing, but are engaging in a host of different activities that are infused with the attitudes of those who participate in them” (Heldke 2003: 5).

I also explore how the individuals who work in the tourism industry in both locations experience food colonizer attitudes: how do employees reference them in order to do their jobs, and in what ways do they resist or disrupt them? Here, as mentioned above, I am attempting to respond to the challenges put forth by folklorists such as Ebony L. Bailey (2021) and Anand Prahlad (2021) to address the ways folklore as an academic discipline has upheld white supremacy, and to create more studies of the folklore of groups who are non-exotic to the researcher.

Methodology

To complete this research, I did several months of fieldwork in both London and Nashville. As mentioned earlier, I have been splitting my time between Nashville, Tennessee and

Newfoundland and Labrador, Canada for the past five years. After completing my initial research paper on Nashville hot chicken for a cultural tourism class in the Spring of 2018, I was interested to further explore the themes that arose during the project. That summer, I interviewed five people who belonged to an online fan group dedicated to hot chicken, two locals and three people who had tried hot chicken while visiting the city and then joined the group afterwards. I also interviewed the owner of a hot chicken restaurant that was very popular with locals. I had no specific goals in mind for this fieldwork, I was simply interested in the topic and decided to take advantage of the fact that I was living in Nashville at the time to pursue it.

When I decided to make culinary tourism the focus of my PhD dissertation, and to expand my focus to include east London's Brick Lane as a second case study, I planned to spend three months doing fieldwork in London from September through the end of November of 2019. Then, I planned to return to Nashville from January through the end of March of 2020 to do some additional fieldwork there before returning to Newfoundland in May of 2020 to begin writing.

The first portion of my fieldwork went according to plan. In east London, I recorded interviews with four tour guides and one tour coordinator, two representatives from a beer company whose products are traditionally served in British Indian Restaurants who organize the events surrounding the annual National Curry Week in England, and two individuals who work in Indian restaurants on Brick Lane. I also participated in six food tours in the area. Finally, I accompanied an employee of the beer company on a night where he took orders for refills of product in Chelsea. While this trip was not based on Brick Lane, I was able to speak with both the employee of the beer company and several owners and employees of Indian restaurants in

Chelsea about their thoughts and feelings surrounding Brick Lane and its Indian restaurants because of this trip.

The global Covid-19 pandemic significantly affected my plans to complete the second half of my fieldwork in ways that were both positive and negative. I was unable to do in-person interviews in Nashville, or to participate in food tours in the city. As a result, I cannot compare culinary tours in east London and Nashville, as I had planned to do, and I was only able to arrange one interview with an individual who had worked as a guide on a culinary tour in Nashville. Even with these limitations, however, I recorded a total of seventeen online interviews with nineteen locals who work in the culinary tourism industry or in hot chicken restaurants, public and academic intellectuals who have studied and written about the dish, and tourists who have visited the city to sample it. I also worked as a volunteer at the 2020 Music City Hot Chicken Festival on the Fourth of July. Because of these necessary changes to my fieldworking approach, the two case studies that make up this dissertation do not mirror one another in the ways that I had originally envisioned, although several common themes and potential areas for further research still arose throughout the writing process.

The pandemic also changed my travel plans significantly while doing fieldwork. I had intended to be in Nashville for three months, but I ended up staying in the city for a full calendar year as a result of travel restrictions that made it impossible for me to return to St. John's. This gave me quite a great deal of extra time to make connections and record remote interviews in Nashville. As a result, I recorded more from this location than I initially anticipated, and my Nashville interview materials outweigh those from England.

Even with these changes to my original fieldworking plan, I was able to follow the same basic methodological steps in London and Nashville. In each location, I relied on the established

folkloristic methods of participant observation and recorded interviews. In both locations, I spent a great deal of time in the restaurants I planned to focus on in my final study, and in the surrounding neighborhoods (east London and north and east Nashville) where curry and hot chicken are thought to be the main draw for culinary tourists, and I participated in special events featuring both of these foods. I took copious fieldnotes, paying special attention to rhetorical uses of the concept of spice that were present in both the narratives of culinary tourists and in the promotional literature restaurant owners and tourism industry workers had created to sell these culinary experiences. In my interviews, I focused my questions on the importance of spice to interviewees, their identities as adventurous eaters, and their thoughts and feelings about connections between food choice and personal and group identity formation. Additionally, I analyzed roughly 200 online reviews of two Indian restaurants in London and two hot chicken restaurants in Nashville, and participated in online fan groups devoted to curry and hot chicken in order to blend together online and in-person research at each location.

Some of the concepts that have come up with my dissertation topic are sensitive, as they involve issues of race, class, and cultural appropriation. For this reason, I have created pseudonyms for all of my tradition bearers, and have done everything in my power to obscure any potential identifying characteristics about them in the following pages. In the case of the online reviews, I have decided to include usernames in my in-text citations of this material, as these were written with a wide audience in mind.

As mentioned above, I consider online restaurant reviews as a form of personal experience narrative because they often dwell on the experiences diners have at specific eateries and include personal details about the reviewers' lives and their reasons for choosing these locations for a meal, as much if not more than they focus on the food they consumed. Viewing

these posts as a kind of traditional narrative helps to incorporate them into the greater body of fieldwork completed for this project, which includes in-person and online interviews with culinary tourists and tourism professionals, as well as participant observation on culinary tours and at food festivals in both London and Nashville. In analyzing all of the collected material, a major focus of my analysis is on how members of all these groups use the concept of spice in their personal narratives of food adventuring, within the professional context of selling culinary tourist experiences, and in the creation of local identities in both London and Nashville. In doing this analysis, I am guided by Sandra Stahl's (1977) assertion discussed above that personal experience narratives communicate traditional attitudes, as well as vernacular rhetoric's emphasis on the importance of identification in persuasion (Burke 1945, 1977), and how this persuasive identification is used in the creation and maintenance of social groups (Gencarella 2009). I am applying these perspectives specifically to the activity of food adventuring or food colonization (Heldke 2003) as a performance of white identity that is constantly being maintained and simultaneously contested by culinary tourists, tourism professionals, and locals who simply live in east London and Nashville and observe how specific foods come to symbolize their homes.

Chapter Outline

This introductory chapter has set the context for the rest of the study. In the preceding pages I outlined my topic and indicated the two locations I have chosen to set case studies: Brick Lane in east London and Nashville, Tennessee. After sharing the central research questions that shape the dissertation, I introduced the bodies of literature I draw on to complete my analysis. This work brings together works from a variety of fields, including foodways and culinary

tourism scholarship; critical race theory and critical whiteness studies; folkloristic studies of narrative, especially personal experience narratives and vernacular rhetorical theory, and analyses of the symbolism of spicy food. This literature is located across multiple disciplines including history, anthropology, sociology, folklore, feminist studies, colonial studies, and philosophy. In the chapter I also described my methodology and detailed the ways in which the Covid-19 pandemic challenged and shaped this project.

The next four chapters form the core of the study. Chapter Two and Chapter Three consider aspects of spice in the context of curry on Brick Lane, East London. The first explores representations of spice by tourism operators and promoters while the second examines the uses tourists make of spice by comparing online reviews of two specific representative restaurants. This organization is repeated in Chapter Four and Chapter Five, as the focus shifts to a discussion of hot chicken in Nashville. Finally, in Chapter Six I conclude the dissertation with a summary of the themes of each chapter, followed by suggestions for areas for further research.

In the following chapter, “Eat Like a True Londoner: Approaches to Selling Diversity on Brick Lane,” I begin the first case study, set in Brick Lane in east London. To set the stage, I provide a brief history of Indian cuisine in London, focusing on Brick Lane specifically. Using this historical context, I explain why I have chosen to rely on generic “curry” as the central focal point of this case study rather than a specific dish. I go on to explore the importance of the “spiciness” of curry in the creation of promotional literature for Brick Lane and east London more generally, and compare these rhetorical uses to the ways that individuals who work on Brick Lane, as guides, tour organizers, or as restaurant employees, use the concept of spice in their occupational activities.

Chapter Two:

Eat Like a True Londoner:

Approaches to Selling Diversity on Brick Lane

Chapter Introduction

As discussed in the last chapter, in recent years, there have been increasing calls to incorporate elements of critical race theory into folkloristic research, and to attempt to decolonize the field (see Bailey 2021 and Prahald 2021 for two examples). While folklorists have had a long interest in connections between folklore and ethnic identity, links of folklore to modernity, nationalism, and colonialism, and proposed approaches to conducting a critical folkloristics (for some examples see Fry 1975, Hymes 1975, Abrahams 1992, Fox 1993, Bendix 1997, Tuleja 1997, Anttonen 2005, Whisnant 2009, Gencarella 2009 and 2013, Naithani 2010, Jackson 2013, Moody-Turner 2013, Greenhill and Marshall 2016, Bacchilega and Naithani 2018, Mills 2020, and Roberts 2021), the studies of the folklore of whiteness as a social identity that Anand Prahald calls for are relatively uncommon (see Leary 1977, Thomas and Enders 2000, and Mullen 2008 for some exceptions). Perhaps this absence is partly due to the widespread understanding of whiteness as unmarked or invisible (Perry 2001). That said, because of its orientation towards the communal, the common, the informal, the marginal, the personal, the traditional, the aesthetic, and the ideological (Oring 1986), and because of its focus on “how” rather than “why” questions (Noyes 2016: 15), folklore as a discipline is uniquely situated to explore issues of structural inequality and performances of white identity, as it is within the context of everyday life that issues of race and other forms of identity are performed, perfected, and, at times, contested.

Foodways, the “total cookery complex, including attitudes, taboos, and meal systems—the whole range of cookery and food habits in a society” (Yoder 1972: 325), is one such arena of the practical and quotidian where individual and group identities and values are commonly expressed and renegotiated. The concept of “ethnic” food has long been indicated as both a site for potential racial integration and increased harmony (Kalčík 1984, Mak, Lumbers, and Eves 2012), and as an inherently problematic concept that contributes to oppression and upholds hegemonic white supremacy (Montaño 1997, Spracklen 2013). As noted in the previous chapter, bell hooks argues that “Within commodity culture, ethnicity becomes spice” (hooks 1992: 21). This dissertation investigates the premise that the reverse is also true: within commodity culture, spice becomes a kind of shorthand for selling ethnicity (see the work on spice and “ethnic” foods cited in Chapter One), and a coded way for individuals to make observations and comments about ethnicity and race that would otherwise be considered inappropriate. In this chapter, I explore rhetorical uses for the concept of spice (here used to mean both piquancy, and more generally to indicate flavor) as they are employed in the creation of destination images (Echtner and Ritchie 2003)¹⁶ by the tourism industry surrounding culinary tourism in east London’s Brick Lane, an area famous for its Indian restaurants and other establishments for “ethnic” cuisine.

Indian restaurants on Brick Lane provide an especially rich site for investigation of how spice can be used rhetorically by culinary tourists, as Indian food in the United Kingdom has its own long and contested history (Buettner 2008) reaching back to the time of the British East India Company (Collingham 2006). As will be described briefly below, the concept of spice has been a central rhetorical aspect of how tourist organizations attempt to sell the experience of visiting east London, and specifically of eating in Indian Restaurants on Brick Lane, to potential

¹⁶ For more on destination images in the context of food tourism, see the 2014 volume *Foodies & Food Tourism* edited by Getz et.al.

consumers in a way that suggests both the authentic and the exotic (Johnston and Baumann 2015). With an eye towards using a folkloristic approach to understanding larger issues of performances of racial identity and lived experiences of structural inequality, I focus in the second half of the chapter on the experiences and beliefs of individuals who work within east London's tourism industry rather than on the destination images being sold. How do the people who sell these experiences feel about their work? In what ways do they subscribe to the master narratives of the tourism industry, and in what ways do they work their own counternarratives (Shuman 2005) into their presentations of Indian restaurants on Brick Lane? How does the rhetorical use of the concept of spice factor into both perspectives?

Why Indian Restaurants on Brick Lane?

In Chapter One, I explored the problematic nature of the concept of "ethnic" food in the realm of culinary tourism, understood in its broadest sense as exploratory eating, within the greater realm of leisure activities. Indian food in the United Kingdom has a unique, specific history that is relevant to this larger conversation. The British East India Company was formed in response to the riches the Dutch were making trading in spices in 1599 (Dalrymple 2019: 6-7, Turner 2004: 77-78). The presence of white British people, first as employees of the British East India Company, and later, after India became a part of the British empire in 1858 (Collingham 2006: 150), meant significant changes to the cuisine on offer. What we know of today as curry was born out of this contact between British palates and Indian cuisine: "Curry became not just a term that the British used to describe an unfamiliar set of Indian stews and ragouts, but a dish in its own right, created for the British in India. One nineteenth century surgeon described curry as 'a most heterogeneous compound of ginger, nutmeg, cinnamon, cloves, cardamoms, coriander,

Cayenne pepper, onions, garlic, and turmeric, ground to a powder by a pestle and mortar, made into a paste by ghee, ... and added to a stewed kid or fowl” (Collingham 2006: 118). As British officials were moved around the subcontinent on various assignments, they incorporated certain aspects of the regional cuisines of each location into their repertoire of curries. For this reason, Collingham writes that Anglo-Indian cooking was the first instance of a pan-Indian cuisine: “Indeed, one of the most distinguishing characteristics of Anglo-Indian cookery was its tendency to apply appealing aspects of particular regional dishes to all sorts of curry” (Collingham 2006: 118). In spite of this, Collingham stresses that Anglo-Indian cookery should not be considered a “true” form of national Indian cuisine, as this cooking style was never widely adopted by the locals in any of the regions the officials traveled to (Collingham 2006: 125).

Despite a lack of connection with locals, it was this Anglicized form of Indian cuisine that British officials consumed while in India, and what they described to friends and family members at home. It was also what they most missed when their assignments were complete. In order to accommodate this desire, a number of purveyors of Indian spices began selling spice mixtures to be used in the creation of curries in Britain. One of the first Indian restaurants in London, the Hindostanee Cafe, was opened in 1811 explicitly for retired employees of the British East India Company to enjoy the foods and general atmosphere they had left behind in India (Collingham 2006: 129). These returning employees and, later, government officials, also occasionally requested that the dishes they enjoyed in India be reproduced in their own kitchens. Premade curry powders appeared on the market to facilitate this growing interest. At first, it was understood that these mixtures of dried spices were meant as a replacement for the individual components that were added at different stages of the cooking process in India, but eventually,

curry powder began to be viewed in Britain as its own, singular spice, which was an essential element of cooking Indian food (Collingham 2006: 142-144).

This invention of first curry, and then curry powder, was an important part of the maintenance of the British empire. In her analysis of Victorian cookbooks, Susan Zlotnick suggests that "...nineteenth-century domestic cookery books are self-conscious cultural documents in which we can locate a metaphor for nineteenth-century British imperialism, in which the Other presents itself not as a source of threat and contamination but of nourishment. By virtue of their own domesticity, Victorian women could neutralize the threat of the Other by naturalizing the products of foreign lands" (Zlotnick 1996: 53). Collingham describes how India and Indian cuisine were presented as a form of pro-empire entertainment at various exhibitions throughout the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. These events were meant to drum up a sense of patriotism and enthusiasm for empire for specific political purposes, often to maintain control of the working classes: "Music-hall songs, popular plays, children's adventure stories, all celebrating Britain's empire, distracted the working man from the inequalities in British society by encouraging him to identify with a larger imperial project" (Collingham 2006: 150). The most successful of these, The British Empire Exhibition at Wembley, which ran from 1924 to 1925, included a section on India that featured a cafe serving Indian cuisine that became Veeraswamy's, England's longest-running Indian restaurant (Collingham 2006: 153). Veeraswamy's was run by Edward Palmer, who specialized in importing Indian foods and spices to Britain and created his own popular form of curry powder (ibid.).

Rohit Varman describes how Europeans combined the names for several different South Asian dishes into the word "curry" without distinction (Varman 2017: 350-351). He cites Uma Narayan's (1995) observation that the construction of curry mirrored that of the construction of

India as a single political entity under the control of the British (Varman 2017 :353) and concludes that the popularity of Indian restaurants today is a form of “gastronostalgia”: “The widespread consumption of curry serves as a reminder of Britain’s position as a master nation and the transnational territorial control that produced its cosmopolitan consuming subjects, who seamlessly shift from one colonial offering to another” (Varman 2017: 354).

While the transformation and consumption of Indian cuisine played an important role in the celebration of the British Empire and the formation of a distinctly white British identity, white British people were sometimes skeptical of Indian food, and especially the standards of cleanliness used to prepare it. In her analysis of the culinary culture of white British people living in India in the nineteenth century, Caroline Lusin includes the description of an Indian kitchen from the preface of *The Complete Indian Housekeeper and Cook*, originally published in 1888, to illustrate the British prejudices against Indian cooking and standards of hygiene: “The kitchen is a black hole, the pantry a sink. The only servant who will condescend to tidy up is a skulking savage with a red broom; whilst pervading all things broods the stifling, enervating atmosphere of custom, against which energy beats itself unavailingly, as against a feather bed” (Lusin 2013: 472). Narayan describes this same set of prejudices when she writes that India, while considered to be a jewel in the empire’s crown, and a useful rhetorical tool for inspiring a sense of patriotism amongst the white working classes, was also viewed as “the India of ignorant natives, indolent and incompetent rulers, of vile practices and ungrateful mutinies, of snakes and scorpions, of the heat and the dust and the hard-to-convert heathens—an India that vividly signified the need for the civilizing mission of the British” (Narayan 1995: 65). The characteristics of this second India of the British imperial imagination were reflected in how white British people felt about Indian cuisine as well: “After curry’s heyday in Victorian Britain,

a prejudice had developed against curry as ‘spicy and disagreeable to respectable middle-class English stomachs.’ Curries were also thought of as smelly dishes to cook, which was a consideration in the 1950s when middle-class kitchens moved up from the basement into the main living area of the house” (Collingham 2006: 230).

Harvey Day, a cookbook writer who published a compendium on Indian cuisine called *The Complete Book of Curries* in 1966, noted the persistent impression that curries were unhealthy, causing gastric distress and a bad temper in the consumer. Buettner references his writing in her work on Indian restaurants in the United Kingdom, noting that he attempted to address in his books “preconceptions of curry as an underhanded method of disguising spoiled food with pungent spices and the persistent idea ‘that Indian cooks are dirty and their dishes permeated by disease germs’” (Buettner 2008: 874). Summing up attitudes towards both former employees of the empire and of Indian people, Buettner notes that “two stereotypes converged: that of the arrogant, privileged colonial, and that of the unhygienic South Asian peoples and food” (Buettner 2008: 874). However, as the 1950s turned to the 1960s, interest in Indian food and Indian restaurants increased as cosmopolitanism and multiculturalism became more highly valued in British culture. This interest was first born out of a desire for adventure, particularly on the part of working class white British men looking to demonstrate their bravery and imperviousness to spice. I will return to these points in more detail presently.

I first want to note that it is because of the constructed nature of curry, along with its symbolic ambivalence in the British imagination, that I have chosen to focus in this study on “curry” rather than on one specific dish, as I do in the second half when I turn to hot chicken in Nashville, Tennessee. As Narayan puts it:

Curry exists of course in one fairly simple sense, on the menus of Indian restaurants, and in bottles of curry powder to be found even in unpretentious US

grocery stores. But search through the shelves in an Indian kitchen, or grocery store, and you will find no bottles labeled ‘curry powder.’...What we called curry in my vegetarian South Indian home were some dishes of spiced mixed vegetable, eaten with rice, the spices bearing little resemblance to curry powder. (Narayan 1995: 65)

Additionally, the construction of curry contributes to the misconception of Indian cuisine as inherently spicy, a point that was mentioned in the previous chapter. Collingham notes that “The Anglo-Indians also liked their curries extremely hot. Curry-powder vendors spent a great deal of energy trying to persuade their British customers that it was not necessary to ‘experience the discomfort occasioned by excessive heat in order to enjoy the full delicacy of Eastern condiments’” (Collingham 2006: 145) when attempting to sell curry powder to British consumers in the mid-eighteen fifties.

Negotiating levels of heat became an integral part of how specific Anglo-Indian curries were created and presented to consumers as white English people began frequenting Indian restaurants with more regularity: “A code developed that assigned new meanings to traditional titles for Indian dishes. Thus korma came to signify a mild creamy dish, dhansak meant a slightly sweet lentil curry, and vindaloo simply indicated that the food would be very hot” (Collingham 2006: 227). As will be explored in more detail below, this ranking of heat levels of Indian dishes, and understanding that Indian food is generally spicy, are central areas of focus in promotional literature surrounding Indian restaurants in east London today, in the media discourse surrounding Indian food in London more generally, and in the canons of work technique of culinary tour guides who bring visitors to Indian restaurants. The fact that this understanding of Indian cuisine is oversimplified, or that in many cases it was British people working in India themselves who introduced extra heat to the food, brings to mind Narayan’s point that “Perhaps stories about ‘Others’ are inevitably stories about oneself” (Narayan 1995: 66). Curry, a food

constructed by British officials in India that has been used to represent Indian cuisine to British people at home and the rest of the Western world more generally, now constitutes a significant culinary tourist attraction. That it is understood to be very spicy in spite of the fact that this conception, too, is an Anglo construction, provides an opportunity to explore what stories culinary tourists, especially white culinary tourists, are writing and telling about themselves in their visits to east London. I explore these themes in detail in the following chapter.

Buettner offers a brief history of the first Indian restaurants in London: small, working-class establishments on the east side run by men from present-day Bangladesh catering mostly to other men from the area who worked in shipping. From the 1950s to the 1980s, Buettner claims that white people rarely ventured into these restaurants, citing concerns about hygiene and the strong smell of South Asian cuisine as a kind of sensory assault that invaded the private space of the white English home. However, starting in the 1960s, eating in Indian restaurants became a way for white English men to model bravery and sophistication, as mentioned above. This new interest in Indian cuisine led to a dual existence, where restaurants offered two sets of dishes, one designed for white English palates, and another for South Asians, although this latter category received little attention in popular discourse: “Public discussions revolved around those patronized mainly by whites, with most Asians becoming sidelined as consumers of a cuisine that was purportedly ‘theirs,’ however inauthentic such food was accused of being” (Buettner 2008: 882).

Buettner details how an increased interest in Indian cuisine led simultaneously to a highly Anglicized menu and increased claims of inauthenticity. Ravi Arvind Palat identifies two key aspects of Indian restaurants in Britain: first, they have become a fixture of the British high street restaurant scene over the past 30 years, and second, that this central status came about because

“...they offered cheap, filling, tasty food...and because the standardized menus of these restaurants did not highlight vegetables, unlike on the subcontinent, but were adapted to meet the British demand for meat, vegetables and starch” (Palat 2015: 172). Palat goes on to suggest that it is because of an association with cheapness that until very recently, Indian food in Britain has been excluded from the country’s elite dining scene. He also notes that the popularity of Indian restaurants has led to a complicated acceptance of Asian immigrants. Like Buettner, he links the rise of the curry house with white men looking to demonstrate adventurousness, a situation with potential consequences: “After a night at the pub, when young men rolled into a curry house, they tended to treat the waiters with disrespect and racist taunts were routine fare for restaurant workers” (Palat 2015: 173). Lusin echoes this point at the end of her study of nineteenth century attitudes towards Indian cuisine. Surveying the popularity of Anglo-Indian dishes like vindaloo and chicken tikka masala in present-day Britain and comparing this enthusiasm with the disgust of 150 years ago, she concludes that “The popularity of Indian (or mock-Indian) food indicates how strongly British cultural identity is still infused with the country’s colonial heritage. Again, it seems, Indian culinary culture plays an important role in the construction of British cultural identity, but this time very much in the affirmative” (Lusin 2013: 486).

Despite their more positive emplacement in modern British culture, Indian restaurants are often still economically and physically marginalized. In his analysis of British Indian restaurants as popular culture, Ben Highmore (2009) lists seven characteristics that define these establishments. They are often set up in neighborhoods or even buildings that have previously been known for providing cheap foods, giving them an immediate association with the lower classes; they are almost exclusively owned and run by men; they often change hands several times during their tenure, which Highmore suggests means that providing fine dining is not their

goal; they are characterized by self-exploitation; relatedly, they are spaces that are marked by the possibility for racial and ethnic conflict; and they offer a standardized bill of fare to consumers who expect to see dishes such as chicken tikka masala, balti, and korma on the menu. Finally, Highmore suggests that even though they are spaces that can be exploitative and potentially unsafe for South Asians, the restaurants also function as community centers and can be seen as an “unofficial public sphere for a diasporic community” (Highmore 2009: 181-184).

An increase in interest in multiculturalism in London over time (Mavrommatis 2010), as well as growing demand for more specialized, regional forms of Indian cuisine that are understood to be more authentic than the fare served at most traditional curry houses (Buettner 2008 and 2009, Highmore 2009, Black 2010, Ray and Srinivas 2012), have contributed to greater cultural agency for Indian restaurateurs in the present day. This agency, however, is still limited. K. Spracklen (2013) uses Indian restaurants in the United Kingdom as a prime example of how the concept of “ethnic” food leaves ethnic minorities at the disposal of the whims of dominant white culture:

Where Indian restaurants have become successful (and where they have turned into chains) is at the top end of the market, where they cater for bourgeois white people seeking a measure of authenticity and the thrill of diversity, where white people can show they are at ease with the Other and impress their white friends with knowledge of ‘how the Indians eat.’ Indian restaurants for British Asian people and for a more diverse range of the market do exist in multicultural cities, but these are outnumbered by the high-end restaurants and the cheap Sylheti places that serve as the only places in many small English towns where white people see Asians. Ethnic food, then, is highly problematical as a concept, and even where it has been in part an invention of minority ethnic groups (such as British curry) it is still subordinate to the hegemonic forces of whiteness that shape contemporary Western culture. (Spracklen 2013: 156-157)

In sum, Indian cuisine has a central place in British culture, but this place is symbolically ambiguous, and popular understandings of what constitutes Indian cuisine are often oversimplified or inaccurate.

While focusing on Indian food in Britain provides an opportunity to explore food's role in iterations of and negotiations over social power, the specific location of Brick Lane in east London in England is also significant. Engaging in eating to explore, to understand oneself in relation to some clearly defined Other, is a practice inextricably intertwined with narratives, of the self, of the Other, and of the state. Tourism agencies, which are often connected with government bodies, can shape narratives of place by promoting specific dishes, ingredients, or cuisines as being exemplary of their location. As Jeou-Shyan Horng and Chen-Tsang Tsai suggest in their study of how culinary tourism is promoted on government websites in East Asian countries: "National, regional, and ethnic cuisines are not just a representation of national, regional, and ethnic identity, but also a way to give such an identity a deeper symbolic meaning and to preserve national, regional, and ethnic cultures" (Horng and Tsai 2010: 79).

They identify three major strategies that government websites promoting culinary tourism can take to entice visitors and provide them with symbolic place narratives: introducing the food and cuisine of the country, emphasizing its locally grown foods and spices, and providing an overview of appropriate table manners and key phrases to ask to ensure that one knows what one is eating (Horng and Tsai 2010). In London, the history of the British empire, and its current reputation as a global city, are used to attract the tourist gaze. In the Introduction to *Destination London*, Andrew Smith and Anne Graham propose that beginning in the middle of the twentieth century, London became a destination renowned for the picture it painted of the future: a city of modern technology and forms of communication, a hub of global enterprise which necessitated the presence of a diverse immigrant population who also came to symbolize this future, and as a result became subjects of curiosity in their own right:

As a liberal metropolis and a port city that functioned as the commercial and administrative fulcrum of a global Empire, London had long been a city of

migrants. Economic migrants and persecuted groups from across Europe came to live in London, including Jewish and Huguenot refugees. But in the second half of the twentieth century London also experienced a significant influx of people from the Caribbean, Hong Kong, Pakistan, Bangladesh and India. These migrants added to the appeal of London as a world city, a place where a range of international foods, traditions and music could be experienced. Certain clusters, most notably Chinatown in central London, but also the Bangladeshi communities of inner east London, became attractive areas for visitors curious about London's cosmopolitanism" (Smith and Graham 2019: 8).

If London itself is considered a place where visitors can come to experience the entire world, then east London, with its physical distance from the center of the city and its history as a low-cost enclave for immigrants from all over the globe, has been and continues to be a sort of liminal space, associated with poverty and difference that has simultaneously attracted and repelled visitors for over two hundred years. Claire Alexander et al write: "...there has been an expansion of the capital's visitor economy, and especially an increase in visitors wanting to locate and experience the 'real London' in non-central or inner-city areas, such as Spitalfields and Banglatown (see Maitland 2019)" (Alexander et. al. 2020: 22). Spitalfields, the part of east London that is home to Brick Lane, is an area that falls outside of the City of London and has long been home to the city's poorest and newest residents. Brick Lane serves as a major connective road of Spitalfields:

In the sixteenth century it was little more than a country track. In 1671, Christopher Wren deemed it almost impassable, 'an area remote and inaccessible'. One hundred years later it had become a major thoroughfare for coaches and a meeting place for radical weavers. A change of century brought a change of ethnic minority but no variation in function. Brick Lane remained at the heart of Spitalfields, home to people of diverse occupations and a focal point for political dissent. (Kershen 2005: 49)

Nils Roemer argues that social workers, sociologists, writers, and other elites from London's West End effectively created the "proper" central London through explorations and writings about the city's east side, while also constructing a kind of social space where differences could

safely be explored: “Slumming in the East End operated as a cultural practice in a metropolitan city that brought cultures into contact and negotiated their boundaries, generating an engagement with and a rethinking of difference and modernity” (Roemer 2009: 416). Writing about tourists and other visitors who walk the East End’s streets a century later, Smith argues that “Central London is regarded by some tourists as an environment ‘staged’ for tourists, rather than an authentic experience... Therefore, increased tourist penetration of non-central districts (particularly those in East London) can be interpreted as an attempt to access “backstage” regions which better represent contemporary London. (Smith 2019: 227).

As Roemer points out, the east London of 150 years ago was a dangerous place segregated from the rest of the city by both race and class. Indeed, it is this reputation for danger and as a place where people from different walks of life exist in close quarters with one another that makes east London viable as a kind of “backstage” area that tourists might consider more authentic than other parts of the city that are designed specifically for them. It is true that east London, particularly the Spitalfields area, has been the first home of many different groups of newcomers to the city. Brick Lane is often understood to symbolize this history:

Brick Lane is no ordinary street. It resonates with the history of migrating groups—home to Huguenots fleeing religious persecution, Irish fleeing the famine, Jews fleeing pogroms in Russia and Eastern Europe, to generations of lascars from across the world who disembarked at the nearby docks, to post-war labour migrants from South Asia, including Bengalis, and more latterly their families, many of whom came to the U.K. to escape the chaos and upheaval around the time of Bangladesh’s war of independence in 1971. (Alexander et. al. 2020: 2)

For people of Indian and Bengali descent, east London and Brick Lane specifically have long been areas of special significance. Collingham notes that “A network of grubby boarding houses existed in Whitechapel, and in the ‘Oriental Quarter’ around the high street in Shadwell”

(Collingham 2006: 131, see also Alexander et. al. 2020: 4) that escaped Indian domestic servants could use as a place to hide in the late 1700s. Eventually, these boarding houses morphed into some of the earliest Indian restaurants in London that were designed to cater specifically to Indian and Bengali clientele, particularly seamen from Sylhet. Many of these establishments existed on Brick Lane (Collingham 2006: 217).

After the Second World War, several buildings along Brick Lane and in the surrounding areas, which had been evacuated and subsequently damaged during bombing, were available for very low prices. Bengalis, working in the area mainly in tailoring shops started by Jewish refugees before them, (Frost 2011: 227), began buying or renting these properties and operating fish and chips shops. Eventually they expanded their menus to include curries as well (Collingham 2006: 221-225). According to Nicola Frost, “The shift from the rag trade to catering as the primary local industry began in the late 1980s...the first ‘Indian’ restaurants aimed at a non-Bengali clientele appeared from the mid-1970s, as the arrival of settlers’ wives and children began to re-establish domestic cooking arrangements, and proprietors turned their attention to British customers” (Frost 2011: 227-228). In the 2010 article “A Racial Archaeology of Space: A Journey Through the Political Imaginings of Brixton and Brick Lane, London” George Mavrommatis characterizes this as a period of racial strife, exploring how narratives of inner-city crime on Brick Lane and in Brixton became inextricably linked not with the crowded, economically disadvantaged life circumstances of the people who lived there, but with their race. This led to a racial pathologizing of the space in east London, which in turn led to acts of racially motivated violence:

Brick Lane in the 1970s was a theatre of fascist and anti-fascist confrontation. At the corner of Brick Lane and Bethnal Green Road, National Front supporters would sell their newspaper while racially abusing local residents of ethnic background. Racial attacks in this part of London were commonplace; one of the

most highly publicised racial murders took place in May 1978 when Altab Ali, a young local Bangladeshi resident, was stabbed to death near Brick Lane, provoking a rally of anti-fascist and anti-racist demonstrations. (Mavrommatis 2010: 563).

The aftereffects of these years of racial violence were felt at least as late as the early aughts, as Rachel Lichtenstein describes: “You still see these men [Hasidic Jews and Bengali Muslims] shuffling quickly past the bars and clubs, trying to reach the mosque further down the road without attracting unwanted attention. Scuffles sometimes break out as racist abuse is hurled across the street as partygoers drink late into the night” (Lichtenstein 2008: 12). In contrast, east London is currently going through a phase of celebration of diversity (Mavrommatis 2010: 562), where its history of immigration is lauded and displayed as a kind of multicultural standard that typifies the cosmopolitan nature of London more generally.

In a sense, there are different Brick Lanes, co-existing in memory, in different interpretations of the present moment, and in different imagined futures. As Frost comments: “The northern part of Brick Lane is today characterized by bars and clubs catering to this latter group [young white professionals], along with creative small business premises; the southern part remains firmly Bengali, dominated by curry restaurants and ethnic grocers” (Frost 2011: 226). These different streets, frequented by different people for various reasons, co-exist uneasily. Brick Lane is home to a diverse array of families. At the same time, it is still considered a place of marked difference, as informed by its history. For some, this difference is a positive, a cause for celebration. But others still consider it a dangerous place. For them, it is only worth visiting for an adventure, a night of “slumming” in an area where bad behavior is permissible. This tension exists at least in part because the shift Mavrommatis (2010) identifies from a period of racial strife to a celebration of ethnic difference was not an organic shift in attitude, but a marketing strategy put together by government agencies:

From the mid-1990s, the British economy was rapidly characterised by historically low levels of interest rates and unemployment. Political imaginings of race and difference during this period reconsidered the potential market value of difference. They moved away from earlier multicultural narratives of cultural differentiation to debates that openly promoted ethnic diversity. The earlier multicultural agendas of the 1980s gave way to more commodified forms of politics of difference. In some cases, differences became the main engines of local urban redevelopment. (Mavrommatis 2010: 569).

According to Frost, the years of racial conflict led to an economic depression in East London. In an attempt to address this issue, the street of Brick Lane was awarded a Regeneration Budget Award in order to find ways to attract visitors from outside of London to the area. Because, as has been detailed above, curry houses were mostly designed for non-Bengali consumers already, they became the centerpiece of this plan to transform the dangerous Brick Lane into the trendy, cosmopolitan Banglatown:

In some sense this new label acknowledged the troubled past of the area, trading on its risqué reputation, and promoting a visit to Spitalfields as a form of adventure tourism (Eade 2002). The basis of Banglatown's identity, however, was consciously promoted as a culinary one: Banglatown was—for outsiders at least—the Curry Capital, the new Chinatown. In 2001, a new local council ward of Spitalfields and Banglatown was created, turning a culinary entity into a political one. (Frost 2011: 230)

While the rebranding has been marginally successful, Frost notes that racial tensions have persisted on Brick Lane. Visitors still express concerns about the ingredients in the foods and its overall nutrition value, as well as with aggressive restaurant employees “touting” patrons off the street.¹⁷

The creation of Banglatown has generated mixed feelings from both within and outside the local Bengali community. Anne Kershen (2005) details an angry letter published in the *Daily Telegraph* in 1997 that accused the Banglatown project of being “an attempt to pervert history, and to create foreign ghettos in the heart of our cities,” alongside a conversation with a local

¹⁷ <https://www.theguardian.com/uk/2004/may/20/foodanddrink.shopping>

member of the Bengali community who felt that the creators of Banglatown “promote nationalism and it stops the Muslims to speak Islamically...Muslims start to identify with Bengali rather than Muslim” (Kershen 2005: 62). For others, the creation of Banglatown symbolized an effort to create some form of protection for members of the local Bangladeshi community against violent racism and “discrimination in housing, education and employment” by drawing on “Brick Lane’s diversity and distinctiveness to create a ‘corporate creative culture’ in the area” (Alexander et. al. 2020: 10). This was done by constructing the distinctive gates that border the street, painting new street signs, investing in consulting for local restaurants, and putting resources into engaging in a number of street festivals throughout the year (Alexander et. al. 2020: 10). This reality is in some ways like, but also quite different from, the original design conceived of to help improve safety, which had included “plans for a ‘Banglatown’ shopping centre selling Bangladeshi food and crafts, more social housing, and land for a community trust (Alexander et. al. 2020: 10).

Because of its complex history, the Spitalfields district, including Brick Lane, is understood by white visitors, both those staying for a few days and those who have moved from elsewhere to work as part of its up-and-coming creative young professional class, as a kind of ethnic frontier (Smith 1992, Mavrommatis 2006). Here newcomers can make greater sense of themselves by experiencing cultural difference: “Banglatown may have started off as a segregated area but it is now something very different. By day and night it draws to its throbbing pavements outsiders, tourists and young middle-class, predominately white, professionals eager to taste the exoticism of ‘elsewhere’” (Kershen 2005: 62). These themes of exoticism, multiculturalism, difference, and danger are reflected in the promotional literature selling

culinary experiences in east London to tourists, and are often mediated or illustrated through rhetorical uses of spice, a point I will now turn to in detail.

In Promotional Literature and Local Media

Promotional literature meant to entice visitors to specific locations use destination images to achieve this goal. Charlotte Echtner and J.R. Ritchie define a destination image as “not only the perceptions of individual destination attributes but also the holistic impression made by the destination. Destination image consists of functional characteristics, concerning the more tangible aspects of the destination, and psychological characteristics, concerning the more intangible aspects (Echtner and Ritchie 2003: 43). They also reference Phillip Kotler (1987), noting that “there is a link between a country’s tourist image and its national image” (Echtner and Ritchie 2003: 39). As referenced above, London is understood to be a global city of the world where various cultures meet, and east London in general, and Brick Lane in particular, is exemplary of this globalization.

With its history as a center of empire and commerce and its current reputation as “a city of the world,” London is an ideal destination for culinary tourists both foreign and domestic. In part because east London has been home to successive groups of immigrants from all over the world, it is widely considered to be one of the best parts of the city for culinary tourists. The considerable presence of Bengali-owned British Indian restaurants that line Brick Lane, which has come to be known as London’s “curry mile,” is one contributing factor. According to an article in the *Huffington Post*, selling curry and other South Asian foods is a £3.5 billion dollar industry in the United Kingdom (Mirza 2013). For visitors to London, having a meal at a curry

house can be an exciting tourist experience, and Brick Lane a must-visit attraction for foodies interested in trying Indian and other kinds of “ethnic” foods.

The view of east London as a place where locals and tourists alike can experience diversity, or “eat the world” (Turgeon and Pastinelli 2002) is evident in how the area is portrayed in local media. An article about where to eat in east London posted on the website *Travel & Leisure* introduces the neighborhood in this way: “Home to many immigrant communities, this part of London has a huge range of food to sit back and savor” (Ogle 2020). *MyLondon* describes Brick Lane specifically as “a hub for diversity and leisure, the perfect spot to roam around and discover the fascinating vibrancy of living in London’s East End” (Quinn 2019). Local media also support Smith’s (2019) characterization of east London as a kind of backstage area where tourists can experience something truly unique. A description of Brick Lane in *The New Statesman* identifies it as an area off the beaten path: “Popular with locals, office workers in the nearby city, and tourists straying from the usual London landmarks, the resulting curry houses came to define a country that had adopted chicken tikka masala as its ‘true national dish’, according to then foreign secretary Robin Cook in 2001” (Chakelian 2020). *DESIblitz.com* similarly describes east London, and Brick Lane in particular, as a hidden gem: “London is one of the largest multicultural cities in the world. It boasts many religions, cultures, backgrounds, and ethnicities. But it also holds some of the best cuisine hidden gems you could ever hope to find. One of these is Brick Lane” (Lloyd 2017). The organic destination image (Gunn 1988) produced, in part, by these media representations is further refined into an induced destination image by the promotional literature produced by tourism agencies such as *Visitlondon.com*.

Visit London was created by the London Development Agency to replace the London Tourist Board, and was ultimately incorporated into London and Partners, an organization

responsible for both tourism and branding more generally for London (Smith 2019: 9). Its website has pages for all the major neighborhoods in the city, which branch off into pages dedicated to smaller neighborhoods and individual streets. The page for east London emphasizes the variety of things to do in the area, as well as its status as a cool place to hang out: “Head to trendy east London and find a whole host of things to do in Shoreditch or Hoxton. This is where the cool kids hang out, so swing by Boxpark to shop in London’s only pop-up mall” (Visitlondon.com 2020). Brick Lane has its own dedicated page, with a subsection devoted entirely to the diversity of the dishes which can be found there:

Alongside fruits and vegetable stalls, you’ll find plenty of street food vendors lining Brick Lane on Sundays. Try The Rib Man for some of the best ribs in London. For street food throughout the week, head to Ely’s Yard at the Old Truman Brewery where you can feast on buttermilk chicken strips from Mother Clucker. The area is famed for its brilliant curry houses and Indian restaurants, such as Aladin Brick Lane, which serves excellent Balti and tandoori dishes (Visitlondon.com 2020).

The highlighting of consumable diversity in the promotional literature selling culinary experiences around east London is in keeping with the current value placed on multiculturalism in public discourse. As Mavrommatis notes, the British public has arrived at a moment of celebration and commodification of difference. Starting in the 1990s “differences became the main engines of local urban redevelopment” (Mavrommatis 2010: 569).

Indeed, Bronislaw Szerszynski and John Urry (2002) argue that there has been a gradual shift in how youth understand their place in the world: whereas in the past most people felt that their main sense of identity and responsibility was with their nation-state of origin, today there is a feeling that we are all global citizens, and owe some form of responsibility to the world as a whole, a phenomenon they identify as the development of a “cosmopolitan civil society” (Szerszynski and Urry 2002: 477). When it comes to expressing this worldview through the act

of dining, eating “ethnic” food, or food from diverse countries of origin, which was interpreted in the past as a rejection of one’s home country (Belasco 1987), can now be seen as a kind of moral act: “Here the eating experience is expressed as a conversion, a ritual of transcendence, that enhances the diners’ participation in contemporary cultural politics. Diners do not only take possession of people and places. They believe that the conversion experience makes them better people and makes the world a better place” (Turgeon and Pastinelli 2002: 260). In spite of these beliefs, the act of consuming diversity is still informed by structural inequality. As Spracklen notes:

The majority ethnic groups in Western countries make their foods the normal foods of eating out, or they invent traditions that make modern foodstuffs normal but invisible white culinary habits. By labelling foods associated with the cultures of non-white minority ethnic groups as ethnic, what is white becomes non-ethnic, that is, what is white becomes normal—and the non-white becomes exotic and foreign. (Spracklen 2013: 153)

Pamela Perry (2001) points out that the idea that whiteness is “normal” and without culture, and rational as a result, is one of the main supporting ideas of white hegemony. Seen in this way, the consumption of foods framed as “ethnic” in Western countries does not serve to enrich the consumer and signal acceptance of difference, it instead serves to further separate cultures and reasserts white supremacy.

The celebration of “ethnic” food can also distract consumers from the political and social realities of the lives of non-white ethnic groups. Mavrommatis’s work on the narratives young white creative professionals tell about Brick Lane includes an interview with a young professional of South Asian descent who worries that the spectacle of diversity on the street distracts newcomers from the structural inequality the people who live there have dealt with for decades:

You can walk down Brick Lane and, you know, there are different people from different backgrounds and colours and races, different kinds of food, and different smells and noises, and this place is playing thumping tunes, it's like a canvas of sounds and smells, a spectacle, and I think there is a risk of not actually seeing what underlines it, which is [a] huge amount of deprivation, a huge amount of people living in really difficult circumstances. (Mavrommatis 2006: 506)

The spectacle of “ethnic” food serving as a kind of occlusion of the realities of structural inequality may in fact be the true basis of much of its appeal. Buettner suggests that modern, highly regionalized Indian restaurants are favored over Bengali-owned curry houses because there are far less immigrants from India currently living in the United Kingdom than from Bangladesh (Buettner 2008, see also Collingham 2006). In the following chapter I argue that the kind of multiculturalism sold to and enjoyed by culinary tourists in east London is connected specifically to the performance of a nostalgic view of white colonialism: the authenticity promised in promotional literature that claims tourists can “eat like a local” is a specifically white, British, colonialist identity that frames dining out as a kind of adventure where hidden treasures can be found and claimed. For now, it is important to note that this form of diverse dining experience is highly commodifiable, as the emphasis on the cosmopolitan ideal in the promotional literature for culinary experiences in east London makes clear. By presenting the variety of cuisines on offer in the area as a kind of treasure trove of difference, the promotional literature uses difference rhetorically, inviting consumers to identify (Burke 1945) with British colonialists of the past.

The concept of spice that is so closely associated with Indian cuisine, especially in local media, is further used in promotional literature to persuade tourists that a culinary experience in east London, and on Brick Lane specifically, will be a worthwhile experience. One article posted to the BBC website titled “How Britain Got the Hots for Curry” describes London’s first Indian restaurant: “Diners at the Hindostanee Coffee House could smoke hookah pipes and recline on

bamboo-cane sofas as they tucked into spicy meat and vegetable dishes” (Jahangir 2009). An article on where to eat on Brick Lane published in the *Evening Standard* is titled “Hot Stuff on Brick Lane.” While it discusses several dining options, the concept of “hot stuff” is linked solidly with the Indian restaurants associated with the street through the article’s opening lines, which read: “In the 'great curry boom' of the Seventies, Brick Lane was one of the primary beneficiaries. Bangladeshi restaurateurs made this part of London their headquarters and opened a succession of restaurants, almost all of which served Bangladeshi curries tailored to the English market - the kind of British curry you'll find in high-street curry houses everywhere” (Evening Standard 2012). A third article from *The News on Sunday* about the history of Brick Lane and the gentrification it is experiencing at the current moment describes the street as “bustling with art, flavour, and history” (Ali 2016). A list of the top five best Bangladeshi restaurants on the street begins with this description: “Brick Lane is known for its famous curry houses and a strong focus on Desi cuisine. It was crowned ‘Curry Capital’ back in 2012. The delicious spices from the various restaurants can be smelt wafting down the street throughout the night” (Lloyd 2017). *Travel & Leisure’s* guide to dining in east London suggests visitors try Aladin Indian Restaurant: “Situated in the heart of the famous curry mile, Aladin is known for its spicy curries” (Ogle 2020). These few examples offer a glimpse at the linkage made between Indian cuisine, especially curries, and spice. This connection is both in terms of heat and in terms of intense flavor more generally.

Visitlondon.com has a page dedicated specifically to Indian restaurants in the city. Here the concept of spice is used to entice travelers, offering an exciting eating experience and an opportunity to demonstrate the cultural capital of being well-traveled and adventurous through their familiarity with and fondness for spice: “London is full of Indian restaurants – a testament

to the capital's love of a spicy curry, fresh naan or crispy samosa. On the menu you'll find traditional Indian dishes sitting alongside recipes created right here in London. With so much variety, there's something for everyone – whether your spice tolerance is hot, medium or mild!” (Visitlondon.com).

Culinary Tours on Brick Lane

Because of the high level of interest in the food of Brick Lane and the surrounding neighborhood, many culinary tours offer packages to travelers interested in sampling a variety of the dishes available in the area. In spite of the dubious ethics of consuming diversity to improve character, and the inaccuracy of the connection between Indian cuisine and spiciness, these tours describe the practice of eating in east London, and on Brick Lane more specifically, as a cosmopolitan experience that will provide tourists with an authentic culinary adventure and allow them to experience the city as the locals do. Often, this includes a rhetorical mention of spice as a marker of an authentic experience, and the ability to handle spice as a way to demonstrate that one is an adventurous, experienced eater. A full discussion of authenticity is outside the bounds of the present discussion, but my understanding of the concept is informed by the work of scholars like Arjun Appadurai (1986), who views authenticity as a modern conception, and Regina Bendix, who argues that authenticity is not a lasting quality, but rather an emergent social construct (Bendix 1997: 210), that folklorists should not attempt to verify or dispute. Rather, we should “... examine the meanings and the history of ‘authenticity’ from a distance both within and beyond disciplinary discourse” (Bendix 1997: 23).

In the context of analyzing promotional literature surrounding culinary experiences on Brick Lane, I follow Johnston and Baumann’s work on the gourmet foodscape, which posits that

authenticity is one way of framing culinary experiences that can offer distinction to participants. For Johnston and Baumann, authenticity in gourmet foodie discourse can be achieved through geographic specificity, simplicity, personal connection, history and tradition, ethnic connection, or some combination of any of these characteristics (Johnston and Baumann 2015: 65-82). Alongside claims of authenticity sometimes characterized through mentions of spice, websites selling culinary tours in east London also emphasize exoticism, another key framing device in gourmet foodie discourse according to Johnston and Baumann (2015: 86-111).

Here, I am analyzing the promotional literature and experiential texts of three culinary tours of east London: Authentic Food Tours London's East London Food Tour, Strawberry Tours' Free Tour of East London, and Secret Food Tours London's Secret Indian Food Tour. The website for Authentic Food Tours London, eatingeurope.com/london, is advertised on Visitlondon.com, and the promotional literature for its East London Food Tour explicitly promises tourists the opportunity to consume diversity: "Eat your way through the diverse East End neighbourhood like a true Londoner, seeing amazing street art, stopping at the local chippy and other popular haunts along the way" (eatingeurope.com/london 2020). Interestingly, the East London Food Tour suggests that this neighborhood, with its history of immigration, is the best place to go for some "Proper British food," and promises that the tour will be "Fun, informative and of course, delicious, this is so much more than a food tour – it's a taste of the neighbourhood all in one day" (eatingeurope.com/london 2020). Here we see both the master narrative of London as a city of the world identified by Smith (2019), and a direct appeal to tourists to engage in the kind of consumption of place that Turgeon and Pastinelli (2002) argue culinary tourists seek out.

Similarly, the website for Strawberry Tour's Free Tour of East London invites tourists to "Try some of the delicious food it [East London] has to offer, each bite representative of one of the communities that migrated to London and ended up living 'beyond the wall'"¹⁸ (Strawberry Tours 2020). Perhaps in a nod to the city's investment in a cosmopolitan, multicultural image, this page frames the stop on the tour on Brick Lane as a chance to "Discover how Bangladeshi cuisine had such an impact in British culture!" (Strawberry Tours 2020).

Secret Food Tours London's Secret Indian Food Tour, the only tour dedicated exclusively to Indian restaurants on Brick Lane, combines an argument for London's multiculturalism with a use of the concept of spice to symbolize experience and adventurousness on its website. The advertising copy begins by claiming that "'going for an Indian' has become a quintessentially British thing to do," before going on to assure readers that while they will have the opportunity to sample "exciting curries" and "flavorsome dishes," "this tour is catered for all tastes and people, whether you are a seasoned curry fan and like them hot or new to this type of food and need an introduction to the varied tastes" (Secret Food Tours 2020). The qualification speaks directly to what Athena Mak, Margaret Lumbers, and Anita Eves have called the tourist's paradox: "...an oscillation between pursuing the 'symbolic' and fulfilling the 'obligatory' facets in the encounter of food in destinations" (Mak, Lumbers, and Eves 2012: 177). While tourists may be interested in trying unfamiliar foods while traveling, they may also be concerned that the dishes on offer will be too strange, or even inedible.

This paradox is highly relevant for Indian restaurants operating in the United Kingdom, given the country's long history of conflicting attitudes towards Indian cuisine referenced above.

¹⁸ The City of London is a central district of London which was originally founded by the Romans. The entire metro area is now referred to as "London," but areas like Spitalfields that were formed outside of the original City's borders have historically been economically disadvantaged.

The Secret Indian Food Tour website simultaneously tempts the prospective participant with an adventure and reassures that the experience will not be so unfamiliar as to be unpleasant. It is also noteworthy that while all three food tour websites claim to provide an authentic experience, the Secret Indian Food Tour page locates this authenticity in providing a selection of dishes from around the subcontinent of India. There is a contrast here with the promotional literature found on Visitlondon.com, and on the other culinary tour websites. Authenticity is still derived through the consumption of a variety of foods, but in the case of the Secret Indian Food Tour, this variety is closely linked with geographic specificity (Johnston and Baumann 2015: 65-67), rather than with the history and tradition (Johnston and Baumann 2015: 78-80) of British colonialism, although it could be argued that these different frames of authenticity are really two sides of the same coin. While the tour is focused on Indian cuisine, rather than on the food available in east London in general, variety and diversity are still crucial selling points.

The tours I attended as part of my fieldwork highlighted the sense of adventure and diversity promised on their company websites. While the three tours I participated in differed in style and emphasis, all focused on the foodways of east London. Strawberry Tours is a free tour where participants tip guides at the end of the experience according to how much they believe it is worth. It concentrates mostly on the architecture and history of the neighborhood. According to my tour guide, George, the tour is designed to provide participants with small, portable snacks they can carry along with them while exploring the sights of the area. The Eating London Tour offers an experiential introduction to east London's culinary history with many longer stops at sit down restaurants where tourists are served by waitstaff and given information about that particular establishment and others like it. As one would expect, the Secret Indian Food Tour is

exclusively centered on the cuisine of South Asia. Any background historical information provided stayed close to this theme.

Thematic differences do not detract from a core similarity: on all three tours, guides used both narrative and symbolism to emphasize London's status as a diverse, multicultural hub where all are welcome. East London, and Brick Lane specifically, serve as representative sites of this diversity. In presenting the street and its history to tourists, guides on each tour take a linear approach, explaining the successive groups of immigrants who moved to the area over time, starting with French Huguenots escaping religious persecution in the 1600s, and ending with the young professionals who are gentrifying the area in the present time. They use architectural styles, specific buildings, restaurants, and even food trucks as evidence of the arrival of successive newcomers, as this excerpt from one of the tour websites makes clear: "On this 3.5 hour walking tour we will literally eat our way through the neighborhood and its history. We will trace the footsteps of all the groups that once called the East End home...Along the way you will come to understand why this neighborhood is so unique and discover how it has changed from an infamously poor area to one of the trendiest places on the London map" (Eatingeurope.com 2020). On all the tours I attended, guides emphasized London's unique ability to welcome and integrate members of these disparate cultural groups both directly, through speech, and symbolically, using parts of the built environment to drive home the point.

When guides described the immigrants who have lived in east London, they often used a metaphor of immigration as a series of overlapping waves. Even when the guides did not explicitly compare immigrant groups to liquid, they still characterized migration to east London similarly, speaking of successive groups of people overlapping and gradually replacing one another. This is highlighted by the tours' organization that loosely follows a historical timeline.

The Strawberry Tour provides a good example of how all the culinary tours are structured. Its stops are organized by time period with each emphasizing a different “wave” of immigrants to the area through the presentation of both cuisine and architecture. The tour begins in front of a series of buildings on Fournier Street that were constructed in the 1700s by the French Huguenots as homes and industrial spaces where cloth was made. The next stop, Beigel Bake, provides an opportunity to learn about the Eastern European Jews who made the street their home. The guide on the tour I took emphasized the community of Brick Lane, both in the past and present, noting that the bagels are sold by a family who have been running the business for decades, and that the paper bags the establishment uses to pack them in are also produced at a local factory.

The next stop is the Spitalfields Market, where our guide said we would have the opportunity to taste foods from England’s East Asian population. From there, the tour moves on to sample the city’s much-lauded South Asian food at Rajmahal Sweets. The final visit on this tour, an artisanal chocolate shop on Brick Lane called Dark Sugars, is presented as being representative of the “newest wave” of immigrants to the street: hipsters who work at tech startups in rented office spaces. The growing number of vintage clothing stores and fusion restaurants that have opened in recent years are linked to this group. On this tour and every other, ethnic diversity is presented as a major positive attraction. The history of east London’s immigrant populations is used to create a powerful image of the entire city as a welcoming place where people from various walks of life choose to visit, whether to make a permanent home in the face of adversity, or to experience the diversity of the world all in one place. At times, direct speech and symbolic illustration are used simultaneously to paint the picture of a cosmopolitan London where all are welcome and everyone belongs. This is done by using a specific item or

landmark as an example of east London's cosmopolitanism: chicken tikka masala, the Brick Lane street signs, or the Brick Lane Jamme Masjid, also known as the Brick Lane Congregational Mosque.

During my first experience on the Secret Indian Food Tour, I described my project to the other people taking the tour and to our guide, Shelly. I explained my interest in the restaurants on Brick Lane as tourist destinations. Shelly said that it was too bad that I hadn't come to do my research a few years earlier, as Indian food had been much more of a tourist destination in the recent past. At present, she told us, Indian food had been "totally absorbed" into British culture and cuisine. She brought up chicken tikka masala as an example of this absorption and referenced its status as Britain's national dish. This, of course, was an echo of British Foreign Secretary Robin Cook's 2001 speech in which he claimed that "Chicken tikka masala is now a true British national dish, not only because it is the most popular, but because it is a perfect illustration of the way Britain absorbs and adapts external influences. Chicken tikka masala is an Indian dish. The Masala sauce was added to satisfy the desire of British people to have their meat served in gravy" (Cook 2001, printed in *The Guardian*).

On the Eating London Tour, there is one stop on Brick Lane, at Aladin Indian Restaurant. On this stop, we were served three dishes: chicken tikka masala, lamb curry, and vegetable korma. While passing around the dishes our guide, Karen, pointed out the chicken tikka masala, noting that it had officially been voted Britain's national dish in 2007, and describing its origin in the same way it was presented in Robin Cook's speech. Of course, this rosy view of chicken tikka masala has been contested ever since Cook gave the speech. Lizzie Collingham indicates:

Food critics immediately responded by condemning it as a British invention...Rather than the inspired invention of an enterprising Indian chef, this offensive dish was dismissed as the result of an ignorant customer's complaint that his chicken tikka was too dry. When the chef whipped together a can of

Campbell's tomato soup, some cream, and a few spices to provide a gravy for the offending chicken, he produced a mongrel dish of which, to their shame, Britons now eat at least 18 tons a week. Chicken tikka masala's most heinous crime, according to its critics, is not so much that it tastes horrid but that it is not authentic (Collingham 2006: 2).

Within the context of the tours, chicken tikka masala, understood to be Britain's national dish, is produced as a symbol of London's multicultural cosmopolitanism. However, this second narrative about chicken tikka masala, that it is the inauthentic result of the unsophisticated British palate, is one that many tourism industry workers are aware of and greatly sympathetic to. As will be discussed below, this counter narrative was occasionally alluded to by guides during the tours, and some referenced it in interviews as well.

This idea of Indian cuisine, and by extension Indian culture, as being part of British culture more generally, was further underlined on the Secret Indian Food tour when Shelly paused at the beginning of Brick Lane to point out the street sign, where "Brick Lane" was written in both English and Bengali. The sign served as a prompt for her detailed account of the various groups of immigrants who have made the area their home over the course of the city's history. She told us that the area is known as Banglatown but did not mention any details about its intentional creation. On this and all the other tours I participated in, the constructed nature of Banglatown as an attraction specifically for culinary tourists was never mentioned. If I had not been researching Banglatown, I would have walked away from these tours believing that the name, along with the Bengali street signs and the arch marking the beginning of the street, were all expressions of community made by insiders for other insiders.

On the Strawberry Food Tour, our guide also drew attention to the street name written in both English and Bangladeshi to introduce us to Brick Lane, which he referred to only as Banglatown, before beginning to discuss the Bangladeshi immigrants who began arriving on the

street in the early 1900s. As noted above, in this instance and many times on the tour, George described these successive groups of immigrants to the area as waves of culture smoothly overlapping and following one another. We walked along the street on our way to Taj Stores, a local grocery store, but before we went inside, George paused once again to point out the Brick Lane Jamme Masjid. This mosque is an important landmark on Brick Lane, and a central symbol on each of the culinary tours. George explained to us how the building had been a church in its earliest years before transitioning to a synagogue and finally being converted into a mosque in 1976. On the Eating London Tour, our guide, Karen, similarly used the Brick Lane Mosque to emphasize the diversity of the city. Standing in front of it, she highlighted how people from various religious backgrounds have used the space to worship over the past two hundred years. The last tour I attended at my field site was a repeat of the Secret Indian Food Tour. This time the guide, Christina, paused our group outside of the Mosque and explained its history before saying “But that’s London, isn’t it? Everyone is accepted here.”

In addition to incorporating things like chicken tikka masala, the Brick Lane street sign, and the Mosque to symbolize a harmonious diversity, the guides on all four tours I attended drew on the concept of spice to connote both exoticism and authenticity (Johnston and Baumann 2015). This discussion of spice was tied explicitly to the stops on the tour that could be considered ethnically different from mainstream white British cuisine. On the Strawberry Tour, George mentioned spice during the stop at Beigel Bake, a Jewish bagel shop where one can purchase a salt beef beigel sandwich with spicy mustard and pickles. Before we made our selections, George warned us that the mustard was European, and would be much spicier than the sweet version Americans eat. Because the Brick Lane stop on this tour was at Rajmahal Sweets, a bakery and sweet shop, spice was not mentioned. This was the only tour where spice

and Indian food were not explicitly linked, however. On the Eating London tour, we stopped at five different locations, but spice was only mentioned at Aladin Indian Restaurant. While the dishes served at the other stops on the tour were described in the context of their history and where their ingredients came from, the dishes served at the Brick Lane stop were described exclusively in terms of heat level. Three were served and the guide ranked each in terms of mildest to hottest.

On the Secret Indian Food Tours, guests are informed that the first stop at Cafe Grill will be of special interest to spice lovers. Here participants are invited to eat raw green chilis. The connection between spice and adventure is further developed as the tour continues. Spice is equated with authenticity as the guides point out many of the spices used in Indian cuisine both during a stop at a grocery store on the street and during a spice demonstration at Eastern Eye Balti House, a part of the experience I will discuss in more detail below. They also emphasize spiciness at the last stop on the tour, Lahore Kebab House. On this tour, the rhetoric of spice as connoting both adventure and authenticity occasionally leads to an elision between spices and people (see Germann Molz 2004, Bentley 2004, Moñtano 1997, Hamilton 2015). Amid describing the spices used in the dishes, and emphasizing the heat levels of the foods, especially on the stops described as most authentic, the guides pointed out multiple times that most of the patrons in the establishments were Indian. On both tours I took, they suggested that this is a reliable way to tell if a place sells “real” Indian food. Here is one example from my fieldnotes:

The first stop on our tour was Cafe Grill. It was a restaurant with a sort of deli counter up front with lots of different dishes on display. The guide led us past this counter and cash register to a seating area in the back... The guide asked us what we noticed about this restaurant, and David [a tour participant] mentioned that it was all Indian people. I believe we were almost the only white people in the restaurant. The guide emphasized the authenticity this signified, noting that this is how you can tell the food is authentic (Excerpt from field notes written October 17th, 2019).

Spices are also used rhetorically to indicate authenticity at a stop at the Taj Stores Grocery Store, which takes place after the first stop at Cafe Grill and before the main course of the evening is served at Eastern Eye Balti House, a traditional high street style curry house. At the grocery store, the guides first show participants empty masala boxes. These are circular stainless-steel trays that contain several smaller circular containers which are meant to hold various spices. Next, the guides point out all of the spices that are typically contained in a masala box on the shelves. Both times I was on the tour, they took this opportunity to say that curry powder is not its own spice, but rather a mixture of different spices that people in India would not recognize. The second time I took the tour, the guide shared that her mother told her to put salt in the middle of the spice rack instead of something hot like chili powder, so it doesn't get flung into anyone's eyes or the surrounding spices. Both guides emphasized the large quantity of spices a typical Indian family would go through in a year, pointing to the extra-large bags of each spice available for purchase. After pointing out various other items, such as legumes, rice, and tea, the guides on both tours encouraged our group to browse on our own, and to purchase anything we were interested in.

While I enjoyed participating in culinary tours as part of my fieldwork, I found the visit to Taj Stores uncomfortable. It felt particularly strange to be touring a grocery store and taking photographs while locals attempted to go about their business. The stop was meant to indicate authenticity, but to me it felt as though we were exoticizing something ordinary in the context of our presence in the space as tourists. I wrote about the experience in my field notes:

During this point [the tour of the grocery store] I started to get the sense that what we were really touring was "South Asianness" or something like it. The guide introduced the store by emphasizing its authenticity and saying that it's really nice for people in the area to have a grocery store to go to. I felt a little uncomfortable being led around as a white person kind of gawking at people of color doing their shopping (Excerpt from field notes written October 17th 2019).

In this moment on the tour, I was experiencing what it felt like to be visible *as* white, a feeling which many critical whiteness scholars argue is unfamiliar to most white people by design, as the idea that whiteness is unmarked makes it easier to maintain systems of white supremacy (see Frankenberg 2001, Bell 2021 for two examples).

I will explore connections between the visibility of whiteness and consumption of spicy food as a form of culinary tourism in more detail in Chapter Four, but it is worth mentioning here because it is possible to provide a firsthand account of how whiteness can be made visible within the context of culinary tourism. Furthermore, as K. Spracklen (2013) suggests, tourism as a leisure activity often maintains white supremacy by calcifying cultural differences into rigid depictions of “ethnic” Others. Melissa Hargrove (2009) argues that heritage tourism, alongside urban renewal and historic preservation, are three strategies that are used to continue the project of maintaining white hegemony by closely controlling which parts of history are remembered, which locations are worthy of notice and protection, and which of both should be forgotten: “Blatant violence has, in most cases, been replaced by ideological (and symbolic) violence, which reinforces racialized inequality and justifies the interests of the ruling class” (Hargrove 2009: 95). In exploring the specific role of tourism in her project, Hargrove references Zuberi and Bonilla-Silva’s work on white logic, specifically their assertion that white logic “...assumes a posture that grants eternal objectivity to the views of elite Whites and condemns the views of non-Whites to perpetual subjectivity” (Zuberi and Bonilla-Silva 2008: 17).

Hargrove’s work is specifically on urban renewal, historic preservation projects, and heritage tourism in Charleston, South Carolina. She sees this preservation of white objectivity, and insistence on the supremacy of a white perspective on history, in the resistance of white tourists to engage with representations of the Black experience while visiting Charleston. She

writes: “Whites on vacation often want their fantasies of a gentile (sic) South reinforced, thus taking a tour that represents any part of the black perspective seems much less ‘objective’ and undesirable” (Hargrove 2009: 102).

While the context is different, I believe the work of Spracklen, Hargrove, Zuberi and Bonilla-Silva is relevant to the stop at Taj Stores, because this stop frames the act of shopping for groceries on a busy London street as fundamentally outside of the experiences of the (mostly white) tour participants, thus exoticizing the store and transforming its shoppers into Others. All of the foods and spices available for sale were also on offer at other grocery stores I frequented while in the United Kingdom, but as part of the food tour they were recontextualized as exotic and authentic in an effort to maintain the narrative framing of the tour: that participants will experience something “real” and out of the ordinary.

The last stop on the tour, Lahore Kebab House, is a ten-minute walk from Brick Lane. It is presented as an especially authentic stop and a special treat for tourists. As part of this visit, tour participants are invited to tour the restaurant’s kitchen and take pictures, which adds to the narrative that this tour provides access to backstage spaces (Goffman 1959) that most tourists never see. Before entering, guides paused the group outside, and explained that Lahore Kebab House was originally a small family-owned kitchen that was opened by a married couple who wanted to provide food for other South Asian people. Through word of mouth, it became a sensation and ended up expanding to fill both levels of the building it is housed in. Once inside, both times I attended the Secret Indian Food Tour, the guide and the waitstaff at Lahore asked the group repeatedly if the food was too spicy: the heat of the food was presented as an indicator that it was what South Asian people would “really” eat, either on a night out at a restaurant or at home with family. The second time I took the tour, the guide immediately warned us that the

food might be spicier than we were used to, noting that she often heard from participants that it was too hot, and that we could use the sides of raita on the table to cool our palates if we needed to. Directly after this, she drew attention to the fact that our group members were the only white people in the restaurant. On this stop, spice was clearly rhetorically linked to the concept of authenticity and the experience of exploring a backstage area within the text of the tour.

Locals and Tourism Professionals

The story about Brick Lane that is presented in local media and promotional literature selling touristic experiences emphasizes seamless integration and cosmopolitan diversity, and promises opportunities to partake in difference in a way that will be both exciting (exotic), and in keeping with how a “real” Londoner would inhabit the space (authentic). But there is tension between this destination image and the lived experiences of people who live and work in the area. Framing the history of Brick Lane and the surrounding east London neighborhood as a succession of different groups of immigrants moving into and then out of the space, often expressed metaphorically in terms of waves seamlessly forming one large body of water, is problematic. In a recent study of metaphors used to describe and understand migration to the United Kingdom in the *Times Online* from 1785 to 2011, Charlotte Taylor finds that liquid, objects, animals, invaders, weight, commodities, and guests, all have been employed. She argues that “In theoretical terms, metaphor is an important way into understanding discourse because it acts as a way of understanding the world; thus, the use of metaphor always offers up an interpretation” (Taylor 2021: 464). As a result, Taylor, quoting Jonathan Charteris-Black (2011), cautions that metaphors can also rule out any other interpretations. In the case of Brick Lane, the metaphor of waves used to describe its history of immigration effectively obscures the

difficulties and tensions experienced by migrants attempting to make a place for themselves in east London.

Water metaphors used in the context of migration to the U.K. have ambivalent meanings; Taylor cites the work of various discourse analysts and other social scientists who illustrate how water metaphors have been used to describe immigrants as an uncontrollable torrent, a well of possibility, and a natural resource that can be exploited, or a damaging flood (Taylor 2021: 466). She also notes that while the liquid metaphor seems to have had more positive connotations in the 1850s, its associations have been growing steadily more negative ever since (Taylor 2021: 471). At present, the liquid metaphor, especially in the form of the wave descriptor, can be associated with other negative things that are likened to waves such as crime (Taylor 2021: 470).

This suggests that while successive waves of immigrants may be framed positively in the promotional literature for east London and within the texts of the food tours that make stops on Brick Lane more specifically, it is certainly not assured that the presence of these groups is welcomed by the existing British population. Furthermore, even when a positive characterization is meant in using the liquid metaphor, this does not guarantee that being likened to water is experienced positively by migrants moving into the area. As Taylor points out in regard to the positive utilization of flood metaphors to describe migrants: “The intent of the speaker using ‘floods of’ to evoke new values (Bednarek and Caple 2017) of urgency and superlativeness, does not mean that the problems for the individual subsumed in that metaphor are eliminated. They are still de-individualised, their agency is minimised, and for many, it simply does not reflect their experience of movement to a destination country” (Taylor 2021: 466).

During a conversation with an English author and historian who has written extensively about Brick Lane and the surrounding streets, and who has family who grew up there, I shared

my findings that Brick Lane is portrayed to tourists as an example of the city's enviable diversity and its ability to provide a haven for different kinds of people to peacefully coexist. When I asked her if she thought this portrayal was accurate, the author's response was emphatic: "That is an incredibly naive perspective. It's completely unrigorous, it lacks nuance, and, sort of, any real consideration for the area's history" (Cohen 2019). She emphasized the relatively cramped nature of Brick Lane and pointed out that the area has long housed immigrants from varied communities with highly differing values and cultural backgrounds who are forced to live in extremely close quarters. Often, these newcomers are experiencing the stresses of poverty while simultaneously trying to get comfortable living in a new place and cultural context. The author explained to me that this has led to successive bouts of violence on Brick Lane, with fascists and white supremacists clashing with the local Jewish and Bengali populations (that is part of the history briefly detailed above). Increasing interest in the street as a tourist destination has led, in her opinion, to an increased gentrification of the area. In turn, this has significantly disadvantaged the people who have traditionally called it home. She mentioned the Truman Brewery Markets, a large, semi-outdoor flea market where vendors set up booths on Sundays, as an example of this gentrification, which she characterized as "the City taking over" the area.

The author described changes to this part of east London as a shift from "the multicultural to the cosmopolitan: on the plus side, Brick Lane is much safer than it used to be. On the negative side, it's incredibly expensive, is losing its uniqueness, and the Bengali community will most likely be forced out" (Cohen 2019). When I asked her the difference between multiculturalism and cosmopolitanism, she said that to her, cosmopolitanism is "a kind of whitewashed society in which people from different class backgrounds but similar racial or ethnic backgrounds intermingle" (Cohen 2019), and that unless there is an effort to protect and

preserve Brick Lane, there is probably no way to avoid this shift to a whitewashed cosmopolitanism. She cited the creation of Banglatown in the 1990s as one unsuccessful attempt to preserve Brick Lane's multicultural character.

Her comments highlight the problems of gentrification, a subject that is receiving increasing attention in local London media. There was a campaign to prevent an expensive project to redevelop the Truman Brewery organized around the hashtag #SaveBrickLane in 2021 (Arif 2021), and many outlets have highlighted the increasing economic inequality in the area, as in this example from *The New Statesman*:

Dark Sugars, an artisanal chocolatier, now stands where The Clifton [one of the earliest Indian restaurants in London] used to be, at the northern end of Brick Lane. It arrived in 2015, after years of rapid transformation in east London. This was the same year the controversial Cereal Killer café,—serving £4 bowls of cereal—was established, and became a lightning rod for anger over the hipsterfication of England's tenth-most deprived borough (Chakelian 2020).

The issues the author highlighted have only been exacerbated by the global Covid-19 pandemic. One study of east London's Banglatown conducted in July of 2020 notes that increased housing prices, rents for local business and restaurant spaces, food and drink costs from restaurant suppliers, and lack of business due to the pandemic have seriously threatened both the Indian restaurants on Brick Lane, and the Bengali community living in Tower Hamlets (Alexander et. al. 2020: 17).

In speaking with people who grew up around Brick Lane, and who work there today, there were several mentions of structural inequality and racial tension. They spoke of how much the area has changed, as well as how difficult it was to go about their daily lives under the constant threat of racially motivated violence in the past. It is not that these locals do not believe that London is a multicultural city with space for everyone; many people I spoke with expressed

satisfaction with London and its diversity. However, their experiences depict a much more complicated reality than the narrative presented by local media, promotional literature for east London, and the culinary tours that run through the neighborhood. Memories of the murder of Altab Ali came up in conversation frequently, sometimes as vague allusions: “You know, there used to be, I don’t know if you’ve heard of the knife crime, there was a lot of knife crimes at one time (Ayad 2020). Other times, locals would mention Ali specifically:

It was a very rundown area back in the sixties. It was filled with a lot of racism, when the Bengali people or the Asian people moved in, Brick Lane was very prominent in the Nazis and the fascists at that time. And I don’t know if you know of that park there, called the Altab Ali Park? At the bottom of the road? How it got that name is because there was a guy called Altab Ali in the sixties who was murdered there. He was murdered there. He was returning from work one evening, and a bunch of guys, they found him, who were obviously members of the National Front, or the NFs. And they decided to kill him, and that’s how the park has become a memorial for Mr. Altab Ali, who died there. It was very common at that time (Goswami 2020).

For restaurant workers, the period from the 1970s until around 2000 was challenging because of the bad behavior of drunk patrons who would come in late, act boisterously, and sometimes refuse to pay for their food. The manager of a curry house on Brick Lane described how these kinds of issues were dealt with at his family’s establishment:

In the eighties, people used to come in like, after twelve there were a lot of people drunk and all that. So what we used to do is like, after twelve o’clock, all the customers who would come in after 12 o’clock, whatever they ordered, we used to tell them to pay first. Pay first, and then we get the meal out. If they didn’t pay for it, we used to have to pull them out by their hair and all that. Boot them out of the restaurant. But now it’s all changed (Ayad 2020).

The restaurant now closes its doors strictly at twelve o’clock each night but this man also believes that people are different now: “It’s like, people are more understanding now. People think more about what they’re doing now. So, let’s see what happens. [Laughs] It will get better, it’s just going to take a little time” (Ayad 2020). A man who owns a nearby sweetshop echoes

this sentiment that things are changing for the better: “It was more aggressive back in the sixties. And there used to be some evidence of institutionalized racism? Which means that it was even present within the police force...But you know, people’s thinking changed. People are going to school, people are traveling...and, I don’t know how else to put it, but, maybe it’s not quite being tolerant, but it’s just that that wave, or that era, has gone” (Goswami 2020).

While increased awareness of different cultures and more openness to diversity may account for some of the change on Brick Lane, its rapidly gentrifying character probably has something to do with it as well. The influx of expensive, trendy cafes and vintage clothing stores attracts tourists, as well as white, middle-class English people who work in fields like tech, marketing, advertising, and design (Mavrommatis 2006). These newcomers bring more money to the neighborhood, but as is the case in most gentrified areas, the people who were already living there have found themselves struggling to continue to afford to live in the area. When I asked the man who worked at the sweet shop if he ever planned to move away, he responded “Well, we have to, because, I mean, the houses here are relatively small. And they are still very expensive” (Goswami 2020). He explained that growing up, he witnessed Brick Lane cycle through two different phases. The first was a period when many of the people in his community worked in the garment industry: “Back in the days, in 1995, let’s say, Brick Lane, we would walk across Brick Lane and there would be sari shops, garment shops, and there would be very few restaurants” (Goswami 2020). The second phase was when most of the work in the garment industry left the neighborhood, a shift he ascribed to a great deal of industrial work moving outside of Britain and into other parts of Europe. During this time, “we moved into the whole curry and the food sector. And most Asians or Bengali people decided that they would open their own curry houses or their

own entrepreneurship, or their own businesses to get into that, because they didn't exist. So that's how it was" (Goswami 2020).

He refers to the gentrification happening in the present day as a third phase, based around trends favoring more "retro" things like vintage boutiques. He summed up this change as "It's what people enjoy, and that's how things go. Things go about not according to how they're supposed to, but rather, what there is a demand for" (Goswami 2020). Towards the end of our interview, I asked this man if there was anything else he felt I needed to know or understand about Brick Lane, either generally, or in his own personal experience. His answer, in part, was that there are many things he feels that *he* does not understand about the street, even after living there for over two decades. He said that at times he struggles to understand the area's appeal for tourists, given its somewhat grim history. He ended our interview with a series of questions about the process of gentrification happening in the area: "Sometimes I think to myself, who sort of decides where Brick Lane goes? Do you see what I'm saying to you? How did they think that ok, this new phase of retro stuff would come in? Is it the case that, where one person opened it, and another person, or is there somebody who actually decides the regeneration of Brick Lane?" (Goswami 2020).

Employees who work in the culinary tourism industry around Brick Lane are aware of this tension between the ideal and the lived reality of the street. It may be accurate to say that for most of these individuals, this tension lies within the fact that the experience they are selling is one that invites the consumer to partake in a kind of culinary imperialism in which the culinary tourist plays an adventurer role that is tied to idealized depictions of white colonialism. This experience casts the tourism employees in the role of the consumed because tours equate people, in this case specifically non-white people consuming spicy foods, with authenticity. Food and

people conflate; not only is their time and labor on offer, but often, guides' identities, specifically as Other economically, racially, and ethnically, is on the menu for tourists as well. As one guide I interviewed described it: “The tourists, they tend to ask a lot of questions. They like to know a lot about me and my background, and how I’m related to Indian food, and whether I eat Indian food, and what my family is like, what my upbringing was like” (Rao 2020). While these kinds of queries are generally seen as just part of the job, this guide, and others I spoke with did mention that at times tour participants seemed to feel entitled to details about guides’ lives that were too personal. When asked what the most difficult part of her job was, the guide quoted above said:

What’s quite challenging is that your morale has to be quite high most of the time... Another thing that’s challenging is that you do get people that ask kind of, a lot of ignorant questions. And they don’t, they have the best intentions, but they don’t really think before they speak. So I have to, that’s quite challenging, because I’m a bit like, ok, I didn’t really like that question, but I’m going to answer it as politely as I can (Rao 2020).

For Indian guides working on Brick Lane, these personal questions can be based in stereotypes about South Asian culture. Two guides I interviewed for this project described older white men asking them what their parents would do if they brought home a non-Indian partner, for example. Such questions, based on simplistic assumptions, are embarrassing and irritating for guides who nonetheless feel that they must maintain a polite facade in order to do their jobs well: “The thing is, I try not to take too much offense by those questions. Because I know that he didn’t mean it in a horrible way. And that’s probably all they’ve ever known, you know. For a lot of people, that’s all you ever really hear, is that Indian families are very strict, they are very, you know, they keep their daughters under lock and key, and blah blah blah” (Rao 2020).

Tensions between the master narrative of east London’s food scene as the embodiment of London’s identity as a multicultural haven and some of the less positive aspects of its history

were reflected in descriptions of these kinds of moments of boundary crossing, and by the ambivalence guides expressed about this master narrative, both during the tours and in my interviews. As Erik Cohen points out in his foundational article “The Tourist Guide: The Origins, Structure, and Dynamics of a Role:” “...the information imparted [by a tour guide] is rarely purely neutral: rather it frequently reflects the information policy of the tourist establishment or of the official tourist authorities, intended either to impart or maintain a desired ‘touristic image’ of the host setting, or to engender in the visitors some wider social and political impressions, as part of a national propaganda campaign” (Cohen 1985:15). In the case of culinary tour guides working on Brick Lane, this is partially the case, as the example of the guide communicating to participants that London is a place where everyone can feel welcome in front of the Brick Lane Jamme Masjid cited above illustrates. During an interview, another guide echoed the rhetoric of the tour by emphasizing chicken tikka masala’s status as Britain’s national dish:

I think it’s great that our national dish is something that is so, that isn’t originally, well, that was made here, but isn’t originally from here, because it kind of shows how diverse the U.K. is. And that’s something that I’m really proud of, as a citizen here. So I’m pleased that it’s not something like pie. Even though pie is great, I think it’s, it’s quite a, quite a big step that it’s something that’s actually, that isn’t originally traditionally a British dish. And it’s yummy. I love Indian food and curry (Brown 2019).

Another guide expressed great enthusiasm for London’s multiculturalism during our interview: “I love it. I love London. And, um, I didn’t think I would actually like it...And I was all about America and all that, but since the time I’ve been here it’s so multicultural, and I mean I love trying new things, I love, you know, meeting new people. And I think this is a great place for that” (Lal 2020). At the same time, this guide, as well as the other two I interviewed, also took opportunities to challenge or completely diverge from the scripts of the tours, inserting their own

points of view into the experience, and providing participants with perspectives that were at odds with these scripts.

The guide who was enthusiastic about chicken tikka masala and what its status indicated about British culture, took care to explain to tour participants that east London was traditionally considered to be a dirty, dangerous part of the city that central Londoners tried to ignore, going so far as to leave it off maps of London. She noted that it is because of this marginal status that the area around Brick Lane became a hub of immigration: it was more affordable to live there than other parts of the city, and newcomers were less likely to be accosted by white Londoners going about their daily lives in such a segregated area. She also pointed out Dark Sugars specifically as an indicator of gentrification that is threatening to price Bengali families out of the neighborhood, instead of framing it as a marker of the new wave of hipster “immigrants” to the area. She was the only guide to bring up the racially motivated murder of Altab Ali in 1978, telling our tour group about how the nearby St. Mary’s Park was renamed in his honor in 1998. The guide of the Strawberry Tour, George, framed his entire narrative around explaining the various ways that all of the foods most associated with Englishness had actually been stolen from other “ethnic” groups, often as part of violent colonial projects, while simultaneously using the waves metaphor to describe the city’s history of immigration and emphasizing the hybrid community that has always existed on Brick Lane.

One of the Secret Indian Food Tour Guides began the experience by saying that “if you like curry and tikka masala this tour isn’t for you.” This was despite the fact that both items are served and discussed in great detail on the tour. On the second Secret Indian Food Tour I took, the guide chatted with our group about her experiences guiding both white and other Indian people, explaining that some Indian people from India think that British Indians are only British,

and can't be both. She told us this bothers her a lot, and she talked specifically about one man saying that in America, American born Desis are referred to as A.B.C.Ds: American Born Confused Desis. When she asked what they were supposed to be confused about, the man said they were confused because they considered themselves Indian but were American. She emphasized the importance of having the space to express all parts of her identity and made it clear that while there is a great deal of importance placed on diversity in public discourse, it is sometimes difficult to avoid being strictly categorized based on other people's understandings of who she should be. These interjections and interruptions consistently challenged the master narratives of the tour texts by reincorporating parts of history that the tours seemed designed to exclude, and by insisting that participants viewed guides as whole people rather than representatives of various cultural groups. At the same time, it is important to note that many of the narrative complications the guides introduced on the tours were still located safely in a distant past. There were no mentions of racialized violence or experiences of systemic inequality taking place any time after the 1970s.

While guides do weave their own points of view into their presentations of east London, they also take their roles as hosts and employees seriously. They take great pains while working to make sure that everyone knows exactly what they are eating. While they do not have much control over the actual stops on the tour, they are given some leeway to decide which dishes are served at each location based on their clients' preferences. They attempt to ascertain what clients will like or dislike, as well as what they are most interested in experiencing on the tour, by asking multiple questions and follow-up questions. This strategy is also useful in making participants feel comfortable, and facilitates easy conversation between dinner guests throughout

the evening, which is something each guide listed as a major aspect of their role as effective hosts:

That's why when, often when I start the tour I churn out questions. Like, it's really funny actually. Because when I meet people, for example if I go to a party and I meet people, then questions will come out of my mouth, like, quick fire. Because, one, I'm just used to it now, from doing the tour. Because you get people who won't speak, so I have to ask them loads of questions to kind of get them talking. But also I'm a journalism student, so I can think of questions on the spot based on what people have told me...But yeah, I do kind of try to remember what people tell me, and I kind of make the night as easygoing after that, because, you know, there's no better way to get people talking than to get them talking about themselves (Rao 2020).

Tourists traveling far from home must often balance their desire to try something new with their anxiety that these dishes may be too different, or their tendency to seek out something familiar as a source of comfort in a new setting (Mak, Lumbers and Eves 2012). Tour guides, especially those working on culinary tours, often help tourists navigate these conflicting desires. Because Indian cuisine in the United Kingdom is strongly associated with spice, both in terms of high levels of piquancy and of strong flavors in general, the guides I interviewed frequently address concerns about spice levels.

When the East London Food Tour made its one stop at an Indian restaurant, the guide informed us that the hottest dish on the table contained pieces of diced up green chilis, before telling us about a guest on a previous tour who refused to accept that these chilis were not in fact green beans. In her account, the man was overcome by the heat from the chilis, and the guide found herself equally affected by them. During our interview, I asked her why she focused so much on the heat levels at this restaurant, but nowhere else on the tour. She told me that heat is a major concern for some people who take the tour, especially older people who view Indian food as especially spicy:

So, quite a lot of, um, not quite a lot, actually, but some people are worried by the

extra extra spicy stuff. Like some people won't touch curry. Like some British people would not have anything to do with it. A lot of the older generation, like the old East Ends, East Enders, probably would never venture to Brick Lane. I know my grandparents wouldn't try curry. They're just about willing to try pizza. Just. Just now. But any like spicy thing like that? No. So it's, um, yeah. And quite often when we have people from the States they tend to be when they're a bit older. They're a bit more, not, not keen on having the super super spicy stuff. They're like, over sixty usually, they'll just be like "Oh, no, bit too spicy for me." So that's one reason why I mention it. But also some people are the opposite, and they're desperate to know about the spices (Brown 2019).

By ranking the spice level of each dish, the guide aided tourists in making informed decisions about what to eat. Framing the stop at the Indian restaurant in terms of spice level made it possible for her to avoid any potentially unpleasant situations with people who might find the food to be challenging:

It's also to cover myself. So like, when that guy ate the chili, and was like, "I thought it was a bean!" and I said, "No, it wasn't a bean, I told you!" Because he didn't want anyone laughing. I had one guy as well who had something really spicy and he was like in his seventies, from the States, and he was excited, and then got really overheated and had to have some water and stuff. So that's why I'm always very clear about how spicy things are (Brown 2019).

This supporting narrative was effective in communicating to the tourists that the food was spicy and encouraging them to take the guide's spice ranking seriously. At the same time, describing herself as struggling with the dish as much as the guest opened up a space for the people on our tour to decline trying it without losing face. If even the experienced guide found it to be too hot, there was no reason to feel any undue pressure to try it ourselves. At the same time, her confessional stance offered guests an opportunity to perform the role of adventurous eater: if they were able to handle a curry that was hotter than something the guide could tolerate, they could prove themselves to be truly experienced eaters. This narrative made it possible for performances of adventurousness to proceed without tourists having to venture too far into the unfamiliar or uncomfortable. This guide worked within the existing narrative of Indian food as

excessively spicy to create a smooth, welcoming environment for guests while at the same time maintaining absolute control over the situation and managing any potential tension (Cohen 1985).

The guides for the Secret Indian Food Tour similarly use questions about heat levels as an opportunity to help tourists navigate unfamiliar dishes. They also use these moments as a chance to educate participants on some of the nuances of Indian cuisine that have been left out of the promotional literature. Both guides I interviewed expressed some frustration that Indian food is considered to be very spicy. As one guide put it: “But yes, one of the questions, some of the people, they do have, especially when they have kids, and younger, you know, adults and stuff, where they’re like, ‘Oh, is it going to be very spicy, or what?’ Apparently Indian food, it’s, I think, of course it’s generalized that it’s very spicy, but it’s not. Because there are different people who make different food and stuff” (Lal 2020). Questions about heat levels provide tour guides with an opportunity to serve as good hosts who can help tourists navigate unfamiliar dishes while simultaneously educating them on regional variations in Indian cuisine. For the guides on the Secret Indian Food Tour, who are both of Indian descent, providing a more accurate view of Indian cuisine is an important project. The first stop on this tour includes a dish that is served with raw green chilies, which guides point out to tourists as a marker of authenticity. During an interview, one guide mentioned that she uses these chilis as an entry to talking about the various regions of India that are represented on the tour:

They do ask, you know, “How spicy is the food?” I mean, in the first place we go to, we obviously get served fresh chilis, those hot chilis, right? So then I ask them there and then, “How do you do with spicy food? Do you like spicy food?” And then I go on to say that most of the stuff on the tour is pretty mild, but that’s because of the type of restaurant we’re going to. So Bengali food is typically not that spicy. But when we go to the last stop it’s more North Indian, Pakistani food, which tends to be spicier. So I can explain to them that it’s, it’s a regional difference there. So spice kind of depends a lot on region (Rao 2019).

This discussion may be framed around spice, but its central message is that Indian cuisine is not a monolith. Both of the Indian Food Tour guides I interviewed emphasized the centrality of educating participants on Indian cuisine, highlighting the fact that while Brick Lane is known for its Indian restaurants, most of them are not actually owned by Indian people: “Brick Lane is of course hardcore Bangladeshi. Most of these restaurants are actually owned by Bangladeshis...I think the idea of the tour is to explore the whole subcontinent of India, and have Pakistan and Bangladesh included in that. So I mean, of course it is mainly focused on Indian food, but at the same time I think that that’s what we wanted to do. We actually explore the other side of it as well” (Lal 2019).

As mentioned earlier, during the stop at Taj Stores guides explain that curry powder is a British invention, and all of the various spices that are generally included in curry powder are pointed out. At the next stop, Eastern Eye Balti House, the guide retrieves a masala box containing fennel seeds, cumin seeds, cinnamon bark, turmeric, cardamom, cloves, and a curry powder mixture from the kitchen. Both times I took this tour, the guide passed each spice container around and asked everyone to smell and examine them before attempting to guess what they were. On one tour, the guide pointed out that in different regions of India, you might see different things in the masala box such as mustard seeds or lime leaves. She asked participants to try to guess what individual spices made up the curry powder based on its color and smell. She explained that different regions of India favor different spices in their cuisine. Indicating which region each spice in the masala box was most associated with, she used the spices to map the regions of India. The second time I took the tour, a different guide focused more on the medicinal uses for each spice, noting that you can make a face mask out of yogurt and turmeric, and that some people use cloves to try to heal toothache. Both emphasized the commonness of

the spices in the masala box: while the spices were arranged and perhaps used differently than how tour participants may have seen them in the past, they were not in themselves unusual or rare to find in supermarkets and spice cabinets across England. By disrupting the link between “Indian food” and “hot” at the first stop on the tour, and then inviting participants to identify with Indian people by pointing out that we all use the same spices, guides can correct what they see as misconceptions and oversimplifications about Indian cuisine in public discourse. They also use spices to present clients with a more detailed understanding of the country’s regional differences.

This emphasis on education is in slight contrast with the primary objectives of the tour’s creator, who worked as a guide for the tour’s parent company before being asked to design the experience. It was the first tour he created, although he has worked on several tours since in other parts of London and even other cities, including Nashville. From his perspective, designing a successful culinary tour is all about providing clients with a unique experience that will stick in their memories. To do this, he follows a basic plan: “Eventually you come up with a structure. It encompasses food, culture, and history. That’s ideally what you want. Food, culture, and history. And once you’ve got that basic structure, you then can put a tour together” (Kumari 2019). When asked what he wants people to experience on the tours specifically, he emphasized what I would classify as exoticism, saying “I think just essentially, to try things that they wouldn’t normally try, you know? Indian food, people go there, they have a curry that they normally have, they probably have a couple of local restaurants that they normally go to. Our tour takes people a little bit out of your comfort zone” (Kumari 2019).

At the same time, exoticism is elided with authenticity in the goals of the tour. A major part of taking people out of their comfort zone for the organizer means providing them with he

calls an authentic experience: “The interesting thing, I would say, is now that Indian food has been here for so long, people’s taste buds have adapted so much, people want the authentic stuff” (Kumari 2019). While it may be true that tourists are interested in authenticity, there are barriers to them experiencing it. For one thing, he shares the view espoused by many foodies I interviewed for this project that the Indian restaurants on Brick Lane are inauthentic and not of very high quality (this is a point I will revisit in the following chapter):

Brick Lane is an interesting one. As Shelly probably explained on the tour, most of those restaurants are actually owned by the Bangladeshi community. So, they only make up 10% of the South Asian community in the U.K., but they own 90% of the Indian restaurants. So they have a stronghold there. Now, they’ve still got a small community there, and that place has become synonymous with Indian restaurants. So you know you’re going to get a decent meal. Also, it’s going to be quite competitively priced because they’re all seriously competing with each other. And they have people who are, you know, out to get your, the clients, you know? But generally the Bangladeshi, slash Indian restaurants are, like I said, they come from that tradition of originally catering for a more Western palate (Kumari 2019).

During a follow-up interview, I asked him to clarify how the restaurants on Brick Lane have adapted their menus to accommodate a Western palate. He responded:

I mean that when Indian food became big in the U.K. in the sixties and seventies, initially there was quite a strong difference between the local food that we would have in the U.K. So they had to think of ways to get people wanting to have it in the first place. So not everyone would have been into a hot curry at the beginning, you know.... So cream and sugar feature a lot in some of these Westernized versions. And that’s just, I think, to ease the palate for people who are not used to it (Kumari 2020).

The feeling that Bangladeshi owned Indian restaurants on Brick Lane are inauthentic because they cater to a Westernized palate is reflected within the text of the tour itself. As described above, both times I took the Secret Indian Food Tour, the guides emphasized the authenticity of the first stop, Cafe Grill, where guests are served an appetizer with black dal and raw green chilies, and the last stop, which specializes in North Indian cuisine and is located a

short walk from Brick Lane. At both locations, the spiciness of the food is emphasized along with the existence of many customers who appear to be South Asian as indicators that tour participants are having an especially authentic experience. Within the tour text, the concept of piquancy becomes synonymous with the ethnic group of South Asians through the framing of authenticity. This is in keeping with current foodie discourse which associates personal and ethnic connections in food presentation with authenticity (Johnson and Bauman 2015: 75-78, 80-82). It also serves to symbolically transform South Asian people into spice (Montaño 1997, Bentley 2004, Germann Molz 2004).

At first glance, it would be easy to suggest that in the “text” of the tour, and in its creator’s own estimation, the concept of spice as piquancy is used rhetorically to sell authenticity to tourists. To some extent, this is the case. However, like the guides interviewed above, he does not consider Indian cuisine to be characterized by overly piquant flavors. During our discussion, he made a distinction between heat and flavor that he feels most people often miss in their understanding of Indian cuisine: “It is often hot. People do often use chili as well. But people often get confused between the word ‘spicy’ meaning, ‘Is it got lots of chili,’ and ‘spicy’ meaning the spices, but it doesn’t have to be chili hot if you know what I mean” (Kumari 2019). The perceived inauthenticity of many of the Indian restaurants on Brick Lane due to their propensity to add sweet and bland flavors to their dishes, and common misconceptions about Indian food as overly spicy motivated the Secret Indian Food Tour creator to try to provide his clients with an authentic experience that he hopes will stand out and stick in people’s memories. But what specifically does he mean when he says that he wants to provide his guests with a more authentic experience? He reflects:

How do we provide the authentic experience? By ordering things that people wouldn’t normally order. By going to places that people might not normally go to.

By taking people into kitchens and showing them the utensils they might not normally see. I think all those elements help with the authenticity...When we order the curries, we order ones that you would probably find people having at home rather than the sort of commercialized ones like chicken tikka masala which have kind of been a bit Westernized really. We try to order more authentic things. We try to go to places that are slightly more, that people might not go into, for more authentic foods...At Lahore Kebab House, when we take them into the kitchen, and they see the tandoor, they see all the big utensils and things like that, that again helps to create the authentic experience. Because they're seeing things they wouldn't normally see, like a tandoor. They're tasting things they wouldn't normally taste, like black chickpeas (Kumari 2019).

This description of how the tour offers participants an authentic experience is revealing because it includes elements of both the authentic and the exotic. Here mentions of unusual dishes (black chickpeas) and access to backstage (Goffman 1959, Smith 2019) areas (the kitchen at Lahore Kebab House), both exotic attributes of the tour, are counted as authentic. Also highlighted is the notion that the dishes served on the tour closely resemble what one would find Indian people having for dinner at home, an idea that is closely aligned with framings of authenticity through simplicity, personal connection, and ethnic connections.

The primary subject position of the tour designer was that of a professional working within the culinary tourism industry in east London. When asked if he saw his tour as a kind of correction to the misconceptions about Indian cuisine as either overly hot, or as too Anglicized, he said no, his goal had been to provide tourists with a unique experience they would remember:

It was the first tour I was put in charge of designing. I had already done a few food tours before, you know, I'd done the British food tour. I just thought, "How do I make this tour come alive, rather than just taking people to restaurants? What can I do different that will make it stand out," you know? I can't exactly remember where the idea came from, as such, but I remember thinking, "Wouldn't it be good to have some interactive things, something a little bit more tangible that you can see, touch, and feel," you know? Because these things bring value to food tours. You know, the minute you bring some sort of a theater or something different to the scene, it brings value to the actual tour (Kumari 2019).

As we continued to talk about the role spices play in the Secret Indian Food Tour, however, he noted that perhaps their rhetorical use on the tour was more powerful than he had initially realized. People who have taken the tour are more likely to recognize some of these spices in their own kitchens at home, “Or at least, ‘I know about these now’, you know?” (Kumari 2019). Finally, we ended up discussing the experiential value this part of the tour brings to its participants: “I think everyone probably has a lot of those spices in their cupboards. But when you bring them out all collectively, together, and then you break them, and you smell them, and you talk about them, it does really do something, probably more than I realized it was going to do when I decided to do it, you know? It does really bring spices to life” (Kumari 2019).

While the main rhetorical use of spice in the design of the Secret Indian Food Tour is to persuade participants that they are having an experience that is both exotic and authentic, elements of its designer’s own life and feelings about spice and Indian cuisine work their way into the narrative. During our interview, he mentioned that he partly had the idea to include such a heavy emphasis on spices on the tour because he was already so familiar with them: “So I think maybe it was a combination of me knowing about the spices and everything, and also going to Taj Stores and seeing the spices. I thought well, maybe we can, you know, I’ve always had my mom’s spice box at home, so I’ve always known about that” (Kumari 2019). There is a connection between his mother’s spice box and the idea that the tour will allow participants to try dishes that Indian people would normally eat at home. Here, authenticity is both a highly marketable buzzword that makes a great deal of money for the culinary tourism industry, and a way for members of a group whose cuisine has been mischaracterized in various ways in Western culture to work counter narrative elements into tourist texts they help to create and perform.

Conclusions

Spice has had an important presence in the discourse about Indian restaurants in east London, specifically on Brick Lane, in local media and in the destination images produced in promotional literature advertising culinary tours around east London. It is linked specifically to Indian cuisine in ways that emphasize its exoticness while still reassuring tourists that it will not be too unfamiliar. Local media, tourism advertisements, and the texts of the culinary tours I attended also emphasize London's diversity as a reason to visit the area. This diversity is presented as uncomplicated: with successive waves of immigrants from all over the world being peacefully absorbed into east London in turn. However, in researching Brick Lane's history, speaking with locals who live and work on the street, and in observing how individual tour guides contribute their own perspectives to the texts of the tours, I find that the narratives of east London and Indian cuisine presented to the tourists are oversimplified.

While each of the tour guides I spoke with prioritizes performing their hosting duties well and assisting customers with navigating unfamiliar foods, they use the concept of spice rhetorically in a number of ways to achieve other goals. They can use it to gain information about their clients' interests, and to maintain an image of authority during tours. The guides leading the Indian food tour also rely on conversations surrounding spice to draw attention to details about Indian cuisine and the Indian restaurants on Brick Lane that are not reflected in the advertising copy used to attract visitors to the street. These details provide a more nuanced view of regional variations on Indian cuisine, as well as information about the foods of neighboring countries. They also illustrate some of the complexities of the Indian restaurants on Brick Lane, emphasizing that most of them are owned and operated by people from Bangladesh who

integrate elements of their own cooking styles into the dishes they serve. Finally, these three tourism industry workers and the tour organizer also initiate conversations about spice in order to negotiate their responsibilities as guides and their identities as foodies, locals, and as South Asians. They draw connections with, and make distinctions between, what is presented in the advertising copy about Indian food and their own life experiences.

In the following chapter, I explore how tourists view Indian cuisine on Brick Lane as expressed in their online reviews of two restaurants that represent different kinds of experiences: Aladin Indian Restaurant on Brick Lane, and Dishoom Shoreditch, located a few blocks away, on Boundary Street. In analyzing these online reviews, I pay special attention to what visitors to each restaurant seem to value in a dining experience and look specifically at how they use the concept of spice to accomplish a number of different goals.

Chapter Three:

Adventurous Play and Negotiations of Spice in Culinary Tourist Reviews of Indian Restaurants on Brick Lane

Chapter Introduction

This chapter explores how the dichotomy between traditional curry houses and newer, regionalized Indian restaurants is experienced by culinary tourists¹⁹ through an analysis of online reviews of Aladin Indian Restaurant, located at 132 Brick Lane, and Dishoom Shoreditch, a short walk from Brick Lane on nearby Boundary Street, posted to popular review websites TripAdvisor, Yelp, and Google reviews. Building on the work of Sandra Stahl (1977), who argued for personal experience narrative as a kind of folk narrative in which traditional attitudes are expressed, I approach the reviews as a form of personal narrative. I analyze roughly 120 reviews of each restaurant to identify commonly shared attitudes among reviewers. My premise in this chapter is that restaurant reviews are an online form of personal experience narrative and that the reviewers communicate shared traditional attitudes (Stahl 1977) with one another mainly through these review websites.²⁰ After surveying some common themes present in the reviews, I move on to an analysis of how the concept of spice appears in the texts. Before moving into my analysis of the reviews, however, I first provide some detail on the two categories of Indian restaurants in London and introduce the restaurants I am using as representative of each type in more detail.

¹⁹ Depending on the context, anyone can be a culinary tourist. In this chapter I am looking specifically at how culinary tourism and expressions of specifically white identities are connected within the context of these online reviews.

²⁰ Reviews are reproduced as they appear online, with no corrections in spelling or grammar.

Two Categories of Indian Restaurants in the United Kingdom

Lizzie Collingham begins her 2006 monograph *Curry: A Tale of Cooks and Conquerors* by contrasting two different types of places serving Indian food in New York City. The first, “Curry Row,” on the Lower East Side, is a place where one can order “a lamb vindaloo, a seafood biryani, a sweet yellow dhansak, or a mild and creamy beef korma with side dishes of aloo gobi and nan bread. This catalog of dishes conjures up the aroma of fried onions; windows adorned with bright red fairy lights, white tablecloths, patchy service, Indian music humming in the background, and a two-course meal for under \$20” (Collingham 2006: 1). In contrast, further uptown on 6th Avenue, is Utsav, a more conservatively decorated, expensive restaurant which focuses less on the kinds of Indian restaurant staples listed above and more on providing diners with an “authenticity of flavor” by serving more regionally specific dishes. Collingham points out that restaurants like Utsav are becoming more common both in the United States and the United Kingdom: “On both sides of the Atlantic, these high-class restaurants place great value on the authenticity of their food. The chefs are often specially trained in India and cook only dishes from their home region” (Collingham 2006: 2). Collingham’s dichotomy in New York City of the restaurants on Curry Row selling cheap dishes and the more expensive, regionally specific establishments, is also reflected in the reviews of Indian restaurants in London.

The history of Indian restaurants in the United Kingdom, specifically in east London, was explored in some detail in the preceding chapter. However, it is important to note that the restaurants that opened in the 1970s and experienced a major boom in the 1980s and 1990s, are owned and operated by a different group of people from a different cultural background than those who operate the fine dining, more regionally specific, Indian restaurants that are increasingly popular with exploratory eaters today. As Ravi Palat explains:

After World War II, when British manufacturing enjoyed a Renaissance, people from the subcontinent migrated to Britain in substantial numbers to occupy the lower rungs of the industrial employment ladder. This led to a growth in Indian restaurants, run overwhelmingly by East and West Pakistanis and catering primarily to the South Asian diaspora and to adventurous but impecunious white Britons, especially college students (Palat 2015: 185-186).

The subsequent decline of the manufacturing industry and related loss of jobs contributed to the opening of more of these traditional high street curry houses, which served cheap food to an increasingly strapped working class throughout the 1990s. However, Palat claims, “By the 1990s, as the Indian economy started registering high growth rates and wealthy Indians and some British-born South Asians prospered, and with the consequent rise of upper-end eateries, a sharp fracture emerged between these restaurants and the established high-street curry houses serving a standardised fare” (Palat 2015: 186).

The divide that Palat describes has racial and class implications. The high street curry houses of the 1970s through the 1990s are associated with the poor Bangladeshi and Pakistani immigrants who owned and frequented them, as well as the working-class white Britons, particularly young men looking to behave badly in front of their peers (see Collingham 2006, Buettner 2008 and 2009, Palat 2015 for some examples), who also made up part of the clientele. In contrast, the newer, higher end Indian restaurants are owned, as Palat points out, by wealthier people, mostly from India rather than Bangladesh or Pakistan (Palat 2015).

In his exploration of high-street curry houses as a form of popular culture in Britain, Ben Highmore notes that denigrating these restaurants has become a convention of South Asian cookbooks purporting to be authentic:

This critique of the standardized (and anglicized) cuisine of the high street Indian restaurant, in the name of authenticity, is now a classic strategy in recipe books promoting South Asian cuisine. In one sense it is presumably a justified reaction to the imperialist and capitalist inflection that has been central to the emergence of this food culture in Britain, yet at the same time it fails to recognize that *all*

South Asian cooking has been affected by colonialism (the chili only came to the subcontinent through Spanish and Portuguese colonialism), and fails to recognize the extraordinary success and specificity of the high street restaurant (Highmore 2009: 186).

For Highmore, this claim to authenticity is especially important because it is about creating an image of a higher social class. In drawing such sharp distinctions between the foods of curry houses and more “authentic” Indian cuisine, South Asian cookbook authors and others underline the history of economic struggle associated with Bengali-owned Indian restaurants. As usual, claims to authenticity are complicated here, as many of these newer Indian restaurants which use authenticity rhetorically are creating completely new fusion dishes, or simply putting interesting new spins on established classics. As Yasmin Alibhai-Brown notes, the presentation itself, “dishes painted with jus and piled high with criminally small portions” (Alibhai-Brown 2001) served by well-groomed waitstaff in chicly modern settings, is an important marker of class distinction.

Indeed, the Flock wallpaper²¹, white tablecloths, and folded napkins found in many curry houses are now considered old fashioned (see Buettner 2009, Highmore 2009, Sivasthan 2019). Perhaps not surprisingly, there is sometimes real tension between these two styles of Indian restaurant in London. For example, in her article about the recent changes to Indian cuisine in Britain, Alibhai-Brown quotes one of the newer, higher end restaurateurs as saying that he actively wants to take business from Bengalis and Pakistanis who own curry houses, calling them “jungle peasants with rough habits” (Alibhai-Brown 2001).

The idea that curry houses like the ones that line both sides of Brick Lane are old-fashioned, inauthentic, or just plain cheap, came up often during my fieldwork. This attitude is reflected, for example, in the tour organizer’s thoughts on Brick Lane shared in the last chapter

²¹ Flock wallpaper is a kind of wallpaper that has a raised, often soft pattern covering the material.

where he expresses concern over providing his customers with dishes other than the curries they might typically order on a night out. In exploring how culinary tourists experience Indian restaurants on Brick Lane, it seemed important to try to account for the distinction, and to explore performances of identity as culinary tourists in both styles of restaurant. For this reason, I selected one restaurant as representative of each style: for the trendier, more expensive, authentically Indian/Indian fusion option, I chose Dishoom Shoreditch, and for a more classic high street curry house, Aladin Indian Restaurant.

Dishoom Shoreditch and Aladin Indian Restaurant:

When I first arrived in east London in the fall of 2019 to study Brick Lane, I was unaware of any dichotomy between established, mostly Bengali-owned Indian restaurants and newer, more expensive establishments touting more authentic, regionalized fare. However, it immediately came up as I began seeking out people to interview. An early conversation with the brand manager for a popular beer brand served in Indian restaurants was the first time I heard anyone mention the distinction between curry houses like the ones on Brick Lane and village high streets, and fancier Indian restaurants focusing on regional cuisine (Santiago 2019). Later that evening, he sent me a link to a short documentary on the evolution of Indian restaurants in England produced by the BBC entitled "From Korma to Coconuts—The Evolution of Indian Cuisine in the U.K." to support his point. The documentary informs viewers that many of the dishes they have come to expect on the menu, such as madras and vindaloo, were designed to suit the white English palate. In the video, a reporter informs surprised-looking white English patrons that most Indian restaurants are owned by Bangladeshis as they eat their dinners at a typical high street curry house. The documentary explains that the "classic" Indian restaurant

model is dying out, as harsh immigration sanctions against Bangladeshis and “the changing tastes of the British public” have both put a dent in custom at curry houses. Stepping in to fill this gap are those interested in “reclaiming” South Asian cuisine and presenting more “authentic” representations of regional dishes from specific states of India like Gujarat or other South Asian countries like Sri Lanka. Nitisha Patel, a chef who works to help “modernize” curry houses, is interviewed extensively; she explains how she advises her clients to include dishes from different regions in India, along with encouraging them to get rid of things like folded napkins and flock wallpaper, which she considers to be old fashioned (Sivasthan 2019).

This early exchange with an interviewee was not an anomaly. Many times over the course of my fieldwork, after I explained that I was focusing on the Indian restaurants on Brick Lane, people would disparage the businesses there by saying something like “I hope you get to eat some *good* Indian food while you’re here!” While Collingham names Veeraswamy and Zaika as examples of restaurants that are leaders in the trend of regionalized, fine Indian dining in the United Kingdom, the people I spoke with often followed up their expressions of dismay at my choice to focus on the establishments on Brick Lane with the imperative that I had to try Dishoom, a chain of restaurants with an especially famous brunch service. On its website Dishoom certainly positions itself as a restaurant where one can experience the cuisine of a specific part of India, the city of Mumbai, which is referred to by the older, colonial name Bombay:

The old Irani cafes have almost disappeared...Opened early last century by Zoroastrian immigrants from Iran, there were almost four hundred cafés at their peak in the 1960s. Now, fewer than thirty remain. These cafés broke down barriers by bringing people together over food and drink. They were the first places in Bombay where people of any culture, class or religion could take cool refuge from the street with a cup of chai, a simple snack or a hearty meal. People from all walks of life shared tables, rubbed shoulders and broke bread together. Shared spaces beget shared experiences, and Bombay was more open and

welcoming for the existence of these cafés. Dishoom pays homage to the Irani cafés and the food of all Bombay (Dishoom.com).

When this restaurant chain was presented to me unprompted as a favorable alternative to the curry houses on Brick Lane, I decided to explore tourist attitudes towards it. I chose Dishoom Shoreditch, located only a short walk away from Brick Lane on Boundary Street, because it was often specifically presented to me as a better option than dining on Brick Lane.

Choosing one representative restaurant on Brick Lane to compare to Dishoom was a little more difficult. Collingham frames the dichotomy between kinds of Indian restaurants in New York City as between indistinguishable establishments on Curry Row versus a singular restaurant called Utsav that exemplifies regionally specific cuisine. Similarly, I found that many locals and tourists in London seem to view the restaurants on Brick Lane as interchangeably inferior to newer, trendier locations like Dishoom Shoreditch. This tendency to generalize all restaurants on Brick Lane is illustrated by one restaurant reviewer who ends their post with an admonition for readers: “Generally I would recommend you stay away from Brick Lane. It’s a run down dump” (TripAdvisor user SpaceRob 2019). In the end I selected Aladin Indian Restaurant for a number of reasons. First, it is featured on Visitlondon.com, described as serving “excellent Balti and tandoori dishes” (Visitlondon.com/BrickLaneMarket). As discussed in the previous chapter, Aladdin is also a stop on one of the east London food tours. During an interview, one of the guides who works on Brick Lane compared the food at Aladin with the more authentic offerings available in Southall, a suburb of West London with a large South Asian population. In comparison with this more authentic fare, she described Aladin’s tikka masala sauce as thick and syrupy, “like ketchup” (Lal 2019).

While Aladin is definitely a more traditional curry house, its website makes a claim for the authenticity of its dishes which is in keeping with Collingham’s observation that “Even the

more traditional restaurants are beginning to follow this trend and advertise their dishes as ‘authentic’” (Collingham 2006: 2):

Welcome to the Best Curry House in London

Opened in 1979 the Aladin continues to serve fine Indian cuisine to curry lovers of London and beyond. Described by many as ‘One of the Best Indian establishments in the East End of London’, Aladin fails to disappoint. With its close proximity to the famous bars and clubs of East London as well as being close to some of the historic hotspots of the area, Aladin at Brick Lane is the perfect place to start, end or spend a fabulous evening with friends and family. Cooking is a form of Art to which we are totally dedicated, especially the authentic dishes of the sub- continent. It is our passion to serve you the best of dishes that makes us the best Indian restaurant in London. Brick Lane is renowned for Indian restaurants & eateries. When you are in search for the best curry house on the street, Aladin Welcomes You! (aladinbricklane.co.uk)

In total, I analyzed 117 reviews of Aladin Indian Restaurant and 142 reviews of Dishoom Shoreditch posted to TripAdvisor, Yelp, and Google Reviews. In order to collect this data, I began taking screenshots of reviews posted for each restaurant starting at the first of September 2019, in order to coincide with when I began my fieldwork, and moved forward through the end of December 2019. I included a few additional reviews from the first few months of 2020 as well to get a more even sample of reviews of each restaurant from each of the three websites.

I found that reviewers viewed Dishoom Shoreditch more positively than Aladin Indian Restaurant overall. Dishoom Shoreditch has an average rating of 4.5 stars on TripAdvisor.com, compared to 3.8 stars for Aladin.²² On Yelp, Dishoom Shoreditch has an average rating of 4.5 stars, compared to 2.7 stars for Aladin.²³ The preference is based on calculations of value that include price and taste of the food, ambiance of the restaurant, and quality of the service. When the two restaurants are compared, Dishoom is usually described favorably: “We came to London

²² Average TripAdvisor ratings calculated September 2022, based on 3585 reviews of Dishoom and 1993 reviews of Aladin.

²³ Average Yelp ratings calculated September 2022, based on 519 reviews of Dishoom and 91 reviews of Aladin.

to try a new Indian restaurant (Dishoom is our fav.). We decided that Brick Lane was the place to go. Unfortunately we chose the wrong restaurant. The food was nearly inedible” (TripAdvisor user elligta 2019). Sometimes, restaurants like Dishoom are even depicted as replacements for high street curry houses: “Dishoom became an instant classic when it opened in 2009, right as Shoreditch’s beloved Brick Lane curry houses were becoming vintage stores and cocktail dens” (Florio).

The tension between the desire for an unusual, out of the ordinary experience as characterized by Dean MacCannell (2013) and John Urry (1990), and the appreciation for rationalization, as noted by George Ritzer and Allan Liska (1997), is clearly present in positive reviews of Dishoom Shoreditch. They exalt the establishment as being unique and worth the high prices and long waits while simultaneously trying to reconcile the fact that it is part of a chain of Indian fusion restaurants located throughout the United Kingdom. More than one reviewer compares Dishoom to cheap American fast casual chains like Applebees or T.G.I. Friday’s. Occasionally, this comparison is negative, but surprisingly, these parallels are more usually *not* meant to suggest that Dishoom Shoreditch is not worth the time and money. This is despite the fact the comparison would seem to fly in the face of characterizations of the establishment as off the beaten path, eclectic, trendy, unique, or different from standard Indian fare:

I love this place. I’ve been to two Dishoom’s now on two separate visits to London, and loved them both. It’s a bit of a chain, so you can kind of think of them as the Applebee’s of Indian food, but they do it amazing.

The owner of these is a pro restaurateur. The wait can be long, but they give out free hot chai while you wait! The waiting area is a place that lets you buy cocktails, and the restaurant’s ambiance and decor is amazing.

And now the food itself is great. It’s your standard Indian food that’s found in the UK/US, but it’s done right-no complaints! The service is phenomenal and the whole experience of going here is pleasant from the wait to the dining. (Yelp user Eugene X. 2019).

Here, while the fact that the restaurant is part of a chain is mentioned at the beginning of the review, the rest of its content seems designed to explain how Dishoom differs from most chain restaurants. This is important, as even though many reviewers seem to appreciate the set prices, predictable menus, and efficient service one might associate with a chain, eating at a chain restaurant is not in keeping with the role of adventurer that many posters are playing.

Dishoom's status as favored Indian food destination for exploratory eating is largely based on its ambiance: Dishoom is designed for seamless consumption in an aesthetically pleasing environment before patrons even make it to the table, and based on the reviews, its waitstaff are more likely to willingly play the role of friendly guide or cultural broker. Dishoom Shoreditch offers diners a sort of backstage experience, meant to contrast with the manufactured nature of Brick Lane's Banglatown curry houses. The experience is tightly controlled and managed from beginning to end, however. In many ways, the experience of eating at Aladin, a family-owned establishment whose employees have lived and worked in East London since immigrating from Bangladesh in the late 1960s, might be seen as a more "authentic" London experience, but reviewers do not seem to value this authenticity as much as Dishoom's highly rationalized hospitality.

Online Reviewers as Culinary Tourists

Culinary tourists begin exploring before they even leave the house. Having access to websites dedicated to specific travel locations makes it possible for them to visit sites virtually in preparation for in-person trips to new locations, and the web makes it possible to communicate with a wide network of other travelers to compare notes (MacCannell 2013: xxiv, Smith 2018: 173). In this chapter, I am exploring how the digital activities of culinary tourists take place within a context that is deeply informed by whiteness, as the practice of eating at "ethnic"

restaurants in Western countries as a form of leisure is itself deeply informed by whiteness. Furthermore, the specific history of Indian restaurants in London is one that is influenced by racial inequality. As the work of hooks (1992), Narayan (1995), Montaña (1997), Bentley (2004), Binnie et. al. (2006), Buettner (2008 and 2009), Highmore (2009), Spracklen (2013), Johnston and Baumann (2015), Palat (2015), and Varman (2017) cited throughout this dissertation have shown, the act of eating “ethnic” food can be understood as a present-day imperialist project that renders actual people invisible while altering their cuisine beyond recognition to suit the tastes of the white Western palate. Of course, the situation is often more nuanced than this perspective would seem to suggest. Many scholars, like Johnston and Baumann, continue to see potential for social change in culinary tourism:

We argue that, although the foodie’s desire for new, novel, and exotic flavors *is* indeed part of a colonial legacy, it is not only that, and cannot be reduced to a simple instance of culinary colonialism. The desire to eat the exotic Other also represents the hope for cultural exchange, a cosmopolitan broadening of the culinary canon beyond the narrow valuations of nationally based Euro-American cuisine (Johnston and Baumann 2015: 88).

On the other hand, as bell hooks points out, a failure to acknowledge the reality of white supremacy neutralizes the possibility for real change in an encounter with an Other: “Mutual recognition of racism, its impact both on those who are dominated and those who dominate, is the only standpoint that makes possible an encounter between races that is not based on denial and fantasy. For it is the ever-present reality of racist domination, of white supremacy, that renders problematic the desire of white people to have contact with the Other” (hooks 1992: 28).” In approaching the topic of online reviews of Indian restaurants on Brick Lane in London, my analysis is informed by hooks’s assertion, and takes it as a baseline for contextualizing these reviews.

Posting travel narratives online must be viewed within the context of racist domination and white supremacy hooks mentions in her work. While they may remain unacknowledged, racial and ethnic differences are a foundational element of culinary tourism. Heldke describes how food colonizers frame their actions in a way that is similar to how the online reviewers surveyed here contextualize their own experiences: as adventures into the unknown. She writes, “Like the explorers Richard Burton and Henry Schoolcraft, contemporary white American food colonizers set off on brave adventures down unfamiliar streets filled with people-who-aren’t-white in search of the newest, most exotic dining experience possible” (Heldke 2003: 12-13). Spracklen explains that the seemingly neutral leisure activity of socializing online is informed by hegemonic whiteness in ways that are often obscured:

It is in conversations and networking online that hegemonic whiteness operates, turning everyday leisure into a form of instrumentality. White people normalize their particular leisure interests as something universal and the leisure interests of non-white people are marginalized, ring-fenced or mocked or fetishized as something irredeemably Other. The Internet allows anyone to find their community and belonging in some website or social media network. But the power of the white West means there is more economic, social and cultural capital available for white people to dominate the ‘neutral’, ‘mainstream’, de-racialized popular hubs. The most popular social network sites allow white users to create social networks that avoid non-white people and non-white interests, and create a sense of imagined and imaginary community that makes such whitewashing a barely conscious act (Spracklen 2013: 151).

I will explore some of the specific ramifications of the connection between online restaurant reviews and expressions of white identity within the context of Indian restaurants on or around Brick Lane in my Conclusions section.

In writing their reviews, posters simultaneously have an audience of other would-be diners in mind; at the same time, they are informed by the previous reviews of other posters: “While tourists certainly deviate from established scripts, or engage them playfully or even ironically, the enactment of the already-seen constitutes a *hermeneutic circle* by which tourists

reflexively or un-reflexively recontextualise prevailing narratives about a destination” (Smith 2018: 174, emphasis in original). This referencing of past narratives can be seen in the review mentioned above, where the poster describes Brick Lane as a “rundown dump,” a characterization which recalls the street’s long reputation for poverty and danger. Reviewers also tend to reference one another. Often, reviewers use phrases like “just like people say,” or, alternatively, “you can’t believe everything you read” to signal agreement with or departure from the general consensus about an establishment:

Did a takeaway order...The food was awful and off. I spent £50 and it all went in the bin. *Like people say*, Brick Lane is full of Indian restaurants but none of them are genuine. I’ll give credit where it deserves. The starters were ok. Everything else was old salty rubbish (Google Reviews user Khaled Miah 2020, review of Aladin Indian Restaurant, emphasis mine).²⁴

Writers will often directly reference other reviews as the major deciding factor in whether or not they plan to try a restaurant:

Had originally booked for a large party of 20 for next door’s restaurant, Cinnamon, which we chose based on reviews and menu prices, and it was BYO to help us keep costs down (TripAdvisor user JStraffe 2019, review of Aladin Indian Restaurant).

Can not recommend enough!! Went here on the only night I didn’t have a reservation somewhere during my trip to London because I saw recommendations for it all over. You will wait, however, it will likely be shorter than they tell you, and they make great cocktails there, so it’s a good chance to grab a couple at the bar (Yelp user Sam Z. 2019, review of Dishoom Shoreditch).

Alternatively, posters refer to other reviews in order to reinforce their impressions of a restaurant, or to present a contrary opinion. When viewed as a collective, the reviews represent a kind of conversation or exchange of narratives taking place online across multiple platforms.

Understanding the online reviews of Aladin Indian Restaurant and Dishoom Shoreditch as online personal experience narratives in which common traditional attitudes (Stahl 1977)

²⁴ Online restaurant reviews are cited in the Bibliography first by review site, and then alphabetically by username.

about eating Indian food on Brick Lane are expressed is fruitful. It makes visible certain common concerns that posters share about culinary tourism as a leisure activity more broadly, as well as the common shared meaningfulness (Long 2015) that Indian restaurants hold for these reviewers.

Common Themes: Determining Value

I turn first to the common concerns with culinary tourism the posters express and negotiate in their online reviews: the anxiety about whether or not a given experience will be “worth it” in terms of money and time; the importance of having a tour or restaurant employee who facilitates the experience by being kind, personable, and informative about the cuisine, acting as guide throughout the experience; and, finally, the concern with making sure that the experience will provide something that feels different from or outside of everyday life (in other words, an experience that feels exotic):

Super Yummy, lovely, worth the wait

We waited an hour for our table, which seems long but we didn't have a booking so that was our bad! Awesome drinks menu, super cool menu, staff that know and love the food. The menu is pretty unique. The chicken rubi, fried chillis, okra fries, BLACK DAHL, beautiful. Very cool spot, perfect for friends or couples. (TripAdvisor user coyneemal 2019).

This TripAdvisor review of Dishoom Shoreditch is instructive in that it addresses all three of the major concerns mentioned above: the idea of the experience being “worth it” (in this case worth the time it took to get a table), the importance of helpful staff members (“staff that know and love the food”), and the importance of having an exotic experience (the “unique” menu, with the potentially unusual black dahl dish emphasized with capitalization). There is also persuasion to both attitude and action at work in this review (Burke 1945). In describing their experience, the reviewer indirectly makes the argument that eating at Dishoom Shoreditch will be worth a potentially long wait because of the friendly service and interesting menu. In

describing their positive experience, they attempt to persuade readers to share their evaluation that Dishoom is worth the wait; in explaining that their party had not made a reservation in advance and thus had to endure a lengthy wait to be seated, they also instruct readers on how to have the best possible experience at Dishoom. Informing readers of what potential pitfalls to avoid, along with detailing items on the menu that are the most interesting and unique, also provides an opportunity for this reviewer to demonstrate cultural capital. They are experienced, and thus in the position to give credible advice to other would-be adventurers.

Time is not the only resource that may or may not be worth spending at any given establishment. Money is also a major consideration:

Had an absolutely delicious dinner here right before lockdown. The place is stunning in terms of decoration and friendliness of the waiters. I had lamb chops and a delicious side of vegetables (the seasoning was great) and my friend ordered samosa and a delicious burger. As our order took some time the[y] offered us a chai refill! Much appreciated! Just note that this place is on the pricier side, but worth it because of the high quality cuisine and service. Would definitely recommend for a date! (Google Review user Axelle P 202, review of Dishoom Shoreditch)

This review suggests that both atmosphere and quality of service are equally important as the taste of the food in deciding whether a restaurant is worth visiting. The following Google review expresses the question of whether or not the dining experience is “worth it” in a way that seems almost proverbial: “I absolutely love this place, you normally have to wait (1hr10 last night), but *nothing worth having comes easily*. You can have a cocktail or two at the bar while you wait, the level of service is really good. We ordered a bit of everything and every dish was delicious. One of my favourite restaurants” (Google Review user Cridders 2020, review of Dishoom Shoreditch, emphasis mine). Here, the attitude is that a long wait is acceptable if the service and food are good enough to warrant it. Friendly staff and an expansive menu signify a noteworthy experience.

The use of the phrase “nothing worth having comes easily” is striking. Having entered vernacular speech, it fits the main criteria of a true proverb: it is a complete sentence, it varies in form, and expresses a general kind of wisdom (Brunvand 1998: 93). According to Abrahams:

Proverbs are traditional answers to recurrent ethical problems; they provide an argument for a course of action which conforms to community values. They arise in the midst of a conversation, and are used by speakers to give a “name” to the ethical problem confronting them, and to suggest ways in which it has been solved in the past (though the suggestion is not necessarily directed immediately to the ones confronted by the problem). The use of a proverb invokes an aura of moral rightness in a conversation; the comfort of past community procedure is made available to the present and future...The strategy of the proverb, in other words, is to direct by appearing to clarify; this is engineered by simplifying the problem and resorting to traditional solutions (Abrahams 1968: 150).

While Abrahams is referring here to the use of proverbs as a rhetorical device in everyday, face-to-face communication, reviews of Aladin and Dishoom are a kind of conversation taking place online. This conversation is one in which the concept of value is used to construct the reviews, and in fact serves as their “point” (Labov and Waletzky 1997). After reading one of these posts, potential culinary tourists should know whether or not it will be worth their time and money to go to the restaurant in question. Abrahams suggests that proverbs arise in conversation as answers to ethical problems, that they “suggest a course of action which conforms to community values.” This study is not focused on proverbial phrases in online reviews of Aladin and Dishoom, but Abrahams’s idea of vernacular rhetoric is instructive here. His conception of folkloric performances attempting to solve social problems using traditional means applies to the online personal experience narratives of culinary tourists in the context of the traditional attitudes they express.

Specifically, I am looking at how culinary tourists decide what makes a “good” dining experience. What makes it “worth it,” to borrow their phrasing, to commit to spending time and money in one establishment, but not another? In the case of culinary tourism, the problem would

seem to be one of limited resources. Whether one is visiting London from somewhere else, or a local resident attempting to select a place to celebrate a special occasion or simply have a good meal, resources of time and money are often limited. Furthermore, the choice of a restaurant is made in the face of an overwhelming number of options. Because food is as much about symbolism and expressions of identity (Jones 2007) as it is about nourishment, questions of taste and value are directly connected to social distinction (Bourdieu 1984). These reviews suggest that the most important factors that determine whether a restaurant is worth it are the presence of exceptional service and an exotic experience.

Common Themes: An Exotic Experience

Culinary tourists looking for a meal around Brick Lane are being sold two things in the promotional literature: the experience of the exotic, and the experience of the authentic, through the act of consuming the city like a “true Londoner.”²⁵ The exotic and the authentic are intertwined here, as the way to have an authentic experience on par with that of a local is to consume a wide array of diverse “ethnic” offerings in the relatively cramped east London streets. The act of sampling these unusual foods is an out of the ordinary, exotic experience, and it is meant to give participants an authentic, local experience of London. In their reviews, diners seem eager to enter the “twilight zone” of east London; they depict their experiences as culinary journeys or adventures where they are intrepid explorers of the foreign country of the East End.

To create these narratives, reviewers are looking for anything that will set the experience of eating at the restaurant apart from a typical, everyday meal. Many simply emphasize the general uniqueness of a restaurant experience: “Dishoom provides a unique drink and dine

²⁵ For more information on this, see Chapter Two.

experience. Both the cocktails and dishes were tasty. The vibe is chic yet casual, and the decor is spectacular” (Google Reviews user Marcus Hamblin 2022). Sometimes this means emphasizing the ambiance of an establishment, as in the following review that describes the facade of Dishoom Shoreditch as lush and vaguely jungle-like:

Dishoom-We’ve been to the King’s Cross branch. But the Shoreditch Branch has its own vibe. Beautiful vine clustered outdoor veranda and some very specific dishes to the Shoreditch branch. I honestly can’t think of a more wonderful Indian restaurant experience in the U.K. Traditionally styled and with great Tikka and Anglo-Indian fusion dishes. Just go there (Google Reviews user Amit Mishra 2019).

These reviews suggest that diners are looking for a culinary experience where the flavoring and presentation of the food combine with the ambiance of the restaurant to contribute to an overall sense of adventure. This is in keeping with the kind of exploratory play described above and is in accordance with the phrase “Nothing worth having comes easily”.

Brick Lane is often depicted as a noteworthy destination where reviewers can feast their eyes as well as have a good meal: “You don’t come to brick lane just for Indian food—but the awesome street art all over the neighborhood” (Google Reviews user Syeda 2020, review of Aladin Indian Restaurant). In their online reviews, culinary tourists use narrative description as well as the framing question of whether the restaurant is worth visiting to link this history of exploration to a present moment of play. Sometimes, exploring the restaurant itself is explicitly mentioned: “The vibe here is great. I walked in and remember thinking to myself, oh I want to eat here! There was an outdoor patio and the decor was really interesting. There was so much to look at and *explore*” (Yelp user Mariam B. 2019, review of Dishoom Shoreditch, emphasis mine).

A few examples of both the framing question as well as the narrative devices used to create this feeling of playing at adventuring have been given above, but I would like to focus briefly on two final examples, both of Dishoom Shoreditch:

Taste of india

A vibrant Indian cuisine located in the heart of London. The outside of the restaurant looks basic but once you enter, your taken into shock. They have great service, great food only downfall is that it can be a little packed (TripAdvisor user saniyarauf 2019).

From the main road, Dishoom is deceiving. It doesn't look at all appealing. However once you venture to the entrance on the side street, you will be pleasantly surprised. Once inside, this continues. The decor and atmosphere is wonderful. The food was cooked to perfection, extremely tasty and great value for money. I'd recommend Dishoom to everyone. I can't wait to return! (Google Reviews user Megan Doherty 2020).

These two reviews share an implicit theme of the benefits of exploring and being adventurous: while Dishoom might not look exciting on the outside, if one ventures within (using a side street to gain entry), one is pleasantly surprised, or even taken into shock, to find that the food, service, and ambiance are all extraordinary. While the two reviews describe the outside of the building as unexceptional, one characterizes the anterior of the building positively: with a vine-covered veranda. In all three cases, Dishoom is pleasing to the eyes as well as the palate, but in these latter two examples, the experience of going to the restaurant is described as an adventure in which appearances can be deceiving and disregarding them can be worth the risk. Dishoom emerges as a hidden gem.

My analysis of these reviews is largely in accordance with established scholarship on tourism in general. As MacCannell suggests, these reviewers are seeking an alternative to “Everyday life and its grinding familiarity” (MacCannell 2013:159) when they engage in culinary tourism in Indian restaurants in East London. As MacCannell, John Urry (1992), George Ritzer and Allan Liska (1997) and others have explored, it is unclear to what extent tourists are

seeking the real or authentic in their travels, and the importance of authenticity varies contextually, from person to person. As Ritzer and Liska (1997) suggest of tourists in general, these reviewers seem to value predictable vacations, high levels of efficiency, calculability, and highly controlled situations, while still putting up with what seems to be a great deal of irrationality (waiting in long lines, paying large sums of money for small portions) to have these highly rationalized vacation experiences. At the same time, they seek an experience that opens up space for play: eating curry in east London gives them an opportunity to perform adventurousness and openness as a way to gain social distinction among peers.

Common Themes: Waitstaff as Helpful Guides

As Maria Onorati and Paolo Giardullo found in their study of TripAdvisor reviews of restaurants in Italy's Aosta Valley, online reviewers of Indian restaurants in east London place a high value on the quality of service they receive when out at a restaurant (Onorati and Giardullo 2020). Even a brief perusal of the reviews of Aladin and Dishoom make it clear that the employees of the restaurant play a crucial role in whether the experience is considered positive, as in this example from a Google Review of Aladin: "Loved the food! I will definitively [sic] come back again. Even though it was busy, the friendly staff were so attentive and not too intrusive like in some restaurants" (Google Reviews user Jassica Casuga 2020). Alternatively, bad service can tip the scales in the other direction, as in this Google Review of Aladin: "The food was delicious! Excellent chef, size of dishes are decent. But service is far from being good. Waiters are very impatient and not helpful at all. It would be a 5 out of 5 if it wasn't for the service" (Google Reviews user Daniel PdO 2020) [this reviewer gave Aladin a total of three stars]. It is unsurprising that people spending money and time in a restaurant would want the waitstaff to be friendly and helpful. Receiving excellent customer service is a form of cultural

distinction one can claim when dining out, and it is one that many reviewers seem to especially appreciate, as in this Google review of Dishoom: “Bespoke customer service, super friendly, warm and welcoming and great table. Our waitress was outstanding. When I book again, I’ll be calling beforehand to get the same table and hopefully she’s also available” (Google Reviews user Sabrina Natasha 2020). This five-star review focuses exclusively on the service, except for a tip to “order the lamb chops.”

The social distinction conferred on restaurant goers by exceptional customer service, and thus their performances of cultural capital by describing it in their online reviews, is complicated by the central question discussed above of whether or not the experience is “worth it.” As Johnston and Baumann (2015) point out, the current gourmet foodscape is in some ways more democratic than in years past, with emphasis turning away from expensive, fine dining establishments in which waitstaff would most certainly be expected to go above and beyond consistently in helping to provide outstanding experiences for patrons. Today the focus is on more widely available restaurants serving local and/or “ethnic” foods that are coded as authentic or exotic in gourmet discourse. Within this context, the search for distinction has changed but not disappeared, as foodies now demonstrate cultural capital by displaying the possession of both time and money to spend seeking out authentic foods and local ingredients, as well as the knowledge and cosmopolitan adventurous spirit required to correctly identify and enjoy the increasingly regionalized “ethnic” cuisines that are available today.

To sum up, framing online reviews around the question of whether or not an experience is “worth it,” encapsulated in the vernacular phrase “Nothing worth having comes easily,” is affirmed and interrogated across online posts on several platforms. In doing this, reviewers create a space to contextualize themselves within their culinary experiences as knowledgeable, intrepid explorers who know that there is “no gain without pain,” to borrow another proverbial

phrase. In this framework, “going for an Indian” in east London is an affective, exotic experience in which having the right guide is crucial in helping one to sort out the real from the fake, and to provide guidance on what to order when menus are full of unfamiliar, potentially strange dishes:

Simply the Best

Thing 1 and I ventured on an autumnal London evening and T1 suggested Dishoom, Shoreditch. I have been a regular for the infamous Dishoom breakfast in Edinburgh but this was my first ‘big’ meal. Previously put off by the queues but boy do I understand why they have massive queues. We went early and got seated almost immediately. Great vibe, sounds and smells and then came Ani the epitome of world class service. We went for traditional chicken ruby and lamb biryani with naan but T1 also ordered the black dhal that was out of this world but too big. Food was superb but service was even better. When it came to dessert I was intrigued by the ice fruit cola salt mixture and despite Ani’s warning it came and my culinary mind was totally mixed up. I am afraid it was not for me and Ani kindly replaced with a delightful cinnamon ice cream. The meal was brilliant but really must give a shout out to Ani who was unbelievable and with a newbie in hand I could not think of a better mentor. Dishoom superb but Ani simply the best (TripAdvisor user Longmur 2019, review of Dishoom Shoreditch).

While this reviewer has been to a Dishoom location in the past, and orders menu items that can be found in most Indian restaurants, their review is still coded as an adventure narrative. The reviewer refers to themselves as a “newbie,” mentions the vibe and smell of the restaurant, and begins the review by framing the narrative as a “venture on an autumnal London evening.” They demonstrate bravery and adventurousness by trying more unusual dishes like the black dhal, described as “out of this world” and the cola salt ice cream.

The emphasis on the server’s willingness to replace a dish that was a little too unusual underlines Johnston and Baumann’s point that the kind of cuisine sought out and upheld in foodie discourse, which they call exotic and identify as being distant from the typical cuisine eaten by the culinary tourist in terms of either social distance or norm breaking, is most appealing when it is only moderately outside of the culinary tourist’s everyday experiences (Johnston and Baumann 2015: 100). In emphasizing that they were able to return a dish that was

too unfamiliar in exchange for something more appetizing, this reviewer assures readers that Dishoom is a place where one can experience something exotic and have a culinary adventure without having to worry about committing to spending money and eating something potentially inedible. The right guides are there in the form of the waitstaff to both advise and to help rectify errors in judgment when ordering.

On the other hand, failure to act as a patient, warm guide through an unfamiliar menu is met with derision from reviewers:

Absolutely pathetic behaviour of staff and low quality food. Probably fraudsters with fake/bought reviews. They did not want to give me a proper bill for my food that we ordered and would not write the VAT [value added tax] number on the bill. The guy could barely speak english and was asking me to read the menu when i asked him politely about a dish. These guys are probably from la la land and not London (Google Reviews user Minimum Minimum 2020, review of Aladin Indian Restaurant).

It is unclear where exactly this reviewer is implying the waitstaff are from, but their inattentive behavior marks them as being not from London. When engaging in exploratory eating in the specific context of eating at an “ethnic” restaurant, would it not be considered a good thing to interact with and be served by people who are not from the country in which one is eating? In this case, the answer is no. Because the waitstaff in question seem to have refused the role of helpful guide on the reviewer’s culinary journey they are identified as being out of touch and unpleasantly foreign. This idea of a culinary journey or adventure is a crucial aspect of the experience for online reviewers. It is a major factor in determining whether or not the experience has been “worth it,” that is often facilitated, as illustrated above, by the presence of restaurant employees who successfully fulfill the role of helpful guide or ruin the experience by failing to do so.

Common Themes: Conclusions

While reviewers of both Dishoom and Aladin seem most interested in arbitrating whether a dining experience will be worth it, using the metrics of an exotic atmosphere and exceptionally helpful waitstaff who guide participants through the experience, the criteria of what makes a restaurant experience worth it are differentially applied to each restaurant. Reviewers of Dishoom do not consider long waits, high prices, crowds, or the occasional botched order as negative attributes, assuring readers that the entire experience will be worth it. On the other hand, reviewers of Aladin often consider these same attributes to be negative, even though the wait times, prices, and crowds are all generally less at this location. Additionally, even when waitstaff at Aladin attend to their duties efficiently, this behavior is sometimes considered negative:

Absolutely terrible service but good food

Once we had finished, the bill was down on the table within 60 seconds, about 120 after that the waiter was over with the cash machine! I have no idea why they think that is acceptable. (TripAdvisor user Woolnutt 2019, excerpt from longer review of Aladin Indian Restaurant).

Attempts to explain menu items to customers can also be met with suspicion at Aladin, even though the reviews of both restaurants overwhelmingly suggest that this is the behavior that is most valuable to tourists, as in these two excerpts from longer reviews:

Visit for mum's birthday

This is more a place for a 2AM curry when you won't remember what you ate...Service was awful. In fact as we wanted some advice on the dishes the server just pointed to the most expensive before saying that he had to go because if he didn't leave our table now he wouldn't be able to do everyone else and basically picked our orders for us despite us saying we were still deciding. Tried to shout at him back a few times to come back so we could order what we wanted but to no avail. (TripAdvisor user Warren M 2019).

Everyone was talking about Brick Ln Indian food so we ended up here after seeing FANTASTIC google reviews...but I was extremely let down. The place was relatively empty, so the staff was pretty attentive. But, they seemed to think

we knew nothing about what we were ordering, which wasn't the case considering this is my favorite type of food. That being said, they just seemed off. (Yelp user Sophie B. 2020).

In both examples, the waitstaff function as significant barriers to the kind of adventurous play the culinary tourists are seeking, even though they are engaged in a behavior (explaining the menu to guests) that is generally very highly valued. In the first review, the waiter breaks the fourth wall by explaining that he must move on if he wants to adequately attend to all of his tables, in essence refusing to play the part of patient guide happy to welcome guests. In the second, the waiter refuses to give the customer space to perform her expertise on Indian cuisine, underlining her outsider status. When we engage in culinary tourism, we are usually looking to experience an other through their cuisine, not to be made to feel like an Other ourselves. As these reviews show, playing the part of guide successfully without somehow stepping outside of the role is a fine line to walk. This is especially the case when it is not a role one has asked for or consented to play, a point that was briefly explored in the previous chapter.

In reviews of both restaurants, the desire to have an exotic experience is paired with anxieties about the experience being too unfamiliar in a classic expression of the tourist's paradox (Mak, Lumbers and Eves 2012). As Heldke puts it: "Food adventurers may be enthralled with the exotic, but there *is* a limit to our adventurousness. We need to whittle the exotic down to size, so it isn't too odd for us; we like our exoticism somewhat familiar, recognizable, *controllable*" (Heldke 2003: 19). Spice helps reviewers discuss this tension. Reviewers employ it rhetorically in the online reviews both to indicate the exoticness of a restaurant, particularly by indicating the richness and complexity of dishes on offer, and as a means of arbitrating the relative level of exoticness of the experience through debates about whether or not the food is spicy enough, and what to do if it is too spicy.

Rhetorics of Spice

The use of spice in the online food reviews connects to Johnston and Baumann's understanding of the exotic as a framing device that can confer social distinction on modern day diners. The authors argue that exoticism is mainly achieved through geographic and/or social distance from the foods most culturally familiar to the eater, and through norm breaking. Foodies seem to prefer foods that are only weakly exotic, and most of the people interviewed for the book tended to avoid norm-breaking foods altogether (Johnston and Baumann 2015: 106). Here Johnston and Baumann note the importance of spice: "the valorization of exotic food commonly references spice. Departing from the typically under seasoned standard of American 'meat and potatoes' food culture, references to heat, particularly, heat garnered from non-North American sources such as hot sauce stand out as excitingly exotic" (Johnston and Baumann 2015: 105). In the reviews analyzed for this project, diners typically reference spiciness, or heat, when assessing whether or not the food has what they believe is the appropriate amount of spice and when sharing tips for toning down the heat if the food is too hot.

In beginning work on this project, I hypothesized that I might find a kind of covert racist dialogue (Hill 2008) taking place in the online reviews surrounding rhetorical uses of the green chili, or of spice in general. As discussed in Chapter One, the chili pepper is sometimes used as a way to signify that cuisine is authentic, and it occasionally comes to symbolize groups of people, as in Bentley's work on the American Southwest (2004). I did not find this to be the case in my analysis of reviews of Aladin and Dishoom however.

On the contrary, one of the unexpected discoveries of my research was the relatively infrequent use reviewers of either restaurant make of spice. Of the 117 reviews of Aladin Indian Restaurant surveyed for this project, only 32 mention spice in any form, around 27% of the total reviews. In reviews of Dishoom, spice came up even less frequently, with only 20 reviews

mentioning spice out of a total of 142 analyzed, or around 14%. Initially I found this surprising, especially given the long history between the United Kingdom and India explored in Chapter Two. The two countries share a past that has been heavily shaped by the finding and controlling of spice trade routes explored. I also expected to see a greater emphasis on spice emerge in the reviews given that heat levels are often a focus of media discussions of Indian cuisine both in the United Kingdom and in North America, as also explored in Chapter Two.

Several factors might inhibit a larger discussion of spice in the online reviews. First, spice, whether it signifies piquancy or flavor, is directly connected to how food tastes. While it may seem counterintuitive, the food itself seems to be less important to reviewers than having an exotic experience accentuated with the help of waitstaff serving as attentive guides throughout the meal. My findings are consistent with those of Onorati and Giardullo (2020), whose study of 1500 TripAdvisor reviews of restaurants in Italy's Aosta Valley posted over a 25-month period found that the two most prevalent review topics were quality of service and restaurant context: "To our reviewers, eating out is a valuable experience mainly because of the atmosphere and hospitality it can provide. In sociological terms, this means that the perception of the quality of eating out refers almost completely to the predictable patterns connected to a comfortable setting rather than to the food served" (Onorati and Giardullo 2020: 357). In reviews of Indian restaurants on Brick Lane and the surrounding east London neighborhoods, the importance of good service and the restaurant atmosphere are framed within a narrative of exploration and adventure. A "good" restaurant often poses as a hidden gem with evocative decor and the restaurant employees patiently guiding diners through the experience while still giving them the space to express their expertise. For reviewers, the food itself, and its relative amount of heat and flavor, are still important, but both take a backseat to other qualities in the narratives they post online.

Second, perhaps reviewers see spice as being so exotic it is outside of the realm of interest for most readers. Johnston and Baumann categorize exceptionally hot foods among the norm breaking foods culinary tourists tend to avoid. They note that “while our foodie interviewees showed clear preferences for weakly exotic food based on social and geographic distance, they tended to avoid norm-breaking exotic food, which they often understood as involving things like shrimp heads, dog, insects, and the offal dishes (brain, marrow) offered in many high-end restaurants” (Johnston and Baumann 2015: 106). This avoidance of norm-breaking foods is reflected in the interviews cited above that provide tips on how to cool down foods that are too hot, and in the description of the ice fruit cola salt dessert that left one Dishoom reviewer “totally mixed up.” It is also possible that reviewers consider concern about spice, especially in terms of piquancy, to be too closely associated with high street curry houses like Aladin, and thus consider it to be old fashioned. They do not see evaluations of spice as an avenue for social distinction in a gourmet foodscape that views higher end, fusion or regionalized Indian restaurants as trendy and of the moment. Johnston and Baumann comment, “Cultural capital is required to appreciate foodie discourse and discern which features of exoticism are worth pursuing” (Johnston and Baumann 2015: 91), and by leaving aside a discussion of spice in their online reviews, posters may be demonstrating that they are keeping up with the times.

Although there are fewer references to spice in these online reviews than I expected, the ones that are there confirm that spice is important in helping reviewers determine whether or not a dining experience at either restaurant will be worth the time and money.

Reviews of Aladin Indian Restaurant that mention spice include positive descriptions of the spice level of the food. In these reviews, it seems clear that spice is meant to signify piquancy, as in these reviews that mention the fresh green chilies that are added to a few

different dishes at this establishment: “Friendly service. I enjoyed the chicken tikka masala the most and the fresh chilies they add to it are such a nice touch because I love spicy food. Lamb curry and vegetable curry are also good” (Yelp user Lillian B. 2020); “... “Curry at Aladin Brick Lane is excellent. Served hot and spicy just the way I like it (Chicken Tikka actually had slices of hot green pepper in it...)” (TripAdvisor user Nathan M 2019). In these cases, the presence of the chilies is meant to illustrate that the food at Aladin is spicy enough for the reviewer. Other reviews make heat the central focus of the post as in the following review, which was titled “As hot as expected”:

Simple looking Indian restaurant on Brick Lane, serving authentic dishes. Was hoping for a hot curry, ordered a chicken tikka phaal. The waiter informed me it is extremely spicy, which is what I wanted. It arrived as promised, deliciously hot. Not like the watered-down versions we are used to in Europe! Good recommendations for the side dishes, quick and efficient service (TripAdvisor user Tyrou0 2019).

Significantly, this review associates heat with authenticity in the same way as the culinary tours discussed in Chapter Two.

Other reviews of Aladin find the food to be lacking in adequate levels of piquancy, as in the following review: “I didnt understand why the ‘spicy pappadum’ was named as such (since it wasn’t spicy at all, and nor were the chutneys) but the vindaloo curry smacked me right across the face with spiciness (which I loved). I’ve definitely had better Indian food, but it’s good enough and the wall painting was cool!” (Google Reviews user Thijs van Boven November 2020). This reviewer attempts to educate other potential customers on whether the dishes served at Aladin can be trusted to bring the heat, letting them know that the answer is decidedly mixed. Frequent positive reassurances that the food that is spicy enough, alongside references to hot green chilies, phaal, and vindaloo, all foods famous for their heat level, exist beside criticisms of foods which are falsely advertised as spicy, such as the poppadom mentioned in the above

review. Together, these reviews make it clear that some customers at Aladin are seeking out piquant foods as part of their experiences on Brick Lane.

Online reviews of Dishoom include positive mentions of green chilis and hot foods but there are also comments about very high levels of spice. This is in contrast to reviews of Aladin where concern about too much heat is exceedingly rare (of the 32 reviews of Aladin that mentioned spice, only one included a reassurance that the food would not be too hot). Reviewers of Dishoom reassure other potential patrons that specific menu items will not be too spicy or warn them of dishes that may in fact be too intense. Occasionally, they do both at once: “Gunpowder potatoes were like an explosion of flavor in my mouth! Not spicy at all; just lime juice, garlic, tons of cilantro, maybe olive oil and onions poured over smashed new potatoes that were so moist and steaming. Rice pudding was also incredible. The rest of the food was a bit spicier than I wanted” (Yelp user Shannon S. 2019). When dishes are found to be too hot, Dishoom reviewers often provide suggestions on how to tone down the heat: “GREAT atmosphere and friendly staff. Try the broccoli salad, fresh but beware it’s spicy! Cool your mouth down with some delicious garlic naan and a mango lassi” (Google Reviews user Maximilian Pazak 2020).

Whereas an interest in heat levels, signifying exoticism through norm-breaking (Johnston and Baumann 2015), is of primary concern at Aladin, references to spice at Dishoom tend to have a different focus. In these reviews, a rhetorical use of the term that seems to signify complexity, richness of experience, and mastery of the art of cooking is occasionally present, as in the following examples:

Gunpowder potatoes (5/5): Ok this was the most memorable thing I ate it; and yes it was just potatoes. You know a restaurant is amazing when they can transform a humble potato to something absolutely satisfying and glorious. It was all in the coriander. Something about this freshly cracked coriander took this dish

to the next level, it served with a yoghurt sauce and a lime wedge which was the perfect compliment (Yelp user Mariam B. 2019).

The Shakarkandi Chaat was a special dish they were offering for Diwali, and this flavorful mixture of fried sweet potato chunks topped with shredded beets, radish, carrots, along with yogurt and tamarind was an explosion of flavors and mouthfeels--it was sweet, tangy, savory, crunchy, soft, and creamy, all at the same time! The gunpowder potatoes were simple potatoes grilled, broken apart, and tossed with seeds and green herbs but they had an amazing flavor and the heat was toned down nicely with the yogurt sauce that came on the side (Yelp user David K. 2019).

There is an emphasis on vegetables and whole foods as well as abundant, but skillfully balanced, spices. In both reviews, descriptions of the humble potato's transformations convey the message that good quality comes from simple, easy to identify ingredients. Reviewers use the concept of spice to signify richness of experience: the restaurant is a good one if the entrees have a masterful blend of the correct spices. Rhetorically, they may be drawing on spice to attest to their own expertise and to build credibility. Their knowledge of spice serves as a device to persuade readers that they know how "good" Indian food should taste. By extension, they are therefore worldly and adventurous. Potentially, such demonstrations of competency and adventurousness may indicate a deep appreciation for the nuances of Indian cuisine, which scholars like Kongandra Achaya 1994, Lizzie Collingham 2006, Chitrita Banerji 2007, and Rohit Varman 2016, describe as varied, and centered on the correct balance of spices rather than on emphasizing heat levels. Reviewers rhetorically employ both discourses around spice (its heat and its richness) to address the central concern of value. Is the experience of eating at either restaurant "worth it"? Spice helps identify the experience as worthwhile by lending the right amount of exoticism: enough to be unusual, but not too much to be uncomfortable.

It is important to point out that while discussions of heat level are more prevalent in reviews of Aladin and references to richness are more common in reviews of Dishoom, heat and

richness are topics in the reviews of both restaurants. The different emphasis may relate to how reviewers categorize each business. For example, the concern with high levels of spice that surfaces in reviews of Aladin is consistent with its positioning as a traditional curry house. According to Elizabeth Buettner, starting in the late 1960s, working- and middle-class white Britons, especially men, began eating at Indian restaurants to rebel against the values and palates of their parents' generation. A large part of this rebellion centered around eating foods that were considered to be almost dangerously hot, and of proving one's masculinity by treating the Asian waitstaff badly:

Masculinity was displayed through competing with mates to choke down a vindaloo or 'take the piss out of the waiter'—evidence that youth culture's 'resistance through rituals' might well involve displays of racism, even when this took the arguably more benign form of reveling in unequal relations with staff in the course of consumption as opposed to more overtly aggressive forms of violence" (Buettner 2008: 878-879).

Tourism professionals who work around Brick Lane, and other local Londoners I spoke with, report that this sort of behavior has improved greatly in recent years. Nonetheless, echoes of it, and its relationship to the practice of eating exceedingly spicy food, can be found in reviews of Aladin from as recently as 2019:

Good food & service. Shame about the stag do!

Good food and service here. I mistakenly ordered a curry that was too hot and they made me a new one that was milder and knocked 20% off the bill. BYOB is a good idea but we were sat behind a stag do of 20 young lads who were drunk and completely uncontrollable (6:30pm on a Friday) that ruined the whole experience for us. The waiters tried their best to control them but really should have just asked them to leave (TripAdvisor user Taya D 2019).

Here, the reviewer mentions the rowdiness of patrons out for a bachelor party in the same sentence they indicate a dish was a bit too spicy for them. The association connects the concept of heat with a kind of drunk and disorderly masculinity. By extension, it reinforces the belief that high street curry houses are old fashioned and perhaps even low class. This knowledge, in turn,

demonstrates the restaurant goer's sophistication and familiarity with "ethnic" cuisines. Furthermore, the close connection between food that is too spicy, and the unpredictable behavior of drunk patrons may also indicate an association between spice and danger. This is an instance where the norm-breaking (hot food) and social distance ("ethnic" Others failing to protect the patrons from working class white men behaving badly) produces an exoticism that is too strong for a pleasant culinary tourism experience.

In contrast, the use of spice to depict dining experiences at Dishoom as rich and varied is more in keeping with the desirable, and socially distant, dimension of exoticism as cosmopolitanism. In writing about the evolution of foodie culture, Johnston and Baumann observe: "Contact with new, 'exotic' cuisines was seen to mark a transition from a parochial, Eurocentric lifeworld, to a new kind of cosmopolitan sensibility that affected not just diet, but was part of a critical attitude towards Western culture." (Johnston and Baumann 2015: 92). By emphasizing the flavor and artful presentation of simple, whole foods like potatoes and lentils, reviewers who emphasize richness and variety are demonstrating both their familiarity with current gourmet food trends that privilege higher end Indian restaurants like Dishoom, and their adherence to current ideas about health and food quality as espoused by journalists like Michael Pollen and Jamie Oliver, a point I return to in the discussion below.

Discussion: Culinary Tourism in Online Spaces and Structural Inequality

In exploring rhetorical uses for the concept of spice in the specific context of expressions of white identity in online reviews of Indian restaurants in east London, it has become clear that these online reviews actively contribute to structural inequality in a number of ways. In my analysis of the common themes shared amongst the reviews, I noted that reviewers are looking for an exotic experience. In this, they cast themselves as adventurers exploring unknown

territory. The physical setting of the East End and Brick Lane is central to this framing of the reviews. In demonstrating that they are willing to sacrifice something (time or money, usually) to have a specific kind of experience, these reviewers are identifying themselves with an intrepid, explorer persona.

This explorer persona is related to a frontier attitude towards the act of dining out. James Leary explores the “frontier” orientation towards the world that many small-town American men share (1977), but understandings of certain parts of the world as frontier-like are not relegated only to small towns, or individual people. Neil Smith (1992) investigates how the developers and businesspeople involved in the process of gentrification in big cities also use the cultural myth of the frontier to frame their activities. Looking specifically at New York City’s Lower East Side and Tompkins Square Park, Smith details a long history of racial and class conflict, and the City’s efforts to force the area into submission, noting that the Lower East Side has been “described by local writers as a ‘frontier where the urban fabric is wearing thin and splitting open,’ and as ‘Indian country, the land of murder and cocaine’” (Smith 1992: 65). This depiction of the area as a wild frontier leads naturally to the need to tame it through gentrification:

The social meaning of gentrification is increasingly constructed through the vocabulary of the frontier myth. This appropriation of language and landscape—the new city as new frontier—seems at first playfully innocent, and in any case so common as to be wholly unremarkable. Newspapers habitually extol the courage of urban homesteaders, the adventurous spirit and rugged individualism of the new settlers, brave pioneers, presumably going where no (white) man has gone before (Smith 1992: 69).

Visitors and transplants to the rugged urban frontier absorb this framing, and incorporate it into their performances of self. And New York City is certainly not the only urban environment understood to be a frontier. East London, with its cramped, working-class conditions and constant influx of newcomers, has a similar reputation. Nils Roemer details how some of the earliest forms of guided touring occurred in East London in the form of “slumming”:

the practice of visiting ethnically different neighborhoods in the area. While east London was considered dirty and dangerous, the diverse array of people living there represented new ideas and new approaches to living life: “Yet exploring and writing about the East End provided men and women with an actual and imagined location where, with the approval of society, they could test prevailing norms about ethnicity, class, and gender relations” (Roemer 2009: 421). This view of east London as a frontier, and a potential site of transformation, has persisted into the present day. George Mavrommatis explores how the “loitering army of web designers, computer engineers, art directors, music producers, and any other job titles generated by this new digitized era” (Mavrommatis 2006: 499) understand the neighborhood where they have recently opened offices and set up shop in trendy new cafes. He reveals that the newcomers see the area as both a place where artistic creativity is possible, and a culturally diverse enclave in the middle of the city.

Many of the professionals Mavrommatis interviews describe east London as a kind of foreign country nestled into the middle of the rest of the city. He notes that this attitude is in keeping with earlier depictions of east London from the 1950s and 1960s and brings up the idea of “twilight zones” in cities: these were urban areas where one could often find low-income housing and diverse immigrant populations. Mavrommatis quotes Jon Rex and Robert Moore on the origin of the phrase “twilight zone”: “Because of the age of these houses the areas are known to the planners as ‘twilight zones’ implying that they are approaching but have not yet reached, the night of slumdom” (Rex and Moore 1967: 29). However, the designation of the twilight zone was never wholly negative. Its diversity and cultural multiplicity signified possibility, and resistance to established ways of British life. Today, the presence of this kind of potentially transformative difference is seen in a more positive light than in the past: “This new kind of

urban multiculturalism goes along with a new narrative of difference in relation to contemporary twilight zones, like Brick Lane...In short, this new narrative of ethnic diversity acknowledges the charms of local ethnic vernacular; it tends to aesthetically value diversity” (Mavrommatis 2006: 505).

The young white professionals who work on the street and value its multiculturalism view this diversity as a potentially transformative influence: by walking along the street, their identities are rearranged. One woman Mavrommatis interviewed describes Brick Lane as “like a frontier” where diversity “challenges you, in a sense, you start to think, who am I, or what’s me in a sense” (Mavrommatis 2006: 513). This frontier narrative positions the street as a place where “Ethnic boundaries are not just transgressed, but denied altogether. As a result, ethnic categorizations become almost irrelevant. The self is free to evolve in a world without boundaries or borders, just frontiers” (Mavrommatis 2006: 513-514).

Culinary tourists share this frontier perspective on Brick Lane, and their online reviews of the Indian restaurants in the area draw on this perspective in order to construct explorer personae in a way that is directly connected to a sense of play with the concept of time. Both Mary Douglas (1997) and David E. Sutton (2001) explore connections between food, time, and memory. More recently, Diane Tye (2014) investigates how the foods people choose to buy, prepare, and consume on storm days help to constitute a time out of time. By focusing on leisurely breakfasts, slowly cooked stews and roasts, and comfort snack foods like store bought chips and cookies, storm foods connect modernity and tradition and allow for a feeling of timelessness and play which makes it possible for people to acknowledge the importance of self-care and community.

Culinary tourists eating curries in east London, particularly on Brick Lane, are also using food as an entry into play in a time outside of time that is connected to both the past and the present. Dean MacCannell suggests this connection between the tourist and the past in a comparison between the explorer and the tourist in his classic work on the subject: “What begins as the proper activity of a *hero* (Alexander the Great) develops into the goal of a socially organized *group* (the Crusaders), into the mark of status of an entire social *class* (the Grand Tour of the British ‘gentleman’), eventually becoming *universal experience* (the tourist)” (MacCannell 2013: 5). Choosing to eat Indian cuisine in east London connects diners with the distant past of colonial explorers searching for spices in a kind of imperialist nostalgia (Rosaldo 1989), as early Indian restaurants like the Hindostanee Cafe were designed to invoke empire and provide retired government officials with a reminder of their time in India (Collingham 2006, Palat 2015). It also connects them with the more recent past and present, in which London’s East End has been viewed as a symbolically charged twilight zone or backstage (Goffman 1959) site of difference, adventure, transformation, and even danger. There is an interesting doubling back here as well, as east London’s rugged past was also a period of intense nostalgia for empire:

The sharp rise in the numbers of Indian restaurants was due to several reasons: the imperialist nostalgia of Margaret Thatcher’s Britain; the decline in the British manufacturing industry; and the influx of migrants of Indian origin from East Africa since the 1970s. In the unstable boom and bust of Margaret Thatcher’s Britain, Lizzie Collingham argues that people sought stability and ‘echoes of empire’, which could be found in curry (Palat 2015: 180).

In using east London as a means to a kind of play that allows one to step outside of time, diners are constructing experiences that link them both to England’s colonial past, and to the 1960s and 70s, a moment in English culture that also looked back nostalgically to colonial times.

Bandyopadhyay notes that British identity is tied to nostalgia, and that “This nostalgic vision of the British imperial past is resurrected through tourism” (Bandyopadhyay 2012: 1719).

Both categories of Indian restaurants in London rely on this nostalgic British identity in their attempts to attract customers to their establishments. Palat argues that most Bengali and Pakistani owners of high street curry houses in the United Kingdom choose to open Indian restaurants rather than selling their own regional cuisines in order to tap into the romantic and exotic associations white British people have with India:

If 'curry' is a colonial appropriation of Indian cooking styles, 'Indian' restaurants in Britain are largely run by Bangladeshis and Pakistanis who call their restaurants 'Indian' because India, rather than their own countries, is associated with the romance of the exotic. Wahhab, a Bangladeshi restaurateur, told a reporter in 2002: 'Bangladesh is a land associated with floods and cyclones, whereas India is associated with romance, the Raj, Taj Mahal, mystique'. More recently, the association of Pakistan with militant Islam has made it unattractive to name restaurants after that country or its more prominent cities. (Palat 2015: 175).

Dishoom similarly trades on this romantic, nostalgic framing of the imperial past on its website.

The bar area of the restaurant, known as the Permit Room, is described in the following manner:

Since 1949, and to this very day, Bombay has been under a state of prohibition. Set apart from a family room, there is a special place where only permit holders may consume liquor, which has come to be known unofficially as a Permit Room. Our Permit Room serves the most delicious and sincere old cocktails, recalling the days before Independence, such as Gimlets, Juleps and Sours; Fizzes and Old-Fashioneds, and a Bombay Presidency Punch (Dishoom.com/shoreditch).

In frequenting these Indian restaurants, diners enjoy an "authentic" experience of Englishness by participating in imperialist nostalgia, so closely connected to English identity and various periods of its history. East London generally, and Brick Lane specifically, is a unique location that affords associations with several of these different historical moments. It is important to keep in mind that these touristic performances of adventurousness are closely connected with idealized and romanticized conceptions of England's colonial past, which was in reality characterized by horrific exploitation and violence the effects of which are still reflected in inequality and racially

motivated acts of violence in the present day. As Renato Rosaldo suggests, “a mood of nostalgia makes racial domination appear innocent and pure” (Rosaldo 1989: 107).

It may be that the medium of posting these reviews online makes it possible for culinary tourists to express this kind of nostalgia uncritically. Sean Smith (2018) argues that while the genre of travel writing has been critiqued from a post-structural perspective that insists on the interrogation of the ways that this kind of writing tends to reinforce structural inequality, travel narratives posted to social media sites like Instagram seem to be exempt from this form of self-reflection. Analyzing combinations of images and text captions on travel-themed Instagram posts, Smith argues that “These visual tropes, paired with textual captions and hashtags, prefigure the tourist as the rightful occupant and user of local spaces in a way that echoes the colonial seizure of foreign lands” (Smith 2018: 173).

Sharon Zukin, Scarlett Lindeman, and Laurie Hurson (2017) make connections between online restaurant reviews posted to websites like Yelp and gentrification: “by appealing to people who share their tastes, Yelp reviewers encourage changes to the cultural landscape in neighborhoods that are potential sites of capital reinvestment” (Zukin, Lindeman and Hurson 2017: 462), and illustrate that these reviewers “mobilize racialized biases to effect a discursive redlining of majority-Black districts” (Zukin, Lindeman and Hurson 2017: 475). Defne Karaosmanoğlu (2013) finds that London-based food bloggers writing about Turkish grill restaurants in Dalston, London, use descriptions of the bodies of the men who work there, which are marked both racially and by gender. They do this to signify the authenticity of the establishments in a way that reproduces difference rather than promotes democratization. Finally, Trevor Jamerson (2016) argues that tourist reviews posted on TripAdvisor are “able to engender discursive authority at both the individual and collective levels” (Jamerson 2016: 120)

because of their dual status as social media posts and travel narratives. Because of the connection between travel narratives and Orientalism (Said 1978), and the kind of “colorblind” (Bonilla-Silva 2003) rhetoric that obscures racial inequality in Western discourse that is prevalent in TripAdvisor reviews, Jamerson concludes that

TripAdvisor’s content as well as organization can be seen to buttress contemporary discourses about racial difference and reaffirm their legitimacy. It brackets and categorizes notions of Otherness in the service of the tourism industry as well as offers a crowdsourced standard of objectivity—mediated by algorithms—that tourists have come to rely on when making decisions about travel related purchases (Jamerson 2016: 132).

The recreations and reinforcements of structural inequality in online restaurant reviews directly impact the lives and livelihoods of the “ethnic” and racial Others whose foods are being consumed as part of the adventurous play of food colonizers in several ways. For example, the importance of waitstaff who perform their roles as guides in just the right way in the reviews can lead to conflict between restaurant employees and culinary tourists. We can see a different iteration of this in the previous chapter, where guides and restaurant employees expressed frustration with the bad behavior of restaurant patrons and tour participants who felt entitled to ask overly personal questions and express stereotypes about South Asian culture.

The adherence to current gourmet foodie trends of authenticity and exoticism, and the centrality of whole, “healthy” foods that reviewers express partially through their rhetorical uses of the concept of spice, especially in online reviews of Dishoom Shoreditch, are also related to expressions of white identity in ways that contribute to structural inequality. In her work on the rhetoric of the loss of home cooking, Jennifer Dutch’s (2018) argues that this lens tends to view the foods and cooking habits of the 1950s through the 1980s as unhealthy, processed, and focused on convenience at the expense of nutritional value and traditional food preparation methods. What Dutch identifies as the rhetoric of the death of home cooking is related to the

emphasis on simplicity that Johnston and Baumann identify as a core determinant foodies use to determine whether or not a food is authentic. As they note, simplicity is explicitly connected to morality: “In addition to providing superior taste, ‘simple’ production methods are often described as motivated by a devotion to purity and integrity in food production that insulates them from the negative associations of complex chemicals and industrial processes” (Johnston and Baumann 2015: 69).

Charlotte Frew (2010) traces how food writers Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall and Jamie Oliver popularized a similar rhetoric in Britain following public health scares surrounding salmonella, genetically modified foods, and beef that had been contaminated by poor animal husbandry practices. These health scares led to distrust of the British government, concerns about the potential for animal abuse connected with industrialized meat production, and, eventually, to a preference for organic produce and simple, whole foods. Frew writes: “The organic products that began to appear on British supermarket shelves were initially viewed with suspicion, deemed suitable only for health fanatics or, because of their increased price, for the wealthy. However in light of the revelations concerning farming practices which had led to foods becoming unfit to eat, the organic movement began to gain greater acceptance with the British” (Frew 2010: 139).

This attitude has directly affected the high street curry houses that first became popular in the 1970s on Brick Lane. Nicola Frost (2011) describes how trends have changed at British Indian restaurants over the years, noting that the current interest in Indian-owned restaurants and vegetarian fare has left Bengali-owned curry houses scrambling to defend themselves against the general feeling that they are old-fashioned and unhealthy. Frost describes the efforts by

restaurant owners on Brick Lane to address these concerns at the 2006 Curry Festival by featuring a vegetable curry as the event's centerpiece:

At one end of the table was a large cauldron of vegetable curry. This was the festival's signature dish, literally a green curry. The BTRA, with the help of the PR firm hired by the organizers of the Brick Lane Festival, had decided they needed to address some specific recent criticisms by the food writers—those relating to overuse of artificial colorings and flavorings, and the large quantities of oil used for cooking. This specially devised recipe was low-fat, and used no artificial colors or flavors” (Frost 2011: 234).

The reviews suggest that Aladin, representative of an older style of high street curry house, struggles more than Dishoom with adhering to current trends which emphasize simple, whole ingredients and a special focus on produce. In discussing this failure, reviewers sometimes resort to one of spice's rhetorical opposites: sweetness or blandness. While reviews of Dishoom abound with mentions of broccoli, gunpowder potatoes, and black dahl, those of Aladin mention a surplus of oil or sugar, or an overall lack of flavor:

The worst Indian food I've had

The food was nearly inedible. The only flavor was sweetness, in both the Chicken tikka masala and the butter chicken. No spice, no heat, no complexity, just sweetness. The naan was barely warm, chewy, no garlic that I could see or taste and the cheese naan tasted like plain naan, no cheese present. They both tasted old. The samosa's were decent. But the chutney that we tried, mango mint, just was bland, like mangos only. The rice was the best thing and it was just plain basmati rice. The service was just as bad. No refills on our water, ever. Not rude, just not around, not helpful. Sorely disappointed. (TripAdvisor user elligta 2019).

As Dutch points out in the context of the home kitchen, not abiding by current ideals of whole foods prepared slowly is often considered a failure of morals, and nonconforming cooks are often looked at as deviant (Dutch 2018: 7). Reviews complaining about an excess of sugar or blandness often seem to suggest that diners have been tricked in some way:

If you have a sugar tooth, this is your place. All their wok entrees are full of sugar. At first you think the tastes are authentic and unique. But after a few bites you begin to realise how everything is infused with sugar. Then you realise this meal is full of fillers and the taste is overwhelmingly sweet. You lose the flavour

of the Indian food you and the reason you came here in the first place. What a disappointment (Google Reviews user Julio Cervantes August 2020, review of Aladin Indian Restaurant).

From an excess of sugar, other reviewers move on to more serious accusations, sometimes involving unappetizing colors in the food, as in this excerpt from a TripAdvisor review of Aladin: “...The food was decent, although some strange colours on some of the dishes. For example the butter chicken came out red and the almond filling of my Naan was also bright red” (excerpt from TripAdvisor user Woolnutt 2019). An unexpected appearance marks the food as unappetizing and foreign.

Finally, if my interpretation is accurate, online reviewers of Aladin and Dashoom are seeking an out of the ordinary, or exotic, dining experience. Spice is one metric some reviewers use to gauge how exotic a given restaurant experience will be, but I believe it is possible that there are other metrics for exoticism that the majority of reviewers find more useful and meaningful to potential readers. Surveying the reviews of both Aladin and Dishoom as a collection of narratives suggests that reviewers are concerned that the experience of dining at either establishment not be *too* exotic, and potentially even dangerous, rather than too quotidian. In the section on uses of spice, I cited reviews that describe the food, specifically at Aladin, as being bland, unusually colored, and perhaps even deceptively sweet. Sometimes, the reviewers describe the food as not just unusually colored, but as unrecognizable:

Worst prawn curry I've ever had! We called in Cinnamon but was told it was the same chef at Aladin. Luke warm and *I don't even think it was prawn* (TripAdvisor user linda w 2019, emphasis mine).

Gross. Honestly I eat everything. Even plane food. Train food. Anything. I couldn't actually manage to finish my food here (and it wasn't a size issue, I'm going out for sushi now as I am still hungry). Ordered the tandoori chicken-dry dry dry. So dry. Tried someone else's butter chicken (a friend, not a stranger)-not nice. *Not sure it was chicken inside. Wouldn't bet my life on it.* Avoid. Worst curry I have ever had. My boyfriend is Indian. (TripAdvisor user travellingelephant1 2019, emphasis mine).

Along with criticisms of the food as being unhealthy or even inedible are reviews describing the dubious practices or general untrustworthiness of the waitstaff and restaurant owners. One TripAdvisor review of Aladin is titled “Diabolical Customer Experience and & Rude Staff – AVOID!” (TripAdvisor user JanKev55 2017). Several indicate prices being more expensive in the actual restaurant than they were shown to be online, and restaurant employees as dishonest or even aggressive. One Yelp reviewer advises readers to “Be wary of the guy who will rope you in off the street with promises of the best Indian food in London” (Yelp user Everett B. 2019) at Aladin. Several people characterize the waitstaff as scammers, double crossers, or liars. Hidden fees are mentioned, and doubts about the food are combined with depictions of the restaurant staff as duplicitous or overtly threatening:

AVOID. Arrived at 7:30 this evening and after constant chasing we were serve at 10pm!! The food was lukewarm at best and was not what we ordered. What topped it off was the bartering the Manager was trying to do with us over the bill. No acknowledgement or apology for the over 2hr wait and more interested in getting money in the till over the poor service. We were then threatened with “this is brick lane” be careful (Google Reviews user Terin Nabi September 2020).

While Aladin is consistently more negatively reviewed overall and has more reviews that question the healthiness and edibility of the food, the cleanliness of the restaurant, and the trustworthiness of the staff than Dishoom, these concerns are present in online reviews of the Shoreditch location of the chain as well. Some reviewers express surprise that Dishoom smells good and is clean:

Cosy and adapted Indian taste. Not too smell. Really delicious (Google Reviews user Invisible Woman August 2020).

Very large and clean restaurant with a wide choice of typical Indian food and drinks. The food is nice and every dish comes with its own spiciness. The staff is very kind and professional. Not expensive, but not the cheapest, around 30 pounds pp (Google Reviews user Matteo October 2020).

Others complain of false advertising, as in this excerpt from a longer Google Review of Dishoom that describes a lamb dish that was not what the patron had been expecting: "...The meat was complete detached from the bone and it appeared as slices of lamb kebab displayed as if they were part of the original lamb shank. The meat was dry and mostly hard, basically very far from what the description on the menu suggests" (Google Reviews user Francesco Scano September 2020). And although most reviews of Dishoom mention its exceptional customer service, there are some that describe issues with price gouging, and one that tells of a situation wherein a reviewer was convinced by a Dishoom employee to get in a non-licensed cab and then forced to pay double the agreed upon price of the fare in cash:

Right before we left the restaurant, I approached the host counter and asked where I should go to find a cab quickly. The gentleman volunteered to call a car for us and asked us where we were traveling and how many were in our party. He then told us to wait in front of the entrance, that the cab would arrive in 5 minutes. 5 minutes later, a car pulled up and honked the horn. We didn't approach the car, because it did not look like a cab at all. A few minutes later, the driver of the car walked up to us and stated that he was called to pick up 2 people and transport them to our hotel. We got in the car and when we were close to our destination, he asked if we needed to go to a cash machine because his credit card machine was inoperable. He also proceeded to price gauge us. Never again! We paid the fare but we were left with a very bitter taste in our mouths. This was not an official cab, he didn't even know how to get to our hotel. Shame on Dishoom! (Yelp user Kiyah G. 2019 Review).

Conclusions

In online reviews of Aladin Indian Restaurant, representative of high street curry houses, and Dishoom Shoreditch, representative of upscale, regionalized Indian restaurants, reviewers use spice to illustrate whether or not dining at either restaurant was worth the time and money by illustrating how exotic the experience might be. This was done in one of two ways: through

descriptions of food as adequately spicy, not spicy enough, or too spicy, and by using spice to signify an especially rich and varied dining experience.

Taken together, this collection of reviews calls into question various aspects about the food, cleanliness, and smell of these restaurants, as well as the trustworthiness of the people working there. It suggests a shared understanding or attitude (Burke 1935, Stahl 1977) that reinforces ideas about Indian restaurants that have been explored throughout this chapter: that they may in fact be *too* exotic, bordering on risky or even dangerous. This is an old attitude, one that has been attached to various “ethnic” restaurants in the Western imagination. In England, early ideas about the sickening quality of the Indian climate and its food (Harris 2011), lack of cleanliness of Indian people (Lusin 2013) and concerns about the strong smells and flavors of their cuisine lingered long into the twentieth century: “Despite a long colonial history, food from the subcontinent was not widely accepted in Britain. As late as the 1960s, residents of a Birmingham neighbourhood petitioned the city council for rent reductions because they claimed the smell of curry wafting from nearby South Asian row houses was too offensive” (Palat 2015: 173).

The idea that South Asian food was somehow aggressive or deviant in its difference combined with the racial pathologizing of neighborhoods like Brixton and Shoreditch that struggled with the negative effects of poverty (Mavrommatis 2010) to create racist stereotypes, and these stereotypes are reflected in the online reviews of Aladin and Dishoom. This conclusion highlights complexities underlying claims like Johnston and Baumann’s that “The desire to eat the exotic Other also represents the hope for cultural exchange, a cosmopolitan broadening of the culinary canon beyond the narrow variations of nationally based Euro-American cuisine”

(Johnson and Baumann 2015: 88). Even well intentioned forays into diversity are embedded in entrenched inequities of the past.

At the very least, online reviews of Aladin and Dishoom, suggest that scholars need to pay close attention to the tenacity and longevity of racist attitudes and “commonsense” (Burke 1935) ideas in dialogues surrounding the consumption of “ethnic” foods. Culinary tourists may be performing a cosmopolitan attitude towards difference that is open and curious, but this too can become a performance of white supremacy. As Eduardo Bonilla-Silva explains in his exploration of color-blind racism, “saying things that sound or can be perceived as racist is deemed immoral” (Bonilla-Silva 2006: 55) in a culture that looks back on slavery and colonialism as moral wrongs. In this context, failure to remark on or even notice race “provides new language for what is in fact an old view of whites as a highly virtuous racial group” (Feagin 2013: 95).

But color-blindness and a belief in white virtue are only two parts of the white racial frame (Feagin 2013): a third is a reliance on old stereotypes about other racial groups to help create social ties between white people. In the context of these reviews, discussions of spice join those of cleanliness of Indian restaurants and the trustworthiness of the staff in order to tap into a shared “common knowledge” among white people about people from South Asia. In *The Everyday Language of White Racism*, Jane H. Hill contrasts overtly racist language such as stereotypes and ethnic slurs with what she calls “covert racist discourse”, which is language that invites speakers to make certain inferences that are racially charged without ever trafficking in overt racism. Because covert racist dialogue depends on the communication, either verbal or written, between two or more people, it is even more difficult for it to be identified as racist, since the Western folk theory of racism maintains a personalist ideology, i.e. the position that

“racism is entirely a matter of individual beliefs, intentions, and actions” (Hill 2008: 6). This attitude towards racism puts the responsibility squarely on a few bad individuals and obscures the ways in which racist ideology is continually being propagated and constituted in both public and private discourse.

The emphasis on simple, whole foods and concerns about health discussed above is linked in gourmet foodie discourse to the contemporary framing of certain foods as authentic or, as the case may be, inauthentic. It becomes a screen behind which online reviewers can engage in conversations about Indian restaurants that are informed by racist stereotypes. What Dutch identifies as the rhetoric of home cooking and Johnston and Baumann ascribe to the framing of authenticity in foodie discourse as simplicity plays a central role in keeping the covert racist discourse at play in the online reviews of Aladin and Dishoom covert. Concerns about spiciness, strange colors, unidentifiable meats, and excesses of sugar or oil in the food might be considered ignorant or overtly racist on their own, but within the context of current trends in foodie discourse, these same concerns are divorced from their racist implications.

Instead, reviewers are demonstrating both a knowledge of current food trends, but also a sense of moral responsibility, as the discourse around health and the “obesity epidemic” in the West places such an emphasis on personal responsibility. Reviewers are further protected from charges of racism by the folk idea of racism as a character flaw of only a handful of ignorant or morally bankrupt people (Hill 2008). After all, reviewers who have taken such care to demonstrate that they subscribe to current ideologies on health have already proven their moral credentials. Ultimately, it is possible that spice may not be of primary interest to these reviewers because it is too loaded of a concept: England’s history of colonialism as a project to acquire spices, and more recent images of loud, rude white people demanding hot curries from

beleaguered restaurant employees both link spice too explicitly to racial inequality, and this would constitute a major interruption of the kind of play and performances of identity that these culinary tourists are seeking on Brick Lane. In this context, spice may only be of limited usefulness to some culinary tourists.

In the next chapter, the focus shifts to my second case study, hot chicken in Nashville, Tennessee. I begin by exploring the history of hot chicken in this city and provide perspectives of locals on the connections between Nashville's changing built environment and its foodways. This case study opens up new ways of considering spice within the context of culinary tourism, and also echoes some themes that are similar to what has been described above.

Chapter Four:

Mapping Space and Playing with Stigma: Local Rhetorical Uses for Hot Chicken

Chapter Introduction

Nashville, Tennessee has seen significant growth in recent years. Indeed, when looking for apartments in Nashville in 2017, I was told repeatedly that over one hundred people were moving to Nashville each day. While it is difficult to know whether or not this number is accurate, the population of the Nashville metropolitan area has increased 49% over the past 20 years (FRED 2022). Several tech companies have expressed interest in the area and opened offices there, while the music scene continues to boom (Jack White's decision to open the first physical location of his record company, Third Man Records, in Nashville in 2009 renewed interest in the area for music industry executives and music fans alike).

The city's growth has led to more, and new kinds of, tourism. For example, in addition to its famous country music scene, Nashville is a very popular destination for bachelorette parties (Petersen 2018). In this context, Nashville hot chicken, an extra spicy fried chicken rolled in a cayenne paste and served on a piece of white bread with pickles, has also emerged as a major tourist draw. Johnston and Baumann observe that developing or capitalizing on an already existing cuisine, or a regionally unique dish, is especially helpful for cities looking to profit from current gourmet food trends that emphasize authenticity and the super local (Johnston and Baumann 2015) and hot chicken fits the bill. As a local dish with an interesting origin story, it provides culinary tourists with a unique experience of heat unlike anything most will ever have experienced before. This chapter focuses on how hot chicken is used in narratives created by

local media, hot chicken restaurant owners, and Nashvillians to simultaneously attract touristic interest in the city as well as to grapple with deeper issues of racial, class, and regional identity.

This work is based on twelve months of on-site fieldwork in Nashville²⁶ visiting hot chicken restaurants and participating as a volunteer in the 2020 Music City Hot Chicken Festival on the 4th of July, along with seventeen interviews conducted via WebEx or Facebook Messenger with a total of nineteen hot chicken restaurant owners, individuals who work in local media, Hot Chicken Festival and event coordinators, and members of several online fan groups devoted to hot chicken. Most interviewees were 30 to 40-something middle to upper middle class white locals who know one another and work in local media, non-profits, and other organizations that are connected with city government. I have changed all of their names to protect their anonymity. First, I will provide a brief history of hot chicken and an overview of its development into a culinary tourist attraction. I then go on to explore the feelings of ambivalence this specific group of interviewees expressed about the changes to their city's built landscape and local foodways as a result of the area's rapid growth, and argue that they are able to express these feelings through narratives and conversations about hot chicken, as well as by using it symbolically as a centerpiece in social events. Because hot chicken is a dish invented by Nashville's Black community that has become increasingly popular with white locals, tourists, and restaurateurs, I analyze how this group's symbolic and rhetorical uses of hot chicken are connected specifically to expressions of white racial identity.

History of Hot Chicken as a Dish and Tourist Attraction

Hot chicken was created and made popular in Nashville, Tennessee. Local foodways scholar and author of the 2015 book *Nashville Eats: Hot Chicken, Buttermilk Biscuits, and 100*

²⁶ This fieldwork took place during the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic, and as such was conducted mostly via WebEx.

More Southern Recipes from Music City Jennifer Justus described it in a 2014 article for *Time* Magazine:

In its most traditional form, hot chicken is fried in an iron skillet and caked in a cayenne paste until reddish-rust in color, resembling nothing so much as a rock from the surface of Hell. It arrives glowing atop white bread turned orange from those spicy drippings, with pickle rounds on the side. Everyone has their own method for tackling the bird, though the processes tend to follow a similar ritual. Bite of chicken followed by one of pickle, for example, then tear of bread and spoonful of cooling slaw. Repeat. As the heat ramps up, the speed of eating tends to follow because if you keep pressing onward (or so you tell yourself), you'll push through. You'll beat the heat. But you won't (Justus 2014).

When I moved to the Nashville area in the summer of 2017, I began to hear about the history of hot chicken, its importance to locals, and its draw as an attraction for culinary tourists. Early on, I learned that the dish was said to date from the 1940's. As André Prince Jeffries, the great niece of the owner of what many consider to be the original hot chicken restaurant in Nashville, tells it:

So I grew up on this chicken...It belonged to my great-uncle...However, the story goes—is my uncle was a womanizer, and he was out late one night, and by revenge his lady friend the next morning cooked some chicken and to get him back she poured all this pepper on it, to get him back. But he liked it; so he told his friends about it and the word got around, so he asked her to keep cooking some more. So that's—that's the story; so but it was for punishment but it was something that turned into our business (York 2006a: 3).

Whether or not André Prince Jeffries's great uncle was ever the target of revenge via chicken, most locals and Nashville food historians do point to his establishment as the first place to sell hot chicken in the area beginning in the 1930s or 1940s. Rachel L. Martin, a scholar of Southern history and foodways, traces both the history of hot chicken and of racial segregation and development in Nashville in the essay "How Hot Chicken Really Happened," which was published in 2015, as well as in the 2021 book *Hot, Hot Chicken: A Nashville Story*. According to Martin, Thornton Prince III opened his first restaurant, the Hill Top Restaurant, with his then-wife Caroline in 1947, although it is unclear whether the couple ever sold hot chicken there.

Located in the neighborhood surrounding Capitol Hill, the Hill Top Restaurant was attached to an apartment complex called the Hill Top Inn that the married couple also owned. By 1950, however, the Inn and Restaurant were both closed because of an aggressive slum clearance project in the majority-Black neighborhood instigated by then City Planner Gerald Gimre (Martin 2021: 60-65). The first record of Prince's hot chicken restaurant, originally known as the BBQ Chicken Shack, appears in 1953 on Charlotte Avenue in North Nashville (Martin 2021).

When Thorton Prince III passed away, the Shack was successively taken over by two of his brothers; first Alphonso Prince, who died in 1960, and then William Prince Sr., who ran the Shack until his death in 1973. His second wife, Maude, kept the restaurant operating. (Martin 2021: 96-120). In the early 1980s, other hot chicken restaurants appeared in Nashville. For example, Bolton Polk, Maude's cousin and the former manager of the Shack, opened his own restaurant, Columbo's Hot Chicken, around this time. While this establishment has long since closed, Dollye Ingraham-Matthews, wife of the late Bolton Polk Matthews, who was Bolton Polk's nephew, still runs Bolton's Spicy Chicken and Fish. With locations on 8th Avenue in Nashville and in Antioch, Tennessee, the restaurant serves what many regard as the absolute hottest in town. In 1989, André Prince Jeffries, who had taken over the restaurant from Maude in 1980, moved Prince's to a new location in a strip mall on Ewing Drive in East Nashville. Historically this was a Black neighborhood that in recent years has begun to gentrify. In the fall of 2016, the Prince's opened a second location in South Nashville that ultimately became their only establishment when the Ewing Drive restaurant was destroyed after a car ran into the building on December 28th, 2018 (Cavendish 2019).

Hot chicken was a local dish in the Nashville area that received little notice from the wider public until 2007 when then mayor of Nashville Bill Purcell, who is white, put together

the first annual Music City Hot Chicken Festival in Nashville's East Park. Mayor Purcell first encountered hot chicken at Columbo's before it closed (Martin 2021) and was a big fan of Prince's Hot Chicken Shack. He launched the festival to promote a sense of community and local identity for the city. Martin interviewed him for her piece on the relationship between hot chicken and the history of Nashville's Black neighborhoods: "Purcell was looking for a way to celebrate the city, which was approaching its bicentennial. 'Hot chicken is truly our indigenous food,' he explains. 'It seemed a way to convene the city around something special to us, worth celebrating but also allowed everybody to participate'" (Martin 2015). While Purcell was interested in fostering a sense of pride in a Nashville identity, he also hoped to grow the local population and encourage tourism. His motivations align with Lucy Long's observation that food can be shaped into an attraction for outsiders for political reasons (Long 2004: 37).

Purcell is also interviewed in Joe York's 2006 film *Hot Chicken*, which focuses mostly on Prince's. In the closing moments of the film, all the participants give their final thoughts on hot chicken. The former mayor has this to say: "I think people should come to Nashville, they should come to Prince's Hot Chicken Shack, they should eat this hot chicken. And then they should make the decision that so many people make, which is, stay here for the rest of their lives" (York 2006b). Purcell's vision of hot chicken as both a symbol of and a lure to the city of Nashville has worked very well, and he is often credited, for good or ill, as the man who made it "ok" for white people in particular to enjoy it. As Betsy Phillips writes in her 2016 article "Race, Credit, and Hot Chicken": "There's an interesting and important story still to be written about the racial politics surrounding hot chicken, like what it means for a city that prides itself on being forward-thinking on race and that celebrates a dish we all proudly acknowledge has a long black history, but which most of us did not embrace until Mayor Bill Purcell made it okay" (Phillips

2016). In 2010, Isaac Beard, opened Pepperfire Hot Chicken. Two years later Nick Bishops Sr. and Jr. and John Lasater established Hattie B's Hot Chicken, and the hot chicken craze was fully launched. Linking hot chicken's appeal to the city's position as a rapidly developing and gentrifying locale that attracts an increasing number of transplants, Martin claims: "Hot chicken's new-found popularity was helped along by national and international forces. East Nashville's gentrification was well underway by the time the event [Music City Hot Chicken Festival] began, and many of the transplants were looking for a way to feel like they, too, were authentic Nashvillians" (Martin 2021: 149).

A Changing City and a Blossoming Destination for Culinary Tourism:

The nineteen individuals I interviewed grew up in Nashville or had been living there for at least twenty years. They come from a variety of backgrounds; some have worked in the hot chicken industry, while others are involved in local nonprofits, write for local news sources, or just consider themselves fans of hot chicken in general. They have different opinions on favorite hot chicken restaurants, what makes hot chicken good or bad, and the ongoing debate about hot chicken and cultural appropriation in Nashville, a topic I will discuss at greater length in Chapter Five. One point of unanimous agreement, however, is that the city of Nashville has changed drastically over the past two decades, both in terms of its population demographics and physical cityscape. The city's profound changes came up in every conversation I had with someone who has spent more than five years living in the area and was especially highlighted by those who grew up in Nashville.

This emphasis on change is not (or is not only) the result of nostalgia for a bygone era. Apartment List named Nashville the most changed city of the 2010s, citing its population

growth, the increase in members of the local workforce with a college degree, and rapid development of the area as reasons for this ranking: “Nashville tops our list of metros that have undergone the most change over the course of the 2010s. Like Portland and Austin—the two metros that round our top three, the Music City is in the midst of grappling with how to retain its specific regional character during a period of unprecedented expansion that is transforming it into an economic force on a national scale” (Salvati 2019). Peter Lane Taylor sums it up in an 2017 article for *Forbes* titled, “Nashville is One of America’s Hottest Cities Right Now and It’s Not Just The Hockey,”: “Last year Nashville ranked second in the United States for job growth. Real estate prices are soaring faster than virtually any other place in the country. By most estimates over 100 people are moving into the city every day” (Taylor 2017). Taylor describes how development companies like Trust Development started buying up property in economically depressed areas like Germantown before the Great Recession:

Germantown’s historic core, which boasts some of the city’s most landmark buildings, had been largely gutted by neglect. Many homes were boarded up and in disrepair. The streetlights came on and off at night for no apparent reason. The four vacant in-fill lots that Creason [CEO of Trust Development] first bought were overgrown with weeds and piled high with trash...Barely a decade later, Germantown now is home to Creason’s recently renovated Germantown Inn, as well as a James Beard chef-inspired restaurant called City House, started by Nashville local Tandy Wilson, which is consistently ranked one of the best restaurants in the Southeast (Taylor 2017).

Restaurants such as City House have been foundational in Nashville’s transformation. Taylor also notes that the restaurant group Strategic Hospitality has played a major role in the city’s rapid development: “When Ben and Max [founders of Strategic Hospitality] founded their company in 2006, they envisioned a network of concept-driven ‘social destinations’ throughout the city that not only would elevate Nashville’s food and bar scene for locals, but also would create an innovative hospitality culture that could boost the city’s street cred far beyond the I-40

loop—particularly among mobile Millennials and young professionals who have the choice to live anywhere” (Taylor 2017). Over a decade later, the hopes of investors and developers like Trust Development and Strategic Hospitality have certainly come to fruition. Nashville is now not only considered a hip place to live and a good place to work, it is also a popular tourist city. While country music and the Grand Ole Opry may first come to many people’s minds as Nashville’s tourist attractions, as mentioned above, the city is now a major destination for bachelorette parties as well. As one CNN Travel article exclaims, “There’s A New Bachelorette Capital, And It’s Not Vegas!” The article suggests that “It’s likely that Nashville’s accessible price point is a contributing factor to the rising scene, but it’s not the only reason the Southern city’s bachelorette game is thriving. Nashville is about openness and having a good time with everyone else around you, according to Budden [a local tourism professional who specializes in putting together experiences for bachelorette parties] who sees a distinct lack of exclusivity in his city’s offerings” (Lastoe 2019). This kind of tourism speaks to the aspirations of the founders of Strategic Hospitality. Their hope is that young men and women visiting Nashville for a weekend as part of a bachelor/ette party will explore the possibility of moving to the area: “That’s why the economic development groups in Nashville *adore* “bach” parties as bachelor and bachelorette parties have become collectively known: These women are at precisely the point in their lives when a move to Nashville is possible” (Petersen 2018 *Buzzfeed News*).

Community is a major selling point in how the metropolitan area markets itself to visitors and prospective transplants. According to developers and travel media, Nashville is a big city that feels more like a small town. In his article for *Forbes*, Peter Lane Taylor quotes former mayor Megan Barry as saying that “Nashville is a place where people say, ‘Here’s what I can do for you’, instead of asking what you can do for me, and it shows...we’re diverse, we’re

progressive. But we're also pro-business. We still have that small town feel with lots of small businesses that are bringing their creativity and passion here, and it creates this unique culture that you don't find anywhere else in America" (Taylor 2017). This sentiment is echoed on websites devoted to travel and tourism like Theculturetrip.com, which lists the ease of making new friends, Southern hospitality, and city atmosphere as three of its "10 Reasons Why You Should Visit Nashville." The description of the laid-back atmosphere is especially reminiscent of the small town: "If you're coming to Nashville to get away, you're coming to the right place. There's no pressure to 'see it all' or 'do it all' because the atmosphere is slow going. People really do want to 'stop and smell the roses.' That's why so many Nashvillians have rocking chairs and benches on their front porches" (Kollar 2017).

As lucrative as it has proven to be, developers hoping to attract tourists and transplants are ambivalent about this image of the small-town city because it is so closely related to notions of Nashville as backward and overly rural. An article in *The New York Times* from 2013 describes Nashville as "a city once embarrassed by its Grand Ole Opry roots" (Severson 2013). Taylor writes of the need to "shak[e] off Nashville's hee-haw, honky tonk image" as the first step in revitalizing the city. He quotes one of the founders of Strategic Hospitality on his interactions with native New Yorkers who were not sure whether Nashvillians had electricity in the early 2000s (Taylor 2017). Roughly two decades later, developers' reshaping of Nashville's physical landscape and its image as a tourist destination (Echtner and Ritchie 1991) appears to have been a success, with an article entitled "Nowville" published on the GQ website in July of 2012 proclaiming that "Nashville, Tennessee used to be just a city of ten-gallon hats and the Grand Ole Opry. Now it's the most electric spot in the South, thanks to a cast of transplanted designers, architects, chefs, and rock'n'rollers" (The Editors of GQ 2012). Despite its slick, hip

new image, and the fact that “If you drive into downtown Nashville from any direction these days, the first thing that catches your eye is the forest of tower cranes” (Taylor 2017), Nashville has managed to hold on to its smalltown image without teetering over the edge back into “hee-haw” territory.

Residents express a great deal of ambivalence about both the old fashioned, country image of the city of Nashville, and its subsequent transformation into a cooler, more sophisticated place. In interviews and in public forums, they express some embarrassment about Nashville’s past. At the same time, they fear losing the qualities that make the city seem more like a small town. A 2018 article from *The Wall Street Journal* entitled “As Nashville Rapidly Expands, Residents Worry the Metropolis is Growing Too Fast,” for example, includes several quotes from recent transplants who were attracted to the city by the very transformation they express concern about after relocating. In the article, residents old and new complain of struggling with traffic congestion, flooding because of the surplus of ongoing development projects, and rising housing prices that make it difficult to find affordable places to live (DeShazer 2018).

Tourists who have been visiting the city over the course of decades also express some ambivalence about Nashville’s transformation. A post on TripAdvisor’s Nashville forum from 2019 reflects these concerns from both locals and visitors:

Hi we came to Nashville 19 years ago (where as [sic] the time gone!!) and loved itwe are thinking of returning this year but feeling a little apprehensive in case turned into a cowboy Disneyland!! I read that someone described it as “Nash Vegas” and it looks like its got much bigger.... can anyone put my mind at rest ?? Thank you (winnie 100_13 2019).

In the eight replies to this post, all of which appear to come from locals, there is no disputing that the city has indeed changed over time, although there is some disagreement as to the extent of

this change. User J M responds that Nashville is “Completely different. It will be almost unrecognizable to you” (J M 2019). On the other hand, TFerrell says “It has been called NashVegas for (counts on fingers) at least 30 years. Contrary to popular opinion that’s not about neon but rhinestones” (TFerrell 2019). TFerrell does not dispute that Nashville has changed, but rather when this change occurred. They conclude their response to the original poster by saying that “For us old-timers, a lot had *already changed* by 2000 [around when the original poster ostensibly made their last trip to Nashville] as the upswing had already begun” (TFerrell 2019).

There is also ambivalence about who is most likely to appreciate these changes. Yoderlinda writes: “Yes it has changed a lot! For tourists they love the changes” (yoderlinda 2019). Whether or not the changes have been positive or negative is up for debate as yoderlinda continues to elucidate: “I love all the new restaurants and shopping choices but all the growth has come at a price. Traffic is a nightmare and they are tearing down a lot of what I found so charming when I moved here 40 years ago” (yoderlinda 2019). J M shares mixed feelings in their reply as well: “People are still friendly, although it is hard to find locals anymore because so many people have moved here because our economy is booming. The population is more diverse which has enriched everything. Sadly with our population explosion, violent crime is [a] greater concern” (J M 2019).

Locals I spoke with often expressed the same opinion that Nashville has changed extensively and they reflected the same deep ambivalence about these changes. For example, when I asked one man who writes for a local newspaper and grew up in the city for his final thoughts on hot chicken at the end of our interview, he answered with the following meditation on tourism and development, especially within the context of the Covid-19 pandemic, which had recently caused much of Nashville to go into lockdown:

You're in Nashville now. You know that we have a very complicated relationship with tourism. I'm not sure what started out as a real excitement because of what it did for the economy and what it did for the restaurants, if you want to get specific about it, um, has turned, over the past couple of years, to, I won't say revulsion. But certainly, you know, a resentment where locals don't, they're not necessarily pleased to see these four storey restaurants getting all the business downtown at the expense of either independent restaurants or local based restaurants, even if they're a small chain. You know, like a Martin's BBQ or something like that. Those have got a, those have got, still a strong support. And now, you know, in the age of Corona, it really is resentment at this point. You know all those folks, those restaurants are open, but Black Abbey Brewery can't be, because they don't serve food, you know. But, Kid Rock's Covid Emporium, you know, is free to be operating full board (Wilson 2020).

While he never mentioned hot chicken directly in answering the question I had posed, he did encapsulate three major themes that consistently came up in my discussions with white locals about how Nashville has changed over time. First, locals agreed that the physical landscape of the city has changed significantly. Second, the small-town feeling, or culture of the city, is at the very least in flux, and could be fully disappearing. Finally, and containing elements of both the first and second themes mentioned, the Nashville food scene has changed dramatically over time as well. Locals experienced all three kinds of change as disorienting and expressed ambivalence about them. Hot chicken provided them with a vehicle for safely discussing Nashville's changes and their implications for residents, and allowed them to express a specifically white identity to one another and outsiders.

A Changing Landscape

In the second half of *Hot, Hot Chicken: A Nashville Story*, Rachel Martin explores various factors that led to the intense gentrification of East Nashville. One major impact was the destruction caused by several extreme weather events. East Nashville was hit especially hard by a series of tornadoes on April 16th, 1998:

A Tornado Recovery Board formed to coordinate the relief efforts in East Nashville, and several of the members of the board were neighborhood advocates who had long dreamed of remaking and revitalizing their district. The tornado meant they would have the funds, attention, and opportunity to reimagine what their community could be in the future...Unfortunately, the families and communities that had settled East Nashville and lived there for generations began to be bought out, unable to compete with the rising cost of property” (Martin 2021: 144-145).

In addition to this series of tornadoes, the city was seriously affected by the 2007 housing crisis, as well as extensive flooding in 2010; both events led to a further displacement of locals and increased housing prices as new populations moved in (Martin 2021: 150). Today, Nashvillians go about their day-to-day lives within a gentrified, highly developed cityscape:

Nashville is in now the middle of its fifth fit of urban planning. This time we call it Nashville Next, and we say it’s a way to handle gentrification. The city is growing almost faster than developers can manage. Historic neighborhoods are being razed and renewed. The suburbs are expanding. Fields are being replaced by paved shopping paradises identical to those spreading across the nation. My friends have moved to the neighborhoods we grew up avoiding. They ask me to meet them for drinks or haute Southern cuisine in places I remember as industrial wastelands (Martin 2021: 159).

For those locals who have not been priced out of the rapidly developing metropolitan area, changes to the physical landscape are experienced as extreme, and at times as disorienting. The man quoted above about the complicated relationship the city has with tourism, described himself as a “unicorn” because he believes his situation is so rare. He was born and raised within city limits and continues to live in a relatively unchanged neighborhood. He described his situation as “blessed”: “Though I can, while I can feel the pressure inside and outside, it hasn’t affected my day to day. I can still walk where I need to walk. I can still get downtown in ten minutes. So it’s certainly seen a lot more tourism focused development. Seen a lot more industry headquarters coming into town...But I live in a historic neighborhood, so, they can’t build another house next to me” (Wilson 2020). Another local woman described a city that is so

transformed, she finds it unrecognizable. She tries to spend time in the areas that are still familiar in order to avoid getting lost in a place she has lived for most of her life: “I mean, I say I hang out in West Nashville because at least I know where I am. And I know that’s kind of, a laugh, a pithy soundbite, right? But it’s also true. There have been some buildings going up but it’s nothing like what’s happened at Eighth Avenue, or East Nashville, heavens! Or Germantown. What in the world?! It’s all gone. Historic Germantown is no more. There are three buildings left” (Canley 2020).

While most of the people I spoke with shared sentiments of disorientation and dismay about the ways the city has changed, it is important to note that others see an upside in the new developments. One man who grew up just outside of Nashville and has spent most of his life living within city limits described the experience of watching the city change in more positive terms: “I didn’t expect to watch the city explode under my feet, but that’s been an interesting life experience, to see that happen, and kind of watch it. You kind of get a clue what’s going on, and then a week later, it’s like, ‘Whoa, where did that come from?’, you know? So I’ve enjoyed that. It’s been very interesting watching it change” (Monk 2020). These more positive feelings are also present in responses to the query about whether or not the city would be recognizable to someone who has not been to town in twenty years posted to TripAdvisor referenced above. In general, writers noted that there has been a lot of change, perhaps even a disorienting amount, but much of it has resulted in a host of enjoyable benefits.

Feeling/Culture of the City

Nashville’s sense of itself as an especially warm, community focused, and peaceful city has a long history. Often referred to as both the “Athens of the South” because of the several

colleges and universities within the metro area, and as the “city of churches” because of its large number of places of worship, Nashville has historically considered itself to be a place where people are unusually willing to help one another during times of need. For some locals, this idea was very important, and the sense of community has not been lost in spite of the influx of newcomers to the city:

What I don't think has changed so much yet is there's still, while we can't call it a small town anymore, or a small city anymore, I think there's still a lot of that community that Nashville holds on to. And part of that is because, you know, we, we had a flood ten years ago, and we have these tornadoes that come through. And its an opportunity for us to, you know, remind each other that we're neighbors. And I think just the, the freaking *niceness* of people in Nashville in general, is one of those things that hasn't changed (Monk 2020).

However, this person is one of a small minority of interviewees who see the culture of the city as relatively unchanged. Many others reported feeling that things have changed extensively. One woman who had lived and worked in Nashville for twenty years, but was looking to move away at the time of our interview, put it this way: “Nashville has changed. I really loved Nashville ten years ago. There was a Southern hospitality even though this was still kind of a small town...There wasn't, it was just like this Southern hospitality, recognizing everybody's humanity...I don't recognize Nashville now, from like ten years ago” (Lovett 2020). When I asked her to describe what has changed, her response included feeling out of place as a person who is not easily categorized into the racial binary of Black and white. It was something that she had not previously experienced:

Like, there's, there's, I don't want to, maybe suspicion, there's more of a suspicion, there's more, *something*. And I think there's, and maybe it was always there and I wasn't seeing it, but there was more like, you know, because I'm not white, and I'm not Black, and yet, I never, I didn't feel it until now. Until like, maybe five years ago. Ten, twenty years ago, it was just me, you know, I'm the jogger, I'm the crazy woman sweating at Prince's Hot Chicken (Lovett 2020).

Finally, some locals I interviewed questioned if this image was ever accurate. For example, a local historian suggested that Nashvillians only “pay really good lip service to being concerned about” the fallout from natural disasters like the most recent series of tornadoes which hit the city in early March of 2020. Indeed, historian Benjamin Houston traces how Nashville’s white elites used the image of Nashville as genteel, cultured, and more like a small-town than a big city, to resist cultural changes like desegregation throughout the Civil Rights Movement:

Thus Nashville by the 1950s was rife with paradoxes. The city comprised black and white institutions that staked common claim to creating Nashville’ character, even as racial and class differences remained prevalent throughout the city. Similarly, the city had a veneer of political and rhetorical progressivism covering a more hardened layer of cultural conservatism. Race made all these qualities stand in starkest relief as the city encompassed two segregated but occasionally overlapping worlds that met in quotidian if slanted ways. When racial interaction did occur, it created interstitial moments that sometimes promised to erode the segregated barrier, but more often served as a salve to the self-image of those believing in the fiction of cordial race relations (Houston 2012: 45).

In their narratives about exploring unfamiliar neighborhoods in order to try hot chicken, some locals alluded to Nashville’s history of racial segregation while others attempted to downplay it, a point I explore more fully below.

A Changing Food Scene

Nashville’s food scene is a sort of microcosm of the city as whole, illustrating in miniature how both its landscape and the culture have changed drastically over the past twenty years. Building new restaurants was part of the plan for developing the city from the start. Peter Taylor describes Strategic Hospitality as “...one of Nashville’s hottest up-and-coming restaurant groups that’s re-shaping the city’s dining landscape” (Taylor 2017). He quotes Megan Barry again, who notes that “We have a lot of different businesses here, but this current meteoric rise is because of the entrepreneurs who are bringing restaurants and other start-ups into Nashville

which help us to accelerate our cultural cred” (Taylor 2017). Taylor also stresses that Strategic Hospitality has ultimately been successful in changing the dining landscape of the city, pointing out that the group owned ten restaurants spread across Nashville at the time of his writing. They are designed to accommodate a wide range of clientele and serve different kinds of food.²⁷

For some people who have spent most of their lives in Nashville, this influx of trendy new restaurants, many of which market themselves as gourmet, has been confusing. One woman, who wrote about restaurants for a local newspaper for six years, characterized the downtown area as “a ghost town” when she first moved there in the late 1990s. She continued, “there was really not a lot of local places to eat downtown, even, other than bars. It was just a lot quieter.” She described an onslaught of new eating establishments that eventually led her to quit her job: “That’s where I really started to see things change, because it was my job to cover food, and things just got faster and faster and faster and more and more and more and more until eventually I left. I was like, ‘I can’t keep up with all of this anymore’” (Waller 2020). The turnover of new restaurants was so rapid, locals struggled to keep track:

You know, the best way to tell everybody you know that you’re a local is to drive around and go, “I remember when this was all cow field.” Of course, that applies to anywhere on the planet, but it sounds a lot better. You know, like, you actually knew what was there before, but, that’s really true, you know, here, in the area. Or, I would say the other thing, especially in like the last ten years, is, “So, how many restaurants have been in that space?” It’s like, you know, so you tend to kind of work your way through, and you’re like, “Wow, that location is just *doomed*.” [Laughs] You know, nobody’s going to have a good restaurant in that space (Lake 2020).

People I interviewed who lived in Nashville before the economic boom reported rarely going out to eat, in part because there simply were not many good places to go. One woman who moved here twenty years ago explained:

²⁷ At the time of this writing, Strategic Hospitality has lost one of its venues, Paradise Park, but otherwise continues to successfully run nine other establishments across the city.

But this never really was a foodie town when I first moved here. And that was something that I missed. There were a couple of restaurants that sort of everyone went to, like Tenn Angel and things like that. A lot of them aren't even open anymore unfortunately. So it's only been, you know, I would probably say like in the last ten years is when Nashville started feeling cool outside of Nashville, you know? I feel like Nashvillians always knew it was cool, but that's when it started seeming, and then, it's probably been maybe in the last five or six years that it really has seemed like a big foodie town (Murphy 2020).

Interviewees expressed the view that Nashville had a limited gourmet food scene for most of its recent history many times during the course of my research. Residents were also clear that the city's emergence as a "big foodie town" came at a cost, as this woman highlighted when she pointed out that some restaurants considered to be local institutions before the wave of development were forced to close. The situation has caused some resentment, especially in recent years as the Covid-19 pandemic has made it clear just how difficult it is for independent, locally owned restaurants to compete with establishments owned by major restaurant groups like Strategic Hospitality, or celebrities who open vanity restaurants. The tension is reflected in the words of the local quoted above who described the attitude of locals towards the tourism industry as something close to revulsion.

Before the boom interviewees describe Nashville as having a foodways culture that consisted largely of traditional Southern foods, most of which were eaten at home. Often these foods were grown, gathered, and prepared by Nashvillians themselves, as one local remembers: "We had the staples: you know, fried apple pie, fried chicken. One of the big things was greens? We would go out on Sunday afternoons and literally pick greens off the side of the road. Turnip greens, poke salad is what they call it. And, oh, I hated that stuff. It would stink up the house for days, and I just, I never liked those dark leafy greens" (Monk 2020). Going out to eat was a rare occurrence: "Because my parents were quite Protestant, and had been kids during the

Depression, we didn't go out to eat. That just didn't happen. If we did it was like a Christmas party, and, you know, it was really an exception" (Monk 2020).

A co-owner of one of the original hot chicken restaurants in Nashville shared a similar memory; during her childhood families almost never went out to eat but grew and prepared most of their own food. Her reminiscences on this topic linked changes in the city's foodways to larger cultural shifts:

I came up in the era when people didn't go out to eat everyday like now. I grew up in the era when there was no cell phones. I grew up in the era where the streetlight would let you know when it was time to come home. When you could walk up and down the street and you didn't have to worry about nobody trying to put 'em in a car. Nobody else's kids. This is crazy to me. So, you know, we ate food that, you know, we went out, you know, on the weekend, or special occasions. But as far as every day, like what the millennials do, and even myself do, and others, now, because of the way you never have enough time to do anything now? It changes your lifestyle. So, fast food is a hit. Non-fast food is a hit, just not cooking is a hit now. But back in the day, it was, you know, you fixed your food, you prepared your, I remember growing up we grew our own chickens. Yeah, we had a barn in the backyard, and we grew our own chickens, and had our own fresh eggs (Morganson 2020).

This nostalgic view of an earlier food culture is explicitly connected to feelings of safety and a sense of simplicity (no cell phones, keeping time by streetlights, having enough time to do basic things for oneself such as cooking a meal). By contrast, when asked about the Nashville of today, this person said that it has "changed 100 percent" in terms of both the built environment of the city and its food culture. She commented: "Nashville has changed I would say a hundred percent. Neighborhoods that were, neighborhoods are nothing like they used to be. Neighborhoods where different ethnic backgrounds lived no longer exist. There's not as many meat and threes like back in the day...It's now moved on to specialty items" (Morganson 2020).

Hot Chicken

According to interviewees, Nashville has transformed from a city where most people went out to eat at a meat and three²⁸ on a weekend or for a special occasion, if they went out at all, into a place where no one has the time to cook for themselves, and specialty items of all sorts and price ranges are available for purchase all the time. Locals believe its new identity as a “foodie” city gives Nashville distinction. As one person who has lived in Nashville all his life put it, “Ten, fifteen years ago, you know, we were a city of fern bars. You know, where going out to the Applebee’s was a big deal, and the Roadhouse was fine steak. So with, with a more sophisticated populace comes the need and desire for more interesting food, more authentic food, you know” (Wilson 2020). Within Nashville’s gourmet food scene, hot chicken has been an important player. It has been part of local cuisine since at least the 1950s and its changing status reflects both the ways the city has evolved as well as residents’ ambivalence about these developments.

As noted at the beginning of this chapter, hot chicken became a prominent symbol of Nashville around 2007, when then- mayor Bill Purcell launched the first annual Music City Hot Chicken Festival to drum up increased interest in the city for potential transplants. This event coincided with the increased gentrification of neighborhoods like East Nashville that was instigated by developers and helped along by the destruction wrought by natural disasters that forced many lower-income families out of their homes, leaving the real estate free to be flipped and then rented or sold for much higher prices. Martin suggests that newcomers to the city were looking for a way to feel like they belonged (Martin 2021: 149). As one local I spoke with put it: “Any time a city becomes a foodie town I feel like there’s an identity that people sort of glom on

²⁸ A meat and three is a cafeteria-style restaurant where customers choose one meat and three vegetable sides from a rotating selection of daily choices.

to. And for whatever reason, hot chicken and chicken and waffles has become this weird thing that is on nearly every menu” (Murphy 2020). The owner of a hot chicken restaurant quoted above also links hot chicken directly to Nashville’s transformation into a more modern foodie city:

Back in the day, it was not a foodie city. The foodie city syndrome came on as people started doing specialty products like hot chicken, specializing in pizza, New York Style pizza, or this type of pizza, pizza from Italy. Then you got the hot dog shops that popped up. We’ve always had some chain restaurants with the hamburgers and stuff like that, chicken, but then you have the hot chicken came up, and then so therefore you have a lot of hot chicken spots in Davidson County (Morganson 2020).

Importantly, the increased national popularity of hot chicken, and its connection to New Nashville, is connected to one specific franchise: Hattie B’s Hot Chicken. The owners of Hattie B’s, Nick Bishop Sr., Nick Bishop Jr., and head chef John Lasater are understood by many to be the men who “launched the hot chicken craze” (Embiricos 2016). As Martin describes it in her book:

On August 9, 2012, the most successful of these new ventures opened its doors. Hattie B’s, owned by Nick Bishop Jr. and his dad Nick Sr.—a white family from the Prince’s hometown of Franklin—launched their first store in Midtown, right in the heart of a new, hip area. “Hattie B’s is almost in both Music Row (the area where country recording studios are located) and the campuses of both Vanderbilt and Belmont Universities, making it a much nicer area than Prince’s seedy strip mall,” food blogger Dan Angell wrote of his visit there. “The idea of being in a more protected area was appealing to us, and since you can’t go through Nashville without having experienced hot chicken, Hattie B’s was the choice.” Soon the Midtown location had a loyal following. The Bishops opened a new spot on the edge of a rapidly gentrifying neighborhood once known as the Nations. By 2020, they had seven locations, including spots in Las Vegas, Atlanta, Memphis, and Birmingham. (Martin 2021: 151).

Hattie B’s has been remarkably successful because they have been able to afford to open locations in parts of the city that are considered trendy, and are easily accessible to tourists. Furthermore, as will be explored in more detail in Chapter Five, Hattie B’s appeals to consumers

because the chicken is consistent, and considerably less spicy than at many other places, as Lasater incorporated brown sugar into the spice rub, a controversial decision. Because of its success and popularity with tourists, Hattie's symbolizes Nashville's present for some locals, and in media discourse about the city and its foodways.

But while hot chicken symbolizes the new, trendy Nashville for many locals, and has undeniably played a key role in the city's development into the tourist attraction it is today, it is worth remembering that hot chicken is also a dish that has existed in the city for several decades. As Martin notes, the first restaurant to serve hot chicken was open as early as 1953. Not only is hot chicken an important historical dish in Nashville, fried chicken itself is an important link between the South's past and future. In *The Potlikker Papers*, John T. Edge, the director of the Southern Foodways Alliance, details how selling fried chicken at fast food restaurants provided Southerners with a source of income following Reconstruction and contributed to the South's rebirth as a modern place. At the same time, fried chicken is a traditional part of Southern foodways (see Edge 2004, Williams-Forson 2005, Ferris 2014), and one that many locals I interviewed identified as an important part of their diets growing up in Nashville, as illustrated in the quotes above.

Thus, hot chicken is not only a symbol of modernity, development, and Nashville's current trendy reputation; for locals, hot chicken is also an important symbol of local urban identity, and a marker of a shared regional past: "In this era of change and loss, residents and visitors alike are anxious to celebrate what is historic about the town. Hot chicken has become shorthand for the area's various traditions, a *de rigueur* part of being from here" (Martin 2021: 150). My interviews with locals about the importance and meaning of hot chicken support this point. Discussions about hot chicken often led to reminiscences about the various neighborhoods

where locals had lived and worked, as well as nostalgic ruminations about the city's past. One local described a specific hot chicken restaurant that has since been remodeled as a "room that time forgot," for example. More broadly, for many people who grew up in Nashville, hot chicken is a symbol of home and a link to Nashville's past.

One woman who owns a hot chicken restaurant that is very popular with locals told me that growing up, she would eat at Prince's Hot Chicken as often as she could, sometimes stopping by every day for periods of time. For her, hot chicken was always the ultimate comfort food, and when she was looking for a way to reset her life after feeling unfilled at a corporate job, the decision to open a hot chicken restaurant that would, in part, pay homage to Prince's, seemed like an obvious choice. When I asked her why she thinks hot chicken is so popular today, her answer surprised me. While many people I spoke with talked about the novelty of trying something spicy, paired with the current trend to value foods that are super local and unique, but not too unrecognizable (Johnston and Baumann 2015), this woman linked hot chicken's popularity to a sense of comfort and familiarity, rather than to the concept of adventure and new experiences:

It's nostalgic, for one. Like, people, the majority of my customers say "Hey, when I eat your chicken I think about my grandma." I remember my first time eating that chicken. It brings back childhood memories. So that's really important. It's comfort food. Come on, like, on Valentine's Day? That's our busiest day. Yeah, so, it's comfort. I know what it did for me. It helped me through college. It stayed up late night with me. You know, that chicken just does a lot. It creates memories. Like bachelor parties, birthdays. I've had all that. When people come and say "Hey, we want to celebrate at your establishment," they want to eat the chicken. I mean, that's what it is, you know? Comfort, nostalgia, you know, memories. Doesn't that make sense? And I guess it, it's really nothing fancy. It's just simple (Hudson 2018).

In a conversation with a local historian three years later, I asked about hot chicken's popularity again. However, the interviewee pivoted from discussing hot chicken's popularity to its

importance to the local Black community instead, linking that importance to a sense of community history:

It [hot chicken] was one of their neighborhood foods. And I don't know if it's that always specifically hot chicken matters, or if it is that these are some long standing businesses. Some of the oldest businesses in the community, and that matters. They've been community gathering places, you know? When the Prince's closed up in East Nashville, that, that was a loss for the local neighborhood. That had been their chicken joint since 1989. It was where people had been able to go and hang out and see each other. So, I think for Black Nashville, these are community institutions, for some people they are community gathering places, or community centers. They've been run by families, within families, they've raised up kids together. It's generational (Canley 2020).

Prince's Hot Chicken Shack, understood to be the original spot to get hot chicken, and Hattie B's Hot Chicken, in some ways function as symbolic opposites, with Prince's representing Nashville's past, and Hattie B's its present and future. In online discourse about hot chicken, these two restaurants are often pitted against one another. I will discuss this dichotomy in greater detail in Chapter Five. Here, I am focusing on the connections between racial identity and understandings of ownership of space that become visible in discussions about hot chicken restaurants, specifically in the context of narratives told by middle class white locals.

For people who grew up in Nashville, discussing hot chicken joints: naming their favorites and the ones they visit most often, differentiating these from the ones they recommend to visitors, and tracing how these establishments have opened, closed, and moved around the area over time is an effective way of mapping a landscape that has changed dramatically as development and gentrification have continued to shape the city. As Rachel Martin points out, because hot chicken was originally created by African Americans and sold in Black neighborhoods, hot chicken restaurants were consistently affected by the zoning and urban renewal projects which targeted these neighborhoods. They were often forced to close or relocate as various parts of the city were rebuilt or razed to accommodate major highway systems. As

mentioned earlier, hot chicken also played a key role in the creation of Nashville's current hip image. As one man who has worked closely with Mayor Purcell for many years explained it: "Bill has had, he's made it sort of his life's work as an overall advocate for the city to make sure that the notoriety has spread" (Fry 2020) by creating and promoting the annual Music City Hot Chicken Festival.

In general, whether they consider themselves to be fans of hot chicken or not, locals I spoke with considered hot chicken to be a symbol of their city that is recognized both by other locals, and by outsiders: "If you look at it across the community, it's definitely a flagship of food here, there's no doubt about it" (Fry 2020) said one local. Most understood this as a positive thing, and locals described enjoying both that hot chicken is associated specifically with their city, and using hot chicken as a way to introduce the area to newcomers:

I like the fact that it is called Nashville hot chicken. I do think that it is, even if you move outside of Nashville, move into, even outside of middle Tennessee, you will not find, you know, that flavor profile. You will definitely find fried chicken, and good fried chicken, but that is something that is very, very iconic, very local, definitely moves beyond just Southern cuisine, or even traditional Southern cuisine" (Lake 2020).

Hot chicken's uniqueness gives Nashville a claim to a specific kind of Southern cuisine that it did not previously have, unlike places like Louisiana, or parts of the region well known for specific styles of barbecue, for example:

So one of the things that has always been *so embarrassing* as a middle Tennessean, is that we don't have, there's nothing like a Nashville style barbecue, right? You're eating Memphis style, or you're eating North Carolina style, or you're eating Alabama style. We don't have a style. So I think that's part of the reason, also, that Nashville adopted hot chicken when we knew it existed, was that we didn't have our own barbecue. We love pork, but it's not ours (Canley 2020).

In discussing various hot chicken restaurants, locals chart changes in the city, and relate

these changes in landscape back to their own personal lives. When I asked locals where they prefer to go for hot chicken, it was rare for them to give a straightforward recommendation. Instead, they would note that their “favorite” depended on several factors and situational contexts. Often, people would respond with a place that was close to their home, or where they worked, before mentioning the various other locations this franchise had been housed over time, and how these changes in location affected their status as the “favorite” place for hot chicken. The following discussion between a married couple was sparked by me asking where their favorite place to have hot chicken is:

TH: What was the place that was walking distance from our old house?

SH: Oh, um. Pepperfire.

TH: Yeah.

SH: Or Fire Pepper? I always forget which way. Is it Firepepper or Pepperfire?

SS: Pepperfire.

TH: I think it’s Pepperfire.

SH: Yeah.

SS: Yeah. I haven’t tried that one, but people love Pepperfire. Is it good?

TH: Yeah, definitely. Another one that had a really good kick to it if you, it could get you. But yeah, we were living down on [Street Name], like south of where we’re at right now, and it was like walking distance from our house.

SH: It was, it used to be in, like a, like a wooden shack, with a screened porch. Like that was the dining area.

TH: Yeah.

SH: And they moved, it’s in more of a strip mall kind of location. Which, I think, probably is good for them. They’re probably doing well. But I don’t think we’ve been since they moved it.

TH: Only once, but the line was like stupid long.

SH: We just are, we just don't like waiting in line, is what it comes down to. That's what all our references come down to [Laughs] (Harper and Harper 2020).

These comments reflect how hot chicken restaurants mirror the rapid changes to Nashville's landscape, often closing in one location only to open in another while simultaneously opening and closing second and third locations in other neighborhoods, and maybe also running a food truck in various parking lots a few days each week. Nonetheless, most locals agree that hot chicken originated in North Nashville, a historically African American community. One man went to far as to map out what he called the "Hot Chicken Triangle" in North Nashville, within which one could be certain to get a good meal:

You know, one of the phrases that I coined is the Hot Chicken Triangle [Laughs]. I introduced this several years ago. You know, you have to look at Trinity Lane as kind of being like the geographic, you know, center of the universe for hot chicken. And you have these, you know, very iconic places that have been there for quite some time, and some of them have moved around. So you've got Four Hundred, that's moved locations a couple times, even some of the more transient places like Flaming Bird, that moves into between three different parking lots. But they're all right there, you know, pretty much along Trinity Lane. And so I kind of drew it on a map with a few anchor points along Trinity Lane going, "Buy hot chicken in the triangle, the hot chicken triangle? You're good! There's not one bad place in the Triangle, you know? But if you're outside of that, I don't know, it's going to be hit or miss." I do think geographically that North Nashville, you know, that is geographically kind of the center of where a lot of this cuisine not only started, but where it continues to thrive as well (Lake 2020).

With so many new hot chicken restaurants opening in trendier parts of the city that are designed to cater to tourists, the appeal of the idea that there is one specific part of town where locals can be sure of getting a good meal (and maybe avoid waiting in a long line) is clear.

Some locals understood different parts of the city to be "for" different people, even if it is hard to keep track of which are which. Because of its current popularity, hot chicken is available everywhere in Nashville and its surrounding areas, but it also is understood to be "for" different people, looking to achieve different goals. One kind of hot chicken experience, often considered to be the most authentic

by locals, is the “shack” experience, where the hot chicken is served from a small building with little to no indoor seating or decor, no liquor license, and no real expectation that patrons will remain on the premises to eat their food. On the opposite end of the spectrum are large places with valet parking that serve signature mixed drinks and hot chicken brunch items, like Party Fowl, and franchises that operate like high end or fast casual fast-food restaurants such as Hattie B’s. These serve beer on tap and branded merchandise for tourists alongside desserts like banana pudding and ice cream which are meant to cool down visitors’ palates.

While residents expressed ambivalence about hot chicken restaurants that cater to tourists like Hattie B’s, many said they are happy these places exist because they effectively keep tourists out of the establishments they prefer. When I asked one local how he felt about Hattie B’s, he replied that he had mixed feelings: “I feel that they are likely the only hot chicken tourists ever touch, but at the end of the day they have appropriated a local cuisine and it bums me that the success may be taking away from some of the original places. Yet at the same time, I don't like waiting in lines, so in a way, it is best that tourists haven't discovered them yet” (Bell 2018). This was a measured response, but many locals were much more negative in their feelings about Hattie B’s and similar establishments. One person took the question about Hattie B’s as an opportunity to say that its owner, Nick Bishop Senior, “is an asshole and a prick,” before exclaiming “Fuck him!” Another said “I have been back [to Hattie B’s] and, you know, I’ve eaten there several times, and it’s good. I have no problem in sending idiots from Alabama that don’t know any better there and keeping them out of my places. So, it’s been nice to say, ‘Go to Hattie B’s. Go stand in that fucking line for two hours.’ [Laughs] You know? ‘Get out of my face!’ Because then I can go and eat where I want to go a lot faster (Lake 2020). I did speak with some locals who said they preferred Hattie B’s or other “touristy” hot chicken restaurants over places like Prince’s or Bolton’s, but not very many, and the ones who did often provided qualifiers about these preferences. For

example, they stated that they generally do not enjoy spicy food so the places with milder chicken are more appealing. They also indicated that it is easier to go to a place like Hattie B's when you have young children who require highchairs and a kid's menu.

Playing with Stigma

Throughout these pages, I have referenced issues of race, structural inequality, and gentrification in my contextualization of how the city has changed over the past twenty years. I turn now to a more micro exploration of the connections between Nashville's foodways and issues of race in keeping with folklore's emphasis on informal everyday life. Although hot chicken is a historically Black food with a specific cultural significance for the local Black community, within the current Nashville context, consuming hot chicken can also be a performance of specifically white identity. In the following pages I look at how performances and understandings of whiteness engage with hot chicken as a symbol *from the perspective of white people*. I am especially interested in exploring this perspective in light of the ongoing debate about whether or not the success of franchises like Hattie B's, which is owned by a white family, constitute an instance of cultural appropriation. I discuss this debate and tourist and local responses to it in detail in the following chapter. Here, I am interested in hot chicken's symbolic use in expressions of a specifically white, middle class identity. I am in a unique position to do this, as most of my local interviewees are white and middle or upper middle class. Because I am white myself, I have some access to the white "backstage" (Feagin 2013), although this access is in some ways tempered by the interview context and the presence of a digital recorder and mandatory consent forms.

In speaking with white locals who have lived in the Nashville area, especially those who are longtime residents and have memories of visiting previous locations of original hot chicken restaurants like Prince's Hot Chicken Shack and Bolton's Spicy Chicken and Fish, certain

narrative characteristics stand out. First, there is a variant of the “adventurer” theme which emerged in online reviews of Indian restaurants on Brick Lane in London.²⁹ Like many of those reviews, white Nashvillians’ stories about their first experiences trying hot chicken included descriptions of venturing out in search of treasure in the form of unusual cuisine. The London reviews emphasized themes of hidden gems, beautiful ambiance, exotic flavors, and helpful guides; to the extent that I can generalize, the emphasis in these reviews seemed to be on the pleasures of discovery, coupled with a nostalgic linkage between England’s colonial past and the reviewers’ present experiences in one of the most multicultural parts of London.

White Nashvillians’ narratives about eating hot chicken share this focus on adventure. One local who is very critical of how white people speak about and interact with hot chicken in Nashville said she has noticed almost a “narrative of discovery” surrounding the dish, remarking that “even before hot chicken hit it ‘big’ big, there was kind of this narrative of like, like explorer? “We’re going to go up to Prince’s,” and, you know, you’re literally, you’re not discovering America, you’re just going to a different part of town” (Pomeroy 2020). Other locals depicted this phenomenon in more positive terms, framing the process of going to get hot chicken as a kind of notable experience that adventurous people especially enjoy:

Prince’s had been kind of been, you know, in the collective mind as long as I’ve been in Nashville. You always knew there was a place where you could, you know, get some really hot chicken. Again, this was before it was “Nashville Hot Chicken,” but just kind of always knew about it. It was part of that, that place in a different part of town where you would, you know, go have that experience. I don’t know exactly how I ran into it, I’m sure it wasn’t a television ad, or a newspaper ad. It was probably just neighbors talking about it. In East Nashville [where interviewee has lived for many years], at the time people, even now, tend to go for the more, you know, off the beaten path experiences. So it was a topic of conversation (Monk 2020).

²⁹ This theme was explored in detail in Chapters Two and Three of my dissertation.

While they share this emphasis on adventuring and discovery, there are also significant differences between the London and Nashville narratives. Instead of focusing on what can be gained by eating adventurously, the local hot chicken stories emphasized hardship, discomfort, and even danger. Many narratives centered on the distance diners traveled to eat hot chicken, the rudeness of restaurant employees, and the dangerous neighborhoods in which the restaurants are located. Usually the narrators concluded that all of this was worth it in order to have the experience of eating the dish: “You had that experience where you knew they were going to be kind of rude to you, you knew that you were going to have to wait, you know, 30, 40 minutes before you got it. You knew, maybe you weren’t comfortable in that part of town or whatever. But we loved it. We would go occasionally just because it was novel” (Monk 2020). This local’s mention of the part of town he would travel to eat hot chicken is typical of these narratives: they almost always included some reference to a perceived sense of risk inherent in traveling to areas where hot chicken could be found before Hattie B’s began opening locations across the city. Importantly, this perception of risk seems to be an integral part of the experience: “Where you had Prince’s, you know, up in, out on Ewing. Completely opposite. It was all word of mouth. Cash only. The place was small, it was, you know, people are like “Am I gonna get shot?” You know, that kind of thing. *But that kind of goes with it, you know*” (McDonald 2020).

This emphasis on the distance traveled to eat hot chicken and the perceived risk associated with neighborhoods like East and North Nashville reflects the city’s history of segregation. Martin outlines Nashville’s history of urban planning projects from 1860 through to the present day, revealing how during each phase of redevelopment, Black and lower income neighborhoods were identified as “blights.” City developers saw them as risks to public health and safety and targeted the areas for destruction, most often with no clear plans in place to

provide alternative housing for displaced residents. This approach was most glaringly obvious in the 1950s during the construction of the major interstate highways, Interstate 65, Interstate 40, and Interstate 24, that decimated formerly Black neighborhoods (Martin 2021: 93-94).

However, many interviewees did not say that the fact that hot chicken restaurants historically have been and continue to be in majority Black neighborhoods contributed to the sense of unease or risk they associated with visiting them.³⁰ Some locals, however, do make this connection while still emphasizing the remoteness and dangerousness of these locations:

I think what Hattie B's really did was bring service and efficiency to the hot chicken world. And they put them in locations where white people felt safer to go... You know, you dive quickly into the intersection of race in Nashville when you unpack that statement. But, you know, we're a segmented city, like most every city. And, so, you know, I can remember, back in the day Dickerson Road, where Prince's was, was kind of a hotspot for prostitution, and, you know, you had to really like your food (Schwartz 2020).

Other white locals emphasize that these areas are in fact middle class, "It's just that Black people live there" (Pomeroy 2020), and point out that regardless of this reality, "white people treated hot chicken like a delicacy that proved your bravery in going into this Black neighborhood, and eating this strange food... And so, that became kind of the underlying foundational myth for white people of hot chicken" (Pomeroy 2020). The bravery locals are performing when they venture to unfamiliar parts of town is directly linked to conceptions of Blackness but also, importantly, to their own experiences of being white, even when they emphasize class rather than race in their depictions of neighborhoods like North Nashville as bad parts of town. This is evident in the following long narrative I collected in response to a question about when this

³⁰ White locals who resisted the argument that structural racism is responsible for the outsize success of establishments like Hattie B's Hot Chicken, which has opened locations in central parts of Nashville more often frequented by tourists, sometimes emphasized that the disparity in success levels has more to do with good or bad parts of town than with race.

interviewee, who is a popular personality working in the local food media, remembered first hearing about and trying hot chicken:

Yeah, so, it was just one of those fates of geography. So, my best friend lived in [Neighborhood]. And he lived on [Street], which is about three blocks away from Prince's. So we, there's a high school that is right there in between the two, and we would just, it was a common way of getting on the interstate, and so we'd end up driving by, you know, that restaurant. And you know, we just, we saw a lot of cars over there, and one day we were like "What are all those cars over there?" you know. We actually just thought it was a place where they were just selling drugs all the time. Because it's a really seedy, you know, strip center. And it had a crappy car wash next to it. And I always thought those were people lined up for the car wash. And my best friend was like, "No, those are drug deals going down, Steve." And I'm like, "Well maybe it's both." You know? [Laughs] Go get your car washed, pick up a bag of weed, why not? And, you know, Dickerson Road is probably one of the parts of town that, yeah, you could truly get weed, your car washed, and a blowjob all in a three-block radius, you know, from where all this was at. There was a grocery store right across the street, a Kroger, very popular grocery store chain in the area. And so we would, that was also the grocery store we frequented a lot, so it was all this, just, line of sight, and seeing what was going on. So finally we went and had lunch there one day. And the two of us, we were probably about 16 at the time, we were probably the youngest, skinniest two white kids that Miss Jeffries had ever seen walk into her place. Because we were definitely way out of our element. [Laughs] For sure. But, we didn't know anything about the cuisine, and I don't even remember what we ordered, up front, but we kept coming back quite a bit. And I remember just walking out of there probably on like a weekly basis with a brown paper bag that was just completely covered in grease and going, "Yeah. This is good. I like this." (Lake 2020)

In sharing this story, the interviewee demonstrated a kind of worldliness and bravery: he was unbothered by the prospect of being in proximity with drug dealers and sex workers. His dedication to eating hot chicken, an extremely spicy dish which he described as "covered in grease," can also be read as a performance of masculinity³¹ (Jones 2007, Walton 2018). The spiciness and heaviness of hot chicken, paired with its connection to locations which some consider to be dangerous, makes it a potent symbol for performing a certain kind of masculinity which emphasizes a strong stomach, bravery, and a predilection for the kinds of

³¹ In recording interviews for this project, I did not collect any narratives from individuals who identified as women which shared this emphasis on the perceived dangerousness of the location of hot chicken restaurants.

foods we have traditionally linked with men (meat) rather than those understood to be more feminine (Adler 1981, Shuman 1981, Inness 2001, Deutsch 2005, Jones 2007, McPhail, Beagan, and Chapman 2012). As was the case in the online assessments of curry in East London, the adventure theme exemplified in narratives of hot chicken is related to conceptions of the frontier. More specifically, it connects to the frontier orientation towards reality that James Leary identifies in his analysis of young white men's talk and personal experience narratives. Leary, who is building off of Richard Dorson's (1942) comparison of Davy Crockett to earlier European literary hero narratives, characterizes the nature of the talk of young white men who hang out in front of a grocery store in Bloomington, Indiana in the following way: "On a grander scale, personal experience stories indicate that small town males possess a "wild" or "frontier" orientation toward reality in which ideas of contest and struggle are mitigated by humor and abandon (Leary 1977: 67).

Here, Leary is describing the narratives of young men who reside in small towns, and Nashville is a large and ever-expanding city. Still, it is not unusual for locals who have grown up there and watched the transformation into a major metropolis to take on a similar kind of narrative orientation. It may be the case that this orientation is even pronounced in these narratives as a way to signal to listeners that one *is* a local, rather than a transplant who might not feel safe visiting these dangerous, "frontier" neighborhoods, and who might prefer to frequent one of the Hattie B's locations instead. One interviewee commented: "I haven't had Hattie B's either. But I know Hattie B's came in on the commercial end, and for the so-called people who didn't want to go into the hood to eat hot chicken? They got their establishments in the areas in which they felt that they were more comfortable" (Morganson 2020).

Residents rely on frontier-oriented narratives that use the heat of fried chicken and the perceived danger of neighborhoods like North Nashville to perform a specific form of white masculinity. The accounts represent one way white locals utilize hot chicken in their performances of race. Their characterizations of Black neighborhoods *as dangerous*, and their insistence that this element of danger has nothing to do with race, as in this response I received when asking about the correlation between race and danger, is another. One resident reflected : “Yeah, I can see some people, I don’t think that’s really borne out of, you know, an African American owner, it’s just that, you’re on Dickerson Road, and somebody’s going to get shot. So. [Laughs] It could be owned by anybody” (Lake 2020). Both this frontier orientation and the denial that it is in any way inflected by understandings of race fit in with what Feagin (2013) calls the white racial frame: a kind of toolkit white Americans inherit from relatives and more distant ancestors that serves as a sort of “commonsense” way of viewing race. Feagin suggests that the white racial frame includes narratives, stereotypes, emotional responses, and inclinations to act in certain ways in accordance with understandings about race that are based in this commonsense frame rather than in any objective reality (Feagin 2013: xi).

The white racial frame is made up of a number of subframes (Feagin 2013); together they make up a gestalt. Feagin writes:

Central to the dominant racial frame are several ‘big picture’ narratives that connect frame elements into historically oriented stories with morals that are especially important to white Americans. These emotion-laden scenarios include stories about white conquest, superiority, hard work, and achievement. They make powerful use of stereotypes, images, and other elements from the overarching frame (Feagin 2013: 13).

One of the most important and prevalent big picture narratives or subframes that makes up the contemporary white racial frame is the anti-black subframe: “The contemporary white racial frame, as with earlier versions over the centuries, contains many negative elements targeting

African Americans and other Americans of color. Strikingly, from the beginning to the present, whites have placed the anti-black subframe at the heart of this racial framing” (Feagin 2013: 97). When we consider the work of scholars like Gallagher (1997), who have argued that white people feel most visibly white in situations in which they are in close proximity with people of color, and Hughey (2012), who identifies comparisons with people of color as a major aspect of what he calls hegemonic whiteness, it is not at all surprising that ideas about and attitudes towards people of color might lie at the heart of the white racial frame. Feagin lists several characteristics of the anti-black subframe: the tendency to describe Black people using animalistic imagery, an association between Black people and criminality, and specific gendered stereotypes of Black people as excessively sexually aggressive or available (Feagin 2013: 102-108). As noted, narratives from local white Nashvillians about going to get hot chicken emphasized that the experience is an adventure, and the adventure seemed to be directly related to a sense of risk or danger: the person was demonstrating bravery when venturing out for hot chicken.

While white residents do not mention explicitly that this experience is an adventure because they are entering into historically Black neighborhoods, they do employ several elements of the anti-black subframe in their characterizations of these neighborhoods. It is present in the emphases on sex work, drug dealing, and the possibility of getting shot. While narrators may insist that this is not a racial distinction, that these neighborhoods are just “bad parts of town,” the truth is that they are characterizing areas that historically have been and continue to be majority Black. They do not need to be explicit in order to activate this part of the white racial frame, which other local white people will recognize and react to. The frequent use of symbolically loaded words like “ghetto” in descriptions of these locations further ensures that

white listeners will understand that they are racialized areas. One interviewee commented: “Yeah. It’s a bad part of town. I mean, it’s just North Nashville, North, Northeast Nashville. Just wasn’t a great part of town...Here you are, you’re up in the ghetto, or close to the ghetto, and, you know, again, every walk of life in there, right? And just, everybody’s there for one thing, right? And it’s for the food, right” (McDonald 2020). Scholars like Houston (2012), Rutland (2018) and Martin (2021) have all explored how city governments use similar racially charged language when describing urban planning and rezoning projects that deliberately break up communities with high populations of people of color; they call these areas “slums” or health hazards in order to justify their destruction.

One could argue that we should take people’s assertions that racial stereotypes have nothing to do with their choices in which restaurants to frequent, or in their characterizations of certain historically Black areas as bad, but not because they are historically Black, at face value. However, according to Feagin, the white racial frame becomes embedded neurologically and becomes part of a person. He cites Bonilla-Silva’s (2003) work on the white habitus here, noting that “Once deeply imbedded (sic) in the mind and brain, this frame tends to be lasting and often resistant to change. Activation of it tends to suppress alternative or countering frames. For most whites the dominant frame has become so fundamental that few are able to see it or assess it critically” (Feagin 2013: 15). In using the same language in their descriptions of historically Black neighborhoods, these narratives shared by middle-class white locals reveal how inherited understandings of place that were expressly created for political purposes can impact how individuals construct their understandings of the cities where they live. Going further, Feagin notes that while the white racial frame is inherited and contains a great deal of content related to history, it is also constantly evolving and changing with the times. Hence, the contemporary

white racial frame includes as one of its main elements an emphasis on color blindness in “front stage” areas. Today, claiming to not “see” or notice color is considered a virtue, and pointing out racial characteristics for any reason, by anyone, is considered a sign of inherent prejudice.

This emphasis on color-blindness is effective at silencing any potential criticisms of structural inequality, which helps to maintain hegemonic whiteness. At the same time, it reinforces a major aspect of the historical white racial frame: the inherent goodness of white people. Feagin writes: “Today, the contemporary frame’s accent on most whites as ‘no longer racist,’ ‘post-racial,’ and ‘colorblind’ provides new language for what is in fact an old view of whites as a highly virtuous racial group...this white accent on being colorblind has been shown by social science research to be misleading and often a coverup of the substantial levels of blatantly racist framing and action in which many whites still engage” (Feagin 2013: 95). As Feagin demonstrates, while many white people claim color-blindness in their public, front stage communications, in “backstage,” all white contexts, many continue to engage in overtly racist stereotyping and joking as a way of building social connections with other white people (Feagin 2013: 124-126). The interview context is decidedly front stage, one in which coded uses of the anti-black subframe make sense. Furthermore, Nashville has a history of dealing with racial issues and conflicts that emphasizes indirectness and coded communication (Houston 2012). Martin identifies this phenomenon in her 2021 book, describing how diners use different forms of coded language to neutralize any potential explanation for the differences in success levels of white versus Black owned hot chicken restaurants that include race:

A few years ago, folks would say the neighborhoods felt dangerous to them, which was a barely veiled way of saying white customers were uncomfortable going into Black spaces. These days, Yelp reviewers will say that some other business felt cleaner or the customer service in the white restaurant is always better or when they go to Prince’s or Bolton’s it feels like the cashier puts other people’s orders ahead of theirs (Martin 2021: 154).

My experience doing interviews with both locals and tourists, as well as analyzing online reviews of Hattie B's and Prince's, largely confirms Martin's assertion, although I do find that locals and tourists, who I discuss in more detail in the following chapter, tend to cite both perceived danger and lack of ambiance and customer service equally in their critiques of Black-owned hot chicken restaurants like Bolton's and Prince's.

Through deployment of the anti-black subframe, adventure narratives provide tellers with cultural capital by identifying them as adventurous eaters and symbolic capital (Feagin 2013) by identifying them as white. There is also the pleasure of visibility, of being seen or marked by another. The idea that whiteness is invisible or unmarked is a foundational argument of the field of critical white studies (McIntosh 1989, Frankenberg 1993, Perry 2001, Jardina 2019, Torkelson and Hartmann 2021). Bell provides a long list of scholars in critical white studies who have developed and built upon the concept that whiteness is invisible, particularly to white people themselves. He writes, "...it has nearly become a social fact that, within white dominated societies, individual white people construct whiteness as the default category or the invisible norm. Owing to racial socialization, it is argued, white people rarely, if ever, have to think about their own racial identities" (Bell 2021: 1). As mentioned in Chapter One, this idea has increasingly been questioned and critiqued by scholars like Bell, who argue that we must move beyond this paradigm to understand how white people do perceive their own whiteness, particularly in local contexts. Scholars like McDermott (2006) and Jardina (2019) have argued that white people in the United States are increasingly aware of their racial identity today, citing controversies surrounding affirmative action and the election of Barack Obama as the first Black president in 2007 as activating factors.

Ruth Frankenberg, who in previous publications argued in favor of the theory that whiteness is mostly invisible to white people, contends in “The Mirage of Unmarked Whiteness” that “The more one scrutinizes it, however, the more the notion of whiteness as unmarked norm is revealed to be a mirage or indeed, to put it even more strongly, a white delusion” (Frankenberg 2001: 73). Frankenberg points out that whiteness has always been marked, in that it was a social category created during the beginning of the imperialist age in order to justify colonial violence. She argues that we can see the ways in which white has been a marked category in the boundary disputes surrounding who counts as white and who does not, and reminds the reader that whiteness was constantly being named and was visible during the era of Jim Crow in the South.³² Frankenberg ends her article by suggesting that rather than increased racial cognizance leading to a greater orientation towards anti-racism, a turn of events she hoped for during earlier works in critical whiteness studies, she has seen an increase in what she terms power-evasive race cognizance. There is a greater awareness of whiteness among white people that stridently denies that any structural advantages come along with being able to claim a white identity. Power-evasive race cognizance among white people means an increased feeling of disenfranchisement and loss of advantages:

No longer do white people have recourse only to claims about the inherent inferiority of people of color in seeking to explain (away) inequity. It is now possible to make two claims simultaneously. One is that African Americans and Latinos do not need the “handouts” of affirmative action because they are perfectly capable of achieving without help. The second is that when African Americans and Latinos do succeed alongside whites, this is not because of their own efforts and talents, but rather because of unfair assistance. (Frankenberg 2001: 91).

³² Feagin suggests that a major part of the contemporary white racial frame is employed to blur and distort the history of racism in the United States in order to legitimize the structural inequality that continues in the country at the present time. In the first chapter of *The White Racial Frame*, he uses interviews with white Southerners about their memories of Jim Crow to illustrate this point, finding that most white people remember Jim Crow as a simpler era when everyone, both Black and white, was happier and there was not much racial conflict.

These arguments about whether or not whiteness is or has ever truly been invisible, and to what extent we should accept at face value assertions made by white people that white is just “regular,” with no particular unique culture, are instructive to this discussion of hot chicken consumption among local white Nashvillians and expressions of white racial identity. Whether or not whiteness is truly invisible or unmarked in the everyday experiences of white people, or if they are constantly aware of it even as they simultaneously try to deny its existence, in this context, being perceived as white, and being permitted to speak about race openly, is a source of pleasure when discussing hot chicken for some white Nashvillians. In local’s narratives about eating hot chicken in Nashville, particularly at the older Black neighborhood establishments like Prince’s and Bolton’s, there is often an emphasis on being seen as white and standing out among the other patrons. We can see this emphasis in the last narrative quoted above. The interviewee stated that he and his friends must have been two of the whitest, skinniest kids the owner of Prince’s had ever seen in her life and described the two of them as being “definitely out of [their] element” (Lake 2020).

Within the context of the contemporary white racial frame, something like food, with its rich symbolic potential and its tendency to be used in the formation of deep stereotypes (Abrahams 1984, 1993), can be utilized to engage in coded discourse surrounding race. The symbolic meanings of spices and spicy food, and the tendency to elide people and the food they consume, have been reviewed in depth in a previous chapter. Because hot chicken is spicy, it provides the perfect cover to openly engage in racial stereotypes: part of the pleasure is in being stereotyped yourself as a white person who can’t take the heat, or in bucking that stereotype by proving that you can, as in the narrative quoted above. As Benjamin Houston details in his work on the history of the Civil Rights Movement in Nashville, the city is and has always been tightly

bound in a form of racial etiquette that emphasizes politeness, indirectness, and Nashville's exceptionalism when it comes to race relations, despite ample evidence of racial inequality.

This "Nashville way" of emphasizing the city's exceptionalism and putting a premium importance on politeness above all else made achieving racial equality in the city especially difficult:

As racial custom began breaking down, whites called for the neutral arbitration of color-blind laws; as laws began to break down aspects of the segregated order, whites suggested that custom and individual preferences should still be heard. The fluidity of the racial situation found whites scrambling for new rhetorical and substantive ways to adjust to a changing order even as few found themselves able to free themselves from racial legacies. The response increasingly in Nashville, with some exception, was that whites found ways to retain distance—socially, spatially, and even in terms of shared values and the ability to converse—from the movement even as some segregated space crumbled. This tactic of distancing did not necessarily directly exclude African Americans, but it found ways not to be inclusive, and that maneuver was in its own way excluding. Thus the spirit of Jim Crow hovered over a newly evolving fusion of law and custom. (Houston 2012: 163).

Houston is describing a system negotiated and maintained by the parents and grandparents of the people I interviewed. My interviewees have witnessed this system bend and occasionally break, and the rapid transformation of the city and the changing demographics of many of its neighborhoods has made it increasingly difficult to maintain the balancing act of following the rules of racial etiquette and appropriate distancing while pretending that none exist. Discussions of hot chicken, and spicy or even just Southern food more generally, provide an opportunity to acknowledge racial issues, even if indirectly.

In discussions about hot chicken with people of all races, I was struck by the frequency with which mentions of race and ethnicity came up. When asked what legends or rumors she might have heard about hot chicken, one woman responded:

I've heard rumors that, and again, who knows if this is true, and it also, this is one of the things I was talking to Jess about with this interview, so I'm glad that this is

anonymous. Because it feels a little bit weird to talk about because there is an element of race and culture that goes with this too. But like, I've heard a rumor for years that they just won't serve white people the hottest chicken that they have. [Laughs] And I don't know if that's true or not because I've never asked them, because you feel like an asshole asking a question like that (Murphy 2020).

A Black woman who owns a hot chicken restaurant which is very popular with locals told me that she grew up eating chicken on the bone, but serves chicken tenders now, as that is something that is very popular with her white clientele, although she does not understand why that is the case. One man explained how he enjoys confusing people from out of town by sending them to a local meat and three which is widely considered to be the quintessential example of Southern soul food, but is owned by an Asian man:

I mean, so, Arnold's is a, I mean, he's an Asian dude, so. I always laugh when everybody goes, "Where *is* Arnold?" And I go "That little Asian dude right there? That's Arnold." [Laughs] They go, "Wait, I thought this was like a Southern place," and I go, "He's Southern!" [Laughs] So yeah. You know, I think that there is this mystique that I think some people think that in order to have great Southern cuisine, it has to be, you know, a certain style of, you know, you have to have an 84-year-old African American that props open the window and goes "What'll you have?" (Lake 2020).

One white woman explained that "I do have a, like if I went to a Black friend's house for like, a cookout, I would expect the food to be spicier. I hadn't really articulated that to myself but that's, you know, just kind of a mental, like, preparation of, like, be prepared" (Pomeroy 2020). She went on to explain that

One of the reasons that people in the South eat any kind of overly spicy food is to mask spoilage. That's like historically the reason, and kind of the joke behind, like, white people not seasoning their food, right? Because what white person in the South needs to? Right, so you have these foods that are developed out of Black cultures, that are extremely spicy because of the history of them getting the shittiest scraps, basically, and needing to do something with them to make them edible (Pomeroy 2020).

This explanation for why Black people are believed to have spicier food than white people in the South was new to me, but the idea came up several times during fieldwork.

These examples suggest that discussing spicy food, specifically hot chicken, opens up a space for white people to discuss race, racial history, and racial stereotypes in a way that is socially acceptable and remains in keeping with the current emphasis on color-blindness in the contemporary white racial frame. For some, this space is used to remark on apparent racial differences in food preferences, and occasionally to attempt to account for these differences. For others, talking about hot chicken provides a chance to be seen and acknowledged *as* a white person. This is a rare opportunity, as it mostly exists in media discussions about what is to be done with poor, working class whites who are unable or unwilling to adapt to the modern world (a subject I will return to in a moment), and in overtly white supremacist spaces. Just as compelling as traveling to an unfamiliar or even dangerous part of town and eating a food that is unusually spicy, for some, is the experience of being racially marked when one is generally a member of an unmarked category. Of course, some will avoid this experience, but others seem to especially enjoy it.

Narratives that emphasize this dynamic are sometimes overt, as in this example collected during a conversation about the various hot chicken restaurants in town and their varying portion sizes:

I always tell people, you know, in fact, I've told her [the restaurant owner], I said "Why do you always serve two pieces?" I go, "Holy shit, I've never finished one order." Ever. I always have one and I take the other half home, you know? And I've told her, I said, "I'd rather you drop the price by two bucks and not throw in another pork chop on there." She's like, "Yeah, but that's you, [Name] you're a skinny white guy. I got some big, I got some big boys that come in here, and they just dust that thing," you know? (Lake 2020).

Other times, it is not so obvious that the speaker is describing an experience of being marked as white, or at least, it is difficult to convey that this is what is happening through the medium of text. I collected several narratives from interviewees in which a restaurant employee or fellow

customer singled out the (white) narrator and warned them away from ordering the chicken especially hot, where no racial indicators were included, as in this example:

I think the first time I ever had Prince's per se was at a festival. We used to have a downtown festival called Summer Lights. This was way before food trucks were a thing, this had to have been, gosh, mid-eighties? And so they had a food truck there. And I walked up to the line, and a person in front of me was ordering, ordering extra hot. And the woman working the truck, you know, just a nice lady from Prince's, I never knew her name. But she was like, "Baby you don't want extra hot, trust me." And the fellow was there with his wife, and he was kind of bragging, and he said, "Extra hot's what I want, extra hot's what I asked for, extra hot's what I'm gonna get." So she delivered him a little basket of wings that were just, infernally red, Devil fire red, and he said thank you and walked off. Before she took my order she just shook her head and looked down and said, I won't say the whole thing, but "Crazy M.F." So. [Laughs] So I stepped up and ordered my medium (Wilson 2020).

It's not visible in the text, but when quoting the Prince's employee, this narrator broke into a stereotypical African American accent. In many instances, narrators describing moments of negotiation over who should be allowed to eat which heat levels of chicken would break into this kind of delivery, making it clear that the employee was Black without directly mentioning race.

I think that one important aspect of this kind of experience, and one of the main "points" (Labov and Waletzky 1997) of sharing narratives about it, is the unusual, at times even enjoyable experience, of being stereotyped because of one's race when that has not been a part of one's daily experience.³³ There is perhaps always some level of fascination when one is able to view oneself, however briefly or superficially, through the eyes of another. This looking at oneself through another's eyes is especially resonant for this group of people in this moment in Nashville. As so many new, upwardly mobile people from all over the country flood into Nashville each day, whether just visiting or settling in more permanently, locals must accept

³³ Of course, another important aspect here is that the stereotype in question: that white people are unused to or incapable of eating spicy foods, does not carry the same emotional weight that the kinds of food stereotypes associated with other racial and ethnic identities do.

changes to the city's built landscape, many of which are for the benefit of tourists and newcomers. And just as Nashville's previous reputation was as a sort of hokey, old-fashioned place, the South as a region is highly stereotyped and vilified by the rest of the country. Often southern foods like fried chicken are considered by Americans outside of the region to be unhealthy and low class. Within this context, the experience of going out for hot chicken provides these white Nashvillians with an opportunity to see themselves from the perspective not only of people of color, but also of people from other parts of the country. Even though tourists and transplants tend to prefer the more centrally located and standardized experiences of newer establishments like Hattie B's or Party Fowl, the older locations like Prince's and Bolton's also receive a great deal of attention and are usually well-frequented by locals and visitors alike. This creates an opportunity for Nashville residents to experience the stigma associated with being born and raised in the South.

Class comes into play here in a similar way to race. We can see references to class lurking behind associations between hot chicken restaurants and stigmatized activities like drug dealing or sex work, and in the descriptions of the neighborhoods where these restaurants are located as "not the best" or "bad" parts of the city. In their narratives about going to get hot chicken, locals, like tourists (as explored in the following chapter) tended to emphasize the physicality associated with hot chicken: it makes your nose run and your face turn red, it makes you sweat and gulp down milk, and it causes gastric distress that can last for over a day. As the owner of Prince's describes it: it is a "24-hour chicken," that one may want to prepare for consuming by putting a roll of toilet paper in the freezer ahead of time (York 2006b). When asked to share some of her favorite stories from work with me, one woman who owns a hot chicken restaurant shared the following anecdote:

At [restaurant location], I had a man tear his shirt off. He started burning so bad that he started using obscene language, and he just fell to the floor and he ripped his white T-shirt off, and just started running out the door. It's hot! It made him feel like he was on fire. I can tell you numerous of those types of stories. They turn red and they sweat so bad you have to get them a clean white towel to dry their hair, like they've been in the shower. You know, customer service, I'm big on customer service. So if I'm out there mingling with my people, my customers, I'm going to make sure that you have what you need to survive this meal. So if they need towels, if they need water, a bottle of water, whatever (Morganson 2020).

I mention this in connection with class because of an aspect of the hot chicken experience for white locals that I had not originally foreseen when beginning my research: the centrality of coworkers and workplaces in the choice of where to eat hot chicken and the social contexts in which it is consumed. As mentioned earlier, many locals have a favorite place to go for hot chicken that is close to their home, or even more often, near their workplace. Many people described eating hot chicken as something they did with colleagues, often during the workday: "We had a group that would just, you know, it was a lunch group at the nonprofit where I work. And, you know, for a while we would go and just pick a different place on a Friday and try it out" (Schwartz 2020). One man told me about a hot chicken taste test that was hosted at his job as a team building exercise in which hot chicken from various local places were tasted and ranked blind in order for the office to discover which location was actually the "best." Criteria for this contest included texture, flavor, and, most importantly, heat. He commented, "It had to actually be hot in order to be ranked highly" (Carll 2020).

Several interviewees described their first time eating hot chicken in the company of coworkers in the middle of the workday. I found this to be surprising, considering hot chicken's reputation for imparting extreme physical side effects in both the short and long term. The sweating, panting and facial flushing are typically replaced with cramping and extreme gut pain

later. But I think there is a delight in the visibility of temporary abjection that is related to the enjoyment of being seen or marked as white, in letting loose in such a way that physicality overrides middle class professionalism:

I had a white dress shirt on. I took, I had an undershirt underneath, and by the end of the meal the white dress shirt was off. I was crying, I was, snot was coming out of my mouth. The only sensation of pleasure I had was when my friend would exhale and the exhale from him would cool down the spice on my face. The woman, there was a woman in line, as our chicken came out, she walked past us and just said “Boy, you’re gonna get the mud butt.” Yeah, back then they had vending machine drinks that we went through quite a few of. But it was a spectacle, like people were just watching us. Both of us sweat easily, and it was just, it was, it was an experience. For sure. It was something. But we were early 20s and into doing stupid things, so it seemed about right at the time (Schwartz 2020).

This man’s description of eating extra hot chicken at Prince’s with a coworker during a lunch break is graphic. It includes sweat, tears, mucus, breathing into one another’s faces, and even an allusion to excrement that is tied explicitly to dirt. It should be noted that this line was delivered in the kind of exaggerated African American accent sometimes used by white interviewees. We have, again, the removal of a white shirt, this time a dress shirt rather than a more casual tee shirt. After hearing this story, I asked the man how he had felt after the experience. Did he swear off hot chicken, as many people do after experiencing its more extreme side effects? His response was telling: “No, I, we enjoyed it. One, for the spectacle. Two, for the endorphin rush you get when you eat spicy food” (Schwartz 2020). Again, being visible, being *seen*, in a context that is different from the norm, is a major part of the pleasure associated with eating hot chicken. Perhaps the physical discomfort connected with the experience is associated with this pleasure: standing out, being seen, is uncomfortable, but, like an endorphin rush, it can be intoxicating: “addictive” is a term many locals use to describe the experience of being “lit up” by hot chicken.

An emphasis on the physical and the tendency to eat hot chicken in situations that one might deem “semi-professional,” or perhaps “professional adjacent,” are connected in interesting ways. The fact that Nashville’s signature dish is a deep-fried chicken is relevant as well. Food is highly symbolic, and deep fried foods, or foods high in fat more generally, are coded in ways that associate them with class: specifically, with people from lower classes.³⁴ Louise MacAllister and Suzanne Hocknell (2020) explore how fatty foods are connected with the experience of distaste, noting that some foods that are considered to be high fat are often described as disgusting, while others, like cooking oils, are not. They conclude that consumption practices and beliefs surrounding fatty foods “co-create and perpetuate powerful classed performances of belonging and of othering” (MacAllister and Hocknell 2020: 30). In interviewing middle class parents from the United Kingdom, the authors find that interviewees engage in a performance of distaste or disgust towards some, but not all, fatty foods. Specifically, foods that are associated with people of a lower socioeconomic status are considered distasteful, and this distaste seems equally directed at their hypothetical consumers. This includes hypothetical parents who feed their children potato chips as Hocknell writes: “This entanglement between the material and discursive creates an atmosphere of distaste for crisps that cannot be accounted for by thinking only about taste as merely a ‘sense’ of the body; it is rooted in a parenting practice that Carol [one of the study’s interviewees] perceives to be irresponsible. The correct way to parent as envisioned in policy falls into line with traditionally white, middle-class practices and knowledge” (MacAllister and Hocknell 2020: 38).

When Nashville locals take part in work outings to eat a deep fried, traditionally Southern food that can cause an extreme physical reaction that is also extremely visible, they can be seen

³⁴ For more information on how fried chicken is coded racially, see *Building Houses Out of Chicken Legs: Black Women, Food, and Power* by Psyche Williams-Forsson (2007).

to be flaunting white middle-class practices and ways of knowing. In reveling in this experience, where they are highly visible as white to people of color, and perhaps as Southern or even as locals to tourists and transplants, they are perhaps playing with and even embracing the stigmas associated with Nashville's former reputation, with being Southern, and with being seen as "white trash."

"White trash" is a symbolically charged label. According to scholars from backgrounds in history, sociology, anthropology, critical whiteness studies, and others, the privileges and powers associated with whiteness are constantly being contested, and the boundaries of whiteness maintained and negotiated. As Feagin (2013) notes, a major part of the white racial frame is the belief that white people are inherently virtuous, superior both morally and intellectually. It is this superiority that was used to justify the enslavement of non-whites in the past, and to account for disparities in health and quality of life in a way that did not admit to systemic inequality. As Perry (2001) details, by claiming that whiteness is the norm, rational, and divorced from culture, white people exercise power. But despite this belief in the inherent superiority of whiteness, not all people who appear to be white are equally successful. Hargrove, citing Page (1999), suggests that whiteness is both a social position, and a kind of practice. As McDermott notes, this practice can be performed correctly or incorrectly: "Regardless of the experience of whiteness, each understanding of white racial identity stems from an overarching racial hierarchy in which whites are dominant and nonwhites are subordinate. White racial identity is a stigma for some whites a portion of the time, only because the expectations for whites—that they be materially advantaged and live apart from blacks—are not met" (McDermott 2006: 55).

The fact that some white people fail to benefit from the privileges associated with their racial identity presents a significant challenge to the white racial frame. Matt Wray argues for viewing whiteness as “a flexible set of social and symbolic boundaries that give shape, meaning, and power to the social category white” (Wray 2006: 6) and subsequently asks readers to consider where we might find these boundaries. The answer, he suggests, is that we most often find boundary work occurring in situations where groups with different codes of conduct meet one another; in these situations, a great deal of effort goes into establishing who belongs where and ensuring that everyone stays on their respective sides of the border. Much of this boundary work is done at the level of language, with what Wray calls “boundary terms” being deployed to sort people into categories. Over the course of American history, Wray identifies several of these boundary terms which connote both difference and moral failing. Terms such as lubber, cracker, dirt eater, poor white trash, and sufferer from hookworm disease, have been leveled against whites through, among other things, the deployment of the anti-black subframe. As Dina Smith explains:

Notions of class shift along with the economy. Fordist “white trash” referred to unemployed (depressed) labor or unskilled labor, oftentimes designating the initiate city factory worker who had recently left his/her tenancy. Or as with Erskine Caldwell’s Jester Lester, “white trash” was the defiant relic-farmer who refused to leave his land in the wake of large-scale incorporation. White trash, then, was out of place, because it refused to obey a changing Fordism’s imperative of regulated change; it was defiantly immobile or illegally mobile. This older conception of white trash often anchored the term to a racialized economic and occupational class status—the white trash sharecropper, the white trash migrant worker, the white trash miner, the white trash mill worker, all of whom are stuck in place. At once white and trash, a metonym for blackness, the term historically designated a *border position* between white privilege and black disenfranchisement. (Smith 2004: 370).

The use of these boundary terms was meant to explain the “poor white paradox.” Wray quotes Walter Hines Page, writing in 1912: “The southern white people are of almost pure

English stock. It has been hard to explain their backwardness, for they are descended from capable ancestors and inhabit a rich land” (Hines 1912 cited in Wray 2006: 121). Wray details several different explanations offered to explain this “poor white paradox” over the course of American history: from living in close proximity to and intermarrying with people of color, to passing down genes for imbecility and criminality, to the wasting effects of hookworm disease and pellagra. What all these explanations share is an emphasis on the body: either some essential difference from other white people passed down through the blood, or a disease that caused physical symptoms and a marked change in appearance.³⁵ This physical difference, whether it was inherent and unchangeable, or brought about by a disease that could be cured, was crucial to maintaining white supremacy: it provided, and continues to provide, an explanation for the fact that not all white people are equally successful, or appear to be equally intelligent, moral, and rational, that does not threaten the baseline belief in the inherent superiority of whiteness. Writing about the tendency of social scientists and politicians to focus on the physicality of poor whites throughout American history, Smith notes: “The poor white exists within these critiques as whiteness’s other self, a masochistic complement to Southern white class and racial privilege. The masochistic fantasy is itself an invocation of power, as its energies revolve around constructing a spectacle of abjection” (Smith 2004: 374).

As locals describe their experiences eating hot chicken, often surrounded by both professional colleagues and by newcomers and tourists, it is possible to see another kind of spectacle of abjection: one where locals suffer, sweat, and burn, by choice, in the process of

³⁵ Wray notes that consumers of media about hookworm disease were encouraged to “notice the hair; the unusual disposition; the sluggish movement; the dull expression; the abnormal shape; and finally, the skin...with a waxy, slightly opaque top layer, beneath which lay a yellow, ashen layer” (Wray 2006: 121) when observing sufferers from the disease in the first half of the 1900s.

consuming a meal that has become representatively symbolic of their city, and has helped to offer it a new image to present to the rest of the world.

While many locals appreciate hot chicken for the ways that it has brought Nashville into a more dynamic future, I believe they consider it as a vehicle to look backward as well. Being able to make spectacles of themselves, shucking their dress shirts and sweating with their coworkers, in all its embodiment, is an opportunity to play with and perform the identity of being poor white trash that is both critically nostalgic (Cashman 2006) and defiant, as it occurs in front of an audience of outsiders. If white trash is considered out of place, as Smith suggests (2004), then these performances of embodiment can be read as a playful, yet aggressive, reclaiming of place. I was struck by this idea as I learned more about the various events locals engage in around the act of going out to get hot chicken. Work team building exercises, rock climbing competitions, and “hot chicken crawls” have participants, mostly local, trawling across the city, dressed up in bar crawl tee shirts and competing to see who can consume the most beer and the hottest chicken.

Indeed, many white locals I interviewed mentioned attending “white trash bashes” where hot chicken was served. One iteration of this kind of event was a hot chicken themed white trash bash that occurred for several years in the city as a fundraiser for a local charity. This event was held at one of the bars on Broadway, Nashville’s main tourist district for visitors looking to dance and drink in honky tonks; it was opened as part of the city’s planned revitalization in the early 2010s. The bar, which has since closed, was described to me as a kind of spoof on the other honky tonks on the street: “So...it was a bar that was a trailer park. And so, like, the inside of it, there was like an old 1970s Camaro that, you know, people would dance on top of. And it was very white trash” (Fry 2020). This bar was famous for selling tater tots, and had a mullet wall of

fame. These white trash hot chicken parties included contests to see who could eat the hottest chicken and the most tater tots. There were also spam carving competitions that occasionally devolved into spam fights, Velveeta Jenga, and beer chugging from baby bottles. All of these foods, understood to be unhealthy, cheap, and heavily processed, contributed to the “white trash” ambiance along with the bar’s trailer park theme. Attendees were also encouraged to dress up, something which many of them were happy to do, according to two people who were involved with planning the event. They recalled: “I don’t know what it is but when you tell guys, and girls, that we’re, you know, it’s a party, and you can dress up, especially when it’s like white trash sort of themed? These prim and proper little, you know, former sorority girls, you know, they show up with fake tattoos up and down every arm and leg, and the scantily-est dressed things you’ve ever seen” (Fry 2020), said one, while another reported that “I guess it resonated with a lot of people, that dressing up like rednecks, it was kind of an opportunity to have an adult Halloween in the summer. With a theme, it was a theme party. And I was really surprised at how into jorts³⁶, and how short of jorts guys would do. It was pretty phenomenal. And disgusting at times. But there was a beautiful level of shamelessness that accompanied the party” (Schwartz 2020).

One local who helped to organize a few of these white trash bashes described his motivations for getting involved as “a chance to act stupid with my friends” and raise money for a local charity. Using hot chicken, representative of both the city’s past and its future-oriented present, as the centerpiece of a white trash themed event also provided its participants with an opportunity to look critically at their city’s history and current state. The interviewee went on to

³⁶ Jean shorts. Often “jorts” refers specifically to jeans that have been cut above the knee into shorts.

explain that the idea to have this kind of event originated in potential culture clashes between lifetime and new Nashville residents:

Like, jorts started becoming a thing? Where people were more, I think, because Nashville got, you know, maybe a little more progressive, we started realizing that cut off jean shorts were maybe not as normal in other parts of the country as they were in the South. So then that kind of became a thing that we would joke about” (Schwartz 2020).

Here again is the experience of seeing oneself through another’s eyes, this time in the context of local Nashvillians becoming increasingly familiar with the opinions and stereotypes associated with their city, and with the South more generally, through more frequent contact with people from elsewhere. It should not be forgotten that locals have witnessed their city being transformed and reshaped in order to accommodate these newcomers. Locals wed elements of the stereotypical poor white Southerner (the DIY clothes, Camaros, mullets, cheap beer, and “unhealthy” foods), to a party with hot chicken, a symbol of Nashville’s past as well as a major tourist attraction in its present, as its centerpiece. In doing so, they magnify both the physical abjection associated with hot chicken and the physical abjection associated with the boundary term “white trash” in order to play with the stigmas associated with being Southern.

Conclusions

In both their informal excursions to eat hot chicken where they make spectacles of themselves, and in their more organized group activities involving hot chicken, particularly the white trash hot chicken parties, locals see themselves through the eyes of others. Further, they actively distort these images as a form of play. Gathering greens on the side of the road, making their own clothes, and living frugally are the life experiences that many locals recounted about growing up in the area. Yet, because these activities are potentially seen as old fashioned and

overly country by outsiders, local businesses and government acted accordingly to rectify this image and make the area more inviting for a more cosmopolitan, wealthy class of newcomers. Hot chicken, once a cheap food associated almost exclusively with the local Black community, and only available in parts of town considered by white locals to be remote and dangerous, has been transformed into a must-try culinary attraction that is now served in restaurants across the city. In response to these ideas about the city and the changes that have been made because of them, locals have seized on them and used them as an opportunity to reclaim Nashville's past unapologetically. They embrace and flaunt the symbols associated with being white trash to strengthen their bonds with friends and colleagues, reveling in temporarily creating scenes in which their bodies can be seen as abject or even grotesque. An organizer of one of the white trash hot chicken parties himself described the costumes of party goers as "disgusting at times."

While these instances of spectacle often play out in front of an audience of outsiders, they are usually enacted in pursuit of achieving the ends of locals, whether that be a team building work exercise or a large-scale event to raise money for charities dedicated to helping local populations in need. Through these instances, hot chicken helps these white Nashvillians come to terms with "new Nashville" symbolically, just as it helps them to organize their physical space. It gives them an opportunity to reflect on and play with the dissonance between how they grew up (not going out to eat much, wearing jorts unironically), and how the city is now (ultra-hipster, ultra-ironic, gourmet food scene).

It may be enough to leave this analysis here: playing with the stigma of being white trash is a way that these white Nashvillians look to their past in order to more fully assess the present (Cashman 2006). They use it to strengthen their bonds with one another and perhaps to mock and resist the stereotypes associated with their city and region without fully leaving behind their lived

experiences growing up in the Nashville of the past. But I think the calls of folklorists like Bailey (2021) and Prahlad (2021) encourage us to go farther. According to Goffman (1963) stigma is “an attribute that is deeply discrediting” (Goffman 1963: 3) for the person who possesses it, and this attribute is dependent on context. Goffman identified three different kinds of stigma: abominations of the body, blemishes of individual character, and stigmas that are passed along bloodlines (Goffman 1963: 4). With its associations with physical abjection, moral failure, and tainted bloodlines, the social category of “white trash” could belong to all three categories. Goffman sorts the stigmatized into two main groups: those whose stigmatizing attribute cannot be hidden are discredited persons, while people whose “differentness is not immediately apparent, and is not known beforehand” are discreditable persons, who can potentially “pass” as “normal” in day-to-day life by managing the visibility of their discrediting attribute or attributes (Goffman 1963: 41-42).

Debates about whether or not the failures associated with poor whites in the South were permanent, or could be rectified in some way, are closely related to this idea. For people who grew up associated with the stereotypes of being “white trash”, it seems that the attendant stigma is discreditable rather than discrediting. By getting well-paying jobs, moving to trendier parts of town, and actively participating in the city’s gourmet food scene, white locals can shed associations with a more poor, rural upbringing. This last part is essential, as racial transposition (HoSang and Lowndes 2019), “the process by which certain whites might now be implicated in positions of abjection traditionally reserved for the racialized ‘other’” (Torkelson and Hartmann 2021: 8), now includes the attributes of being non-cosmopolitan and monocultural, and displaying an ability to consume a diverse array of foods is a central part of performing a

cosmopolitan identity (Heldke 2003, Long 2004, Jones 2007, Germann Molz 2007, Johnston and Baumann 2015).

While it is tempting to see these performances of abject spectacle, particularly in the context of the white trash hot chicken parties, only as a kind of resistance against the negative, old-fashioned reputation Nashville so recently escaped, and the attendant development that has made the area increasingly difficult for locals to afford to continue to live, this interpretation does not tell the full story. It is useful to return at this time to Smith's point, quoted above, that white trash is "a metonym for blackness" and "a *border position* between white privilege and black disenfranchisement" (Smith 2004: 370). In Hughey's (2012) estimation, hegemonic whiteness is formed, in part, "through marginalizing practices of 'being white' that fail to exemplify" supposed essential differences between the races (Hughey 2012: 187). Hegemonic whiteness continues to reproduce inequality in spite of constant struggles by people of color and their allies to change this social reality. Using stereotypes of poor whites as "white trash" is a central element in this process of maintaining and reproducing inequality. Poor whites play a crucial part in the construction of white hegemony, because they provide the template for how to perform whiteness incorrectly. The white middle class effectively uses the concept of poor white trash to construct itself, even though at the same time the existence of poor white trash threatens its existence. Wray (2006) argues that organizers, health officials, and politicians alike all rely on the "poor white paradox" to carve out areas of expertise for themselves in order to more fully ensconce themselves in middle class white culture.

And as Smith (2004) argues, middle class white people who claim to have a white trash background are actually reaffirming their distance from this stigmatized attribute. By claiming to be white trash, one can obscure the ways that hegemonic whiteness has influenced one's life. She

likens the consumption of white trash goods such as Ernest Matthew Mickler's popular *White Trash Cooking* to minstrelsy, suggesting that "Such performances express a desire to distance oneself from the lived lives of today's working poor, both black and white, through a parody of whiteness" (Smith 2004: 386). Middle class white Nashvillians who consume hot chicken as a way to "celebrate" their white trash background are processing how outsiders view the South and Nashville specifically, but their toying with symbols of stigmatization are just games. They can take off the jorts and put the dress shirts back on.

In performing these caricatures, they prove that they really are not white trash. Many of the people I interviewed are prominent members of local society; they work for the media and nonprofits. Some of them know the mayor on a first name basis. This is evident in the description of the people who attended the white trash hot chicken parties as "prim and proper," in the ironic treatment of trailer parks in the bars where some of the parties were hosted, and in their founder's response to my question of why the parties were so popular. He commented: "Hot chicken was popular. I think the opportunity to dress up like rednecks is fun for people that don't like, that are in Nashville, but don't go to Broadway cause it's kind of a redneck mecca. I think we just, we really hit in a sweet spot of a lot of things unbeknownst to us" (Schwartz 2020).

White trash is the border between black and white. By playing at and then abandoning being "white trash," these locals reassert their identities as hegemonic white in the dominant white racial frame. This makes it possible for them to evolve along with their city. They demonstrate that they are competent in hegemonic whiteness and aware of the proper behaviors associated with it by modeling its opposite. Their adoption of hot chicken, a dish created by the local Black community, with its own symbolic weight for that community, in their performances of being white trash, further reinforces racial inequality in the city.

I am not attempting to vilify these people's activities, but it is important to make space for interpretations of identity performance that are intersectional: in holding these white trash themed parties, locals are participating in an empowering activity that reasserts their claim on a space that has changed greatly both physically and culturally over the past twenty years. Additionally, while this specific group of people are upwardly mobile, many of them described childhoods which were more austere, as described above. On the other hand, these activities may serve to disempower people of color through this same assertion of ownership of the city, especially when we consider the ways that visits to hot chicken restaurants in historically Black neighborhoods are framed as dangerous adventures in the narratives of many white locals. These narratives parrot coded racist language that was intentionally deployed to break up thriving communities of color and maintain strict segregation between Blacks and whites in Nashville throughout the city's history (Houston 2012, Martin 2021). The ability to temporarily play with stigma without lasting social consequences these middle-class white locals display in their narratives about hot chicken and their symbolic uses of it in their social events should not be overlooked. Here, I've explored some vernacular expressions of white identity in one specific local context in an attempt to make visible both how white identity is activated in everyday life, and how these everyday activations of white identity are interconnected with larger social systems of structural inequality. This work provides one example of the ways that folklore's emphasis on everyday traditional activities and expressions of identity lends a unique perspective on larger social issues like structural inequality that can help make sense of the complex relationships between identity, inequality, and place.

In the following chapter, I analyze how Prince's Hot Chicken Shack and Hattie B's Hot Chicken are presented and sold to tourists as binary opposites, as well as how tourists experience

both restaurants, before moving on to a more in-depth exploration of how both locals and tourists feel about the relationship between hot chicken and structural inequality.

Chapter Five:

Hot Chicken and Cultural Appropriation

Chapter Introduction

In this chapter, I look in more detail at how hot chicken has come to symbolize Nashville's history and changing present within a debate that took place in the local media during the second half of the 2010s. This debate examined the idea that hot chicken's recent popularity, and the resulting financial success that many white restaurant owners have enjoyed since beginning to sell it, amount to a form of cultural appropriation that is directly connected to Nashville's long history of slaveholding, segregation, and structural inequality.

Within the context of this debate, Prince's Hot Chicken Shack and Hattie B's Hot Chicken have emerged as a sort of hot chicken binary: one representing authenticity, the city's history, Blackness, locals, and spice; the other representing commercialism, the city's present experience of gentrification, whiteness, tourists and transplants, and blandness or sweetness. Accordingly, this chapter explores how these two restaurants present themselves to potential consumers and are portrayed in public discourse. I then turn to an exploration of how tourists experienced both restaurants during this moment in time. Did they have preferences for one establishment over the other? Were they aware of the debate about cultural appropriation surrounding hot chicken, and did it influence their choice in which restaurant to patronize? What were they looking for in a hot chicken experience? To answer these questions, I have analyzed one hundred reviews posted to Yelp and TripAdvisor of Prince's Hot Chicken Shack on Ewing Drive, now closed, and Hattie B's Hot Chicken Nashville Midtown. I find that reviewers of hot chicken restaurants seem to prefer Hattie B's over Prince's for a number of reasons, chief among

them convenience and feelings of comfort. They share an emphasis on the experience being “worth it” with online reviewers of Indian restaurants in London, using slightly different metrics. While tourists in London focus on quality of service and ambiance of establishment to determine whether an eating experience will be worth it, visitors to hot chicken establishments pay closer attention to wait times, price, and quality of the food instead. While this is interesting, I do not focus on these differences. Instead, I look closely at how reviewers seem aware of the online debate about hot chicken and cultural appropriation, and how they compare experiences at Hattie B’s and Prince’s as a result of this awareness.

A great deal of this data was collected during the spring of 2018, and the original analysis was written during that time as well. For this reason, the chapter ends with a sort of update on the situation as it stands now, using seven interviews recorded with tourists to Nashville during the summer of 2020 to explore in more detail how culinary tourists feel about the subject of cultural appropriation, as well as how it factors into their decisions on where to eat. First, however, I turn to an exploration of the media discourse surrounding hot chicken during the second half of the 2010s.

Hot Chicken in the Local Media

In July of 2015, local historian Rachel Louise Martin published a long article in *The Bitter Southerner* entitled “How Hot Chicken Really Happened.” In the article, Martin described the disorientation she felt upon returning to Nashville after several years away: the landscape was almost unrecognizable, parts of the city that had long been considered dangerous had been renamed and transformed into hip areas for young people to hang out, and hot chicken, a dish Martin had never heard of, had become a ubiquitous symbol of the city: “But although I’m a

second-generation Middle Tennessean, the daughter of a Nashville native, I had never eaten hot chicken—or even heard of it—before I moved away for graduate school in 2005. I came back eight years later to a new Nashville that eats new food” (Martin 2015). Of course, hot chicken was not and is not a new food, and Martin spends the rest of her article detailing how Nashville’s history of segregation explains why she and her friends had never even heard of a dish that was simultaneously a beloved favorite with the city’s Black community.

Martin’s article, which she later developed into a book called *Hot Hot Chicken: A Nashville Story* in 2021, explores how the Prince family and other Black restaurant owners selling hot chicken in Nashville were consistently affected by Jim Crow laws, rezoning and urban renewal projects, and the construction of three major highways, being forced to relocate and start over as these government interventions continued to destabilize communities. The article ends with the question of whether the increasing popularity of hot chicken, and the city of Nashville more generally, will lead to greater equality for residents, or if it will be just another hipster trend signifying gentrification and little else.

In August of 2016, the food writer George Embiricos published an interview with John Lasater, the head chef of Hattie B’s Hot Chicken in *Food Republic*. This article was controversial among local Nashvillians for several reasons. First, it was unfortunately titled “Meet the Man Who Launched the Hot Chicken Craze: John Lasater of the Famous Hattie B’s on the Past, Present, and Future of Music City’s Iconic Dish.” This title led many to assume that the interview was claiming that Lasater and Nick Bishop Sr. and Jr., the owners of Hattie B’s, had invented the dish, although there are several mentions of the Prince family throughout the interview. Even so, many residents considered the piece to be deeply out of touch. They objected to Lasater describing other hot chicken restaurants as focusing solely on spice rather than on

complexity of flavors, and his response to the question of why no other hot chicken restaurant owners had thought to open a location in Nashville's midtown with "It's crazy! It really is. It's just so simple" (Embiricos 2016). In the interview, Lasater also claims that Hattie B's "has a lot to do with" hot chicken's transformation from a local dish to a national attraction, elaborating that "On the front end, Nashville has grown at such a rapid pace. Then you have our location, the price, the right timing, the local beers, our amazing staff—it's a hodgepodge of a perfect storm" (Embiricos 2016).

In online discussions taking place in the comment sections of the interview (comments have since been disabled), in online groups devoted to hot chicken, and local Nashville media (*Food Republic* is based in New York City) the interview was widely criticized for ignoring the structural inequality that made it possible for Lasater and the Bishops to enjoy so much success selling hot chicken, and to be credited with launching it as a culinary attraction across the country. The article does not mention the intentionality with which Nashville has been developed and gentrified, explored in the previous chapter. Nor does it address the equally intentional segregation that has plagued the city for over a century, as Martin had so painstakingly uncovered in her article for *The Bitter Southerner*. At the 2016 Change Food Fest, Devita Davison, the Executive Director of FoodLab Detroit, gave a lecture entitled "Black Food Matters: Race and Equity in the Good Food Movement" in which she used hot chicken as an example of structural inequality in the gourmet food scene and used Embiricos's article as an example of what this kind of structural inequality looks like.

In an article for *The Nashville Scene*, Betsy Phillips pointed out that "George Embiricos at *Food Republic* has written a hot mess of an article on Hattie B's hot chicken that gives credit for the popularity of the dish to the white guys who took a piece of black culinary culture and

made it cool. That is not me paraphrasing. This is literally what Embiricos says” (Phillips 2016), before conceding that “Hattie B’s did make some important innovations to the hot chicken game in Nashville,” but that “once you’re talking about how Hattie B’s is doing something special because they care about ‘umami’—insinuating that other places don’t and thus are lacking something that would make them appealing to true foodies—your head is up your own ass” (Phillips 2016).

As far as opening a restaurant in the highly desirable midtown location, which is close to Vanderbilt University and the main tourist attraction of Broadway with its many bars and shops, and the mystery surrounding why no other hot chicken purveyors had done it before Hattie B’s, an episode of David Chang’s Netflix series *Ugly Delicious*, which aired in February of 2018, addressed this issue poignantly. In episode 6, “Fried Chicken,” Chang explored the global history of fried chicken and focused on its fraught relationship with race in the United States, as well as the question of cultural appropriation in the specific case of hot chicken in Nashville. Throughout the episode, Chang interviewed restaurant owners from Hattie B’s, Bolton’s Spicy Chicken and Fish, and Pepperfire Hot Chicken, about issues of ownership and cultural appropriation. When asked to respond to charges that their business could be construed as culturally appropriative, the Bishops appear stunned, and do not have much to say for themselves. They mumble some platitudes about being respectful, which seem to contradict their insinuation that original hot chicken restaurants lack culinary sophistication because their food is so hot. The camera lingers on their faces for a few seconds too long before panning out to show the bright, well lit, spacious restaurant that has made them their fortune.

In the next frame, Chang is filmed sitting at a picnic table outside of Bolton’s Spicy Chicken and Fish in East Nashville with Dollye Ingram, who co-owned the restaurant with

Bolton Matthews³⁷ and is the creator of their hot fish recipe. The restaurant is visible the background: a squat, gray building made of cinder block with fish painted on the walls in blue and red. Chang asked Ingraham how she felt about other restaurants selling hot chicken:

Ingram: I think everybody has something to offer. Some people came in on the commercial end and benefited off of it, but they don't have an idea what the authentic hot chicken is. But they go for it, and to each his own. It, it cuts a little bit, but you know you just shake it off and go on. Because we know what we got. We know what we do.

Chang: Would you ever open up in a more traditionally, more affluent community?

Ingram: Yes, but everybody can't afford that 4,000-, or 5,000-dollar rent.

Chang: I like Hattie B's. It's delicious. I think though that, one of the things is, you've never marketed for an, a white, whiter, intentionally more affluent audience.

Ingram: Well that's what they come for though. They wanted a place where they could feel comfortable, and have beer, and enjoy hot chicken. And they [the Bishops] jumped on the opportunity.

Ingraham insists that she does not begrudge the Bishops their success, saying that ultimately her sense of peace about the whole thing comes from “Just having love in your heart and knowing that when you do what's right, and do the best that you can do, and what you do, you're going to always be maintained and sustained” (*Ugly Delicious* 2018).

Of course, there was not total consensus in the media that Hattie B's is guilty of cultural appropriation, or at least unfairly benefitting from structural inequality. The day after Phillips's article was posted, the *Nashville Scene* published a rebuttal from Chris Chamberlain, a Nashville local who proposed to fill in “all the context that was missing from the story on how Hattie B's helped propel hot chicken nationwide” (Chamberlain 2016). In this rebuttal, Chamberlain

³⁷ Mr. Matthews passed away in June of 2021. Dollye Ingram-Matthews continues to run Bolton's Spicy Chicken and Fish at the time of this writing.

pointed out that Embiricos went to Vanderbilt and has long been a fan of hot chicken and draws readers' attention to the fact that both Embiricos and Lasater do credit Prince's as the inventors of hot chicken in the interview. He argued that if the headline had read "Meet the Man Who Launched the National Nashville Hot Chicken Craze" most people would not have batted an eye, as this would have made clear that for local Nashvillians, the Prince family is undisputedly responsible for and consistently acknowledged as hot chicken's inventors and longest running purveyors. He directed readers to Martin's piece in *The Bitter Southerner* if they were interested in learning more about the history of hot chicken in Nashville, a topic he seemed to imply was not necessarily appropriate for a culinary publication like *Food Republic*, while simultaneously criticizing the piece: "Both elements of Martin's narrative were instructional, but I don't personally believe that she made the connection between them in the way that she intended. Just because nobody she knew had ever eaten hot chicken when she lived here for grad school in the mid-2000s doesn't mean that no white people ate at Prince's" (Chamberlain 2016).

In online fan sites where locals and tourists converge to discuss hot chicken, there was also (and continues to be) divided opinion on whether Hattie B's and other newer hot chicken restaurants are culturally appropriating. For example, a meme circulated of Speaker of the House of Representatives Nancy Pelosi ripping up one of former President Donald Trump's speeches with the caption "When they say they're ordering in hot chicken for lunch and hand you the Hattie B's menu." In response a number of commenters argued over whether or not the "hate" Hattie B's has garnered was justified. For some, the answer was an emphatic yes. "Hattie B's is 'white people' hot chicken. They have made it palatable to people who can't handle a lot of

spices” reads one comment under the original post³⁸. A reply to a comment positing that Hattie B’s is only criticized because it is cool to hate things that are popular reads:

@poster it’s not that it’s “cool to hate popular things”, it’s that this popular thing pales in comparison to all the better, cheaper and less gimmicky HC out there. Yet people only flock to Hattie B’s because they’re too dumb/basic to know any better and are swindled by the slick marketing and promotions. Or too scared to go to the more legit places. Or they’re sad tourists who think Taco Bell red sauce is “too hot.”

On the other hand, other posters argued that the hate is undeserved, and that Hattie B’s is rightly considered the best spot for hot chicken in Nashville because they serve high quality food: “I love Hattie’s from [the] Bishops! Always consistent in heat and juicy!” Others reject claims that Hattie B’s has been so successful because of structural inequality out of hand: “People hate on Hattie B’s for faux ‘virtue signaling’ reasons that have nothing to do with the actual quality of the food.” While opinion on whether or not Hattie B’s is guilty of culturally appropriating hot chicken was divided in the online fan groups, Hattie B’s was often referred to as “the dirty bird” by posters and criticized for selling chicken that is not spicy enough. They complain that the restaurant has to rely on spice extracts to achieve its higher heat levels, a practice that, as mentioned in the last chapter, is considered cheating by some spice aficionados.

Implicit in this debate is a comparison between the hot chicken of “new” Nashville, Hattie B’s, and the older, more traditional hot chicken restaurants, specifically Prince’s Hot Chicken Shack, the original hot chicken restaurant in Nashville. These two establishments are portrayed very differently in the media as well as in the marketing styles each business uses to entice customers. They are also experienced differently by diners.

³⁸ Because these commenters were posting in a private online fan group under their real names, I have chosen to keep them completely anonymous.

Prince's Hot Chicken Shack and Hattie B's Hot Chicken

In the previous chapter, I explained that Prince's Hot Chicken Shack and Hattie B's Hot Chicken symbolize different things to Nashville locals. Specifically, I detailed how Hattie B's is closely associated with tourism and Nashville's rapid development and gentrification over the past two decades, and Prince's is associated with Nashville's past as a Southern city that was more like a small town. While locals tended to articulate a strong sense of loyalty to Prince's during interviews, they often make comparisons between Prince's and Hattie B's that make it clear that there are some idiosyncrasies about dining there that people used to eating in highly mechanized fast casual restaurants might find a bit surprising or even inconvenient. Multiple locals describe the inconsistent opening hours at Prince's on Ewing Drive as part of the charm" of eating there:

The original Prince's, before it caught fire, I always admired the charm of that. You know, if they said they were going to open at noon, you know, it was a twenty-minute drive from where I worked, and we would all pile in the car at 11. Like, "Alright, we're going to be there at 11:30. So we'll be the first ones at the door, you know, when she opens." Then you'd get there at 11:30, and there would be twenty people in line, she just opened early. Or you'd get there, and they wouldn't open for another hour after that, so. [Laughs] You couldn't tell (Wilson 2020).

Others fondly describe ordering hot chicken at one spice level and walking away with something significantly hotter. For them, it is a major part of the Prince's experience: "That's kind of part of the charm. You order medium, you get extra hot. It's, you know. Sometimes you win, sometimes you lose" (Schwartz 2020). For many locals, the long wait times, inconsistent hours and heat levels, and even the potentially rude behavior of the staff are all considered part of the experience. "Prince's is an institution. "If you want to see Paris, you have to go to Paris,"

(Waller 2020) one interviewee declared while describing the importance of having “real” Nashville hot chicken at Prince’s.

Some locals note that while Prince’s Hot Chicken is beloved, in part, because of its idiosyncrasies, these same unique elements might be off-putting for people who are unfamiliar with them:

Nick [Bishop] and those guys have actually done really well in the fact that they’ve captured, you know, they’ve created a brand, right? And they have, and I’m not really sure how much advertisement they’ve done. I’ve never really seen it advertised. But I guess it was just the location. They created a brand; they came up with some catchy little stuff. You know, when you go to the place, it’s got a little bit of a vibe to it and stuff, and everything. And I think what happened is that just caught on, you know. Where you had Prince’s, you know, up in, out on Ewing. Completely opposite. It was all word of mouth. Cash only. The place was small. (McDonald 2020).

Many share this opinion that while the ambiance at Prince’s is lacking, the food itself is good enough that it simply does not, or should not, matter. However, the chicken at Prince’s really is *hot*, no matter what spice level you order, and ending up with extra hot when expecting mild or medium could seriously change the course of someone’s planned itinerary in the city:

I know people have a lot of hard things to say about Hattie B’s. And, like, Hattie B’s is *really good* for tourists. They have beer there, they, they’re not hot, and, you know, it’s a good segue way for people. Because, if people had the same experience I did at Prince’s on Ewing, they would, they would probably be mad. Because it was a little painful. And I think there’s a place for Hattie B’s. It’s good for tourists, it’s good for new people. It’s very inviting. It’s like, you know, anybody coming from anywhere, I think it’s a good place. I don’t prefer it, but if they’re open on Sunday, and everybody else is closed? (Lovett 2020).

One local called this struggle to maintain consistency of heat levels and overall quality of the food the “Achilles heel” of the overall hot chicken experience which Hattie B’s has successfully overcome. He commented, “I have to give it up for Hattie B’s for, I think, creating a very consistent product in a lot of multiple locations. And, I think, having a franchise model that is, you know, working very well” (Lake 2020).

In an oral history interview that accompanied Joe York's documentary on hot chicken for the Southern Foodways Alliance, André Prince Jeffries, the owner of Prince's, emphasizes the family feel of her restaurant. She points out that ownership of the establishment has literally been passed down through her family since Thornton Prince originally opened the BBQ Chicken Shack and mentions that she has never done any advertising for the restaurant, instead relying on word of mouth. Because of the small size of the place, Jeffries can get to know her customers fairly well. In response to a question from York about whether she feels like a "mom" spending all day talking with customers, she responds in the affirmative, saying that she gives advice all day, and that many of her regulars call her Mom. She also stresses the importance of serving food in the right way, no matter how long it takes:

This chicken cannot be rushed; it cannot be rushed. To be right it takes time. And then sometimes when we give it to the customers too fast they don't want it; they think something is wrong with it because they're used to waiting. So, I find that rather odd, but—that's the way they expect it because that's the way it usually is but it takes time to cook the chicken right. It's not a fast food; we're definitely not a fast-food restaurant. It's old-time, it's like old-school (York 2006: 12).

While Jeffries emphasizes slow, "old-school," cooking, John Lasater, one of the owners and head chef of Hattie B's Hot Chicken, has different priorities. In the interview with George Embiricos for *Food Republic*, Lasater emphasizes the convenient location, sophisticated flavor profile, consistent product, and bright atmosphere of his restaurants before pointing out that he hopes to open hot chicken places across the United States. He claims, "In 20 years, I think all 50 states will have hot chicken. We're going to try to grow Hattie B's in the Southeast — that's really our target right now. In the future, you're going to see us anywhere from Memphis to Knoxville, maybe Atlanta...Big cities and high volume is really our target" (Embiricos 2016). These two different narratives about what a restaurant has to offer: informal, friendly, "old school" home cooking versus bright, highly predictable, uniform food, are, as I mentioned, often

pitted against one another in online discussions of Nashville hot chicken. But there is another important difference in the narratives these two establishments are serving up to potential consumers that involves gender. Jeffries identifies as a woman and Lasater as a man, but beyond this surface level difference, their two narratives are coded as feminine and masculine, respectively, in important ways.

Multiple times throughout her interview with York, Jeffries refers to the many ways in which hot chicken seems to be especially important for women. Most obviously, if the origin story recounted in Chapter Four is to be believed, it was a woman who first created the dish in the 1930s. Later in the interview, Jeffries notes that more women order the chicken hot than men, adding “I don’t know what it is. I guess it keeps up with their anger” (York 2006: 5). She says that many pregnant women eat the chicken and also mentions it affecting women in unusual ways: “Oh yes; we—we have a lot of shows and sometimes the women get carried away and they roll on the floor and some of them jump up on the table and they do dances and we have to pull them down off the table and sometimes they do get a little wild. Yes; it’s some strange things go on associated with hot chicken” (York 2006: 9).

Jeffries focuses quite a bit on the bodily experience of eating hot chicken for both women and men. She references customers who say it has made their hair grow or fall out, some who seem to consider it an aphrodisiac (she mentions one regular who she believes is a “lady of the evening” who takes her dates there for dinner), and meditates on the experience of digesting the bird, calling it a “24-hour chicken.” She claims: “Take off like a missile through the other end. I hear all kinds of stories...But it’s a cleansing—it’s a cleansing and we need it. We got a lot of infected people, so we need that cleansing. Oh me, I don’t know what the doctors say about it. But we clean them out” (York 2006: 25). This focus on bodily experience, particularly the bodily experiences of women (pregnant women, angry women, women of the evening), combined with

Jeffries's identification as a mother figure and the emphasis on home cooking all code Prince's Hot Chicken Shack as a feminine space.

Hattie B's Hot Chicken, on the other hand, is presented to consumers wrapped in symbols associated with professionalism. It also signals the kind of performative, special occasion cooking most often connected with men. In this regard it is in keeping with Thomas Adler's findings in his classic 1981 article on men's cooking in the domestic context. In his interview with John Lasater, George Embiricos makes the distinction between the masculine and feminine sphere of cookery explicit in the origin story he puts together for Lasater:

John Lasater never expected to be at the forefront of a national hot-chicken movement. Nashville hot chicken is a storied city tradition that stretches all the way back to the 1930s, after all, and the executive chef of Hattie B's Hot Chicken— which opened in 2012 — recently turned 30. Sure, Lasater started cooking when he was just ten years old, designing three-course menus based on a strict budget laid out by his mother, but his graduation from culinary school led to stints in the kitchens of fine-dining establishments; frying up mass amounts of chicken was simply not on the horizon (Embiricos 2016).

Here, Embiricos emphasizes the genius of his subject (Lasater just turned 30 and is helming a very lucrative franchise, and he started cooking at 10 years old, which would probably not be considered noteworthy had Lasater been a woman) and draws a direct comparison between fried chicken and the food served at the kinds of restaurants where a graduate of culinary school might expect to go to work. Lasater underlines this connection to the male dominated world of fine dining when he describes what he sees as his addition to the classic recipe:

One of my biggest goals when I first came to Hattie B's and I looked at everything was, like, "Everywhere you go for hot chicken, it's just hot, hot, hot, *hot*." I was like, "How can we make this more pronounced but also rounded in flavor and just have that umami bomb?" That's what we were really gearing on, so I started playing with cayenne and my other components so they would balance out (Embiricos 2016).

As mentioned, Lasater emphasizes the convenience of his locations rather than a homey atmosphere, as Jeffries does. On the other hand, while he does mention the physical effect his

chicken has on customers in response to a question from Embiricos, unlike the owner of Prince's, Lasater only provides one example, that of a pregnant woman: "One time a lady came in and she was *super*-pregnant. She had our "damn hot" chicken at night and had her kid in the late hours of the night, into the early morning. She named her kid Hattie! She's become a real big regular now" (Embiricos 2016). Because this is the only example of a physical reaction, the customer's status as a pregnant woman stands out clearly. There are no stories of men growing chest hair or spending the next twelve hours sweating on the toilet. The physical experience of eating and digesting hot chicken is described only in the context of a woman giving birth, and as a result the body is effectively separated from the Hattie B's narrative, where it is central to that of Prince's. This helps to reinforce the masculine coding of the Hattie B's narrative.

In addition to the binary pairs associated with hot chicken explored in Chapter Four, the framing of Hattie B's and Prince's in the media, as well as in advertising promoting each restaurant, introduces two others: male versus female, and fine dining experience versus "shack." It is noteworthy that Lasater and the Bishop family are coded as "fine dining" even while their business is a highly franchised chain. Despite this, they are still considered culinary professionals, and they have access to a wide network of resources within the culinary world. This network is something Chamberlain (2016) explores in his response to Phillips's assertion that the success of the Lasater family constitutes an instance of cultural appropriation. He points out that restaurant owners and members of the culinary media are more likely to want to add Hattie B's to their circuit of places to visit in Nashville than Prince's because it is more centrally located. He describes the "chef-ier" behavior of Lasater and the Bishop family:

John Lasater comes from a culinary background, which means his version of hot chicken is a bit chef-ier." And I'll bet he probably loaded them down with his version of hot chicken because chefs love to try to bury other visiting chefs under a mountain of food (Chamberlain 2016).

Chamberlain does not connect this difference to the gourmet culinary networks that the Prince and Bishop families have access to, or reflect on why Prince's Hot Chicken Shack was, at that time, located so far outside of the main downtown area. Finally, according to Chamberlain, Lasater's time in culinary school means that he "comes from a culinary background" but the Prince family, who have owned and run their establishment successfully for decades, do not.

The coding of Prince's Hot Chicken Shack as female is also significant. As Adler (1981) points out in writing about home cooking, women's cooking is understood to be quotidian and unspecial, while men's is considered festive. Within the context of Southern foodways, Black women's labor, expertise, and creativity have often been obscured or devalued. In his book devoted to American fried chicken, John Edge (2004) notes that even when Black women's culinary expertise is recognized in mainstream media, they are often dehumanized. Anthony Stanonis (2008) surveys Southern cookbooks and advertisements for groceries, meal kits, and restaurants published during the first half of the twentieth century and finds that the rhetoric of this literature is designed to help Southern whites adjust to life during and after Jim Crow while continuing to maintain white supremacy. This is done by describing Black cooks as having a kind of intuitive cooking, or "cooking by ear." This innate ability is paired with stereotypes about domestic workers and chefs failing to practice good hygiene or trying to save the best food for themselves. These "shortcomings" require white women to step in as heads of household to supervise all kitchen endeavors. This framing maintains white supremacy, and effectively erases Black contributions from Southern cuisine. The fact that the dish being sold is a kind of fried chicken also matters. Because they are white, men, and from a higher socio-economic class (able to afford culinary school and to open multiple locations in expensive parts of Nashville and other cities), the Bishops and Lasater can be lauded as culinary experts for "elevating" fried chicken.

They can do this without worrying about the many negative stereotypes associated with fried chicken for working class people and people of color. Psyche Williams-Forsen notes that fried chicken is a stigmatizing dish, but not for everyone. She also traces the history of its transformation into an industrialized product widely considered to be the purview of white men during the 1800s, describing how

Throughout their treatises [on raising and slaughtering chickens correctly], Bennett and his ilk subtly and not to subtly disparage rural farmwomen when they argue, “It is no longer universally true that fowls are raised without care, or with a perfect indifference as to their kind”...With only a passing reference, they acknowledge that women made their livelihood and gathered their “pin money” from the sales of surplus poultry and eggs (Williams-Forsen 2006: 82).

There are echoes of this disparagement in the way Lasater talks about the lack of sophistication of the original hot chicken shacks in Nashville. There is also a connection between fried chicken’s transformation from a resource for women of color to use to make money and build community into an industrial product that came to make extraordinary profits for men and Nashville’s dramatic urban transformation. Prince’s Hot Chicken Shack is understood to be a neighborhood place, described as either a hole in the wall or like “grandma’s house” in both the media and in the reviews analyzed below. At the same time, Hattie B’s is considered a major tourist destination with highly efficient service and a consistent product. I turn now to an exploration of how these two restaurants, presented to consumers as binary opposites in a number of ways, are reviewed by culinary tourists.

Tourist Experiences of Hot Chicken in Nashville, Tennessee

To explore tourist experiences of hot chicken in Nashville, I chose to analyze online reviews of Prince’s Hot Chicken Shack on Ewing Drive and Hattie B’s Hot Chicken midtown location, as this was their first establishment. I analyzed a total of 100 reviews of each restaurant,

50 from Yelp and 50 from TripAdvisor, most posted during the Spring of 2018. I also included some reviews from 2017 and 2019 as there are less reviews for both restaurants on Yelp, and I wanted to have an even number of reviews to analyze for each restaurant. This was a period of time during which the debate about hot chicken and cultural appropriation which first took place in local Nashville media had become mainstream, with the allusion to it in David Chang's fried chicken episode of *Ugly Delicious*, which originally aired on Netflix in February of 2018, restarting discussion about the situation online. During interviews with locals, this television episode came up often as the "final straw" for the owners of Hattie B's, who supposedly stopped giving interviews with the media altogether after David Chang asked them about it during a segment filmed in one of their restaurants.

Surveying these online reviews reveals a few similarities with the reviews of Indian restaurants in London explored in Chapter Three: "Awesome food. Great music playing. When we arrived there was one group in front of us. Super helpful staff and clean restrooms" (Yelp user Kaitlyn Z. 2018) reads one review of Hattie B's Midtown. This review hits all the major areas of concern outlined in Maria Onorati and Paolo Giardullo's (2020) analysis of the content of TripAdvisor reviews and exemplifies the emphasis on ambiance and helpfulness of the staff described in Chapter Three. While Onorati and Giardullo find that reviewers seem less interested in taste than in ambiance, a finding that was supported in my own analysis of the London restaurant reviews, the Nashville reviews mention taste much more frequently. This is specifically within the context of discussing the overall quality and heat level of the fried chicken. As Nashville hot chicken is famously all about the spice, and that is the central draw that makes the experience exotic (Johnston and Baumann 2015), this seems fitting. Like in the online reviews of restaurants in London, there is a great deal of discussion of how spicy the food really is. As in London, there is a difference in how spice is regarded at each location.

Reviewers of Prince’s are more enthusiastic about heat in general. Because this restaurant has a reputation for being one of the hottest in the city, even people who identify as spice enthusiasts often describe themselves as finding the heat level challenging. They advise other visitors: “Before you visit here, just be sure to realistically evaluate your spice tolerance. Otherwise you might be crying tears of happiness/pain from going beyond your spice level (like others in my party)” (Yelp user Ellyse L. 2018). This connection between pain and joy came up often, with most reviewers who felt that the chicken was too hot at Prince’s still describing the overall experience as positive or even transformative, as in this review:

BEST. CHICKEN. EVER.

At first I was scared. I thought the medium was as hot as I could handle. But for kicks, I tried the hot one day. The chicken hit my tongue and I could feel the rising wave of heat. But instead of the burning I expected, I heard a choir of angels sing from on high. The sky changed color. Birds sang and bells rang out. 1,000 virgins lifted me on the tips of their fingers and slowly massaged me from head to toe as we floated away on a cloud.

The delicate balance of countless secret herbs and spices took control of my being. I left my conscious self and became the unified spirit of an orgy of unicorns dancing about a holy effigy. I regained consciousness hours later with the lingering flavor on my lips to remind me of the moment I became one with God.

If you have a problem waiting in line for THIS—you can kick rocks...no one or nothing can help you. This place is the reason “Nashville hot chicken” is a thing. (Yelp user Jamie T. 2017).

The newer Hattie B’s seems to be the overall tourist favorite, as is the case with Dishoom Shoreditch in London. And like at Dishoom, online discussion of spice at Hattie B’s seems to be about advising other potential diners in how to avoid meals that will be too hot. That said, probably because of the nature of hot chicken, Hattie B’s has more reviews that arbitrate whether or not the food on offer will be spicy enough than at Dishoom. As mentioned earlier, Hattie B’s has a reputation for being one of the least spicy hot chicken options in the city, both because of

its popularity with tourists and because they use brown sugar in their spice rub. In his infamous interview with George Embiricos, head chef John Lasater says that “the basis of hot chicken is cayenne, paprika, garlic, salt, and brown sugar—we’ve got to release some of that heat and round it with either vinegar or sugar” (Embiricos 2016). Lasater may take it as a given that sugar is a foundational component of hot chicken, but its inclusion is controversial among hot chicken aficionados and chefs in Nashville. A beloved local hot chicken restaurant owner I interviewed for this project expressed concern about how increased interest in hot chicken has led to a decrease in quality. The inclusion of sugar as a balancing agent for the heat of the dish was one of the major problems she identified with its current surge in popularity:

That’s what you get with the hot chicken movement. People don’t care. People just see money money money, “I wanna be involved, I wanna do this,” but the chicken is not the same. And it’s sweet too. There shouldn’t be anything sweet about hot chicken. People say it cuts the heat. Baby, I don’t need my heat cut. Brine me up, give it to me. I know. So we went into that with a lot of new places too, “Oh, it has a little brown sugar.” I never put sugar in mine. *Never*. So, that’s what you have (Hudson 2018).

Many locals and tourists made this association between Hattie B’s and unsatisfactory levels of heat, or unusual levels of sweetness when I asked them to recount any folklore they might have heard about hot chicken. Alongside the legend of Prince’s hot chicken being invented by a scorned lover, and rumors that eating hot chicken is somehow good for the immune system or can instigate labor in pregnant women, I was told several times about how Hattie B’s uses extracts to achieve their highest heat levels. As indicated earlier, this is a practice many spice fans consider to be cheating. Several interviewees offered explanations as to why Hattie B’s highest heat level is known as “Shut the Cluck Up,” as in this example:

Let me tell you something about Hattie B’s. I was going through a phase to where I was trying as hot of chicken as I could. And I was going around the different places and eating at them. We ate at Pepperfire, Scoreboard, Hattie’s B. I was telling them to bring the heat. Do whatever you can[...] Anyway, I’m telling them, bring it. Bring the heat. And Hattie B’s, they were known, they were kind of

bothered that people were making fun of the fact that they had good tasting chicken, but it wasn't hot. So when I got up to the counter, I said, "I want some hot chicken. Bring the heat. I don't ever get any heat here." The manager kind of took it, I think it kind of bothered him a little bit. They had just started making chicken called "Shut the Cluck Up." And that's basically a response to people saying that they didn't have the heat. And they had a cook who had cooked at Prince's, and knew how to really cook it hot. And they kept cooking on my chicken, my order, until probably 15 minutes after everybody else had already been served. And the manager, the same manager, brought it out to me and said "Here you go, sir. Here's your chicken". [Laughs] Ok. And you could smell it from about three foot away before it got to you. And I started to eat a bit of it, and at that point it was like, it was like eating, you know. [Sighs] I don't know. It was like gasoline had been poured on it, it was that hot. And it had an absolutely terrible, bad taste. But I was going to eat a couple pieces of it anyway because I had bragged about, you know, they didn't have hot chicken. And the guy next to me asked to try a little bit of it, and he said "That tastes *terrible*. I don't see how you can stand that". And I had to keep getting up to go to Coke machine, which was kind of right next to the window into the kitchen. And the cook kind of looked at me, reached through, and said "I am so sorry. The manager told me to make it that hot". Because she saw how I was drinking water. Just, water and then Coke, then water, then Coke, and just sitting there going crazy. And she said that she knew how to make it really really hot, but they chose not to do that. But she was the one who had come up with the "Shut the Cluck Up" chicken. She said, "I can make it hotter. And I can make it as hot as you need it." But anyway, they can make it hot if they want to, that's just not what they're, I kind of backed off of that (Carll 2020).

This is a fascinating story, as it suggests that the only way that Hattie B's can achieve any real heat is by hiring a cook who used to work at Prince's. The owners and management are depicted as resentful of their reputation for not being hot enough, which they vent by naming their hottest chicken "Shut the Cluck Up" and seeming to relish torturing customers who dare to express this common knowledge out loud. The negative characterization of the management and staff at Hattie B's comes up often, particularly in interviews with locals (in the previous chapter, I mentioned an interviewee who referred to Bishop Sr. as a "prick", for example). However, if "Shut the Cluck Up" was supposed to change how consumers view the heat levels at Hattie B's, there is little evidence in online reviews to suggest that it was successful. Many reviewers describe getting the medium rather than hot "just to be safe." Although they find the experience

to be pleasant, customers sometimes look forward to trying a higher heat level on a subsequent trip: “Since it was my first visit here, I opted to get my chicken medium because I didn’t want something unbearably hot. But if you consider yourself someone who can handle spice, I would recommend the hot because the medium wasn’t that spicy” (Yelp user Eugene C. 2018).

At the same time, there are many reviews posted about Hattie B’s on TripAdvisor and Yelp that come from people who made it a point to visit Hattie B’s during their short trips to Nashville, or were willing to wait in line for long periods of time only to order the mild or even the “Southern style” chicken which has no Nashville hot spice rub on it at all:

Loved Lunch at Hattie B’s!

Hattie B’s is a must while in Nashville. We stopped by for lunch and had the Hattie B’s Hot Chicken sandwich. You can get this sandwich in different spice levels. I don’t like spicy food so they were able to cook the chicken in my sandwich with no spice. The meal comes with 2 sides and a drink. There are a great variety of sides to choose from. Our meals were awesome and I would go back and eat there again when in Nashville. The restaurant overall is small and a really cute spot to enjoy a quick meal (TripAdvisor user RTM2289 2018).

The current popularity of Hattie B’s, and hot chicken’s status as a symbol of the city of Nashville as a whole mean that it is possible to buy T-shirts at any tourist gift stand or in the giftshops of places like the Country Music Hall of Fame that say “Nashville hot chicken” without mentioning any specific establishment. It also means that many visitors to the city understand eating hot chicken as a “must have” experience, whether they actually have an interest in eating spicy food or not. Including a completely plain option and mixing brown sugar into the spice rub, a practice that people who consider themselves to be hot chicken “traditionalists” find to be abhorrent, ensure that Hattie B’s will be an appealing option for having the hot chicken experience for a wide number of potential consumers. Reviewers who are not fans of spicy food include tips for how to tone down the spice at Hattie B’s in a way that is similar to how reviewers of Dishoom

Shoreditch recommended ordering specific sides or beverages to tone down the heat, as explored in Chapter Three:

Work conference

We stopped here for dinner on our first night in Nashville. What an awesome dinner we had! We had read all about the famous “hot chicken” and decided we must try Hattie B’s and it surely didn’t disappoint! We got the southern chicken aka no heat, as well as the medium and as a person who typically LOVES heat/hot foods, this was pretty intense. We had be warned by friends who had previously been, to eat the sides first because the heat of the sauce might blanket our taste buds. Great advice! We had the beans and mac and cheese and they were great. The chicken was hot, juicy, and delicious. We will definitely come back here the next time we are in Nashville! (TripAdvisor user skvalley 2018).

The question of whether eating at Prince’s or Hattie B’s is “worth it” comes up regularly in these reviews, often within the context of whether the food is good enough to warrant weathering the long wait times for orders to be ready at Prince’s, or the long, mostly outdoor lines associated with dining at Hattie B’s. The aftereffects of eating hot chicken, which can be quite unpleasant, are also weighed in conjunction with whether or not the experience of eating hot chicken will be worth it. Occasionally, both concerns will be addressed in the same post, as in this Yelp review of Prince’s Hot Chicken Shack:

Y’all. I don’t care who you are, where you’re from, you need to experience this.

“Oh but it’s hot!”

If you want it. And if you do, dear Lordy you are in for one helluva treat.

The dining area is negligible. There’s about 5 or 6 tables and the place gets slammed. So probably don’t count on getting a seat and rought it on your tailgate, trunk, or hood of your car. Even better, take it to a nearby park (if it’s nice out) or somewhere that you can sit and truly enjoy the experience.

After you place the order, be prepared to wait. It’s home cooked and takes time. All y’all complaining need to pack up and leave. You are not worthy. *Good things come to those who wait.*

My husband and I ordered a whole chicken, hot, ranch packets, coleslaw, and lemonades. Opening up the precious package of deliciousness on our tailgate was heavenly, and our first bite was salty, hot, and pure goodness. I've never experienced something so savory in my life, and now I'm left wondering if I will ever be able to consume regular chicken again. It's just not as good as the hot chicken.

Coleslaw was definitely worth it since they didn't hold back on their mayonnaise and mixed it with fresh slaw.

Skip the ranch pack, unless you're a real heat wimp, in which case I wouldn't recommend ordering hot to begin with.

Post-consumption: I would definitely recommend putting some toilet paper on ice. Hurts, but it's worth it (Yelp user Lauren W. 2017, emphasis mine).

Like in the online reviews of Indian restaurants in London, there is a proverb inserted here, although this time it is “good things come to those who wait” rather than “nothing worth having comes easily.” While the wording is different, the overall message is similar, if more passive: if you want to have an unusual or exotic experience, you will have to be willing to put up with some amount of discomfort or inconvenience. A folk idea about the correlation between long wait times (specifically as a result of long lines) and high-quality food, came up in a minority of reviews, as in this example which also includes a judgment of the food at Hattie B's as not quite spicy enough: “The line that preceded our approach spoke volumes of the quality of the food. Tried the hot ½ bird and should have gone with extra hot which by the way was very good. Definitely a place to check off when visiting Nashville from out of town for a locally owned business. Yum!” (TripAdvisor user Trails4U 2018).

Out of approximately 100 reviews of Hattie B's posted to TripAdvisor and Yelp analyzed, I found this folk idea expressed in five reviews (or in 5% of reviews). While this is admittedly a small number, I find it significant because it is not an idea I have found expressed elsewhere in reviews analyzed for this project, or as part of my own personal experiences as a

foodie. It reads as a kind of mirror image of the folk idea that good quality food can always be found at “a real hole-in-the-wall” which Johnston and Baumann identify as an exotic framing of culinary experience that is constructed through “Othering based on class difference but without the rural setting” (Johnston and Baumann 2015: 103). I think this equation between long lines and good food, applied specifically to the experience of eating at Hattie B’s, serves two purposes.

First, it stands as a kind of defense of choosing to eat at an undeniably mainstream restaurant, a choice that some may find sits uneasily with their identity as culinary tourists or food adventurers. George Ritzer and Allan Liska (1997) point out that many of the things that tourists seem to prize as making an experience highly efficient, or rational, lead to inefficiencies or irrationalities like long lines. The idea that a long line signifies an excellent dining experience stands as a kind of defense of the preference for this irrational rationalism. Relatedly, there is a hint of a pro-capitalist orientation towards eating hot chicken expressed in the idea that “it was packed so that is a true sign of good food” (TripAdvisor user SharieN_13 2018)³⁹ which I also found when asking tourists and locals directly about whether the success of Hattie B’s can be attributed, at least in part, to structural inequality. Some version of “That’s just capitalism. Hattie B’s has a good product so they attract the biggest crowds” was the most frequent response to this question, and I think these associations between large crowds and high quality food coming from foodies, who we might expect to seek out more off the beaten path options in accordance with their identities, can be read as a similar sort of defense of Hattie B’s.

Indeed, there is a great deal of direct comparison between Prince’s and Hattie B’s in these reviews. Reviewers seem aware of the binary these two establishments represent, and many

³⁹ Interestingly, while this review expresses the idea that a crowded restaurant indicates good food, the reviewer was ultimately unsatisfied with Hattie B’s, giving their review the title “Just Okay”.

reviews of either restaurant reference the other, as in this review of Hattie B's: "The battle between Hattie B's and Prince's is still a tie. Hattie B's chicken is moister, but the spices are not as good as Prince's. In the end it just comes down to convenience and your desire to wait" (TripAdvisor user *guybeau2016* 2018). As this review illustrates, the amount of inconvenience that one should be willing to accept is a major focal point of these reviews, which are often framed around passing judgment on the Prince's vs. Hattie B's controversy. Based on the prominence of authenticity and exoticism in foodie discourse (Johnston and Baumann 2015), and the importance many foodies place on having an identity as a culinary explorer (Heldke 2003), one might expect Prince's Hot Chicken Shack to be the clear winner. After all, it is home to the original purveyors of hot chicken, a classic "hole-in-the-wall" type of establishment, and off the beaten path, away from the more touristy parts of Nashville. Hot chicken served at the location on Ewing Drive fulfills many of the requirements Johnston and Baumann list for an exotic culinary experience: it is a dish marked by social and ethnic distance, but it also falls into the category of a dining experience that "manage[s] to shock middle American, non-foodie sensibilities, breaking food norms that allow the eater to stand aside as unique, special, and distinctly adventuresome" (Johnston and Baumann 2015: 96) due to its superior heat levels. However, this is only true for some reviewers.

My analysis of online reviews of Hattie B's and Prince's on TripAdvisor and Yelp reveals what perhaps should have been obvious from the beginning: tourists overwhelmingly prefer the experience of Hattie B's over that of Prince's. Many visitor reviews of Prince's advise other tourists to avoid the spot, citing long wait times, the "dangerous," remote location, a plain or even dirty dining room, chicken tenders and wings only being offered on certain days, inconsistent opening hours, the presence of a police officer on the premises, and even the

spiciness and greasiness of the chicken as reasons to stay away. They recommend visiting Hattie B's instead: "If you don't mind an armed sheriff on site because of the location or the long lines. Or the amount of grease that will make you nauseous after a couple of bites, then you'll be fine. Sorry if this offends you but it was a 'no go' for me" (TripAdvisor user Atiyah79 2018). This reviewer makes use of Feagin's white racial frame by invoking the anti-Black subframe when they mention the "armed sheriff" that is made necessary by the location of the restaurant (Feagin 2013). They also engage in the classed framing of fat described by MacAllister and Hocknell (2020) by describing the fried chicken at Prince's as being greasy to the point of inducing nausea, which seems an unusual criticism to level against a dish that is deep fried. The "sorry if this offends you" could be read as an allusion to criticism of Hattie B's as being culturally appropriative. When online reviewers directly compare the two establishments, often they are not favorable to Prince's:

Worlds worst service!!! I will never come here again!!! I will forever love Hattie B's. If you need a security guard to order chicken then it may be worth your time!!! The wait time is ridiculous vs. the time that you order. I am a patient person if it comes to food worth waiting for!!! I'd rather wait in line at Hattie B's and know when my food is coming than come to this trashy place! The food was soggy and gross for having to wait so long when there was no one in front of me waiting (Yelp user Stephanie W. 2018).

Here again the reviewer utilizes the anti-Black subframe with the mention of the security guard, as well as the word "trashy" used to describe the entire restaurant, which certainly has classist connotations.

While many tourists appreciate Prince's, many of its most positive reviews come from commenters who identified themselves as living in the Nashville area, and Nashville locals were much more likely to call Hattie B's bland or "touristy" in their reviews. While conducting fieldwork, I heard several rumors from locals about how Hattie B's has used shortcuts in order to gain popularity. There was frequent mention of the Bishop family hiring an expensive marketing

team based out of New York City, and attempting to bribe people into writing them positive reviews in exchange for free items, as this hot chicken restaurant owner described: “They give away a lot of stuff, and people like that. So I guess if you give them free stuff, then I’ll write you a review. This is what I don’t like too, what I’ve noticed with a lot of places. They say, ‘Hey, we’ll give you this for free, if you write us a review.’ Just for a soda? I would never do that. So that’s what people do now” (Hudson 2018). A related rumor I heard several times is that the owners of Hattie B’s pay online review sites like Yelp and Google Reviews to remove any negative reviews that might be posted. Perhaps because of this rumor, I noticed a few five-star reviews of Hattie B’s posted by users whose hometown was listed as Nashville that were actually sharply, and sometimes disgustingly negative. This is one example: “My a\$\$hole was SCREAMING for days after my first trip to Hatties. The Hot flavor singed all the hairs off my taint and irreversibly gaped and discolored my gooch. Only had to change my pants 3 times the following day because I had severe, uncontrollable anal leakage. WORTH IT!” (Yelp user Chode Z. 2018). This extremely graphic review could be read as a satire of other reviews of Hattie B’s that detail long wait times, often in the rain or on hot days, and food that comes out cold or overcooked, while still awarding the restaurant high marks. By rating this review as five stars, this user may also be hoping to avoid having their review removed by Hattie B’s marketing team, in line with the suspected practice that was mentioned in my interviews.

Bizarre five-star reviews like this one aside, in general, tourists prefer Hattie B’s because of its convenient location, friendly staff, well-organized line system, and milder chicken. Many mention that it is possible to order food online instead of waiting at the restaurant: “Biggest tip I can give you: order online ahead of time. Not only do you not have to wait in line, but your order is ready when you want it to be. You can even pre-order up to 2 weeks in advance” (Yelp user Ellyse L. 2018). Others seem to parrot John Lasater’s assertion that Hattie B’s provides its

customers with a more sophisticated taste experience: “See, the issue with some ‘spicy’ foods is that when you eat it you literally just taste spice-just a tongue on fire. Not here. Hattie B’s chicken is hot, tasty and flavorful” (Yelp user Leigh O. 2018). Others mention that there are locations next to the airport, or across the street from hotels: “Knowing I was coming to Nashville for a business trip, I was dead set on trying some hot chicken. Luckily, Hattie B’s was down the street from my hotel, and even though I had a dinner somewhere else, I decided to venture out to try it around 9pm (on a Monday)” (Yelp user Doug B. 2018). This reviewer’s choice of the word “venture” to describe his trip to Hattie B’s is illustrative. Further on in the review, he mentions encountering a “shady dude hanging outside the entrance begging for money” and describes the restaurant as “clean and well lit” with “some Biggie bumpin’ from the kitchen.” In spite of the restaurant’s convenient location, and the fact that their order was ready after only a five-minute wait, the reviewer still describes the experience as a kind of exotic adventure and utilizes elements of the anti-Black subframe to characterize it. The review suggests that for some culinary tourists Hattie B’s can provide an experience that reads as just exotic enough without tipping over the edge into discomfort (Johnston and Baumann 2015).

When comparing both restaurants, even tourists who prefer the taste of Prince’s mention that Hattie B’s has a more comfortable atmosphere: “Ambiance is very trendy-cool place to be...After trying Prince’s, I have to say I liked Prince’s better for the flavor. My husband like Hattie B’s better. The ambiance here is much nicer and I prefer this place for overall experience” (Yelp user A. W. 2018). At Hattie B’s the restaurant space is also set up self-consciously as both an eatery and as a tourist attraction; tables full of merchandise available for purchase are placed by the front doors and souvenir T-shirts hang above the cash register.

While many reviewers mention convenience as a major reason to frequent Hattie B’s over Prince’s, several of these same reviewers describe waiting in line for Hattie B’s for one or

even two hours. In this case, they cite it as all “part of the experience” even though equivalent patience does not often seem to be extended to Prince’s when tourists encounter similar wait times. When it comes to Hattie B’s, tourists seem to attribute long lines to the high quality of the food, as noted above, rather than to incompetence on the part of the staff. Even tourists who do not explicitly equate a long wait time with quality food, and seem irritated by it, often give Hattie B’s high ratings:

On a hot August day it was not exciting for the family to wait in line. The kids moaned and groaned and my wife thought I was out of my mind. After around 40 minutes we finally arrived at the door...The seating is pretty limited, I could not even tell you how many interior. I moved to an outdoor picnic table. The patio was clean. Food orders are called out, so if outside pay attention. We got our food in around 15 minutes. So total investment is now over an hour and the family was starved...I had to go the distance with a full 5 STARS! This was a wonderful find and is now a great recommendation for others to try (Yelp user J David H. 2018).

Others cite the consistent quality of the food as a major positive: “My son lives in Nashville and I made him promise I couldn’t leave town without us eating at Hattie B’s. It never disappoints and is delicious every time” (TripAdvisor user 9396mom 2018). As in the London reviews, these preferences for perceived consistency and convenience seem to underline Ritzer and Liska’s (1997) points about the irrationalities of highly rationalized travel that are accepted as part of the experience of tourism. At first glance, these preferences would seem to suggest that visitors to Hattie B’s are “in search of inauthenticity.” As Ritzer and Liska write, “That is, rather than seeking authenticity as MacCannell suggests, it could be argued that people raised and living in a post-modern world dominated by simulations increasingly come to want, nay to insist on, simulations when they tour” (Ritzer and Liska 1997: 108).

Based on their online reviews, it would be easy to sort Nashville’s culinary tourists into neat piles of those who prefer the convenience of Hattie B’s, and travelers or explorers, who are drawn to the more “real,” gritty, ambiance of Prince’s Chicken Shack. But neither of these tourist

narratives is necessarily authentic or inauthentic. Both draw their appeal from fantasies about Southernness and Blackness, albeit in different ways. Importantly, both narratives make it possible for tourists to eat hot chicken without really tasting the city's complicated history of racial, class, and gender power imbalances which have all seasoned the city's famous dish in different ways.

John Lasater and the co-owners of his establishments, Nick Bishop Sr. and Jr., are selling a highly rationalized but not exactly simulated version of hot chicken. The three men are from the Nashville area and grew up eating at Prince's and other hot chicken restaurants. Their recipes follow the basic formula for the dish, which they have smartly chosen to make as palatable and available to the widest customer base possible. But while the Bishops and Lasater are not peddling an inauthentic product, their establishments do make it possible for thousands of tourists and locals alike to consume fried chicken, and specifically a form of fried chicken created and originally championed by members of the local African American community, in a way that is completely decontextualized from its history.

As noted above, fried chicken is a simple dish with a complicated symbolic weight. Its meanings become all the more complex when connotations change depending on who is cooking and eating it. For African Americans, fried chicken is the basis of many painful stereotypes that can be traced back to the years directly following Emancipation. For some, these associations are so difficult that they refuse to eat fried chicken in public, order it at restaurants, or, in the case of black chefs, to put it on the menus in their dining establishments. Psyche A. Williams-Forson traces both the facts and fictions of the relationships between Black Americans and fried chicken. It is a heavy subject, and one that Williams-Forson points out is crucial to get to the bottom of in her Introduction:

The more I listened and talked with people about my proposed topic, the clearer it

became that a generation of young people were relatively unaware that any negative associations existed between chicken and black people. Or worse, although aware of the stereotypes, they often saw no socio-political correlations between the historical positioning and the current contemporary moment. These variables, and the fact that women's cooking is often overlooked and devalued, made an exploration of black people's relationships with chicken ripe for discussion (Williams-Forson 2007: 5).

It is not surprising that so many people that Williams-Forson spoke with were unaware of or untroubled by the complicated history between African Americans and fried chicken. The bird is wily, and slips free of many of these negative connotations when it is consumed by white people, as she points out later in the book:

These recipes, which were borrowed and modified by African and African American female cooks to include their own creative twists, were readily acculturated into the cuisine of the South. Yet because these foods are not embodied by linguistic variations and are relatively indistinguishable from white (particularly poor white) culinary habits, they have been left out of the cultural forms identified as 'distinctly' African American, such as spirituals, sermons, and literature written in dialect. This lack of such a distinguishing feature furthermore made food susceptible to cultural, social, and physical appropriation by white women (and men) (Williams-Forson 2007: 169).

As many scholars of Southern foodways have pointed out, Southern cuisine is a unique blend of European, Native American, and African cooking styles which relies heavily on the local environment for its many staples. After the economic, physical, and social ravages of the Civil War, Southerners used their unique cuisine to rebuild communities. John T. Edge, the director of the Southern Foodways Alliance, describes this project of culinary reconstruction in the 2017 book *The Potlikker Papers: A Food History of the Modern South*.

According to Edge, fast food restaurants played a major role in the refashioning of the South on its own terms, allowing Southerners of all class backgrounds an opportunity to modernize along with the rest of the country:

Southerners with lower incomes were ideal fast-food customers. A burger, a sleeve of fries, and a shake promised a sugar rush, a full stomach, and temporary middle-class status. Fried chicken promised all of that plus a tether to their rural

past, when yardbirds pecked for grain and the first step in frying chicken for dinner was wringing a bird's neck before breakfast. As factory jobs expanded and farm jobs shrank, Southerners adopted restaurants that served passable versions of the foods that Southern women, liberated from tending skillets of hot oil, could buy for their families on the drive home from work (Edge 2017: 114).

But while Edge makes the case that the rise of fast food in the South was a boon for all members of Southern society, Angela Jill Cooley raises a contrary point in the 2013 article "The Customer is Always White: Food, Race, and Contested Eating Space in the South." Cooley explores the history of lunch counter sit-ins in the South, many of which occurred in Nashville, to prove that these spaces were heavily contested along lines of race and class. Cooley concludes that the Civil Rights Act of 1964 was a major victory for a more equal public eating space in the modern South. She also underlines the fact that white authorities struggled to control these spaces throughout much of the 1900s:

The history of the development of public space, where eating represented the dominant activity, reveals a complicated history in which white southern authorities attempted to regulate the interactions of different races, classes, ethnicities, and genders. Notions of proper behavior according to class-based mores precipitated legislation that implicated deep-seated white anxieties over consumption, racial purity, and the protection of white women (Cooley 2015: 267).

This history of racial strife playing out in public eating establishments, particularly fast food restaurants, is relevant to the discussion of hot chicken. Whether or not the Bishops will admit it, their restaurants have more in common with McDonald's than they do with many of the other hot chicken eateries in Nashville. As Edge argues about so many fast food establishments in the South, Hattie B's has helped to position hot chicken as a tourist experience which draws many people to the city. However, when tourists to the area sing the praises of the convenient locations and sophisticated take-out ordering system, are they really praising the fact that they do not have to travel outside of the areas of the city which are specifically marked for tourists, or associate with other tourists or locals if they do not want to? The economic benefits of their presence

remain concentrated in the parts of the city which are the most affluent and traditionally white. Intentional or not, this set of circumstances maintains the status quo of structural inequality in the city. It encourages the continued segregation of neighborhoods and is consistent with the transformation of fried chicken from a resource primarily for Southern women to an industrialized product that mainly benefits white men.

Indeed, some tourists who decide to leave the central parts of Nashville to try Prince's are put off by its location in a strip mall and its lack of ambiance. One review, for example, is titled "Left broken hearted, needing a bath and still hungry but no desire for food" (TripAdvisor user WillTravelforGoetta 2018), while another short review reads "Filthy disgusting inside and out with rude woman at the counter. Food was ok, surprised I even ate it given the nastiness of the place. Oh and cash only" (Yelp user Michael M. 2018). Interestingly, however, some tourists cite the very concerns raised in the above reviews as reasons to visit Prince's Hot Chicken Shack. What for many seem to be off putting idiosyncrasies and inconveniences are, for others, marks of authenticity or aspects of an exotic adventure: "The place is a dump, but anyone expecting the Ritz is not looking for Hot Chicken...Eat the chicken soaked white bread. I won't tell your doctor. Don't do it every week. Then I will tell. Yikes what a crappy parking lot. Be careful! I'm glad I took my own path and slightly ignored the Yelp community (this time). In this instance, you should too" (Yelp user Jeff D.:2018).

Some reviewers even emphasize the atmosphere as a major draw to the restaurant, describing the small, simple space as homey: "The decor gives you a 'grandmas house' type vibe, which is a dead giveaway that you're about to get some quality food" (Yelp user Christopher B. 2018). For others, the space is not homey, but spartan, and this too is considered a positive: "We read about this spot and thought we'd give it a try. It's a no frills location and restaurant, but that's part of the allure...We waited about an hour for our chicken but that's part

of the experience too” (TripAdvisor user BirdiesTravels1 2018). Finally, some tourists liken Prince’s to a gritty hole-in-the-wall establishment where the grunge of the surroundings and the heat of the food combine to create a unique, authentic experience for the visitor:

The devil isn’t in hell, he’s here in Nashville. The prince of hellfire and brimstone is in the kitchen slathering hot spice rub onto your fried chicken at Prince’s Hot Chicken...I don’t believe there was central air conditioning. So like the underworld, this isn’t a palace but a hole in the wall shack. I sweated, cried, suffered as I consumed this meal. Afterwards, I felt like demons were tenderizing my stomach. Yet, I loved every moment of it and still crave it now (Yelp user Alexander W. 2018).

Just like in the personal narratives of Nashville locals explored in the last chapter, these reviewers adopt a frontier orientation towards the experience of eating hot chicken at Prince’s. Some describe the restaurant as unique or “off the beaten path”: “Awesome place saw them on the travel channel and had to come out. Off the beaten path type of place. Great people there, really great chicken. I had the ½ Hot Chicken, full of flavor” (Yelp user Jonathan Y. 2017). Some directly make the comparison between the adventure of dining at Prince’s and the more mainstream experience of Hattie B’s: “Visiting Nashville for the first time and we were told we need to try hot chicken. A common tourist spot is Hattie B’s, but we were told to venture off the beaten path to Prince’s and we’re super glad we did. The restaurant is small and filled with locals. The fried chicken was amazing” (TripAdvisor user anna0124 2018).

While these reviewers focus on the act of venturing to Prince’s, others emphasize the location itself, describing it as a dive, rundown, or sketchy. Again utilizing the frontier mentality, they express the folk idea that small, hole-in-the-wall kinds of places usually have the best food and assure other prospective diners that the price alone makes the wait worth it. One reviewer of Prince’s concludes with “If you’re looking for a place that has great ambiance, you can walk on by. But if you’re looking for a unique chicken joint, with really good food and willing to wait. This is your place” (TripAdvisor user kellyn850 2018). In posts like these, reviewers position

themselves as true food adventurers: they know that looking off the beaten path and being willing to try places with little ambiance and long wait times is worth it for good food. For other reviewers, the main point of the review is to demonstrate their willingness to take risks in order to have an exotic culinary experience: “First off when I got there I was scared shitless. Didn’t seem like a safe part of town. But then I saw the lineup and it was from all walks of life, with one goal in mind to get really good fried chicken. I got the medium heat and it was damn hot and there are still 3 levels of hotness after that. It was really greasy but totally worth it” (TripAdvisor user Hellochuman 2018).

I would argue that these reviewers employ the anti-Black subframe when they describe Prince’s as a “run down” dive in a bad part of town and write of initially being “scared shitless” before the unifying quest for good food soothes them. There are even clearer examples of the anti-Black subframe in reviews left by white posters which seem to adopt a digital stereotype of a Black southern accent, as in this example: “Hot chicken, dank sides and trap music. This combination summons the hood rats from far and wide. Want some collards? They got that. You like Mac and cheese? What about pimento cheese? Guess what, you can get em together. I fucks with Hattie B’s” (Yelp user Daniel W. 2018). One reviewer references the connection between India and Pakistan and hot food explored in previous chapters: “I strutted in there like a cocky fool, imagining that all those wusses on yelp had never had spice before, or couldn’t handle their jalapenos. I was better than them, I thought! I cook Pakistani food and have been to the far reaches of India. I can hold my own when it comes to habaneros, damnit! But this? No” (Yelp user AI R. 2018). Another reviewer references the question of cultural appropriation directly, saying of Hattie B’s: “Of course this is the white man’s hot chicken but you can’t deny the amazing flavor and service” (Yelp user Caroline M. 2018).

While some tourists find the locale and clientele of Prince's authentic or even exotic, they fail to take into account that Prince's is a "homey," perhaps even "gritty," location not because of some inherent authenticity, but because of Nashville's long and effective zoning and urban renewal programs that have kept the poorest and blackest sections of the city separate from its whiter, more affluent neighborhoods since outright segregation became illegal, as Benjamin Houston describes in his 2012 book *The Nashville Way: Racial Etiquette and the Struggle for Social Justice in a Southern City*:

The Nashville Way argues that both civil rights activism and white responses to battles over jobs and public accommodations sprang from the elaborate racial etiquette of the Jim Crow past and were updated according to new circumstances decades later...But a combination of legal and political maneuvers in the mid-1950s, responding to movement endeavors and accelerating throughout the 1960s, changed the rules. Whether by explicit design or benign indifference, this maneuvering remapped the spatial layout of the city so that race and class remained deeply encoded in the physical layout of the city...As the racial etiquette of the first half of the century was meant to preserve social hierarchies in the spaces where the races interacted, so did the second half of the century see whites dictating the same in terms of the city's physical design to preclude that sort of interaction. Both were meant to reinforce black economic dependence on whites. (Houston 2012 :6).

As Rachel L. Martin points out in "How Hot Chicken Really Happened," referenced above, these urban planning projects affected Prince's Hot Chicken Shack from its earliest days and continued to plague the restaurant well into the 2000s. In her interview with Martin, André Prince Jeffries describes her struggle to open a new location in a better part of town: "'We were supposed to move to 10th and Jefferson, but a lot of politics got involved,' she says a little sadly. A new baseball stadium was planned for the area. 'If I had it my way, we'd have a shack-type building but upscale on the interior with a big old potbellied stove in the center of it,' she tells me" (Martin 2015).

That most tourists prefer the experience of Hattie B's affects hot chicken and the people who serve it for a living in Nashville. While Hattie B's is wildly popular, its success has not

swallowed up the other local hot chicken businesses. Prince's opened a new location in the fall of 2016 which very much resembles the Hattie B's model: they serve beer, take credit cards, and provide customers with order numbers to keep track of high volume (this location is a big hit with tourists on both TripAdvisor and Yelp). They sell T-shirts, which are displayed above the cash register. André Prince Jeffries, along with other African American hot chicken restaurant owners like Dollye Ingram-Matthews, Bolton Matthews, and Aqui Hines, are featured prominently in a promotional video about hot chicken on the website visitmusiccity.com, and many of these business owners have been interviewed in major national publications and spotlighted in television shows.

It seems there is room, for now, for everyone in the Nashville hot chicken scene, and this successful coexistence among members of various ethnic, racial, and class groups is very important to many members of the Nashville community and tourists alike. Online reviewers along with Nashville locals all stress the potential of hot chicken restaurants to bridge the gaps in a deeply segregated society. Rachel L. Martin ends her piece for the *Bitter Southerner* with the observation that the various social groups in attendance at one year's Annual Hot Chicken Festival seemed to be mingling with one another, which she took to be a very positive thing. André Prince Jeffries emphasizes the importance of her great uncle's restaurant in the process of desegregating Southern restaurants:

I remember the stories when my great-uncle started it the Caucasians ate in the back and of course the—the—well colored that they called back then, Black people ate up front, so they were ushered to the back in my great-uncle's place. So that was during—prior to the Civil Rights Movement, so I mean it's—it has definitely played an integral part in the integration movement. But people come here from all walks of life and think nothing of it (York 2006: 19).

This idea that people from all walks of life are drawn to Southern food, that the table might be a place where the hurts of the past could begin to heal, is one that is very important to

some scholars of Southern foodways. In her exploration of what Southerners think and feel about Southern food, Beth A. Latshaw explores consumption patterns and attitudes towards traditional foods among Black and white southerners. Latshaw concludes that there are enough similarities between the two groups to warrant some hope that they could serve as a bridge between them: “In essence, if a taste for and pride in these foods—regardless of differences in their meaning and symbolism to groups—is shared, the possibility of food being a healer, unifier, and road to progress should not be overlooked” (Latshaw 2009: 123). However, in their reviews of both Hattie B’s and Prince’s, whether positive or negative, posters decontextualize both establishments from the facts of history and culture that inform their characteristics. In this, they are engaging in the kind of amnesia or blindness to history that scholars like Pamela Perry (2001) and Melissa Hargrove (2009) characterize as being a major aspect of whiteness. As Perry explains, “white identity and culture is constructed in such a way that the values of individuality, personal responsibility, and a future-oriented self create a cognitive inability to see things any other way. A past orientation simply does not make sense to many whites from their cultural perspective” (Perry 2001: 80).

Of course, this view is complicated by the importance of history to the maintenance of the white racial frame. But I do not think this complication amounts to an actual contradiction. Rather, a selective view and valuation of history is crucial to the maintenance of whiteness. As Feagin (2013) notes, the white racial frame relies, in large part, on a collection of racial stereotypes that can be traced back for several generations. These stereotypes have no basis in fact, but their very age gives them the *feel* of truth. In this way, racial stereotypes have a kind of rhetorical persuasiveness that is like what Roger Abrahams (1968) ascribes to proverbs and other conversational forms of folklore. They provide traditional solutions to social problems that

appear to have been tested through the ages. In the case of racial stereotypes, the “problem” is how to understand and deal with people whose appearance and culture differs from one’s own. While the white racial frame relies on stereotypes that have a sheen of historicity, it also draws heavily on a kind of revised version of history that depicts white people as virtuous and innovative above all else. In instances where parts of white history could be considered shameful, there is often a willful reframing of what happened, an obscuring of the facts, or an outright dismissal of the event as “just part of the past” with no relevance to the present day. To illustrate the importance of collective memory, forgetting, and reframing to the maintenance of the white racial frame, Feagin cites the work of sociologist Kristen Lavelle (2011) on how Southern white people remember Jim Crow segregation. Lavelle found that most Southern whites who lived through Jim Crow and the Civil Rights Movement significantly downplayed the effects of this segregation on Black Americans, instead emphasizing that everyone simply kept to themselves. Most whites described themselves as having nothing to do with the systematic mistreatment of Black Americans in the rare event that it did occur, and looked at efforts to desegregate the South as especially dangerous for white people. According to Feagin, “Evidently, one key purpose of the contemporary white racial frame in regard to our history is to provide a type of social ‘shrouding’—that is, to conceal much of the brutality of the racist history, especially perhaps for younger whites and new immigrants. This shrouding involves the hiding of the brutal racist realities of an era and/or the rewriting of its history so that key events are mostly recalled from a white point of view” (Feagin 2015: 18-19).

In interviews with both locals and tourists, there are elements of this sort of collective amnesia, or reframing of how the past is connected to the present. In this way interviewees obscure connections between the current success of Hattie B’s and its historical past. It is divorced from Nashville’s specific history of segregation and racist rezoning policies, and the

United States' history of intentional structural inequality more generally. Sometimes, when asked whether or not Hattie B's has engaged in cultural appropriation, interviewees responded with color blindness. One local said that this accusation amounted to "race baiting propaganda" and suggested that the Prince family has not been as successful as the Bishop family simply because they never wanted to franchise, citing both conversations with members of the family he has had as well as the 2019 *New Yorker* article "The Family Business That Put Hot Chicken on the Map". When I asked him to confirm that all the media discourse surrounding Hattie B's and cultural appropriation was "bullshit," something he said before calling the discourse propaganda, he elaborated:

Honestly, I read one of them [an article about hot chicken], where somebody was giving a speech and then she was talking about racial inequality, right? About, you know, Prince's and stuff like that. But then in the same article, they're talking about how Miss André had been approached, right, about doing it. And she had actually made a choice not to do franchising. If she would have gone out and started doing franchising, like ten years ago or whatever, Prince's would be all over the country. You know what I'm saying? It would be just like Hattie B's, spreading all over the place. There'd probably be two or three of those in Nashville, right? And it'd be in Memphis and Knoxville and, you know, California and New York and stuff like that. I mean, she's won the James Beard Award! Right? You know, so, I mean, it's not like people don't know who she is, and it's not like she doesn't have a good product. Again, that doesn't have anything to do with racial inequality or anything else. That, honestly? That's just poor business decision making. Right? And, you know, maybe she's just not educated enough in that, I don't know, but I can't believe that, you know, like I said, that she has probably, if she said she's only had one person come and talk to her about franchising, I would be shocked (McDonald 2020).

This interviewee's point is that being less successful than Hattie B's amounts not to structural inequality, but to a personal choice not to franchise. In fact, it might even be read as a personal failing; lack of success is a result of poor business decision making caused by lack of education.

This response uses the color-blind aspect of the contemporary white racial frame by insisting that this has nothing to do with race, as well as engaging in the importance of individualism that

Perry (2001) identifies as instrumental to white culture in America. By discussing lack of education, this interviewee also makes use of the anti-Black subframe. Their view echoes the online reviews that refer to the dangerous neighborhood and describe the interior of the restaurant as incredibly dirty and “staffed by lazy people” (Yelp user Katelynn P. 2017) as a way of drawing on anti-Black stereotypes without engaging in overtly racist rhetoric.

This idea that this is a question of franchising and personal choice came up consistently in interviews. It was closely associated with the related idea that the Prince family has been victimized by America’s economic system, not racism. In response to my question of whether or not the Bishop family’s decision to open a restaurant specializing in selling a dish invented by Black Nashvillians was an example of cultural appropriation, one interviewee commented: “I don’t see that. But I can see where people would be like, “You know, this kind of pisses me off. You took a really great idea from our community and you kind of made it your own.” I can see that. But I don’t think it’s necessarily racial, I think it’s more capitalism” (Monk 2020). This emphasis on capitalism was reflected both in interviews with locals, and with tourists, as in the following example:

I mean I guess I understand, like, maybe they’re pulling in the tourist crowd. But, I mean, I think you could say that’s like a microcosm of maybe what Nashville’s become in general, you know? It’s like, that’s how all the places on Broadway make money, you know? It’s not from like, repeat locals. It’s from all the tourists coming into town. So I guess that’s what I see more, like if Hattie B’s, those kinds of joints, you know, I could be wrong, but I don’t think like 20 years ago people were coming to Nashville and going to Prince’s. I think just the whole culture of the city has changed. Maybe not the culture, but the dynamic of it is just different. So it’s not so local, and it’s a lot more tourist driven. So, there’s probably a lot of places that have opened up and are selling garbage fried chicken. But if you’re in the right place, at the right spot, and you advertise yourself, even if you make up some bogus story about why you exist, you probably can sell it to people (Harper 2020)

One local attributed the increasing popularity of hot chicken nationally to Hattie B's. They feel that when chefs in other cities see the popularity of Hattie B's, they are likely to want to try to replicate the experience of eating there in their own restaurants, as this is what most customers will be expecting. Heat level comes into play here, with would-be hot chicken sellers wanting to ensure that their product is not too spicy for consumers who may not be used to the amount of kick present at places like Prince's or Bolton's. The interviewee commented:

Tourists come, and they go to—you also have to believe that, “Gosh, if I put this on my menu, will my customers have the fortitude to finish this?” So you kind of go, “All right, they're all eating Hattie B's, the line's around the block. When they go home, that's what my customers' idea of hot chicken is”, too. So, replicating that model, replicating that taste profile, those heat levels, makes sense. So then that becomes the measuring stick, that becomes more of what people expect. So that's why I think it's, when you talk about it being portable, you've got to give that credit to Hattie B's (Wilson 2020).

When these locals and tourists attribute Hattie B's success to capitalism, they are technically correct, but this perspective does not account for the ways in which capitalism and racism have always been interconnected. This relationship exists broadly: it can be seen in the connections between the spice trade and colonial violence that led directly to our current economic system (an idea that was touched on in Chapter Two), and in the creation of race in order to justify the global trade in enslaved human beings (Kendi 2016). This connection is also present in the more specific context of Nashville, as has been explored in the work of Rachel Martin (2015, 2021) and Benjamin Houston (2012). When speaking with a local author about hot chicken and cultural appropriation, an even more specific element of structural inequality within the culture of restaurateurs came up as well:

The Prince's aren't always the easiest people to get along with. And they're, obviously, clearly, they have faced racism. And clearly, the reason that there aren't twenty Prince's Hot Chicken Shacks in middle Tennessee is because of all kinds of reasons, many of which are racism. Like, could they get loans? Probably not, you know? But also though, you know, there's a reason why employees leave

there, and go set up their own places. So, you know it's not, it's not clear, it's not completely innocent victims, even though, like, 90% is racism. And just this narrative of now that white people like it, it matters.

[...]

I mean, think of this just at the level of, like, where is Prince's able to source their chicken from? Versus, Hattie B's is bragging like their chicken is fresh. Because they are attached to this restaurant family, they're just able to get better quality chicken. And again, that's not like a deliberate racism on the owners of Hattie B's part. But that *is* part of systemic racism, that they just have the ability to leverage things that the Prince's, or, you know, other Black restaurateurs can't (Pomeroy 2020).

This accounting is nuanced in that it acknowledges that some of the inconsistencies associated with eating at Prince's Hot Chicken Shack, often characterized as charming by locals, may have something to do with the challenges the owners have had with expanding (if that is in fact something they would have wanted to do), while still ascribing much of the disparity to structural racism in clear, concrete terms.

Conclusions

In some ways, it seems that hot chicken may be helping Nashville to achieve a more integrated, unified society. The food provides the city with a powerful symbol which links people from its many diverse neighborhoods. It is featured at affordable fast casual places like Hattie B's Hot Chicken, even cheaper chicken joints like Prince's Hot Chicken Shack, and at more upscale restaurants, so individuals from all socioeconomic backgrounds can afford to enjoy it, and there are places to buy hot chicken across the city. But this coexistence seems predicated on the willingness of tourists and locals alike to accept the narrative that Hattie B's, with its white, culinary school educated head chef and co-owner, has "perfected" what the Princes and Boltens started decades ago. As a result they have earned the right to profit most from the

product. Lauded as the ones who “launched the hot chicken craze,” they should have the most opportunity for future economic growth both within and outside of Nashville. This arrangement, which continues to uphold a system of white supremacy within the world of hot chicken production, aligns with much of the city’s history with issues of race and class.

In *The Nashville Way*, Houston traces the legal and physical segregation that shaped so much of the city’s history, as mentioned above, along with the idea of Nashville as “the Athens of the South,” a city far too genteel for the kinds of racially motivated violence that wracked so many other Southern communities during the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s. Behind this narrative of gentility, according to Houston, is an assumption of white supremacy so ingrained that it need never be mentioned. He writes: “So a tangled racial etiquette governed social relationships for both races [black and white] in Nashville. Where segregated lines blurred, class differences often flared, and vice versa, and yet the etiquette was employed by individuals of both races for personal gain. But these personal gains always came at the cost of reinforcing broader white superiority in the social hierarchy” (Houston 2013: 22).

This same complex set of rules of etiquette govern the hot chicken landscape of Nashville today. To profit, people like André Prince Jeffries must change their business models to more closely approximate places like Hattie B’s (whether this is a positive or negative change is certainly up for debate). They also have to live with all of the highest accolades going to Hattie B’s and the three white men who run its many locations. Furthermore, as is often the case with Southern foodways, the contributions of women, many of them African American, are swallowed up in the rush to make Southern food as marketable and palatable as possible. Marcie Cohen Ferris traces this phenomenon in the article “A Journey Back in Time: Food and Tourism in the New South,” in which she uses several different Southern cities as case studies. She finds that culinary tourism to the South in the 1900s often erased the history of slavery, replacing real

stories of suffering with a sanitized image of happy, genteel slaves who delighted in serving their masters. Elsewhere, Ferris makes the point that the commodified Southern food of today continues to erase this history:

In contemporary worlds of popular and consumer culture, southern food has become untethered from the complex historical narrative responsible for this cuisine. Think buckets of southern fried chicken and cathead biscuits like culinary spacecraft set adrift from the mother ship of southern history, culture, and experience. A multi-layered past and present underlies these foods and explains why southerners eat the way they do, and why we think of these foods as deeply southern. Food *is* history. Food *is* place. Food *is* power *and* disempowerment (Ferris 2014: 2-3).

It seems obvious that hot chicken is a powerful symbol that is capable of captivating a wide audience as well as simply a delicious Nashville meal. But if tourists, locals, foodways scholars, and “neighborhood mayor” Bill Purcell want this or any other Southern dish to do the complicated, delicate, social work of healing from the past, then white supremacy must be addressed. It is not enough to trumpet equality and inclusivity while ignoring the social inequalities that let white men set the terms, make the most money, and be declared the experts on and perfecters of a dish they did not invent or spend decades developing. Unfortunately, this unspoken white supremacy is the real bridge connecting the past and the present of Nashville at this time, and this situation disenfranchises and causes pain for those at the bottom of what Houston calls the social hierarchy in Nashville, as evidenced in the exchange between David Chang and Dollye Ingram-Matthews in the “Fried Chicken” episode of *Ugly Delicious* described at the beginning of this chapter.

While the white racial frame provides an array of tools for those who wish to avoid seeing a connection between the greater success of places like Hattie B’s and structural inequality, there is also some reason for hope that things may improve. Thanks to hot chicken, a debate about cultural appropriation that grew to include a discussion of gentrification and the

consequences—both intended and unintended—of urban renewal projects in Nashville reached a mainstream audience. Combined with current events, particularly the #BlackLivesMatter protests of the summer of 2020⁴⁰, there is evidence to suggest that white culinary tourists are increasingly open to examining how structural inequality impacts their choices, and to reflect on past decisions. Even interviewees who seemed most resistant to considering the idea that Hattie B's Hot Chicken's success is in some ways attributable to structural racism were increasingly open to this idea as that summer wore on. The local who called the entire thing “bullshit” and “race baiting propaganda” ended his response on franchising with the following: “But what have you heard about all this doing this research? I could be wrong” (McDonald 2020). While telling me that she feels that it's a very powerful thing to have the iconic dish of Nashville be something that was invented in the city's Black community, another local added that “There's not a right way for white people to profit off of this Black dish that Black people are not able to profit off of in the same way. That's just the contradiction of it. And, you know, you can't copyright a recipe, so it's not even like, the Princes can't sue” (Pomeroy 2020)

Many tourists also seemed to be thoughtfully considering connections between hot chicken and structural inequality, often citing the protests of the summer of 2020 as a major turning point in their thinking processes. One tourist who described attempting to eat at the Prince's Hot Chicken Shack location on Ewing Drive but ultimately feeling uncomfortable and leaving to go to Hattie B's instead reflected on the experience in the following way:

I mean it, it makes me uncomfortable because there's shame there, right? Like, as evolved as you want to believe that you are, or as educated as I want to believe that I am, like, with everything that's been going on, like, I am definitely realizing those low key ways that, definitely wasn't making racist moves? But I also wasn't fighting against it, you know, like I want to. And so, yeah, it makes me

⁴⁰ While #BlackLivesMatter has been a decentralized activist group since 2013 (Blacklivesmatter.com), the 2020 protests were sparked, in part, by a number of police killings of Black Americans over the Spring of 2020 including Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, and George Floyd (Silverstein 2021).

uncomfortable because it's like, yeah, we definitely patronize a white owned business, and when we went to the Black owned business, we were uncomfortable, and we left. You know what I mean? So like, that is like, not a pretty picture to paint about our personal choices in this situation. But I don't know. I feel like we live in a time where it's ok to say that. But like, and now I see that that was a poor choice, you know what I mean? And if I was put in the situation again, I would like to think I would make different choices now (Elkins 2020).

Another tourist I interviewed had not heard anything about the discussion of Hattie B's and cultural appropriation, which was unusual. However, she was very open to the idea and mentioned her desire to be more intentional about frequenting Black owned businesses in Nashville because of the Black Lives Matter protests:

I haven't heard that, but that makes complete sense to me. I would believe that argument, and I think that's, sadly, probably really true. I don't know, I feel like we're probably guilty of contributing to that, to places like that doing better, because like we were saying, it's convenient, and accessible. And some of that has to do with the fact that they're run more like a corporation than a family-owned business. I don't feel great about that. But I also feel like, trying to, especially now, being better about trying to support Black owned businesses in Nashville, so maybe we can be more aware of that in our next era of eating hot chicken (Harper 2020.)

This response raises the issue of capitalism without using it to obscure the role that racism plays in who can be the most successful. In a group interview I conducted with a married couple who are fans of hot chicken and often make it themselves, one partner suggested that Hattie B's and Prince's might simply have different goals for what they want to do with their businesses, an argument that was also often raised by locals who cited the Prince family's decision not to franchise as the only reason why they have not been as successful as the Bishop family. The other partner responded by discussing the links between racism and capitalism:

I wonder if those goals were shaped by systemic racism, right? Because the limits on those businesses are shaped by racism. So like, it's not reasonable for a Black owned business to want to have a national food chain, like, without it being appropriated by white people, you know? And that's the basis of a society that

was segregated, right? And continues to be segregated. That sort of capital is from racism, systematic racism, and segregation (Belkin 2020).

Of course, as the work of scholars in critical race theory and critical white studies, history, sociology, cultural studies, and many other disciplines have shown, white supremacy has proven to be resilient over the past several centuries, and the interviews conducted for this project are hardly sufficient to prove that any significant dismantling of the system is taking place through the act of culinary tourism. But the existence of this debate in mainstream media, and the thoughtful responses it has provoked from Nashville locals and culinary tourists alike, does point to an opportunity for meaningful change.

Chapter Six: Conclusions

This thesis has explored rhetorical uses of spice in the context of culinary tourism focusing on curry on Brick Lane in east London and hot chicken in Nashville, Tennessee as case studies. Previous scholarship suggests that culinary tourism is rooted in assumptions that “ethnic” foods are essentially non-white. Exploratory eating, that often focuses on “ethnic” food, therefore, is about gauging differences from the perspective of white, middle-class culture (for some examples, see hooks 1992, May 1996, Bost 2003, Heldke 2003, Duruz 2005, Molz 2007, Spracklen 2013, Kamal 2016). Here I have concentrated mainly on how specifically white racial identities are expressed through the exploratory consumption of spicy foods. As Rachel Slocum notes, “The representation of non-white groups through food in the white imaginary is a means to understand whiteness” (Slocum 2010: 306).

In Chapter One, I provided a brief introduction of my study, research questions, and methods, as well as a review of relevant literature on culinary tourism and cosmopolitanism, vernacular rhetoric, and the history and symbolic uses of spice.

In the second chapter, I detailed my reasons for choosing to focus specifically on tourism around Bengali-owned Indian restaurants on Brick Lane in east London, analyzing how these restaurants are represented in promotional literature from the local culinary tourism industry. Spice is used rhetorically within this literature to indicate a safe, customizable kind of exoticism. I then turned to an exploration of the personal interventions tourism industry professionals incorporate in their work on Brick Lane. I found that each of the tourism industry professionals I spoke with is invested in selling the experience of east London, and specifically Brick Lane, to tourists in a way that emphasizes the importance of authenticity and exoticism currently prevalent in gourmet foodie discourses (see Johnston and Baumann 2015). At the same time,

however, they also have personal investments in the area and attempt to shape the master narratives surrounding Indian food in the United Kingdom through their own presentations of the touristic experience in different ways. Often they use the concept of spice as a rhetorical device. For culinary tour guides, spice is a tool for gauging what clients are interested in trying and their comfort levels with trying foods that may be unfamiliar. This is connected to larger ideas about hospitality that many guides take seriously, and with the desire to educate guests on what Indian food is “really” like. Similarly, the tour organizer I interviewed makes spice the centerpiece of his tour both to offer a unique experience to consumers, and to provide them with some information on Indian cuisine and how it is authentically consumed by Indian people.

Chapter Three continues the analysis of Indian food on Brick Lane, introducing the idea that there are at least two different categories of Indian restaurants to be found in London and, more generally, throughout the United Kingdom: traditional high street curry houses, usually owned by Bengalis, that have a long history in the country, and newer, more upscale establishments that are often owned by Indians and tend to specialize in a mixture of British-Indian fusion dishes and regional specialties. In this chapter I was interested in exploring culinary tourist responses to each category of restaurant, and particularly to understand how they incorporate concepts of spice into their performances of culinary adventurousness. To do this, I selected one restaurant on or near Brick Lane to be a representative for each category: Aladin Indian Restaurant as an example of a high street curry house, and Dishoom Shoreditch as an example of a newer, trendier Indian restaurant. I analyzed online reviews of both posted to TripAdvisor, Yelp, and Google reviews, paying special attention to rhetorical uses of the concept of spice.

In analyzing these reviews for uses of “spice” and similar terms, I was surprised to discover that the concept is not more heavily used; only 27% of the reviews I surveyed draw on it. This was initially puzzling given that a significant amount of the promotional literature for Indian food on Brick Lane connects it to spice, and spice plays a major part in all of the culinary tours I participated in on the street. I found that often reviewers seem more interested in discussing issues of the health of the food served, restaurant cleanliness, and trustworthiness of employees in ways that are connected both to contemporary concerns with having a healthy diet, and older, racist narratives about Indian cuisine and Indian people. That said, spice continues to offer some people an important vehicle and I found that specific mentions of spice in the online reviews can indicate the presence of extremity, and, by extension, danger. At the same time, spice signifies complexity and sophistication, a kind of richness in terms of both abundance of flavor and of sensory experience. Often, this rhetorical use of spice is accompanied by or completely replaced by a signifier of a rhetorical opposite, most often sweetness or blandness. While “spicy” means rich and sophisticated, “sweet” and “bland” signify an experience that is cheap, commonplace, and mundane. Taken together, these two rhetorics of spice both contribute to the project of litigating whether or not a visit to either Aladin or Dishoom is “worth it.” It also helps identify reviewers as knowledgeable and game culinary explorers.

In Chapter Four I move to my analysis of hot chicken in Nashville, Tennessee. I provide some historical information on hot chicken in Nashville alongside a summary of the boom in development and touristic interest the city has been experiencing over the past twenty years. Drawing on interviews with Nashville locals, many of whom are white and work in the local media or for non-profits, I explore hot chicken’s status as both a symbol of the past and present of the city. I argue that while many of these locals resist the argument that hot chicken’s current

success is a byproduct of cultural appropriation or systemic inequality, the heat associated with the dish makes it possible for them to directly discuss issues of race in ways that would otherwise be considered inappropriate. Furthermore, incorporating the consumption of hot chicken into work events and social gatherings, particularly “white trash” themed parties and fundraisers, allows locals to play with and resist stereotypes about themselves and their city as country and white trash. At the same time, these playful performances of resistance serve to further solidify participants’ identities as middle-class white people.

My final chapter contextualizes culinary tourist impressions of hot chicken at two restaurants, Prince’s Hot Chicken Shack and Hattie B’s Hot Chicken. I consider tourists’ viewpoints within the context of a local media discourse that presents these two establishments as binary opposites and suggests that Hattie B’s Hot Chicken, owned and operated by a white local family, is the more successful restaurant due to structural inequality and cultural appropriation. To conduct this analysis, I surveyed online reviews of each restaurant posted to TripAdvisor and Yelp during the spring of 2018, when this debate had been circulating in the local media for several years and had surfaced in more mainstream national media, such as in an episode of David Chang’s Netflix series *Ugly Delicious* that focused on the cultural significance of fried chicken around the globe.

I found that online reviewers tended to assess Hattie B’s more positively than Prince’s, praising the highly rationalized (Ritzer and Liska 2004) experience one can have there, and its proximity to the tourist attractions of downtown Nashville. Reviews that indicated a preference for Prince’s emphasized the perceived risks associated with visiting an establishment in a part of town that is considered to be dangerous. These reviewers appeared to be modeling a specific

kind of bravery and willingness to put themselves in uncomfortable situations which is comparable to similar narratives of danger collected from locals.

This chapter ends with an analysis of a small collection of online interviews with tourists conducted during the summer of 2020, a time when many people were reconsidering their relationships with the concept of race and attempting to educate themselves on structural inequality in the wake of a series of protests and demonstrations taking place across the United States. These reflections on food and cultural appropriation are compared with those of locals who were similarly interrogating these ideas at the time of the interviews.

While these two case studies may seem very different, being set in cities of different sizes in different countries, and focusing on different dishes, they share much in common. First, online reviews posted by culinary tourists at restaurants in both locations share an emphasis on arbitrating whether or not dining at any given sample establishment will be worth the time and money of eating there. In both cities, culinary tourists resort to proverbial expressions that stress the value of sacrifice and patience when expressing the view that sometimes an exceptional dining experience comes at a cost. Onarati and Giardullo's (2020) work on TripAdvisor reviews posted about restaurants in the Aosta valley indicates that this central question may be the motivating "point" of most online restaurant reviews.

Online reviews posted in both London and Nashville, and interviews with Nashville locals, often express a frontier orientation (Leary 1977, Smith 1992). Personal experience narratives about going for an Indian in east London or eating hot chicken in Nashville emphasize that the experience is an adventure full of hidden gems and potential risks. This frontier orientation in the narratives often utilizes aspects of the white racial frame (Feagin 2013). Because many of these online reviews, and all of the personal experience narratives collected

from Nashville locals, came from people who identify as white, this use of the white racial frame is unsurprising. When narrators invoke it to communicate with other online reviewers or with me as the interviewer, it is very possible they conceive of their audience as comprised of mainly other white people.

In both cities, the online reviewers used the concept of spice rhetorically to demonstrate they had had a sufficiently exotic experience. In London, spice was most often used in discussions of whether or not the food at either Aladin or Dishoom was hot enough, or too spicy, or it was used to suggest that the food at either restaurant was sufficiently rich and unusual. In Nashville, discussions of spice were more closely aligned with heat level. In both cities, reviewers relied on heat as a way to engage in the process of rhetorical identification as outlined by Burke (1945). By knowledgeably describing the expert balancing of spices in the dishes at an Indian restaurant in east London, or by favorably describing the hot chicken in an establishment in Nashville as “lighting up” the reviewer with heat, reviewers are attempting to persuade readers that they belong to the foodie community, and to gain distinction because of this identification (Bourdieu 1984).

Finally, in both London and Nashville, there is some tension between the experiences of locals and the master narratives surrounding their home cities and the specific kinds of foods that have become the focus of culinary tourism. Because of the limitations on this study caused by the global Covid-19 pandemic described in the Introduction, the interviews I conducted with locals in each location differed. In London, I interviewed restaurant workers, tour guides, and one tour organizer, but I was unable to make these same kinds of connections with culinary tourism workers in Nashville while maintaining social distancing. Instead, my interviews with Nashville locals included a wider variety of individuals who mostly did not work in the culinary

tourism scene, but all self-identified as hot chicken aficionados. In London, I was able to explore the specific ways in which culinary tourism professionals intervene in the presentation of master narratives about east London as a safe haven for immigrants and curry as an authentic national dish, as outlined in Chapter Two. In Nashville, I explored the ambivalence locals feel about the city's booming population of transplants and tourists, as well as their confusion about the national popularity of Hattie B's. In Chapter Four I considered their feelings of nostalgia for a bygone city as expressed in their fond memories of older hot chicken restaurants like Prince's Hot Chicken Shack and Bolton's Spicy Chicken and Fish.

There are also several important differences between the two case studies. While the frontier orientation towards culinary tourism was present in narratives analyzed from both London and Nashville, it was expressed differently in each location. Online reviews of Indian restaurants in east London focused on the pleasure of discovery associated with exploration, describing visits to Brick Lane as ventures into the unknown, and emphasizing the hidden gems that can be found in the Indian restaurants that line the street. Descriptions of vine covered facades that lead to beautiful interiors discovered by reviewers seemed to emphasize the unfamiliar and the wildness of this urban frontier. In Nashville, the neighborhoods where hot chicken was originally sold, all understood to be primarily Black, were also framed as a kind of urban frontier. But here, the emphasis in the narratives was on the danger inherent in this metaphorical wilderness: reviewers and locals describe the inherent risks associated with visiting these neighborhoods, often casting themselves as indifferent to these considerable risks in their pursuit of a good meal. There was also a stronger emphasis on bodily discomfort in these reviews and narratives, as hot chicken has a reputation to wreak havoc on the digestive system.

Relatedly, different elements of the white racial frame were used more extensively in each location. In London, there was a tendency for reviewers to identify with explorers discovering new delights in uncharted territory. This identification seems strongly connected to a nostalgic view of colonialism that does not take into account the extreme violence to both people and the environment British colonialism is responsible for. This selective memory supports the kind of selective history scholars like Hargrove (2009) and Feagin (2013) write about. Hargrove and Feagin explore the creation of a particular view of history that is favorable to white people, minimizes white racial violence, and maintains a view of white people as being especially virtuous that is central to a white cultural worldview. Additionally, the online reviews of Aladin and Dishoom that emphasize the unsanitary conditions of these restaurants, the mysterious ingredients in the food, and the duplicitous behavior of the employees utilize an anti-South Asian subframe of the white racial frame that references old negative stereotypes about South Asian people. In Nashville, the emphasis on the inherent risk associated with visiting a hot chicken restaurant in a “bad” part of town, including references to stigmatized behaviors and unsanitary locations with slow service, makes use of the anti-Black subframe of the white racial frame (Feagin 2013). It also maintains a surface level dedication to color-blindness (Bonilla-Silva 2003) that is an important element of the contemporary white racial frame (Feagin 2013).

Finally, while spice is used rhetorically in online reviews and personal experience narratives in both London and Nashville, it is not equally visible in each location. As explored in Chapter Three, references to spice are limited in online reviews of Aladin and Dishoom. In Nashville, however, spice emerges as a central component in almost every narrative about hot chicken posted online or recorded during an interview for this project. Because heat is the main attraction when it comes to eating hot chicken, its centrality in these narratives is not surprising.

As noted in Chapter Five, the current symbolic prominence of hot chicken in Nashville means that it has become a major tourist attraction for people who do not consider themselves fans of spicy food. These culinary tourists are willing to wait in long lines for hot chicken, especially from Hattie B's, even when they have no intention of ordering anything above a mild heat level.

This thesis suggests several avenues for further research. First, although I offered some potential explanations for why spice does not appear more frequently in the online reviews about Indian restaurants on Brick Lane in Chapter Three, it would be helpful to more deeply explore the relative importance of spice symbolically in the east London gourmet foodscape. Attempting to study why something is limited or absent is difficult, but several folklorists have addressed this issue. As early as 1979 Kay Cothran argued for the importance of considering both presences and absences to the understanding of specific traditions. Choosing not to participate can be as telling as opting in. Cothran contends that if we understand folklore as a form of communication, "We must also deal with people who do not appear to the naive eye to be involved in the tradition at all, or who even appear to be trying to stamp the tradition out (Cothran 1979: 447). More recently, the study of absences has emerged as an important thread in folklore scholarship on personal experience narrative, particularly within the context of analyses of expressions of traumatic experiences (Lawless 2001, Shuman and Bohmer 2004, Shuman 2005, Goldstein 2009 and 2016, Wilsey 2015). Within the context of the study of rhetorical uses of the concept of spice in culinary tourist discourse, in-depth interviews with adventurous eaters focusing on their narratives about eating at Indian restaurants in east London would be a workable strategy for finding out more about this topic's importance (or lack thereof).

While this work attempts to explore expressions of white identity within the world of culinary tourism, future analyses could focus more specifically on performances of intersectional

identities. Scholars working in critical whiteness studies and related fields have called for more localized explorations of white identity that move away from the idea that whiteness exists as a monolithic unmarked category (see Bonnett 1993, Frankenberg 2001, Haylett 2001, Winders 2003, Bell 2021). Chapter Four presents a localized study of expressions of whiteness, featuring interviews with white middle-class local Nashvillians who consider themselves to be fans of hot chicken. Because the fieldwork with culinary tourists in east London was based on analysis of restaurant reviews posted online, the same kind of localized study was not possible in this location. Future studies of spicy foods as culinary tourist attractions focusing on expressions of racial identity, particularly white racial identity, could be conducted in a number of localized contexts.

Relatedly, additional studies could be done on the connections between consumption of spicy food and expressions of class and/or gender identity. Playful and rhetorical uses of performances of a “white trash” identity by Nashville locals were explored in Chapter Four, but the classed connotations of both fried chicken in Nashville and traditional high street curry houses in east London could both be explored in greater detail, as could the consumption of spicy foods in other contexts. Throughout research for this project, ideas about gender and the consumption of spice came up consistently. In both London and Nashville, there seemed to be a consensus that men would be more likely to attempt to consume extremely hot foods, in order to prove their strength and masculinity (see Walton 2018). At the same time, André Prince Jeffries’ assertion that the heat of hot chicken keeps up with women’s anger (York 2006) suggests intriguing ideas about the connections between heat and expressions of women’s rage that could be pursued from several different angles.

Finally, this research suggests that nostalgia is a central part of performances of whiteness expressed through engagement in culinary tourism. In London, tourists are invited to look back nostalgically at both England's distant colonial past and the more recent historical period of the 1960s through the 1980s, a time period which was itself nostalgically occupied with the idea of empire (Collingham 2006, Buettner 2009, Highmore 2009, Bandyopadhyay 2012, Palat 2015). In Nashville, hot chicken is a symbol that links the city's past and present in the minds of white locals. Southern foods like fried chicken are often viewed nostalgically. Long (2017) suggests that the foods considered to be comforting are often strongly associated with not only the past, but with the American South. The implications of nostalgically linking concepts of home and the past with this region of the United States are fascinating. Connections between food and memory are a rich area for scholarship in many different fields. Folklorists interested in the links of foodways to memory have used both historical and sensory approaches in their work, but folkloristic studies of foodways and memories are also informed by folklore's orientation toward the concept of tradition, popularly understood to denote a continuance with the past. Folklorists view tradition as an emergent process (Hymes 1975) and a personal responsibility to one's past (Glassie 1995, Noyes 2009), and folklore's treatment of the relationship between food and memory reflects these orientations.

Future studies of expressions of whiteness within the realm of culinary tourism, whether or not they center the consumption of spicy foods, would benefit from Ray Cashman's (2006) work in critical nostalgia. Cashman advocates for investigating nostalgia without passing judgment on the concept, and focusing on how it is used critically by individuals and groups in order to critique both the past and the present. Because of the centrality of a distorted view of history to the maintenance of white supremacy, and the importance of viewing history clearly for

scholarship devoted to anti-racism, a folkloristic perspective on the traditionalization of specific foodways within performances of white identity could be illuminating.

Bibliography

- Abrahams, Roger D. "Phantoms of Romantic Nationalism in Folkloristics." *The Journal of American Folklore* 106, no. 419 (1993): 3-37.
- Abrahams, Roger D. "Equal Opportunity Eating: A Structural Excursus on Things of the Mouth." Essay. In *Ethnic and Regional Foodways in the United States: The Performance of Group Identity*, edited by Linda Keller Brown and Kay Mussell, 19-36. Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Pr., 1984.
- Abrahams, Roger D. "A Rhetoric of Everyday Life: Traditional Conversational Genres." *Southern Folklore Quarterly*, no. 32 (1968): 44-59.
- Abrahams, Roger D. "Introductory Remarks to a Rhetorical Theory of Folklore." *The Journal of American Folklore* 81, no. 320 (1968): 143-58.
- Achaya, Kongandra Thammu. *Indian Food: A Historical Companion*. Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1994.
- Adler, Thomas A. "Making Pancakes on Sunday: The Male Cook in Family Tradition." *Western Folklore* 40, no. 1 (1981): 45-54.
- Alexander, Claire, Sean Carey, Sundeep Lidher, Suzi Hall, and Julia King. "Beyond Banglatown: Continuity, Change and New Urban Economies in Brick Lane." *Runnymede Perspectives*, 2020, 1-28.
- Ali, Fatima Zahid. "Bangladesh to Brick Lane: Footloose." thenews. TNS, June 12, 2016. <https://www.thenews.com.pk/tns/detail/561108-bangladesh-brick-lane>.
- Alibhai-Brown, Yasmin. "Why the Future May Not Be Orange: The New Wave of Upmarket Curry Houses." *The Guardian*. Guardian News and Media, July 13, 2001. <https://www.theguardian.com/theguardian/2001/jul/13/features11.g21>.
- Allen, Barbara. "Personal Experience Narratives: Use and Meaning in Interaction." In *Folk Groups and Folklore Genres: A Reader*, edited by Elliott Oring, 236-44. Logan, UT: Utah State Univ. Press, 1998.
- American Jewish Committee. *The Translate Hate Glossary*. February 2021. <https://www.ajc.org/translatehateglossary>.
- Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. London, U.K: Verso Press, 1983.
- Anttonen, Pertti J. *Tradition Through Modernity: Postmodernism and the Nation-State in Folklore Scholarship*. Helsinki: Finnish Literature Society, 2005.

- Appadurai, Arjun. *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1986.
- Appiah, Kwame. *Cosmopolitanism: Ethics in a World of Strangers*. New York, NY: WW Norton, 2006.
- Arif, Zara. "Banglatown: Why Brick Lane Cannot Fall Victim to the Gentrification of East London." Cherwell, March 3, 2021. <https://cherwell.org/2021/03/03/banglatown-why-brick-lane-cannot-fall-victim-to-the-gentrification-of-east-london/>.
- Aristotle. *Rhetoric*. Edited by David J. Furley. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2015.
- Bacchilega, Cristina, and Sadhana Naithani. "Colonialism, Postcolonialism, and Decolonization." Essay. In *The Routledge Companion to Media and Fairy-Tale Cultures*, edited by Pauline Greenhill, Jill Terry Rudy, Naomi Hamer, and Lauren Bosc, 1st ed., 83–90. New York, NY: Routledge, 2018.
- Bailey, Ebony L. "(Re)Making the Folk: Black Representation and the Folk in Early American Folklore Studies." *Journal of American Folklore* 134, no. 534 (2021): 385–417. <https://doi.org/10.5406/jamerfolk.134.534.0385>.
- Baldwin, Karen. "'Woof!' A Word on Women's Roles in Family Storytelling." In *Women's Folklore, Women's Culture*, edited by Susan J. Kalcik and Rosan A. Jordan, 149–62. Philadelphia: University Press of Pennsylvania, 1985.
- Bandyopadhyay, Ranjan. "'Raj Revival' Tourism." *Annals of Tourism Research* 39, no. 3 (2012): 1718–22. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.annals.2012.05.025>.
- Banerji, Chitrita. *Land of Milk and Honey: Travels in the History of Indian Food*. Oxford: Seagull Books London Ltd, 2007.
- Bascom, William. "The Forms of Folklore: Prose Narratives." *The Journal of American Folklore* 78, no. 307 (January 1965): 3–20.
- Basso, Keith H. "Stalking with Stories: Names, Places, and Moral Narratives Among the Western Apache." In *Text, Play, and Story: The Construction and Reconstruction of Self and Society*, edited by Edward M. Bruner, 19–55. Prospect Heights, IL: Waveland Press, 1984.
- Bednarek, Monika, and Helen Caple. *The Discourse of News Values: How News Organizations Create Newsworthiness*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2017.
- Belasco, Warren J. "Ethnic Fast Foods: The Corporate Melting Pot." *Food and Foodways* 2, no. 1 (1987): 1–30. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07409710.1987.9961902>.
- Bell, Marcus. "Invisible No More: White Racialization and the Localness of Racial Identity."

Sociology Compass 15, no. 9 (2021): 1–10. <https://doi.org/10.1111/soc4.12917>.

Bendix, Regina. *In Search of Authenticity: The Formation of Folklore Studies*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1997.

Bennett, Gillian. *"Alas, Poor Ghost!": Traditions of Belief in Story and Discourse*. Logan: Utah State University Press, 1999.

Bentley, Amy. "From Culinary Other to Mainstream America: Meanings and Uses of Southwestern Cuisine." Essay. In *Culinary Tourism*, edited by Lucy M. Long, 209–25. Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 2004.

Binnie, Jon, Julian Holloway, Steve Millington, and Craig Young, eds. *Cosmopolitan Urbanism*. New York, NY: Routledge, 2006.

Black Lives Matter. "Herstory." blacklivesmatter.com. Accessed Nov 20, 2022. <https://blacklivesmatter.com/herstory/>.

Black, Shameem. "Recipes for Cosmopolitanism: Cooking Across Borders in the South Asian Diaspora." *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies* 31, no. 1 (2010): 1–30. <https://doi.org/10.5250/fronjwomestud.31.1.1>.

Bock, Sheila. "Ku Klux Kasserole and Strange Fruit Pies: A Shouting Match at the Border in Cyberspace." *Journal of American Folklore* 130, no. 516 (2017): 142–65. <https://doi.org/10.5406/jamerfolk.130.516.0142>.

Bonilla-Silva, Eduardo. *Racism Without Racists: Color-Blind Racism and the Persistence of Racial Inequality in the United States*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2003.

Bonnett, Alastair. "Forever 'White'? Challenges and Alternatives to a 'Racial' Monolith." *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 20, no. 1 (1993): 173–80. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183x.1993.9976415>.

Borland, Katherine, Patricia Sawin, and Diane Tye, eds. 2017. Special Issue, *Journal of American Folklore* 130, no. 518 (Fall). JSTOR, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5406/jamerfolk.130.issue-518>.

Bost, Suzanne. "Women and Chile at the Alamo: Feeding US Colonial Mythology." *Nepantla* 4, no. 3 (2003): 493–522.

Bourdieu, Pierre. *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste*. Translated by Richard Nice. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984.

- Brown, Linda Keller, and Kay Mussell. *Ethnic and Regional Foodways in the United States: The Performance of Group Identity*. Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Press, 1984.
- Brunvand, Jan Harold. *The Study of American Folklore: An Introduction*. New York, NY: W.W. Norton, 1998.
- Buettner, Elizabeth. "Chicken Tikka Masala, Flock Wallpaper, and 'Real' Home Cooking: Assessing Britain's 'Indian' Restaurant Traditions." *Food & History* 7, no. 2 (2009): 203–29.
- Buettner, Elizabeth. "'Going for an Indian': South Asian Restaurants and the Limits of Multiculturalism in Britain." *The Journal of Modern History* 80, no. 4 (2008): 865–901. <https://doi.org/10.1086/591113>.
- Burke, Kenneth, and Hugh Dalziel Duncan. *Permanence and Change: An Anatomy of Purpose*. Indianapolis, IN: Bobbs-Merrill, 1977.
- Burke, Kenneth. *A Rhetoric of Motives*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1945.
- Burke, Kenneth. *Permanence and Change: An Anatomy of Purpose*. Indianapolis, IN: Bobbs-Merrill, 1935.
- Cashman, Ray. "Critical Nostalgia and Material Culture in Northern Ireland." *Journal of American Folklore* 119, no. 472 (2006): 137–60.
- Cavendish, Steve. "Prince's Hot Chicken on Ewing Drive Will Not Reopen." Nashville Scene, July 26, 2019. https://www.nashvillescene.com/food_drink/bites/princes-hot-chicken-on-ewing-drive-will-not-reopen/article_b3586079-6c76-599c-8584-2baf99e7371e.html.
- Chakelian, Anoosh. "The Last Days of Brick Lane." New Statesman, August 3, 2021. <https://www.newstatesman.com/culture/food-drink/2020/07/last-days-brick-lane>.
- Chamberlain, Chris. "Race, Credit and Hot Chicken, Part 2." Nashville Scene, May 4, 2021. https://www.nashvillescene.com/food_drink/bites/race-credit-and-hot-chicken-part-2/article_a5ddad97-88f3-520e-bd98-03e0a0e37a25.html.
- Charteris-Black, Jonathan. *Politicians and Rhetoric: The Persuasive Power of Metaphor*. Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011.
- Cohen, Erik. "The Tourist Guide: The Origins, Structure, and Dynamics of a Role." *Annals of Tourism Research* 12 (1985): 5–29.
- Collingham, Lizzie. *Curry: A Tale of Cooks and Conquerors*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2006.

- Contois, Emily J.H., and Zenia Kish. *Food Instagram: Identity, Influence, and Negotiation*. Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2022.
- Cooley, Angela Jill. *To Live and Dine in Dixie: The Evolution of Urban Food Culture in the Jim Crow South*. Athens, Ga: University of Georgia Press, 2015.
- Cothran, Kay L. "Participation in Tradition." Essay. In *Readings in American Folklore*, edited by Jan Harold Brunvand, 444–48. New York, NY: Norton, 1979.
- Counihan, Carole, Van Penny. Esterik, and Alice P. Julier. *Food and Culture: A Reader*. New York, NY: Routledge, 2019.
- Crenshaw Kimberlé, Neil T. Gotanda, Gary Peller, and Kendall Thomas, eds. *Critical Race Theory: The Key Writings That Formed the Movement*. New York, NY: New Press, 1995.
- Dalrymple, William. *The Anarchy: The East India Company, Corporate Violence, and the Pillage of an Empire*. New York, NY: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2019.
- D'Andrade, Roy Goodwin. *The Development of Cognitive Anthropology*. Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 1995.
- Davison, Devita. 2016. "Black Food Matters: Race and Equity in the Good Food Movement." Lecture presented at Change Food Fest, New York City, November 11th-13th.
- Day, Harvey. *The Complete Book of Curries*. Hartford, CT: A.S. Barnes, 1966.
- de Jong, Anna, and Peter Varley. "Food Tourism Policy: Deconstructing Boundaries of Taste and Class." *Tourism Management* 60, no. 2017 (2017): 212–22. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2016.12.009>.
- Delgado, Richard, and Jean Stefancic. *Critical Race Theory: An Introduction*. New York, NY: New York University Press, 2017.
- DeShazer, William. "As Nashville Rapidly Expands, Residents Worry the Metropolis Is Growing Too Fast." *The Wall Street Journal*. Dow Jones & Company, July 7, 2018. <https://www.wsj.com/articles/as-nashville-rapidly-expands-residents-worry-the-metropolis-is-growing-too-fast-1529314200>.
- Deutsch, Jonathan. "'Please Pass the Chicken Tits': Rethinking Men and Cooking at an Urban Firehouse." *Food and Foodways* 13, no. 1-2 (2005): 91–114. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07409710590915382>.
- Dishoom. "Dishoom Shoreditch: Indian Restaurant Near Shoreditch High Street." Accessed July 21, 2022. <https://www.dishoom.com/shoreditch/>.

- Douglas, Mary. "Deciphering a Meal." Essay. In *Food and Culture: A Reader*, edited by Carole Counihan, 36–54. New York, NY: Routledge, 1997.
- Doyle, Don H. *New Men, New Cities, New South: Atlanta, Nashville, Charleston, Mobile, 1860-1910*. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Pr., 1990.
- Duruz, Jean. "Eating at the Borders: Culinary Journeys." *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 23, no. 1 (2005): 51–69. <https://doi.org/10.1068/d52j>.
- Dutch, Jennifer Rachel. *Look Who's Cooking: The Rhetoric of American Home Cooking Traditions in the Twenty-First Century*. Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi, 2018.
- Eade, J. "Adventure Tourists and Locals in a Global City: Resisting Tourist Performances in London's East End." Essay. In *Tourism: Between Place and Performance*, edited by Simon Coleman, 128–39. New York, NY: Berghahn Books, 2002.
- Eating Europe. "East End London Walking Food Tour." Accessed July 8, 2022. <https://www.eatingeurope.com/london/east-end-food-tour/>.
- Eating Europe. "London Food Tours - London Walking Tour for Foodies." Accessed July 8, 2022. <https://www.eatingeurope.com/london/>.
- Echtner, Charlotte M., and J.R. Brent Ritchie. "The Meaning and Measurement of Destination Image." *Journal of Tourism Studies* 2, no. 2 (1991): 2–12.
- Edge, John T. *Fried Chicken: An American Story*. New York, NY: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 2004.
- Edge, John T. *The Potlikker Papers: A Food History of the Modern South*. New York, NY: Penguin Books, 2017.
- The Editors of GQ. "Nowville: The GQ Guide to Nashville, Tennessee." GQ. July 2, 2012. <https://www.gq.com/gallery/nashville-guide-travel-fashion>.
- Embiricos, George. "Meet the Man Who Launched the Nashville Hot Chicken Craze." Food Republic, August 25, 2016. <https://www.foodrepublic.com/2016/08/25/meet-the-man-who-launched-the-nashville-hot-chicken-craze/#:~:text=John%20Lasater%20never%20expected%20to,in%202012%20%E2%80%94%20recently%20turned%2030>.
- Evening Standard. "Hot Stuff on Brick Lane." Evening Standard. April 10, 2012. <https://www.standard.co.uk/reveller/restaurants/hot-stuff-on-brick-lane-6341131.html>.
- Everett, Holly. "Vernacular Health Moralities and Culinary Tourism in Newfoundland and Labrador." *Journal of American Folklore* 122, no. 483 (2009): 28–52. <https://doi.org/10.2307/20487645>.

- Everett, Sally. *Food and Drink Tourism: Principles and Practice*. London, UK: Sage Publications Ltd, 2016.
- Feagin, Joe R. *The White Racial Frame: Centuries of Racial Framing and Counter-Framing Second E*. New York, NY: Routledge, 2013.
- Ferris, Marcie Cohen. *The Edible South: The Power of Food and the Making of an American Region*. Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2014.
- Fishman, William J. *The Streets of East London*. Nottingham, UK: Five Leaves, 1979.
- Fiske, Susan T. "Controlling Other People: The Impact of Power on Stereotyping." *American Psychologist* 48, no. 6 (1993): 621–28. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066x.48.6.621>.
- Florio, Erin. "Review: Dishoom." Condé Nast Traveler. Accessed July 21, 2022. <https://www.cntraveler.com/restaurants/london/dishoom>.
- Fouché, Rayvon. "From Black Inventors to One Laptop Per Child: Exporting A Racial Politics of Technology." Essay. In *Race After the Internet*, edited by Lisa Nakamura and Peter A. Chow-White, 61–84. New York, NY: Routledge, 2012.
- Fox, Jennifer. "The Creator Gods: Romantic Nationalism and the En-Genderment of Women in Folklore." *The Journal of American Folklore* 100, no. 398 (1987): 563–72. <https://doi.org/10.2307/540913>.
- Frankenberg, Ruth. "The Mirage of an Unmarked Whiteness." Essay. In *The Making and Unmaking of Whiteness*, edited by Brander Birgit Rasmussen, 72–96. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2001.
- Frankenberg, Ruth. *White Women, Race Matters: The Social Construction of Whiteness*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1993.
- Frew, Charlotte. "Ministries and Campaigns: The Political Language and Tactics of Popular British Food-Writing." Essay. In *Food and Language: The Oxford Symposium on Food and Cookery*, edited by Cathy K. Kaufman. Oxford, UK: Oxford Symposium on Food and Cookery, 2010.
- Friedensohn, Doris. "Chapulines, Mole, and Pozole: Mexican Cuisines and the Gringa Imagination." Essay. In *Pilaf, Pozole, and Pad Thai: American Women and Ethnic Food*, edited by Sherrie A. Inness, 165–74. Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts, 2001.
- Frost, Nicola. "Green Curry: Politics and Place-Making on Brick Lane." *Food, Culture & Society* 14, no. 2 (2011): 225–42. <https://doi.org/10.2752/175174411x12893984828791>.

- Fry, Gladys-Marie. *Night Riders in Black Folk History*. Knoxville, TN: The University of Tennessee Press, 1975.
- Gallagher, Charles A. "White Racial Formation: Into the Twenty-First Century." Essay. In *Critical White Studies: Looking Behind the Mirror*, edited by Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic, 6–11. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1997.
- Gencarella, Stephen Olbrys. "Constituting Folklore: A Case for Critical Folklore Studies." *Journal of American Folklore* 122, no. 484 (2009): 172–96. <https://doi.org/10.2307/20487676>.
- Gencarella, Stephen Olbrys. "Folk Criticism and the Art of Critical Folklore Studies." *Journal of American Folklore* 124, no. 494 (2011): 251–71. <https://doi.org/10.5406/jamerfolk.124.494.0251>.
- Georges, Robert A. "Timeliness and Appropriateness in Personal Experience Narrating." *Western Folklore* 46, no. 2 (1987): 115–20.
- Germann Molz, Jennie. "Eating Difference: The Cosmopolitan Mobilities of Culinary Tourism." *Space and Culture* 10, no. 1 (2007): 77–93. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1206331206296383>.
- Germann Molz, Jennie. "Tasting an Imagined Thailand: Authenticity and Culinary Tourism in Thai Restaurants." Essay. In *Culinary Tourism*, edited by Lucy M. Long, 53–75. Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 2004.
- Getz, Donald, Richard Robinson, Tommy Andersson, and Sanja Vujicic. *Foodies & Food Tourism*. Wolvercote, Oxford, U.K.: Goodfellow Publishers Limited, 2014.
- Gilbert, Helen, and Anna Johnston. *In Transit: Travel, Text, Empire*. New York, NY: Peter Lang, 2002.
- Gilman, Sander L. *Difference and Pathology: Stereotypes of Sexuality, Race, and Madness*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1985.
- Glassie, Henry. "Tradition." Essay. In *Eight Words for the Study of Expressive Culture*, edited by Burt Feintuch, 176–97. Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2003.
- Glassie, Henry. "Tradition." *Journal of American Folklore* 108, no. 430 (1995): 395–412.
- Goffman, Erving. *Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity*. New York, NY: Simon & Schuster, 1963.
- Goffman, Erving. *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. New York, NY: Doubleday, 1959.

- Goldstein, Diane K. "Rethinking Ventriloquism: Untellability, Chaotic Narratives, Social Justice, and the Choice to Speak For, About, and Without." *Journal of Folklore Research: The Stigmatized Vernacular* 49, no. 2 (2016): 179–98.
- Goldstein, Diane. "The Sounds of Silence: Foreknowledge, Miracles, Suppressed Narratives, and Terrorism—What Not Telling Might Tell Us." *Western Folklore* 68, no. 3 (2009): 235–57.
- Google Reviews user Amit Mishra. 2019. Review of Dishoom Shoreditch. Google Review. <https://www.google.com/maps/contrib/101522672527931948654/reviews/@51.3739568,0.6398278,9z/data=!3m1!4b1!4m3!8m2!3m1!1e1?hl=en-US>.
- Google Reviews user Axelle P. 2020. Review of Dishoom Shoreditch. Google Review. <https://www.google.com/maps/contrib/115095869052533464353/reviews/@23.4201022,-9.2365203,3z/data=!3m1!4b1!4m3!8m2!3m1!1e1?hl=en-US>.
- Google Reviews user Cridders. 2020. Review of Dishoom Shoreditch. Google Review. <https://www.google.com/maps/contrib/112655070119490213369/reviews/@51.5516324,0.011539,12z/data=!3m1!4b1!4m3!8m2!3m1!1e1?hl=en-US>.
- Google Reviews user Daniel PdO. 2020. Review of Aladin Indian Restaurant. Google Review. <https://www.google.com/maps/contrib/113173960307881032009/reviews/@14.3705602,-38.5279315,3z/data=!3m1!4b1!4m3!8m2!3m1!1e1?hl=en-US>.
- Google Reviews user Francesco Scano. 2020. Review of Dishoom Shoreditch. Google Review. <https://www.google.com/maps/contrib/112377079988142067897/reviews/@51.5047743,-0.1617297,13z/data=!3m1!4b1!4m3!8m2!3m1!1e1?hl=en-US>.
- Google Reviews user Invisible Woman. 2020. Review of Dishoom Shoreditch. Google Review. <https://www.google.com/maps/contrib/117197343144424344580/reviews/@14.0118201,100.5110607,10z/data=!3m1!4b1!4m3!8m2!3m1!1e1?hl=en-US>.
- Google Reviews user Jessica Casuga. 2020. Review of Aladin Indian Restaurant. Google Review. <https://www.google.com/maps/contrib/107680887976982440576/reviews/@51.4725771,0.3678991,10z/data=!3m1!4b1!4m3!8m2!3m1!1e1?hl=en-US>.
- Google Reviews user Julio Cervantes. 2020. Google Review. <https://www.google.com/maps/contrib/116324746860607258311/reviews/@46.9041476,5.7938662,5z/data=!3m1!4b1!4m3!8m2!3m1!1e1?hl=en-US>.
- Google Reviews user Khaled Miah. 2020. Review of Aladin Indian Restaurant. Google Review. <https://www.google.com/maps/contrib/110364927081714193811/reviews/@42.9571853,-49.6800775,3z/data=!3m1!4b1!4m3!8m2!3m1!1e1?hl=en-US>.

- Google Reviews user Matteo. 2020. Review of Dishoom Shoreditch. Google Review.
<https://www.google.com/maps/contrib/102967862356739508629/reviews/@46.0322306,6.9985539,6z/data=!3m1!4b1!4m3!8m2!3m1!1e1?hl=en-US>.
- Google Reviews user Marcus Hamblin. 2022. Review of Dishoom Shoreditch. Google Review.
<https://www.google.com/maps/contrib/112655070119490213369/reviews/@51.5516324,0.011539,12z/data=!3m1!4b1!4m3!8m2!3m1!1e1?hl=en-US>.
- Google Reviews user Maximilian Pazak. 2020. Review of Dishoom Shoreditch. Google Review.
<https://www.google.com/maps/contrib/114264614959125985672/reviews/@35.9846767,-45.9796593,3z/data=!3m1!4b1!4m3!8m2!3m1!1e1?hl=en-US>.
- Google Reviews user Megan Doherty. 2020. Review of Dishoom Shoreditch. Google Review.
<https://www.google.com/maps/contrib/111603656031884273996/reviews/@47.5594752,-52.7078285,14z/data=!4m3!8m2!3m1!1e1?hl=en-US>.
- Google Reviews user Minimum Minimum. 2020. Review of Aladin Indian Restaurant. Google Review.
<https://www.google.com/maps/contrib/105156716743835981782/reviews/@51.5205415,-0.0717058,17z/data=!3m1!4b1!4m3!8m2!3m1!1e1?hl=en-US>.
- Google Reviews user Sabrina Natasha. 2020. Review of Dishoom Shoreditch. Google Review.
<https://www.google.com/maps/contrib/107215509984837787077/reviews/@51.5586031,0.0983836,11z/data=!3m1!4b1!4m3!8m2!3m1!1e1?hl=en-US>.
- Google Reviews user Syeda. 2020. Review of Aladin Indian Restaurant. Google Review.
<https://www.google.com/maps/contrib/100916512476962697337/reviews/@40.7997349,-74.5397882,9z?hl=en-US>.
- Google Reviews user Terin Nabi. 2020. Review of Aladin Indian Restaurant. Google Review.
<https://www.google.com/maps/contrib/111326812409651952038/reviews/@52.4285941,-1.3773535,8z/data=!3m1!4b1!4m3!8m2!3m1!1e1?hl=en-US>.
- Google Reviews user Thijs van Boven. 2020. Review of Aladin Indian Restaurant. Google Review.
<https://www.google.com/maps/contrib/118341221768126065920/reviews/@46.9819004,8.442468,6z/data=!3m1!4b1!4m3!8m2!3m1!1e1?hl=en-US>.
- Greenhill, Pauline, and Alison Marshall. “Racism and Denial of Racism: Dealing with the Academy and the Field.” *Journal of American Folklore* 129, no. 512 (2016): 203–24.
<https://doi.org/10.5406/jamerfolk.129.512.0203>.
- The Guardian. “Robin Cook's Chicken Tikka Masala Speech.” Guardian News and Media, April 19, 2001. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2001/apr/19/race.britishidentity>.

- Gunn, Clare A. *Vacationscapes: Designing Tourist Areas*. New York, NY: Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1988.
- Hamilton, Anna. "Bottling Hell: Marketing St. Augustine, Florida's Datil Pepper." *Southern Cultures* 21, no. 1 (2015): 59–72. <https://doi.org/10.1353/scu.2015.0006>.
- Hargrove, Melissa D. "Mapping the 'Social Field of Whiteness': White Racism as Habitus in the City Where History Lives." *Transforming Anthropology* 17, no. 2 (2009): 93–104. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1548-7466.2009.01048.x>.
- Harris, Jonathan Gil. "Sickening India: On Dislocation and Explosive Enjoyment in Early Modern Travel Writing." Essay. In *The Shakespearean International Yearbook* 11, edited by Graham Bradshaw, Tom Bishop, and Tetsuo Kishi, Special Issue: Placing Michael Neilled., 11:177–97. London, UK: Routledge, 2011.
- Haylett, Chris. "Illegitimate Subjects?: Abject Whites, Neoliberal Modernisation, and Middle-Class Multiculturalism." *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 19, no. 3 (2001): 351–70. <https://doi.org/10.1068/d237t>.
- Heldke, Lisa. *Exotic Appetites: Ruminations of a Food Adventurer*. New York, NY: Routledge, 2003.
- Heldke, Lisa. "Let's Cook Thai: Recipes for Colonialism." Essay. In *Pilaf, Pozole, and Pad Thai: American Women and Ethnic Food*, edited by Sherrie A. Inness, 175–98. Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 2001.
- Highmore, Ben. "The Taj Mahal in the High Street: The Indian Restaurant as Diasporic Popular Culture in Great Britain." *Food, Culture & Society* 12, no. 2 (2009): 173–90.
- Hill, Jane H. *The Everyday Language of White Racism*. Malden, MA: Wiley, 2008.
- Holland, Patrick, and Graham Huggan. *Tourists with Typewriters: Critical Reflections on Contemporary Travel Writing*. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1998.
- Holstein, James A., and Jaber F. Gubrium, eds. *Varieties of Narrative Analysis*. Los Angeles, CA: Sage, 2012.
- hooks, bell. *Black Looks: Race and Representation*. Boston, MA: South End Press, 1992.
- Horigan, Kate Parker. *Consuming Katrina: Public Disaster and Personal Narrative*. Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi, 2018.
- Horng, Jeou-Shyan, and Chen-Tsang Tsai. "Government Websites for Promoting East Asian Culinary Tourism: A Cross-National Analysis." *Tourism Management* 31, no. 1 (2010): 74–85. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2009.01.009>.

- HoSang, Daniel Martinez, and Joseph E. Lowndes. *Producers, Parasites, Patriots Race and the New Right-Wing Politics of Precarity*. Minneapolis, MN: Minnesota University Press, 2019.
- Houston, Benjamin. *The Nashville Way: Racial Etiquette and the Struggle for Social Justice in a Southern City*. Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2012.
- Howard, Robert Glenn. "A Theory of Vernacular Rhetoric: The Case of the 'Sinner's Prayer' Online." *Folklore* 116, no. 2 (2005): 172–88.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/00155870500140214>.
- Hughey, Matthew W. *White Bound: Nationalists, Antiracists, and the Shared Meanings of Race*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2012.
- Hui Kyong Chun, Wedy. "Race and/as Technology, or How to Do Things to Race." Essay. In *Race After the Internet*, edited by Lisa Nakamura and Peter A. Chow-White, 38–60. New York, NY: Routledge, 2012.
- Hymes, Dell. "Folklore's Nature and the Sun's Myth." *The Journal of American Folklore* 88, no. 350 (October 1, 1975): 345–69.
- Inness, Sherrie A. *Dinner Roles: American Women and Culinary Culture*. Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2001.
- Inness, Sherrie A. "Introduction: Eating Ethnic." Essay. In *Pilaf, Pozole, and Pad Thai: American Women and Ethnic Food*, edited by Sherrie A. Inness, 1–13. Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 2001.
- Inness, Sherrie A. *Pilaf, Pozole, and Pad Thai: American Women and Ethnic Food*. Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 2001.
- Jackson, Jason Baird. "The Story of Colonialism, or Rethinking the Ox-Hide Purchase in Native North America and Beyond." *Journal of American Folklore* 126, no. 499 (2013): 31–54.
<https://doi.org/10.5406/jamerfolk.126.499.0031>.
- Jahangir, Rumeana. "How Britain Got the Hots for Curry." BBC News. November 26, 2009.
<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/8370054.stm#:~:text=%22All%20hot%20food%20of%20the,%27%20which%20means%20to%20cook.%22&text=A%2019th%20Century%20account%20records,for%20breakfast%2C%20lunch%20and%20dinner.&text=Yet%20within%20three%20years%20of,Mr%20Mahomed%2C%20applied%20for%20bankruptcy>.
- Jamerson, Trevor. "Digital Orientalism: TripAdvisor and Online Travelers' Tales." Essay. In *Digital Sociologies*, edited by Jessie Daniels, Karen Gregory, and Tressie McMillan Cottom, 119–37. Chicago, IL: McMillan Policy Press, 2017.
- Jardina, Ashley. *White Identity Politics*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2019.

- Johnston Josée, and Shyon Baumann. *Foodies: Democracy and Distinction in the Gourmet Foodscape*. New York, NY: Routledge, 2015.
- Jones, Michael Owen. "Food Choice, Symbolism, and Identity: Bread and Butter Issues for Folkloristics and Nutrition Studies (American Folklore Society Presidential Address, October 2005)." *Journal of American Folklore* 120, no. 476 (2007): 129–77. <https://doi.org/10.1353/jaf.2007.0037>.
- Justus, Jennifer. *Nashville Eats: Hot Chicken, Buttermilk Biscuits, and 100 More Southern Recipes from Music City*. New York, NY: Abrams Books, 2015.
- Justus, Jennifer. "Where to Eat in Nashville: Prince's Hot Chicken Shack, Hattie B's." *Time*, March 7, 2014. <http://time.com/15504/how-hot-chicken-became-nashvilles-signature-dish/>.
- Kalčík, Susan. "'... Like Ann's Gynecologist or the Time I Was Almost Raped': Personal Narratives in Women's Rap Groups." *The Journal of American Folklore* 88, no. 347 (1975): 3–11.
- Kalčík, Susan. "Ethnic Foodways in America: Symbol and the Performance of Identity." Essay. In *Ethnic and Regional Foodways in the United States: The Performance of Group Identity*, edited by Linda Keller Brown and Kay Mussell, 37–65. Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Pr., 1984.
- Kamal, Soniah May. "When My Authentic Is Your Exotic." *Literary Hub*, May 23, 2016. <https://lithub.com/when-my-authentic-is-your-exotic/>.
- Kaplan, Anne R., Marjorie A. Hoover, and Willard B. Moore. "Introduction: On Ethnic Foodways." Essay. In *The Taste of American Place: A Reader on Regional and Ethnic Foods*, edited by Barbara G. Shortridge and James R. Shortridge, 121–34. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 1998.
- Karaosmanoğlu, Defne. "Authenticated Spaces: Blogging Sensual Experiences in Turkish Grill Restaurants in London." *Space and Culture* 17, no. 3 (2013): 224–38. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1206331212452817>.
- Karg, Sabine. "Spices." Essay. In *The Encyclopedia of Archaeological Sciences*, edited by Lopez L. Varela Sandra, 1–4. Malden, MA: Wiley Blackwell, 2018.
- Kendi, Ibram X. *Stamped from the Beginning: The Definitive History of Racist Ideas in America*. New York, NY: Bold Type Books, 2016.
- Kershen, Anne J. *Strangers, Aliens and Asians: Huguenots, Jews and Bangladeshis in Spitalfields, 1666-2000*. London, UK: Routledge, 2005.

- Kollar, Leena. "10 Reasons Why You Should Visit Nashville." Culture Trip. The Culture Trip, May 2, 2017. <https://theculturetrip.com/north-america/usa/tennessee/articles/10-reasons-why-you-should-visit-nashville/>.
- Kotler, Phillip. "Semiotics of Person and Nation Marketing." Essay. In *Marketing and Semiotics: New Directions in the Study of Signs for Sale*, edited by Donna Jean Umiker-Sebeok, 3–12. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 1987.
- Labov, William, and Joshua Waletzky. "Narrative Analysis: Oral Versions of Personal Experience." *Oral Versions of Personal Experience Journal of Narrative and Life History* 7, no. 1-4 (1997): 3–38.
- Lantis, Margaret. "Vernacular Culture." *American Anthropologist* 62 (1960): 202-216.
- Lastoe, Stacey. "There's a New Bachelorette Capital, and It's Not Vegas." CNN. Cable News Network, May 1, 2019. <https://www.cnn.com/travel/article/bachelorette-party-nashville-tennessee/index.html#:~:text=The%20bachelorette%20party%20%E2%80%94%20called%20a,number%20one%20bachelorette%20party%20destination.>
- Latshaw, Beth A. "Food for Thought: Race, Region, Identity, and Foodways in the American South." *Southern Cultures* 15, no. 4 (2009): 106–28.
- Lavelle, Kristen M. "Our Generation Had Nothing To Do With Discrimination': White Southern Memory of Jim Crow and Civil Rights." Dissertation, Texas A&M University, 2011.
- Lawless, Elaine J. *Holy Women, Wholly Women: Sharing Ministries of Wholeness through Life Stories and Reciprocal Ethnography*. Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2010.
- Lawless, Elaine J. *Women Escaping Violence: Empowerment through Narrative*. Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2001.
- Leary, James P. "White Guys' Stories of the Night Street." *Journal of the Folklore Institute* 14, no. 1/2 (1977): 59–71. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3814042>.
- Lichtenstein, Rachel. *On Brick Lane*. London, UK: Hamish Hamilton, 2008.
- Lloyd, Laura. "Top 5 Bangladeshi Restaurants on Brick Lane, London." DESIblitz, July 26, 2017. <https://www.desiblitz.com/content/top-5-bangladeshi-restaurants-brick-lane-london>.
- Lockwood, Y.R., and W.G. Lockwood. "Pasties in Michigan's Upper Peninsula: Foodways, Interethnic Relations, and Regionalism." Essay. In *Creative Ethnicity: Symbols and Strategies of Contemporary Ethnic Life*, edited by S. Stern and J. A. Cicala, 3-20. Logan: Utah State University Press, 1991.

- Long, Lucy M. "Culinary Tourism." Encyclopedia entry. In *Oxford Handbook of the History of Tourism and Travel*, edited by Kevin James and Eric Zuelow, C35.P1-C35.N168. Oxford, U.K.: Oxford University Press, 2020.
- Long, Lucy M. "Cultural Politics in Culinary Tourism with Ethnic Foods." *Revista de Administração de Empresas* 58, no. 3 (2018): 316–24. <https://doi.org/10.1590/s0034-759020180313>.
- Long, Lucy M. "Comfort Food in Culinary Tourism: Negotiating 'Home' as Exotic and Familiar." Essay. In *Comfort Food: Meanings and Memories*, edited by Michael Owen Jones and Lucy M. Long, 126–49. Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi, 2017.
- Long, Lucy M. "Meaning-Centered Research in Food Studies." Essay. In *Food Culture: Anthropology, Linguistics and Food Studies Volume II*, edited by Janet Chrzn and John Brett, 204-217. Brooklyn, NY: Berghahn Books, 2019.
- Long, Lucy M. "Introduction to Part One." Introduction. In *The Food and Folklore Reader*, edited by Lucy M. Long, 9–20. New York, NY: Bloomsbury Academic, 2015.
- Long, Lucy M., ed. "Introduction to Special Issue: Food and Identity in the Americas ." *Journal of American Folklore* 122, no. 483 (2009): 1–124.
- Long, Lucy M. "Culinary Tourism: A Folkloristic Perspective on Eating and Otherness." Essay. In *Culinary Tourism*, edited by Lucy M. Long, 20–50. Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 2004.
- Lusin, Caroline. "Curry, Tins and Grotesque Bodies: Food, Cultural Boundaries and Identity in Anglo-Indian Life-Writing." *English Studies* 94, no. 4 (2013): 468–88. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0013838x.2013.780827>.
- MacAllister, Louise, and Suzanne Hocknell. "A Sticky Situation? Fatty Distaste and the Embodied Performance of Class." Essay. In *Space, Taste and Affect: Atmospheres That Shape the Way We Eat*, edited by Emily Falconer, 1st ed., 30–43. London, UK: Routledge, 2020.
- MacCannell, Dean. *The Tourist: A New Theory of the Leisure Class*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2013.
- Maguire, Jennifer Smith. *Food Practices and Social Inequality: Looking at Food Practices and Taste Across the Class Divide*. London, UK: Routledge, 2019.
- Maitland, R. "Extending the Frontiers of City Tourism: Suburbs and the Real London." Essay. In *Destination London: The Expansion of the Visitor Economy*, edited by Andrew Smith and Anne Graham, 15–35. London, UK: University of Westminster Press, 2019.

- Mak, Athena H.N., Margaret Lumbers, and Anita Eves. "Globalisation and Food Consumption in Tourism." *Annals of Tourism Research* 39, no. 1 (2012): 171–96. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.annals.2011.05.010>.
- Martin, Rachel L. "How Hot Chicken Really Happened." *The Bitter Southerner*, April 1, 2015. <http://bittersoutherner.com/how-hot-chicken-really-happened/>.
- Martin, Rachel L. *Hot, Hot Chicken: A Nashville Story*. Nashville, TN: Vanderbilt University Press, 2021.
- Mason, Laura. *Food Culture in Great Britain*. Food Culture Around the World. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2004.
- Mason, Laura. *Food Culture in Great Britain*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2004.
- Mavrommatis, George. "A Racial Archaeology of Space: A Journey Through the Political Imaginings of Brixton and Brick Lane, London." *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 36, no. 4 (2010): 561–79. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13691830903398862>.
- Mavrommatis, George. "The New 'Creative' Brick Lane: A Narrative Study of Local Multicultural Encounters." *Ethnicities* 6, no. 4 (2006): 498–517. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1468796806070720>.
- May, Jon. "A Little Taste of Something More Exotic': The Imaginative Geographies of Everyday Life." *Geography: Journal of the Geographical Association* 81, no. 1 (1996): 57–64.
- McDermott, Monica. *Working-Class White: The Making and Unmaking of Race Relations*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2006.
- McIntosh, Peggy. "White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack (." *Peace and Freedom Magazine*, 1989, 10–12.
- Mcphail, Deborah, Brenda Beagan, and Gwen E. Chapman. "I Don't Want to Be Sexist But...." *Food, Culture & Society* 15, no. 3 (2012): 473–89.
- Mickler, Ernest Matthew. *White Trash Cooking*. Berkeley, CA: Ten Speed Press, 2011.
- Miller, Jeffrey P., and Jonathan Deutsch. *Food Studies: An Introduction to Research Methods*. London, UK: Bloomsbury Academic, 2009.
- Mills, Margaret, ed. "Special Issue: Critical Folkloristics Today." *Journal of American Folklore* 133, no. 530 (2020): 383–517.
- Mintz, Sidney Wilfred. *Tasting Food, Tasting Freedom: Excursions into Eating, Culture, and the Past*. Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1996.

- Mirza, Ben. "Britain's Curry Industry Under Pressure." HuffPost UK. HuffPost UK, September 16, 2013. https://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/ben-mirza/britains-curry-industry-under-pressure_b_3612555.html.
- Montaño, Mario. "Appropriation and Counterhegemony in South Texas: Food Slurs, Offal Meats, and Blood." Essay. In *Usable Pasts: Traditions and Group Expressions in North America*, edited by Tad Tuleja, 50–67. Logan, UT: Utah State University Press, 1997.
- Moody-Turner, Shirley. *Black Folklore and the Politics of Racial Representation*. Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi, 2013.
- Moody-Turner, Shirley. "Gladys-Marie Fry's Night Riders in Black Folk History: Critical Race Theory and Black Folklore Practice." *Journal of American Folklore* 135, no. 537 (2022): 332–37.
- Muir, Hugh. "Curry Touts Leave a Bad Taste in Brick Lane." *The Guardian*. Guardian News and Media, May 20, 2004. <https://www.theguardian.com/uk/2004/may/20/foodanddrink.shopping>.
- Mullen, Patrick B. *The Man Who Adores the Negro: Race and American Folklore*. Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2008.
- Naithani, Sadhana. *The Story-Time of the British Empire: Colonial and Postcolonial Folkloristics*. Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi, 2010.
- Nakamura, Lisa, and Peter Chow-White, eds. *Race After the Internet*. New York, NY: Routledge, 2012.
- Nakamura, Lisa. "Don't Hate the Player, Hate the Game: The Racialization of Labor in World of Warcraft." *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 26, no. 2 (2009): 128–44. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15295030902860252>.
- Narayan, Uma. "Eating Cultures: Incorporation, Identity and Indian Food." *Social Identities* 1, no. 1 (1995): 63–86. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13504630.1995.9959426>.
- Narsimhan, Sushila. "Plants and Human Civilization: Indian Spices." *Comparative Civilizations Review* 60, no. 60 (2009): 120–49.
- Nayak, Anoop. "After Race: Ethnography, Race and Post-Race Theory." *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 29, no. 3 (2006): 411–30. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870600597818>.
- Nayak, Anoop. *Race, Place and Globalization: Youth Cultures in a Changing World*. London, UK: Bloomsbury Academic, 2003.
- Negro, Giovanna del. *Looking Through My Mother's Eyes: Life Stories of Nine Italian Immigrant Women in Canada*. Toronto, ON: Guernica, 1997.

- Noyes, Dorothy. "Group." Essay. In *Eight Words for the Study of Expressive Culture*, edited by Burt Feintuch, 7–41. Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2003.
- Noyes, Dorothy. *Humble Theory: Folklore's Grasp on Social Life*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2016.
- Noyes, Dorothy. "Tradition: Three Traditions." *Journal of Folklore Research* 46, no. 3 (2009): 233–68. <https://doi.org/10.2979/jfr.2009.46.3.233>.
- Ogle, Amanda. "Where to Eat in London's East End." *Travel + Leisure*. *Travel + Leisure*, January 11, 2020. <https://www.travelandleisure.com/food-drink/east-end-london-places-to-eat>.
- Onorati, Maria Giovanna, and Paolo Giardullo. "Social Media as Taste Re-Mediators: Emerging Patterns of Food Taste on TripAdvisor." *Food, Culture & Society* 23, no. 3 (2020): 347–65. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15528014.2020.1715074>.
- Ono, Kent, and John Sloop. "The Critique of Vernacular Discourse." *Communication Monographs* 62 (1995): 19-42.
- Oring, Elliott. "Ethnic Groups and Ethnic Folklore." Essay. In *Folk Groups and Folklore Genres: An Introduction*, edited by Elliott Oring, 23-44. Logan, UT: Utah State University Press, 1986.
- Oring, Elliott. "On the Concepts of Folklore." Essay. In *Folk Groups and Folklore Genres: An Introduction*, edited by Elliott Oring, 1–22. Logan, UT: Utah State University Press, 1986.
- Page, Helan. "No Black Public Sphere in White Public Space: Racialized Information and Hi-Tech Diffusion in the Global African Diaspora." *Transforming Anthropology* 8, no. 1-2 (1999): 111–28. <https://doi.org/10.1525/tran.1999.8.1-2.111>.
- Palat, Ravi Arvind. "Empire, Food and the Diaspora: Indian Restaurants in Britain." *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies* 38, no. 2 (2015): 171–86. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00856401.2015.1019603>.
- Panayi, Panikos. *Spicing Up Britain: The Multicultural History of British Food*. London: Reaktion, 2008.
- Perry, Pamela. "White Means Never Having to Say You're Ethnic: White Youth and the Construction of 'Cultureless' Identities ." *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 30, no. 1 (2001): 56–91. <https://doi.org/10.1177/089124101030001002>.
- Petersen, Anne Helen. "How Nashville Became One Big Bachelorette Party." *BuzzFeed News*. *BuzzFeed News*, March 29, 2018.

- <https://www.buzzfeednews.com/article/annehelenpetersen/how-nashville-became-one-big-bachelorette-party>.
- Phillips, Betsy. "Race, Credit and Hot Chicken." *Nashville Scene*, August 29, 2016. https://www.nashvillescene.com/news/pithinthewind/race-credit-and-hot-chicken/article_79e3f2ae-9edf-560f-b93c-ce70f28930f6.html.
- Pottier, Johan. "Savoring the Authentic: The Emergence of a Bangladeshi Cuisine in East London." *Food, Culture & Society* 17, no. 1 (2014): 7–26. <https://doi.org/10.2752/175174413x13758634982173>.
- Prahlad, Anand. "Tearing Down Monuments: Missed Opportunities, Silences, and Absences—A Radical Look at Race in American Folklore Studies." *Journal of American Folklore* 134, no. 533 (2021): 258–64. <https://doi.org/10.5406/jamerfolk.134.533.0258>.
- Pratt, Mary Louise. *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*. Oxfordshire, UK: Routledge, 1992.
- Quinn, Angie. "A Complete Guide to Exploring London's Most Vibrant Street, Brick Lane." *MyLondon*, January 2, 2019. <https://www.mylondon.news/news/east-london-news/complete-guide-exploring-brick-lane-15218273>.
- Ramsey, Sonya. "'The Destiny of Our Race Lies Largely in Their Hands': African American Women Teachers' Organizational Efforts in Memphis and Nashville During the Progressive Era." Essay. In *Tennessee Women in the Progressive Era: Toward the Public Sphere in the New South*, edited by Mary A. Evins, 157–82. Knoxville, TN: The University of Tennessee Press, 2013.
- Ray, Krishnendu, and Tulasi Srinivas. *Curried Cultures: Globalization, Food, and South Asia*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2012.
- Rex, John, and Robert Samuel Moore. *Race, Community, and Conflict: A Study of Sparkbrook*. London, UK: Oxford University Press for the Institute of Race Relations, 1967.
- Rhys-Taylor, Alex. *Food and Multiculture: A Sensory Ethnography of East London*. London, UK: Bloomsbury Academic, 2018.
- Ritzer, George, and Allan Liska. "'McDisneyization' and 'Post-Tourism': Complementary Perspectives on Contemporary Tourism." Essay. In *Touring Cultures: Transformations of Travel and Theory*, edited by Chris Rojek, 96–109. London, UK: Routledge, 1997.
- Roberts, John W. "Systemic Racism in American Folkloristics." *Journal of American Folklore* 134, no. 533 (2021): 265–71. <https://doi.org/10.5406/jamerfolk.134.533.0265>.
- Robinson, John A. "Personal Narratives Reconsidered." *The Journal of American Folklore* 94, no. 371 (1981): 58–85. <https://doi.org/10.2307/540776>.

- Roemer, Nils. "London and the East End as Spectacles of Urban Tourism." *Jewish Quarterly Review* 99, no. 3 (2009): 416–34. <https://doi.org/10.1353/jqr.0.0053>.
- Rofe, Matthew W. "I Want to Be Global': Theorising the Gentrifying Class as an Emergent Elite Global Community." *Urban Studies* 40, no. 12 (2003): 2511–26. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0042098032000136183>.
- Rojek, Chris. *Leisure Theory: Principles and Practices*. New York, NY: Palgrave MacMillan, 2005.
- Rosaldo, Renato. "Imperialist Nostalgia." *Representations* 26 (1989): 107–22. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2928525>.
- Rowe, Caroline. "The Meaning of Pepper: Money, Medicine and Magic." Essay. In *Food and Language: The Oxford Symposium on Food and Cookery*, edited by Cathy K. Kaufman, 282–91. Oxford: Oxford Symposium on Food and Cookery, 2009.
- Rutland, Ted. *Displacing Blackness: Planning, Power and Race in Twentieth-Century Halifax*. Buffalo, NY: University of Toronto Press, 2018.
- Said, Edward W. *Orientalism*. London, UK: Penguin Books, 1978.
- Salviati, Chris. "2010s In Review: Which Metros Changed The Most?" Apartment List - More than 5 Million Apartments for Rent. Apartment List, September 20, 2019. <https://www.apartmentlist.com/research/most-changed-metros-of-the-2010s>.
- Santino, Jack. "Miles of Smiles, Years of Struggle: The Negotiation of Black Occupational Identity Through Personal Experience Narrative." *The Journal of American Folklore* 96, no. 382 (1983): 393–412. <https://doi.org/10.2307/540981>.
- Schell, Heather. "Gendered Feasts: A Feminist Reflects on Dining in New Orleans." Essay. In *Pilaf, Pozole, and Pad Thai: American Women and Ethnic Food*, edited by Sherrie A. Inness, 199–221. Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts, 2001.
- Schivelbusch, Wolfgang, and David Jacobson. *Tastes of Paradise: A Social History of Spices, Stimulants, and Intoxicants*. New York, NY: Pantheon Books, 1992.
- Secret Food Tours. "Secret Indian Food Tours in London, England." Secret Food Tours - Europe, America, Africa, Asia and Australia. Accessed July 8, 2022. <https://www.secretfoodtours.com/london/indian-food-tour-east-end/>.
- Severson, Kim. "Nashville's Latest Big Hit Could Be the City Itself." *The New York Times*, January 8, 2013. <https://www.nytimes.com/2013/01/09/us/nashville-takes-its-turn-in-the-spotlight.html>.

- Shuman, Amy. *Other People's Stories: Entitlement Claims and the Critique of Empathy*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2005.
- Shuman, Amy, and Carol Bohmer. "Representing Trauma: Political Asylum Narrative." *Journal of American Folklore* 117, no. 466 (2004): 394–414.
- Shuman, Amy. "The Rhetoric of Portions." *Western Folklore* 40, no. 1 (1981): 72–80. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1499851>.
- Silverstein, Jason. "The Global Impact of George Floyd: How Black Lives Matter Protests Shaped Movements Around the World." CBS News, June 4, 2021. <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/george-floyd-black-lives-matter-impact/>.
- Sivathasan, Nalini. "From Korma to Coconuts – the Evolution of Indian Cuisine in the UK." BBC News. BBC, October 19, 2019. <https://www.bbc.com/news/av/stories-49993929>.
- Slocum, Rachel. "Race and the Study of Food." *Progress in Human Geography* 35, no. 3 (2010): 303–27.
- Smedley, Audrey. *Race in North America: Origin and Evolution of a Worldview*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1993.
- Smith, Andrew, and Anne Graham, eds. *Destination London: The Expansion of the Visitor Economy*. London, UK: University of Westminster Press, 2019.
- Smith, Andrew. "Conceptualising the Expansion of Destination London: Some Conclusions." Essay. In *Destination London: The Expansion of the Visitor Economy*, edited by Andrew Smith and Anne Graham, 225–36. London, UK: University of Westminster Press, 2019.
- Smith, Dina. "Cultural Studies' Misfit: White Trash Studies." *The Mississippi Quarterly* 57, no. 3 (2004): 369–88.
- Smith, Neil. "New City, New Frontier: The Lower East Side as Wild, Wild West." Essay. In *Variations on a Theme Park: The New American City and the End of Public Space*, edited by Michael Sorkin, 61–93. New York, NY: Hill and Wang, 1992.
- Smith, Sean P. "Instagram Abroad: Performance, Consumption and Colonial Narrative in Tourism." *Postcolonial Studies* 21, no. 2 (2018): 172–91. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13688790.2018.1461173>.
- Spence, Charles. "Why Is Piquant/Spicy Food So Popular?" *International Journal of Gastronomy and Food Science* 12 (2018): 16–21. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijgfs.2018.04.002>.

- Spracklen, Karl. *Whiteness and Leisure*. New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013.
- Spracklen, Karl. *Constructing Leisure: Historical and Philosophical Debates*. New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011.
- Spracklen, Karl. *The Meaning and Purpose of Leisure: Habermas and Leisure at the End of Modernity*. New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009.
- Stahl, Sandra K. D. "Introduction: [Special Double Issue: Stories of Personal Experiences]." *Journal of the Folklore Institute* 14, no. 1/2, Special Double Issue: Stories of Personal Experiences (January 1, 1977): 5–8.
- Stanonis, Anthony J. "Just Like Mammy Used to Make: Foodways in the Jim Crow South." Essay. In *Dixie Emporium: Tourism, Foodways, and Consumer Culture in the American South*, edited by Anthony J. Stanonis, 208–29. Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2008.
- Stillwell, Chloe. "What Is Nashville Now? ." Slate Magazine. Slate, June 11, 2021. <https://slate.com/business/2021/06/nashville-political-transformation-gig-economy-nashville-has-become-less-reliant-on-its-identity-as-a-city-has-been-altered>.
- Strawberrytours.com. "Free London Food Tour: Strawberry Tours." Accessed June 7, 2021. <https://strawberrytours.com/london/tours/free-london-food-tour>.
- Sutton, David E. *Remembrance of Repasts: An Anthropology of Food and Memory*. Oxford, UK: Berg, 2001.
- Szerszynskiand, Bronislaw, and John Urry. "Cultures of Cosmopolitanism." *The Sociological Review* 50, no. 4 (2002): 461–81. <https://doi.org/10.1177/003802610205000401>.
- Taylor, Charlotte. "Metaphors of Migration Over Time." *Discourse & Society* 32, no. 4 (2021): 463–81. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0957926521992156>.
- Taylor, Peter Lane. "Nashville Is One of America's Hottest Cities Right Now and It's Not Just the Hockey." Forbes. Forbes Magazine, June 24, 2017. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/petertaylor/2017/06/02/nashville-is-on-a-red-hot-roll-and-its-not-just-the-predators/?sh=75151147a587>.
- Thomas, Jeannie B., and Doug Enders. "Bluegrass and 'White Trash': A Case Study Concerning the Name 'Folklore' and Class Bias." *Journal of Folklore Research* 37, no. 1 (2000): 23–52.

- Thomas, Jeannie B. *Featherless Chickens, Laughing Women, and Serious Stories*. Charlottesville, VA: University Press of Virginia, 1997.
- Toelken, Barre. *The Dynamics of Folklore*. Logan, UT: Utah State University Press, 1996.
- Torkelson, Jason, and Douglas Hartmann. "The Heart of Whiteness: On the Study of Whiteness and White Americans." *Sociology Compass* 15, no. 11 (2021): 1–19.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/soc4.12932>.
- TripAdvisor user 9396mom. 2018. "Last Day Lunch." Review of Hattie B's Hot Chicken Nashville Midtown. TripAdvisor Review.
https://www.tripadvisor.ca/ShowUserReviews-g55229-d3859209-r565030732-Hattie_B_s_Hot_Chicken-Nashville_Davidson_County_Tennessee.html.
- TripAdvisor user ana0124. 2018. "The Original Hot Chicken." Review of Prince's Hot Chicken Shack. TripAdvisor Review. https://www.tripadvisor.com/ShowUserReviews-g55229-d470488-r567073296-Prince_s_Hot_Chicken_Shack-Nashville_Davidson_County_Tennessee.html.
- TripAdvisor user Atiyah79. 2018. "It's in the hood!" Review of Prince's Hot Chicken Shack. TripAdvisor Review.
https://www.tripadvisor.ca/ShowUserReviews-g55229-d470488-r518534592-Prince_s_Hot_Chicken_Shack-Nashville_Davidson_County_Tennessee.html.
- TripAdvisor user BirdiesTravels1. 2018. "Serious chicken." Review of Prince's Hot Chicken Shack. TripAdvisor Review. https://www.tripadvisor.ca/ShowUserReviews-g55229-d470488-r549033635-Prince_s_Hot_Chicken_Shack-Nashville_Davidson_County_Tennessee.html.
- TripAdvisor user coyneemma1. 2019. "Super Yummy, lovely, worth the wait." Review of Dishoom Shoreditch. TripAdvisor Review.
https://www.tripadvisor.com/ShowUserReviews-g186338-d3602060-r715860635-Dishoom_Shoreditch-London_England.html.
- TripAdvisor user elligta. 2019. "The worst Indian food I've had." Review of Aladin Indian Restaurant. TripAdvisor Review. https://www.tripadvisor.ca/ShowUserReviews-g186338-d3489533-r714008604-Aladin_Brick_Lane-London_England.html.
- TripAdvisor user guybeau2016. "Good, but needs more hotness." Review of Hattie B's Hot Chicken Nashville Midtown. TripAdvisor Review.
https://www.tripadvisor.com/ShowUserReviews-g55229-d3859209-r576488602-Hattie_B_s_Hot_Chicken-Nashville_Davidson_County_Tennessee.html.
- TripAdvisor user Hellochuman. 2018. "Got the medium heat and almost died." Review of Prince's Hot Chicken Shack. TripAdvisor Review.

https://www.tripadvisor.ca/ShowUserReviews-g55229-d470488-r608165453-Prince_s_Hot_Chicken_Shack-Nashville_Davidson_County_Tennessee.html.

TripAdvisor user JanKev55. 2017. “Diabolical Customer Experience & Rude Staff – AVOID!” Review of Aladin Indian Restaurant. TripAdvisor Review. https://www.tripadvisor.ca/ShowUserReviews-g186338-d3489533-r545711128-Aladin_Brick_Lane-London_England.html.

TripAdvisor user JStraffe. 2019. “pleasant staff, disappointing food, expensive BYO.” Review of Aladin Indian Restauant. TripAdvisor Review. https://www.tripadvisor.ca/ShowUserReviews-g186338-d3489533-r729215763-Aladin_Brick_Lane-London_England.html.

TripAdvisor user kellyn850. 2018. “Good, but ne prepared to wait.” Review of Prince’s Hot Chicken Shack. TripAdvisor Review. https://www.tripadvisor.co.uk/ShowUserReviews-g55229-d470488-r574077519-Prince_s_Hot_Chicken_Shack-Nashville_Davidson_County_Tennessee.html.

TripAdvisor user linda w. 2019. “Horrid!” Review of Aladin Indian Restaurant. TripAdvisor Review. https://www.tripadvisor.ca/ShowUserReviews-g186338-d3489533-r729854783-Aladin_Brick_Lane-London_England.html.

TripAdvisor user Longmur. 2019. “Simply the best.” Review of Dishoom Shoreditch. TripAdvisor Review. https://www.tripadvisor.ca/ShowUserReviews-g186338-d3602060-r717212392-Dishoom_Shoreditch-London_England.html.

TripAdvisor user Nathan M. 2019. “Spicy & delicious. Great service from Abz and Yakab.” Review of Aladin Indian Restaurant. TripAdvisor Review. https://www.tripadvisor.ca/ShowUserReviews-g186338-d3489533-r712820703-Aladin_Brick_Lane-London_England.html.

TripAdvisor user RTM2289. 2018. “Loved lunch at Hattie B’s!” Review of Hattie B’s Hot Chicken Nashville Midtown. TripAdvisor Review. https://www.tripadvisor.ca/ShowUserReviews-g55229-d3859209-r556757097-Hattie_B_s_Hot_Chicken-Nashville_Davidson_County_Tennessee.html.

TripAdvisor user saniyarauf. 2019. “Taste of india.” Review of Dishoom Shoreditch. TripAdvisor Review. https://www.tripadvisor.ca/ShowUserReviews-g186338-d3602060-r716529442-Dishoom_Shoreditch-London_England.html.

TripAdvisor user skvalley. 2018. “Work conference.” Review of Hattie B’s Hot Chicken Nashville Midtown. TripAdvisor Review. https://www.tripadvisor.ca/ShowUserReviews-g55229-d3859209-r563215825-Hattie_B_s_Hot_Chicken-Nashville_Davidson_County_Tennessee.html.

- TripAdvisor user SpaceRob. 2019. "STAY AWAY." Review of Aladin Indian Restaurant. TripAdvisor Review. https://www.tripadvisor.com/ShowUserReviews-g186338-d3489533-r718937272-Aladin_Brick_Lane-London_England.html.
- TripAdvisor user SharieN_13. 2018. "It's Okay." Review of Hattie B's Hot Chicken Nashville Midtown. TripAdvisor Review. https://www.tripadvisor.ca/ShowUserReviews-g55229-d3859209-r563612466-Hattie_B_s_Hot_Chicken-Nashville_Davidson_County_Tennessee.html.
- TripAdvisor user Taya D. 2019. "Good food & service. Shame about the stag do!" Review of Aladin Indian Restaurant. TripAdvisor Review. https://www.tripadvisor.ca/ShowUserReviews-g186338-d3489533-r725406203-Aladin_Brick_Lane-London_England.html.
- TripAdvisor user Trails4U. 2018. "Very nice hot chicken." Review of Hattie B's Hot Chicken Nashville Midtown. TripAdvisor Review. https://www.tripadvisor.ca/ShowUserReviews-g55229-d3859209-r561062662-Hattie_B_s_Hot_Chicken-Nashville_Davidson_County_Tennessee.html.
- TripAdvisor user travellingelephant1. 2019. "Gross." Review of Aladin Indian Restaurant. TripAdvisor Review. https://www.tripadvisor.ca/ShowUserReviews-g186338-d3489533-r726864697-Aladin_Brick_Lane-London_England.html.
- TripAdvisor user Tyrou0. 2019. "As hot as expected." Review of Aladin Indian Restaurant. TripAdvisor Review. https://www.tripadvisor.ca/ShowUserReviews-g186338-d3489533-r725495372-Aladin_Brick_Lane-London_England.html.
- TripAdvisor user Warren M. 2019. "Visit for mum's birthday." Review of Aladin Indian Restaurant. TripAdvisor Review. https://www.tripadvisor.ca/ShowUserReviews-g186338-d3489533-r731735435-Aladin_Brick_Lane-London_England.html.
- TripAdvisor user WillTravel4Goetta. 2018. "Left broken hearted, needing a bath and still hungry but no desire for food." Review of Prince's Hot Chicken Shack. TripAdvisor Review. https://www.tripadvisor.com/ShowUserReviews-g55229-d470488-r613277548-Prince_s_Hot_Chicken_Shack-Nashville_Davidson_County_Tennessee.html.
- TripAdvisor user Woolnutt. 2019. "Absolutely terrible service but good food." Review of Aladin Indian Restaurant. TripAdvisor Review. https://www.tripadvisor.com/ShowUserReviews-g186338-d3489533-r729756190-Aladin_Brick_Lane-London_England.html.
- Tuleja, Tad. *Usable Pasts: Traditions and Group Expressions in North America*. Boulder, CO: NetLibrary, Inc., 1999.

- Turgeon, Laurier, and Madeleine Pastinelli. “‘Eat the World’: Postcolonial Encounters in Quebec City's Ethnic Restaurants.” *The Journal of American Folklore* 115, no. 456 (2002): 247–68. <https://doi.org/10.2307/4129222>.
- Turner, Jack. *Spice: The History of a Temptation*. New York, NY: Vintage Books, 2004.
- Turner, Jeffrey A. “The Rise of Black and White Student Protest in Nashville.” Essay. In *Rebellion in Black and White: Southern Student Activism in the 1960s*, edited by Robert Cohen, 129–47. Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013.
- Tye, Diane. “Storm Days: Playing with Food and Time.” *Digest: A Journal of Foodways and Culture* 2, no. 2 (2014): 1–9.
- Ugly Delicious. “Fried Chicken.” Episode. *Ugly Delicious* 1, no. 6. Netflix, February 23, 2018.
- Urry, John. “The Tourist Gaze ‘Revisited.’” *American Behavioral Scientist* 36, no. 2 (1992): 172–86. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0002764292036002005>.
- Urry, John. *The Tourist Gaze: Leisure and Travel in Contemporary Societies*. London, UK: Sage Publications, 1990.
- Varman, Rohit. “Curry.” *Consumption Markets & Culture* 20, no. 4 (2017): 350–56. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10253866.2016.1185814>.
- Veblen, Thorstein. *The Theory of the Leisure Class*. New York, NY: Open Integrated Media, 2016.
- Visit London. “Brick Lane Market - Street Market.” Accessed July 8, 2022. <https://visitlondon.com/things-to-do/place/279336-brick-lane-market>.
- Visit London. “Hoxton and Shoreditch.” Accessed July 8, 2022. <https://visitlondon.com/things-to-do/london-areas/hoxton-and-shoreditch>.
- Visit Music City. *Authentic Nashville Hot Chicken: An Introduction*. YouTube, 2018. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yXIXT2wyto&t=13s>.
- Visit Music City. “Hot Chicken.” Visit Nashville TN, November 19, 2021. <https://www.visitmusiccity.com/things-to-do-in-nashville/food-drink/hot-chicken>.
- Visit Music City. “Visitors.” Visit Nashville TN, March 31, 2022. <https://www.visitmusiccity.com/>.
- Wachs, Eleanor. *Crime Victim Stories: New York City's Urban Folklore*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988.

- Walton, Stuart. *The Devil's Dinner: A Gastronomic and Cultural History of Chili Peppers*. New York, NY: St. Martin's Press, 2018.
- Whisnant, David E. *All That Is Native & Fine: The Politics of Culture in an American Region*. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2009.
- Whit, William C. "Soul Food as Cultural Creation." Essay. In *African American Foodways: Explorations of History and Culture*, edited by Anne Bower, 45–58. Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2007.
- White, Michelle. *The Body and the Screen: Theories of Internet Spectatorship*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2006.
- Williams, Paige. "The Family Business That Put Nashville Hot Chicken on the Map." *The New Yorker*, January 28, 2019. <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2019/02/04/the-family-business-that-put-nashville-hot-chicken-on-the-map>.
- Williams-Forsion, Psyche A. *Building Houses out of Chicken Legs: Black Women, Food, and Power*. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2007.
- Wilsey, Kristiana. "Falling Out of Performance: Pragmatic Breakdown in Veterans' Storytelling." In *Diagnosing Folklore: Perspectives on Disability, Health, and Trauma*, edited by Trevor Blank and Andrea Kitta, 215–32. S.l.: University Press of Mississippi, 2017.
- Wilson, Julie. *The Routledge Handbook of Tourism Geographies*. New York, NY: Routledge, 2012.
- Winders, Jamie. "White In All the Wrong Places: White Rural Poverty in the Postbellum US South." *Cultural Geographies* 10, no. 1 (2003): 45–63. <https://doi.org/10.1191/1474474003eu266oa>.
- winnie100_13. "Has Nashville Changed?? - Nashville Forum." *Tripadvisor*, March 18, 2019. https://www.tripadvisor.com/ShowTopic-g55229-i154-k12417748-Has_Nashville_changed-Nashville_Davidson_County_Tennessee.html.
- Wray, Matt. *Not Quite White: White Trash and the Boundaries of Whiteness*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006.
- Yelp user AI R. 2018. Review of Hattie B's Hot Chicken Nashville Midtown. *Yelp Review*. <https://www.yelp.ca/biz/hattie-b-s-hot-chicken-nashville-midtown-nashville?osq=hattie+b%27s+nashville+midtown&q=the+far+reaches+of+India>.
- Yelp user Alexander W. 2018. Review of Prince's Hot Chicken Shack. *Yelp Review*. https://www.yelp.ca/user_details_reviews_self?userid=sBkm5dZgoZXBn5W6YQj7Q&review_filter=location&location_filter_city=Nashville&location_filter_state=TN.

- Yelp user A.W. 2018. Review of Hattie B's Hot Chicken Nashville Midtown. Yelp Review.
https://www.yelp.ca/user_details_reviews_self?userid=pxwOHU5aAVsPHJxdBXmTNO&review_filter=location&location_filter_city=Nashville&location_filter_state=TN.
- Yelp user Caroline M. 2018. Review of Hattie B's Hot Chicken Nashville Midtown. Yelp Review. <https://www.yelp.ca/biz/hattie-b-s-hot-chicken-nashville-midtown-nashville?osq=hattie+b%27s+nashville+midtown&q=the+white+man%27s+hot+chicken>.
- Yelp user Chode Z. 2018. Review of Hattie B's Hot Chicken Nashville Midtown. Yelp Review.
https://www.yelp.ca/user_details_reviews_self?userid=hhfyh0fv826f6d2mxtON8A&review_filter=location&location_filter_city=Nashville&location_filter_state=TN.
- Yelp user Christopher B. Review of Prince's Hot Chicken Shack. Yelp Review.
<https://www.yelp.ca/biz/princes-hot-chicken-shack-nashville?q=grandmas+house>.
- Yelp user Daniel W. 2018. Review of Hattie B's Hot Chicken Nashville Midtown. Yelp Review.
<https://www.yelp.ca/biz/hattie-b-s-hot-chicken-nashville-midtown-nashville?osq=hattie+b%27s+nashville+midtown&q=Hot+chicken%2C+dank+sides%2C+and+trap+music>.
- Yelp user David K. 2019. Review of Dishoom Shoreditch. Yelp Review.
https://www.yelp.ca/user_details_reviews_self?userid=R7L6Fz8_SJuPJx3TqwzfTA&review_filter=location&location_filter_city=London&location_filter_state=XGL.
- Yelp user Doug B. 2018. Review of Hattie B's Hot Chicken Nashville Midtown. Yelp Review.
https://www.yelp.ca/user_details_reviews_self?userid=qfvsAPVSAKYLkUsKPqduBA&review_filter=location&location_filter_city=Nashville&location_filter_state=TN.
- Yelp user Ellyse L. 2018. Review of Prince's Hot Chicken Shack. Yelp Review.
https://www.yelp.ca/user_details_reviews_self?userid=EaRd_4nFnPs8Fei-H2ZmVA&review_filter=location&location_filter_city=Nashville&location_filter_state=TN.
- Yelp user Eugene C. 2018. Review of Hattie B's Hot Chicken Nashville Midtown. Yelp Review.
https://www.yelp.ca/user_details_reviews_self?userid=J4s-nnp3JUNawmv9bKnGWA&review_filter=location&location_filter_city=Nashville&location_filter_state=TN.
- Yelp user Eugene X. 2019. Review of Dishoom Shoreditch. Yelp Review.
https://www.yelp.ca/user_details?userid=g8TDfc8Iv9y7ieTp8xpENQ.
- Yelp user Everett B. 2019. Review of Aladin Indian Restaurant. Yelp Review.
https://www.yelp.ca/user_details_reviews_self?userid=T2cMVZHBjF8ITPTRzh-3Q&review_filter=location&location_filter_city=London&location_filter_state=XGL.

- Yelp user J David H. 2018. Review of Hattie B's Hot Chicken Nashville Midtown. Yelp Review.
https://www.yelp.ca/user_details_reviews_self?userid=TrU49Ydk2ZMjIh0rtOVj7g&review_filter=location&location_filter_city=Nashville&location_filter_state=TN.
- Yelp user Jamie T. 2017. Review of Prince's Hot Chicken Shack. Yelp Review.
https://www.yelp.ca/user_details_reviews_self?userid=pRI1b1HWGEg6Z3QSt6OOzA&review_filter=location&location_filter_city=Nashville&location_filter_state=TN.
- Yelp user Jeff D. 2018. Review of Prince's Hot Chicken Shack. Yelp Review.
https://www.yelp.ca/user_details_reviews_self?userid=Htx0bjQtOsoEIVBoSbjh5g&review_filter=location&location_filter_city=Nashville&location_filter_state=TN.
- Yelp user Jonathan Y. 2017. Review of Prince's Hot Chicken Shack. Yelp Review.
<https://www.yelp.ca/biz/princes-hot-chicken-shack-nashville?q=off+the+beaten+path+type+of+place>.
- Yelp user Katelynn P. 2017. Review of Prince's Hot Chicken Shack. Yelp Review.
<https://www.yelp.ca/biz/princes-hot-chicken-shack-nashville?q=staffed+by+lazy+people>.
- Yelp user Kaitlyn Z. 2018. Review of Hattie B's Hot Chicken Nashville Midtown. Yelp Review.
https://www.yelp.ca/user_details_reviews_self?userid=XJTITrAB6KQHc-Q0fQtqZA&review_filter=location&location_filter_city=Nashville&location_filter_state=TN.
- Yelp user Kiyah G. 2019. Review of Dishoom Shoreditch. Yelp Review.
https://www.yelp.ca/user_details_reviews_self?userid=z3GKno925T4mTiPdbyYwng&review_filter=location&location_filter_city=London&location_filter_state=XGL.
- Yelp user Lauren W. 2017. Review of Prince's Hot Chicken Shack. Yelp Review.
https://www.yelp.ca/user_details_reviews_self?userid=jmk1NsEKAH1EiMCb1JQvAg&review_filter=location&location_filter_city=Nashville&location_filter_state=TN.
- Yelp user Leigh O. 2018. Review of Hattie B's Hot Chicken Nashville Midtown. Yelp Review.
https://www.yelp.ca/user_details_reviews_self?userid=HHp96KPsroyYDAHOwo_VSg&review_filter=location&location_filter_city=Nashville&location_filter_state=TN.
- Yelp user Lillian B. 2020. Review of Aladin Indian Restaurant. Yelp Review.
https://www.yelp.ca/user_details?userid=8Gt3z5OgcfQ0zNfawzQpNQ.
- Yelp user Mariam B. 2019. Review of Dishoom Shoreditch. Yelp Review.
https://www.yelp.ca/user_details?userid=jRttoF94E1yhT8AfUXsy7Q.
- Yelp user Michael M. 2018. Review of Prince's Hot Chicken Shack. Yelp Review.
https://www.yelp.ca/user_details_reviews_self?userid=vJgKKjZnGGCagS6F5p7EqQ&review_filter=location&location_filter_city=Nashville&location_filter_state=TN.

- Yelp user Sam Z. 2019. Review of Dishoom Shoreditch. Yelp Review.
https://www.yelp.ca/user_details?userid=-9NMyRIFCXht_rTzKLIPEA.
- Yelp user Shannon S. 2019. Review of Dishoom Shoreditch. Yelp Review.
https://www.yelp.ca/user_details_reviews_self?userid=8rw-lqaOVN4A4NX2YNdWvA&review_filter=location&location_filter_city=London&location_filter_state=XGL.
- Yelp user Sophie B. 2020. Review of Aladin Indian Restaurant. Yelp Review.
https://www.yelp.ca/user_details?userid=xWFxce7BldODkTVD-lcBOQ.
- Yelp user Stephanie W. 2018. Review of Prince’s Hot Chicken Shack. Yelp Review.
<https://www.yelp.ca/biz/princes-hot-chicken-shack-nashville?q=Worlds+worst+service>.
- Yoder, Don. “Folk Cookery.” In *Folklore and Folklife: An Introduction*, edited by Richard Mercer Dorson, 325–50. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982.
- York, Joe. Oral History Interview with Andre Prince Jeffries. Other. *Southern Foodways Alliance Nashville East Project*, July 7, 2006a.
<https://www.southernfoodways.org/interview/princes-hot-chicken-shack/>.
- York, Joe. *Prince's Hot Chicken*. Oxford, MS: Southern Foodways Alliance. 2006b.
<https://www.southernfoodways.org/film/hot-chicken/>
- Zlotnick, Susan. “Domesticating Imperialism: Curry and Cookbooks in Victorian England.” *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies* 16, no. 2/3 (1996): 51–68.
<https://doi.org/10.2307/3346803>.
- Zuberi, Tukufu, and Eduardo Bonilla-Silva. “Toward a Definition of White Logic and White Methods.” Essay. In *White Logic, White Methods: Racism and Methodology*, edited by Tukufu Zuberi and Eduardo Bonilla-Silva, 3–28. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2008.
- Zukin, Sharon, Scarlett Lindeman, and Laurie Hurson. “The Omnivore’s Neighborhood? Online Restaurant Reviews, Race, and Gentrification.” *Journal of Consumer Culture* 17, no. 3 (2017): 459–79. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1469540515611203>.