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Texts and Tastes: Food and Cultural Identity in Hispanic Writing and Film

Elizabeth L. (Elizabeth Louise) Huard



FLORIDA STATE UNIVERSITY
COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES

TEXTS AND TASTES: FOOD AND CULTURAL
IDENTITY IN HISPANIC WRITING AND FILM

By

ELIZABETH LOUISE HUARD

A Dissertation submitted to the
Department of Modern Languages and Linguistics
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

Degree Awarded:
Fall Semester, 2014

Elizabeth Huard defended this dissertation on October 24, 2014.

The members of the supervisory committee were:

Enrique Álvarez
Professor Directing Dissertation

Bruce Boehrer
University Representative

Roberto Fernández
Committee Member

Lisa Wakamiya
Committee Member

Michael Uzendoski
Committee Member

The Graduate School has verified and approved the above-named committee members, and certifies that the dissertation has been approved in accordance with university requirements.

For my parents, Martha and Harold

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I was once told that writing a dissertation is the loneliest work a person could ever do. The people included here have proven that it doesn't have to be.

I would first like to express my deepest gratitude to my directing professor, Enrique Álvarez. In addition to spending countless hours of your time tediously reading and revising my work, you have offered me invaluable guidance on how to navigate the academic world. It was you who taught me that professors are not these distant, disconnected, other-worldly beings, but rather, they are grounded in their humanness and should be given the same space for emotion and error that the rest of the world is afforded. This taught me that I, too, should give myself that same consideration. But, most of all, I want to thank you for always telling me the truth. Your consistent honesty means so much more to me than you will ever know.

Next, I would like to thank my committee members: Lisa Wakamiya, Michael Uzendoski, and Roberto Fernandez. Thank you all for the time and energy you put into my project. Your feedback was detailed and thoughtful; I know that it will be extremely useful for me as I begin the next phase of my work. Dr. Wakamiya: thank you for your input about how I can rearticulate my argument to make it much stronger and applicable across multiple disciplines. This has been one of my main struggles, so I am extremely thankful for your help. Dr. Uzendoski: Thank you for skyping in from Ecuador to give me your anthropological perspective – it is fundamental to my argument and I am so grateful that you accommodated me. Dr. Fernandez, many thanks for your insightful comments; your expertise is invaluable to me. Also, thank you for your guidance along the way – my very first excursion into food representation began in your contemporary Latin American literature class.

My family has been a consistent support for me throughout the years, beginning with my parents, to whom this dissertation is dedicated. Mom and Dad: I am eternally grateful for your unwavering pride and faith in me from a very early age; it gave me the confidence to pursue what I love. You taught me that having passion for what I do each day, for the moments that make up this life, is far more important than the material aspects of the world. For that, I never felt wrong for pursuing something that brings me happiness, something that moves me. Even when so many other people could not understand why I chose this path, you always did. I cannot tell you how special that is to me.

To my brother Jason – thank you for extending the same confidence in me that our parents have given us. Thank you for always asking how my work is going and understanding when I have not had the time to talk. Your support over the years and distances has been constant and I cannot adequately express how much I appreciate that.

Aunt Maribeth – thank you for your graduate school advice; it has never failed me. Also, many thanks for the hilarious exchange of student stories. I'd like to thank the rest of my family – the Huards, the Logues, and the Pyles – for always conveying how proud you all are of me. You will never know how much those words of encouragement pushed me when I needed it the most.

To Micah – thank you for being my constant strength. You took the brunt of my (at least weekly) graduate student meltdowns, you gave me no excuses to quit, you pushed me to move forward, and you stuck around through it all. Thank you for indulging my daily graduate student rants about disenchantment with academia and the overall failure of this country's food production system. Our conversations mean the world to me. Thank you for being my personal editor and re-articulator of thoughts. Also, I cannot thank you enough for always reminding me

how to enjoy life despite being swamped with work. I will strive everyday to be all of these things for you (whether you like it or not), now that you are at the beginning of your graduate school path.

To Traci – thank you for always making me laugh when it seemed my world was crumbling down around me. Thank you for always offering perspective when I needed it. You have been my clarification an innumerable amount of times. Throughout this process, you have been my biggest source of comfort and unconditional love. You truly are the best.

To Bridget – thank you for being a constant source of inspiration. You have been such a bright light for me and you have given me hope that the world can change. Thank you for being my go-to for intense conversation about food, the body, and astrology – these conversations have reminded me that I’m not completely crazy and we’re totally on to something. Also, thank you for being my food-obsessed, overeating twin. I couldn’t do it alone.

Additionally, I’d like to thank the many people that make up my CrossFit family. You all have been the physical balance to my mental exertion. Without even knowing it, you have given me a completely different yet complementary forum through which I could grow and become a stronger, more capable person.

Unfortunately, there is simply not enough space or time to include everyone who has contributed to my project in one way or another, so I will forcibly cut myself off where I began: writing a dissertation is not a solo project. Like any other worthwhile endeavor in this life, it is a collective effort. Many thanks to you all.

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation explores the role of food representation and identity in Hispanic cultural production as they participate in establishing resistant agency despite historical contexts of authoritarian oppression. Accordingly, I explore subjectivity through the lens of food studies as it is grounded in notions of difference and therefore allows us to establish understandings of self and other – both personal and political. Next, I use this relationship between food and subjective experience to demonstrate how – regardless of the details in which it is manifested – in each of the historical contexts, the end result of food representation is a politics of resistance which in some fashion challenges the authoritarian status-quo. This is a process that occurs within the text, among characters and often manifested through a challenging of gender roles. However, these works (and specifically their varied historical trajectories) also demonstrate that the language of food extends far beyond the text, participating in larger projects that challenge, undermine, and rewrite the ethical atrocities committed during each of these oppressive political regimes.

The novels and films included in this study were chosen to purposely span various geographical and historical time periods encompassing dictatorship, political transition, and those produced in democratic retrospect, which thus revisit an oppressive past in the Hispanic world. In chapter one, I explore food representation as it problematizes Puerto Rican identity in the face of United States imperialism in Luis Rafael Sánchez's Puerto Rican novel *La Guaracha del Macho Camacho* (1976). In chapter two, I analyze gastropoetics in Margarita Engle's US-Cuban novel *Singing to Cuba* (1993), as it establishes interconnectedness among the characters, which is juxtaposed with the ruptures created by Castro's communism. In chapter three, I investigate how culinary metaphor is used to rewrite Spain's history of Francoist oppression in Almudena Grandes' Spanish novel *Inés y la alegría* (2010). Finally, this study concludes with an

analysis of food representation in two films that depict the transition from authoritarianism to democracy: Manuel Gutiérrez Aragón's *La mitad del cielo* (1986), a Spanish transitional piece, and Silvio Caiozzi's transitional film *La luna en el espejo* (1990), produced under Chilean dictatorship.

INTRODUCTION

AN EDIBLE LANGUAGE OF RESISTANCE

As a fundamental aspect of culture, food is elemental and simultaneously symbolic, thus making it integral to understanding human interaction and, more specifically, the multiple ways in which we define ourselves and others. Accordingly, food can create solidarity by connecting people together on local, national, and even global scales. In a similar way, food also serves to mark the differences between us, delineating many of our bases for identity such as race, class, gender, religion, political affiliation, geographic origin, and many other nuanced labels that we use to identify ourselves (healthy, active, environmentally aware, etc). Due to the relationship that food has with identity and difference – both being understandings of self and other, interpreted from one’s own perspective – food (and lack thereof) can be found at the center of many major revolutions and struggles against personal and political oppression. For these reasons – and with the rise of “the study of everyday life” as a popular facet of cultural studies within the academy – “food studies” or “diet studies” has more recently come to the forefront of literary and film analysis, with the intent of reading food as text and text as food in an attempt to see how the real-life repercussions of food are manifested within cultural production.

The pioneering work of Laura Esquivel’s novel *Como agua para chocolate* (1989) and the filmic adaptation with the same name (1992) has drawn critical attention to the important role that food and food representation play in Hispanic cultural production.¹ Nonetheless, the representation of food as conceptualized within a transatlantic Hispanic geographical space, across the modalities of novel and film, has yet to be analyzed. Furthermore, regarding the connection between food and struggles against personal and political oppression, there is only one pertinent analysis of the language of food as fundamental to cultural production during and after Hispanic authoritarian political regimes – that of Nina Bosch Namaste who discusses

alimentary metaphor in Argentina's, Chile's, and Spain's dramatic texts. In this regard, Bosch Namaste argues that "the appearance of food in these dramatic texts is not merely a costumbristic detail, but, instead, constitutes a reflection of the exploration, contestation, and transgression of national identities imposed during times of dictatorial regimes in these countries" (vii).

Following Namaste, I argue that this transgressive quality of food representation is one that we will also see in authoritarian and post-authoritarian Hispanic prose and cinema. Nonetheless, no critical attention has been dedicated to gastronomy within novel and film that are produced during transitions from authoritarianism to democracy. Therefore, in addition to those texts produced during and after political oppression, I will further extend this argument to transitional cinematic production.

Regarding the body of film criticism in general, Teresa de Lauretis posits that cinema is "a work of semiosis: a work that produces effects of meaning and perceptions, self-images and subject positions for all those involved, makers and viewers" (Quoted in Bower 3). With this in mind Anne Bower further comments on the study of symbolism in film: "Cinema critics and scholars have studied this semiosis in terms of clothes, setting, mise-en-scene, lighting, music, acting, cinematography, and many other elements. What about the recurrent use of food?" (3). Therefore, this lack in food criticism within Hispanic literature and film – specifically as related to the cultural politics of identity and difference – invites us to investigate the following overarching question: How does food representation challenge the problematic relationships between collective and individual subjects, subject and object, self and other in the Hispanic world? More specifically, how does this alimentary representation become a commonality that links distinct histories of oppression during, transitioning, and after the authoritarian political regimes that have driven social relations in the Hispanic world?

In order to fill this critical gap, my investigation revolves around the analysis of three novels written during or after political histories of oppression and two transitional films, depicting the movement from dictatorship to democracy. My objective is to demonstrate how food representation determines collective and individual subjects, identities and differences, during, in between, and after the rule of authoritarian political regimes in the Hispanic world. In particular, I argue that the language of food provides a voice of resistance to the political oppression that existed in each of these historical contexts. More specifically, I will show how food representation undermines and offers an alternative solution to the false identities created and forced upon the characters in each of the texts, who metaphorically represent their respective countries. In order to establish how this alimentary process of resistance is manifested within cultural texts, I will provide examples from Luis Rafael Sánchez's *La guaracha del Macho Camacho* (Puerto Rico, 1976), Margarita Engle's *Singing to Cuba* (US-Cuban, 1993), Almudena Grandes's *Inés y la alegría* (Spain, 2010), and Manuel Gutiérrez Aragón's *La mitad del cielo* (Spain, 1986) and Silvio Caiozzi's *La luna en el espejo* (Chile, 1990). Geographically, these texts underscore the need to conceptualize a space that unifies authoritarian/transitional/post-authoritarian cultural production from the Spanish, US-latino, Cuban, Puerto Rican, and Chilean contexts while simultaneously highlighting and upholding cultural difference. This is especially true when considering the thriving and multiple histories of military dictatorship and/or United States imperialism in Latin America and Spain throughout the 20th century. Thus, creating such a unified space is fundamental to understanding both histories of oppression and the ever-allusive freedoms alleged by democratic reform (in these contexts and beyond).

In this dissertation, I will explore how food representation actually serves as a fundamental symbolic system through which readers and viewers are pushed to reflect upon and

potentially reevaluate their understandings of self and other. In this way, I will demonstrate how the language of food offers a more comprehensive understanding of the many cultures that comprise this world. In order to do this, I will analyze food's ability to call attention to and place tension upon conceptualizations of self and other, identity and difference, emphasizing how food derives its poignant ability to do so from our interactions with it daily. As such, this is an argument that could be used beyond the Hispanic context in order to explore questions of personal and political identity and social change in other countries and cultures that have experienced authoritarianism.

Hispanic Food Cultures

When we begin to ponder the various cultures of the world, it is not unlikely that food will be one of the first points of discussion; food is culture. As such, food is fundamental to the field of cultural studies itself. The project of cultural studies, then, may be understood as the convergence of innumerable subject matters unique to various disciplinary heritages which traditionally have been segregated by the academy. For example, current trends in the field bring together explorations of “gender and sexuality, nationhood and national identity, colonialism and postcolonialism, race and ethnicity, popular culture and its audiences, science and ecology, identity politics, pedagogy, the politics of aesthetics, cultural institutions, the politics of disciplinarity, discourse and textuality, history, and global culture in a postmodern age” (Grossberg et al 1). Through this holistic theoretical lens, cultural studies endeavors to remain in a constant state of flux with the evolution of new and pre-existing socio-cultural trends that are distinct to an increasingly globalized socio-economic order. As such – and for the purpose of obtaining both a more comprehensive knowledge of the world and the conditionality of its many historically institutionalized inequalities – cultural studies seeks to explore the many intersecting

realities that exist between self, collective history, and social structure. In so doing, it offers itself as a basis for resistance to traditional modes of research, within and beyond the academy, as it “provides ways of thinking, strategies for survival, and resources for resistance” (Hall 22).²

Food, then, is a paramount aspect of cultural studies for the role it plays in both the maintenance and transmission of fluctuating cultural patterns (norms, values, and beliefs) in which understandings of self and other are located. Of equal importance, however, the study of food representation within cultural studies provides a uniquely salient mechanism for exploration into the relationships that exist between self and other, while also allowing for investigation into the numerous socio-cultural contexts within which these relations are both situated and created. In other words, food is thick with cultural significance; it is symbolic. Following Sidney Mintz, there is a “rich symbolic universe that food and eating always represent” (4). Food representation is therefore also heavily laden with meaning that is significant to and dependent upon understandings of individual and collective identity. As is posited by Kroeber and Kluckhohn, culture itself is dependent upon this symbolism:

Culture consists of patterns, explicit and implicit, of and for behavior acquired and transmitted by symbols, constituting the distinctive achievement of human groups, including their embodiments in artefacts; the essential core of culture consists of traditional (i.e. historically derived and selected) ideas and especially their attached values; culture systems may, on the one hand, be considered as products of action, on the other as conditioning elements of further action. (181)

We may understand culture as not only a result of past, but it is simultaneously a creator of the future; in other words, culture is constantly being produced and modified by the people who practice it. Accordingly, food becomes a very concrete way through which we may interpret this

cultural process for it constitutes one of the basic groups of “artefact” through which meaning is conveyed (Kroeber and Kluckhohn 181). The messages associated with food and food symbolism are contrived by the actions surrounding these foods and play a large part in determining how food will be perceived and understood in the future within a given culture. However, and as Kroeber and Kluckhohn go on to explain, these elements which define culture are in constant fluctuation; with each action surrounding our networks of symbols, meaning is reproduced and transformed simultaneously.³

To frame it in a more contemporary light, Marshall Sahlins posits that “localization develops apace with globalization, differentiation with integration; that just when the forms of life around the world are becoming homogenous, the peoples are asserting their cultural distinctiveness” (“Culture” 8). In other words, there is no pure or truly authentic source of any one culture – cultures are constantly changing in interaction with other cultures. “From all this, it follows that hybridity is everyone [...] In that sense, as Boas, Kroeber & co. taught, all cultures are hybrid. All have more foreign than domestically invented parts” (“Culture” 9). It is precisely through culture’s fundamental dynamism which social change is made possible. Food and its representation are very concrete symbols through which to study this social change as it is played out through the paradox that is local and global, different and integrated, homogenous and distinctive.

Although the concepts of cultural studies and culture are indeed very challenging to pin down, what we can talk about are certain distinct characteristics that distinguish one culture from another; this is, at its core, the conceptualization of self versus other. For the purposes of this project, moving from a definition of general culture towards an approach to Hispanism is only

logical because Hispanism is also defined by its characteristic quality of indeterminacy; it is fluid in that it is constantly changing. As Mabel Moraña reminds us,

Under these circumstances, the study of the variety of cultures that are connected to or exist in the periphery of the Spanish language, either in Spain or in the Americas [Hispanism itself], requires innovative trans-disciplinary and transnational approaches that take into consideration the political, social, and cultural transformation of the international arena. (xix)

Given the necessary difficulties inherent to trans-Atlantic considerations of the field, food representation becomes one of the “innovative, trans-disciplinary” tools through which Hispanism may be explored (Moraña xix). The language of food figures as a fundamental tool through which we as scholars may approach Hispanism, highlighting the fact that “the tensions, contradictions, and paradoxes that cut across the field are precisely what keep it alive, connected to both the social communities that produce its objects of study, and the political and cultural processes that these communities continuously challenge and reshape” (Moraña xx-xxi). As such, the most fruitful version of Hispanism requires us to engage cultural difference despite the Spanish language commonality. Food and its representation become innovative tools through which Hispanism may be approached.

Through food representation, we may transcend the historically universalized concept of “Hispanic” by placing emphasis upon the cultural differences that are categorized under the umbrella of the Spanish language commonality. What the field of Hispanism does – specifically via the language of food – is open a space of and for “an incessant commitment to problematize how cultures and histories establish notions such as reality, identity, and worldviews” (de la Campa 304). The representation of food offers a way to concretely demonstrate how these

Hispanic spaces are constantly evolving and challenging the boundaries of tradition and definition – at once unifying this space while simultaneously emphasizing the importance of cultural differences, or that which makes us who we are. Gastropoetics – which I will now define – is central to any argument involving cultural Hispanic contexts.

Food Talks: Defining “Gastropoetics”

The term “gastropoetics” first appears in Parama Roy’s article “Reading Communities and Culinary Communities: The Gastropoetics of the South Asian Diaspora” (2002). Although Roy does not explicitly define the term, she uses it in order to highlight and explore understandings of personal and national identity. She posits that Sara Suleri’s gastropoetic autobiographical representation “articulates the precise and haunting ways in which (gendered) national identities are, as it were, tested – sometimes disturbingly – upon the tongue”, thus interconnecting gastropoetic representation with personal and national identity (471). Ronald LeBlanc has more recently used the term within literary studies to loosely refer to “treatment of food motifs and eating metaphors” within a text (3). Ben Highmore’s 2013 article approaches a definition of “gastropoetics” through the lens of aesthetics stating that it is “a form of aesthetic attention that allows [these] varied regions to be glimpsed in the entanglements of an ordinary act of cooking” (102).

Synthesizing these three approaches to gastropoetics, I argue that when food is represented textually, its aesthetic usage is dependent upon its connotations and meanings outside of the text, in everyday life. It is a highly useful tool for exploring understandings of self and other, as well as the relations within which these identities are negotiated and perpetually changing. At the core of the definition of “gastropoetics” is of course, poetics itself, where form and function are intertwined; poetics capture the reader due to their cultural connotations beyond

the text. As Linda Hutcheon summarizes, poetic systems are “self-conscious about the context-dependent nature of linguistic meaning, about the importance to signification of the circumstances surrounding any utterance” (34). Words and their meaning do not exist outside of cultural context. Gastropoetics may be understood as cuisine replicated textually (be it written, spoken, visual, or otherwise), giving us that window into the “unfolding of experience” and “materialities of life” that Highmore references, through food.⁴

In order to fully encapsulate this idea of “gastropoetics”, we must understand what makes such an aesthetic experience meaningful to the reader or viewer. How do people interact with food to make meaning in everyday life; or, what is cuisine? Sidney Mintz states that cuisine may be simply understood as

people using ingredients, methods, and recipes on a regular basis to produce both their everyday and festive foods, eating the same diet more or less consistently, and sharing what they cook with each other [...] ongoing, active producing of food and producing of opinions about food, around which and through which people communicate daily to each other who they are. (97-98)

When we encounter the aesthetic representation of cuisine within a text, we are consuming gastropoetics which mimics cuisine and thus creates and reproduces what cultures come to understand as their identity. When cuisine is translated into gastropoetic representation, it calls attention to food’s extra-textual meanings, standing as a tool through which we may explore the intersecting realities that exist between self, other, and the socio-cultural relations that yield these understandings, many of which constitute personally and politically oppressive histories.

Through the tensions that it creates between self and other, gastropoetic representation offers a potential language of resistance to exploitative historical contexts of authoritarianism within

which it is found. On par with the mission of cultural studies itself, gastropoetics participates in the larger project of creating new “ways of thinking, strategies for survival, and resources for resistance” (Hall 22).

Ravenous Readers and Alimentary Audiences: Food Reception

The process of reading a text is, much like eating itself, a consuming experience that unfolds between the reader and the text, the viewers and the film. Stanley Fish demonstrates this possibility by merely changing the question from one of *meaning* (What does the text mean?) to one of *doing* (What does the text do?). Therefore, contrary to the seemingly finite and static qualities of a book, we are able to recognize that “a great deal is going on” between the text and the reader (Fish 128). In order to fully analyze what exactly occurs in this elusive space, we must consider how the text affects the reader. Following Fish, I understand the reaction of the reader to encompass the perception of words and consequential prediction of what is to come next, whether the action unfolds in the way that they think it will, their subsequent attitude towards all textual elements, and how their attitude and therefore perceptions are challenged as the text unfolds.

This potentially transformative tension that is placed upon the reader’s personal attitudes and worldviews is further emphasized when it relies upon the language of food as a primary symbolic system. This is precisely due to our close everyday relationships with food. The progressive potential that gastropoetic representation brings to a text, then, may be summed up by what Uma Narayan tells us:

Thinking about food has much to reveal about how we understand our personal and collective identities. Seemingly simple acts of eating are flavoured with complicated and sometimes contradictory cultural meanings. Thinking about food

can help reveal the rich and messy textures of our attempts at self-understanding, as well as our interesting and problematic understandings of our relationship to social Others” (64).

The gastropoetic text may be used as a tool that perpetuates the collective good through sound ethical practices that are grounded in a more comprehensive understanding of otherness.⁵ Molly Abel Travis further expands upon this idea, positing that it is not through empathy, but rather otherness, that literature in general opens space for social change: “It is only through openness to alterity that there can be an ethical relation. Without a relation to that which interrupts our epistemological projects to contain the other, there would be no ethics” (232). For this reason, the ethical possibilities of literature are founded not in empathy, but in “keeping alive intractable ethical questions about the asymmetrical relationship between self and other” (Travis 232). Again, food, self, and other are fundamentally correlated. As such, gastropoetic representation emphasizes the ethical quality of literature as it, too, highlights self and otherness through a forum that is elemental to human existence.

The ethical qualities of narrative are further explored by Kim Worthington who finds that the narrative process (writing, reading, telling, interpreting, responding, etc) allows for the “revision of one’s conceptions of self, and also acknowledges the potential for misreading and misinterpretation of the narratives of self and others [...] In short, it allows the subject to function as a purposive, morally responsible agent” (Worthington 13-14). That is, identity-making – or “one’s conceptions of self” – is demarcated as a fluid process, which I argue is even more prominent when dealing with food narrative due to the role that food plays in everyday life. Therefore, this project will demonstrate that not only through narrative – but more specifically through *food* narrative – readers and audiences are pushed towards being “purposive, morally

responsible agent[s]” (Worthington 14). This is, of course, an argument that extends beyond written literature and lends itself to the other arts, film being one of them.

Justin Lewis and Toby Miller point out film’s ability to bring attention to issues of self-conceptualization and otherness. They state that film’s

promiscuity points every day and in every way towards the social. It is three things, all at once a *recorder* of reality (the unstaged pro-filmic event); a *manufacturer* of reality (the staged and edited event); and *part of* reality (watching film as a social event on a Saturday night, or a protest event over sexual, racial, or religious stereotyping). Film is a marker of culture that touches on consciousness and systems of value and either bind society together or illuminate its fissures. (85)

Again, with Narayan’s contribution in mind, when gastropoetic representation is employed as a primary language within film, the language of food becomes an even more culturally meaningful as it is a fundamental system of value (as Kroeber and Kluckhohn may call it) in either uniting or dividing individuals within their society. This is also evocative of Roland Barthes’s claim that “food sums up and transmits a situation; it constitutes an information; it signifies. That is to say that it is not just an indicator of a set of more or less conscious motivations, but that it is a real sign, perhaps the functional unit of a system of communication” (29). Food speaks to its audience and culture determines what it says.

Therefore when considering the reader – or on the collective scale – audience, again Lewis’s and Miller’s definition is illuminating:

[...] the cultural audience is not so much a specifiable group *within* the social order as the principal site *of* that order. Audiences participate in the most global

(but local), communal (yet individual), and time-consuming practice of making meaning in the history of the world. The concept and the occasion of being an audience link society to person through screen texts, for at the same time as viewing involves solitary interpretation as well as collective behavior. (86)

While the readership of novels may be seen on a more individual level, I nonetheless argue that both readers and filmic “audiences are encouraged not just to watch and consume, but to act, to be better people” (Miller 86).⁶ With this understanding of audience, reader, or any other type of cultural consumer in mind, coupled with food’s fundamental connection to self and other, we can see how gastropoetic representation offers a unique approach to understanding the unification or division of peoples and nations, precisely through similarity and distinction. The language of food creates a space in which ethics may be reevaluated and transformed. Gastropoetics thus constitutes a forum through which subjectivity may be acquired and resistant agency against histories of oppression – both past and present – may be maintained, ultimately contributing to larger societal projects that strive for socio-economic and political freedoms in the face of authoritarianism. As such, this process is replicated throughout the novels and films that I include in this project as follows.

In chapter one, we will see that gastropoetic representation in *La guaracha del Macho Camacho* not only problematizes Puerto Rico’s history of Spanish colonialism, but it also challenges and undermines the contemporary colonialism of United States imperialism and the “Americanized” identity that is imposed upon Puerto Rico, squelching the island’s cultural traditions and identity.⁷ We will see that this historical backdrop of oppression is one that gastropoetics challenges head-on, demonstrating to what extent the United States has permeated the Puerto Rican market. However, through representation of Puerto Rican cuisine, food

becomes the voice of subjectivity and resistant agency in the text, specifically through the female cook figure – Doña Chon. Thus, through gastropoetics, the novel functions in “keeping alive intractable ethical questions” of cultural identity as it participates in the larger anti-imperialist voice that Puerto Rico and its citizens had in 1976 when the novel was published and in the present-day (Travis 232).

Chapter two will shift its focus to a quite similar history, represented in Margarita Engle’s *Singing to Cuba*. Although the novel was published almost two decades after *La guaracha* and focuses on the US-Cuban interaction and history, we still see the language of food being used in order to challenge and undermine oppressive political realities – in this case both United States capitalism and Cuban communism. Within the text, gastropoetic representation underscores and problematizes the indisputably oppressive interaction between Cuba and the United States while simultaneously criticizing Cuba’s history of failed Communism and the atrocities that accompany it. However, once again through cultural traditions of Cuban *guajiro* (peasant) food, resistant agency is achieved as the language of food proposes a potential solution to the exploitative politics of both Cuba and the United States.

Chapter three takes us from the Hispanic Caribbean to the Spanish peninsula itself with Almudena Grandes’s 2010 novel *Inés y la alegría*. Grande’s novel is distinct from the previous two in that the historical time frame that it represents (that of Franco’s dictatorship) ended in 1976, roughly three decades prior to the novel’s publication. In other words, *Inés* revisits Spain’s Francoist past in an attempt to engage ethical repercussions of his regime in present-day Spain. Therefore, we will see that with this novel, history is revised through gastropoetic representation to form part of the bigger project of bringing justice to Franco’s violent regime through the restoration of historical memory. Similar to the previous two novels, in *Inés y la alegría*,

gastropoetic representation acts as an ethical conduit which is used to reconstruct the past, undermine its many injustices, and potentially counterbalance these histories of oppression with a resolution of cultural subjectivity. We can see how the years of oppression, violence, and exile of the Spanish Republican army (specifically the communist sector), is revisited, rewritten, and ethically revised through the language of food. Ultimately, this gives a voice of active resistance and agency that joins the much larger present-day project through which Spain continues to restore historical memory in an attempt to bring justice to its Francoist past.

Finally, with chapter four I take a look at how gastropoetic representation is similarly used during moments of political transition from dictatorship to democracy – specifically in Spain and Chile. Spain in 1986 and Chile in 1990 have many political parallels and similarities.⁸ At this time, in both countries there was a complex process of renegotiation of cultural and political identity that was set into motion when the dictatorial power of both Pinochet and Franco seemingly changed hands. Thus, the desire to transition to democracy manifested itself distinctly in the face of the ever-looming power exercised by both dictators, even beyond their political regimes. For this reason, through an analysis of these films' representation of both food and the particularities of societal tastes during their transitions, we are able to see the conflict between the past and the present. Through this transitional glimpse, we gain access to the process of acquiring personal and political resistant agency for the characters and countries respectively, as they moved politically towards a newly- formed democratic state.

In conclusion, I return to my main arguments and underscore the potential role of gastropoetics as a transgressive academic tool of socio-cultural investigation within and beyond Hispanic contexts. To render Spanish-language texts accessible to English-language readers, I include English translations of the primary and secondary texts that were originally in Spanish.

Unless otherwise noted, all translations are mine and I am fully responsible for any potential discrepancies. Finally, many times food items and meals are untranslatable. When I find this to be the case, I leave the food reference in its original form in order to maintain meaning. Subsequently, I provide the reader with a footnoted description of the meal.⁹

Eat up, buttercup!

Regardless of whether or not we find gastropoetic representation in literature and film produced *during* histories of oppression, *after* authoritarian political regimes, or *while* there is a transition between the two, we see that the language of food is not only elemental, but fundamental to the constitution of different subjective positions and cultural resistance. Food representation within literature becomes a primary forum through which ethics may be reevaluated, reformed, and ultimately changed for the betterment of society, regardless of the geographic location. As Sidney Mintz reminds us, “the taste of freedom and the taste of food may be much more closely linked than they seem at first to be. The taste of freedom sounds so empyrean, so noble (or ennobling); the taste of food, so ordinary, so material. But these tastes are not really so remote from each other” (34). As such, the objective of this dissertation is to demonstrate the interconnectedness of these tastes as represented through food in Hispanic literature and film, thus highlighting the need to unify seemingly disconnected geographic places into a conceptual space that undermines authoritarian oppression in the name of a more just socio-economic and political order.

CHAPTER ONE

EATING DIS/ORDERS: QUESTIONING THE ALIMENTARY AMERICAN DREAM IN LUIS RAFAEL SÁNCHEZ'S *LA GUARACHA DEL MACHO CAMACHO* (1976)

As will be demonstrated throughout my project, food and its representation function as a collection of linguistic signs with meanings that go far beyond the scope of survival as food's basic function. As I point out in the introduction, Roland Barthes posits that food has the ability to convey meaning, to speak. He states:

When he buys an item of food, consumes it, or serves it, modern man does not manipulate a simple object in a purely transitive fashion; this item of food sums up and transmits a situation; it constitutes an information; it signifies. That is to say that it is not just an indicator of a set of more or less conscious motivations, but that it is a real sign, perhaps the functional unit of a system of communication.

(2)

Therefore, parallel to words of spoken language, food comprises a system of meanings depending on the context in which it is found. In so doing, it constructs identity by way of differentiation, or the subtleties surrounding food in everyday life. To add to that, Barthes argues: "Substances, techniques of preparation, habits, all become part of a system of differences in signification; and as soon as this happens, we have communication by way of food" (30). It is precisely through this language of alimentation and the nuances therein that we find one of the prevalent ways in which personal and collective identities are created, sustained, and transformed.

Accordingly, many contemporary Latin American novels represent food as a recurring theme that serves as a basis upon which to establish and question both personal and collective

identities within a specific political context or history.¹ *La guaracha del Macho Camacho* (1976), a Puerto Rican novel written by Luis Rafael Sánchez, is an exemplary narrative when it comes to food symbolism, as each page confronts the reader with a plethora of alimentary references. Further, food is particularly useful for understanding conceptualizations of Puerto Rican identity, as these very fundamental aspects of the human experience are constantly highlighted, questioned, problematized, and reevaluated, especially within the contexts of authoritarian and imperialistic relationships, such as the one existing between Puerto Rico and the United States when *La guaracha* was published. While there are many possible semantic trails we can follow with food as it is represented within Sánchez's novel, I will focus on the problematic representation of Puerto Rican cultural identity as it is developed in the face of United States influence, which we can identify as the imposed *alimentary* American Dream.

Whenever food forms part of the narrative in Luis Rafael Sánchez's *La Guaracha del Macho Camacho*, it lays bare the complex relationship that has existed between Puerto Rico and the United States for much of the 20th century, and is fundamental to the problematizing of Puerto Rican cultural identity in the wake of United States imperialistic presence on the island. By reading *La guaracha* through gastropoetics, and the historical and political exchanges between the two countries, we shall see that concepts of cultural identity are unfixed and constantly evolving in an effort to redefine and adapt what it means to be Puerto Rican. Arcadio Diaz-Quiñones problematizes the polarization of the relationship between the two countries, stating that "Puerto Rico era uno de varios estereotipos, o todos a la vez: un país 'americanizado'...que había pasado a ser paradigma de 'la pérdida' de identidad debido a la subordinación a los Estados Unidos" (55) (Puerto Rico was one of various stereotypes, or all of them at once: an "americanized" country...that had come to be the paradigm of 'loss' of identity

due to subordination to the United States). However, as the language of food will demonstrate in *La guaracha*, subjectivity is a process of constant revision and evolution – perhaps even more so in the face of imperialistic domination. The alleged “loss of identity” is simultaneously problematized and contested, demonstrating a more flexible understanding of subjectivity itself.

As pointed out by María Inés Ortiz, in the Puerto Rican context this identity interaction is “un proceso constante, porque la cultura y la identidad necesitan redefinirse constantemente, como resultado de la globalización que nos afecta, y con el propósito de no volverse obsoleta y estática frente al paso del tiempo” (175) (a constant process, because culture and identity need to be redefined constantly, as a result of the globalization that affects us, and with the purpose of not becoming obsolete and static as time passes). This process is both critiqued and realized through the inclusion of United States brand name foods as they are juxtaposed with traditional Puerto Rican meals throughout the text. Through an analysis of these various dietary representations within Sánchez’s novel, Puerto Rico’s collective identity is questioned by way of the influence and acceptance of U.S. foods on the island, which we can interpret as the *alimentary* American Dream, or the false promises of prosperity and happiness as they are portrayed through U.S. convenience foods in the text. Subsequently, the island’s identity is transformed and subjectivity is acquired through the emphasis and detail placed on traditional Puerto Rican cuisine, demonstrating the importance of creating a reaction in which customs and cultural heritage prevail in the face of United States imperialism.

While literature in general has this power, the language of food is fundamental in this process due to its close proximity to everyday human interactions and relationships. Deborah Lupton states that: “Food and eating are central to our subjectivity, or sense of self, and our experience of embodiment, or the ways that we live in and through our bodies, which itself is

inextricably linked with subjectivity” (1). Our experience of food through text resonates as it is connected to our alimentary experiences in everyday life. In the case of *La guaracha del Macho Camacho*, the language of food as it relates to Puerto Rican subjectivity in the face of United States imperialism is no exception. The gastropoetic references in the novel comprise a system of meaning through which we may interpret 1.) the omnipresence of capitalism/imperialism through the language of advertisement and 2.) two types of embodiment of national identity – the abject and the motherly. While the abject is representative of how Puerto Rico is deformed by the market economy, the motherly representation in the text counteracts this negativity through the emotional quality of the language of food, or food as it affects the characters and readers. As I will demonstrate, through these forums, the gastropoetic text opens a space in which the ethical understandings of self/other are explored through a vindication and reaffirmation of Puerto Rican histories and tradition.

Alimentary Omnipresence: The Voice of Food and False Advertisement

Throughout the text, there are various moments that ring with a tone of advertisement, even when they are not necessarily occurring as advertisements. In other words, food – and in this case drink – references consistently jump out at the reader for the entirety of the novel. This facet of the language of food thus represents food advertisement’s integral role in perpetuating United States economic imperialism. For example, the unknown narrator is describing a psychiatrist office receptionist who tells someone on the other line: “Misis, refresque esos nervios” (Misses, refresh your nerves) and then the narrator recounts her conversation, quoting her greeting and then commenting on it: “HOLA, HOLA, PEPSICOLA: ingenio colonizado” (136) (Hello, hello, Pepsi Cola: Colonized wit/ingenuity/sugar mill). The usage of the term “refresh” followed directly by the common greeting including “Pepsi Cola” resonates as the

product being advertised and marketed. The effect of such an example is followed up by the narrator's observation – “ingenio colonizado” – that this phrase represents the island's colonization, going so far as to invade their colloquial expressions while simultaneously representing the colonization and exploitation of the island via the sugar mill.

This is one example of many consumption-related images that reflect Puerto Rico's historical context at the time the novel was published, but on the cusp of change: “From 1945-1980, Puerto Rico was transformed into a modern colony with access to metropolitan rights and federal transfers as part of a symbolic and ideological interest of the United States in transforming the island into a ‘showcase’ of American capitalism during the cold war” (Grosfoguel 9). The Pepsi Cola example reinforces this “showcasing of American capitalism” in two ways. The first is how it is presented as if it were an advertisement – which is perhaps the single most powerful way to perpetuate capitalism in any forum. The second is that it indicates the extent to which the island's cultural wit, ingenuity, or creativity has been colonized – represented through the United States Pepsi Cola product. Not only has the United States product permeated the island's economic market, it has also permeated their language. This colonization is one that exceeds political boundaries and invades the very minds of the Puerto Rican people. Thus, the omnipresence of United States capitalism and its effects on the island are represented precisely through the language of food advertisement. Indeed, such imperialistic capitalism would not exist and prosper without the language of food and advertisement.

This critique is further perpetuated as food advertisement within the text is coupled with even more explicit political connotations. For example, the narrator describes a series of billboards in the following way:

En la búsqueda de paisaje redentor, superior en tamaño a los tablones propagandistas del Pan Holsum y el Queso Kraft, el First National City Bank y la Esso Standard Oil Company, descubre un letrero heroico...que, alto, predica: ...MUÑOZ MARÍN VIENE, ARREPIÉNTETE: como versículo saetado hasta el mondongo de la conciencia...(228-29)

(In search of a redeemed country, larger in size than the Holsom Bread, Kraft Cheese, First National City Bank, and Esso Standard oil company propagandistic billboards, there is a tall, heroic sign that declares: MUÑOZ MARÍN IS COMING, REPENT: like a verse piercing through the *mondongo* of the conscience)

When read in light of Puerto Rico's political history at the time the novel was published, we can see that issues of collective identity are questioned specifically through a critique of Puerto Rico's first democratically elected governor, Luis Muñoz Marín. His political platform, based on autonomy but not true independence from the United States, is ironically critiqued by juxtaposing it with foods representative of the United States ("Kraft" and "Holsum").² The irony lies in the fact that Muñoz Marín's politics were supposedly grounded in a return to Puerto Rican culture and traditions. According to Arcadio Díaz-Quñones, Muñoz Marín "logró neutralizar algunos de los reclamos centrales del independentismo mediante un discurso de 'afirmación' de las tradiciones propias y la creación de una burocracia cultural 'puertorriqueñista'" (60) (achieved the neutralization of some of the central calls for independence through a discourse of "affirmation" of their own traditions and the creation of a cultural "Puerto Ricanist" beurocracy). It is this political commentary simultaneously coupled with Puerto Rican

mondongo which conveys the importance of respecting and upholding the island's cultural identity.

Also, at first glance it may seem that Holsum bread and Kraft cheese appear in the text as a side note to the political commentary that is expressed here. Further, perhaps the inclusion of a bank and oil company may seem far more politically and culturally charged than the food imagery. On the contrary, through this inundation of U.S. convenience foods, there is a perpetuation of the traditional myth of the American Dream that success and prosperity is equally possible for everyone, despite gender, race and social class. In addition to highlighting the seemingly omnipotent presence of the United States on the island, these brands of food – ranging from Holsum and Kraft to “Corn Flakes” and “Libby juice” in other examples – embody the ideal of the abundantly prosperous and pre-packaged American lifestyle (199). Ironically, it is precisely this false *alimentary* American Dream which, rather than ensuring the prosperity of the Puerto Rican people, ultimately negatively alters their cultural identity, diluting the island's traditions with supposed promises of convenience and success, while diminishing quality of life. In other words, *La Guaracha del Macho Camacho* reappropriates the American Dream as it has been historically propagated as something positive which should be sought after and rewrites the American Dream through food as one that seeks to oppress.

The inclusion of Holsum, Kraft, and other United States convenience food stands in stark contrast to the traditional Puerto Rican food items and practices that have come to constitute the community. In a world of *arroz y las habichuelas*, *mondongo*, and *bacalao*, these name brand pre-packaged items mark the difference between self/other – Puerto Rico/United States. Thus, the United States brands metaphorically intervene upon what has been created within the traditional Puerto Rican kitchen, and subsequently intrude upon and affect the social

relationships formed by tradition. While this inevitably creates a new set of social relationships – one in which Puerto Rican food and United States food do indeed coexist on the island – these images are textually used to critique this interaction.

It is no coincidence, then, that the typical Puerto Rican meal *mondongo* – made of cow tripe, vegetables, and pig feet – is used to represent the collective inner consciousness of the Puerto Rican people as they are ironically called to “repent” (“ARREPIÉNTETE”) for not only buying into the American Dream, but also buying into Muñoz Marín’s political propaganda which purported a supposed “Puerto Rican Dream” – one in which the island’s traditions were used to gloss over its dependence upon the United States. That is, through the juxtaposition of the North American foods, the political dependency of Muñoz Marín on the United States despite his claims of tradition, and the “mondongo de la conciencia” of the Puerto Ricans, this piece of *La guaracha* serves as a critique of North American domination on the island as well as the complacency of the Puerto Rican people in forfeiting their own traditions – and thus identity – in the face of the imposed American Dream. Again, this is a rewriting of history through the language of food in order to approach a more ethical understanding of self and other in the Puerto Rican and United States context.

Another example that more explicitly critiques United States imperialism and its effects on Puerto Rican identity occurs in the supermarket. It connects various products with the geographic location in which they were grown. While shopping in “el monumental supermercado” (the monumental supermarket) owned by a “norteamericano dueño” (North American owner), the consumers hear an announcement about the specials of the week which are: “...jamón de Virginia, papas de Idaho, uvas de California, arroz de Louisiana, carnes de Chicago, manzanas de Pennsylvania, chinas de Florida” (271, 273) (Virginia ham, Idaho

potatoes, California grapes, Louisiana rice, Chicago meats, Pennsylvania apples, Florida oranges). The humoristic tone of disdain towards the flagrancy with which the U.S. foods assert their presence on the island elucidates a critique of the United States' imperialist dominance and seemingly omnipotent infiltration of the market. Although this is an issue which seems to be indisputable, the U.S. has historically tried to deny the nature of its relationship with Puerto Rico. According to Díaz-Quiñones, “En los Estados Unidos...casi nunca se admite la noción del *imperio* en el discurso – al menos no para referirse a la historia propia – Puerto Rico no ha sido una ‘colonia’ sino un ‘pueblo,’ un ‘territorio,’ en todo caso inferior” (55) (In the United States, hardly ever is the notion of *imperialism* admitted in the discourse – at least not to refer to their own history – Puerto Rico has not been a ‘colony’, but rather a ‘town, a ‘territory’, in any case inferior). Therefore, *La guaracha* takes the notion of imperialism as a social context that has been historically denied by the U.S. and ironically demonstrates through food representation to what extent United States' domination permeates the island and squelches Puerto Rican cultural heritage.

While the language of food in *La guaracha* was particularly relevant in the Puerto Rico of 1976, the gastropoetic representation in the novel is still relevant today as it forms part of the response to what Ramón Grosfoguel calls “neocolonial recolonization”, or the intent to politically and economically utilize Puerto Rico as yet another cog in the capitalist system (66). It is precisely this neocolonialism that ensures that “the recolonization pseudovereignty [occurring today] would permit the local and transnational bourgeoisie to better compete at the international level, while pauperizing Puerto Rican workers by eliminating those federal laws, rights, and transfers so costly to capital” (Grosfoguel 65). The political implications of images such as Pepsi cola, Kraft cheese, and Holsum bread are ironically employed within the text such

that they, along with other examples within and beyond the novel, not only demonstrate the colonization and recolonization of Puerto Rico, but perhaps more importantly they demand *decolonization* of the island. Through this critique of present-day neoliberal politics, alimentary metaphor in *La guaracha* confronts history and thus may be understood to call for decolonization and “imply a radicalization of the existing democratic structures in alliance with social movements and oppressed groups in the metropole, mobilizing U.S. citizenship as a means to fight and demand social justice and equality within the U.S. empire” (Grosfoguel 66). We will see that justice, equality, and subjectivity also have a gastropoetic voice within Sánchez’s novel.

Accordingly, food representation in the *La guaracha* is a prominent trope throughout the text that continuously participates in the process of problematizing and conferring agency to the Puerto Rican people. While the previous examples have been pulled from the omniscient narrator or omnipresent voice throughout the text that constitutes advertising (billboards, announcements, jingles), I now wish to analyze two characters and their interactions with food as they represent two types of embodiment of national identity: the abject and the motherly. We will see them associated with Puerto Rican tradition versus a sort of disordered island that is being pulled into the present by imperialistic consumption. Respectively, these two characters are Doña Chon, the archetypal female cook, and El Nene, a mentally challenged child.

Alimentary Abjection: The Case of el Nene

Julia Kristeva’s theory of abjection is particularly relevant to analyzing el Nene, a mentally handicapped boy in the narrative. I argue that el Nene can be understood as a representation of Puerto Rico itself, specifically a country that is disordered when read in light of its interaction with the United States. Such alimentary formation of self may be read through Kristeva’s words: “I expel it. But since the food is not an “other” for me, I expel myself...I

spit myself out. I abject myself within the same motion through which I claim to establish myself...During that course in which I become, I give birth to myself, amid the violence of sobs, of vomit (3). This is particularly illuminating considering the part of the narrative that depicts el Nene's rather disturbing relationship with eating. In addition to knowing that el Nene eats "tres lagartos por día y una libra de moscas" (301) (three lizards a day and a pound of flies), Doña Chon and the child's mother witness the following:

El Nene mordía la cabeza del largartijo hasta que el rabo descansaba la guardia, el mismo rabo que trapedo en la garganta convidaba al vómito. La Madre y Doña Chon miraron el vómito: archipiélago de miserias, islas sanguinolentas, collares de vómito, vomito como caldo de sopa china, espesos cristales, sopa china de huevo, convención de todos los amarillos en el vómito, amarillos tatuados por jugos de china, amarillos solviatados por la transparencia sucia de la baba, cristales espesos por gramos de arroz: un vomito como Dios manda (148-9)
(The boy was chewing on the lizard's head until its tail woke up the guard, the same tail that, tricked into the his throat, invited vomiting. The Mother and Dona Chon looked at the vomit: archipelago of misery, bloody islands, necklaces of vomit, vomit like a pot of *orange soup*, thick crystals, *orange soup* of egg, convention of every *yellow* in the vomit, *yellow* tattooed by orange juices, *yellows* incited by the dirty transparency of the dribble, crystals thickened by grams of rice: a proper vomit)

While el Nene does not actually eat the lizard in this scene, the lizard stimulates him to vomit and the description of the vomit thus represents the simultaneous abjection and creation of self to which Kristeva refers. El Nene metaphorically rejects yet recreates Puerto Rico, the "archipelago

of misery”, the “bloody islands”. Of course, the orange and yellow vomit only becomes a “proper vomit” when rice – the fundamental Puerto Rican staple becomes its main constituent.³ Puerto Rican history is rewritten through el Nene as part of Puerto Rico’s textual struggle for agency as he is juxtaposed with the United States foods in the text, representative of the imperialistic interaction between the two countries.

El Nene’s representation of Puerto Rico is further illuminated when we find out that he was not always mentally-ill: “Cuando el pai se fue de tomatero a Chicago – dijo la Madre – porque la cosa está mal pal de aquí – dijo Doña Chon – el Nene se veía normal – dijo la Madre. Es que era normal de nación dijo Doña Chon – Eso le vino a salir después del gateo – dijo La madre” (148-9) (When the country went to Chicago to harvest tomatoes – said the mother – because things were bad here – said Doña Chon – el Nene looked normal – said the mother. It’s just that he was normal of nation? – said Doña Chon – This happened to him after the crawl – said the mother). Thus, the leaving of many of the Puerto Rican people to go to the United States because of the inability to find economic success on the island is what initiates El Nene’s mental illness. This portion of the text may be read through social and cultural anthropologist, Arjun Appadurai’s following claim: “[...] food presupposes and reifies technological arrangements, relations of production and exchange, conditions of field and market, and realities of plenty and want. It is therefore a highly condensed social fact. It is also, at least in many human societies, a marvelously plastic kind of representation” (494). While this particular historical event – “el tomatero a Chicago” – is one among many, read alongside the other United States influences on the island, we may see this to be representative of the dependency of Puerto Rico on the United States economy in general. Food and its cultivation are the determiners here – linguistically in the text as well as concretely in an economic sense. Indeed, the language of food and food itself

reifies the economic relationship between Puerto Rico and the United States, and this is represented through the conversion of el Nene's mental status from healthy to deformed. Therefore, if el Nene is a metaphor for Puerto Rico, we may conclude that it is this United States dependency – rooted in U.S. imperialistic policies – that causes the maladies of the island.

Consequently, if we understand el Nene to be representative of the disordered island, searching for agency, this reading of food representation critiques Puerto Rico's imperialistic relationship with the United States. When la Madre takes el Nene to the park to play, there is a girl there accordingly named "la niña de dientes cómeme" (the large-toothed girl) (198). In this regard, the narrator states that "la niña de dientes cómeme tribunó que en su casa había una jaula vacia donde ella podía guardarlo [el Nene]: altruista, abnegada, yo le pedí a Santa Claus un bobo pero no me lo trajo: razonadora, saludable, desayunada con corn flakes, jugo de pera Libby, chocolatina y huevos fritos con jamón" (199) (the large-toothed girl tribuned that in her house there was an empty cage where she could keep him: 'unselfish, altruistic, selfless, I asked Santa Claus for an idiot but he didn't bring me one': rational, healthy, fed a breakfast of corn flakes, Libby pear juice, chocolate bar, and fried eggs with ham). Again we see United States name brand foods – Corn Flakes and Libby juice, coupled with chocolate, eggs, and ham. While the last three items may have a history within and outside of the United States, what can be said of them is that this is certainly not a traditional Puerto Rican breakfast. In fact, on more than one occasion, the narrator reminds various characters "*arrecuerdate que desayunas café con pan*" (107, 126) (remember that you have coffee and bread for breakfast). The "rational", "healthy", well-fed, large-toothed girl with an empty cage may easily be read as a metaphor for the United States, trying to not only consume el Nene (Puerto Rico) but feigning selflessness by putting him in a cage which serves to bind his freedom even further than his illness already does.

This is further compounded with what el Viejo, the man that la Madre is seeing, says regarding el Nene's psychological classification. He states that el Nene is an "alienado benigno" (a benign insane/mentally ill person) but that the girl with the teeth "no se lo va a comer [...] Así (treated with a sun bath) anima en su inteligencia escasa el sentido de pertenencia y grupo correspondiente" (248, 201) (she is not going to eat him...this way, there will be awakened in his lacking intelligence, a sense of belonging and corresponding group). While "alienado" has the connotation of an "insane" person, it can also mean "alienated" and is evocative of "alien" or "foreign". Following the metaphor of el Nene/Puerto Rico this double connotation gestures towards the island being a "benign foreign" presence from the perspective of the United States.

Nonetheless, as el Viejo points out, leave him in the sun for a while, and he will realize his identity – where he belongs and his corresponding group. Thus, the girl with the large teeth is not going to eat him – he will discover who he is and where he comes from, thereby acquiring agency through a solidification of the island's cultural identity. Regarding the geopolitical consequences of this part of the text, David Bell and Gill Valentine's work is illuminating. As I mention in the introduction, they state that "in a world in which self-identity and place-identity are woven through webs of consumption, what we eat (and where, and why) signals, as the aphorism says, who we are" (3). Thus, with this part of the text we see identities of self and place as delineated through el Nene not being eaten, but rather bathing in the sun. El Nene may be reminded of and reconnected to Puerto Rico itself, rather than being consumed. Further, his eating of lizards may also be understood as consumption of place – the eating of Puerto Rico itself – albeit disordered – represented by the lizards. Unfortunately, la Madre ultimately leaves el Nene in the sun at the park and his fate is one of suffering, hardship, and horror, as the

children in the park treat him like a toy, take him around on a leash, and finally end up killing him with a shard of glass.

Consequently, it is again through food – specifically the abjection of food and the trope of consumption vs. being consumed – that the struggle for Puerto Rican agency unfolds within the text. While the large-toothed girl did not eat el Nene, the larger group of children and their tendency to interact with him as if he were a pet or play-thing squelched any possibility that he had of surviving and finding a voice. While his death may represent a loss of cultural identity through the many injustices afforded by United States imperialistic domination in Puerto Rico, there is also a textual representation that is juxtaposed with el Nene and she subsequently serves to salvage the island, reinforcing Puerto Rican cultural identity through what she cooks, consumes, gives, and sells: traditional Puerto Rican cuisine.

“The High Priestess of Rice and Beans”: Doña Chon as Puerto Rico

As has been demonstrated in *La Guaracha* – through el Nene and the omniscient narrator – Puerto Rican cultural identity is broken down by the effects of the United States’ domination on the island, evident by the consistent American alimentary symbols and metaphors that confront the reader.⁴ Nonetheless, in addition to highlighting the deterioration of Puerto Rican cultural identity, Sánchez also makes use of the language of food in order to emphasize the island’s culture, despite United States imperialism. We will see that gastropoetics leaves an imprint upon the text and subsequently upon the reader through Doña Chon. Strikingly different from the representation of Americanized food throughout the text, Doña Chon’s character not only embodies Puerto Rican identity through food, but also serves as a reminder that “uno es lo que come” (252) (you are what you eat). Thus, Doña Chon’s personal subjectivity through food is a metaphor for the Puerto Rican community.

As such, we are dealing with the ways in which people define themselves in connection to or distinction from others, the way understandings of self are affected by others and vice versa. Either way, this interaction demonstrates that subjectivity is acquired through our relationships to the rest of the world – and, as previously explained, the language of food is precisely a language of self versus other. As I explain in the introduction, the gastropoetic text *does something* and in the case of Doña Chon, the language of food delineates what it means to be Puerto Rican in the face of United States imperialism. Thus, through her character, the fixed understandings of identity perpetuated by projects of oppression – in this case that of American capitalism – are undermined.

Regarding the process of identity formation, Sarah Ahmed reminds us that

the hybrid work of identity-making is never about pure resemblance of one to another. It involves a dynamic process of perpetual resurfacing: the parts of me that involve ‘impressions’ of you can never be reduced to the ‘you-ness’ of ‘you’ but they are more than just me. The creation of the subject hence depends upon the impressions of others, and these ‘impressions’ cannot be conflated with the character of others’. The others exist within me and apart from me at the same time. (160)

The language of food represents the interconnection of human beings and collectives as they affect and “impress” their experiences upon one other. Gastropoetics consciously delineates this interactive process; precisely through food metaphor, we can see that subjectivity and identity affect and are affected by other subjectivities. It is a back and forth, constantly changing process that is dependent upon all parties involved (in this case – Puerto Rico and the United States). *La guaracha* does not constitute a return to the past, but rather, through Doña Chon’s gastropoetic

representation, the novel functions to keep the past alive in order to prosper in the present and future. Puerto Rican and United States history is rewritten through Doña Chon's language of food.

Contingently, Doña Chon is fundamentally constructed upon food and diametrically opposed to anything that is not traditional Puerto Rican alimentation. For example, one of the narrators tells us that:

Dato adicional a tener en cuenta, con independencia de lo que Dona Chon, por pico propio, les ha dicho: Doña Chon es mucho más que entrada en carnes. Doña Chon es mucho más que gorda...angelote rebelado contra toda abstinencia bucal...los gordos no son primos hermanos de William Pen. Reconocido: Doña Chon es más buena que el pan: masa de trigo que, fermentado y cocido, ella gusta de comer (145-46)

(Something else to have in mind, with independence, of her own free accord, Doña Chon has told you all: Doña Chon is much more than meaty. Doña Chon is much more than fat...large angel against all oral abstinence...the fat ones are not William Penn's cousins. Acknowledged: Doña Chon is better than bread: mass of wheat that, fermented and cooked, she likes to eat)

This textual juxtaposition of Doña Chon and William Pen makes it evident that she is in no way associated with anything related to the United States. While this is also a humorous play on William Penn's name (as she claims that fat people are not "pendejos" or "primos hermanos de William Penn"), it is not coincidental that the text utilizes one of the most famous names associated with early United States democracy. Read in this way, Puerto Rico cannot be viewed as a "primo hermano de William Penn," or a relative part of the United States, but as a separate

country with its own traditions, history, and cultural identity. Furthermore, this example places emphasis on Doña Chon's independence and freedom; she *chooses* to eat in excess, to be fat, and she also *chooses* to say so. Through her choices surrounding food, her agency is created through her subjective experience. Accordingly, we will see that the connection between food and subjectivity continues to be the fundamental basis upon which her character is constructed.

This representation becomes more illuminating upon analyzing Doña Chon's preferred culinary and alimentary tastes, which evoke Ahmed's concept of "stickiness" – a particularly appropriate term that is useful in food analysis. For her part, Ahmed states that stickiness is constituted when "[s]igns increase in affective value as an effect of the movement between signs: the more signs circulate, the more affective they become" (45). The affects of Puerto Rican food representation reach their apex in *La guaracha* with Doña Chon's relationship to specifically Puerto Rican food – which would arguably be the "stickiest" due to their prevalence on the island and thus call the most attention to themselves within the text. When examining her food choices – both to cook and to eat – the reader realizes that, as opposed to other characters who have "bizcocho de Sara Lee" (Sara Lee cake) and "mantequilla Blue Bonnet" (Blue Bonnet butter) in their refrigerators, Doña Chon only prepares and consumes food which is traditionally Puerto Rican (232). For example, she is introduced into the narrative as: "la clériga suma del arroz y la habichuela...depositaria del secreto del bacalao guisado con huevo...mater et magistral del asopado de pollo, mano santa para las tortitas de calabaza" (250) (the high priestess of *arroz y la habichuela*...the bestower of the secret of *bacalao guisado con huevo*...the mater et magistral of *el asopado de pollo*, the blessed hand for the *tortitas de calabaza*).⁵ As is popularly known, and historically delineated by Ortiz Cuadra, rice is quite "sticky" in the Ahmedian sense: "comer arroz de forma asidua y cotidiana continua siendo lo que en Puerto Rico se entiende por

‘comer’ propiamente” y “Sin arroz, no hay habichuelas, y si no hay habichuelas, seguramente no hay arroz” (75, 78) (Eating rice regularly and daily continues to be in Puerto Rico what is understood as ‘eating’ properly [and] without rice, there are no beans, and without beans, there is surely no rice). Again, these two foods are fundamental to the Puerto Rican diet and the Puerto Rican identity and Doña Chon is the “high priestess” who creates and imparts them on the country, thereby representing a vindication of Puerto Rican cultural subjectivity.

Thus, through these two Puerto Rican staples which are consistently used as markers of identity, we see that Doña Chon is not only representative of cultural identity; her character also demonstrates the sacred status of Puerto Rican food within the society. She is the “high priestess,” the “mother and teacher,” and the “holy hand” that prepares, consumes, and thereby transmits the Puerto Rican collective identity through food. Doña Chon’s food – as juxtaposed with the influx of United States foods – may be read as what Cruz Miguel Ortiz Cuadra denotes is “una alimentación pretérita a la que los puertorriqueños y puertorriqueñas se ciñen con nostalgia ante el sinfín de informaciones e influencias que intersecan la alimentación actual [...]” (19) (a past diet to which Puerto Ricans adhere with nostalgia in the face of the endless amount of information and influences that intersect the present-day diet). Although rice and beans continue to be the present-day basis of the island’s diet, as the novel presents elsewhere, kitchens are nonetheless permeated with United States foods. Thus, for the first time in the novel, the example of Doña Chon and her sacralized cooking is a vision of Puerto Rican tradition and identity – a glimpse into the past – without any United States influence whatsoever. In other words, the “stickiness” of the Puerto Rican food’s presented through Doña Chon affect the characters and the readers such that they may cling to these traditions in the face of the United States’ imperialistic attempts to drown them out. Such a representation – being as sticky as it is –

is not without consequence; this is the text's way of challenging such authoritarian oppression on the island at the time *and* in the present day.

While the United States brands and food items that are present throughout the novel disrupt Puerto Rico's cultural identity, Dona Chon embodies the traditions and social relationships created through cooking and eating. Therefore, Dona Chon is a textual representation of what Stephen Menell defines as "culinary culture", or

todo lo que entendemos por cocina de una sociedad o grupo social, pero mucho más también. Se refiere no sólo a qué alimentos son comidos y cómo son preparados – sea de manera simple o por métodos muy elaborados – sino también las actitudes con las que se come y cocina. Esas actitudes incluyen el sitio para cocinar y comer según los patrones de sociabilidad de las personas (comer fuera o en privado); el entusiasmo o carencia del mismo hacia la comida: los sentimientos de repugnancia hacia ciertos tipos de alimentos o métodos de preparación; el lugar que ocupan en la comida, la cocina y el consumo en la identidad cultural del grupo o la sociedad, etcétera. (qtd. in Ortiz Cuadra 23)

(everything that we understand by cuisine of a society or social group, but also much more. It not only refers to the foods that are eaten and how they are prepared – be it simply or by very elaborate methods – but also the attitudes with which they are eaten and cooked. These attitudes include the place for cooking and eating according to the pattern of sociability of the people (eating out or in private); the enthusiasm or lack thereof towards food: the feelings of repugnance towards certain types of food or methods of preparation; the place that they

occupy during the meal, the cuisine and the consumption on the cultural identity of the group or society, etc)

Doña Chon serves as a textual means through which Puerto Rican subjectivity is regained through the representation of food traditions – or the stickiest foods in the Puerto Rican context. This is further evidenced in Doña Chon’s attitude towards eating: “Una cosa es comer y otra cosa es sentir que la comida se ha sentado en los pies del estómago – dijo Doña Chon. El cristiano debe parar de comer cuando siente que se le va a salir la comida – dijo Doña Chon” (252) (One thing is eating another is feeling that your food has set in the depths of your stomach). Doña Chon’s obsession with eating well beyond fullness serves as a rebellion against the United States’ obsession with dieting and control, evidenced by the unknown narrator saying: “Doña Chon ruega por nosotros los gordinflones ahora y en la hora de las dietas adelgazantes de los Weight Watchers” (252) (Doña Chon pray for us fatties now and the hour of the slimming diets of Weight Watchers). Similar to the other United States name brands of food, Weight Watchers is one more alimentary conduit through which the imperialism of the United States has permeated the island.

In order to counteract this imperialistic presence, when Doña Chon states that “uno es lo que come,” that what she serves and eats is culturally Puerto Rican (232). Through the island’s cuisine, the text makes clear that the collective Puerto Rican identity is created and affected by way of food choices. According to cultural geographer Peter Bishop, “diet’s relationship to cultural identity is not just a jingoistic one...[on the contrary, it is] on par with language in terms of cultural definition” (32). With Bishop’s assertion in mind, even though Puerto Rico is a protectorate of the United States, rebellion against United States influence and consumption of traditional cuisine of the island equates to survival of their own culture and prevalence of their

cultural identity. This is achieved through the language of food within the text exemplified by Doña Chon. Directly before proclaiming that you are what you eat, she describes her idea of a complete meal to another character, la Madre. She says:

El cuajo y las morcillas y los guineítos verdes para ir abriendo...Los platones de bacalaítos fritos para acabar de abrir...El mondongo y el butucún de pan con ajo para enfrentar el estómago abierto...La olla de funche y los azafates de dulce de lechoza para empezar a cerrar...Los potes de café para cerrar de una vez...” (252)
(*Cuajo* and *morcillas* and *guineítos verdes* to begin with...plates of *bacalaítos fritos* to finish beginning...*Mondongo* and a ton of *pan con ajo* to confront an open stomach...A pot of *funche* and trays of *dulce de lechoza* to begin to finish...pots of coffee to finish once and for all.)

Food reinforces what Ortiz Cuadra calls “la metáfora de ‘puertorriqueñidad’ que representan los platos señalados” (the metaphor of Puerto Ricanness that the specific dishes represent) (18). That is, Doña Chon and her description, preparation, and consumption of typical Puerto Rican meals thus participate in the construction of the Puerto Rican cultural identity through an enduring loyalty to traditional island cuisine.

Furthermore, we come to find that Doña Chon prepares her food in order to feed the only two productive entities on the island mentioned throughout the narration: groups of striking workers and a pregnant woman. There are two moments in the text when we see that she prepares food to give to those on strike. The first states that “se fue hasta los fogones a voltear el caldero de cuajo y morcilla que se mandarían de una sentada de taxistas en huelga, invocante de puniciones y escarmientos y dichos y redichos del mundo se está acabando” (196) (she went over to the burners/stove to turn over/flip the pot of *cuajo y morcilla* that would be sent in one go to

the taxi drivers on strike, invoking/pleading/appealing sanctions and punishments and sayings and repetitions of the world is ending). The second also places emphasis on Doña Chon in the act of cooking: “revolvía un dron de mondongo que daría el gustazo de la época a los albañiles en huelga” (250) (she stirred a pot of *mondongo* that would give the greatest pleasure of all time to the construction workers on strike). However, as she notes directly following this, while she thought it was just the taxi drivers that were striking, she observes that in fact it is “Medio país en huelga y el otro medio organizándola” (251) (Half the country on strike and the other half organizing it). This represents another facet of agency that is achieved through Doña Chon and her food. By feeding the strikers, Doña Chon plays her own part in fueling these protests, once again representing the acquisition of a Puerto Rican voice against oppression.

While there is no particular historical strike that is referenced here (Doña Chon mentions taxi drivers, firefighters, construction workers, etc), the historical economic context of Puerto Rico in the 1970’s certainly illuminates this part of the text. According to César J. Ayala and Rafael Bernabe, a report on the Puerto Rican in economy in 1974 (two years prior to the publication of *La Guaracha*) indicated that

half of the ‘tangible reproducible assets’ located in Puerto Rico were ‘externally owned’. This meant that a considerable portion of the income generated was not reinvested on the island [...] The report concluded that Puerto Rico should formulate an economic program less reliant on U.S. capital. Yet the insular government responded to the crisis by deepening its tax exemption policy, confirming its commitment to U.S. direct investments as the agent of Puerto Rico’s development. (268)

Such dependency upon and exploitation by the United States inevitably resulted in underpaid Puerto Rican citizens and drastically increased unemployment rates. Moving back to the text – Doña Chon prepares food for those who are striking against these economic injustices. Specifically in the second example, she stirs *mondongo* (previously used to represent the Puerto Rican conscience), which will again serve to fuel the protests. We see that Doña Chon disseminates Puerto Rican tradition to those who are actively exercising their freedoms up against injustices perpetuated by both the Puerto Rican and United States government. Subsequently, Doña Chon and her relationship to food are juxtaposed with the previously analyzed examples of advertising and el Nene. Through Doña Chon and her food interactions, there is a textual alimentary metaphor through which she – and therefore Puerto Rico – acquire agency in the wake of United States imperialism.

Furthermore, Doña Chon declares her subjectivity as a woman upon saying that “yo soy una mujer de mi casa [...] Un hombre no sabe ni así, tomó una pizca de yema de dedo, lo que es dolor – dijo Dona Chon, argumentosa. Ningún hombre podrá parir nunca – dijo Dona Chon, bombástica en la formulación del histórico aserto [...] (253, repeated p. 299) (I am a woman of my house...a man has no idea, taking a piece of her fingertip pointing...what pain is – said Doña Chon argumentatively. No man can ever give birth – said Doña Chon, bombastic in her formulation of the historical assertion). Following this, she then sells some of her food to a pregnant woman: “Dona Chon cortaba el papel de estraza en que envolvía las frituras. Dona Chon vendía cuatro alcapurrias a una preñada antojada” (300) (Doña Chon cut the Brown paper in which she wrapped the *frituras*. Doña Chon sold four *alcapurrias* to a pregnant woman with a craving). In this case it is specifically the woman’s ability to create and reproduce (both food and children) that ensures the survival of Puerto Rico’s cultural identity. Again, through traditional

Puerto Rican cooking, Doña Chon is the only character throughout the narration that recreates and perpetuates Puerto Rican subjectivity, giving the island a culturally fruitful future as opposed to the omnipresent dominant force of United States products and the disordered view of Puerto Rico represented by el Nene.

Conclusion: “Potes de café para cerrar de una vez”

In conclusion, it is through food and female subjectivity that the Puerto Rican political allegiances to the United States are questioned and cultural identity subsequently reaffirmed and defined within *La guaracha del Macho Camacho*. In this novel, gastropoetic representation becomes a language which rewrites Puerto Rican history as it communicates and reinforces the importance of the island’s identity as it is threatened in the face of United States imperialistic domination. That is, the images of U.S. food brands, which appear as part of the omnipresent political propaganda throughout the novel, are not coincidental references to the everyday act of eating. On the contrary, they are imbued with meaning – one that conveys criticism towards both the United States’ role in the dissolution of Puerto Rican cultural identity as well as the complacency that the island plays in its own degradation. On the other hand, this same language of food is engaged as the primary manner in which the Puerto Rican identity is salvaged. Through Doña Chon’s unwavering creation of Puerto Rican dishes and her constant reinforcement that “uno es lo que come,” her character ultimately represents the acquisition of the island’s agency and affirmation of its cultural subjective experience, as she is the only one who takes an active role in everyday life and does not suffer an ill fate at the end of the novel. It is through her that the language of food recreates and represents the constantly evolving Puerto Rican cultural identity in the face of the ever-looming *alimentary* American Dream.

The gastropoetic text *acts*; it *does something*. That something is fundamentally establishing agency and simultaneously contesting projects of oppression that stifle personal and collective subjectivities such as the one embodied in the United States imperialistic relationship with Puerto Rico. In 1976, *La guaracha* was published amidst an ongoing search for Puerto Rican subjectivity, in “el debate persistente en torno a la identidad” (Díaz-Quñones 54) (the persistent debate surrounding identity). The sticky language of food in the novel demarcates precisely this process – the back and forth exchange of identity creation and transformation through subjectivity. Contingently, the novel undoubtedly presents “una sociedad ininteligible en el marco de los estados nacionales modernos. Lo definitorio de Puerto Rico parece ser la indefinición” (Díaz-Quñones 54) [...] (an unintelligible society in the context of national modern states. The definitive aspect of Puerto Rico seems to be indefiniteness). However, it is through gastropoetic representation that we may come to sort out this messy work of establishing agency through subjective experience in the face of oppression.

It is precisely through this critique of United States omnipresence through food that *La guaracha del Macho Camacho* recreates what it means to be Puerto Rican in a world that has falsely polarized identity to be something that implicates we must be *this* or *that*. Therefore, Doña Chon’s female subjectivity – the core of gastropoetics in *La guaracha* – allows for a rethinking of such categories in the Puerto Rican/United States context (and in general), as it is precisely through food that we see that identity and subjectivity are never static; they are constantly being redefined and transformed in the face of adversity. There is no official version of identity, subjectivity, or history – there are many voices. While food representation participates alongside other cultural resources and production in a larger project of establishing agency, I argue that it is *fundamental* to this process due to its own previously mentioned ability

through which we experience our own subjectivity in everyday life. Doña Chon participated in a metaphorical representation that gave the voice of agency to Puerto Rico in 1976. Her gastropoetic implications continue to give that same voice of subjectivity to the island today by challenging the continuing imperialistic reality between the United States and Puerto Rico. In the following chapter, I will extend this argument to another historical context in which oppression has stifled subjective experience: the Cuban communist/US-latino socio-political context.

CHAPTER TWO

TASTING FRUIT, TASTING FREEDOM: MARGARITA ENGLE'S *SINGING TO CUBA* (1993)

Just as the language of food in *La guaracha del Macho Camacho* (1976) engages an understanding of Puerto Rican identity founded in resistance to U.S. imperialism, it functions in a similar manner in Margarita Engle's *Singing to Cuba* (1992). This chapter further explores the connection between gastropoetic representation and resistance to political oppression, specifically in the U.S.-Cuban socio-historical context represented by Engle's novel. In *La guaracha*, this is carried out through a critique of United States domination through U.S. food brands coupled with the female acquisition of subjectivity and maintenance of cultural tradition through cooking. However, in *Singing to Cuba* the language of food emphasizes the importance of the connection of individuals to one another, specifically through the figure of the *guajiro* Cuban peasant tradition, highlighting the fundamental role that food has in collective cultural interactions. We will see how gastropoetics is used to rewrite US-Cuban history, providing cultural solidarity to the Cuban and US-Cuban population despite the exploitation of Castro's communism, which itself is fundamentally connected to the abuses of U.S. imperialism. Gastropoetics will demarcate this novel as overtly anti-Castro; the language of food functions blatantly as a language of resistance against Cuban communism. However, again through gastropoetics, I shall demonstrate how *Singing to Cuba* also affords a voice of resistant agency up against United States capitalism, specifically through the maintenance of Cuban cultural traditions.

As in *La guaracha*, exploring individual and collective identities through food may serve to demonstrate the coexistence of alternative social logics (alongside capitalism and communism

in this case) that afford agency through group interconnection by emphasizing an individual's place within their culture. Food representation has this ability precisely because “the foods we eat are not simply an expression of individual tastes but have a wider basis in class cultures and lifestyles. Tastes are not simply a reflection of our identity but work to construct our cultural identity: we may be what we eat, but what we eat also produces who we are” (Ashley et al 59). While this is definitively reminiscent of Doña Chon's relationship with food in *La guaracha*, *Singing to Cuba* even further questions an understanding of individual identities and bodies created separate from one another (rather than located within a web of interactions) – a markedly state-endorsed concept.¹ Rather than cultural food tradition being represented and perpetuated by one central character (like Doña Chon in *La guaracha*), *Singing to Cuba* portrays the importance of group interconnection through food, seen through the eyes of an unnamed protagonist, as it affects and reinforces each individual's location within that collective culture.² Thus, Timothy Morton reminds us that rather than attempting to delineate individual identities, perhaps when we encounter food representation, it would be beneficial to explore the opposite: “diet studies need what Theodor Adorno meant by negative dialectics: the encounter of thought with what it is not – nonidentity” (258). I will investigate how food representation may contribute to this call for a “negative dialectics” that juxtaposes itself to the dialectic divisions perpetuated by the state while simultaneously coexisting with it. As such, in *Singing to Cuba*, I explore how gastropoetic language represents an alternative system of contrasting social logic that aims to reconnect people to themselves, each other, and the land.

Similar to *La guaracha*, *Singing to Cuba* uses gastropoetics in such a way that connects food and memory to distinct subject positions (or understandings of self and other) embedded within political histories. This is because food is “an ‘edible dynamic’ – a visceral link between

the personal and the political” (Belasco 217). Food representation (and the processes surrounding its preparation and consumption) in *Singing* problematizes traditional markers of personal and political identity perpetuated by the state within the communist and capitalist systems.

Accordingly, food representation offers an alternative conceptualization of identity formed within a coexisting social system based in kinship. Again, food representation within the novel constitutes a language of resistant agency that confronts the past and reflects upon Castro’s communist oppression as related to U.S. imperialism (made possible through the capitalist economic system) in such a way that pushes for a focus upon “the intractable ethical questions about the asymmetrical relationship between self and other” (Abel Travis 232). In other words, alimentary metaphor in the text highlights tensions that engage and problematize what it means to be Cuban, Cuban-American, communist, capitalist, part of a group, individual, and indeed – “free”, thus opening a cognitive space in which the reader may reevaluate their understandings of these categories and the role that they play in perpetuating political injustices.

Previous scholarship on this novel has also focused on Cuban and Cuban-diasporic identity and understandings of self – specifically as they relate to memory.³ This is not surprising, considering that the novel recounts the story of a Cuban-born protagonist (who narrates her own story, although we never know her name) who moved to the United States as a small child. The narration alternates between her experience of return to the island thirty-one years later (to visit her relatives) and the account of the atrocities suffered by her great-Uncle Gabriel during the Cuban revolution right after she and her parents fled Cuba. Regarding this, Gisele M. Requena observes that

The novel is a physical monument to memory, family, song – and for the narrator, both the completion of her mission and the beginning of a new wholeness. To

form this monument to memory and to sing the silenced words of the Cuban people, Engle/the narrator emphasizes the novel's goals in the style of narrative, choosing to stress remembering not only through what is said, but also through how it is said. (149)

Here, Requena draws an autobiographical parallel between the author – a Cuban-American born and raised in Los Angeles, who made trips to Cuba every summer – and her narrator, as they have a similar objective – narratively reconstructing their return to the island (the narrator chronicles her experience just as Engle is writing a novel). Thus, while memory and narrative have been previously analyzed in *Singing to Cuba* as two forums through which hybrid identity is conceived of and manipulated, I will explore how memory and narrative are specifically expressed through the language of food in such a way that opens new doors of understanding when considering conceptualizations of self and other in the Cuban and US-Cuban socio-historical context.

Kinship: Food and Memory

First, I will discuss two forums through which kinship is founded: food and memory. Both food and memory connect individuals to their collective culture through what Marshall Sahlin's calls "mutuality of being" or "mutual relations of being; participation in one another's existence" (9). Therefore, in kinship systems, the concept of fixed individual identity is reconfigured as a group of "transpersonal unities of bodies, feelings, experience" ("Kinship" 11). When reflecting upon the role of memory and food as they are related to these human experiences, we can see that they both contribute to the formation of different subject positions. According to James Fentress and Chris Wickham, "we are made of our memories" (qtd. in Radstone and Hodkin 2). In other words, both food and memory are pillars of subjective

experience, or our understandings of self and other; they are the stuff of which we are made.⁴ Just as food and memory serve as conduits through which we construct self-histories, they are fundamental to the creation of collective histories. Accordingly, food and memory are fundamental to intersubjectivity – or the interconnection of individual subjectivities that make up a social web. They allow other to be part of self and self to be part of other and thus create and transform identities that are mutually constituted and codependent; this is the foundation of kinship.

If we recall Sarah Ahmed’s contribution, we can see that food, memory, and text all participate in how we perceive ourselves and others – they are never exclusive of one another. This underscores the falsity of fixed or individual identity that is often times perpetuated by oppressive social systems. Gastropoetics show that when identity is being created and transformed, it is what Ahmed calls “a dynamic process of perpetual resurfacing” that is based upon “the impressions of others” (160). Identity only exists in tandem with other identities. Thus, the understanding of identity as being what sets us apart from one another results in a great disconnect that has often times ended up being the root of much of our present-day conflicts. This notion is one that takes for granted – or perhaps does not engage at all – the interconnectedness of individuals to other individuals. So, while Ahmed may be contributing to the ongoing dialogue of cultural politics and how emotion is socially perpetuated and activated through text, what she also has identified is that if we consider how our identities are created, we will realize that we are subjectivities caught in a social web with other subjectivities or, in other words, we all have kinship – regardless of the countries and respective political systems within (or between) which we may find ourselves.

Food and the Fluidity of Cultural Identity

In *Singing to Cuba*, kinship – specifically as represented through food – offers an alternative social logic that supersedes the falsely rigid identity categories represented in this socio-historic context: Cuban and Cuban-American. Both Marta Caminero-Santangelo and Eliana Rivero have commented that Cuban-American literature often times does not seem to fit into the US-latino canon as one which includes largely leftist and anti-imperialist (and anti-capitalist) ideologies (250). Regarding Cuban-American authors (as opposed to other US-latino writers), Rivero states that “[m]ost of these writers oppose the socialist revolutionary process taking place in their homeland” and “even some of the younger ones in their midst, who migrated in their teens, embrace middle class values and ignore their subordination to a dominant Anglo culture” (183). Nonetheless, Rivero also posits that there is a body of US-Cuban literature in which writers express “a feeling of alienation [that] is resolved in social criticism when confronted with the world of consumerism” that is so prevalent in the United States (185). These works, often written by the children (or grandchildren) of Cuban immigrants typically confront the political abuses of both Cuba and the United States, constituting “cultural resistance and/or protest” to both exploitative systems (Rivero 187). Due to Margarita Engle’s own unique history, *Singing to Cuba* is one such novel – specifically when analyzed through the lens of food studies.

Margarita Engle was born and raised in Los Angeles, California (her American father’s hometown), but took trips to Cuba every summer to visit her Cuban mother’s family. As such, it is not surprising that *Singing to Cuba* offers a voice of resistance against political injustices afforded by Cuban communism and United States capitalism, specifically considering how the former has perpetuated the latter. While *Singing* is definitely anti-Castro, at the same time, it

does not perpetuate American middle-class materialistic consumerism, despite the fact that Engle is an “ethnic Cuban-American” – born and raised in the United States with frequent trips back to Cuba as a toddler (Alvarez Borland 9). On the contrary, it offers a different political and economic discourse that connects Cubans and Americans to one another and to their local geography through the figure of the *guajiro* or Cuban peasant. The novel “align[s] itself, in its opposition to Castro, not with middle- and upper-middle-class Cuban exiles, but with ‘third-world’ Cuban peasants” (Caminero-Santangelo 254-55). Through such alignment with the *guajiro* figure, the novel poses the alternative logic of kinship and the creation of human relationships as juxtaposed with the idea of what it means, according to the state, to be “Cuban” or “Cuban-American”, in an alienated and highly-individualized fashion.

Fixed cultural identities – hyphenated or otherwise – are seen as rigid categories perpetuated by state-based systems of oppression in order to limit possibilities of other potentially coexisting alternative understandings of self and other. Often, this type of categorization results in a fracturing of people from themselves, from each other, and from the land. Regarding these limited conceptualizations of identity, David Graeber states that: “For the most part, what we call ‘identities’ here, in what Paul Gilroy likes to call the ‘over-developed world’ are forced on people. In the United States, most are the products of ongoing oppression and inequality” (101). The label of “Cuban-American” may in fact be understood as an identity that is forced upon people who appear to fit within the confines of a certain experience. The resulting imposition of conjured categories is undermined when the question is investigated through food and collective cultural identity based in kinship. Gastropoetic representation recontextualizes the Cuban and Cuban- American experience as one that places emphasis on ties of kinship – between the Cuban/Cuban-American people and their local geography.

Her Story: Kinship and Capitalism

Both Cuban and United States foods function in two ways within the text: they either serve as a criticism of Castro's Cuba – which can historically be linked to the US trade embargo – and/or they establish the protagonist's *cubanidad*.⁵ While there are no pizzas, hamburgers, red, white, and blue cupcakes, or other North American processed foods in the text, three significant US food metaphors that I will explore in the novel are a Thanksgiving turkey, a Christmas ham, and “northern fruit” flavored candies.⁶ Further, there is a wide array of Cuban foods (pigs and yucca being two of the most prominent), that I will analyze as they specifically relate to the Cuban *guajiro* peasant traditions, creating kinship. The first two examples of United States foods (the turkey and ham) appear alongside traditional Cuban foods which are fundamental to the protagonist's understanding of self. She tells the reader that,

During the Cuban Missile Crisis I was suspended for lying to a junior high school teacher about my great-uncle Gabriel. The class assignment was an essay about the best meal of our short lives. We were expected to come up with a Thanksgiving turkey or a Christmas ham. Instead, I wrote about Gabriel and his farm, about pigs and *yuca* roasted in crimson earth [...]. (50)

In this example, we see that the narrator – born in Cuba, but raised in the United States – identifies more with the tastes of Cuba. Further, the tastes of the United States (associated with US holiday traditions in this example – turkey and ham) are juxtaposed with those of the island to identify what she is *not*. Despite considering herself “much more Yanqui than Cuban”, her taste buds beg to differ – and this Cuban understanding-of-self through food is one that is continuously underscored as the text unfolds (Engle 50). Just as Doña Chon aligns herself with Puerto Rican foods in *La guaracha*, we will see that Engle's protagonist similarly defines herself

through Cuban comestibles. She not only self-identifies through these foods, but also invokes memories of Cuba through traditional foods eaten for Cuban celebrations, which are deeply connected to the land: farms, pigs, and yucca.

Furthermore, while the protagonist's mention of the Cuban Missile Crisis may seem insignificant to her memory of the best meal she ever ate, it is relevant in the historical context of the novel as it pertains to food. In 1960, the United States initiated the well-known trade embargo which was further imposed and strengthened in 1962, just prior the Cuban Missile Crisis.⁷ The trade embargo produced many effects on the Cuban population, but among the most prominent was (and still is) the extreme deprivation of goods – specifically food. With this, the narrator's contextualization of her meal description conveys the pervasive negativity, maintained by United States towards Cuba (in this example) as it is associated with the United States/Cuban political policies. This is specifically represented by the fact that the narrator was accused of lying by her teacher and subsequently suspended. In other words, her teacher could not believe that the best meal she had ever eaten had been cooked and enjoyed in Cuba; she must be lying. This further demonstrates the difficulties in encapsulating identities - especially hybrid identities in the diasporic community – with terms such as “Cuban-American”, “US-Cuban”, or even “Cuban” itself. The protagonist is Cuban-American, identifies as “more Yanqui than Cuban”, and still further is punished for her *cubanidad* – all of which is represented through food (Engle 50). For this reason, food within the novel serves to propose an alternative to these labels through human interconnection. In the following examples, we will further see how this remembering of food in light of historical context poses kinship as an alternative social logic to the communist and capitalist systems.

In the previous example, the narrator's memory focuses upon her family ties through Gabriel, her great uncle, the delicious food he prepared, and how he prepared it – “roasted in the crimson earth” (50). The kinship that is created through the intersubjective experience that the protagonist describes above becomes more explicit as it is further underscored through food and memory when she returns to Cuba for the first time in thirty-one years and sees a sign at the hotel advertising a *guajiro guateque*. She exclaims the following: “*Guateque*. What memories came with that word! [...] Gabriel roasting a pig in an earthen pit, his wife serving the meat with a sauce of sour orange and garlic; a crowd of cousins consuming spiced corn tamales wrapped in banana leaves; everyone smiling and laughing [...]” (46). With this part of the text, we see Cuban food as it is connected to and prepared within the earth, and then consumed by the family. This food memory evokes nostalgia in the protagonist as she fondly recalls the happiness associated with the Cuban *guateque* foods. These foods are thus reproductions of her Cuban intersubjectivity – situating her within the collective Cuban experience which exemplifies kinship with her family and with the earth.

In this example, the kinship-based alternative social logic that is presented contradicts the alienation inherent to capitalism (as a highly individualized approach to economics), and the exploits of communism which, despite having an ideology grounded in the collective, manifested itself in an oppressive way in Cuba (which may be indeed linked to the United States exploitation). Thus, in this socio-historic context, kinship offers a more just social system through the emphasis it places upon the relationships that exist between the people with one another and the land. In a similar manner, during the narration of her memory of the Cuban *guateque*, which comes up several times throughout the novel, importance is placed on the relationships between people through food. This is a self/other understanding that Roger Bastide

has set in opposition to the Western notion of a “true identity marked by the limits of [the] body” (qtd. in “Kinship” 10). That is, rather than constructing a singular Cuban or Cuban-American identity for herself, the protagonist highlights her own existence as “node of participation” in which she is “outside more than inside herself” (“Kinship” 10). This is indicated in her wording of “Gabriel”, “his wife”, “crowd of cousins” and “everyone” as they are joyously sharing and consuming the food (Engle 46). There is no emphasis on individuality but rather commensality of human beings through *guateque* Cuban foods.

This analysis of intersubjectivity is also inherent and equally important to the protagonist’s recollection of the role that the Cuban geography plays: “the crimson earth” (50) and the “earthen pit” (46) not only yield the food, but also serve in its preparation. Evoking Marx, Sahlins states that “the land has certain intersubjective relations with its human possessors, or indeed a certain kinship with the people” (“Kinship” 4). The kinship system alternative that is posed within the novel is not only one that places emphasis on mutuality of being among humans but also between human beings and the land; the land and the food that it yields are just as fundamental to the system of kinship as the human beings themselves. This connection of land, food, and people is of utmost importance to the tension produced by the novel’s critique on capitalism. This is because it stands in opposition to capitalist modes of production, which alienate people from one another and from the land. As James Carrier explains, commodity exchange – the basis of capitalism – is concerned with the reproduction of *things* while gift-based economy’s – such as those of kinship, are concerned with the reproduction of *people*. Gifts are “inalienable” and thus create and transform relationships among people – they cannot be alienated from the people (or land) who produce or give them (Carrier 24). This strengthens the relationships between people in kinship groups, as well as their

relationship with the land. It also creates a system of intersubjectivity whereby what happens to the land happens to the people and what happens to one person happens to them all.

The logic of capitalism, on the other hand, places emphasis on individuality and individual desires thus conferring preconceived identities upon “free” persons within the system. It breaks the links between people and their local and global geographies. In so doing, it masks the relationships between the producer, product, and consumer in such a way that the inequalities and exploitations required to produce the commodity often go unnoticed. As capitalism emphasizes the thing being produced and not the people or land who produce it, this sets the stage for extreme disconnects in social relationships. Subsequently, individual identity is emphasized and becomes disassociated from collective identity. Regarding this system, David Graeber posits that we are living in

a world in which all human behavior can be classified as either production, exchange, or consumption; in which exchange is assumed to be driven by basic human proclivities for rational pursuit of profit which are the same everywhere, and consumption becomes a way to establish one’s particular identity (and production is not discussed at all if one can possibly avoid it). (100)

The connection of the people to their land – the recognition of food not as a commodity but as a gift – represents an alternative social logic that is juxtaposed with the exploitation of capitalism and the false sense of individual identity that it confers upon people. For this reason, while the previous example connecting the land and food may seem quite minute, it forms part of a bigger protest which uses this connection throughout the novel to suggest the mutuality among land, food, and people as a coexisting economic system which – as previously shown – contradicts the logic of United States capitalism and, by extension, Cuba’s communist system.

Another alimentary example that surpasses both the capitalist and communist systems for the kinship alternative is candy. Throughout the text, candy is used as a prominent food symbol, beginning with the protagonist's arrival to Cuba, upon which she shares candies with her Cuban family. While seemingly insignificant, the candy becomes explicitly connected to variety and choice:

I pulled out a bag filled with candy, each wrapper decorated with the image of some colorful northern fruit, strawberries, apples, peaches. Miguelito, Aurora, and the old woman all stared hard at the mound of candies, at the fishtails of twisted foil, the inside of each wrapper silvery like fish scales. I poured the candies out of the bag onto a dish Miguelito held out to catch them. He and his wife exchanged glances, shaking their heads as if they had seen something wondrous. (Engle 38)

As opposed to the examples of United States fruit that we see being sold in the supermarket in *La guaracha*, which blatantly represent and critique imperialism, here the fruit candy represents one of the positive aspects that a capitalist economy boasts: choice.⁸ This is not only emphasized through the wonderment that the protagonist's family experiences, but also by Miguelito's subsequent comment that highlights what the Cuban population no longer has access to: “the little things [...] And choices' my cousin added. ‘Sometimes I think what would it be like to have a choice’” (38). The various northern fruit flavored candies can be read as representative of the freedom to choose and abundance to choose from what is available in the United States. This is an experience that she symbolically shares with her family members through the act of giving the candy, which itself shifts from a capitalist commodity to a gift. Therefore, interestingly enough, the candy – a previously alienated capitalist product – becomes an inalienable part of the protagonist, which she shares with her family.

Despite the candy seemingly exceeding its textual representation of capitalism, during this part of the narration it is abundantly clear that the protagonist and her family identify with the United States' conceptualization of democratic freedom; in other words, this part of the text is definitely anti-Castro. In fact, the candy example spurs an entire conversation revolving around personal freedom to choose. Miguelito tells the protagonist that

You have heard the term totalitarianism, right? I know they tell you that about us over there. You've heard about communists acting like robots, doing what they're told to do, saying what they're told to say [...] Well, it's true, it's all true. Everything you've ever heard about us, it's true. That's what it's like here, total power for one man, total. And I know you must wonder, so I'm telling you. Because if I was from over there, I would wonder [...] He treats us like children. Every little thing is decided for us, what we will study, where we will work, where we will live, where we will go on vacation, what we will eat for dinner.

(40)

The juxtaposition of the Cuban reality versus "over there" is one that revolves around the freedom to choose, culminating with an alimentary reference – "what we will eat for dinner" (40). While the text may do this unintentionally, this attitude towards Castro's Cuba as inferior to the abundance of freedom proffered within the United States, is one that acquires a certain irony when read in light US-Cuban relations in 1993, the year that *Singing to Cuba* was published.

In this year, the United States created the Cuban Democracy Act (CDA), which reinstated the previously mentioned 1960s-1970s trade embargo, cutting Cuba off from all outside resources. This was an attempt to strong-arm Cuba into the pursuit of "democracy" (or rather, capitalism) through deprivation. According to those who supported the CDA, it

“attempted to lay the groundwork for the Cuban people to begin seeing the United States not as their inherent enemy, but rather as a source of support in their struggle for freedom from tyranny” (Sweig 163). Nonetheless, the Cuban government and much of the suffering populace alike “regarded the CDA’s supposed carrots as yet another example of American-led destabilization, aimed at softening the population’s support for its government” (164). Coupled with the isolation from trade, the United States also offered its open support to “individuals and organizations working for nonviolent change on the island”, thus resulting in “a clear violation of national sovereignty” (Sweig 165). While *Singing to Cuba* exalts the United States for the democratic freedoms it supposedly affords its citizens, at the same time the United States is fundamentally correlated with the lack of choice and goods in Cuba. Therefore, while the text does not critique the American dream and the promise of choice and abundance that it offers (as we see so explicitly carried out in *La guaracha*), at the same time, when read in light of US-Cuba relations at the time the novel was published, it offers more comprehensive understanding of the overall lack of food and pervasive suffering associated immediately with Castro’s communism, but rooted very deeply in United State exploitation. This vehemently pro-United States capitalist freedom that is present in *Singing to Cuba* is nonetheless exceeded by a larger human interconnection – or kinship – through gastopoetics in the text.

Despite the candy being a capitalist commodity representing United States variety and freedom to choose, the protagonist’s sharing of the candy with her Cuban family becomes fundamental in transforming the candy from an alienated product into a link between them all, through which intersubjective experience is shared (she experiences their lack and they experience her abundance). According to Chris Gregory, we can understand the candy gift through the lens of personification whereby “things are converted into people” (41).⁹ Gregory

adds that “[...] things and people assume the social form of objects in a commodity economy while they assume the social form of persons in a gift economy” (41). When the protagonist gives the candy, she is not simply giving an object; she is sharing herself and her experience, prompting her family to share their experiences. The candy is a commodity transformed into a possession or “objects that inalienably bear the personal identities of the people who have them, of those from whom those people received them, and of the personal relationship between givers and receivers” (Carrier 361). Thus, the candy becomes a possession – anthropomorphized into an extension of the protagonist’s human self, which she shares with her family, creating intersubjective relationships with them, consequentially participating in kinship.

To put it another way, the fact that we are dealing with “Northern” fruit-flavored candies could be interpreted as a representation of the capitalist system and the choices that it offers the consumer. However, understood in light of extreme lack of food due to the trade embargo imposed upon Cuba by the United States, this example evokes the following questions posed by James Watson and Melissa Caldwell: “Does choice, as many neoliberal theorists claim, imply empowerment? Or is capitalism always accompanied by an ‘iron cage’ that transforms comrade worker-producers into isolated, alienated consumers?” (5). In response, we will see that choice – represented through the candies here - neither empowers nor completely alienates the characters involved, demonstrating the tension between systems of kinship and capitalism. Rather, through the candy’s status as gift, it connects them to one another and creates a possibility somewhere in between these two extremes of empowerment and isolation. Thus, rather than the two systems being completely opposed and exclusive of one another, with this example we see that kinship indeed exists amidst the overarching United States capitalist system and thus contributes to a

debunking of the state-like conceptualizations of identity which disconnect people from one another.

Gabriel's Story: Kinship and Communism

The intricate entanglement of food, land, and identity is further developed in the novel through the *guajiro*'s connection to the local geography, and the land's subsequent oppression and exploitation during the Cuban revolution – a relationship that is also constructed upon food. This is primarily represented by the interruption of the protagonist's narration by the past story of her previously mentioned great Uncle Gabriel, a *guajiro* who was imprisoned by Castro's troops for feeding the rebels. Gabriel's entire story revolves around food: his *guajiro* lifestyle and family relationships, his arrest, his imprisonment, whether he lives or dies, and his means of survival while in prison are all related to food and how the food creates or destroys relationships between people and the land.¹⁰ With this, we will see how Gabriel's character demonstrates that “in a world in which self-identity and place-identity are woven through webs of consumption, what we eat (and where, and why) signals, as the aphorism says, who we are” (Bell and Valentine 3). In other words, through Gabriel's story we can see the importance of the relationships created by kinship-based interactions through food and the Cuban land as well as the oppression associated with communism which, as conveyed by the novel, exploited and abused intersubjective relationships between people, one another, and the local geography.

Prior to his arrest, the descriptions surrounding Gabriel's everyday activities all demonstrate the ties between the Cuban people and their sustenance. One of the first narrative interruptions talks about how much Gabriel (and the protagonist) loved the land and thought that: “Every millimeter of this red sugar land was miraculous – the pasture grasses, the hard sweet cane, the fragrant guava thickets, the papaya, mango, mamey, anón, guanábana and mamonsillo

trees, the feathery leaves and buried brown tubers of the malanga [...]” (30). From the beginning, Gabriel lives in harmony with the world surrounding him, taking only what he and his family need to live, respecting the virtues of the earth. Read on par with the fruit candies from the first part of the chapter, the list of fruits here parallels the choices represented by the candy – indicating that capitalism is not the only economic system that boasts choice. In fact, this example demonstrates the overall abundance that is available through the connection of people to their local geography. Choice thus becomes represented not only through fruit candies but also through fruit yielded by the land, again demonstrating how kinship and capitalism may be based in two distinct social logics that are not always exclusive and irreconcilable. This relationship between food, sharing, and the Cuban geography is one that develops throughout the narration, but that is also deeply intrinsic to the development of the protagonist herself.

Accordingly, Gabriel’s feelings of respect and love for the land and what it produces are shared by his great niece (the protagonist) and happily recalled by him:

Gabriel chuckled, remembering how surprised Amparo had been when her granddaughter chose to stay on the farm instead of in Trinidad or Havana. How Amparo had gone on about the girl’s attachment to the land! [...] It was just an instinct some people were born with, a love of the land, a calling [...] something you just had to answer if that passion was given to you as a gift [...]. (31)

Through Gabriel’s fond memory, we can see that the protagonist shares his interconnectedness to the Cuban land. She is a farm wife, connected to her own local geography in the U.S.¹¹ However, she is also deeply tied to the Cuban geography. Her subjectivity is constructed in relationship to the *guajiros* (like her Uncle Gabriel) as well as their (including her own) interaction with the local geography. While there is no food in this example, the text is replete with connections

between food, land, and the protagonist. From her “admiring the bundles of wild fruit and tubers” (137) to her commentary on the *guajiros* working and “making food emerge from the soil” (94), she is a character who is constructed around family, food, and the land that sustains them both. The protagonist and Gabriel parallel one another as characters through love of the land and their ability to choose, seen with the fruit candy in her case and the fruit trees in his.

This is further evidenced by her indignation regarding the previously mentioned hotel advertisement of a traditional *guateque*. After arriving in Cuba and seeing her own family starving and deprived, her response to the supposed *guateque* is one of pain in which she experiences the atrocities committed against her Uncle Gabriel by Castro’s regime. She states that she,

felt afflicted, cursed. How many years had Gabriel spent in prison before dying?
Now this hotel, built by the Maximum leader, dared to advertise the authentic
country feasts of peasants imprisoned under the orders of el líder máximo. They
were turning the *guateque* into a Caribbean version of the Hawaiian luau. They
were portraying free and joyful peasants. They were deceiving tourists. (46)

This is one of many examples in the novel that contests communism through food and contradicts its alienating qualities (in the socio-historical context of Cuba) through establishing kinship ties. The importance of this piece of the text lies in the fact that it demonstrates the protagonist to be part of Gabriel’s and the *guajiro*’s kinship group; she aligns herself with her uncle through the *guateques*, one of which she fondly recalls earlier in the novel. Further, her feelings of pain – she “felt afflicted, cursed”, link her intersubjectively to her Uncle’s experience in prison. In addition, these same feelings are juxtaposed with those of “the free and joyful peasants” that are portrayed dishonestly through the bastardized communist version of the

guateque. This is a clear example of “transpersonal unities of bodies, feelings, experience” (“Kinship” 11). Through the *guateque* feasts, accompanied by joy juxtaposed with feelings of pain surrounding Gabriel’s time in prison and subsequent death, the protagonist shares this experience with her Uncle. Further, “the free and joyful peasants” who work the land and share their food provide an example of kinship’s social logic, which places emphasis on human interconnection as opposed to the violence and oppression that characterized revolutionary Cuba.

The kinship represented by the *guajiro* experience in the text is not only apparent through Gabriel’s character, but also by the group as a whole. The violence the *guajiros* incurred during the Cuban Revolution is again represented in contrast to their connection with the land. Regarding this, the protagonist states that, “What was done to those people was a horror [...] the *guajiros* who never did anything but work the land every day of their lives. Men like Gabriel were not a part of that war. They were down at the foot of the mountains, in the hills, working just like they always worked, making food emerge from the soil” (94-5). Through this example, we see kinship as an alternative social system based upon the *guajiros*’ connection to the land and its fruits. Intersubjectivity and “mutuality of being” with each other and the earth are underscored as contradictory to the logic of capitalist and communist oppressive regimes.

Food and land as they express the importance of mutuality of being and intersubjective experience continue to be extremely significant throughout the text, as they are further juxtaposed with the violence associated with the textual representation of communism’s devouring nature. For example, Gabriel is jailed because he is suspected to be feeding the rebels fighting against Castro’s troops. While in prison, his Instructor interrogates him in the following way, proclaiming:

‘We know how you guajiros are all connected, each family tangled up with all the others, brothers and cousins and nephews spread out all over the countryside [...] a pot of beans always waiting for whomever comes along the road. ‘Mamonsillo’ the Instructor had said, ‘Mamonsillo’ repeating the name of the fruit as if its sound could make everything clear to Gabriel. ‘That’s what we found in the stomachs of three bandits we shot in the mountains a couple months ago. You did have mamonsillo trees on your land? [...] ‘I do’ Gabriel answered ‘I do have a mamonsillo grove, but it’s wild fruit, planted by God’. (113)

The guajiro’s connection to the land is not only demonstrated but shown to be exploited by the oppression of communism. While the *guajiros* are connected through food – “a pot of beans” or “mamonsillo”, this mutuality of being among the *guajiros* is deplored by the Instructor who “clenches his teeth in outrage” (113). Furthermore, it is also utilized as a tool to condemn those who live freely in symbiotic relationships with the land that was being taken from them. This intersubjectivity with the local geography is underscored by Gabriel who, rather than seeing the land as his, a possession to be owned, emphasizes that the fruit in question is wild and belongs to God. In turn, this depicts the morally objectionable perspective that the Cuban land can be taken, controlled, and exploited as a means of oppression, regardless of whether it is the Cuban or United States government that does the taking.

Even more convincing is the fact that throughout his time in prison, Gabriel is subjected to deplorable conditions most often represented textually through his meals. In response, he fantasizes about the foods that connect him to his home, family, and the land. As he is frequently served maggot and worm-infested dishes of chickpeas, Gabriel survives by reconstructing the delicious foods upon which he sustained himself and his family, beginning with a detailed

description of the fruit trees and the animals, again highlighting his connection to the land. He does this so vividly that

By the end of his third year in prison, Gabriel had been nicknamed the Chef for his descriptions of duck stuffed with pineapple, sea turtle stewed in its own shell, flying fish draped with avocado sauce and almonds. His words could make the men taste manioc bread filled with spiced beef. In Gabriel's presence the men could imagine themselves consuming mountains of 'Moors and Christians', black beans served with white rice. Land crabs steamed with coconut milk, guava paste with sliced cheese, marañón jelly from the heart-shaped red fruit of the cashew tree. Milk whipped with orange mamey fruit, fitters of name tubers, twice fried ripe plantains. (126)

With each of these Cuban food items, Gabriel's connection to abundance that is offered by the land is not only fundamental to his construction as a character outside of the violence of communism, but it also serves to sustain him when he becomes subject to this very same oppression. Abundance of food is what once nourished him and his family prior to the land's appropriation by communist troops. While in prison, it is the bounty of food for thought, or the memory of food, which sustains him. Once more through the trope of gastronomy and memory – a sort of food nostalgia – emphasis is placed upon the intersubjectivity between Gabriel, food and land, as well as the other *guajiros* in prison with him. Although his body – like the local countryside – is ravaged by the atrocities of Cuban communism, he refuses to sever his alimentary ties with the land and his fellow kinsmen. Therefore, this example unites the men in prison with whom Gabriel nostalgically shares his food memories. Thus the logic of kinship as it contradicts that of communism is again proposed within the text through alimentary metaphor.

Furthermore, his connection to others and their sustenance is also paramount in this example, which continues with him mentioning

Boniatillo, to make the men laugh. Sweet potato pudding simmered with cream and coconut. The name of the pudding sounded so much like Boniatico, the punishment wing, that each man swore he would never eat sweet potato unless it was served in some other language [...] Three years. In three years they had taught him to be satisfied with the illusion of food (127).

The gift of food through memory thus becomes personified as Gabriel shares a part of himself with his fellow *guajiros*, creating kinship ironically based on the “illusion of food” (Engle 127). This is of course a tragic irony, as the food memory brings joy to Gabriel and those around him through remembrance, even after they are all abused and starving. It is precisely through the “illusion of food” that the communist atrocities are contested while it is through the food and memory sharing with the men in prison that the logic of kinship stands in contradiction to the oppression of Cuban communism (Engle 127).

Finally, in addition to the oppressive and consuming characteristics of communism that are portrayed in the previous examples, there is also a very direct textual description of Fidel Castro and communism as violent, uncontrollable consumers of the country. For example, “...Fidel seemed to have consumed everyone in Cuba. Gabriel visualized Fidel as an enormous mouth, opening and closing, sending out words and swallowing people” (129). In contrast to the people who have nothing to eat, Castro eats the Cuban people themselves. In addition, communism is seen as a devourer of the land and its people: “it was said that the Maximum leader’s troops were devouring entire regions, livestock, crops, even the *guajiros* themselves” (23). In this case, the troops, as an extension of the “enormous mouth” that is Castro, also devour

everything in sight –including the *guajiros*. Castro and his troops being all-consuming, exploitative, and violent is juxtaposed with the kinship among the *guajiros* that is founded upon mutuality of being and intersubjective experience. This demonstrates that kinship is a social logic that coexists with that of communism. Despite the oppression of Castro’s communism that is conveyed by the text, kinship still remains. This is represented throughout the novel by food and food sharing as it comes from the land and creates kinship among the people. At the same time, the lack of food, exploitation of food and land, food that is maggot-infested and wormy, and the overall devouring nature of communism portrayed by the text, all stand in stark contrast to the kinship system as products of state-like social logic that results in alienation of the people and the land and often, oppression.

Their Story: The Kinship Alimentary Alternative

In conclusion, through the representation of food and memory, *Singing to Cuba* textually proposes an alternative social logic that simultaneously complements and contradicts both United States capitalism and Cuban communism as two systems which textually and historically have been understood to rupture the connection between human beings with themselves, each other, and the land that sustains them. In this same way, as kinship coexists alongside these distinct economic systems through food representation, it challenges the preconceived individual identities that are perpetuated within these systems of oppression. This is not to gloss over cultural differences – these foods are culturally Cuban and convey messages of *Cubanidad*. It is precisely for this reason that the food and memory in *Singing to Cuba* serve to connect the characters to each other and to the Cuban geography, creating a cultural Cuban kinship system in which individual identities are not created solely through opposition of self and other. Rather, self is distinct from other while it is simultaneously part of other – and other is part of self. Food

and memory in *Singing to Cuba* thus highlight interconnectedness in order to establish personal and collective Cuban agency both within and outside of the geographic space of Cuba. Food representation in the novel does not establish what it means to fit into the state-endorsed categories of “Cuban” or “Cuban-American”. On the contrary, enabled by the language of food that is culturally significant to Cuba and produced by its earth, the novel engages these two labels but subsequently demonstrates that there are other ways in which identity may be understood and re-contextualized that propose a more fluid and inclusive understanding of human beings and the social webs in which they participate.

Kinship in *Singing to Cuba*, offers one such example of an alternative social logic that functions alongside the more rigid, state-conceived notions of identity. The novel’s presentation of kinship is expressed through the language of food which creates the basis of interconnectedness between the protagonist, her family, and the land. I wish to conclude by placing emphasis upon how this example – geographically and culturally situated within and outside of Cuba – may gesture towards understandings of identity that reconnect human beings to one another through their specific cultures and local/global geographies. What *Singing to Cuba* offers is precisely that; through the novel’s interconnection of food, family, and land in the Cuban/Cuban-American cultural context, we have a very salient example of the everyday possibilities that are afforded by a rethinking of individual and collective identities that contradict the social logic of the predominant state-endorsed conceptualizations of identity, which generally result in alienation and disconnection between human beings from one another and the earth. When we read this text through a gastropoetic lens, a more comprehensive understanding of self and other is perpetuated by the language of food. Another socio-historical

context in which gastropoetics speak towards a questioning of subjective experience, agency, and oppression is that of Francoist Spain, which will be the focus of the following chapter.

CHAPTER THREE

FOOD AND THE RECOVERY OF HISTORICAL MEMORY IN ALMUDENA GRANDES'S *INÉS Y LA ALEGRÍA* (2010)

In Almudena Grandes's *Inés y la alegría* (2010), the language of food determines the way that different subject positions are questioned and redefined, creating a voice of resistant agency in the face of authoritarian oppression in the Spanish socio-historical context. While *La guaracha* rewrites history through parody and disordered eating resolved through female subjectivity, and *Singing to Cuba* uses the language of food to emphasize group interconnection as an alternative to the exploitation of Cuban communism and United States capitalism, we will see that *Inés y la alegría* combines gender and sexuality, political militancy, and food representation in order to re-envision the role of women in Spain's recent history. All three of these texts use gastropoetics to present a challenge to the social status quo. While this process occurs in the context of its own distinct history and historical moment, in each of these novels, gastropoetic language, in play with memory and history, demonstrates that authoritarian conceptualizations of identity cannot undermine those based in a politics of freedom. Such authoritarianism is often destabilized by the interconnection created through food among social networks. Subsequently, food representation continues to extend beyond the text, as it gestures towards a politics of liberation that questions and challenges the power of the authoritarian state. Almudena Grandes's novel *Inés y la alegría* is one such example in which we see a politics of liberation portrayed gastropoetically, as it retrospectively challenges the pillars of Francisco Franco's authoritarian dictatorship (1939-1975).

Inés y la alegría tells the life story of Inés, the female protagonist who escapes from her fascist (and later Francoist) brother's household at the age of 18 in order to join the exiled Spanish communist efforts to re-enter Spain through the Pyrenees (from the Valle de Arán), in an

attempt to overthrow Franco. This event opens the narration and historically (and fictitiously), it occurs at the beginning of World War II, right as Franco took power in Spain after the country's Civil War (1936-39), exiling much of the Spanish communist republican army in France. As this event is one that ultimately failed (Franco remained in power until 1975), the remainder of the novel is the account of this communist group throughout Francoism (narrated alternately by Inés and her husband Galán) concluding with the group's reentry into Madrid after Franco's death in the seventies. The entire story revolves around food and cooking: Inés is the cook in her brother's home, she becomes the cook for the communist group to whom she flees, she provisions the food and cooks for the soldiers during battle, she manages several kitchens throughout the narration, and she ultimately opens a restaurant in France and later in Spain. For this reason, *Inés y la alegría* may be understood as a piece which poses an opportunity to further investigate the following claim:

Cooking cannot simply be understood as something imposed on women as a result of patriarchal ideology nor can it be understood as the basis for an 'authentic' women's culture. Instead, it is necessary to start by examining what cooking has been *made to mean*, exploring how these representations are *lived* and analyzing how the relationships between gender and cooking are a site of struggle and transformation in specific historical locations and power relations.

(Ashley et al 138-9)

Throughout this chapter, I will further investigate food, cooking, and the kitchen as the traditional place of the Spanish woman, as it becomes a site of resistance through which personal understandings of gender are worked out and connected to larger conceptualizations of Spanish cultural identity under Francoism. Inés's gender subversion is carried out precisely through

gastropoetic discourse. Through food, Inés destabilizes the oppressive personal and collective identity conferred upon women and communists by the Francoist state. Thus, her relationship with cooking and her experiences with food, Francoism, and communism, are the fundamental conduit through which Spain's turbulent history and subsequent transition to democracy is rewritten and revised. This process is ultimately realized through the acquisition of female agency afforded by food and thus represented gastropoetically. As the novel is set during Spain's tumultuous past, this opens a cognitive social space in the present participating in the larger endeavoring of the country to bring justice to the forefront in restoring Spain's historical memory.

The vast majority of literary criticism regarding Almudena Grandes's body of work as a whole, revolves around the reconstruction of Spain's past, historical memory, and the intersection of fiction and history.¹ Accordingly, there are numerous studies dedicated to gender identity and sexuality within Grandes's work.² While her novels *Las edades de Lulú* (1989), *Malena es un nombre de tango* (1994), *Modelos de mujer* (1996), *Atlas de geografía humana* (1998), and more recently, *El corazón helado* (2007), have received quite a bit of critical attention, *Inés y la alegría* (2010) remains one her less-studied novels. This is perhaps because it forms part of a larger series entitled *Los episodios de una guerra interminable* that begins with the previously mentioned *El corazón helado* (2007) and is followed by *El lector de Julio Verne* (2012) and *Las tres bodas de Manolita* (2014). Due to its relatively recent publication as well as its extensive length and placement within the series, there still remains much to be explored in *Inés y la alegría*. Nonetheless, Grandes's above-mentioned thematic tendencies are duplicated within the novel: the love story plot, alternately narrated by Inés and her lover Galán (who later becomes her husband), takes place beginning during World War II, spans Franco's thirty-six

year dictatorship, and ends shortly after Franco's death (1975). Thus, historical memory, history, and its intersection with fiction, remain central to approaching *Inés y la alegría*, as do understandings of gender identity and female agency.

Furthermore, critics have also noted that in much of Grandes's work, the language of food is a prominent tool through which history, historical memory, and female agency are manifested. Regarding best-selling contemporary female Spanish writers, Shelley Godslan posits that they,

often focus on the articulation of female experience and on the uncovering of social mechanisms within contemporary patriarchy that contrive to perpetuate 'traditional' notions of female behavior. Such concepts are usually associated with ideals prevalent during the Franco dictatorship; the exclusivity of which to female activity is now rejected wholesale by many groups of women in Spain. Central themes in this narrative corpus thus tend to revolve around the woman's right to freedom of choice in matters personal, professional, and sexual, preoccupations that also characterize Grandes' fiction. (59)

As Godslan goes on to analyze, food and the traditional female roles surrounding it become one such way in which the female experience is re-articulated in Grandes's work. In *Inés y la alegría*, I will explore how food permeates the personal, professional, and sexual realm of the protagonist, Inés, in such a way that problematizes and challenges the Spanish social status quo that was perpetuated and maintained during Francoism. In other words, while Ramón Acín affirms that food in *Inés y la alegría* is a refuge, an evasion, a passport, a light, and a salvation for Inés, I will demonstrate how food transcends its traditionally passive status (indicated most strongly in its comparison to "refuge" and "evasion" here); Inés does not just rely on food and

cooking as an escape or refuge from the seemingly man's-world that was war-ridden Spain and Europe.³ On the contrary, through a gastropoetic exploration of the text, I will show how food is used to destabilize traditional gender roles which were used by Franco as one of his many conservative platforms that served to oppress rather than to liberate. The language of food in *Inés* may be understood as the foundation through which Inés gains agency and participates actively within the political atmosphere of her time, despite the gender norms that were instilled and perpetuated by Francisco Franco's regime – which I will now discuss.

Gender and Sexuality under Francoism

One of the most prevalent issues regarding female agency and understandings of self during the Francoist regime was deeply rooted in the construction of national identity and the gender roles that created a basis for what it meant to be Spanish during Franco's regime. Regarding Spain's national identity, the Francoist regime intended to “[...] create a particular national identity in the coming generations through the utilization-manipulation of history. In other words, the re-creation of the past would be used as the base for the configuration of national identity in the present” (Escudero 72). Along with this recreation of the past came Franco's intent to reinstate the Golden Age set of conservative, Catholic female morals and values presented in books such as *Ángel del hogar* and *La perfecta casada*.⁴ Among the many myths propagated by Francoism in order to reestablish and maintain the state, the ideal Spanish woman who sacrificed herself for the needs of her home and thus the nation was at the forefront. This is noted by Aurora G. Morcillo who, in referring to Golden Age texts such as Fray Luis de Leon's *La perfecta casada*, states that “The stereotype of the domestic woman was a crucial element of traditional Catholic Spain that the Francoist order intended to restore” (4). Obviously,

cooking and food are definitively a foundation of domestic life, and as such would serve to relegate the female to the private sphere. Morcillo adds:

By endorsing the true Catholic womanhood of Church doctrine, the state expected women to fulfill their motherly destiny rather than to become professionals.

National-Catholic discourse did not deprive women of a national purpose; on the contrary, their agency resided, paradoxically, in their active political withdrawal.

Becoming mothers and wives constituted women's contribution to the national endeavor. (5)

Understood in this way, it would seem that the main female character in *Inés y la alegría* (Inés), who cooks and often does occupy a motherly role throughout the text (and indeed has children years after the narration begins), would seem to reproduce traditional Francoist definition of femininity and the good Spanish woman. On the contrary, we will see that Inés represents a rebellion of these norms, specifically through the trope of food which transcends her domestic, private sphere and expands into her own public political activity as opposed to the female withdrawal that served as a basis of Francoist nationalism. Thus, the novel is a contribution to historical memory, which revises, challenges, and undermines Francoist norms through female agency and food.

Historical Memory, Narrative Variation, and Food

Inés y la alegría therefore participates in the challenging of authoritarian rule through Inés's agency, which is achieved in the novel through food relationships. Gastropoetic representation in this text challenges gender norms set forth by Francoism. However, as opposed to the other novels discussed in this project, *Inés* is distinct in that it is the only work not published during the rule of the authoritarian government which it critiques. It is precisely for

this reason that I chose to write about *Inés* – to demonstrate that the language of food may form part of this process of acquiring agency not only during authoritarian rule, or during a political transition from oppression, but even when it occurs retroactively within a text.⁵ With that said, *Inés y la alegría* is a piece published in 2010 uses the language of food as a primary forum through which Spain's past is rewritten. In light of Spain's recent transition from dictatorship to democracy, as well as its ongoing endeavors to establish historical memory, *Inés y la alegría* – and specifically the gastropoetic imagery within it – participates in the much larger process of breaking the silence that has typified Spain's history during the Franco regime.

Similar to what we see in *La guaracha* and *Singing to Cuba*, the importance of historical memory (revised through food) is fundamental to understanding how *Inés y la alegría* figures into a larger anti-authoritarian project. However, the issue of historical memory is perhaps even more salient in *Inés* as it confronts the silenced histories and atrocities that Spain's past saw throughout Francisco Franco's forty year dictatorship. The Law of Historical Memory, passed in 2007, constituted an integral part of the socialist government's call to break the silence maintained by previous governments on the issue; *Inés y la alegría* was published only three years later, in 2010. This law sought to recognize and afford rights to those who suffered persecution and violence during the Civil War and the dictatorship.⁶ For some, namely those for whom the Law of Historical Memory was written, it is simply insufficient; for others, it is useless and only serves to live in the past rather than look towards the future (Pérez Garzón and Manzano Moreno 15). Within this context, food representation in *Inés y la alegría* participates in the recuperation of historical memory and as such, becomes an ethical agent in revisiting the past in order to contribute to the construction of a better, more just future in Spanish society. Gastropoetics in *Inés y la alegría* therefore becomes a language that is fundamental to entering

into dialogue with the past in such a way that marks collective memory as a “site of struggle and resistance for oppressed groups”, allowing such groups to attain agency retrospectively – through what is remembered and thus reconstructed subjectively (Colmeiro 23).

For this reason, narrative structure and variation within *Inés y la alegría* are fundamental to understanding the novel’s contribution to historical memory. Structurally, *Inés y la alegría* is Galdosian in nature – divided into several small interconnecting stories (which Grandes purposefully refers to as episodes) with first-person narrations fluctuating between Inés and Galán. However, in between each of these fictitious sections, Almudena Grandes (in her own voice) intermittently includes Francoist historical descriptions about political figures and their relationships and significant historical occurrences that supplement the fictitious story of Inés and Galán. In these sections, she includes both well-known and not-so-well-known historical facts as well as her (and Spanish culture’s) own interpretation and elaboration of Spain’s Francoist history.

Furthermore, in the afterword, Grandes includes more information on her conceptualization of the novel and Inés’s character. Here, Grandes discusses the thought process that led her to begin *Inés y la alegría* with a fictitious account of a largely untold portion of Spain’s Francoist past: a military operation that took place in October of 1944 in the Valle de Arán, when the communist guerrillas that were exiled in France and the Pyrenees, organized an invasion of Spain, beginning with the valley, in an attempt to ultimately overthrow Franco.⁷ She says:

En el instante en que tuve noticia de esta asombrosa y quijotesca hazaña, tan grande, tan ambiciosa, tan importante como para poder aceptar sin estupor que sea, al mismo tiempo, tan desconocida, sentí una especie de comezón imaginaria

mientras veía a una mujer montada en un caballo, uniéndose a los guerrilleros con cinco kilos de rosquillas. No sé por qué era una mujer, por qué tenían que ser rosquillas, pero sé perfectamente que la vi, que la vi así, y que al verla, me puse todavía nerviosa, como si su historia, que aún desconocía, luchara dentro de mí por salir a la luz. (720)

(In the instant that I found out about this astonishing and quijotesque feat, as big, as ambitious, as important as it was to be able to accept without any astonishment, at the same time, so unknown, I felt a kind of imaginary uneasiness while I saw a woman on a horse, uniting with the soldiers with five kilos of doughnuts. I don't know why it was a woman, I don't know why they had to be doughnuts, but I know perfectly that I saw her, I saw her like that, and upon seeing her, I became very nervous, as if her story, that I still did not know, would fight inside of me until it came to light)

Almudena Grandes's own voice within the novel and her alimentary commentary on Inés as a character figures prominently in establishing the language of food as fundamental to the novel's contribution to historical memory. Subsequently, when food is represented within *Inés y la alegría*, despite it being published well beyond Spain's Francoist authoritarian oppression, gastropoetics continues to be a tool that keeps alive the difficult questions surrounding agency and identity in a Francoist and post-Franco Spanish world. Through maintaining tension regarding these issues—“keeping them alive”—the past is also kept alive—it cannot be silenced (Travis 232). Through gastropoetic representation *Inés y la alegría* participates in a larger body of cultural production that is fundamental to keeping the Spanish past alive and consistently revisited and revised, bringing an ethical reevaluation of Spanish history to the forefront.

Doughnuts and Democracy

Marta Zubiaurre reminds us that, regarding the vast majority of Hispanic female literature that has been studied through the lens of food studies, literary critics find that

Cooking turns into a powerful language geared towards female liberation. To cook is to rewrite history and hence to write herstory. Cooking becomes a new semantics, through which women learn about themselves, exert collective influence on the male establishment, and acquire an inebriating sense of empowerment. (30)

This is indeed true of *Inés y la alegría*, where cooking and the space of the kitchen become forums through which Inés gains agency and empowerment. For example, when Inés's narration first starts, she tells us that it is October 20th, 1944, “el día mas importante de me vida” (the most important day of my life) (102). She is in the kitchen making doughnuts – “rosquillas” – at a time when she should be preparing to flee from her house as Madrid is going to be re-occupied by the exiled communists who have intentions to overthrow Franco. Ricardo (her fascist brother) gives the orders for Inés and his wife, Adela, to leave under the guise that there has been a snow-storm advisory from the army and everyone must evacuate (103). Although she feels extremely nervous and unsettled, she says that “Reuní la tercera parte de los ingredientes en una artesa, metí en ella las dos manos hasta las muñecas, y mientras movía la masa con todos los dedos, me fui sintiendo mejor, más segura [...] la cocina era el único lugar donde aún sentía que tenía una piel, donde la piel aún me daba alegrías” (50) (I combined the third part of the ingredients in a kneading-trough, put my two hands in it up to my wrists, and while I moved the dough with all of my fingers, I started feeling better, more secure...the kitchen was the only place where I still felt that I had a skin, where my skin still gave me happiness).

While this may seem like the traditional female gender role, seemingly indicating that happiness can only be found in the space of the kitchen, the events that follow throughout the novel serve to question, undermine, and revise traditional Spanish gender roles as perpetuated by the Francoist regime. While the preparation of the doughnuts brings solace and comfort to Inés on a personal level, their purpose extends far beyond the confines of her kitchen walls; Inés is preparing these doughnuts to offer the communist troops who have entered into Spain, to whom she plans to flee. Her strategy for escape from her brother Ricardo – the textual embodiment of authoritarian right-winged politics – thus begins in the kitchen. Therefore, contrary to conforming to Franco’s propagation of a “good woman”, Inés subverts this preconceived identity precisely using one of its own bases: food and cooking. The kitchen transcends its traditional connotations and becomes a space of political resistance as she escapes from fascism (her brother’s household).

Subsequently, food is foundational not only to Inés’s personal agency and subjective experience, but also to her interconnection with a larger political group. As posited by Pierre Bourdieu, “ways of treating food, of serving, presenting and offering it...are infinitely more revelatory than even the nature of the products involved” (193). It is not so much the food type – doughnuts – that is important here. Rather, the significance lies in Inés’s presenting and offering of the doughnuts that she prepares, which creates a connection between her and the other communists, as the food is offered as a gift once she arrives. Once Inés escapes on horseback, tying up her sister-in-law Adela at gunpoint, and ordering the stable boy to show her the way, she finally arrives in the Arán Valley, where the communist soldiers begin to question her about her life, her intentions, and of course – her hatbox full of doughnuts.⁸ She says: “Es que cuando me pongo nerviosa, me da por cocinar. Y esta mañana, como llevaba mucho tiempo pensando en

escaparme, pues...me he liado a hacer rosquillas [...] en ese momento el Capitán Galán con una expresión risueña y enigmática a la vez [...] cogió la sombrerera y empezó a repartir rosquillas entre sus compañeros” (260) (It’s just that when I get nervous, I decide to cook. And this morning, since I’d spent a lot of time thinking about escaping, well...I started making doughnuts. At this moment with a simultaneously bright and enigmatic expression, captain Galán took the hatbox and started to share the doughnuts with his friends). This moment marks the beginning of the personal and political importance of the doughnuts throughout the text – they mark Inés’s escape, they connect her to the communist group, and this textually comes full circle in the following examples as the doughnuts acquire even more political significance.

Regarding the potentially political connotations of food, Sidney Mintz posits that “the taste of freedom and the taste of food may be much more closely linked than they seem at first to be. The taste of freedom sounds so empyrean, so noble (or ennobling); the taste of food, so ordinary, so material. But these tastes are not really so remote from each other” (34). We see this connection between food and freedom played out as Inés’s doughnuts quickly become so popular within the group, they become symbolic of the group’s re-entry into Spain. Inés tells Comprendes, a one of the soldiers who is particularly fond of her doughnuts, that “Cuando entremos en Madrid, Comprendes, voy a hacer cinco kilos de rosquillas para ti solo [...] Te lo prometo” (296) (When we enter into Madrid, Comprendes, I’m going to make five kilos of doughnuts just for you. I promise.) The doughnuts therefore mark moments of liberation for Inés, but also for the larger group, because when they enter into Madrid they will be victorious in their efforts. Thus, something as everyday as doughnuts marks the abstract state of freedom that both Inés and Comprendes (and their whole group) hope to attain once they defeat Franco and his authoritarian regime.

Thus, in addition to the doughnuts marking the personal independence of Inés all of those years ago from the dominion of fascist brother, the doughnuts again transcend their personal implications and intertwine her with a new kinship group that is specifically communist. This process links the past with the present, as she makes the same amount of doughnuts for Comprendes when they finally return to Madrid almost forty years later, which is an event that is representative of personal and political alignments. When Inés gives the doughnuts to Comprendes, someone snaps a photo of the moment (at Inés's recently opened restaurant), making the reader aware of how personal and collective experiences are deeply intertwined through gastropoetic representation. Inés says

Dos días después el *Diario 16* publicó la foto bajo un titular escueto y misterioso 'Cinco kilos de rosquillas'. El texto convertía en noticia la cita de un grupo de combatientes republicanos que se habían reencontrado en Madrid para asistir al cumplimiento de una promesa que se había mantenido intacta, como sus esperanzas de reencontrarse en una España democrática, durante más de treinta años de exilio. (713)

(Two days later, *Diario 16* published the photo with a plain and mysterious title 'Five kilos of doughnuts'. The text became the news about the meeting of a group of republican soldiers that had reunited in Madrid to attend to a promise that had remained intact, like their hopes of reuniting in a democratic Spain after more than thirty three years of exile).

The promise that remained intact – one of doughnuts – is compared directly to their hopes of freedom, which also remained alive until they were achieved. Furthermore, the kinship that exists between Inés and Galán, Comprendes, and the other communist troops – long since family

– is one that stands to connect them to the larger population of Spain and the much larger cause that they've always stood for: the promise of democracy. This promise begins first and foremost through gender and sexuality, which later spans into the realm of collective political consciousness. The personal is thus connected to the collective, opening a textual space in which history is revised and erased experiences are taken into account. As such, the novel continues to participate in the ongoing project of restoring Spain's historical memory. Therefore, through culinary metaphor that is consistent throughout the entirety of the text, *Inés y la alegría* contributes to the questioning, subversion, and revision of Francoist oppression and its implications in present-day Spain.

Food and Freedom

Regarding food and freedom, Sidney Mintz also affirms that food may be employed as a means of liberation:

For many people, eating particular foods serves not only as a fulfilling experience, but also as a liberating one – an added way of making some kind of declaration. Consumption, then, is at the same time a form of self-identification and of communication. [...] this act of choosing to consume apparently can provide a temporary, if even mostly spurious, sense of choice, of self, and thereby of freedom. (13)

This analysis of food and freedom remains true in the case of Inés. Earlier in the text, after Inés has been imprisoned for her communist involvement, sent to a nunnery by her brother, and then rescued by her sister-in-law Adela to come home to her brother's country estate, Inés finds herself once again cloistered by her fascist brother. Furthermore, while living at the country estate, she is sexually assaulted repeatedly by one of her brother's friends, who is a fascist

general. Therefore, for the second time, she plans an escape from Ricardo's household.

Gastropoetic discourse is fundamental to Inés's second escape plan, which she spends months contriving. She says,

Mi cuerpo había perdido la memoria de los buenos tiempos, pero yo aún recordaba lo que tenía que hacer. Antes que nada, comer, renunciar a los caldos, los huevos duros, y las restantes languideces nutritivas que mejor entonaban con mi maltrecho ánimo de cautiva, para recuperar la dieta generosa, contundente, de mis días de amazona [...] mi cuerpo trabajaba como una máquina que solo sirviera para hacer una cosa, fugarse, fugarse, fugarse. (208)

(My body had lost the memory of good times, but I still remembered what I had to do. First of all, eat, give up soup, hard-boiled eggs, and hardly nutritious leftovers that went more with my injured captive spirit, in order to recuperate a generous diet, satiating, from my days of being an Amazon woman. My body worked like a machine that would only serve to do one thing, escape, escape, escape).

Mind and body become fused in this segment as Inés recognizes a physical connection between her body and her desire to flee towards freedom as represented by progressive, left-wing ideology. Food again becomes Inés's path to subjective agency. As demonstrated in this example, her food choices – what she decides to omit or include in her diet – provides a concrete means to her liberation. Through food, she is able to recuperate her “injured, captive spirit” as well as her body, in order to escape towards personal and political autonomy (208).

In addition to strategizing her eating as a means to escape, Inés also uses cooking strategy as political strategy, shortly after she joins the communist group in Arán. Regarding cooking

strategy, Luce Giard states that: “In cooking the activity is just as mental as it is manual; all the resources of memory and intelligence are thus mobilized. One has to organize, decide, anticipate. One must memorize, adapt, modify, invent, combine, [...]” (130). With this, domestic and political knowledge are equalized. In this same vein, Carole Counihan summarizes DeVault in saying that

Food provisioning often reproduces female subordination by requiring women to serve, satisfy, and defer to husbands or boyfriends who do not feel a similar need to serve their women (DeVault 1991). Reciprocity of giving and receiving, of cooking and eating, makes for equality among partners, and its lack contributes to power imbalances. In many ways, food establishes and reflects male and female identity and relationships. (13)

Thus, while women have traditionally been relegated to the space of the kitchen, the following examples will show how Inés’s knowledge about food and cooking transcends this space and becomes a political tool which she is able to use to her advantage in order to prove her innocence and acquire agency, subverting Francoist female gender norms and authoritarian exploitation. Furthermore, rather than reproducing female subordination, Francoist gender norms are subverted in the novel.

For example, early in the text, Inés becomes the communist soldiers’ cook and therefore is responsible for obtaining foods to cook for the troops. In an attempt to ensure that they have enough food, she has a local boy and his helper bring an abundance of supplies including sacks of potatoes, onions, cabbages, and a basket full of eggs (319). However, upon arrival, the boy, Arturo, tells Inés that “Su padre (the other boy’s father) no sabe que os hemos traído esto, me dijo, y tiene que volver con los sacos antes de que se dé cuenta, yo me quedo fuera, a vigilar el

carro... (319) (His father doesn't know he brought you this, he said, and he has to get back with the sacks before he finds out, so I'll wait outside and watch the cart...). With this, Inés and the other boy go inside to quickly put away the groceries, which enables Arturo – who is left alone and we find out is working for the nationalist army– to attempt a break-in at the communist general headquarters to obtain information to report back to the nationalist troops that are about to invade Bosost (where the communists are exiled in France). In terms of plot, it is not the specific foods that have relevance here. On the contrary, it is *how* food is used –as a political tool, this time by Arturo – that has relevance. Due to this incident, Inés is accused of being a traitor who is using her role as cook to aid the nationalist army.

Nonetheless, Inés re-appropriates and inverts this situation, reclaiming her agency, while simultaneously reinforcing her interconnection with Galán and the other troops. When one of the main troops, Lobo, finds out about the incident from the soldier on watch (Ferrocovario), he goes to Galán and declares how suspect it is that a woman randomly arrives, with a hatbox full of doughnuts, and

se convierte en nuestra cocinera, se sigue empleando a fondo para encandilarnos a todos desde el desayuno hasta la cena, y de repente, la puerta del despacho esta forzada, un cabrón registrando el cuartel general y, al ser descubierto, a quien usa para encubrirse? ¿quién está con él mientras intenta aparentar lo que no es? (327) (she becomes our cook, she continues working in the background to dazzle us all from breakfast to dinner, and suddenly, the door of the main office is forced open, a bastard trying to search the main headquarters and, upon being discovered, who does he use to cover his tracks? Who is with him while he pretends to be something he's not?).

Thus, as is evidenced by Lobo's description, Inés's identity as traced through cooking is deeply intertwined with political meanings as she is suspected of using this as a tool to plot against the communist group. On the contrary, she will use her cooking knowledge to become an active agent in reestablishing her political alliance with the group. Therefore, food and the act of cooking goes from being a personal forum through which agency is established to one that serves to interconnect – or potentially disconnect through betrayal – a political and kinship group.

In this scenario, Inés decides to determine her own future, once again subverting gender norms through the traditionally female trope of food and cooking. She returns to the main house where she cooks and Montse (her friend and kitchen helper) returns Inés's pistol to her (Galán originally took the pistol from Inés upon her initial arrival). However, while she has the pistol to aid her, what truly allows Inés to capture Arturo is her knowledge of cooking: “[...] se me ocurrió a tiempo que atar la mano de Arturo a su manga vacía no era tan distinto a preparar un pollo para meterlo en el horno, y eso fue lo que hice, dejando un cabo de cuerda colgando, como si necesitara deshacer el nudo sin estropear las patas [...]” (399) [it occurred to me just in time that tying the hand of Arturo to his empty sleeve [he only has one arm] was not so different from preparing a chicken to put it in the oven, and this is what I did, leaving a piece of the rope hanging, like I needed to undo the knot without damaging the legs]. Thus, Inés uses her knowledge of the cooking to prove her political innocence. This does not go unnoticed by the men when she brings Arturo to them. For example, Romesco exclaims “Joder, parece el pavo de Navidad a punto de entrar en el horno!” (403) (Damn, he looks like a Christmas turkey about to enter the oven!). This example is fundamental to Inés establishing a strong subject position through personal agency as it is connected to others and spills into the realm of the political.

Then, gender norms are again inverted once Inés proves her innocence and furthermore gives the troops the information that the Nationalist army is about to invade – information she obtained while capturing Arturo (Grandes 415). She decides to return in order to do reconnaissance, and in response Galán becomes the nurturer and Inés, the soldier. He says: “[...] si no comes, tampoco vas a llegar muy lejos... - giré la cabeza hacia la izquierda y vi de nuevo su mano tendida hacia mi, y en ella, un paquete de papel de estraza que no me decidí a aceptar-. Tu me has dado de comer muchas veces, insistió – déjame darte de comer esta vez” (417) (if you don’t eat, you won’t make it very far either... --I turned my head to the left and saw again his hand outstretched towards me, and in it, a package of brown paper that I decided not to take--. You have fed me many times, he insisted – let me feed you this time). While this is one of the only times in the text that Galán feeds Inés, read alongside Inés’s political involvement (she is the one who “saves the day”), it functions to subvert the traditional female-food connection, especially as it was propagated by Francoism. Furthermore, Galán’s giving of this meal to Inés is followed by an apology for having suspected her to be a traitor, which he delivers as she ultimately accepts and consumes the meal. In addition to personally connecting Galán and Inés within their relationship, establishing personal reciprocity, due to the political connotation that food acquires throughout the text – we may read this as a representation of the reciprocity afforded by Spanish communism, or at the very least, reciprocity within this particular kinship group. Through this, the division of power propagated by Francoism is “rearranged” and disputed through this inversion of culinary gender norms (Clarke 73). Conveyed through food, the political implication is that women have more personal freedoms and agency as it is afforded by food, the space of the kitchen, and the social relationships they create within the Spanish communist context.

Food and Exile

As of yet, I have not focused on whether or not food items have been “Spanish” or otherwise associated with certain countries. Regarding the importance of considering food cultures, Peter Bishop reminds us that “diet’s relationship to cultural identity is not just a jingoistic one...[on the contrary, it is] on par with language in terms of cultural definition” (32). Therefore, the Spanishness of foods within the text indeed becomes specifically significant during the communist troops’ exile in France. Inés comments that, in 1949, while she was physically exiled from her country, she was also exiled from one of Spain’s fundamental staples: olive oil. She says that:

Para mí, había sido todo un drama, un exilio paralelo, una condena que se me estaba haciendo tan dura, tan eterna como el franquismo. En los cinco años que llevaba en Francia, lo había intentado todo y antes que nada cocinar con otros aceites vegetales, girasol, soja, maíz, con cada uno de ellos hice una tortilla distinta, paisana, de espárragos, de calabacines, y al probarlas todas me dieron las mismas ganas de llorar. Por eso, empecé a comprar aceite de oliva casi a escondidas...(628)

(For me, it had been a complete tragedy/calamity, a parallel exile, a sentence that was lasting so long, as everlasting/never-ending as Francoism. In the five years that I lived in France, I had tried everything and a before anything else, I tried cooking with other vegetable oils, sunflower, soy, corn, with each of them I made a different tortilla, paisana, asparagus, zucchini, and upon trying them, all of them made me want to cry. So, I began to buy olive oil covertly...)

With this example, we see how food serves to connect Inés back to her country, expressing hope and despair simultaneously for a non-Francoist Spain. It is similar to the doughnuts as it marks her – and Spain’s – journey from authoritarian oppression to social democracy in Spain. However, olive oil is representative of the Spanish nation in that Inés parallels her separation from country directly to her separation from olive oil. Accordingly, the absence of olive oil becomes the absence of Spain for Inés – it is irreplaceable and the fact that it (the olive oil and Spain) are both inaccessible brings her great sadness. Thus, as Bishop’s quote highlights, olive oil figures as one of the main symbolic food bases of Spanish cultural identity. However, in this case it functions not just on a cultural level, but relatedly, on a very political level. This is similar to what we see in *La guaracha* and *Singing*: certain national foods align the characters with certain countries and their politics.

In this same vein, aside from being what represents a parallel exile in Inés’s life, the olive oil becomes explicitly political in the text when Galán has to return to Spain to do undercover work for the Communist party and, when injured, is taken in by a clandestine doctor who also works for the party undercover, but runs a freight company by day. When Galán asks that he send Inés word that he is ok, the doctor already knows the address and informs Galán that Inés is his client; she illegally imports his olive oil to France. Galán thinks to himself, after all of the arguments they had about using the communist party to acquire olive oil illegally, that Inés “nunca se dio por vencida. Una dictadura nunca sería motivo suficiente para obligarla a abandonar” (554-55) (she never gave up. A dictatorship never would be a sufficient reason for her to give in). The olive oil becomes politically charged with meaning and also serves to connect Inés back to her home and other Spanish communists living in Spain. Inés’s illegal acquisition of olive oil represents its own rebellion against Francoism and her exile (and the

communist exile) from Spain. Thus, while the olive oil is deeply personal to Inés, it also serves to create that interconnection on a collectively political level. Again, through gastropoetic imagery – olive oil in this instance – Francoist oppression is undermined by female personal and political agency. Accordingly, Inés’s illegal acquisition of olive oil is representative of her determination to remain faithful to who she is as a Spaniard, even while she is exiled from Spain. Therefore, while she could not return to Spain physically at the time, she is able to circumvent her “parallel exile”, bringing Spain to her in the form of olive oil (628).

This can also be noted through the specific food types in her restaurant while exiled. As it boasts being “La mejor restaurante español en Francia” (the best Spanish restaurant in France), Inés explains that they began with classic tapas – again a fundamental food category to the Spanish nation. She includes:

tortillas de patatas, empanadas de lomo, croquetas, boquerones en vinagre, soldadito de pavia, ensaladilla rusa. Tuvieron mucho éxito, y no solo porque la clientela, casi exclusivamente española, estuviera empachada de encurtidos y conservas de pescado, sino porque mis comensales de Bosost se dedicaron a hacerme una propaganda que nunca habríamos podido pagar (514-15)

*(tortillas de patatas, empanadas de lomo, croquetas, boquerones en vinagre, soldadito de pavia, ensaladilla rusa. They [the dishes] were very successful, y not only because the clientele, almost exclusively Spanish, was sick of pickles and fish preserves, but rather because my Bosost patrons dedicated themselves to giving me advertisement that we never could have afforded/paid for.)*⁹

While this example evokes national images of Spaniards eating tapas and unable to stomach the French pickles and fish conserves, at the same time it demonstrates the kinship interconnection

between Inés and her communist kinship group and links them back to Spain. This is further amplified by the fact that Inés begins with a simple tapas menu, but ends up creating a menu based on what her clients come in and ask for because they do not like what their wives are cooking at home. Inés says that “Así, la Taberna Española empezó a servir a mediodía unos menús que tuvieron más éxito que las tapas y la virtud de solucionar un problema domestico común a todas las socias, porque nuestros maridos empezaron a venir a comer también todos los días” (515) (Just like that, at noon the Spanish Tavern began to serve some menus that were more successful than the tapas and that had the virtue of resolving a common domestic problem for all of the partners, because our husbands also began to come and eat every day). Food – and specifically food type – combined with Inés’s talent for cooking – become fundamental to connecting the group together during the years that they are exiled from Spain for their political purposes.

Further, when they are finally able to return in 1976 and Inés opens her restaurant in Spain, they post a sign saying “el mejor restaurante español de Francia conquista Madrid” (the best Spanish restaurant of France conquers Madrid), again injecting the entire restaurant experience with political implications that, once unjustly removed from its home, this group – and the restaurant – triumphantly return to Madrid (Grandes 667). Concordantly, the triumphant return of the Communists who began their lifetime battle at the Valle de Arán in the forties is marked through the opening of her restaurant that “conquers” Madrid almost forty years later. *Inés y la alegría* thus offers a culinary historical revision of Spain’s past which contributes to giving voice (even if fictitious) to the stories of those oppressed under Franco. The opening of Inés’s restaurant represents democratic success in present-day Spain and finishes the novel by giving an alternative face and a voice to the histories that unfolded throughout his reign.

Conclusion

In *Inés y la alegría*, gastropoetic representation constitutes a fundamental language through which traditional Francoist gender norms are undermined and revised. The language of food and cooking thus creates a strong female subject position through which Inés acquires agency and is able to transcend her traditional role, actively participating in anti-Francoist politics throughout the novel. Almudena Grandes rewrites an innovative version of Spanish history, creating more subjective alternatives to the official version, up against decades of Francoist lies and oppression. This is not only done by the retelling of the largely untold Valle de Arán story, but more importantly it is done through the inversion of Francoist gender norms through food, giving voice to both women and communists during a time when they were both oppressed.

The food-facet of cultural production has thus allowed for new knowledge to be created in such a way that a cognitive social space is opened so that the past may be met with justice and a politics of liberation may progress forward through the various voices of the past confronting Spain's history of silence. Gastropoetic representation in *Inés y la alegría* "helps define a transition from totalizing national identities to pluralistic, individual identities" that are still deeply interconnected in their opposition to "singular Spanish identity propagated by Franco" (Namaste 14). Thus, Inés's fictitious history, and its inversion of real traditional Francoist norms specifically carried out through food interactions, is fundamental in this process. Using gastropoetics as its primary "tool to engage with the past", *Inés y la alegría* constitutes the place where culinary fiction meets historical reality (Colmeiro 27). Through this, the novel embodies one piece of a vast endeavor to provide a new voice and varying perspective on what it meant to be Spanish during Francoism and what it means to be Spanish in post-authoritarian Spain. In a

country where the past has been forcibly silenced within the realms of both fiction and history, the value of producing new and multiple identities on a personal and collective level is immeasurable. While we have seen how food representation contributes to such an endeavor in works produced during and after oppression, now I would like to finish my analysis with how food representation is used in in transitional works – specifically films – when countries are in the process of a political shift from authoritarianism towards the promise democracy.

CHAPTER FOUR

TRANSITIONAL TASTES: FOOD METAPHORS AND CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT IN MANUEL GUTIERREZ ARAGON'S *LA MITAD DEL CIELO* (1986) AND SILVIO CAIOZZI'S *LA LUNA EN EL ESPEJO* (1990)

In her book *From the National to the Individual: Forging Identities through the Use of Culinary Imagery in Representative Twentieth-Century Hispanic Dramas* (2005), Nina Bosch Namaste states: "I specifically chose to exclude dramatic works written during the transition to democracy because of my own preconceived notion that identities would be in a state of evolution, and thus not solidified, during such politically incipient periods" (16). Despite the unstable nature of such political backdrops, I believe that food representation can be an equally useful tool for analyzing transitional realities, during which time social and political liberties and agency (as opposed to authoritarian oppression) were in the process of being achieved. Further, gastropoetic representation may also be used in order to analyze how such political transitions opened space for the development of identities conceptualized outside of the authoritarian norm. This is because while questions of identity during political transition may have seemingly more fluid attributes, it is within the nature of identity to be in a constant flux of production and transformation.

I would like to now move from authoritarian and post-authoritarian novels into the realm of film – a particularly useful genre through which to investigate transitional tastes and identities as they were in the process of becoming something new – something beyond authoritarianism – in this case, something beyond both Francoism (in Spain) and Pinochetism (in Chile). As posited by Justin Lewis and Toby Miller, "film is a marker of culture that touches on consciousness and systems of value and either bind society together or illuminate its fissures" (85). While this claim is indeed true of *all* films, I will venture to say that it is particularly true of films produced and

released during political transitions when such “systems of value” are at the forefront and undergoing massive revisions (Lewis and Miller 85). Thus, in this chapter I analyze the proposed movement towards the promises of political freedom as transitional experiences unfold on screen through food representation in two pivotal films: Manuel Gutiérrez Aragón’s *La mitad del cielo* (Spain, 1986) and Silvio Caiozzi’s *La luna en el espejo* (Chile, 1990). I argue that, in viewing these films eleven years after the death of Franco or one year after Pinochet supposedly relinquished his power (1986 and 1990 respectively, while many of their institutions still remained in place) indeed “touches on the consciousness” and highlights the “fissures” of the post-authoritarian and pre-democratic society in both countries (Lewis and Miller 85). Therefore, similar to Namaste, I will explore how “food imagery acts as an expression of political, historical, and socio-economic power conflicts seen in the contestation of identities” (16). Unlike her, I will explore how this representation works within a transitional political setting by analyzing the films representation of food metaphors through dichotomies such as clean/dirty, fit to eat/unsanitary, sickness/health, traditional/new age. Further, I will analyze these metaphors of food as they are conflated with character development in these two films, thus representing traditional authoritarian politics versus the desire for a newer, innovative version of politics that promises personal and political liberties. Through such a conflation, both *La mitad* and *La luna* represent the transitional contestation of authoritarianism in Spain and Chile respectively, as they are in the process of being renegotiated and pushed towards the promise of democracy.

Accordingly, when considering the case of Spain, 1986 was historically preceded by the approval of the New Constitution in 1978 (three years after Franco’s death), the failed *coup d’etat* to revoke the Constitution in 1981, and the country’s incorporation into the European Community the very same year *La mitad* was released in 1986 (Comellas 540). Similarly, in

Chile prior to 1990, the political dissatisfaction and upheaval reached such heights that the people were no longer willing to accept Pinochet's abuses. That is "After the 1980 plebiscite and constitution, human rights organizations increasingly denounced the ongoing atrocities of the regime in the public sphere [...] During the following years, popular protest against the dictatorship intensified, fueled by hunger, poverty, unemployment" (Ros 109). Thus, Pinochet was removed from power in 1988 "with 55 percent of the votes against a second term" (Ros 109). These are the politically charged transitional environments in which these two films would have been viewed, creating a very mixed and, in large part, negative representation of the traditional regimes.

Subsequently, we will see that both of these histories of authoritarianism and the negativity surrounding them are portrayed by food representation in the films – specifically by demarcating political tastes. According to Pierre Bourdieu

Taste classifies, and it classifies the classifier. Social subjects, classified by their classifications, distinguish themselves by the distinctions they make, between the beautiful and the ugly, the distinguished and the vulgar, in which their position of the objective classifications is expressed or betrayed. And statistical analysis does indeed show that oppositions similar in structure to those found in cultural practices also appear in eating habits. (1813)

Bourdieu's theoretical framing of taste is particularly useful for an analysis of food in these two transitional films, as it may be used precisely to classify characters on a personal and political level within each film through the very broad understanding of good tastes (healthy, clean foods) and bad tastes (disgusting, contaminated foods). Furthermore, regardless of what the object of taste is, taste itself can distinguish social class and status (rich vs. poor, white vs. non-white,

educated vs. uneducated, traditional vs. modern). In the same way, I will argue that *La mitad del Cielo* and *La luna en el espejo* present the intersection of tastes through food within the films as a way to classify two broad groups of these transitional countries and open a space of political reevaluation which, when considered as a bigger part of the whole cultural effort towards the acquisition of social and political liberties, will eventually lead them out of dictatorship towards democracy. These two groups include those who wanted to maintain Francoism and Pinochetismo and those who yearned to move towards reforms and democracy. Food representation in these two films presents the process of transforming collective identities and the fluctuation (often times very messy) between these two groups as they unfold in front of audiences, urging them, “not just to watch and consume, but to act, to be better people” (Lewis and Miller 86).

Consequently, in both films, taste will be analyzed through food representation of tradition – that of dictatorship – versus food as it represents movement towards democracy. In *La mitad*, this is primarily seen through taste of food as being good or bad, fit to eat or contaminated. In *La luna*, this is done in a similar fashion that emphasizes sickness and health with direct commentary on traditional ways of preparing food versus innovative culinary creations. Through an analysis of these food categories and their relationship to each character, we are able to conceptualize transitional agency in the face of the legacy of authoritarianism. Further, we may see how food in film was able to undermine dictatorial oppression in order to participate in the larger cultural efforts of creating a space in which present-day democracy could thrive. Returning to Roland Barthes, food is a system of signs within each of these films; thus, food is never just simply present. On the contrary, food itself does the presenting; it conveys messages that become attached to food through people’s – or in this case characters’ –

interactions with it. Accordingly, I will demonstrate how all of these alimentary associations converge in the film to transmit a message that establishes the filth, sickliness, and ultimate death of Francoist and Pinochetismo politics as juxtaposed with the cleaning up and restoring of the countries' politics, moving towards democratic reforms and the promises of true freedom for the people. Thus, food representation is not only used to question, reproduce, or transform what constitutes the various authoritarian and post-authoritarian identities (as we have seen with the novels), but it also serves to delineate the transition between these two, when ethics surrounding notions of identity/subjectivity (both of self and other) are in a state of change.

Specifically, I will focus on the dichotomy of clean/dirty food, new/old ways of preparing food, and sickness/health as they are represented primarily through narrative, but also mise-en-scène with specific emphasis on sound.¹ In *La mitad*, I will analyze various scenes that delineate the relationships between food and the following three characters: Don Pedro (Fernando Fernán Gómez), Delgado (Nacho Martínez), and their interactions with Rosa (Ángela Molina), all of whom are connected to one another precisely through food. Don Pedro is the gluttonous dirty, devourer of food and Delgado is the clean inspector of food, determining its status as either sanitary or contaminated. Rosa is caught in between these two, the old and the new, and the food that she prepares and serves is constantly affected by her interactions with each of these two men. Similarly, in *La luna*, I will analyze the three main characters: Don Arnaldo – the sick old man (Rafael Benavente), Gordo – his son (Ernesto Beadle), who is caught between his father and Lucrecia (Gloria Munchmeyer), their neighbor and Gordo's girlfriend. Finally, as both Rosa and Lucrecia are central to the food representation in these films, I will demonstrate how – similar to what we see in the novels – it is through the *female* characters and their connection to food that

hope for what democracy promises the people in Chile and Spain is expressed, even if we cannot identify a fully materialized agency.

Historically, as I state in the introduction, both the Spanish and Chilean transitions mark the movement of each country from a politics of dictatorship to one of democracy, with the power and institutions of both Franco and Pinochet being challenged and renegotiated, yet maintained by various sectors of society. In fact, in both cases political transition of law precedes societal/cultural transition. In other words, the political systems in both Spain and Chile implemented democratic reforms beginning in 1977 and 1990 respectively, but it would be decades before these democratic reforms were used in order to confront the past atrocities of their dictatorships openly. In fact, in both cases transitional justice remains a very debatable and controversial concept today, despite democratic reform.

In the case of Spain, the political transition can be temporally qualified by a first phase beginning in 1975 upon Franco's death and solidifying political dominance by the left – the Spanish socialist party (PSOE) – after the 1982 elections. Nonetheless, the amnesty law that was granted in 1977 through the unofficial Pact of Forgetting was upheld, ensuring that none of the violence and atrocities visited upon Spain during the Civil War or Franco's dictatorship could be prosecuted. As is posited by Omar G. Encarnacion, "Spain underwent the transition to democracy without calls for justice against the old regime from the democratic opposition – not even formal condemnation of its evils was demanded" (55). Therefore, many of the military and political figures that held power during Franco's regime were not barred from continuing to play a large part in policy making. Thus, the conservative, right-winged, political framework of Francoism did not transition to democracy overnight; those who wanted to live freely, outside of the grasp of Francoism, were tasked with dismantling the ideologies that prevailed throughout

the 40-year dictatorship. Regarding this, Raymond Carr and Juan Pablo Fusi point out the stronghold of Franco's institutions and the possibility of their perpetuation by a Francoist political elite, despite the dictator's death in 1975 (207). In other words, in 1986 when *La mitad del cielo* was released to the Spanish public, despite the 1982 victory of the left, the Spanish transition was far from over. It was still rife with struggle as the Spanish people were divided between a conservative, traditional Francoist past and an uncertain future.²

In the case of Chile, there was a similar concern for the continuance of Pinochet's politics and oppression once he was voted out through the 1988 plebiscite. Although his dictatorship officially ended in 1990, "as long as Pinochet was alive, in many ways the dictatorship continued" (Ros 115). While Franco's death sparked political Spain's transition to democracy, Chile still had to live with the presence and power of their former, markedly violent, leader. Although the plebiscite yielded a 55% vote against Pinochet's second term, his own 1980 constitution would ensure the maintenance of his power (Ros 108). This is because he guaranteed himself to be commander-in-chief (and thus had control of the armed forces) until 1998 and subsequently deemed himself senator-for-life (Ros 108). In Spain, while it was those who succeeded Franco that threatened to continue with the Francoist regime, it was Pinochet himself in Chile who ensured the perpetuation of his political system. Thus, when *La luna en el espejo* was released to the Chilean public in 1990, democratic reform in Chile had only just begun, and at best, it was a superficial attempt to implement democracy. I will demonstrate how food and taste in both *La mitad del cielo* and *La luna en el espejo* delineate such politically dense transitional realities, offering examples of very early attempts to undermine their histories of authoritarianism and move forward to promises of a freer, more just political system.

Movie Synopses: Contextualizing Comestibles

To begin, *La mitad* is, at its core, a story of women; it is a fairy-tale narrative in which the matrilineal generations represented are Rosa (the protagonist played by Ángela Molina), her grandmother Olvido (Margarita Lozano), and her daughter of the same name (Olvido played by Carolina Silva). The film begins in the northern Spanish countryside, depicting a young Rosa's upbringing, the divining of her future by her magical grandmother Olvido, her marriage and subsequent pregnancy, as well as the almost immediate death of her husband.³ Finally, after the birth of her daughter Olvido, Rosa decides to seek refuge in Madrid after her father threatens to kill Olvido because she is a girl. With that, she takes a job in Madrid working as a house maid and wet nurse for Madrid's Chief of Provisioning, Don Pedro (Fernando Fernán Gomez).

Katherine S. Kovacs describes how Rosa climbs the ranks and, in return for her alimentation of both Don Pedro and his infant son, Don Pedro:

helps her to obtain a permit to open a stall in the local market. There she sells animal innards obtained through her black-market connections (a way of life for many years under Franco). Eventually she prospers and again, with the aid of the right connections, opens her own restaurant. Rats abound in every corner of the building; sewer lines run right through the kitchen. Nevertheless, the restaurant becomes fashionable meeting place for Falangist politicians; they praise it for its wholesome food prepared in old-fashioned ways. (35-6)

The female is bound up with the political arena, as Rosa's successes are all related to whom she knows politically and her restaurant ultimately becomes a the center of political maneuverings.

In her review of *La mitad*, Kovacs dedicates quite a bit of attention to this relationship. She posits that while females conform to all of their usual tasks of satiating all sorts of appetites in *La*

mitad del cielo, at the same time, “these activities involve a potentially subversive dimension” as “food designates the natural world which lies outside the control of the Francoist state apparatus” (36). Similarly, Bernard Bentley argues that “traditional feminine occupations are no longer shown to be subservient or demeaning but, in the case of Rosa as the narrative moves forward, they gradually become a source of power and authority that bring economic independence and allow her to reject the social and sexual proposals put to her” (266). However, in Susan Martin-Márquez’s book *Feminist Discourse and Spanish Cinema: Sight Unseen* (1999), she disputes these claims and focuses on ecofeminism, the abject, blood, and milk symbolism, as they are prevalent food/body references in the film that demonstrate the ambiguity of what is and what is not subject to Francoist oppression and control (in this case – the body) (235-45).

Indeed, there is a marked ambiguity (not a complete subversion of gender norms) that is represented by food in *La mitad*. That is, Kovacs, Bernard, and Martin-Márquez all posit valid arguments. On the one hand, Rosa is subject to the feeding and nurturing of men throughout the film and therefore does comply with traditional Francoist gender roles. Nonetheless, she employs the traditional female role to her advantage, using her cooking talents to ultimately empower her both economically and socially. With that said, through food, we see that the ambiguity thus lies in the fact that Rosa is never completely subject to Francoist gender norms nor is she completely free of them. Additionally, through the blatant politicization of Rosa’s food and food preparation within the film, I extend this argument of ambiguousness as it directly reflects the precarious political situation of Spain at the end of the dictatorship (the timeframe represented in the film), which is an ambiguity that is still very much alive in 1986 (when the film is released). That is, the political situation is one in which Spain is not completely subject to Francoism (as it was in the past). Nonetheless, the country still has not yet achieved the largely desired freedoms

promised by a democratic political system. Thus, Rosa and her food give insight into the transitional realities of Spain and created space for movement out of authoritarianism towards democracy.

While slightly different in terms of gender connotations (the primary cook/food figure is male), in *La luna en el espejo* food representation is used in a similar fashion in regards to giving insight into transitional subjects as well as fostering a space through which democracy could eventually be attained. While *La mitad* is a story based primarily around women, *La luna en el espejo* is the story of a son (Gordo played by Ernesto Beadle) who cares for his ailing yet overbearing and controlling father (Don Arnaldo played by Rafael Benavente). As Stefan Rinke posits:

[Gordo's] only passion remains the drive to eat in the kitchen – the only room which his father cannot oversee. The situation changes when the neighbor, Lucrecia [played by Gloria Munchmeyer], 'a widow with the body of a woman and the mentality of a little girl' enters the scene and becomes the son's lover. El Gordo is now caught in a conflict of emotions between love on the one hand and submissiveness towards the father on the other. (187)

The end of the film includes Don Arnaldo's ultimately leaving the house in a near-death state, delusional, and in search of his past. While the dictatorial figure has left the picture as the film comes to a close, nonetheless, as Rinke also points out, Gordo's prior submissiveness to his father seems to taint his future with Lucrecia as "Arnaldo's departure leaves a bad taste.

Transferred to the Chilean reality in 1990, Caiozzi presaged a problematic future now that the 'father' had left the house" (187). Even so, it is through his food interaction with Lucrecia – the woman of the film – that we see hope for Gordo and thus Chile's albeit "problematic" future.

Accordingly, expanding on Rinke's allusion to the importance of food and the kitchen for Gordo, I will now demonstrate how, similar to what we see in *La mitad*, food representation also highlights transitional subjectivities as they are caught between dictatorship and democracy and as such, participates in the creation of a forum through which the promises of democracy were sought after.

Dirty Dining: An Analysis of Don Pedro and Don Arnaldo

The first scenes I analyze exhibit parallels between Don Pedro and Don Arnaldo, the two overtly dictatorial father figures of *La mitad* and *La luna*, respectively. Although there are distinctions between them, they are both typified by their ailing, slovenly, yet voracious demeanor – which are attributes constructed through their relationship to food and drink. In *La mitad*, Don Pedro is an alcoholic with no regard for his health or cleanliness and, as a result, his vomit and overall sloppiness pervade the film as part of the contamination that is present throughout the movie.⁴ As opposed to Don Pedro, Don Arnaldo's illness in *La luna* is a result of a gastrointestinal ailment, which itself is one of the many health issues he suffers due to his old age. Thus, his sickness is the fulcrum of all interaction in *La luna*. In both films, Don Pedro's and Don Arnaldo's aging and ailments are accentuated through *mise-en-scène*. The films feature a plethora of close shots of their faces, depicting them to be wrinkled and typically sweaty in the case of Don Pedro (*La mitad*). Further, while Don Pedro has more mobility than Don Arnaldo (who is in bed for almost the entirety of the film), his general comportment within in each frame is always lethargic, slumped over, and feeble. Even more disabled than Don Pedro, Don Arnaldo (*La luna*) is constantly requesting his son's help to defecate (“me están sonando las tripas, Gordoooo!”) (my intestines are going off on me, Gordoooo!), he is obsessed with getting his daily diuretic, and in one scene he even urinates upon himself. This, coupled with the multiple close

shots of only him and his bed in the frame, ultimately place emphasis upon the magnitude of his illness and the contamination of the space in which he resides. With this interpretation of these characters in mind, I will now analyze how these attributes are played out through their relationship to food in such a way that contributes to the opening of a space in which Spain's and Chile's dictatorial pasts are ultimately challenged as a representation of the transitional experience unfolded (or unfolds) on the silver screen.

Don Pedro: *La mitad*

Both characters exhibit greed coupled with the desire to maintain tradition and these qualities are expressed specifically through angry outbursts regarding food. Although Don Pedro's greed in *La mitad* far surpasses that of Don Arnaldo in *La luna*, in both cases the films emphasize sound while these two men voraciously eat, grunting and slurping their meals. We see the beginnings of this association in *La mitad* from the moment Don Pedro is introduced as a character. In the first scene that features Don Pedro, he arrives home drunk, sloppily vomits in his escort's coat, and angrily proclaims to his deceased wife's two sisters: "Me mato todo el día a trabajar, llego a casa cansado, hambriento, esperando que hay algo caliente...no hay nada de comer! El jefe de abastos de Madrid no tiene cena, no tiene cena porque todo se lo comen sus cuñadas...nyum nyum nyum nyum!" (I kill myself working all day long, I arrive home tired, hungry, expecting a hot meal...and there's nothing to eat! Madrid's *jefe de abastos* does not have dinner, he doesn't have dinner because his sisters-in-law eat everything...nyum nyum nyum nyum!). This scene, in which Don Pedro slaps a plate out of his sister-in-law's hand during his rampage, establishes from the very beginning Don Pedro's relationship with food – he is belligerently hungry and his greed is brought to life with his own onomatopoeic reference to consumption.

In a similar manner, Don Pedro's voracious demeanor is further exemplified through a scene in which he is eating with his two sisters-in-law. The mise-en-scène is particularly situated to transmit Don Pedro's insatiable appetite, reflecting his greed. He is seated at the dinner table, in the middle, and the two women are seated on either side of him. This creates a profile view of the sisters-in-law for the audience, while Don Pedro is positioned facing the camera head-on. Filmed in a close shot, this scene also includes a large, circular pan of *arroz con leche* (rice pudding) in the center of the small table. As Don Pedro begins to devour his meal, one of his sisters-in-law, disgusted, says: "No debieras comer tanto, tiene mucha grasa" and then adds, "te vas a poner malo" (You shouldn't eat so much, it has a lot of fat...you're going to get sick). After this scene, the camera cuts to another shot of him, in bed, drinking an antacid liquid prepared by his sister-in-law. He then tells her that: "quisiera comer algo," (I would like to eat something) to which she responds "No, hoy estás a dieta" (No, today you're on a diet). Nonetheless, in the very next scene, he is standing in the kitchen, noisily devouring another plate of *arroz con leche*.⁵ Therefore, through this impressive combination of sound, mise-en-scène, and narrative, this portion of the film serves to establish Don Pedro as a gluttonous, nasty character. While such a description does not necessarily implicate the dense political atmosphere of transition in Spain, when read in light of the alimentary political commentary later in the film, we will see that there are certain, more profound conclusions that are indeed relevant to transitional audiences in 1986.

While there is nothing overtly political about the previous examples, food representation does become blatantly political as the film unfolds, opening itself up for such an interpretation throughout the film, especially when considering Don Pedro's previously established greed. Also, Don Pedro's profession – Madrid's Chief of Provisioning – connects food and politics in a

very literal sense as he is part of the political hierarchy, controlling food distribution and laws. To further compound this, he delivers a speech at a celebration that supposedly honors his promotion within the system. However, in reality Don Pedro is being forced to retire and his position is being filled by Delgado – who is characterized by youth and cleanliness, as well as his stringent approach to ensure that anything filthy is restored to a sanitary condition.⁶ He begins his speech by establishing himself as part of “la vieja escuela” (the old school). Then, he states that:

Hay gente que les desconfía de la juventud y desconfía de la generación que viene a tomar el relevo. Yo no desconfío porque la sangre de nuestros hijos es la sangre que late todavía en nuestro corazón. Y todos hemos mamado la misma leche.

Hemos vivido mucho juntos, luchado juntos, algunos se quedaron por el camino.

Hemos tenido discusiones apasionadas, y también nos hemos peleado entre nosotros, pero nunca por nada más importante que si el Martini debe servirse con aceituna o con corteza de limón. Hoy estamos todos de acuerdo que esta cena ha sido magnífica...

(There are people that do not trust the youth and do not trust the generation that is coming to take over. I do not distrust them because the blood of our children is the blood that still beats in our hearts. And we have all suckled the same milk. We have lived a lot together, fought together, some fell by the wayside. We have had passionate arguments, and we have also fought amongst ourselves, but never over anything more important than whether or not a Martini should be served with an olive or a slice of lemon. Today, we all agree that this dinner has been magnificent...)

This part of Don Pedro's speech demonstrates his hopes that Delgado, as part of what we can label the "new school" of the Francoist political bureaucracy, will continue on with the work that he has done as part of the "vieja escuela." Thus, through the language of food, Don Pedro sums up what is critically known as "the two Spains". According to José Luis Comellas, the concept of "las dos Españas" has been understood in various ways. In general terms, Comellas states that "Para unos, la dicotomía se establece entre la España tradicional, con sus viejos valores históricos, y la España tolerante, moderna, progresista" (303) (For some, the dichotomy is established between traditional Spain, with its old, historical values, and the tolerant, modern, progressive Spain). Read in this way, the political undertones of "la misma leche" (the same milk) can be interpreted as the nationwide influences and subsequent effects of conservative Francoist politics, founded in tradition. The disagreement over how to serve a Martini coupled with the images of fighting "entre nosotros" (amongst ourselves) reminds us of the fratricidal Spanish Civil War, caused precisely by the split between tradition and modernity.⁷ Finally, the "fantastic" dinner that they are consuming in this scene, represents the potential for future agreement and compliance with old school politics.

Such food representations are not without consequence when considering Lewis's and Miller's concept of the audience to be "not so much a specifiable group *within* the social order as the principal site *of* that order" (86). In this case, it is the site in which the prominent political division in Spain at that time is replicated and then – through food – such a "system of value [...] illuminates its fissures" (Lewis and Miller 85). Therefore – through food as it characterizes Don Pedro to be nasty, ravenous, yet sickly and immobile, coupled with his political food discourse, the connection is made between Don Pedro and how he represents the old, immobile, "vieja escuela" (old-school) Francoist politics. Carr and Fusí remind us that at this time (the time

represented by the film – roughly the 1960s and 1970s towards the end of the regime) “[...] the political class was divided by struggle between *aperturistas* – those who believed that the regime must be ‘opened’ in order to survive by winning a wider support, usually called ‘participation – and *immobilistas*, who resisted any change in what was called the ‘essence’ of the regime” (179). Finally, this resistance to change is again verified through Don Pedro’s own tastes which – in the Bourdieusian sense and in his own words – most certainly classify him to be representative of old-school Francoist politics.

However, there is a certain ambiguity that can be seen in Don Pedro’s speech in *La mitad*. On the one hand, his words may be seen to represent the desire for a continuation of conservative Francoist politics well after his death (“hemos mamado la misma leche” [we have suckled the same milk]). However, this scene also offers an interpretation that is contingent with the political situation of the transition. Regarding this, Carr and Fusí note that the Francoist regime was not to “remain static,” adding that “the Francoism of 1970 was no longer the undisguised, naked personal rule of 1940. The regime prided itself on its evolution, its capacity to adapt to circumstances: as the constitutional texts put it, ‘to perfect itself’. The purpose of perpetuation, to institutionalize the survival of the Francoist elite” (40). Therefore, if Don Pedro represents the old regime, his speech can be considered representative of the desire to perpetuate traditional politics. Nonetheless, this perpetuation must be embodied through a sort of “evolution”, or governmental revision, as opposed to the stale *immobilismo* that was originally proposed (Carr and Fusí 40). It is precisely through the character of Delgado and his obsession with cleanliness – specifically as related to food and food-preparation – that we see the new Francoist bureaucrats’ attempt “to perfect itself,” that is, to clean it up, making him potentially representative of *aperturismo*. However, Delgado is an ambiguous character with an alternate

reformista representation as well, which would have done anything *not* to perpetuate traditional fascist politics, thereby resulting in the eradication of Franco's elite. Before analyzing such ambiguity in further detail, and what this means for Spanish audiences of 1986, I will first discuss the case of Chile and *La luna*'s Don Arnaldo, as there is a similar food-politics connection and corresponding ambiguity.

Don Arnaldo: *La luna*

Similar to Don Pedro in *La mitad*, Don Arnaldo also has an angry outburst surrounding food consumption. One such instance is a close shot featuring him eating an empanada noisily as he looks in a mirror which reflects Gordo and Lucrecia's interaction. During this scene, emphasis is placed upon two planes of sound: that of Gordo and Lucrecia whispering and that of Don Arnaldo smacking as he eats and watches them. Similar to what we see with Don Pedro, there is also emphasis placed upon his belabored breathing as he eats and grunts. Then, the camera pulls back a bit and the frame is centered upon a mirror reflecting don Arnaldo with the empanadas before him, on a tray in bed, as he continues eating and holds one up and begins to interrogate Lucrecia regarding where she purchased the abalones that went into the empanadas. When she tells him that she purchased them in the market and that the recipe is from a magazine, he becomes quite incensed and tells her "para comer locos buenos y frescos, hay que ir al almendrar, a la pescadería de don Floridor [...] porque estos locos están pasados mi señor, podridos, él no las vendía así, no, no, no. Porque estas empanadas están medio crudas, diría yo, ah no, no, no, son malas, malas de frente" (in order to eat good and fresh abalone, you have to go to the right place, to Don Floridor's fish market...because these abalones are spoiled my friend, rotten, he didn't sell them like this no, no, no. Because these empanadas are half raw, I would say...no, no, no they are bad, straight out bad). Further he tells her that the recipe should never

have been taken from a magazine because “esto es algo tradicional” (this is something traditional). Don Arnaldo may be interpreted as representative not only of greed (through the emphasized sound while he eats) and maintenance of tradition (through dialogue), but also as constant surveillance (as his mirrors are set to reflect each part of the house, with the exception of the kitchen).

In the Chilean context, Don Arnaldo also delineates the split between old, dirty politics and new, clean politics through gastronomical discourse, however, similar to what we have seen in *La mitad*, there is some generational ambiguity. That is, in spite of Don Arnaldo’s dictatorial characteristics, at the same time he seems to challenge Pinochet’s government, wishing to return to a time far earlier than Pinochet’s reign.⁸ Through food imagery, he may be understood to represent a rebellion against Pinochetismo as well as the new turn that the country is taking, bringing a sense of nostalgia to the table. Regarding the previously mentioned empanada scene, he describes the abalones to be “pasados” (spoiled) , “podridos” (rotten), and the empanadas as “pésimas” (awful). In fact, he continues to invert the discourse as if he is the one being oppressed by the present, explaining that he is a war hero and should be treated better: “Me trajiste aquí a la fuerza...aquí yo me ahogo” (You brought me here by force...I’m drowning here). Therefore, while Don Arnaldo is reminiscent of Pinochet through his constant vigilance throughout the house and his history of military service, nonetheless the bad empanadas lead him into a rant in which he says that: “el gobierno anterior no tenía heroes, sino políticos y por eso tuvo que caer” (the previous government did not have heroes, only politicians and for that, it had to fall). Thus, Don Arnaldo questions the failed “past government” – being that of Pinochet, which technically “fell” in 1989, precisely during the production of this film and one year prior to its release. However, at the same time, he rejects the new and modern version, represented through the

empanadas and Lucrecia's deviation from tradition. He finds the current place where she buys and the manner in which Gordo cooks the abalone empanadas as "spoiled" and "rotten." His character thus both renounces and simultaneously reflects Pinochet's dictatorship, embodying precisely the state of the Chilean people at the time – caught between dictatorship and democracy.

This ambiguity regarding the new government in 1990 comes as no surprise considering the fact that Pinochet and his politics were very much alive and well at this time. Although the transition to democracy had officially begun, the 1980 constitution "established the terms for a 'protected democracy' that would enable what was considered a peaceful transition" (Ros 109). Thus, despite stepping down in 1989 after being voted out officially, Pinochet still maintained significant power for the following twenty years. Not only was he commander-in-chief until 1998, when he became senator-for-life, but there was also an Amnesty Law in place that absolved Pinochet and the military from guilt for human rights atrocities committed up "until 1978 (the most brutal period of the regime)" (Ros 109). Neither true justice nor freedom was attained by the Chilean people at this time. In 1990, it can therefore be argued that Chile was still functioning under a rotten, spoiled, dirty politics of authoritarianism and no authentic changes had been made. It is therefore not surprising that the old and ailing Don Arnaldo's taste in food classifies him (as Bourdieu would say) as a traditionalist that wishes to return to a time prior, when the "empanadas were fresh", neither affected by the violence of dictatorship nor having to fight to move towards democracy. Nonetheless, as Lucrecia reminds him, Don Floridor's market "ya no existe" (no longer exists).

This aside, his taste in food further classifies him as dictatorial when he accuses Gordo of being a communist and uses the language of food to express his anger and disdain:

Eso, me criticas y me censuras como los comunistas. Acabo de descubrir la verdad, eso es lo que eres, comunista... Todos los marinos somos héroes imbécil! ¡A mí no me vengan con huevos pasados por agua! ¡A mí me gustan fritos, escuchaste, digan lo que digan esos médicos, que también son sinvergüenzas, fritos entendiste, fritos!

(That's it, you criticize me and censor me like the communists. I've just discovered the truth, that's what you are, communist... all of the marines are heroes, imbecile! Don't come to me with boiled eggs! I like them fried, hear me, the doctors can say what they want, they're also scoundrels, fried, you understand, fried!)

With this example, Don Arnaldo rejects the new and the “healthy” or “cleaner” version of politics – represented through the boiled eggs (new/clean/healthy) versus the fried eggs (traditional/dirty/unhealthy), just as Don Pedro in *La mitad* indulges in copious amounts of fattening *arroz con leche* with no regard to his health. As communists were enemies of the state during Pinochet's reign, with the juxtaposition of criticizing Pinochet's government up against accusing Gordo to be a Communist, we can see precisely the state of flux that is apparent in transitional identities – caught somewhere between Chile's authoritarian past and moving towards a democratic present, all the while yearning nostalgically for a peaceful past, unaffected by the present state of affairs.

As in *La mitad*, this is representative of the political division that was occurring in Chile at the time. Ana Ros reminds us that, while there was a significant group who demanded change up against the oppression of Pinochet, at the same time, Pinochet

enjoyed significant civilian backing from strategic segments such as the investor class, landowners, and privileged families. In addition, *Pinochetismo* was not restricted to the upper-class; he also had support among members of the lower middle class and the poor, defenders of traditional and religious values who identified with his right-wing politics. (Ros 109)

Understood in this way, through the language of food, both Don Pedro and Don Arnaldo represent the staunchly immobile version of Francoist and Pinochetist politics through their aged, sickly, and stubborn decrepitude, while also offering a slightly more ambiguous reading, vacillating back and forth between traditional authoritarianism and the latent desire for change – in the case of Don Pedro, towards a revision of Francoism and in the case of Don Arnaldo, returning to a past time prior to Pinochetismo.

Summary of Don Pedro/Don Arnaldo

While gastropoetic representation serves to classify Don Pedro as *immobilista* and Don Arnaldo as *pinochetista*, I have shown how it does so through a largely negative representation on the silver screen. Therefore, these characters simultaneously represent the futility of such authoritarian politics. “Food imagery acts as an expression of political, historical, and socio-economic power conflicts seen in the contestation of identities”, and this is not without consequence when being viewed by the transitional audiences of Spain and Chile (Namaste 16). Taking into consideration Lewis and Miller’s understanding of the cultural audience as the site of social order, the audience/film interaction is one forum through which the social order (whichever it may be) is played out (86). Don Pedro and Don Arnaldo represent societies – social orders – that are caught between dictatorship and democracy, recognizing the need and having the desire to progress forward but still being plagued by an exploitative past. They

concurrently represent the futility of authoritarian socio-political order precisely because they are associated with illness, decrepitude, decay, and filth as these attributes are conflated with food metaphor. Therefore, the language of food offers a fundamental way through which these films constitute “a *recorder* of reality (the unstaged pro-filmic); a *manufacturer* of reality (the staged and edited event); and a *part of reality*” (Lewis and Miller 85). In other words, when interpreted on par with relevant socio-political occurrences – the previously mentioned events in Spain preceding 1986 and those in Chile preceding 1990 – food representation in *La mitad* and *La luna* highlights the similarity of Spanish and Chilean post-dictatorial contexts, underscoring the fluidity of identities that were being fought for (whether through means of preservation of traditional, exploitative politics, revision of said politics, or complete transformation). Food representation becomes a prevalent tool through which *La mitad* and *La luna* participated as one of the many ethical agents in a much larger project that urged the Spanish and Chilean people to further decontaminate their country, and push forward towards the promises of social democracy.

Similar to Lewis’s and Miller’s claim that film urges its viewers to “be better people”, Bruce McConachie also demonstrates how cultural production participates in ethical reevaluation, specifically in terms of theatre. McConachie summarizes Alan Read’s *Theatre and Everyday Life* in saying that

From his [Read’s] point of view, spectators [...] do much more than look, hear, and passively consume when theatre is working as it should. Rather, audiences rely mostly on their immediate feelings to continually make ethical judgments about the ‘images’ in play. These images, though initiated on stage, are part of an ongoing transaction, ‘an economy of symbolic exchange,’ between audience members and performers” (39-40).

While theatre and cinema are arguably different – specifically as live human beings may affect their audiences far more than those on the silver screen –we still may apply the above argument to the cinematic experience. Food representation may be understood as an integral part of *La mitad*'s and *La luna*'s “economy of symbolic exchange”, and therefore it is fundamental in the process of an ethical evaluation. The interaction between what *La mitad* and *La luna* present through food imagery, Don Pedro, and Don Arnaldo on screen – and the audience's reception to these characters and alimentary metaphors – is part of a much larger process that ultimately pushes Spain and Chile towards new political possibilities and indeed captures these countries in the midst of this endeavor. In this same vein, Read (in a strikingly similar way to Travis) states that “[t]his is the place where theatre occurs. Both ethics and theatre are concerned with possibility” (90). It is precisely this potential possibility to overcome decades of dictatorship and violence that is represented by the continuing dichotomy of dirty and clean food throughout the films as well as the possibilities offered through food and cooking. Ultimately, these images capture the push towards a freer society, creating resistant agency in the face of authoritarian oppression. I will now move on from my analysis of Don Pedro and Don Arnaldo to analyze what I have identified as the characters that are representative of Spain and Chile as they undergo their transitions. In *La mitad*, Rosa's body may be seen as a metaphor of the social body of Spain, affected by her interactions with Delgado (in addition to Don Pedro). Likewise, in *La luna*, Gordo may be understood as Chile, affected by his interactions with Lucrecia (in addition to Don Arnaldo).

Delgado/Rosa

In *La mitad*, Rosa's story is one that takes her from the traditional Cantabrian countryside to the quickly modernizing city of Madrid, immediately marking her as representative of Spain

and its transition from rural to urban that preceded and continued into its political transition. However, from the onset of the story (1959), far before she ever goes to Madrid, her character is one whose role is to feed and nurture. She is the one who wakes up to milk the cow and take her father milk (while her sisters, whom her mother tries to awaken, will not do it). She is also the one who prepares the family meals (her sisters are “tontas” [stupid] and “torpes” [clumsy], according to her father – especially in the kitchen). Once she arrives in the city, her role of nurturer is further emphasized as she takes a job as a wet nurse for Don Pedro and also prepares him *arroz con leche*, a meal with which he develops an obsession as this is the only dish we see him eat throughout the film.

Initially, it is precisely through her compliance with the traditional archetype of the nurturing female that she gains any type of agency. For example, with an extreme tone of satisfaction and gratitude, after consuming *arroz con leche*, Don Pedro says “me alimenta a mi hijo, me alimenta a mí, y da gusto verla a ella: limpia, guapa, joven...” (she feeds my son, she feeds me, and it gives me pleasure to see her: clean, pretty, young...), and in order to show his gratitude, when she asks him for a space in the market, he gets her one. However, it is again through the trope of food that Rosa herself is able to progress forward, when she decides to take out a loan and open a restaurant (albeit with “the right connections” as Kovacs notes). Nonetheless, in this alimentary space the masculine presence that is there, affecting her throughout the entire film, continues to impede upon Rosa’s existence. It is here that we see a marked attempt at revision of Rosa and her restaurant through cleanliness, which makes itself apparent through Delgado’s interactions with Rosa. Delgado states “el estado ha de ser como una mujer: limpia. Hay mujeres bañadas en perfume, pero sucias, sucias, sucias. Pretendemos hacer limpieza. Ser como chachas.” (the state must be like a woman: clean. There are women drenched

in perfume but dirty, dirty, dirty. We intend to clean up, be like maids). Delgado draws the parallel between Rosa and the state of Spain itself, as she is deeply influenced by her interactions with Don Pedro (traditional past) upon arrival and Delgado (traditional past/progressive future), once she is established.

Throughout her entire interaction, from the countryside to the city (again reflecting the modernization of Spain as another integral part of transition), she is plagued by filth, indicated through *mise-en-scène*, with several scenes that include rats and vomit. Therefore, while she begins as “limpia, guapa, joven” (clean, pretty, young) we see her battling to maintain this state throughout the film.⁹ In fact, when Delgado visits her restaurant for the first time, he decides to send back his workers in order to investigate the sanitation levels due to his own observations about the general dirtiness of the restaurant and the rumored food poisoning case of her sisters.¹⁰ When Delgado’s employees are in the house conducting the investigation, the *mise-en-scène* includes a quick shot of a dirty bathroom with leaky pipes. Following this, the scene cuts to a shot in the disordered, contaminated kitchen (located below the bathroom). This juxtaposition of two opposing spaces, one where food is expelled and the other where food is prepared and consumed can be read through a political lens of dirty and clean politics when considering the role that Delgado and his functionaries play in decontaminating Rosa’s restaurant – a markedly political locale itself.

For example, when Delgado’s investigators find that the kitchen is defiled by the bathroom, they interrogate Rosa with a series of abrupt questions and comments: “Esto da sobre la cocina, ¿verdad? [pointing at the bathroom floor]. No hay ventilación. El agua del retrete se filtra en la conducción del agua potable,” and in the next scene, they affirm that, “Cocinar, cocinarán gloria. Pero comer, comen mierda...Lo mejor será que la propietaria pase mañana sin

falta por el ministerio” (This is above the kitchen, right? There is no ventilation. The toilet water is filtering into the running, drinkable water...Cooking, their cooking is glorious. But eating, they’re eating shit...it’s best that the owner (Rosa) goes to the department (El Ministerio Público) tomorrow). Through this conversation, we can see that Delgado’s functionaries evoke two contradictory images here. The first is the image of the many Spanish citizens that comprised supporters of the reform of the Francoist politics, those responsible for decontaminating the previous 40 years of dictatorship, as opposed to those who were resistant to any change at all (embodied in the old, stale Don Pedro).

The second, however, is reminiscent of the traditional authoritarian dictatorship. Despite their connotations of cleanliness, the functionaries’ meticulous manner of inspecting and reporting back to Delgado most assuredly alludes to thoughts of Franco and his many militant officers and workers. Despite this ambiguity, Carr and Fusí illuminate the purpose of this sector of Francoist politicians saying that they wanted reform that would “underpin the gradual evolution of the regime towards democracy” rather than undermine Francoism overnight (183). Perhaps, then, this is why such ambiguity exists. For a country of men and women inculcated with traditional Francoist norms, traces of Francoism are certain to be present during the democratization process. In any case, in order to achieve such a transformation, it was necessary to detoxify Francoist politics in order to progress forward. Thus, we see Rosa as a woman caught in between the past and the present, the dirty and the clean – and being pushed to sanitize her restaurant (she receives an “infraction of hygiene” after visiting with Delgado).

Regarding this, Katherine Kovacs says that food representation in *La mitad* is subversive because it:

designates the natural world which lies outside the control of the Francoist state apparatus. The act of eating induces certain concomitant body functions such as vomiting, defecating, urinating – which Gutierrez Aragon does not shrink from presenting... These ultimately supersede the proscriptions of patriarchal society. (36).

Nonetheless, I would argue that – while Rosa assuredly exercises some form of agency through her consistent feeding of men throughout the film, and subsequent successful restaurant, ultimately *La mitad* uses food in such a way that shows Rosa – and Spain itself – to be in the process of acquiring agency while still being subject to the legacy of men (in Rosa’s case) and more specifically Francoism in Spain’s case.

This food-transitional politics connection is perhaps most prevalent when Delgado tells Rosa: “Tu restaurante es una plaga de infracciones. Las aguas fecales pasan por la cocina, los alimentos están fermentados por falta de higiene [...]” (“Your restaurant is a plague of infractions. The fecal waters pass through the kitchen, the food is fermented due to a lack of hygiene”). Regarding the conditions in which food is prepared and served, “[t]he concept of ‘good’ food practices here no longer simply refers to nutritional value, but carries with it moral and aesthetic values” (Ashley et. al. 62). For the viewer, the lack of sanitary food preparation in the film does not only embody a superficial message that Rosa’s restaurant is dirty. That is, such “moral and aesthetic values” are part and parcel to the social order that is played out in the Spanish cultural audience of 1986 (Ashley et. al. 62). As Delgado tells Rosa, “Tu restaurante es un sitio donde ahora van ministros, intelectuales, periodistas. Un sitio de moda. Tienes una responsabilidad. Hoy la política se hace comiendo [...] Solo quiero que seas limpia” (Your restaurant is now a place where government officials, intellectuals, and reporters go. A

fashionable place. You have a responsibility. Today, politics is done while eating. I just want you to be clean). It is with this statement of Delgado that the connection between food and its communications of political stances throughout the film is directly established. Again: “Hoy la política se hace comiendo” (Today politics is done while eating). Indeed, the political commentary that this *La mitad* purports complies with the above claim as it is a politics constructed on the binary opposition of dirty and clean food.

Gordo/Lucrecia

While it is not in a restaurant that we see filth in *La luna en el espejo*, the discourse of clean and dirty still is still significant in the Chilean context. In addition to urinating on himself in bed (where he eats), Don Arnaldo tells Gordo that they have rats and then says “Cállate, las patitas chiquititas corriendo en el entretecho, que asco... si esta la tuvieras limpia no habrían ratones... hay que ponerles veneno” (Be quiet, the small feet running in the attic, how disgusting... if you kept it clean there would not be rats, you have to poison them). Don Arnaldo is adamant that they need to clean up the house and rid it of filth and pests. Read alongside the awful and rotten abalone empanadas, this may be again interpreted as the necessity to clean up Chilean politics, despite Don Arnaldo himself being the Pinochet of the film in many ways.

This discourse of stifling filth that Don Arnaldo is obsessed with inside of the house is juxtaposed with the only scene in the film that takes place outside of the house with Gordo and Lucrecia, when they decide to leave Don Arnaldo sleeping and go to the pier. This is also where the connection between Gordo as representative of Chile is the most salient. While there, they discuss their future and Gordo says “Usted no me conoce Lucrecita, tengo tantas ideas, tantos proyectos que a veces siento que se me va a reventar la cabeza. Fíjese que pienso en tantas cosas... cosas que me gustaría hacer en el futuro” (You do not know me Lucrecita, I have so

many ideas, so many things...things that I would like to do in the future) and Lucrecia responds “Como poner un restaurante por ejemplo” (Like open a restaurant for example). Gordo then says “se imagina, un restaurante de mariscos aquí en Valparaiso, se llenaría de gente...desde que fue la empleada que le estoy cocinando a papa, y con lo regodeo que es, imagínese lo que he tenido que aprender para tenerlo contento” (Imagine it, a seafood restaurant here in Valparaiso, it would fill with people...ever since the helper left, I’ve been cooking for father, and with the go-round that it is, imagine what I’ve had to learn to keep him happy). It is with this that we may interpret Gordo as comparable to Rosa in *La mitad* - and again the country’s freedom represented through the female character in the film. Gordo’s character represents Chile in much the same way that Rosa represents Spain. They are both pulled towards a preservation of the exploitative politics of a traditional past.

Further, Gordo’s father is the oppressive, vigilant dictator figure, constantly watching Lucrecia’s interaction with Gordo and commenting on both her positive impacts (how nice she is to both of them) and her negative impacts. For example, Don Arnaldo begins interrogating Gordo about his relationship with Lucrecia and he says “Esa cree que soy tonto, cree que no me doy cuenta cómo te lleva a la cocina. Yo sé que ella trae licor, a propósito para emborracharte la cabeza y enseñarte a que tú te rías de mí. No soy tonto [...] Voy a hacer que la investiguen bien investigada (...This one, she thinks that I’m stupid, that I don’t realize how she takes you into the kitchen. I know that she brings liquor, for the purpose of getting you drunk in the head and teaching you to laugh at me. I’m not stupid. I’m going to make sure that they investigate her well). Aside from the blatantly dictatorial characteristics of this commentary, it also highlights two important aspects of gastropoetics in the film: as opposed to every other room in the house, Don Arnaldo cannot use his mirrors to see into the kitchen. The kitchen is a space of freedom

where Gordo is able to express himself with Lucrecia without vigilance. Also, as Don Arnaldo sees it, Lucrecia is a threat to his stability as she may intoxicate Gordo with alcohol and ideas which may ultimately result in his abandonment (“Si salieras a la calle con esa mujer, te podría pasar algo y yo me quedaría aquí solo” [if you go out with this woman, something could happen to you and I would be left here alone]). Lucrecia thus offers Gordo the freedom that his father so incessantly stifles.

Subsequently, in the above example, when they are actually outside of the house and Don Arnaldo’s domain, they are able to discuss their hopes and dreams – which, as Lucrecia suggests – includes opening a restaurant. Lucrecia positively influences Gordo to progress forward – from pushing him to leave the house for a short time (this was her idea, Gordo was hesitant at first), supporting his dream of opening a restaurant, and giving him a modernized version of the empanada recipe (which Don Arnaldo staunchly reminds us must be traditional, not from a magazine), Lucrecia represents the push for a freer existence that Chile was approaching in 1990. Regarding Gordo, Rinke states that, “With *El Gordo* director Caiozzi has touched a sore spot because this figure can be read/interpreted as the submissive average Chilean or even the Chilean people at large” (187). Nonetheless, this understanding of the Chilean people is redeemed through Lucrecia’s character, for it is through her that Gordo stands a chance for freedom and his own subjectivity may be salvaged. After she prompts him to share his dream of opening a restaurant, he declares that it is precisely his experience with food and his father that would make him particularly efficient in the restaurant business. That is, to some extent, the submissiveness and oppression he has undergone waiting on his father hand and foot is ultimately what pushes him forward to a new, hopeful future; he considers himself prepared and recognizes that he may

derive a successful, happy future out of a terribly oppressive situation – much in the same way that Chile is ready to progress forward, into democracy.

Food and the Political Future: “¿Quién lleva?”

Thus far, we have seen how the language of food in these two transitional films may be read as a tool to capture and understand transitional political experience as the characters and countries were in the very process of attaining agency. In terms of *La mitad del cielo* and Spain, Don Pedro is representative of the dirty, gluttonous, and old politics of Francoism. On the contrary, Delgado represents the second wave of Francoist bureaucrats while Rosa represents transitional Spain itself. However, Delgado’s character is somewhat more complicated. He, like his functionaries, may represent two transitional processes at once. This would not be surprising, because up until the early 1980’s, a large percentage of those in power were products of the Francoist regime and thus operated under the old fascist structures by which they were taught; nonetheless, in the majority of cases “no cupiera dudar de su (the ruling class’) auténtica aceptación de las instituciones democráticas” (there was no doubt about their authentic acceptance of the democratic institutions) (Comellas, 547). Therefore, the new generation of Francoists was undoubtedly grounded in the traditional institutions of Franco, approaching the issues through what they had been taught. However, as Comellas points out, a large portion of them accepted democracy. Therefore, both characteristics, as contradictory as they may seem, are present in Delgado’s character. When he is in the process of lecturing Rosa about her restaurant, through *mise-en-scène* we see the Francoist Spanish flag flamboyantly displaying its colors, with Rosa seated beside it. Through this and Delgado’s generally threatening and regulatory attitude, there is a clear connection to his representation of the second generation that wished to preserve the comfort of Franco’s elite through *immobilismo*. On the other hand, his

constant obsession with cleanliness as it is juxtaposed with the filth of Don Pedro's representation of stale Francoist politics, could either be read as "perfecting" the old regime and still maintaining Francoism or perhaps beginning to make those changes and reforms that would eventually lead to democracy.

Regardless of which way Spanish audiences of the eighties interpreted Delgado's part, the restaurant turns into an inarguably political space where dirty politics are juxtaposed with clean, or reformed, politics. Considering the audience as the "site of social order" (as posited by Lewis and Miller), the transitional social order of Spain in 1986 could be approached through one question which Don Pedro asks Delgado when they begin to dance after dinner in the restaurant: "¿Quién lleva, tú o yo?" (Who is leading, you or me?). There is perhaps no better example of a country in transitional crisis than that embodied in Don Pedro's question. Perfectly demonstrating that Francoist politics and movement towards democracy was still something being negotiated at that time, through the language of food *La mitad*, along with other works of art, creates part of the society's transitional reevaluation of political ethics as they are urged towards a fundamental change from authoritarianism to democracy. For as Anne Bower reminds us, "In movies of the past and present, viewers' group and/or individual identities are acted upon, reinforced, or perhaps reformed based on national, generational, gender, or other ideologies" (5). Through the taste of food in *La mitad* (representing generational and political tastes, as they interacted with the female gender) we see Spain's transitional experiences that were leading up to a resolution – democracy – precisely when the film was produced. Food representation captures the extremely fluid transitional identities of that historical moment, and the various challenges posed up against oppressive identities, representing those who did not want change,

those who did want change, and those who fell somewhere in the middle. This is also true in the Chilean historical context and *La luna en el espejo*.

Thus, similar to Don Pedro in *La mitad*, while Don Arnaldo simultaneously represents the old, contaminated, rotten politics, undermines them, and undermines the current political situation in 1990's Chile, the desire to move forward towards democracy may be read again through food. Understood in light of the previously mentioned political connotations of food imagery in the film, Gordo's last significant comment to Lucrecia is culinary, yet is relevant to Chilean politics of that historical moment. With this example, Gordo's cooking advice is presented to the audience in voice-in-off, as his father – for the first time in the film – gets up and puts on his shoes as he prepares to venture into the past, going down to the beach by the ocean, which is the last we see or hear of him. As we see him getting ready to leave, we hear Gordo say the following:

El secreto de la cocina está en saber esperar el momento en que se sueltan los olores Lucrecita. Hay que tener paciencia y no adelantarse ni pasarse, el momento justo cuando se agrega un condimento o se aumenta la intensidad del fuego, uno se acostumbra Lucrecita, se acostumbra a esperar a mirar, a sentir el momento justo, cuando todo está a punto...lo mejor es macerar la carne, dejarla en adobo hasta que esté tierna y perfumada. No hay nada más sabroso que una carne bien macerada, no hay nada más blando. A veces, fíjese Lucrecita, que no hay necesidad de usar el cuchillo para cortarlo, basta el tenedor, pero hay que esperar que la cosa se haga sola, que el vino y las especias ablanden solos la carne y la dejen así, a punto...

(The secret of the kitchen is in knowing to wait for the moment in which the smells are released Lucrecita. You have to have patience and not get ahead of yourself or behind, the moment when you add a condiment or you increase the intensity of the fire, one becomes accustomed, Lucrecita, accustomed to waiting and watching, to feel the right moment, when everything is ready...the best is tenderizing the meat, leaving it in marinade until it is tender and fragrant. There is nothing more delicious than a well-tenderized mean, nothing more delicate. Sometimes, pay attention Lucrecita, using a knife is not even necessary to cut it, the fork is enough, but you have to wait and let the thing do it itself, so that the wine and the spices soften the meat and leave it like that, ready...)

At this point, we then see Gordo in the kitchen frosting a cake and his father in the room, looking at the medals he was awarded in the navy, preparing to leave the house fully decorated in his awards. Similar to *La mitad*'s fundamental question "¿Quién lleva, tú o yo?", we may interpret this part of *La luna* as a metaphor for Chile's precarious political situation, as Pinochet is not officially in power, yet absolutely controls almost every political aspect of Chile at the time. Further, this alludes to a Chile that is in a situation to wait for the right moment to seek justice – "esperar el momento" and "sentir el momento justo" in which ethical justice may be pursued and attained. Again, we can see how the cultural audience is where this social ambiguity – this in-between-ness – is played out. We may understand film to invoke gastropoetics as a fundamental "marker of culture that touches on consciousness and systems of value and either bind society together or illuminate its fissures" (Lewis and Miller 85). Through such alimentary imagery, the possibility of moving from dictatorship to democracy unfolds on screen in tandem with the

representation of fear and uncertainty regarding the right moment in which to pursue political freedom.

Unfortunately, it was not until 1998, when Pinochet was no longer commander-in-chief, that “many Chileans pressed charges against him”, and he was arrested in London, later to be released in 2000 due to medical issues (Ros 112). While he was prosecuted for “fifty-seven counts of murder and eighteen abductions”, again he was declared unable to stand trial due to medical reasons in 2001 and finally in 2002 pronounced incurable, “which protected him permanently from the law but also forced him to retire as senator, thereby dramatically reducing his impact on public life” (Ros 113). For many, the dictatorship and true transition to democracy did not begin until Pinochet’s death in 2006. Although the country was still very clearly divided (many celebrated his death, but many mourned it), again “as long as Pinochet was alive, in many ways his dictatorship continued” (Ros 116). Thus, not until this point, was Chile “tierna” (tender), yet “perfumada” (fragrant) and “a punto” (ready), or truly in a position to move forward and seek the promises of ethical justice through the democratic political system.

Conclusion

La luna en el espejo and *La mitad del cielo* are both part of a bigger cultural panorama in Chile and Spain that, while reproducing some ambiguity, capture an overall desire to move forward into democracy as it unfolds on screen through food. Read in light of the many attempts to break the silence surrounding the abuses of Pinochet’s and Franco’s regimes, we see that a concern for the present led others to investigate the past and contribute to the public debate about it. For them, politics today, the conflicts of yesterday, and the struggles about collective memory are not separable. Through activism, films, and

literary texts, they raise fundamental questions and address unexplored aspects of the past, thereby sparking a lively debate (Ros 5).

Gastropoetic representation in both *La mitad del cielo* and *La luna en el espejo* is a prevalent symbolic system that is paramount in the questioning of the past and the creation of the present (1990 for Chile and 1986 for Spain), as well as these countries' futures, which are now present-day.

Through the level of agency attained by Gordo (with the help of Lucrecia) and Rosa (with the help of men throughout the film), as demonstrated through food representation, these two films open up a space in which ethical reevaluation was able to occur despite the distinct challenges posed by each country's authoritarian continuance of power. Thus, while the word *democracy* was on the lips of many Spaniards and Chileans, these two countries were still very much grounded in traditional oppressive ideologies. It would be another decade before the transitional societies materialized some version of a functioning democracy in Spain and another two decades for Chile. It is through mediums such as film that we may truly understand how “transitional justice, cultural production, and generational change are mutually enabling processes”, and food representation is a fundamental tool through which these processes manifest themselves (Ros 5). Thus, while my previous chapters show food representation as a means through which characters acquire agency and establish cultural identity in post-authoritarian historical contexts and even during authoritarian conditions where identity and freedom are often stifled, *La mitad del cielo* and *La luna en el espejo* demonstrate that the language of food in novels and film produced *during* transition can be read in a similar fashion – precisely as such alimentary metaphor expresses the journey and lays bare the processes through which a freer version of society may be achieved through a democratic system. Finally, the

language of food depicts the ambiguity and fluidity surrounding issues of identity and agency in worlds that are caught between an oppressive past and a promising future, giving us a window into transitional realities despite the historical attempts to stifle the oppressive contexts that necessitated such changes.

CONCLUSION

JUST DESSERTS

I would like to conclude by bringing my argument back around to the role of gastropoetic cultural production in “keeping alive intractable ethical questions,” because it is through this aspect that the language of food in these pieces has potential beyond the text itself (Travis 232). Thus, in accordance with keeping the issues of subjectivity and agency alive through ethical reevaluation, each of these novels and films uses the language of food to create ethical alternatives to the oppression that such alimentary metaphor resists. In other words, the language of food is fundamental to understanding the importance of literary production to real-life ethical change. In a field which has historically been divorced from “the real world” (both by itself and other institutions), the space created by gastropoetics cross-cuts the everyday and the academic, the tangible and the conceptual, demonstrating this division to be largely contrived and detrimental to the overall purpose of the humanities. This is an invaluable attribute for, as Toby Miller tells us, “[b]y removing our research from policy debates and applications in the name of high-minded, disembodied critique, we impoverish everything we do” (15). As I have shown, food representation is a very salient tool that may be used for its transcendental qualities which bridge the gap between the academy and real life histories of freedom and oppression.

In *La guaracha del Macho Camacho*, the ethical alternative is found in keeping Puerto Rican tradition alive in the face of United States imperialism. That is, despite the United States permeation of the Puerto Rican market as is evidenced through U.S. food brands read alongside general stagnation in the text, the island and its citizen’s still have access to agency. As we have seen, such imperialistic presence is deeply criticized through United States food items that pervade the Puerto Rican market to a parodic extreme throughout the novel. However, agency is

acquired and Puerto Rico is redeemed through the figure of the female cook, Doña Chon. Her preparation of the island's traditional cuisines and constant affirmation that "you are what you eat" create and reinforce the island's identity. Thus, through Doña Chon's alimentary activity, she represents Puerto Rico's subjectivity despite centuries of colonialism and more recent imperialism. Without food representation – specifically as it is grounded in Puerto Rican tradition – this novel would only serve to criticize and represent the oppressive results of imperialism with no potential for moving beyond it or actively coexisting with it. While the struggle for identity is still something being negotiated today in the face of United States imperialism, it is through works like *La guaracha* and its language of food, combined with a plethora of other cultural efforts, that the struggle remains alive and well.

The same remains true for Margarita Engle's *Singing to Cuba*, in which the alternative of freedom that is presented is one that reconnects human beings to their local geographies and one another. Through the eyes of an unnamed female protagonist and her recollection of the Cuban peasant or *guajiro* feast, we see how food and people are connected to one another and to the land that yields such prosperity. In this way, the exploits of Capitalism (which disconnect people from the land and the production of food) and Cuban communism (which is historically exploitative of the Cuban people and land), are resisted and challenged through the alternative of interconnectedness or intersubjectivity presented through gastropoetics. Without the language of food, this novel would simply be a depiction of the atrocities afforded by Cuban communism as it is directly connected to the exploits of United States capitalism. On the contrary, the *guajiro* gastropoetics in the novel demonstrate an alternative of local interconnectedness, grounded in Cuban tradition, which is found neither in the United States capitalist nor Cuban communist economic and political systems. In a world where the citizens are realizing that local

interconnectedness affects national and even global economies, *Singing to Cuba* presents an alimentary alternative to such exploitation. Such a food-based alternative has the potential to be universally applicable in the face of two systems which have been historically exploitative and damaging to many peoples throughout the world. The language of food in *Singing to Cuba* therefore presents us with not only “who we are,” but potentially *who we could be* should we indulge the alternative of cultural and local interconnectedness through food.

In *Inés y la alegría*, Francoist oppression is undermined and challenged retrospectively as the novel rewrites Spain’s history and contributes to the project of restoring historical memory in the present day. Again, through a female cook protagonist, Inés, and her acquisition of subjectivity, we may read this as a metaphor for Spanish subjectivity and resistant agency in the wake of Francoist authoritarian abuses. Subsequently, through the language of food, the novel participates in the ongoing project of restoring Spain’s historical memory which, in and of itself, is deeply tied to ethical justice through group agency. Therefore, similar to gastropoetics in *La guaracha* and *Singing to Cuba*, food in *Inés y la alegría* binds people together for the greater cause of the promises afforded by a democratic political system, and this process extends beyond the text into the present day, bringing awareness and voice to the Spanish communist history in post-Franco Spain. While this begins with the little known Valle de Arán experience, the entirety of the novel gastropoetically combines fiction and history, forming part of Spain’s present day collective memory as an active form of resistance to the atrocities of its Francoist past.

Finally, in both *La mitad del cielo* and *La luna en el espejo*, we see the desire and movement towards alternatives of freedom in Spain and Chile, as they were in the process of coming to fruition – being negotiated and realized by the citizens of these countries, and subsequently represented on the silver screen. In any case, while both of these alternatives look

different based on history and geography, they are presented through the fundamental forum of gastropoetics in relation to the female characters in each film. In *La mitad del cielo*, we have seen that this is done through the juxtaposition of clean and dirty food, healthy and unhealthy food, and the tension that exists between them, as they demonstrate the political divide that existed in Spain of 1986 – those who wanted to maintain Francoist power and those who wished for democracy. In *La luna en el espejo*, similarly through alimentary metaphor, we see the conflict between the traditional versus new, healthy versus unhealthy, and ready versus not-quite-done foods as they convey the struggle for democracy that was ensuing in Chile in 1990. As such, this project further contributes to the field of literary and cultural studies by demonstrating for the first time how the language of food may be used to capture transitional identities as people and countries were in the process of resisting oppression and therefore fighting for resistant agency in the shadow of authoritarian histories. Through an understanding of the cultural audience as the location where cultural norms and values unfold, are questioned, and potentially revised beyond the cinema, gastropoetic representation becomes fundamental in creating solidarity or conveying cultural disconnects – not only during and after authoritarianism (as we see with the novels) – but also at the time of political transitions from dictatorship to democracy.

Understood in this way, the multiple meanings of the language of food are culturally established outside of the text, gastropoetically implicated within the text, and subsequently extend beyond the text in order to create resistance and alternatives to oppression. Contingently, this project shows how alimentary metaphor, and its fundamental relation to resistant agency in such geographically and historically diverse works, demonstrates the need to unify histories of oppression as it simultaneously creates one such forum through which this unification occurs.

The language of food therefore highlights and prioritizes cultural difference (Puerto Rican cuisine, geography, culture is distinct from Cuban and Spanish and so on), while concurrently underscoring universal similarities when ethics of subjectivity, agency, and freedom are threatened and compromised by oppressive political regimes; this is a universal history of human rights and liberties. Food, then, whether literally or metaphorically, can be understood as central to every struggle for freedom. The food-freedom relationship is of course replicated within cultural production in such a way that we may creatively reflect upon such real-world issues and potentially find alternatives through which to challenge, resist, and change oppressive histories in the name of future freedom; this is what unifies the novels and films that are analyzed in this project, despite their distinct cultural histories.

Such ethical possibility, of course, is not exclusive to Hispanic literature and film. Again, the language of food highlights cultural difference yet unites humanity through the similarities of humanness. Gastropoetic representation exalts the study of everyday life as one which is not so mundane when considering issues of freedom and oppression as everyday experiences. As posited by Toby Miller, “Here is the future for the humanities: comprehensive, omnibus survey courses about how meaning is made, circulated, and received in all media – running across science, capital, fiction, sport, news, history, and politics” (122). As I have demonstrated, food and its representation is fundamental in understanding how “meaning is made” of self and world, cross-cutting every sector of culture; food itself *is*, in fact, a medium. Thus, gastropoetic representation is an integral modality to academic research across multiple disciplines (food is all of the above) and demonstrates the need to further expand upon its potential in answering fundamental questions about ethics and oppression both within and beyond the Spanish-speaking world.

APPENDIX A

NOTES

INTRODUCTION

1. There is a vast body of literature on food representation in Laura Esquivel's *Como agua para chocolate*. Both the film and novel, as well as the numerous studies dedicated to them, have shaped the direction that Hispanic food studies has taken in recent years, focusing on the problematizing of personal and collective identity in the Hispanic world. For evidence of this, see Maite Zubiaurre's "Culinary Eros in Contemporary Hispanic Female Fiction: From Kitchen Tales to Table Narratives" (2006), in which she traces the scholarship on *Como agua para chocolate*, including studies ranging from 1992-2001, including but not limited to the work of Meredith Abarca (2001), Tina Escaja (2000), Kari Salkjelsvik (1999), Susan Lucas Dobrian (1996), Cristina Ortiz (1996), Joanne Saltz (1995), Kathleen Glenn (1994), and Salvador Oropesa (1992). In this same respect, Cristina García's *Dreaming in Cuban* (1992) and Senel Paz's "El lobo, el bosque, y el hombre nuevo" (1991), a short story which later became a film (Tomás Gutiérrez Alea's *Fresa y Chocolate* (1993)), contributed to the ever-growing 1990's trend of a Hispanic food studies that grounds itself in investigations into self/other in the Hispanic world. Examples of this can be found in Karen Skinazi's "Eating the Nations: A Culinary Exploration of Cristina García's *Dreaming in Cuban* (2003) and Eloy Merino's "Los usos del almuerzo lezamiano en El lobo, el bosque y el hombre nuevo, de Senel Paz" (2004).
2. Here, Stuart Hall refers specifically to Cultural Studies in the United Kingdom as a contemporary response to "understand cultural and social change in British society since the war" (22). He further states that these modes of resistance are intended for those "who

are now – in economic, political, and cultural terms – excluded from anything that could be called access to the national culture of the national community” (22). I believe that this description of British cultural studies is one that may be extended to the field of cultural studies in general as it endeavors to counteract economic, political, and cultural exclusion in any socio-cultural context (in the case of this project, Hispanic).

3. As Gustav Jahoda points out in “Critical Reflections on Some Recent Definitions of Culture” (2012), Kroeber and Kluckhohn included in their definition the very fluidity of the concept of culture, predicting that it would grow and change. They state that “[t]he main respects in which, we suspect, this formula will be modified and enlarged in the future are as regards (1) the interrelations of cultural forms and (2) variability and the individual” (181). While it could be argued that those aspects of culture have indeed seen historical change, I still find their definition of the concept to be useful to this project precisely due to its all-encompassing and flexible attributes.
4. As previously mentioned, Parama Roy also connects food to culture as cuisine is replicated in South Asian diasporic literature. She analyzes Sara Suleri’s *Meatless Days*, positing that Suleri creates a “genealogy through cooking and food, she also makes it clear that such gastrophilic histories, which are in many ways peculiarly tied to conditions of diaspora and migration, are nonetheless saturated with idioms of national belonging and national purity [...]” (472).
5. For the purposes of this project, “ethics” and “ethical change” may be understood as the collective and individual-level acknowledgment of the similarities and differences that exist between self and other. Ultimately, this recognition fosters a more comprehensive understanding of both the individuating and unifying potential of these asymmetrical

forces. As such, this acknowledgment stands to be an increasingly paramount factor in the promotion of socially-conscientious discourse which, at the interpersonal level, nurtures civic engagement and community building both within and between cultures.

6. Bruce McConachie makes a similar argument regarding theater. Summarizing Alan Read, he states that: “From his [Read’s] point of view, spectators [...] do much more than look, hear, and passively consume when theatre is working as it should. Rather, audiences rely mostly on their immediate feelings to continually make ethical judgments about the ‘images’ in play. These images, though initiated on stage, are part of an ongoing transaction, ‘an economy of symbolic exchange,’ between audience members and performers” (39-40). I include this because I believe, despite distinctions between individual and collective reception, this ethical argument permeates all facets of cultural production – from film, to theater, to literature.
7. The ongoing struggle surrounding Puerto Rican collective identity – both on a political and cultural level – is further discussed in three works which I rely upon in chapter one: *Puerto Rico in the American Century: A History Since 1898* (Ayala and Bernabe, 2007), *Puerto Rico: Culture, Politics, and Identity* (Morris, 1995), and Arcadio Díaz-Quiñones’s 2005 introduction to the Cátedra edition of *La guaracha del Macho Camacho* (1976).
8. As Omar Encarnacion points out, Spain and Chile have many things in common that precede their transitions, despite the temporal difference in their dictatorships. He states that “Franco and Pinochet both came to power through bloody military coups that put an end to popularly elected left-wing regimes (the Second Republic in Spain and the Allende government in Chile). Both followed their military victories with widespread repression of the left aided by conservative groups such as the military, the Catholic Church, and the

business community. Moreover, Pinochet fashioned his political regime, which came to power during the twilight of the Francoist era, on the Franco template, right down to the influence of Catholic fundamentalist organizations like Opus Dei” (134). Just as we can see the striking resemblance of Spain and Chile’s authoritarian histories, we can also draw parallels between their political transitions and the challenges associated with each. Additionally, we can highlight these parallels and challenges as represented in cultural production through food representation.

9. For instance, I translate items such as coffee, butter, fruits, and even internationally fundamental meals of rice and beans. However, when dealing with very culturally-specific meals such as Puerto Rican mondongo, I found it more useful to describe the meal in a footnote.

CHAPTER ONE

1. *El señor presidente* (1946) by Miguel Ángel Asturias, *Como agua para chocolate* (1989) by Laura Esquivel, and *Dreaming in Cuban* by Cristina García (1992) are just three of the many Latin American examples that utilize food as a language that conveys a specific political context.
2. For more information regarding Muñoz Marín’s politics, see Luis Arcadio Díaz-Quñones’s introduction, pp.58-60.
3. Depending on which way this is translated, *china* and *amarilla* also evoke the Chinese presence in Puerto Rico.
4. This deterioration of Puerto Rican cultural identity could also be analyzed through a reading of other characters like Benny, el senador Vicente, el Viejo, and la Madre.

5. For a description of each plate, see Arcadio Díaz Quiñones's footnotes on pp. 250-52 of the novel.

CHAPTER TWO

1. For the purposes of this paper, I will not go into a lengthy discussion of the state. To simplify, I will subscribe to SF Nadel's definition which says that the state is "a form of political system which is the product of a conjunction of three factors: a unitary polity based on territorial sovereignty; a specialized governmental body with a monopoly on legitimate force; a ruling group, distinguished from the rest of the population by training, recruitment and status, with a monopoly on the apparatus of political control" (Barnard and Spencer 796).
2. In *La guaracha*, there are examples that place emphasis on the collective, especially when Doña Chon cooks for the strikers. Further, I have argued that her cooking is representative of Puerto Rico as a whole. However, in *Singing*, there is not one specific character that is connected to food. The nameless protagonist conveys her thoughts and memories about food, but they are always grounded in the cooking and enjoyment that connect the group together and have roots in the *guajiro* Cuban peasant traditions.
3. See Marta Caminero-Santangelo's "Margarita Engle, Cuban American Conservatism, and the Construction of (Left) US Latino/a Ethnicity" (2002), G Ignizio's "Finding a Way Home: The Return to Cuba in Margarita Engle's *Singing to Cuba* and *Skywriting*" (2011), and Mary S. Vásquez's "Contrapuntal Song: Celebration and Rage in Margarita Engle's *Singing to Cuba*" (1997).
4. As Radstone and Hodgkin state "historical studies of memory are intimately and indissociably linked with histories of subjectivity, and shed light on historical variations in conceptions of subjectivity and experience" (20). Again, the same is true of food and

food representation. For her part, Deborah Lupton posits that: “Food and eating are central to our subjectivity, or sense of self, and our experience of embodiment, or the ways that we live in and through our bodies, which itself is inextricably linked with subjectivity” (1).

5. Here I am referencing Fernando Ortiz’s concept of “cubanidad” expressed in his essay “Los factores humanos de la cubanidad” (1949). With “Los factores”, Ortiz highlights the difficulty in defining *cubanía* due to the heterogenous history of the island and deems it an ongoing task (15). Furthermore, he compares Cuba to an “ajiaco”, or Cuban stew, in which goes various ingredients from various cultures that comprise the island (3). Ortiz’s conceptualization of “cubanidad” is specifically relevant to exploring Cuban and Cuban-American hybrid identity – specifically in the case of the protagonist of *Singing to Cuba*, through the language of food.
6. The United States foods I mention in the first part of this sentence can be observed in various US Latino texts such as Cristina García’s *Dreaming in Cuban* and Luis Rafael Sánchez’s *La guaracha del Macho Camacho*, and are usually used to complicate and critique identity as affected by United States capitalism.
7. This historical information can be found on p. 222 in *Cuba: Foreign Policy & Government Guide, Volume 1*, published by the International Business Publications, USA, in Washington, D.C.
8. Another similar example in the text occurs when the protagonist has a conversation with a Cuban cab driver about different types of apples. He asks ““Do you have many apples over there?”” to which the narrator says “Apples? Yes, very many.” I answered, startled, intrigued by his query. In the U.S. I had often overheard older exiles reminiscing about

apples. ‘Many different sizes, shapes and colors,’ I added. ‘Apples can be green or yellow, round or heart-shaped’” (99). Similar to what we see with the different types of fruit candy, the apples also may be understood to represent the freedom to choose from an abundant variety that is associated with capitalism. However, later in the text, we will see how capitalism is not the only potential social system that offers abundance and choice.

9. The “personification” argument is one that I do not use to read *La guaracha*, but it could easily be applied to Doña Chon and the food that she prepares and shares with others – from La madre to the strikers, especially as her food becomes an extension of herself personally and the collective Puerto Rican group identity.

10. When Gabriel arrives at the prison, he is marked by the meal that they give him.

Regarding this, he notes that: “Noodle soup, that was the meal he had been given in the shed. All around him men were receiving yellow rice with spiced meat. One of the youngest was trembling [...] The young man who was trembling finished his yellow rice with spiced meat and then, whispering, pressed his palm to Gabriel’s shoulder and said ‘You’re lucky. The noodle soup means they’re not going to kill you’” (104-5). This is one more example of how food is fundamental to understanding Gabriel’s character.

11. This is another autobiographical parallel between the narrator and the author. According to Margarita Engle’s website (www.margaritaengle.com), during her summers spent in Cuba she “developed a lifelong passion for tropical nature, which led me to study agronomy and botany, along with creative writing.” Further, she lives in California and works with her husband as a volunteer “for wilderness search and rescue dog training programs.”

CHAPTER THREE

1. See Irene Andres-Suárez's "Memoria e identidad en El corazón helado de Almudena Grandes" (2012), Ana Zapata-Calle's "La memoria histórica como tema central en *El corazón helado* de Almudena Grandes (2009), Carmen de Urioste's "Memoria de la Guerra Civil y modernidad: el caso de *El corazón helado* de Almudena Grandes" (2010), and Ramón Acín's "Historia de los cuerpos mortales cuando se cruzan con la historia inmortal" (2010), among multiple other studies about Almudena Grandes and historical memory.
2. For studies regarding gender and sexuality in Almudena Grandes's writing, see Lorraine Ryan's "All Turbulent on the Home Front: Unfulfilled Working Mothers in Almudena Grandes' *Atlas de geografía humana*" (2011), Antonia Teresa Pérez-Franco's "La representación de la libido femenina en *Las edades de Lulú* de Almudena Grandes" (2011), Mercedes Valenzuela Cruz's "Soledad, pasión y frustración en los personajes femeninos de Almudena Grandes" (2009), Pilar Rus's "La mirada como transgresión sexual y social: Almudena Grandes y Juan Vicente Córdoba" (2003), and Euisuk Kim's "La dualidad del personaje masculino en *Las edades de Lulú* de Almudena Grandes" (2008).
3. Ramón Acín's article "Historia de los cuerpos mortales cuando se cruzan con la historia inmortal" (2010) is the only currently available article about *Inés y la alegría* and focuses largely on historical memory and fiction. Acín dedicates one paragraph to food, observing that Inés's "refugio y evasión ante tales circunstancias [of war-ridden Spain, Francoist Spain, and post-war Spain] será la cocina, la gastronomía y, a la postre, también su puente de plata y su salvación. Pues, tras escuchar la 'Pirenaica', cuando logre huir de las garras de su hermano, la gastronomía será el pasaporte para cogerse a las filas de los

republicanos que intentan instaurar en Viella la legalidad del gobierno robado por la fuerza de las armas. Y también, la gastronomía será su refugio y su luz hasta que, tras casi una vida, pueda regresar a la España democrática” (88) (“refuge and evasión in facing such circumstances will be the kitchen, gastronomy, and ultimately, also her means of money and her salvation. After listening to the communist radio the “Pirenaica”, when she is able to flee from the grips of her brother, gastronomy is the passport for joining the republican ranks that intended to install a legal government in Viella that was robbed by force. Also, gastronomy becomes her refuge and her light until, after almost a lifetime, she can return to a democratic Spain).

4. Aurora Morcillo references these two books as fundamental to Franco’s regression to a past Spanish female ideal in *True Catholic Womanhood: Gender Ideology in Franco’s Spain*.
5. For example, *La Guaracha del Macho Camacho* and *Singing to Cuba* were both written during the authoritarianism that they problematize through food. *La mitad del Cielo* and *La luna en el espejo* represent the transitional process from authoritarianism to democratic freedom and were written produced and released during those transitions. On the contrary, *Inés y la alegría* forms part of this process retroactively through food as it was published twenty-five years after Franco’s death.
6. This information comes from the previously mentioned journal *Mientras tanto*. For more on the journal, see my introduction.
7. Obviously the attempt failed, but the struggles and fear of this particular group of exiled communists has been largely untold in Spanish history. It also represents one of the first attempts to overthrow Franco through armed struggle. This is discussed in more detail by

Alfonso Domingo in *El canto del búho: la vida en el monte de los guerrilleros antifranquistas* (2006).

8. Inés ties up Adela (her brother's wife) in order to escape her brother's household. She feels extremely guilty about it and expresses remorse as she loves Adela dearly. Later in the narration, it is Adela who convinces Ricardo to get her out of Las Ventas prison.
9. Most of these foods are untranslatable and I believe translating them would undermine the point regarding the importance of their Spanish origins while being served in France during exile.

CHAPTER FOUR

1. "Mise-en-scène" is a theatre and film studies term that refers to the entire experience of the scene – actors, movement, sound, prop placement, design, lighting, etc.
2. Regarding the timeframe of the Spanish transition, in the decades following 1982, democratic reform continued to be implemented in the Spain. As posited by Omar Encarnacion, by the year 2000, "Spain had enjoyed two decades of stable democracy, its future as a democratic society was all but ensured by incorporation into the EEC in 1986 [...]” 132). Thus, the transition in terms of democratic reform was more or less stable by the end of the 1980s. Nonetheless, this was a democratic transition that was implemented via the collective forgetting of the past. The transition – or at least transitional justice – is still going on today.
3. While the grandmother is a very important character – representative of a mythical female tradition existing prior to Franco – my political argument centers upon Francoism and post-Francoism, so I do not go into an in-depth analysis of her. She does, however, have a culinary connection – the bread and cheese that she shares throughout the film

with her granddaughter and great-granddaughter, which Katherine Kovacs says marks “female strength and solidarity” (36). However, while this may be the case, it is not a “strength or solidarity” that supersedes the masculine regulation of the female arena, represented by Rosa, throughout the film. Further, at the end of the film, she dies, and her ghost is seen by Olvido, leaving Rosa’s restaurant, which is arguably the expiration of tradition as Spain moves towards modernity.

4. Don Pedro is not the only one associated with vomit. Rosa’s sisters, poisoned by her daughter Olvido, also vomit frequently (they never get better) and this shows up as part of what makes Delgado suspicious of the restaurant’s filth.
5. *Arroz con leche* is the only meal we ever see Don Pedro consume throughout the film. In her book *Feminist Discourse and Spanish Cinema: Sight Unseen*, Susan Martin-Márquez comments on the trope of milk – specifically as a main ingredient in the *arroz con leche*, but also as Rosa is consistently connected to it through her milking of cows, being a wet nurse, etc (241). Her conclusions – grounded in the abject of the motherly body – are that Rosa does not supersede Francoism and gain subjectivity through the agency of mothering and feeding (as Kovacs would claim), precisely because her body is regulated by Don Pedro (as he represents tradition) and Delgado (as he represents the cleaning up of Spain’s politics) (44).
6. We later find that “mi ascenso fue en realidad solo una jubilación” (In reality, my promotion was just retirement) (*La mitad*).
7. For more evidence of the tradition/modernity split being a main cause of the Spanish Civil War, see José Luis Comellas’s *Historia de la España contemporánea* (2002), pp. 125-26.

8. Don Arnaldo is very old and all of his references to famous naval battles date back to the late 1800's and early 1900's, suggesting that his flashbacks and nostalgia refer to a much earlier time than Pinochet's reign.
9. Again, this is a quote from *La mitad* in which Don Pedro describes Rosa when he first met her.
10. It is Rosa's daughter, Olvido, who poisons her sisters with rat poisoning due to the fact that her sisters ruin a dinner she is hosting to try and impress Delgado and show him the restaurant is clean. Unfortunately this backfires, because while the dinner is occurring, the sisters are upstairs in the room vomiting, and her mother brings down the buckets they are using, and Delgado sees this.

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Elizabeth Huard was born in Bossier City, Louisiana in 1986. She attended Valdosta State University in Valdosta, Georgia, where she received a Bachelor's degree in Spanish, Summa Cum Laude, in 2007. She then moved to Tallahassee where she obtained her Master's in Spanish at Florida State University in 2009. Following that, she remained at Florida State where she completed her Ph.D., focusing on food representation in Hispanic literature and film, in 2014. She has presented her work at the Conference on Food in Literature, Film, and the Arts at the University of Texas (San Antonio, 2014), the 33rd Annual Romance Language Conference at the University of Cincinnati (Cincinnati, 2013), and Political Dreams and Nightmares in Iberian and Latin American Literatures at the University of Chicago (Chicago, 2011). She now lives in Boulder, Colorado where she teaches Spanish and works as the Director of Programs and Operations at Spanish Institute.