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Eating Paradise: Food as Coloniality and Leisure

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Abstract

Sandals Resorts' *Gourmet Discovery Dining* programme continues the company's practice of marketing difference by combining tourism with the commodification of food from non-Western cultures (Dodman and Rhiney 2008). The article draws on bell hooks' (1992) concept of 'eating the other' and the analysis undertakes an interdisciplinary approach that combines visual analysis with Anibal Quijano's (2007) concept of modernity/coloniality. The discussion explores the trends of global multiculturalism that have been adopted by Sandals in a hybridized cut and mix approach to selling a packaged ideal of the Caribbean. The visual techniques devised to create a culinary holiday package are overlaid onto a manufactured and homogenised or McDonaldized (Ritzer and Liska 1997) Caribbean that provides insight into the way in which global neoliberal multiculturalism is framed by ongoing colonial relations after formal colonial rule has ended in the Caribbean region.

Key words: *tourism, coloniality, Caribbean food, luxury, all-inclusive hotels, globalization*

Introduction

Sandals Resorts' *Gourmet Discovery Dining* programme continues the Caribbean company's practice of marketing difference by combining tourism with the commodification of food from non-Western cultures (Dodman and Rhiney 2008). This approach to marketing cuisines as difference, follows a contemporary trend that valorises food within lifestyle consumption practices (Hirst and Tresidder 2016), websites that display perfectly photographed food, television programmes hosted by Michelin-starred chefs and the revival of cookery books that encourage readers to view the consumption of ethnicized food as an adventure and to

experiment with unfamiliar or so-called 'exotic' ingredients. These examples are part of a culinary trend that markets the consumption of food as being integral to leisure activities and the luxury tourism product (see bell hooks' (1992) essay 'Eating the Other' for a critical discussion on the way in which ethnicity is used to add 'spice' in mainstream white culture. This is particularly relevant in the context of food and tourism as packaged food is frequently used to 'excite' the tourist. Compare hooks' discussion with Lucy Long's (2004) essay 'A Folkloristic Perspective on Eating and Otherness').

Sandals Resorts was founded in 1981 by white Jamaican Gordon "Butch" Stewart and specialises in packaging all-inclusive holidays in the Caribbean for heterosexual couples. In the process of building a luxury tourism product, Sandals have deployed the themes of romance, love and paradise when targeting affluent clientele largely from North America and Western Europe. In the course of developing the destination wedding and the *Luxury Included* concept of the brand, Sandals have simultaneously developed a visual discourse of whiteness as denoting luxury, that is to say that such visual culture projects ideas or notions of whiteness that make it synonymous with luxury. In the case of Sandals these discourses of whiteness are carried by images of white princess brides (Wilkes 2016). Sandals disseminate these images via new media technologies that achieve modes of communication via the Internet and social media platforms that have an extensive global reach and sell ideas of distinction and luxury as leisure to tourism customers. It is Sandals' unique role within the all-inclusive Caribbean tourism market and its ability to widely disseminate its version of paradise and luxury that makes the company significant as a site of critical analysis and discussion. Specifically, it is the way in which Sandals' all-inclusive holidays limit the tourists' interaction with local people (Wilkes 2016). Yet in a strategy to provide tourists with a varied "ethnic" menu, the company have devised a package of cuisines that claim to offer authenticity. However, this manufacturing of diversity is simultaneously detached from its cultural context, as the examples presented in this discussion aim to demonstrate.

The article aims to make explicit the ways in which Eurocentric assumptions regarding the superiority of European-derived cuisines contribute to the process of cultural detachment as displayed in Sandals' packaging of 'global food'. It is also significant as an example of coloniality as the company endeavours to create new visual narratives of the region, and continues colonising practices by shaping notions of the Caribbean through imagery and ideas that maintain Euro-American systems of knowledge and economic power. This is the power 'to define reality' (Wong 1994: 134) and is significant in the case of Sandals, as it operates in a

postcolonial Caribbean context, thus positioning the representation of food as coloniality and leisure as a site of struggle.

The article is written from a black feminist perspective and borrows from bell hooks' (1992) concept of 'eating the other' and drawing on this work, adopts an interdisciplinary approach that combines semiotic visual analysis of a selection of Sandals' webpages that are specifically devoted to promoting the different cuisines made available at the company's resorts in the Caribbean. The analysis of the webpages was undertaken throughout 2017 and 2018 and is framed by the intellectual outputs of the modernity/coloniality research programme, devised by Arturo Escobar and Anibal Quijano in 2004. This discussion specifically draws on Quijano's (2007) concept of the modernity/coloniality matrix of power, to explore the use of the Caribbean as a backdrop for the display and consumption of difference. Sandals' *5 Star Global Gourmet* package is an example of the way in which the Caribbean is appropriated, commodified as paradise and used to form the basis of luxury for whiteness (Lott cited in McLaren 1998). The techniques devised to create a culinary holiday package that are inserted onto a manufactured and homogenised or McDonaldized Caribbean will be considered. This approach provides insight into the way in which global neoliberal multiculturalism is framed by ongoing colonial relations.

The article aims to demonstrate that the creation of food narratives within the tourism product has a specific political context. This practice, to be fully understood, needs to be located in the context of global food hierarchies that are structured by pre-existing colonial systems of European value. By undertaking critical analysis of such marketing campaigns, 'different orders of worth' (Hall and Gössling 2013: 301) can be identified, their historical underpinnings made transparent and the structures that continue to hold them in place, subsequently exposed.

Globalization and Inequality

With the promise of the liberating effects of new technologies, and the creation of global markets that provide access to 'world music, global advertising' (Connell 2005: xxi), 24-hour news channels, and unlimited choice of mass produced goods, globalization was hailed as providing global actors with the opportunity to 'participate on equal terms' (ibid: xxi). However, since the eulogising tendencies of much of the scholarship of the 1990s and early 2000s, analysis of globalization has come to recognize the reality that the 'global economy is highly unequal' (ibid) and in practice reproduces and entrenches inequality. When speaking of globalization as

an economic process bringing about equality of opportunity, it denies the fact that the context in which globalization became dominant was a world already structured by ‘hierarchical relations (for example, of imperialism and slavery among others)’ (Bhabra 2016: 39).

Thus, rather than global markets being a level playing field, what we have seen is an intensification of the dominance of the West through its powerful corporations and militarized infrastructures (Shome 2014). Indeed, more recent discussions about globalization and social theory have called for analysis that recognises and incorporates critique that demonstrates an understanding of the interconnections between the West and cultures it considers to be ‘other’ (Bhabra 2016; Sheller 2003). The consideration of the representation of food as a global product within tourism and leisure discourses is one way to gain insight into contemporary global market logics and simultaneously recover and give prominence to the history of slavery and colonialism that was instrumental to the cultural and economic development of Europe (Sheller 2003; Gikandi 2011).

Image making was a central component of Europe’s development, within the colonial matrix of power. Through the production of paintings, photographs and satirical cartoons (Wilkes 2016), colonial discourse employed visual techniques to produce ‘knowledge’ about the Caribbean. It has been the aim of postcolonial scholars to make visible the reliance of Western colonialism on colonized subjects for their economic, cultural and global political dominance (Bhabha 1990; Stuart Hall 1996; Said 1978[1995]; Spivak 1988). These theoretical challenges have encouraged a practice of looking back that is not apparent even in more recent discussions of global affairs and the direction of the discipline of sociology and its preoccupation with cosmopolitanism (Bhabra 2016). Indeed, they continue the process of colonial erasure by omitting the histories of slavery and colonialism (Bhabra 2016). In this discussion, it is not only the practice of looking back that is of concern, but also the continuities of colonialism; the visual as a tool of coloniality that will be considered.

Coloniality as knowledge

Sandals’ appropriation of colonial history as a marketing tool, used to sell its all-inclusive holidays in the Caribbean, is an established practice (Wilkes 2013, 2016). Yet, returning to analyse this approach to contemporary media practices provides an understanding of how visual discourses are instrumental in producing “new” knowledge about territories that have been

culturally, economically and politically pushed to the margins. Western scholars seeking to understand the Western postmodern condition (Sheller 2003; Bhabra 2016) may use the intellectual production of marginalised territories (Mignolo 2012; and see Sheller's (2003: 192-193) discussion of Ulf Hannerz' appropriation of the term *creolization*, without reference to the concept's Caribbean origins). However, it is the process of what Mignolo (2012), drawing on Quijano's concept modernity/coloniality, considers to be 'the coexistence and the intersection of both colonialisms and colonial modernities' (Mignolo 2012: 25-26), that is key to understanding the production of new knowledge in the contemporary context. Mignolo (2012) articulates an approach to challenging hegemonic knowledge through a process of decolonizing, explaining that this requires a subaltern perspective:

border gnosis as knowledge from a subaltern perspective is knowledge conceived from the exterior borders of the modern/colonial world system, and border gnoseology as a discourse about colonial knowledge is conceived at the conflictive intersection of the knowledge produced from the perspective of modern colonialisms (rhetoric, philosophy, science) and knowledge produced from the perspective of colonial modernities in Asia, Africa, and the Americas/Caribbean (Mignolo 2012: 22).

Decolonization is the foundation of the modernity/coloniality project (Mignolo 2007a) and Mignolo's (2012) approach assists in examining ways of seeing that are organised around legacies of colonialism. Although the aim is to devise approaches that speak from subaltern perspectives in the present, what is also required is clear linking to the history of conflict, resistance and upheaval that were integral to the formation of the Caribbean region.

Colonial people laboured but were not in receipt of the resultant economic rewards (Riberio quoted in Mignolo 2012) even in the post-slavery period, termed post-emancipation. Rather, they continued to be positioned as economic tools and were represented as such in visual campaigns 'that was of no more than the reflection of the European vision of the world' (Riberio quoted in Mignolo 2012: 22; see Wilkes 2019). This was the visualisation of slavery under another name and was instrumental in the creation of tourism discourse that intended to shift perceptions of colonial people as subjects to be feared and controlled, to being contained within new regimes of control through indentureship, corporeal punishment, and surveillance.

The following question has frequently been asked during discussions about tourism and the Caribbean, *What are the alternatives to representing the Caribbean as paradise?* The images flow from colonial discourse and constructed colonial differences. In response to this question, different images would flow from a different logic and would be a ‘departure from such global projects’ (Mignolo 2012: 26) of which globalization is an extension. Riding on the waves of ‘neoliberalism, with its emphasis on the market and consumption’ (ibid: 25), globalization continues the objectives of ‘the Atlantic commercial circuit’ that constructed race within a hierarchy that was disseminated via ‘racial imagery’ (ibid: 28; Wilkes 2016). Despite the discourses of consumer choice that globalization engenders through tourism, the packaging of formerly colonized cultures is ‘not a new form of syncretism or hybridity, but an intense battlefield in the long history of colonial subalternization of knowledge and legitimization of the colonial difference’ (Mignolo 2012: 28).

When looking back, the search for a new logic needs to be mindful that neoliberalism may have a new appearance, due to being ‘resemantized’ as Mignolo (2012: 19) describes it, yet it is not separate from, but is a progression from old world colonial projects and exemplifies ‘a new form of capitalism, nonterritorial ...’ as Mignolo (2012) argues. Due to the geopolitical conflicts, and trade wars that have undermined the Caribbean region’s ability to engage in global trade and thus become less dependent on imperial powers (here I am speaking of the long and protracted ‘banana wars’ instigated by the United States on behalf of its multinational corporations), I would consider this new colonialism to be also ‘visible and measured in territorial possessions’ (Mignolo 2012: 33). The new colonialism is ‘a new civilizing project driven by the market and the transnational corporations’ (Mignolo 2012: 26) as in the case of contemporary tourism companies that continue the work of the colonial projects (Wilkes 2016).

Questions regarding colonial regimes may seem to be ‘questions of the past’ (Quijano 2007: 168), due to the fact that ‘political colonialism has been eliminated’ (ibid. 169). However, despite the passing of the political system, colonialism’s efficiency is the ‘specific colonial structures of power [which] produced the specific social discriminations’ (Quijano 2007: 169). That is to say that coloniality of power is what has been sustained in the twenty-first century.

The targeting of food for the purposes of ‘capital accumulation’ (Mignolo 2007a: 160) is a practice and process that maintains the conditions of coloniality that is simply about the region’s exchange function and the demands of the tourists (Daye 2008). This is in keeping with

the colonial matrix of power which extracts the labour and resources of the formerly colonised. These resources remain under the control of a minority of European and Euro-North American descendants (Quijano 2007), as in the ownership of Sandals Resorts. This is alongside the power relations that position European culture as the standard model of logic and, as connoted by Sandals' marginalisation of Caribbean food, locates Europe as the 'dominant position that takes its own perspective to be the dominant one' (Pitcher 2014: 55). As Zilka Janer (2007) argues, the modern colonial cognitive system, 'established Europe as the model and point of view from which all other histories and epistemologies are evaluated' (Janer 2007: 393).

In an approach that centres a subaltern perspective, Candice Goucher (2014) considers the Caribbean region 'to be the longest narrative of globalization' (Goucher 2014: xviii) and an important site of study to understand 'our globalized experience' (ibid: xvi). With a specific focus on Caribbean food as an example of creolization, this discussion retains a historical perspective, and is a 'search for a different logic' (ibid: 26) that not only changes the content, but also 'the terms of the conversation' (ibid: 26). This is an endeavour to undertake 'border thinking from the perspective of subalternity' (Mignolo 2012: 37) and from that position begin the process of presenting alternatives to contemporary representations of the region that are not framed by racialized colonial projects.

Selling 'global' cuisine

The staged and planned interaction that Sandals offers to tourists is a practice that seeks to allay fears that tourists will be kept safe in a context that is considered to be dangerous (see Thomas and Clarke 2006 for a discussion on the way in which Jamaica features in the content of international news media as a site of perpetual danger). This has been addressed by creating packages that have served to reinforce the interaction between the tourists and local people as an unequal power relationship that is governed and shaped by consumption, viewed as the dominant social relationship in Western societies by Ewan and Ewan (cited in hooks 1992: 376). Tourism encapsulates the power of the consumer to determine the terms of the relationship with their postcolonial host society. It is the dissemination of imperial nostalgia-themed visual texts, via global media, that allows the 'reenacting and reritualizing' (hooks 1992: 370) of colonial relations to be revived for twenty-first century audiences. Within the safety of the all-inclusive compound, the Caribbean resort is returned to being a colonial space, a playground

where the tourist can 'affirm their power-over in intimate (although tightly controlled) relations with the Other' (hooks 1992: 23).

The tourism product is such that the potential customer must be convinced of its value before actually seeing or experiencing the destination (Hirst and Tresidder 2016). One of the ways in which the marketers are able to sell the Caribbean to prospective tourists is to combine entrenched ideas within Western culture regarding racial superiority, entitlement to safety and security (see Wilkes 2016) and colonial conquest, with contemporary notions of the modern as luxury that are associated with Western 'elite mobilities' (Thurlow and Jaworski 2012: 487; Hannerz cited in Mignolo 2012).

Thurlow and Jaworski (2012: 487) argue that 'tourism is immensely powerful in (re)organising large-scale inequalities and privileges.' The visual discourses produced by the tourism industry legitimise this organisation of global subjects, represented as highly resourced and classed. They are portrayed as desirable social positions as exemplars of good taste through 'semiotic economies' (ibid.) that are entitled to command the control of space. The expansion of the luxury market has consisted of a conceptualization of space *as* luxury (ibid. and cf. Wilkes 2016). In the construction of tourism discourses of the Caribbean, it is defined as paradise luxury that includes consumption of racialized labour (see Wilkes 2016), where the beach is designated as the privileged space to convey status and is the central signifier in organising the tourist-host relations as the 'site-specific installation[s]' (Paul 2007: 21). In this case the beach resort refers directly to the appropriation of the Caribbean landscape as a designated tourist space. This is a consequence of 'coastlines being dominated by all-inclusive hotels that bar local people from once-public beaches, now private and 'protected' for the tourists who are secured with parameter fencing' (Bryan 2007: 57; Gmelch 2003; Alessandrini 2010 cited in Wilkes 2016: 216). This falls within the domain that Quijano (2007) describes as 'control of economy (land appropriation, exploitation of labor, control of natural resources)' (Quijano quoted in Mignolo 2007a: 156). The colonial matrix of power is dependent on the reproduction of discourses that ascribe whiteness as entitled to possess land, since elevating the Western tourist subject, within the postcolonial contexts of the Caribbean is a process of enacting coloniality, or 'coloniality of being' (Maldonado-Torres 2007).

To produce a convincing and desirable prospect for the tourist, the experience is a promise of adventure and is couched in familiar language that resonates with European colonial expansion,

such as in the title of the product *Discovery* and also ‘discover’ in the accompanying texts; a term that is frequently used to reference Christopher Columbus and his conquest of the Americas.

The Sandals website features the culinary options available to guests to discover new foods (and to consume more familiar cuisines) at their all-inclusive resorts. The visual texts display a montage of ethnicized foods that are used to persuade guests that Sandals will enable them to ‘savour the world’. It is the food originating in the non-West that is represented as exotic and therefore ‘ethnic’. Sandals boast that they are able to offer difference by stating that guests can:

discover an impressive array of cuisine, ranging from the freshest seafood, regional Italian, Thai, Sushi [standing in for Japanese], French Haute Cuisine, Southwestern, Mediterranean Rim, British Pub, Caribbean and even a decadent French Pâtisserie and Crêperie (Sandals website 2017).

This address to the prospective tourist can be located within the broader practices of neoliberalism and multicultural global marketing that professes the rhetoric of choice that is intimately bound up with entitlement to consume difference. However, despite notions of food diversity, its widespread availability made possible by global networks becomes standardized as in the way of many tourism products that mimic the McDonald’s formula of standardization (Ritzer and Liska 1997) and legitimise the demands of the tourists by presenting them with the familiar to avoid unwelcomed culinary surprises.

In speaking to the potential tourist, the assumed entitlement to ‘consume the globe’ is enacted. Indeed, Funway, one of Sandals’ promotional agents, enthuses that “only at Sandals can guests dine around the world without leaving the resort”¹. Thus, the food being promoted is detached from its geographical and cultural origins (Featherstone cited in Daye et al. 2008). This is encouraged, and is a feature of the modernity/coloniality logic in that non-European cultures

¹ <http://www.vaxvacationaccess.co.uk/blobpage.aspx?id=1&VendorCode=SRF>
Sandals Resorts <http://www.sandals.co.uk/all-inclusive/restaurants/discover-dining-asia/> [Last accessed 3 February 2019].

are considered in terms of an ethnic hierarchy and principally how they serve as an exotic contrast to the West.

In the example of Indian cuisine being promoted on the Sandals website, ethnic differences are positively worked up. A woman, who appears to be Indian and is wearing a style of dress that references salwar kameez, is standing in what appears to be an empty restaurant, smiling broadly and directly we assume at her recently arrived guests. The reader of the image is able to insert themselves into the world of the image and imagine that they are savouring the cuisine of 'India', via the Caribbean. The host is holding a menu, with the name of the restaurant, *Bombay Club*, embossed in gold letters on the front. Notably, the restaurant is not called Mumbai, to acknowledge that the city was renamed in 1995 as the political authorities considered the name Bombay to be an unwanted legacy of British colonial rule. However, it is perhaps the intention of adopting the name *Bombay Club* to convey a static and unchanging Indian culture that is fixed in the colonial imagination and reinforces the commitment to producing coloniality in the Caribbean. This is a distorted construction of 'authenticity' of Indianness, that continues the 'discourse of exoticization' (Shome 2014: 198) and meets with the expectations of a worldview that is a practice of 'eat[ing] ethnic' in the West to enhance status and display cultural capital, yet demonstrates no interest in the cultural context of the food being consumed (Heldke cited in Narayan 1997; Bailey 2007).

The promotion of the *Bombay Club* restaurant relies upon a range of existing Orientalist stereotypes of India as a place to consume the exotic as pleasure:

with a unique collection of intriguing, flavorful dishes, Bombay Club is the go-to place for scenic views, great times, and exotic fare.

Although there is recognition of the different culinary regions of India, there is little evidence that there is an epistemological framework that underpins the use of different spices as suggested in the extract below:

baskets overflowing with a multi-hued array of aromatic Indian spices, like cardamom, chili peppers, ginger, coriander, saffron and nutmeg. In like manner, the sweet smells of fragrant herbs and the vibrancy of a bustling market are inextricably linked with Bombay

Club. Enjoy the intriguing ambience while savoring piquant favorites, including Chicken Tikka, Poppadums, Butter Chicken, Lamb Samosas and more.

India is not represented as a country that has evolved and continues to change:

The mere mention of the city of Bombay conjures up images of ancient open-air markets buzzing with activity that heightens the senses.

As if by way of presenting a contrast in the Sandals menu, the food that visitors can expect to be served in the mock British public houses is presented as being distinctive; fish and chips, shepherd's pie and bangers and mash² are located within the site of the public house that has a long cultural heritage as the extract from the website below suggests:

For more than 300 years, pubs have provided a carefree ambience and comfort to those who wanted to relax with good ale and a good joke after a hard day's work. Pubs are most certainly fundamental to British culture. Samuel Pepys, famous for his detailed 17th century writings, even described pubs as the 'heart of England.' The Drunken Duck Pub serves the same purpose as those time-honored public houses of yesteryear, where people gathered together to enjoy life and a cold one in a vibrant atmosphere. A delightful encounter full of good times and customary pub fare awaits pub-goers who seek the welcoming experience of a traditional, British pub.

However, the sample menu for British cuisine does not include a historical context that would reveal its mixed ethnic origins, as fish and chips for example, demonstrates that 'even the most evocative culinary emblem of 'native London life', conceals a translocal cultural history. Popularized in the late nineteenth century, fish and chips was the result of the fusion of French styles of preparing fried potatoes and an Eastern European Jewish tradition for frying fish' (Malvery 1907 and Walton 1992 cited in Back 1998: 69).

What is also absent from this menu, which is described as British (standing in for English²), is the cuisine that would convey the eating practices of contemporary Britain. Thus, the popularity of

² <http://www.sandals.co.uk/all-inclusive/restaurants/discover-dining-britain/>

2. Masala was added to Chicken Tikka to suit the British palate.

South Asian cuisine and restaurants in Britain is such that Chicken Tikka Masala is described as a 'national dish' (Buettner 2008: 865). However, Sandals' depiction of British cuisine makes no reference to this aspect of British culture, nor recognises that the curry-houses, prevalent on Britain's high-streets, are a reminder of Britain's imperial and colonial history.

This commodification continues with food amalgamated under the heading of 'Asian'. The Sandals website informs us that:

Asian cuisines are all about harmony and balance, but each different cuisine accomplishes it in its own singular way. Whether finicky or adventurous, bold or timid, hearty or healthy, there is an Asian cuisine to suit every approach to dining - and we offer them all at Sandals. In Thai cuisine, achieving the perfect flavor for any dish relies upon a balance of four basic tastes: sour, bitter, sweet and salty. Intricate fruit and vegetable carvings add the finishing touch to Asia's most elaborately decorated plates. Clean, natural, unspiced flavors define Asia's most healthful cuisine, Japanese.

In the sample menu, a fragmented approach to the food described as Asian is presented in a selection of foods that encourage guests to sample dishes from only two countries from the largest and most populous continent. Rather than conveying diversity, it encourages a pick and mix approach to cuisine that reduces its social and cultural significance to something simply different from the West. For example:

Asian fare with authentic local Caribbean spices to bring a unique blend of cuisine that can only be found at Sandals Resorts.

In contrast, the diversity of Italian food is enthusiastically emphasised:

When we think of Italian cuisine, we tend to imagine one singular cuisine representing the entire country. In reality, Italian cuisine is made up of 20 diverse regional cuisines, each with its own unique ingredients and culinary philosophy. We at Sandals look at Italy from a regional point of view.

Therefore, *Specialties of the Toscana region of Italy* is presented in the sample menu and used to emphasise the uniqueness of one region's cuisine - which is framed by an epistemology.

Guests are not encouraged to simply ‘sample’ dishes, but are offered a coherent menu from one of the 20 regional cuisines of Italy. This encourages a detailed approach to understanding Italian cuisine, rather than the broad-brush approach to the cuisine of Asia as presented above.

Italian, French and British cuisines are not placed under the heading of a generic European. The aim is to emphasise these cuisines as distinctive, exceptional and they convey the standards that are set for fine dining practices, against which non-Western cuisines are measured. Any internal hierarchies that relate to food originating in Europe, for example the assumed superiority of French food above that of British cookery, are not alluded to here.

In the case of French approaches to dining, it is given pride of place in the selection of global foods on offer to guests and is an ‘expression of European modernity-rationality’ (Janer 2007: 391) and a ‘commodity of high cuisine’ (Mignolo 2007a: 160). The following description explains its privileged status and continuity with colonial practices by elevating European knowledge:

French cuisine has evolved extensively over centuries. The national cuisine started forming in the Middle Ages to the influence of the work of skilled chefs and various social and political movements. Over the years the styles of French cuisine have been given different names, and have been modified by various master chefs. The national cuisine developed primarily in the city of Paris with the chefs to French royalty, but eventually it spread throughout the country and was even exported overseas. At Sandals and Beaches Resorts, you'll find some of the finest French dishes in the Western hemisphere.

Here, the superiority of French cuisine is underpinned with a distinct historical framework having *evolved over the centuries*, in contrast to the non-Western culinary traditions presented. The emphasis on the skills of French master chefs, and the detail provided regarding its connection with French royalty suggests a view of French cuisine as a ‘superior one’ (Janer 2007: 392). However, Zilka Janer argues that despite the influence of postcolonial and postmodern analysis, there is resistance to revising the myth of the superiority of French cuisine (Janer 2007: 392), as a modernity/coloniality view of French cooking takes into account its limitations. Janer (2007) points out that stocks and sauces are fundamental to French cuisine, yet in Indian cuisine, ‘dependence on stocks and sauces is the mark of an incompetent cook’ (ibid). Having exported this approach to fine dining overseas, the result is that a regional cuisine (from one

country) passes as being 'globally valid' (ibid) and makes it possible within the modernity/coloniality matrix of power for French cooking to be privileged in the postcolonial context of the Caribbean.

Caribbean food is included in the company's array of choice and is described as thus;

Our Caribbean restaurants reflect perfectly the culinary diversity of each island, all exciting dining experiences you can't find anywhere else on the planet. For all of the imagery and flavors we might readily associate with the islands of the Caribbean, they still exemplify the mysterious and exotic. The same lush, tropical landscapes that today seduce us to find respite among the Caribbean's beaches, rivers, and mountains enticed Amerindians, Europeans, Africans, Asians, and Middle Easterners to their shores.

The sample menu for the Caribbean themed restaurant *Oleader Room*, despite claiming to be Jamaican inspired, is a list of French-inspired cuisine. Notably, quiche and casserole are included, terms which simply consist of the 'application of a French technique to a Caribbean dish or the addition of Caribbean ingredients to a continental dish' (Janer 2007: 402). Here, Caribbean cuisine occupies a position of subordination (ibid), and there is a repeated valorisation of the so called *lush* landscapes and a notion of the Caribbean as a place where work is not the preoccupation; expressed in the description of the region as a place to *find respite*.

Caribbean food is not privileged in this context; it is simply used as a backdrop to host different culinary traditions. There are no Caribbean dishes that are singled out for special attention. Instead, there is a rather banal reference to the food of the Caribbean as being 'a blend of diverse cultures'. There is no reference to the unique cultural, social contexts of the 34 island nation-states and a regional population of 60 million that speak French, Spanish, Dutch and English.

Sandals' description of Caribbean cuisine erases the history of violence and slavery and the crucial role that slaves played in creating Caribbean culinary practices. What the island nations share is a history of European colonisation (Daye et al. 2008) which is absent from this summary, and what brought Africans and Asians through European force and violence to the region in the first place. Therefore, within the culinary food hierarchy discussed above, the Caribbean is

relegated to a site of resource extraction. Thus it is valued for its 'primary materials in the world economy' (Janer 2007: 402), but its culture and intellectual production is undervalued. This is a practice of decoupling (Featherstone cited in Daye, 2008) the cultural production of the Caribbean from its social contexts and continues the process of the colonial matrix of power that does not acknowledge 'the epistemologies that shape different culinary systems' (Janer 2007: 394). It is this logic of globalization that is based on outside interests and not Caribbean subjectivity.

Caribbean creolization

The description of Caribbean cuisine as the blending of many diverse cultures on the Sandals website, points towards the contemporary popularity of fusion cooking that tends to be associated with globalization (Janer 2007). However, what this description omits is recognition that fusion cooking is not new to the Caribbean, since there has been fusion cooking in the region since the sixteenth century. It is a product of global transformation that 'brought together the appetites of four continents' (Goucher 2014: xviii) and as Janer (2007) argues, Caribbean cuisine is a 'result of the diasporic and genocidal history of the Caribbean' (Janer 2007: 397). Mignolo (2012) points to the significance of the long history that has brought us to this point in time; 'a period expanding from the late fifteenth century to the current stage of globalization' (Mignolo 2012: 22).

The interconnections that were made possible by colonial expansion, those flows of food and stimulants; chocolate, sugar, tobacco, and coffee, have been recognised by scholars (Sheller 2003; Gikandi 2011 and Mintz 1985) as explicitly mapping the Americas' connections to the so-called old world. However, as Bhabra (2016) argues this is a fundamental aspect of European history that continues to be denied broader scholarly attention. Although the Caribbean does not tend to be included in discussions about globalization and modernity (Sheller 2003), it is the region that was instrumental to the making of the contemporary world. It is ironic that the concept creolization, which is of Caribbean origin and developed by the Martiniquan philosopher Edouard Glissant, has been adopted, although detached from the Caribbean by European social theorists such as Ulf Hannerz. This process of continuing to centre the West in all intellectual discussions is an example of the way in which colonial structures are being clung to and new knowledge continues to be produced through an erasure and distortion of blackness. Therefore, in two ways the concept of creolization enables the ability to look back at the 'adaptation,

mingling and borrowing' (Goucher 2014: xvi) that was central to the formation of the Caribbean that brought the cultures of four continents together (ibid), and points towards the cultural mixing that is said to be a feature of the contemporary global experience.

Colonial narratives of food in the Caribbean

It is well documented that the white creoles³ enjoyed lavish feasts and balls (Sheller 2003; Burnard 2004). Scholarship that discusses the lives of white planters in the Caribbean provides insight into their addiction to leisure and luxury, which is noted as being legendary during the eighteenth century (Burnard 2004; Sheller 2003). The white migrants' ability to adapt to their new environment is apparent in their culinary practices; 'they were devoted to local and African-influenced delicacies such as pepper-pot and turtle soup, rum drinks, cassava bread, and tropical fruits and fishes, often devoured at the quintessentially West Indian social gathering, the barbeque' (Burnard 2004: 22). It is also significant that such feasting signals social status, as in the case of Thomas Thistlewood, who 'after he had become a landowner, he had begun to entertain his neighbours at large feasts. In October 1768, for example, he fed eight men "roast beef, crabs, shrimps, roast teal, boiled pudding roast papaya cheese punch grog porter French brandie." For Christmas that year, he invited four male friends to dine on "stewed mudfish, and pickled crabs, stewed hogshead, fried liver etc quarter of roast pork with papah sauce & fresh potatoes, bread roast yam and plantains boiled pudding, very good cheese, marsh melon, watermelon, oranges, French Brandy ... punch and porter' (Burnard 2004: 82).

Although they are not made visible in these accounts from Thomas Thistlewood's diary, the food that creoles (white settlers in the region) ate was 'a diet invented by African cooks' (Sheller 2003: 81). It was and continues to be an example of the syncretism of the region, as it drew 'on the produce of the Americas, Europe, and Africa, later to be joined by Asia as well' (Mintz cited in Sheller 2003: 81).

³ The term Creole refers to those peoples born in the Caribbean region during the colonial period and includes slaves of African descent born in the region. In the context of this essay, makes clear the cultural differences between whites born in the Caribbean and whites, though residing in the Caribbean were born in Europe.

Sandals' description of the restaurant, *Eleanor's Caribbean Cuisine*⁴ exemplifies the continuing process of 'rubbing out' 'the colonial and the postcolonial moment' (Bhambra 2016: 40) by creating imaginary and sanitised narratives of Caribbean history that privilege white colonial femininity and remove the presence of blackness and the agency of the slaves in addition to writing out the syncretism of the region as indicated above.

As the matriarch of Colcannon Hall, then one of Jamaica's finest plantation great houses, Lady Eleanor used her collection of exotic recipes and her massive Georgian dining room to create the most lavish banquets Jamaican colonial society had ever seen. Her recipes cemented her place in culinary history and she became known as the best cook in the Caribbean! Eleanor's cuisine is served in an atmosphere reminiscent of Eleanor's very own great house dining room so that her legacy as the best cook in the Caribbean will never be forgotten. The enchanting, old-world charm of Eleanor's captivates guests from the moment they walk through the doors. But it's the delectable cuisine inspired by this 18th century matriarch that leaves a lasting impression with a calypso of flavors such as Tamarind Grilled Beef Tenderloin (tamarind-infused red wine reduction), Roasted Pumpkin Soup, Caribbean Grilled Lobster, Jamaican Jerk Chicken, West Indian Curried Lamb, and Rasta Pasta (penne pasta tossed with chef's choice of vegetables, ackee, spinach, and coconut cream sauce).

The continuing implementation of colonial logics in the twenty-first century is conveyed by the celebration of the Great White House *Colcannon Hall*, which, as a plantation house would have been the site of immense torture and brutality (Beckles 1989; Burnard 2004; Gikandi 2011). The role of elite white women in the colonies was not to prepare food, as 'from the sixteenth century, most cooks in the Caribbean were African-born or of African descent' (Goucher 2014: xix); contradicting the account that presents Lady Eleanor as the *best cook in the Caribbean*. African women resisted cultural imperialism and retained 'control over the cognitive domains of culinary practice' (ibid) despite the concerted attempts made by the colonial elite to destroy the humanity of Africans (Quijano 2007). The role of elite white women in colonial Caribbean was to manage the household and also to take charge of the house slaves (Wilkes 2016).

⁴ <http://www.sandals.co.uk/main/antigua/an-dining/>

The account that presents the white matriarch of the plantation house as the protector of Caribbean cuisine and its African-derived heritage is an extreme example of the operations of the colonial matrix of power, since the knowledge that is presented in this promotion of *Eleanor's Restaurant* is an example of invention that annihilates 'the techniques transmitted orally across generations ... [that] offered communities a common language of daily life and thus were implicated in both the physical and cultural survival of peoples in the African diaspora' (Goucher 2014: 63). It is a process of 'cultural destruction' (Quijano, 2007: 170) that began with Europeans assuming the mantle of writing world history (Shohat and Stam 2014). Evidence of this continued practice is presented on the Sandals website as there is no mention of the African slaves who created new foodways that developed into what is now commonly described as Caribbean food.

Caribbean holiday food: craving difference/creating distinction

In the 'imagery mill of Caribbean tourism advertising' (Daye 2008: 20) to use Marcella Daye's term, the Caribbean as paradise has become a cliché as a site of luxury and relaxation in Western imaginary geographies. Therefore, it is necessary to repackage and continuously reinvent the Caribbean to attract the interest of tourists who go in search of difference. The commodification of food as a form of distinction for those desiring to 'distinguish themselves from others within and outside specific social groups ...' (Narayan 1997: 161) has been a marketing approach adopted by Sandals. Drawing on the marketing trends of global multiculturalism, the *Rum, Rhythm & Roots*⁵ cooking holiday, combines the appropriation and marketing of race with the tourists' desire for 'authenticity'.

Levi Roots, the Jamaican-born British restaurateur and owner of the *Reggae Reggae Sauce* brand, originally sold the sauce at London's Notting Hill Carnival and later appeared on the BBC television programme *Dragons' Den*, securing a £50,000 investment from the British and Australian businessmen, Peter Jones and Richard Farleigh. The sauce is now sold widely in UK supermarkets and this has positioned Roots as a successful entrepreneur which chimes with the neoliberal rhetoric of innovation, and self-help.

⁵ The Sandals *Rum, Rhythm and Roots* holiday is a week-long vacation that includes cooking classes with the Jamaican-born British restaurateur, Levi Roots at a Sandals resort in Jamaica. See <https://news.sandals.co.uk/article/1179/> [Last accessed 3 February 2019].

Although the court case in which Levi Roots (Keith Valentine Graham) admitted that his recipe for *Reggae Reggae Sauce* (based on Jamaican jerk seasoning) was not handed down from his grandmother as he had originally claimed (see Lawson Welsh 2014), the sauce is a product of diasporic Caribbean cuisine. Roots is an ambassador for Caribbean food, enabled by his claims to Jamaicaness and supported by his successful brand in the UK which is fronted by his own image. Roots' celebrity status and his role as an 'ethnic advocate' (Appadurai quoted in Lawson Welsh 2014: 157), provides legitimacy and authenticity to the Sandals *Rum, Rhythm & Roots* cooking holiday that promises:

foodies an exclusive opportunity to learn how to cook authentic Jamaican cuisine from scratch, with the stunning Caribbean Sea as a backdrop.

The packaging and racialization of food within tourism discourses is significant, as in this case Jamaican-themed food is attached to paradise and becomes *detached* from the stereotypes of the racialized British metropolis:

In 2012 plans by the state-owned Horniman museum in Forest Hill, south east London, to extend its alcohol licence for public events were met with protests by local residents who, according to the front page headline of the local freesheet the News Shopper, remembered the " 'pandemonium', when 20,000 jerk chicken fans descended on the premises in 2009' (Chandler, 2012). Nowhere in the newspaper report complaining of street brawls, gridlocked roads and 'drunks roaming the streets, is the subject of race mentioned, yet in its description of '[h]ungry masses [. . .] craving a taste for spicy Caribbean food [' '] tempted by Reggae Reggae Sauce founder, Levi Roots [...] and [black British TV presenter] Floella Benjamin' (ibid.), a strong association is nevertheless established between the Caribbean cultural origins of jerk chicken and the reportedly inappropriate behaviour of some of those who attended the 2009 festival (Pitcher 2014: 51).

The *Rum, Rhythm & Roots* cooking holiday highlights the disjuncture between the reality of the tourist industry and the manufacture of a so-called appreciation of Jamaican food. The introduction of the *Rum, Rhythm and Roots* holiday package into the Sandals tourism product is an example of how it can be made possible to *add in* Caribbean food in Jamaica as a holiday

option, when the norm is to offer guests a package of commodified food that resembles the McDonald formula.

The enlisting of the recognisable culinary media figure Levi Roots to host the *Rum, Rhythm and Roots* holiday package, continues Sandals' practice of using celebrities with high media profiles to convey credibility for its products. This is a formula that the company used when they formed a partnership with the American media mogul, Martha Stewart to devise their themed destination wedding package. It is also in keeping with the culinary trend outlined at the beginning of this discussion, in which various media platforms and celebrity culture are brought together to sell food as leisure products. It is significant that for authenticity to be attributed to the Sandals' product, it has been sought outside of the region and raises questions regarding the need to employ a celebrity to promote Caribbean food, suggesting that it is not noteworthy in its own right.

Conclusion

The article considers the way in which Sandals Resorts has continued its well-established practice of constructing visual narratives of the Caribbean. In the case of its packaging of 'global' food, with its *Gourmet Discovery Dining* programme, Sandals underpin the concept of culinary differences by drawing on notions of the superiority of European cuisine through their use of visual narratives that continue the work of colonial projects. This is made possible by the production of visual and textual discourses that depend on 'global [and neoliberal] logics [that] simultaneously fix and essentialize nations and cultures' (Shome 2014: 199). New media technologies do the work of the postcard in circulating notions of the Caribbean and cement notions of race and formations of self-making in the Western imagination through the practice of 'eating the other' (hooks 1992). This process facilitates the eradication and displacement through decontextualized appropriation that denies the significance of the slave historical origins of the Caribbean which is repackaged through a process of writing out the agency of the African slaves. This is a practice that does not disturb the comfort of the tourist in their consumption of Caribbean food as 'otherness'. In order for there to be alternatives to framing Caribbean food within racialized colonial projects, there would need to be genuine cultural

interest in the Caribbean food being presented. Rather than what is currently the case regarding the Caribbean as a tourism product, nostalgia-themed accounts that seek to rewrite the histories of the region (as in the case of *Eleanor's Restaurant*) would need to be removed. Centring subaltern perspectives that convey Caribbean food as a value system that has extraordinarily survived colonial attempts of eradication could be the focus of a decolonised foodscape. This would include demonstrating appreciation for the incredible ability of the African cooks who created what is now popularly referred to as fusion cooking, for safe-guarding and passing on their knowledge systems to future generations. This would be a direct challenge to coloniality and continue the process of border thinking.

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