



universität
wien

DIPLOMARBEIT

Titel der Diplomarbeit

“The Orient Tastes Strange: The Relationship Between
Cuisine and Culture in the Context of East Asia“

Verfasserin

Katharina Hoff

angestrebter akademischer Grad

Magistra der Philosophie (Mag. phil.)

Wien, 2009

Studienkennzahl laut Studienblatt:

A 343

Studienrichtung laut Studienblatt:

Diplomstudium Anglistik und Amerikanistik

Betreuerin:

Univ.-Ass. Privatdoz. Dr. Susanne Reichl

Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I am deeply indebted to my supervisor, Univ.-Ass. Privatdoz. Dr. Susanne Reichl, for always providing encouragement, stimulating suggestions and guidance regarding my thesis, as well as the pursuit of postcolonial studies in general. I am very grateful for the fact that she encouraged me to stick to my topic, even though my focus on hybridity in connection with East Asia is highly unusual for a student at the English department. Moreover, Dr. Reichl left me enough space to pour my own thoughts and background knowledge into this paper. Thus, she not only helped me to finish off my thesis, but also provided me with the courage and curiosity to pursue my studies in this field. I think words cannot sufficiently express the gratitude I feel. Nevertheless, thank you!

Furthermore, I would like to express my gratitude towards Professor Linhart and the Japanese department at Vienna University for promoting and stimulating my interest in Japan, "Japanese" culture (which is, as I will point out in the course of this paper, a highly volatile construct), and East Asia in general. A variety of interesting courses at Vienna University have taught me a great deal, and I hope that the Humanities will continue to stimulate the minds of students, and change their perception of the world, in the future.

I would also like to thank my family as well as my friends for their support before, during, and after the research and writing process. All of you have helped me in your own ways, be it in the form of mental support and words of encouragement, help with my computer (which at one point threatened to collapse), or simply by interesting and stimulating discussions. Thank you!

In particular, I would like to thank my mother who has always encouraged me to follow my heart and do what I love. Thanks for believing in me!

Table of Contents

1. INTRODUCTION: THE ORIENT TASTES STRANGE – THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CUISINE AND CULTURE IN THE CONTEXT OF EAST ASIA...	3
2. POSTCOLONIAL TERMINOLOGY – AN OVERVIEW.....	7
2.1. Postcolonialism.....	7
2.2. Orientalism and Mimicry.....	13
2.3. The Myth of the Nation.....	21
2.4. Hybridity.....	26
3. FROM A THEORETICAL TO A PRACTICAL APPROACH – IDENTITY VIA FOOD.....	30
3.1. Food and Foodways – An Overview of Different Approaches.....	31
3.2. Food and the Nation.....	35
4. “A FAMILY SUPPER” BY KAZUO ISHIGURO.....	42
4.1. Kazuo Ishiguro.....	42
4.2. “A Family Supper”.....	44
4.2.1. Fugu – just Fish?	46
4.2.2. Tea – or the Epitome of National Culture	51
4.3. Conclusion.....	57
5. TIMOTHY MO`S <i>SOUR SWEET</i>	59
5.1. Timothy Mo.....	59
5.2. <i>Sour Sweet</i>	61
5.3. Food in <i>Sour Sweet</i>	62
5.3.1. Rice as a Marker of Identity	66
5.3.2. Stereotyping and the Smile of the “Chinaman”	67
5.3.3. TEA AS A BRIDGING DEVICE	72
5.4. Conclusion.....	75
6. <i>EAT DRINK MAN WOMAN</i> BY ANG LEE.....	78
6.1. Ang Lee.....	78
6.2. <i>Eat Drink Man Woman</i>	81
6.3. Food in <i>Eat Drink Man Woman</i>	86
6.3.1. Fish	89
6.3.2. Noodles and Dumplings	91

6.4. Conclusion.....	94
7. TAMPOPO BY JUZO ITAMI.....	96
7.1. Juzo Itami.....	96
7.2. Tampopo.....	98
7.3. Food featured in Tampopo.....	102
7.3.1. Rice and “Japanese” Food	105
7.3.2. Ramen	108
7.4. Conclusion.....	114
8. CONCLUSION.....	116
9. BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	120
10. INDEX.....	126
11. ZUSAMMENFASSUNG.....	127
12. CURRICULUM VITAE.....	129

1. Introduction: The Orient Tastes Strange – the Relationship between Cuisine and Culture in the Context of East Asia

Not all societies are “post-colonial” *in the same way*...But this does not mean they are not “post-colonial” *in any way*.

Stuart Hall

As far as the provocative title of my thesis is concerned, I think an explanation of its components, as well as of my general aims is in order. In spite of the fact that the title suggests a rather derogative view of the “Orient” and concepts related to it, it is merely meant to whet the reader`s appetite for more information on the subject matter. Seemingly, the title confirms commonly held stereotypes about the “exotic East”, which is to say it plays with the expectations of the reader. The description of the Orient as a strange entity which can be consumed is in fact an allusion to Edward Said`s work, which will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter.

In short, Said has claimed that the Orient is constructed as an exotic and passive entity by the West, or in other words, it is appropriated to fulfill the needs or aspirations of a western audience. In spite of the fact that Said`s definition of Orient did not include the Far East, I aim to apply his theories to the fictional portrayal of two East Asian countries, namely to that of Japan and China. Although I speak of East Asia in my title, I will leave out a discussion of Korea, in spite of the fact that I am aware that it is a vital and important part of the East Asian region.

Essentially, I will explore the portrayal of “Chinese” and “Japanese” national identities via an analysis of food items. As I will point out in chapter three, food can be an important signifier for a wealth of identities, as for example race, class, gender, ethnicity, religion and culture. However, the relationship between cuisine and culture is by no means a straightforward one. In spite of what the advertising industry wants to make the consumer believe, “authentic cuisine” and “tradition” are by no means fixed and stable notions inherent in culinary culture. Thus, instead of looking for an essential core of “authenticity” in food culture, this paper can be said to uncover the appropriation, and thus an

underlying hybridity of foodstuffs. Here, I agree with Lupton`s view, who said that research tends to “concentrate more on the discursive production of meaning and [tends to] highlight the plurality of meaning rather than attempting to elicit a single `truth` of experience” (Lupton qtd. in Pang 54).

In the course of this paper, I aim to deconstruct an orientalist view of cultural texts. Before I start, however, I think it is important to offer my understanding of culture, which will similarly serve as a basis for the discussion that follows. My definition of culture overlaps with Döring`s, who describes it as a “contested signifying practice” (Döring 3), as well as with Homi Bhabha`s, who expresses the inherent fragmentation of the notion of culture very aptly by saying that “[c]ulture is *heimlich*, with its disciplinary generalizations, its mimetic narratives, its homologous empty time, its seriality, its progress, its customs and coherence [...]”, but similarly he claims that “[...] cultural authority is also *unheimlich*, for to be distinctive, signifiatory, influential and identifiable, it has to be translated, disseminated, differentiated, interdisciplinary, intertextual, international, inter-racial” (Bhabha 1994: 136-37).

Therefore, culture can be interpreted as a notion of coherence and of a common identity, but at the same time it points towards its own inconsistency and insufficiency. Hence, this paper addresses the seemingly coherent portrayal of “cultures” and cultural identities, but also seeks to demonstrate the futility of this depiction.¹ The methodology with which I deconstruct notions of a coherent culture in this thesis consists of a close reading of both literary and filmic texts, as well as of image analysis, as far as the two films are concerned. Essentially, I will restrict myself to an analysis of individual shots, and of the plot of the two films, instead of engaging in a full film analysis. This, I am afraid, would go beyond the scope of this paper.

Thus, I will start my thesis with some theoretical groundwork, so to say, as the basic definitions and implications of concepts such as postcolonialism,

1 It is important to note here that other terms are closely related to the concept of culture. Among them are, for example, the notions of “race“, “nationality“ and “ethnicity“. These terms will be defined in the following chapter. For further reference, see chapter 2.3., p. 21.

orientalism and mimicry, the myth of the nation, and hybridity will be dealt with in chapter two. The theoretical framework for the thesis closes with a key question, as I ask my reader if there can be anything like “authentic” food in the first place. This will be a vital question and something like a recurrent issue in the following chapters, as I engage in a detailed discussion of not only matters of authenticity and culture in relation to food, but on a wider scale also in relation to identity. Moreover, chapter three links food and culture, or food and the concept of a “national” identity, and paves the way, so to say, for the four analytical chapters to follow. Chapters four to seven then try to answer the initial question by a thorough analysis of four different texts.

The first one is a short story by Kazuo Ishiguro called “A Family Supper”, which deals with commonly-held stereotypes regarding “Japaneseness”. Then, the novel *Sour Sweet* by Timothy Mo will be analysed, which depicts the life of a Chinese immigrant family in London. Afterwards, two “food films” are on the agenda. The first one is by Ang Lee and it is called *Eat Drink Man Woman*, and the second film is Juzo Itami’s famous noodle Western *Tampopo*. Although my analysis will focus on the occurrence and underlying meaning of various foodstuffs in the texts, I will also refer to the biographies of the authors and directors, as their nationalities have caused great commotion and speculation.

It is quite curious to note here that even postcolonial critics have eagerly tried to assign clear-cut “national” identities to these authors and directors, and to put them in a certain category. In this context, Susanne Reichl has pointed out that “[...] it is becoming harder and harder – verging on the impossible – to designate a particular location to a writer and, moreover, his work” (Reichl 2001a: 8). In my opinion, this act of confining authors to a certain location is highly questionable. Thus, I attempt to demonstrate in my analysis that this kind of labelling is not only difficult, but also unnecessary. As Reichl rightly states, “[t]he significance of geographical location, be it a place of residence or of birth, then, dissolves against the power of multicultural, multilingual, polyethnic backgrounds” (Reichl 2001a: 8).

So much for a foretaste of what is to come in this thesis. The next chapter will,

as already pointed out above, provide the theoretical groundwork for the food analysis that is to follow.

2. Postcolonial terminology – an overview

In the first chapter, I aim to set the scene with some basic terminology in the field of postcolonialism. Hence, I will first look at postcolonial theory in general, before I will explore some of the key notions, such as Orientalism, mimicry, nationalism and hybridity in greater detail. Now, however, let me start with a basic question, namely: what is postcolonialism, and can the term be defined in a straightforward manner?

2.1. Postcolonialism

At first glance, it seems fairly easy to pin down the meaning of the term postcolonialism. One is tempted to think that it simply refers to events that happened after – post – the colonial period. However, this is only one of the many implications of postcolonialism. As Walder points out,

[p]ost-colonial is useful because the questions it raises are large, and important. It carries with it the implication that what we are talking about has to do with large-scale historical phenomena involving shifting power relationships between different parts of the world, as well as between people within particular territories.

(Walder 2)

Here, Walder identifies the basics of postcolonial theory, namely its occupation with power and power relations, and this points towards the impact that colonisation has had on our general assumptions about the world (Walder 2). Although Walder identifies “post-colonial” literature as something which emerged only after the colonial period, Elleke Boehmer insists that “[r]ather than simply being the writing which ‘came after’ empire, *postcolonial* literature is generally defined as that which critically or subversively scrutinizes the colonial relationship” (Boehmer 3).

Their different perceptions of the term also surface in the spelling of the same: whereas Walder uses the hyphenated version *post-colonial* in order to highlight his standpoint, Boehmer prefers the non-hyphenated form *postcolonial* in her book. Therefore, C. L. Innes’s argument that the hyphenated form is mainly used by historians, denoting “the period after a country, state or people cease to be governed by a colonial power such as Britain or France”, and her claim that

the non-hyphenated word is more common in literary, cultural and sometimes anthropological studies does not apply in this case (Innes 1-2).

Thus, Boehmer`s definition seems to be slightly more inclusive since she sees all writings which “resist colonial perspectives“ (Boehmer 3) as part of postcolonial literature, not only those which were produced after empire or after the end of the Second World War, and a number of other scholars agree with her perception (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin 2002; Young 2001). Furthermore, the author claims that a definition of the terms *colonial* and *imperial* in relation to *postcolonial* is necessary in order to be able to engage in a more detailed discussion of the matter.

According to Boehmer, imperialism stands for “the authority assumed by a state over another territory“ and she adds that the term is closely linked not only to military and economic power, but especially to the “expansion of the European nation-state in the nineteenth century“ (Boehmer 2). Peter Childs shares Boehmer`s opinion but he goes even one step further in saying that imperialism is essentially the globalisation of capitalism (Childs 5).

Furthermore, Boehmer argues that colonialism is mainly about the “consolidation“ of this imperial power, and therefore it is characterised by the acquisition of territory, the exploitation of resources and the subjugation of indigenous inhabitants (Boehmer 2). McLeod agrees with Boehmer and claims that “colonialism is a particular historical manifestation of imperialism, specific to certain places and times“ but he adds that while colonialism is a thing of the past, imperialism is not, since “[...] Western nations such as America are still engaged in imperial acts, securing wealth and power through the continuing economic exploitation of other nations“ (McLeod 8).

Interestingly enough, McLeod`s definition of imperialism coincides with the term neo-colonialism. Childs interprets imperialism, or capitalism, as merely one part of neo-colonialism, which not only refers to the economic interests of the Western powers, but also to political and cultural endeavours and aims to maintain “maximum indirect control over erstwhile colonies“ (Childs 5).

Ultimately, Boehmer defines postcolonial literature as something that deconstructs the colonial discourse and as a means to give a voice to formerly silenced colonised peoples. At the same time, the author warns us not to interpret the terms colonial and postcolonial as a dichotomy or as a binary pair. She states that although postcolonial literature is perceived as “multivocal” and colonial literature is seen as a one-sided affair, this must not always be the case (Boehmer 4).

In Innes’s view, postcolonial literature is mainly about self-representation, and she identifies two aspects of this concept, namely the artistic and the political (Innes 4). The author describes how “writers from the former colonies wish to speak for themselves” and this act of incorporating the “colonial encounter” into their stories demonstrates their involvement as individuals in the political processes going on at particular points in time (Innes 4-5).

Moreover, Innes argues that contemporary postcolonial literary studies are an “amalgamation of Commonwealth literary studies, Black Studies and Third World Studies” (Innes 5). In her view, postcolonial studies owes its occupation with European settler colonies, former slave colonies, and above all its emphasis on “English-speaking countries” and literary texts written in English instead of an indigenous language to Commonwealth literary studies (Innes 5). McLeod also comments on the issue of language in connection with that of a mainly Western audience when he says that

‘Commonwealth literature’ may well have been created in an attempt to bring together writings from around the world on an equal footing, yet the assumption remained that these texts were addressed primarily to a Western English-speaking readership. The ‘Commonwealth’ in ‘Commonwealth literature’ was never fully free from the older, more imperious connotations of the term.

(McLeod 12)

In addition to that, McLeod refers to the fact that although these texts were mainly read by a Western audience, the writers’ new perspectives and ‘novel’ ideas still had an impact on the readership (McLeod 12-13). However, national differences were interpreted as “secondary colouring or background” which

added light and colour to the text, and the significance of a historical, geographical or cultural context was, according to McLeod, only acknowledged by the generation that followed Commonwealth critics, namely by the postcolonial critics (McLeod 15).

Furthermore, Innes argues that the Black Power movement in the United States, as well as the black British movement in Great Britain contributed to the “social and economic empowerment particularly with regard to people of African and Asian descent” (Innes 5). The author points out that academics from a range of different countries and regions such as Africa, the Caribbean, India and Palestine successfully established a connection between “written discourses and Europe’s political domination over the rest of the world” and also incorporated the work of European intellectuals into their theories (Innes 5). Thus, the philosophers Theodor Adorno, Hélène Cixous, Jaques Derrida and Jean-Paul Sartre played important roles in pointing out the connections between power and language for postcolonial theory, and the psychoanalyst Jaques Lacan and the sociologist Michel Foucault were similarly “appropriated” by postcolonial critics and thus made valuable contributions to the field (Innes 5).

This self-representation that Innes is referring to can also be described as a form of resistance to the “Western-ness of history”, or the constant “othering” of the non-European world (Childs 9). In fact, a number of scholars have pointed out the importance of postcolonialism in the “recovery or revaluing of indigenous histories”, among them Dipesh Chakrabarty and Ashcroft, Griffith and Tiffin (Childs 8-9). Boehmer defines the “Other” as a concept which is “built on the thought of, *inter alia*, Hegel, Sartre, and Said” and she says that it stands for the opposite or negative of authority and thus for the “unfamiliar” and “extraneous” (Boehmer 21). Moreover, the author mentions that in psychoanalysis, the identity of an individual is formed via “othering” as well, or as Lacan calls it via the “gaze of another” (Boehmer 21).

In this context, McLeod points to the study of colonial discourses, which seeks to analyse how the “subservience of the colonised peoples” was justified and how the reasons for this lower ranking were indoctrinated (McLeod 18). Essentially,

this was done by language. However, these colonial discourses led not only to a feeling of superiority on the side of the colonisers, but also to a trauma for colonised peoples since they were “taught to look negatively upon their people, their culture and themselves” (McLeod 19).

The psychologist Frantz Fanon dealt with this psychological damage suffered by colonised peoples in his work. His two most famous books are *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952) and *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961). Fanon himself was subjected to instances of racism and described his experiences in the above-mentioned *Black Skin, White Masks*:

On that day, completely dislocated, unable to be abroad with the other, the white man, who unmercifully imprisoned me, I took myself far off from my own presence, far indeed, and made myself an object. What else could it be for me but an amputation, an excision, a haemorrhage that spattered my whole body with black blood?

(Fanon 1989: 112-113)

This excerpt shows the extent to which the self is internalised as the “Other”, and as Fanon himself states, this leads to the “revision” of the subject identity and renders her, or in this case him, an object (McLeod 20). Furthermore, McLeod claims that this “othering” and the subsequent trauma cause the colonised to attempt to escape from the same by “embracing the ‘civilised’ ideals of the motherland”, but he adds that no matter how hard they try to accept the values and the language of the “motherland”, they are never accepted as equal members of the society (McLeod 21).

Innes states that Fanon also discusses the ways in which black intellectuals and scholars have “sought to challenge racist attitudes” (Innes 6). Thus, she refers to the concept of *negritude*, an ideology developed by the poet Césaire, as well as by the poet and politician Léopold Senghor. Senghor claims that African culture is both completely different from and equal to European culture, and thus inverts the concept of “othering” by basically confirming the thinking in terms of binary positions. Essentially, Senghor thinks that rhythm, emotion and humour are “the distinctive qualities of African writing”, or in other terms “emotion is completely

Negro, as reason is Greek" (Innes 6). One could argue that negritude is one form of self-orientalism, or a form of stereotyping of the "self". This concept is in turn strongly related to food pornography, which will be dealt with in greater detail in the analytical section about the novel *Sour Sweet*.

Furthermore, pre-colonial African cultures and histories are given a new significance by Senghor and other African intellectuals such as Cheikh Anta Diop, as they point to African achievements prior to the colonisation by Europeans. These are characterised by, for example, the "significance of Timbuktu as a centre of learning in the Middle Ages" and the "prestige" which was ascribed to African kingdoms such as Mali by medieval Europe (Innes 6-7). At a later stage, however, Innes sees these "acknowledgements of early African achievements" as important but nevertheless superfluous because they are again situated in a Western context of what is worth mentioning and what is historically irrelevant (Innes 10).

In consequence, negritude as an ideology is "trapped within the terms of a European dialectic" (Innes 7) and thus it cannot and does not overcome colonialist thinking, which is why both Fanon and Innes reject it. In her argument, Innes even refers to the Nigerian playwright Wole Soyinka, who comments on the absurdity of negritude by saying that "it [is] superfluous for Africans to broadcast their African identity" since "a tiger does not need to proclaim its tigritude" (Soyinka qtd. in Innes 7).

Frantz Fanon also talks about the psychology of the colonisers. In their attempt to rule over the "Others", the colonisers classify everything which belongs to the culture of the "other" as something negative: "So the native is by definition uncivilised or barbaric, childlike, feminine, unable to rule himself, superstitious" (Innes 8). This femininity or female component of the "native", as opposed to the masculinity of the European colonisers, is an interesting detail which will also play a significant role in the discussion of Orientalism, as well as in other sections to come.

In this first section, I pointed out some of the major issues in postcolonial

studies, namely its occupation with power structures, resistance, language and discourse, and thus also with (latent) politics. This issue of a political validity of postcolonialism and Orientalism will be raised again in the next section, but before I turn to Edward Said and his oeuvre, I would like to conclude this chapter with a quote by Robert Young, who summarises the meaning of postcolonialism in the following way: “[t]he postcolonial is a dialectical concept that marks the broad historical facts of decolonization and the determined achievement of sovereignty – but also the realities of nations and peoples emerging into a new imperialistic context of economic and sometimes political domination” (Young 2001: 57).

As I already pointed out above, I will deal with the work of Edward Said, who is one of the “three police officers” (Walder 4) of postcolonial theory and for some even the “founding father” of postcolonial studies in the next section. Since the analytical part of this paper will be based on his assumptions to a great extent, I dedicate a separate section to Edward Said and his oeuvre before dealing with concepts such as nation and nationalism, and hybridity in later sections. Now, however, let us turn to Said and his much-debated book *Orientalism*.

2.2. Orientalism and Mimicry

Just like Fanon, Edward Said dealt with the relationship between the coloniser and the colonised in his work. His book with the title *Orientalism* (1978) is regarded to be “one of the most influential books of the late twentieth century” (McLeod 21). In essence, it deals with how Western colonial powers, especially Great Britain and France, portrayed the East and aimed to create a picture of regions such as North Africa and the Middle East which came to be seen as an objective and true representation of the same (McLeod 39). It is interesting to note that in his introduction to *Orientalism*, Edward Said offers three definitions of the term Orientalism.

At first, he states that Orientalism is an academic label and he explains that scholars who deal with this discipline are called Orientalists. However, Said also points out that the expression Orientalism is gradually being replaced by others such as Oriental studies or area studies, simply “because it connotes the high-

handed executive attitude of nineteenth-century and early-twentieth-century European colonialism“ (Said 2). Thus, Orientalism is as much an academic discipline for Said as an attitude towards the Orient.

Furthermore, the author points out that Orientalism is also a “style of thought“ based on a distinction between “the Orient“ and “the Occident“, or in other words on a basic distinction between East and West. Additionally, he says that various disciplines take these distinctions for granted or even “as the starting point for elaborate theories“, among them writers such as “poets, novelists, philosophers, political theorists, economists, and imperial administrators“ (Said 2).

Thirdly, Said identifies Orientalism as the “corporate institution of dealing with the Orient“ (Said 3). In his view, the academic and imaginative meanings of Orientalism mingled in the eighteenth century and produced a certain discourse about the Orient which not only managed but essentially produced the Orient “politically, sociologically, militarily, scientifically, and imaginatively“ (Said 3). Furthermore, this discourse was employed by the West in order to define itself against the Orient and virtually no one could escape the “limitations on thought and action imposed by Orientalism“ (Said 3).

This thesis of the artificial construction of the discourse of Orient versus Occident is founded to a great extent on Foucault’s notions of power and knowledge (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin 10; Young 2001: 383). Essentially, the West uses its power and its knowledge to construct the Orient, and “that power constitute[s] the Oriental other as a particular subject in discourse“ (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin 10).

According to Young, the success of *Orientalism* and its establishment “of a whole new field of academic inquiry“ (Young 2001: 384) are mainly due to its analysis as a discourse. The author states that although *Orientalism* is a highly problematic work, it is nevertheless one of the most influential pieces of writing in the postcolonialist field, and he even claims that postcolonial studies has “defined itself as an academic discipline through the range of objections,

reworkings and counter-arguments that have been marshalled [...] against Said's work" (Young 2001: 384). Moreover, he argues that most postcolonial critics have begun their career by challenging and criticising Said's work, and only by doing so have they passed an essential "initiation rite" and found their position in "the discourse of postcoloniality" (Young 2001: 384).²

However, Young states that the discourse analysis in Said is not so much concerned with the analysis of language but rather with "a discursive regime of knowledge" (Young 2001: 385). Therefore, Said uses the notion of discourse in order to look at different forms of knowledge which are "constructed within a particular kind of language" and this then leads to an analysis of Orientalism, and as Young adds, also colonialism, as an "ideological production across different kinds of texts" (Young 2001: 385). In other words, each discipline has its own language, its own discourse. Young names the medical discourse, or the discourse of literary criticism as examples (among others), and thus demonstrates Foucault's notion that discourse "imposes its linguistic order on the world" and thus "always involves a form of violence" (Young 2001: 386). This violence is exemplified via the development of Orientalist discourse, or via the constant "othering" of individuals, as shown, for example, by Fanon in the last section.

Furthermore, Young argues that Said's survey also demonstrates that the will to knowledge is ultimately also a will to power (Young 2001: 387). Moreover, he claims that "[a]cademic knowledge is also a part of the apparatus of western power" and he quotes Foucault, who states that "it is in discourse that power and knowledge are joined together" (Foucault 1978: 100). In other words, knowledge is produced through a certain linguistic register which in turn manages power positions.

Additionally, and perhaps most importantly, discourse not only creates and maintains knowledge, but also reality. Here, Young refers to the construction of

2 I would like to point out in this context that I do not consider myself a postcolonial critic. Nevertheless, I think that Said's work offers a good starting point for a discussion of colonial and postcolonial matters.

objects through discourse and claims that language does not merely describe the world as it is, but rather produces it (Young 2001: 388). This power to construct realities is especially important in the context of the Orient, since it is argued by Said that the Orient is neither a Western fantasy nor a real entity, and yet both:

Orientalism, therefore, is not an airy European fantasy about the Orient, but a created body of theory and practice in which, for many generations, there has been a considerable material investment. Continued investment made Orientalism, as a system of knowledge about the Orient, an accepted grid for filtering through the Orient into Western consciousness, just as that same investment multiplied – indeed, made truly productive – the statements proliferating out from Orientalism into the general culture.

(Williams and Chrisman 133)

Hence, the Orient was artificially constructed, or as Said calls it, “man-made”, but at the same time it was not merely a “creation with no corresponding reality” (Said 5). Essentially, the Orient was orientalised by the West because the “European-Atlantic power[s]” were in a position to do it. Said ascribes this to the economic and political strength of the West, which strived to maintain and re-define itself through the creation of this binary opposition. Consequently, the Orient came to be seen as the “alter ego” of the West, the “Other”, which is usually described in negative terms, and Said adds that “European culture gained in strength and identity by setting itself off against the Orient as a sort of surrogate and even underground self” (Said 3).

Moreover, Said stresses that this analysis of Orientalism shows that every kind of knowledge is ultimately a political one. According to Said, every discipline and every scholar is shaped by political facts, since “[n]o one has ever devised a method for detaching the scholar from the circumstances of life” (Williams and Chrisman 136). Hence, it is argued by Said that there is no purely objective knowledge because of both the involvement of the author as an individual and the political and economic realities that are part of everyday life (Williams and Chrisman 137).

Furthermore, there is one question that is crucial in the understanding of Orientalism, namely: how does Orientalism reproduce from one epoch to

another? Said argues that there are two forms of Orientalism, the latent and the manifest. Latent Orientalism is comprised of stereotypes, or in other words seemingly unconscious knowledge about the Orient, whereas manifest Orientalism includes “stated views about Oriental society” (Williams and Chrisman 144).

Additionally, according to Said, latent Orientalism remains constant over time which means that certain cultural assumptions are “static, frozen, fixed eternally” (Williams and Chrisman 145). Among these are, for example, the assumption that Orientals are “backward, degenerate, uncivilised and retarded” and commonly linked to elements in Western society which are not looked favourably upon, as “delinquents, the insane, women, the poor” (Williams and Chrisman 145).

This notion of the feminine as “the other” deserves special attention since Orientals in general are often described as being passive and submissive, character traits which are commonly associated with women. McLeod lists this fact under the heading “stereotypes of the Orient” and states that the gendering of the “opposition of the Occident and the Orient” works along stereotypical lines of “masculinity and femininity” (McLeod 45). Therefore, the East is endowed with attributes such as “submissive, exotic, luxurious, sexually mysterious and tempting”, whereas the West is perceived to be masculine, “active, dominant, heroic, rational, self-controlled and ascetic” (McLeod 45).

In addition, individuals are ascribed certain stereotypical gender roles. As already mentioned above, the Oriental woman is portrayed as an exotic, sexually promiscuous female, whereas the Oriental male is denied his masculinity and “deemed insufficiently `manly`” (McLeod 45). As McLeod points out, the “erotised Oriental female” was the subject of a great number of works published during the colonial period (McLeod 45), and Said sees “Oriental clichés” involving “harems, princesses, princes, slaves, veils, dancing girls and boys [...]” as examples of the sexual fantasies of Westerners due to their restricted sex lives (Said 190).

However, Said's preoccupation with latent forms of Orientalism have been among the reasons and causes for various critiques of his works, as already mentioned at the beginning of the chapter. As Said's examples of Orientalist writing cover a time of almost six hundred years, "from the Italian poet Dante writing in the early fourteenth century up to twentieth-century writers", McLeod warns of the dangers of homogenising the texts as potentially holding the same "latent assumptions" (McLeod 47). Similarly, MacKenzie states that Said neglects how Western individuals have treated and approached the Orient with "genuine respect" (MacKenzie 60).

Moreover, Edward Said not only fails to recognise distinctive views about the Orient in the West, but also in the East itself. Although he refers to the absurdity of ascribing a passive and indifferent character to Orientals in the discourse of Orientalism, he seems to confirm this stereotype in his work because he does not give a voice to the East. Instead, he portrays what he himself calls the Orient without any form of agency on the side of the colonised (Williams and Chrisman 16). In this context, Aijaz Ahmad criticises Said for not considering how Western depictions of the Orient "might have been received, accepted, modified, challenged, overthrown or reproduced by the intelligentsias of the colonised countries" (Ahmad 172).

In addition, it is also argued by various critics that Said ignores gender-differences in his work (Fraiman 2000, Mee 2000). In spite of the fact that Said identifies sexist writing in Orientalism, in which women are "[...] the creatures of a male power-fantasy" (Said 207), he does not go further into the subject and thus fails to look at women's writings about the Orient altogether, which renders his account a rather "male-centred study" (McLeod 49). Here, McLeod refers to Sara Mills, who argues that by looking at Victorian travel-writings by Western women, the borderlines between East and West, between female inferior and male superior are blurred (Mills 63). Through the crossing of "colonial and patriarchal discourses" (McLeod 49), Western women are in a position in-between, and this points towards the complexity of colonial discourses and of Orientalism. As McLeod puts it, "Said is certainly right to identify a series of representations about the Orient which functioned to justify and perpetuate the

propriety of colonial rule“, however he also stresses that “[...] these representations were not monolithic, static and uncontested“ (McLeod 50).

Therefore, Said is often criticised for making rather absolute statements of both the East and the West without acknowledging voices of resistance in both contexts. The survey by Homi K. Bhabha, who also deals with colonial discourses, looks quite different from that of Edward Said. Although neither of the two scholars incorporate gender or class issues into their work, Bhabha does comment on some contradictory forces in colonial discourse.

Homi Bhabha is, next to Edward Said and Gayatri Spivak, a very prominent figure in postcolonial studies, and McLeod points out that although the scholar employs a rather complex writing style, “his ideas can be some of the most thought-provoking within postcolonialism” (McLeod 51). In contrast to Said, he mainly draws upon Lacanian psychoanalysis and is influenced by Sigmund Freud, as well as by Frantz Fanon and his book *Black Skin, White Masks*, which has already been mentioned in the last section.

Essentially, Bhabha argues that the “discourse of colonialism” is “pulling in two contrary directions at once” (McLeod 52). In his view, colonialist representations are double-sided: on the one hand, stereotypes are created in order to put the “Other” in an inferior position in opposition to the Westerner. However, on the other hand, this stereotyping has a second function according to Bhabha, namely of translating “the unfamiliar into coherent terms by seeming to account for the strangeness of other peoples” (McLeod 53). In other words, by ascribing attributes to other people, such as “the Irish are inevitably stupid” or “the Chinese are always inscrutable”, one attempts to categorise them, which lessens the distance between the coloniser and the colonised (McLeod 53). Similarly, however, a certain degree of distance is maintained by contrasting the two, which signals that they can never unite and become members of one group or party (McLeod 53).

Moreover, the stereotypes themselves have rather ambivalent characteristics. As Bhabha points out, they do not only consist of exotic fantasies and desires,

but also of “terrifying stereotypes of savagery, cannibalism, lust and anarchy” (Bhabha 72). Consequently, the colonised are trapped in-between contradicting notions. On the one hand, they seem to be “domesticated, harmless, knowable”, but at the same time they are also said to be “wild, harmful, mysterious” (McLeod 53). This ambivalence creates a problem for the coloniser who seeks to put an end to this uncertainty and thus “stereotypes must be *frequently repeated* in an anxious, imperfect attempt to secure the colonised subject in the discourse of colonialism” (McLeod 53).

Therefore, McLeod argues that Bhabha’s discourse of colonialism addresses notions of ambivalence and anxious repetition, which means that the colonised are represented as being both similar to and essentially different from the colonisers. This in turn leads to an endless repetition of stereotypes in an attempt to “fix knowledge about other peoples once and for all”, a state which can never be achieved (McLeod 54).

Another important essay in Homi Bhabha’s *The Location of Cultures*, is called “Of Mimicry and Man”, and discusses how colonised subjects become a “direct threat to the authority of the colonisers” through mimicry (McLeod 54). Bhabha himself calls mimicry “one of the most elusive and effective strategies of colonial power and knowledge” (Bhabha 85). Essentially, mimicry causes the dichotomy of “us” versus “them” to evaporate and thus threatens Orientalist or colonial discourse. In order to demonstrate his point, Bhabha refers to Macaulay’s *Minute* in which the author stresses the need for “a class of persons Indian in blood and colour, but English in tastes, in opinions, in morals and in intellect” (Macaulay qtd. in Bhabha 87). In Bhabha’s view, an individual formally belonging to the group of the “Other”, but endowed with education by the coloniser, belongs to both sides simultaneously and therefore has the power to subvert the Orientalist structure.

The fact that these “mimic men”, as Bhabha names them, “learn to act English but do not look English nor are accepted as such” (McLeod 54), threatens the colonisers more than the colonised and grants the latter a position of power. They are “almost the same, but not quite” (Bhabha 86). Thus, Bhabha’s notion

of mimicry shows that the term does not automatically have to stand for crisis and powerlessness, as in Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks* or in V.S. Naipaul's novel *The Mimic Men* (McLeod 55). As it can be seen, Bhabha, in contrast to Edward Said, portrays forms of resistance to the colonial discourse and thus successfully "disrupts its authority" (Bhabha 88).

So far, we have discussed some of the key notions of postcolonial theory. The notion of mimicry and of colonial discourse in general points to another important concept, namely to that of the nation and to nationalism. Issues relating to this subject will be dealt with in the next section.

2.3. The Myth of the Nation

It is interesting to note that the concept of a nation seems to be a Western idea. It was born during the time of the industrialisation and grew in importance with Western capitalism. As Wisker points out, this capitalist notion had a great impact on the artificial invention of borders between lands and people. Thus, Europeans and Americans defined their national identities "through their seeking and gaining markets abroad and in their self-definition against the identities and rights of other people" (Wisker 50).

Similarly, Gellner points out that nationalism was born, so to speak, in the age of industrialisation, in which "societies emerged based on a technology that required an educated, mobile workforce that could be organised around the needs of industry rather than those of the individual" (Gellner qtd. in Palmer 177-178). Therefore, local traditions were replaced with a national education system, and Gellner argues that only this standardisation finally led to the establishment of nationalism and a feeling of national identity (Gellner 39).

However, what seems to be problematic in Gellner's claim is that "[a] man's education [...] confers his identity on him" (Gellner 36). In her view, "the limits of the culture" in which one is educated are also the limits of the world of an individual (Gellner 36). In my view, this assumption ties in with the Leavises' opinion about an "elitist" culture, because Gellner's argument implies that only those with a proper education and with a knowledge about certain items are part

of a nation, when in fact a nation always consists of various minority groups.

It is the view of nations as fixed and stable entities that points towards the artificiality of them. McLeod points out that contrary to common perception, nations are not naturally occurring phenomena like trees, for example (McLeod 68). They are artificially constructed, or “imagined political communit[ies]” according to Benedict Anderson (Anderson 6). In his argument that nations are merely founded on ideas, the author also points out that the members of this imagined community of the nation “will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion” (Anderson 6). In Palmer’s words, this means that all citizens of a nation simply imagine that “the same basic understanding of what the nation is all about” is shared among them, when in reality national identity is “experienced through immediate family, friends and neighbours rather than through association with the entire nation” (Palmer 179).

However, there are tools with which this “imagination” of a community, of a common nation is fostered. Edwards claims that with the rise of print-capitalism, maps, but also other forms of written communication such as newspapers and novels, became “channels for creating shared cultures, interests and vocabularies within a nation” (Edwards 86). Here, Anderson argues that especially the realist novel and the daily newspaper are capable of reproducing assumptions about time and space which are also inherent in a nation (Anderson 25). McLeod explains this concept of time and space in somewhat greater detail. He argues that in realist novels, there appear different characters who are often unaware of one another and perform “separate activities” at the same time. Thus, these characters “share a common place and obey the same time schema” (McLeod 73).

The same thing happens in daily newspapers. The reader is confronted with events which have all taken place roughly at the same time. In the context of the newspaper, however, these events and activities are further analysed in terms of home and foreign affairs, or national matters and events taking place in other parts of the world (McLeod 73). Moreover, the simple act of reading the

newspaper demonstrates a sense of national belonging, since thousands of people do the same thing at the same time, either reading the newspaper in the morning, or in the evening. Thus, although the members of a community might not know one another, they have “complete confidence in their steady, anonymous, simultaneous activity” (Anderson 26). In essence, by translating the rather volatile concept of the nation into written form, it gains in validity and in strength. Bob Ashley summarises these arguments in saying that cultural apparatuses and state institutions “[...] provide the key to an understanding of the formation of nations” (Ashley 81), and James Donald stresses the fact that the nation is nothing but an artificial construct since “[a] nation does not express itself through its culture: it is cultural apparatuses that produce ‘the nation’” (Donald 32).

Furthermore, in order to strengthen the concept of the nation, conflicting views of history are disregarded in favour of one dominant version of history. This is the reason why certain events are “ritually celebrated as fundamental to the nation’s past fortunes and present identity”, such as Guy Fawkes Night in Great Britain or Thanksgiving in the United States (McLeod 70). Likewise, successful individuals are identified as figures of inspiration for the whole nation. This means that people from various different disciplines, such as science, sports, politics, and many more, come to be seen as icons and role models of the nation. Thus the production of symbols and icons is quintessential in the formation of a nation and the ultimate goal is to create a feeling of unity and a sense of belonging which then joins individuals into one people (McLeod 70-72).

The dominions of these imagined communities are put down on maps which not only have the function of illustrating “the geography of a nation’s domain”, but also the “legitimacy of a country’s ancestry, as well as the nature of the people ruled over by the state” (Edwards, 86). However, Edwards states that although maps have the potential to provide a sense of unity and belonging for the people living in a designated area, they are also limited since they primarily focus on artificial borders: “maps are totalizing systems that comprise classificatory grids, which are applied to anything under the state’s real or imagined control” (Edwards 86-87).

However, as I already pointed out above with my reference to the Leavises, there are also some “fundamental difficulties” in the definition of nation and of national identities (Wisker 49). As McLeod puts it, “[t]he production of a unified imaginary community can be both nationalism’s greatest strength and its ultimate weakness” (McLeod 103). Firstly, the uniting discourse of the myth of the nation disregards the diversity of the individuals it seeks to incorporate. Furthermore, a “liberal dilemma” is inherent in the very idea of the nation, which on the one hand promises liberty but at the same time attempts to govern and dominate the nation’s people (Chatterjee 30).

Moreover, race and ethnicity have been used to define the members of a nation. Geertz states that individuals “identify themselves as belonging to a particular community, state or nation” via factors such as blood ties, race, language, region, religion, and custom (Geertz 1973: 261-3). Here, McLeod points out that racial differences are mere constructs and not biological fact because “[t]here exist no objective criteria by which human beings can be neatly grouped into separate ‘races’” (McLeod 110). They are, however, political constructions, as the myth of the nation itself. Therefore, the perception of racial differences is the “result of a social and historical process” (McLeod 110). Furthermore, although both race and ethnicity suggest a common identity of people, they do not mean the same thing: the term race emphasises “physiological features” whereas ethnicity stands for “a variety of social practices, rituals and traditions” of certain groups (McLeod 111). Additionally, McLeod argues that nationalism “can become complicit with racism by privileging one racialised group above another”, and he refers to a work by Etienne Balibar, who states that through racist ideologies and through the exclusion of certain individuals, national identity is constructed (Balibar qtd in McLeod 111-112). Thus, McLeod concludes that where nationalism is found, racism is never far away (McLeod 112).

On top of this, the term ethnicity is often used instead of race, and Reichl explains this with the fact that the word “race” had biological and genetic connotations attached to it due to “Third Reich ideology”, which is why it was replaced by “ethnicity” in the mid-twentieth century (Reichl 2001b: 158). Although Reichl clearly defines ethnicity as a “[...] sense of identification of

oneself or of others as belonging to a group of people who share (real or putative) common ancestry, language, blood ties, religion, customs, memories, and/or phenotypal features”, she similarly admits that the term has many conflicting meanings, depending on who uses it, and for what purpose (Reichl 2001b: 158-59). In this paper, I will employ the term as a synonym for not only race, but also for the terms culture and nation. Of course I am aware of the fact that these words do not mean the same thing, however, by using them interchangeably, I want to emphasise their volatility and constructedness.

This constructed difference is also referred to by Homi Bhabha. He identifies the inherent instability and fragility of nationalist discourses and thus demonstrates that the unity that is propagated cannot be fully achieved. In attempting to create a “community out of difference”, nationalist discourses “engage with two contradictory modes of representation”, namely the pedagogic and the performative (McLeod 117-118). In particular, Bhabha defines nationalism as a pedagogic discourse because it ascribes a fixed origin and a continuous history to the nation. Moreover, it is termed pedagogical because it confirms the nation as the central and political authority to which all citizens must adhere (Bhabha 145). Additionally, nationalist discourses are also performative as nationalist icons and markers of value must be reproduced continuously: “[t]he scraps, patches and rags of daily life must be repeatedly turned into the signs of a coherent national culture” (Bhabha 145).

Thus, this sense of “national belonging” is also created by “the performance of various narratives, rituals and symbols which stimulate the individual’s sense of being a member of a select group” (McLeod 69). The historian Eric Hobsbawm has pointed out that the repetition of symbols or icons which help to create a manifest tradition is of crucial importance. Essential aspects of these national traditions are aspects of continuity between the past and present of the nation, as well as a shared history and common origins of its people (McLeod 69). Specifically, Hobsbawm is referring to tools such as a national anthem, a national flag, and a “personification of `the nation` in symbol or image” (Hobsbawm 7), and Smith adds that symbols that reflect a “national consciousness” also consist of “more hidden aspects” such as styles of

architecture and fairy tales (Smith 1991: 77).

However, this performance aspect has not only the power to maintain, but also to challenge the idea of the nation. It requires the citizens to be subjects instead of mere objects, as they have to perform their nationality and thus “those placed at the margins of [the nation`s] norms and limits” can challenge the dominant discourse (McLeod 119). Ultimately, difference comes from within the nation and homogeneity is confronted with counter-narratives, which means that unity is “forever out of reach” (McLeod 119). Therefore, in Bhabha`s words, “the national memory is always the site of hybridity of histories and the displacement of narratives” (Bhabha 169). Here, Homi Bhabha refers to another important concept in postcolonial studies, namely to hybridity. This notion will be the subject of the next section.

2.4. Hybridity

As Monika Fludernik points out, the Oxford English Dictionary defines the term hybridity in the following way:

f.L. *hybrida*, more correctly *hibrida* (*ibrida*), offspring of a tame sow and wild boar; hence, of human parents of different races, half-breed. [...]
A few examples of this word occur early in the 17th c.; but it was scarcely in use till the 19th. [...]

(The Oxford English Dictionary 523)

As it can be seen, the original meaning of hybridity is rooted in biological discourse and can essentially be defined as “a crossing of different species” (Fludernik 10). In addition, Fludernik states that in the eighteenth century, the term did not have the “racial overtones” it displayed later in the nineteenth century (Fludernik 9), and it was only used in a postcolonial context from 1980 onwards (Glage qtd. in Fludernik 10).

In this context, Wachinger states that words describing “inter-racial contact” seem to have been “pejorative” prior to the second half of the twentieth century, when a general revaluation and a re-assessment of the terms took place (Wachinger 144). Andrew Smith agrees with Wachinger, but refers to the context

of “supremacist Eurocentric accounts of racial origins” in which the term hybridity gained in popularity (Smith 250). During colonial times, racial separation was propagated on the grounds that intermarriage or inter-breeding would not only cause a “dissolution of the blood of the higher races” , but also produce “sterile or retarded” offspring (Smith 250).

Furthermore, Smith argues that the racial connotations of the term hybridity disappeared gradually and were replaced by a cultural meaning: “As the discourse of `race` became invalid, the focus shifted onto the less contentious ground of `culture`”, but he adds that the “fears of collapse, dissolution and entropy” remained (Smith 250). According to Wachinger, the person responsible for the transformation of the term hybridity is Mikhail Bakhtin, who freed the term from its biological connotations and used it in a linguistic context (Wachinger 146). Bakhtin defines hybridisation in the following way:

[a] mixture of two social languages within the limits of a single utterance, an encounter, within the arena of an utterance, between two different linguistic consciousnesses, separated from one another by an epoch, by social differentiation or by some other factor.

(Bakhtin qtd. in Wachinger 146)

Wachinger discovers in Bakhtin`s views of hybridisation a “brilliant analysis” of a resisting voice speaking from the inside of the dominant discourse, and links this to Bhabha`s notion of mimicry, a theory which Bhabha later “expanded to a theory of subversive hybridity” (Wachinger 146).

In Homi Bhabha`s view, all cultural statements are created in a space which he names the “Third Space of Enunciation” (Bhabha 37). This ambivalent space invalidates the claim to hierarchical purity of cultures and through the emergence of cultural identity from it, the exotic notion of the “other” is overcome (Wisker 190). Thus, Said`s notion of “a simply one-directional power relationship” (Wachinger 147) is replaced by “an empowering hybridity within which cultural difference may operate” (Wisker 190).

In other words, via the concept of hybridity, individuals are transformed from

powerless objects to active subjects who are able to subvert the existing power structures. Edwards sees the reasons for this subversion in the “double-voicing process” that replaces the single-voiced cultural authority (Edwards 141). In essence, he points out that the linguistic and racial differences of the “native self” are a critique of the canon, and of its exclusion of other narratives (Edwards 142).

However, there are various scholars who have criticised Bhabha’s assumptions for their generalisation of the “colonial encounter” (Edwards 146). Among others, the postcolonial critic Benita Parry has argued that Bhabha renders the postcolonial subject as both ambiguous and universal, and asks how a subject can be liminal and homogeneous at the same time. Moreover, she also criticises Bhabha for disregarding issues such as gender, class and location. “What he offers us”, Parry laments, “is The World according to The Word” (Parry 9). Thus, Parry refers to the fact that one has to study Western colonialist discourse to understand hybridity, and she points out that Bhabha’s theory cannot be grasped without “reference to the ideological and institutional structures of colonization” (Edwards 146).

Robert Young also interprets hybridity as a form of “counter-energy” which “challenges the centred, dominant norms of colonial discourse (Young 1995: 22), but he goes on to note that the meaning of the term is not always clear-cut since it can be used in a variety of different ways. Thus, Young states that the concept increasingly stands for “a new cultural hybridity in Britain” (Young 1995: 22-23). Hence, Young connects the term hybridity with another concept, namely multiculturalism. As Edwards explains, there is a fundamental difference between the two, since multiculturalism “does not describe a merger of two things, but instead it describes separate things living alongside one another” (Edwards 144).

In contrast to this rather theoretical approach towards hybridity, Saalman, Schirmer and Kessler foreground a more practical view of the terms hybridity and hybridisation. Thus, they explore the concepts in two respects: Firstly, as processes and techniques of mixing that are somehow related to culture in its

wider, anthropological sense, and secondly, as aspects of identity (Schirmer et al. 10).

Moreover, they seem to comment indirectly on Bhabha's notion of hybridity, which, as Benita Parry has shown, is "housed in the West" (Edwards 146), in saying that hybridisation does not only work "from West to East", but that it can also be the other way around (Schirmer et al. 4). As Said's survey has shown, the West is often associated with modernisation, rationality and individualisation, whereas the East is typically connected with old-age tradition, wisdom and spirituality. Schirmer et al. argue that both these point of views are common in the West as well as in the East. Thus, they explore how hybridisation works in both ways, in the framework of globalisation (Schirmer et al. 4).

Furthermore, their definition of hybridisation comprises cultural, economic, political and social influences which are "multidimensional and multidirectional processes" (Schirmer et al. 4). In other words, they attempt to show that globalisation does not necessarily lead to a "homogenisation of cultures and techniques" but rather to a form of adaption of cultural practices and technologies (Schirmer et al. 4). Hence, their work deals with "concrete situations in which people hybridise things, practices, ideas, concepts and handle hybridisation" (Schirmer et al. 3).

This rather practical approach towards hybridity and other postcolonial concepts will also be featured in the sections to come. So far we have established a theoretical basis, a framework with which we can approach the central question of how culture and cultural differences are expressed through food and cuisine. Thus, in the next section, we will first look at tools for the analysis of cultural differences expressed via food and foodways, such as structuralism and culturalism, and finally we will try to answer the following question: can there be such a thing as authentic food?

3. From a theoretical to a practical approach – Identity via food

The nation is a fluid cultural construct and food is one among many agencies which participate in its construction and the continuing processes of redefinition.
(Bob Ashley 89)

All prejudices come from the intestines.
(Nietzsche 54)

According to Catherine Palmer, in order to understand how people make sense of their identity, it is very important to look at symbols which construct and “promote a sense of national identity [...]”, and she goes on to say that “symbols [...] gently remind people of who they are rather than leap out with flashing lights, brass bands and calls to defend the nation” (Palmer 181). Thus, the author juxtaposes her view of “nationalism in practice”, so to speak, with McLeod’s and Hobsbawm’s definitions of national symbols.³ Essentially, she claims that national identity is maintained and promoted in a very subtle manner, and refers to Michael Billig’s concept of banal nationalism for a more detailed account.

Billig attempts to analyse how individuals experience and also reproduce their nationality in everyday-life. Thus, he uses the adjective banal, which does not have a negative connotation in this context, as Palmer explains, but rather stands for ordinary or “commonplace” events, “something that happens all day, every day” (Palmer 181). Billig himself defines banal nationalism as a reference to “ideological habits” (Billig 6), and claims that “[...] nationalism, far from being an intermittent mood in established nations, is the endemic condition” (Billig 6). Thus, he perceives nationalism as a regular fixture, or as a state of normality, in all Western nations and at all times. In other words, Billig sees nationalism as something very basic and as something prevalent in everyday life, in spite of the fact that it seems to most people as if it was there only in times of crisis or war (Billig 6).

Moreover, Billig has coined the expression “flagging of nationhood”. This is the mechanism, so to say, with which one’s nationality is constantly demonstrated,

³ For a more detailed discussion, see Chapter 2.3.,p 21.

and Palmer explains that “[t]his ‘flagging’ may be unconsciously displayed but it serves to keep people aware of where they belong and what they believe in. It is to be found in the daily habits and routines of life and it is why people do not forget their identity” (Palmer 182). Billig compares his concept of banal nationalism with an image of a flag, however, not with one that is “being consciously waved with fervent passion”, but rather with a flag that is “hanging unnoticed on the public building” (Billig 8). In this context, Palmer states that these inconspicuous little “flags” or signifiers of nationality can be found almost everywhere, from the “weather forecast” to a “Levi jeans” advertisement (Palmer 182), and of course also in the discourse revolving around the production and consumption of food.

3.1 Food and foodways – an overview of different approaches

Before I link various theoretical considerations about the nation and nationalism with food, I think it is appropriate to refer to some influential texts about foodways. It goes without saying that food and eating have attracted much attention, not only because they stand at the very core of life, and here the title of the book by E.N. Anderson, “Everyone Eats” is very apt, but food is also an important marker of identity, and thus food and its consumption can be linked to issues such as race, class, gender, ethnicity, religion and culture, to name but the most prominent categories.

“We are what we eat”. This quotation sums up the manifold reasons why food has been studied from so many different points of view. Counihan and Van Esterik have maintained that “[b]ecause food crosses so many conceptual boundaries, it must be interpreted from a wide range of disciplinary perspectives” (Counihan and Van Esterik 1). Interestingly, Bell and Valentine have slightly extended the above-mentioned aphorism and 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 [...] who we are” (Bell and Valentine 3). Thus, their survey focuses on food consumption in relation to the geographical context of the consumer.

The title of their book, “Consuming geographies: we are where we eat” is quite

revealing in this respect. As Bell and Valentine point out, the main objective of their work is a portrayal of food consumption in relation to social and cultural theory in accordance, as they point out, with Perry's statement that "different ways of thinking (through food) can elaborate different theoretical perspectives" because "the spaces between different perspectives can open up still newer ways of thinking" (Perry qtd. in Bell and Valentine 11).

However, most academic approaches to food do not focus on the context, but rather on a way to discern the meaning of food. There are so many different approaches to food studies that it is not easy to sum up the various academic disciplines in which food has been analysed. Mostly, the key names and books are the same in the sources on which I rely here (Atkins and Bowler 2001; Bell and Valentine 1997; Caplan 1997; Prättälä 1991; Wong 1993), however, they are grouped under different categories and this makes it very difficult to extract some basic meaning from them. Therefore, I will mainly focus on Atkins' and Bowler's account for a background to food studies in this section, and combine their approach with the surveys of the scholars named above. Thus, I aim to give a quick overview of influential approaches to food studies, for which I by no means claim completeness. It should on the contrary be seen as a mere starting point to the topic. After this introduction to the studies of food, I will narrow the focus down on food in relation to the nation.

Firstly, there are "cultural and sociological approaches" which, according to Atkins and Bowler, are founded on the work of both functionalists and structuralists. The functionalists have "identified certain values and norms in eating patterns that are symbolic of broader structures in society as a whole" (Atkins and Bowler 5), which means that food customs, according to the functionalists, not only stand for a society, but also hold it together. Moreover, the main representatives of early food-related functionalist work were originally social anthropologists, and Atkins and Bowler name Audrey Richards and Margaret Mead as the main figures in this field. However, the two authors also state that this approach has been criticised because of its static nature, and because it fails to explain or even recognise "the importance of origins, change, and conflict" (Atkins and Bowler 5).

The structuralists, on the other hand, have taken a much closer look at food and have tried to investigate how “taste is culturally shaped and socially controlled” (Atkins and Bowler 5). Pat Caplan elaborates on anthropological works dating back to the 1960s, and she particularly mentions Claude Lévi-Strauss, who coined the above-mentioned phrase, and who understands food as a cultural system. Essentially, the structuralists interpret food as a system equivalent to language, and thus claim it could be analysed like language: “Lévi-Strauss maintained that food was ‘good to think with’ and that deciphering the codes underlying such matters as food enabled the anthropologist to reach ‘a significant knowledge of the unconscious attitudes of the society under consideration (Lévi-Strauss qtd. in Caplan 1-2). While Caplan praises his work “the culinary triangle” as a provider of “important insights into the rules underlying everyday life” (Caplan 2), Atkins and Bowler mention that it has also been criticised because of its “‘fanciful’ assumptions and generalisations” (Atkins and Bowler 6).

Furthermore, Roland Barthes is referred to as “one of the most entertaining and insightful of the structuralists” (Atkins and Bowler 6), perhaps because he has dealt with “popular food preferences” and food depicted in the media. He has identified certain “mythologies” in everyday life and has tried to interpret food as a system of signs (Barthes qtd. in Atkins and Bowler 6). Just like Lévi-Strauss, Barthes has been influenced by Saussure’s linguistic structuralism, but as Atkins and Bowler emphasise, “[...] unlike Lévi-Strauss, Barthes discusses concepts such as capitalism and imperialism, and his analysis therefore has greater immediacy for western readers” (Atkins and Bowler 6). Moreover, food plays an important part in Barthes’ “Mythologies”, and he has even suggested that a whole world “is present in and signified by food” (Caplan 2). Interestingly, Barthes has also referred food as a signifier for the nation, and I will come back to his portrayal of “steak and chips” as the quintessential French dish in the next sub-section.

Mary Douglas has based her oeuvre on the work of both Lévi-Strauss and Barthes, or as Atkins and Bowler call it, she also “deciphers ‘the grammar’ of

meals” (Atkins and Bowler 6), but nevertheless she takes a different direction. According to Prättälä, she “does not expect to find universal binary oppositions, but instead looks for conceptual categories specific for particular cultures (Prättälä 20). Moreover,

Douglas and her co-workers [...] think that, in the anthropology of food, there has been an over-emphasis on food items as the analytical components of a food system. In addition to food items, several other levels of analytical categories should be used, e.g. recipes; menus; meal cycles; prescriptions for the matching of menus and types of cooking to occasions, the times at which food is eaten; and correct table manners.

(Prättälä 21)

Thus, Prättälä points to the fact that Douglas advocates a broader view of food and foodstuffs as she includes a variety of factors in her analysis which had not been dealt with in greater detail previously. This incorporation of more and more decisive factors in the analysis of production and consumption of food continued to increase over the following decades.

As Atkins and Bowler point out, the 1970s and 1980s were mainly characterised by a change in climate, since it became “more philosophical” as the “linguistic flavour of much of the early structuralism was later leavened by the political economy project of the Marxist structuralists [...]” (Atkins and Bowler 6). They mention Bourdieu as “one of the most significant theorists of relevance to food studies”, mainly because he emphasised the importance of consumption as opposed to “production-orientated explanations of society” (Atkins and Bowler 7). However, Bourdieu has linked a certain consumption pattern to the expression of a certain class identity and similarly to the reproduction of “class distinctions in society”. Here, Atkins and Bowler advocate an emphasis of the study of class identity rather than that of the class system, since, in their opinion, consumers are free to choose what they want to consume and thus have the power to alter class norms (Atkins and Bowler 7).

Furthermore, with the rise of feminism in the 1970s, another important dimension has been added to food studies, one that “[...] previously was solely

lacking” (Atkins and Bowler 7). From this time onwards, female identity has been analysed through an examination of the role of women in the household, as well as in the family. Moreover, feminist critics began to discuss “[...] the relationship between food and body shape in the construction of female identity within a framework of patriarchal expectations” (Atkins and Bowler 7). In other words, gender and sex were now seen as worthwhile factors for an analysis in food studies.

The 1990s have been characterised by “the cultural turn”, according to Atkins and Bowler, and they point out that “[f]or most social scientists with an interest in food, this cultural shift has meant the adoption of ethnographic methodologies of data collection” (Atkins and Bowler 7). Thus, factors such as race and culture have been added to the examination of food and foodways. This is not only exemplified by Bell and Valentine, who, as Atkins and Bowler state, “illustrate the various themes well in their book” (Atkins and Bowler 7), but also by Pat Caplan. She addresses food issues in relation to gender, class and ethnicity, as well as to body, agency, and health (Caplan 1996).

Both Atkins and Bowler, as well as Caplan suggest that recent developments in the field of food studies have generated works which stress individual identity over a socially constructed one. Atkins and Bowler call this “[...] a tendency towards arbitrary individual diversity” (Atkins and Bowler 8), whereas Caplan refers to food consumers as active individuals who “[...] develop taxonomies, articulate satisfaction or dissatisfaction with food, [and] resist advertising or medical messages [...]” (Caplan 25). However, both, or should I say all three authors acknowledge the importance of individual agents, as well as of power structures. Caplan sums these trends up by saying that “[w]e need, then, to see food consumers both as agents, imbued with volition and intentionality, and as social beings, continuing to use food to express significant relationships” (Caplan 25). The next sub-section will deal with the latter, namely with food in relation to the power structures of the “nation”.

3.2 Food and the nation

As it was pointed out in chapter 2.3., there are many ways to describe the

concept of the nation as well as national identity and belonging. Catherine Palmer states that although there seems to be “[...] considerable disagreement amongst writers and scholars over what nationalism is and how it has developed”, there is a core to all of them, namely the basic assumption that an “*idea of nation*” is linked to some kind of understanding of history, and to “the memories and traditions that have been handed down from one generation to the next” (Palmer 177). This is also true of food, of course. Although food and foodways are never and have never been static, the discourse of a “national” cuisine very much suggests that idea, as Ashley demonstrates with his description of a British “core national diet”: “[a] day`s menu might be: the full English breakfast (fried egg, bacon, sausage, tomato, etc.); roast meat (especially beef) with all the trimmings; afternoon tea with scones and/or home made cake; and fish and chips for supper” (Ashley 76). However, Ashley also points out that what “at first sight appear[s] taken-for-granted” (Ashley 77) is by no means a reflection of reality. The author is in doubt if British people eat any of the items on his list on a regular basis and adds that just like nations, national diets are in constant flux and “subject to change over time” (Ashley 76).

This “change” that Ashley is referring to is brought about by constant foreign influences on British food, and he mentions Italian, French and Indian cuisines as some examples. Especially the latter deserves special attention since it can serve as an example of an appropriation of foodways and clearly uncovers false assumptions about the “authenticity” of foreign foodstuffs. The infamous chicken tikka masala case, CTM for short, is a very good example for the superficiality of tradition and of “authentic” dishes.

This seemingly Indian dish was in fact invented by a “cunning chef” in the 1970s in London, who catered to a customer`s request of sauce with his chicken tikka, which is “marinated and grilled chicken in small pieces” (Reichl 178). As Reichl points out, the sauce he produced consisted of a tin of Campbell`s tomato soup, as well as of “[...] a dash of cream and some fenugreek for a spicier taste” and was simply named “masala”, a term which means sauce or spices in Hindi (Reichl 178). In essence, Reichl calls CTM a “cross-cultural culinary merger”, and explains that while some Indian restaurateurs refuse to serve chicken tikka

masala, it was added on the Burger King menu in 1999 (Reichl 178).

Ashley, on the other hand, also refers to the adaption of this dish to “suit” the British palate, but he interprets the “infiltration of other food products by CTM” as a sign for its incorporation into British food culture (Ashley 79). In this context, Ashley quotes Rohan Daft, who has claimed that “Christmas lunch may be turkey, but our national dish is chicken tikka masala” (Daft qtd. in Ashley 79). Moreover, Ashley sees the fact that CTM has been made “available in supermarkets and takeaways [...]”, be it in the form of a favouring device, as a pizza topping or sandwich filling, as proof of its relevance in British cuisine, as “[...] any shift from restaurant to home consumption is itself an indicator of a deeper level of absorption into British food culture” (Ashley 79-80). Therefore, CTM can be termed an appropriation of Indian cuisine, as well as a British culinary invention, which makes it an indispensable part of contemporary British cuisine.

However, a national cuisine is not only shaped by the assimilation, but also by an exclusion of various foodstuffs. As Ashley puts it, “[w]e should not subscribe too enthusiastically to any version which presents British food as uniformly in the process of becoming a cosmopolitan cuisine. Old prejudices die hard, and it would be inappropriate to underestimate the continuing role of xenophobic attitudes in expressions of national feeling” (Ashley 83). In other words, a celebration of a multi-cultural society does not entail that there are no animosities towards the “other”. According to Allison James, “national” identity is often marked by seemingly simple exclamations such as “we eat meat, they don’t”, “we eat horse, they don’t”, “they eat insects, we don’t” (James 72).

Furthermore, othering occurs through a national stereotyping of particular “food habits”, as Fieldhouse exemplifies: “[f]ood habits are an integral part of cultural behaviour and are often closely identified with particular groups – sometimes in a derogatory or mocking way. So the French are ‘Frogs’, the Germans are ‘Krauts’, the Italians are ‘spaghetti eaters’ [...]” (Fieldhouse 41). James also comments on these stereotypes by saying that a “national” identity is confirmed via the othering of particular foodstuffs on an almost daily basis: “[a]nd so it is

that in parlour games and pub quizzes we are asked to affirm that lasagne comes from Italy, chow mein from China and goulash from Hungary: a seemingly fixed culinary order sustains and stakes out fixed cultural identities" (James 72).

Naturally, these bland equations of food and national identity are over-generalisations. James states that "[e]ach national cuisine bears the traces of trade, travel and, increasingly, of technology, so that food could more correctly be said to be constitutive of global rather than local cultures[...]" (James 73). Here, the author is referring to the underlying hybridity inherent in every "national" cuisine. This hybridity surfaces through ingredients in "national" dishes, as well as through many other components of a "national" cuisine. For example, a "good cup of tea" is indisputably synonymous with Englishness or Britishness in general, but hardly anyone seems to question the fact that tea – the epitome of English identity – is not grown in the UK, but imported from other countries.⁴ The fact that most of these places are former British colonies endows these goods with a postcolonial flavour, and this issue will be discussed in greater detail in chapters 4 and 7.

Similarly, the potato, a decisive part of "fish and chips", and thus also British identity, is a good example for what Bell and Valentine call the "[...] menu of naturalised foods brought to Britain's shores through the course of history" which has been "[...] modified, adapted and hybridised over time" (Bell and Valentine 169). It is interesting to note in this context that French identity seems to rely on this commodity as well. In his survey about "everyday objects" in his book *Mythologies*, Barthes has claimed that "steak and chips" is the "national" French dish, and he has even compared a rare steak to another cultural signifier, namely to red wine: "Wie der Wein ist das Beefsteak in Frankreich ein Grundelement und mehr noch nationalisiert als sozialisiert" (Barthes 37). On top of this, the potato also points towards the fact that trade, as a form of globalisation, has influenced "national" cultures and cuisines long before the so-called era of globalisation began. This in turn stresses that hybridity is not a

4 For a more detailed discussion of tea as a colonial signifier, see chapter 4.2.2., p 51.

recent or modern phenomenon, but rather that it has been present for a long time.

As it can be seen, there are various foodstuffs which have turned into cultural and “national” signifiers over the course of time. In this respect, notions of tradition and “authenticity” play an important role. Bell and Valentine point out that authenticity is as volatile as the concept of the “nation”, and mostly used by the advertising industry to construct a “food heritage” in connection with “national” or regional cuisine in order to “[...] promote gastronomic tourism (whether combined with actual tourism or not)” (Bell and Valentine 177-78). Similarly, Emiko Ohnuki-Tierney states that tradition as well as authenticity belong to a “[...] powerful `invented` discourse in the presentation and representation of food and national or local cultures [...]” (Ohnuki-Tierney qtd. in Bell and Valentine 177). Likewise, Reichl shares the view that authenticity is a vital part “in the daily discourse of marketing, politics and economics [...]”, however, she dismisses the concept of authenticity as a notion which “[...] in contemporary cultural and literary theory has been questioned and abolished” (Reichl 178).

With this definition of authenticity in mind, it is curious that Ashley refers to the “contradictory appeals” of what he calls “the novelty/tradition antinomy” (Ashley 85). Essentially, he bases his arguments on the work of Alan Warde (1997), who has identified “four antinomies of taste” in the foodways of contemporary Britain. Ashley claims that on the one hand, there is “an appeal to the traditional, to the old-fashioned ways of eating the `safe`, comforting foods inscribed in the well-tried practices of households and families” (Ashley 85), which means that “national” food is endowed with positive qualities and in turn serves to uphold “national” values and heritage. On the other hand, culinary “novelties” are juxtaposed with seemingly “traditional” foodstuffs, and thus some foods are put in the “other” category and labelled as “exotic”, “different”, “exciting” and “new”, a practice which makes them more appealing (Ashley 85). Thus, according to Ashley, the appeal to the “traditional”, as well as to the “novelty” occur simultaneously.

This constant exoticising of foreign foodstuffs that Ashley is referring to, goes hand in hand with what Chin has termed “food pornography”. The expression “food pornography” denotes an exploitation of exoticism on the part of the producer, so to say. Wong calls the constant staging of otherness an essential survival strategy “[...] to gain a foothold in a white-dominated social system” (Wong 55). This seems to be especially true for operators of “ethnic” restaurants, who serve “authentic” food to cater for the appetite for otherness of their customers, and thus the restaurateurs have to stage themselves as the “other”. Anja Michaelsen analyses these issues in relation to power structures in her article “Asian Food Porn: Fremdheit, Geschlecht und Visualität in Metaphern der Einverleibung zeitgenössischer Populärkultur”. In her article, Michaelsen claims that the Asian restaurant stands for a form of edible “otherness”, and states that “foreignness” is consumed both by eating Asian food and by the consumption of the staged and stereotyped “otherness” of the waiting staff (Michaelsen 3). This “otherness” is demonstrated, apart from other things, by the infamous Asian smile which seemingly makes it easier for the consumer to swallow and digest “foreign” food (Michaelsen 10). The issue of food pornography will be addressed again in the discussion of Timothy Mo’s novel *Sour Sweet*.⁵

As the survey of this chapter shows, there is a clear link between food and identity, and in this sense also of one’s “nationality” and the expression of it via the consumption of certain foodstuffs. However, one must also take into consideration in this whole debate about nationalism and food that there is no such thing as “national” food in everyday life. Just like the whole concept of the nation as a clear-cut entity is a mere construct, food is also always a conglomerat of different ingredients, so to say. Following Bell and Valentine’s account, Palmer states that “[...] the important point is not whether national cuisines exist from a strictly academic perspective, but rather why and how certain foods and styles of cooking continue to be identified with specific nationalities and ethnic groups” (Palmer 190).

5 See chapter 5.3.2., p. 67, for further reference.

Essentially, it is this performative quality of identity which will be dealt with in the practical part of this paper. There will be numerous examples in the sections to come which illustrate that food can act as a symbol for “national” and /or “ethnic” identity, as well as for the resistance to the same. In the following chapter, I will discuss foodstuffs which seem to be pointing toward a “Japanese” identity, but which reveal, through a closer inspection, an underlying hybridity aspect which in turn stresses the artificiality of a “national” identity.

4. "A Family Supper" by Kazuo Ishiguro

"A Family Supper" is a short story by the British author Kazuo Ishiguro. In spite of the fact that his work is regarded as being part of the canon of contemporary British fiction (Childs 2005: 123ff), this short story remains unmentioned in most reviews of his oeuvre (L. Hall 90ff; Shaffer 1ff). This may be due to the fact that he did not only write "A Family Supper" in 1982, but also the novel *A Pale View of Hills* which was well-received and also awarded the Winifred Holtby Memorial Prize in 1983.⁶ Brian Shaffer states that although Ishiguro started out with short stories and television dramas in the early eighties, he is probably best known for "his [...] intricately crafted, hauntingly evocative, psychologically compelling novels" (Shaffer 2), and their success is also reflected by various prizes and awards, including one of the most prestigious literary awards, the Booker Prize, which Ishiguro received in 1989 for *The Remains of the Day* (Shaffer 4).

Before analysing different components of the plot, I will briefly turn to Ishiguro's biography, as his nationality and his name have caused much speculation about whether he can be called a Japanese and/or British author, and these issues of 'where to put' Ishiguro have also had a great impact on the reception of his texts and have contributed to a debate revolving around concepts such as hybridity and identity which were mentioned earlier in the theoretical part of this paper. Although Lewis and Shaffer attempt to analyse Ishiguro's oeuvre in terms of hybridity and multiculturalism, they still cannot get rid of their uneasiness about his nationality. Therefore, they are constantly referring to him as the Other, the migrant with no home, despite the fact that he possesses a British passport and has been living in Great Britain ever since he came to Europe in 1960.

4.1 Kazuo Ishiguro

According to Barry Lewis, Kazuo Ishiguro can be called "a displaced person, one of the many in the twentieth century of exile and estrangement" (Lewis 1). The writer was born in Nagasaki/ Japan in 1954 and emigrated to Great Britain with his parents when he was five (L. Hall; Lewis) , some sources also say six

6 For a more detailed biography, See the British Council Website, <http://www.contemporarywriters.com/authors/?p=auth52>.

(Shaffer 1; British Council Website) years old. He grew up in Surrey, and enrolled at the University of Kent in Canterbury where he read English and Philosophy. After his graduation, he studied Creative Writing at the University of East Anglia, and he has been writing “full-time” since 1982.⁷ This biographical detail of dislocation is one reason why he is often referred to as an essentially homeless writer, and the fact that homelessness is seen as a “figurative motif” (Lewis 2) in Ishiguro’s work seems to confirm this view. Interestingly enough, during an interview he stated that he too thought of himself as being homeless, “I had no obvious social role, because I wasn’t a very English Englishman and I wasn’t a very Japanese Japanese either. And so I had no clear role, no society or country to speak for or write about. Nobody’s history seemed to be my history”(Ishiguro qtd. in L. Hall 101; qtd. in Lewis 4).

However, he also stated that he thought of himself as “British rather than English” (Ishiguro qtd. in Lewis 4), and he has cited Dostoevsky, Kafka, Dickens, Charlotte Bronte and Chekhov as his major influences (Childs 2005: 123), a fact which confuses both critics and readers as they are eager to put him in a Japanese tradition. Ishiguro is often compared to Japanese authors because of his style. As Barry Lewis points out, “[t]he melancholic pitch of Ishiguro’s prose, the formality of the dialogue, the concern with issues of duty and service – all of these seem to indicate an oriental sensibility” (Lewis 10). This expression, “oriental sensibility”, conjures up images of samurai warriors and geishas wearing kimonos, in other words, it clearly positions Ishiguro in the category the ‘Other’ and refers back to what Said has established about Orientalism.⁸

Although he is often stereotyped through comparisons with well-known Japanese authors, such as Yukio Mishima, he refuses such bland equations. Barry Lewis even states that “Ishiguro has suggested that if his own books had been published pseudonymously [sic], and someone else was hired to stand in for jacket photos, nobody would think of comparing him with Japanese writers” (Lewis 10). As far as the stylistic criteria are concerned, some commentators

7 See British Council, <http://www.contemporarywriters.com/authors/?p=auth52>.

8 See Chapter 2.2., p. 13.

seem to align him with Japanese authors, whereas others see him “at the forefront of English literature” (Oe qtd. in Lewis 11), and identify his techniques as very similar to Jane Austen’s or Henry James’ (Robert Clark qtd. in Lewis 11).

Furthermore, he is also often called a postcolonial author and there are critics who detect postcolonial elements in his work as well as his life. First of all, as a “homeless” writer, he supposedly writes from the margins and also treats liminality in his texts (Lewis 13). His protagonists are characters who are displaced in one way or another, and, as Peter Childs puts it, “[a]ll Ishiguro’s narrators are looking for clues to explain how they have become who they are [...]” (Childs 2005: 125), and via the use of first-person narrators,

Ishiguro explains themes of loss, trauma, dislocation, failure, and memory. A central theme is the narrator’s self-deception, while the organization of each novel is that of the narrator’s memory and its medium the linguistic labyrinth of the narration itself.

(Childs 2005: 129)

Despite the fact that “A Family Supper” is a short story and not a novel, the themes that are addressed in the paragraph above remain the same here. However, I will primarily focus on issues of belonging, of national identity and tradition in connection with honour and duty in my analysis. Essentially, I will demonstrate how these concepts are expressed via the use of food in Ishiguro’s story.

4.2. “A Family Supper”

According to Laura Hall, “[t]he question of conflicting loyalties to nations, to higher moral values and to human dignity in a world of transition and change is the territory explored by Ishiguro” (L. Hall 101). This also applies to “A Family Supper”. The story is set in Tokyo, where the narrator, who is living in California, meets his father and his sister for a family reunion two years after his mother’s death. Before his sister Kikuko arrives at their house, the protagonist not only learns about the circumstances of his mother’s death involving the consumption of fugu, but also about the suicide of his father’s business partner and close friend, Mr Watanabe, who killed himself because of their firm’s collapse. Only

later does Kikuko tell him about the fact that Watanabe killed his whole family as well, and the “uncomfortable atmosphere prevalent in the story” (Wachinger 124), fostered by the differences between the traditional father and the “displaced” siblings, as well as by the haunting image of the kimono-clad mother, reaches a climax when the lid of a large pot is lifted and the containing fish soup is shared between the three of them. When the narrator inquires as to what kind of fish it is, the father swiftly replies “[j]ust fish” (Ishiguro 4), and at this point of the story the reader is convinced that the father, who admires his former colleague for his sense of duty and honour, means to kill his family as well. However, merely twenty lines below, the reader is confronted with the oddity of this thought. When the son asks his father about his opinion concerning Watanabe’s suicide and murder, he gets the following response:

“You think what he did – it was a mistake?”

“ Why, of course. Do you see it otherwise?”

(Ishiguro 4)

Finally, this web of cultural stereotypes that Ishiguro has carefully manufactured in the first three pages of his short story is destroyed with only one quick blow, and when the father adds to the above-mentioned comment: “[t]here are other things beside work” (Ishiguro 4), the reader’s vulnerability regarding cultural stereotypes is exposed and he or she is taught a lesson.

Since my paper focuses primarily on the relationship between culture and food, I will leave out other important elements of the text in my analysis, which means that I will not address the ghost-motif in Ishiguro’s work, nor will I incorporate issues of space or nature in my discussion. However, I will deal with the tea room in the story, with the preparation and consumption of tea and the fugu dish, which turns out to be plain fish soup, as well as with all the relevant concepts attached to food and to kitchen utensils in the story. Furthermore, my analysis will rely on the methodology used by Susanne Reichl in *Cultures in the Contact Zone: Ethnic Semiosis in Black British Literature*, and I will provide the reader with some background information, or factual knowledge on the ethnic signs, with the purpose of decoding the appropriation of food in the story in order to demonstrate that otherness is sold as a commodity to the reader, and

that the seemingly Japanese items are far from being “authentic”⁹, on the contrary, they are invented and serve a special purpose.

4.2.1. Fugu – just fish?

The first paragraph of the text consists of a short explanation about the Japanese pufferfish, or fugu, and it deals with the fatal danger of the fish, namely the situation when it is improperly prepared and nevertheless consumed:

Fugu is a fish caught off the Pacific shores of Japan. The fish has held a special significance for me ever since my mother died through eating one. The poison resides in the sexual glands of the fish, inside two fragile bags. When preparing the fish, these bags must be removed with caution, for any clumsiness will result in the poison leaking into the veins. Regrettably, it is not easy to tell whether or not the operation has been carried out successfully. The proof is, as it were, in the eating.

(Ishiguro 1)

This first paragraph serves not only as a definition of the word fugu, but it also conjures up images of the ‘Other’ and strange Japan. In the very first sentence, the connection between fugu and Japan is established, and as the danger which lies in the consumption of this item becomes clear, images which seem to confirm the strangeness of this ritual appear in front of one’s mental eye. Barry Lewis captures these ambivalent feelings of curiosity and suspicion in the opening paragraph of his chapter on Ishiguro’s first success, *A Pale View of Hills*:

Think of Japan. What images come to mind? To the young, it is a place of neon, *manga* comics, microcomputers and *karaoke*. [...] Those of an older generation are more likely to conjure up visions of *kamikaze* pilots, *samurai* swords, pagodas and elegant kimonos. In the first instance, Japan is construed as a kind of hyper-West; in the second, it is foreign and alien, the absolute other of the West. To both young and old, to be Japanese is to be *strange*.

(Lewis 18)

It is this “absolute other” that Ishiguro consciously constructs for the reader, the old and traditional Japan, which seems to be embodied in and emphasised by the father character of the narrative. This strangeness, as Lewis calls it, is introduced right at the beginning and is prevalent throughout Ishiguro’s short

9 The whole concept of authenticity is in fact highly questionable, see chapter 3.

story. Interestingly enough, the fish is always referred to as fugu or simply as fish, but never as blow- or pufferfish, which would be a more adequate translation. Susanne Reichl has commented on the difficulty of translating foreign languages, and thus also foreign cultures into English, by stating that “[...] a translational approach that focusses on where translation occurs and how, can throw light on the question of what is perceived as ‘own’ and what as ‘other’, and consequently, on the identity of a model or implied reader” (Reichl 2001a: 85). Thus, the implied strangeness of eating something poisonous is stressed by the foreign word fugu, and by failing to define it as puffer- or blowfish, it is clearly kept in the ‘other’ category.

This linguistic detail contributes to the exotic flavour of the story, and the fact that the term ‘fugu’ appears only three times in the beginning of the text, whereas the word ‘fish’ is mentioned nine times, scattered across the story as it were, tells us something about Ishiguro’s intentions. At first he establishes the connection between fugu and death, and then later uses the harmless synonym “fish” in connection with expressions such as darkness, shadow or the recurring phrase “You must be hungry” to imply danger and thus he creates suspense:

‘You must be hungry,’ he said. One side of his face had fallen into shadow.
‘Thank you.’ I reached forward with my chopsticks. The steam was almost scalding.
‘What is it?’
‘Fish.’

(Ishiguro 3)

Moreover, the first paragraph of “A Family Supper” leaves the false impression that fugu is a typical Japanese dish, and its popularity is emphasised in the second paragraph, when it is pointed out that “[t]he fish became extremely popular in Japan after the war. Until stricter regulations were imposed, it was all the rage to perform the hazardous gutting operation in one’s own kitchen, then to invite neighbours and friends round for the feast” (Ishiguro 1). Here, the narrator briefly mentions regulations, but fails to elaborate on them in greater detail. Naturally, there are strict laws as to who is allowed to sell and prepare pufferfish. Bestor points out that that “the poisonous blowfish or globefish [...]”

can be sold or prepared only by dealers and chefs with special licences issued by the prefectural authorities” (Bestor 171), and these severe restrictions imposed on the consumers show that fugu is a refined delicacy for gourmets, and not something that is eaten on a regular basis like tuna or salmon. And indeed, the seemingly popular dish is mostly not even mentioned in books on Japanese cuisine (Cwiertka 2006; Ishige 2001), while in others fugu is at least mentioned in a glossary (Ashkenazi 2003).

Furthermore, Bestor states that most accidents are the result of “a seemingly perverse culinary aesthetic”, as “[t]he tingling sensation one reportedly feels on one’s tongue when eating fugu liver is judged by fatalistic gourmets to be an exquisitely sensual delight” (Bestor 172). This statement points towards the fact that the actual reason why fugu is considered to be such a culinary delight is not only the potential fatality of the consumption of the dish but a feeling of numbness in one’s tongue and fingers, when just enough poison is left in the flesh of the fish to achieve this sensual frenzy. The craving for such an “emptying euphoria” has even led to the death of the famous kabuki actor Bando Mitsugoro in 1975, who requested and ate four servings of slightly ‘contaminated’ fugu liver at a Kyoto restaurant. The chef only “catered to his patron’s whim” because he did not dare to refuse the famous customer’s order and had his licence taken away from him after police investigations followed the death of the actor (Bestor 172).

In addition, it is claimed in the story that the poison of Fugu “resides in the sexual glands of the fish” (Ishiguro 1), but the narrator fails to mention that other parts, such as the liver and the intestines, are also poisonous. Jim Garrison refers to “puffers” as the most poisonous fish in the order Tetraodontoidea and adds that “[t]heir skins, livers, ovaries, intestines, and gonads contain tetrodotoxin, an extremely powerful poison, which attacks the nervous system in both the individual nerves and in the brain [...]” (Garrison 248). In this context, Bestor states that especially the liver of the fish concentrates toxins (Bestor 172), a fact which lends weight and significance to Ishiguro’s reference to the “sexual glands”, namely that of the issue of gender in the short story. I will not elaborate on the issue of gender in greater detail, however it must be said that

this element ties in with the analysis of the significance of tea in the narrative, as there seem to be parallels between the male principle, in other words the father figure, fugu and death, as opposed to femininity, life-sustaining forces and tea.

Moreover, the symptoms of tetrodotoxin poisoning are quite different from what the narrator describes in "A Family Supper", as there are different grades of poisoning. First signs of intoxication include a slight numbness of the lips and tongue, followed by tingling or pricking sensations in face and extremities, as well as feelings of "lightness and floating". Additionally, the victim may suffer from nausea, headache and diarrhoea. During the second stage, the symptoms include paralysis or the inability to move, and this loss of muscle function even affects one's speech ability and might eventually result in cardiac arrest. Death usually occurs, if it does occur, one has to add, within a time span of 20 minutes to eight hours.¹⁰

Therefore, the symptoms are a far cry from the description in Ishiguro's short story where it is said that "[f]ugu poisoning is hideously painful and almost always fatal. If the fish has been eaten during the evening, the victim is usually overtaken by pain during his sleep. He rolls about in agony for a few hours and is dead by morning" (Ishiguro 1). This either-or situation expressed by Ishiguro is also prevalent in other areas of the story, where life and death, light and darkness stand in stark contrast to each other. It almost seems as if the plot only consists of black and white and no shades of grey at all, and the use of extremes also signifies the opposition between East and West in the story, and on another level ridicules this view as it is a prominent feature in stereotyping. Thus, Japan is portrayed as the un-homely home, the traditional but old-fashioned and rather cold 'Other', and this is done via the incorporation of fugu and tea.

In other words, Japan as a nation is constructed through the use of two cultural signifiers in the text: fish and tea. According to Theodore C. Bestor, seafood as

10 See <http://vm.cfsan.fda.gov/~mow/chap39.html>.

well as rice are *the* “essential traits” in Japanese cuisine: “[f]ish and the art associated with its preparation and consumption are central to Japan’s culinary heritage, itself near the emotional core of national identity” (Bestor 126). Interestingly enough, rice is not mentioned in the text, a fact which might also point towards the fact that the Japan presented in the story is only an imagined entity and has nothing to do with the real, the ‘authentic’ Japan. However, rice is a prominent feature in Timothy Mo’s *Sour Sweet*, which will be discussed in the next section.

The importance of fish in Japanese cuisine, in Japan as well as abroad, might be the reason why it is featured so prominently in “A Family Supper”. However, probably the most famous dish associated with Japan is sushi, or “a small fistful of vinegared rice with a [...] slice of raw fish laid on top” (Ishige 228), and thus it is quite interesting that fish is eaten boiled in a soup and not raw as sushi in the story. Again, this instance might refer to the fact that the Japan presented here is an invented entity, a ‘third space’ in Bhabha’s terms, and this state of in-betweenness might be expressed via this conscious omission of rice, or perhaps rather via the appropriation of an existing cultural stereotype, as the fish-cliché is used, but not the ‘raw’ version of it.

Again, this adaptation of a cultural practice in the form of fish soup refers back to chapter 2 of my paper, and to the concept of hybridity. Schirmer et al have argued that globalisation leads to the active hybridisation of cultural artefacts by individuals, and in their view this act of creating new forms of cultural stereotypes on a fictional level might also count as an active “handling” of hybridisation.¹¹ Similarly, Wachinger talks about the act of “claiming a cultural space in-between” (Wachinger 1), and although he acknowledges the “capacity of food to work as a signifier of ethnicity” (Wachinger 123), he fails to recognise the importance of tea in his analysis of Ishiguro’s “A Family Supper” and concludes that the story offers a “[...] constructed picture of Japanese culture in terms of hara-kiri and food poisoning” (Wachinger 126), but does not move beyond this cliché. Therefore, I will analyse the importance of tea in the text and

¹¹ For a more detailed account of hybridisation, see chapter 2.4. p. 26.

demonstrate that there is a certain significance to the incorporation of this element in the story.

4.2.2 Tea – or the epitome of national culture

At first glance, the dominance of the fugu-motif seems so powerful that one easily overlooks the two instances in the text when tea is served. However, by examining the text via close reading, it becomes clear that the serving and consumption of tea is even more significant than the consumption of fish in the story. As far as discourses such as authenticity, tradition and national heritage are concerned, ‘a good cup of tea’ is most certainly always a decisive part of the picture. There are numerous works in literature where tea is in the service of the ‘myth of the nation’, not only in the ‘Japanese’, but first and foremost in the ‘English’ context, and thus tea, be it green tea or black tea, is appropriated to express identity. However, there is also a colonial flavour attached to the taste of it, as Stuart Hall demonstrates:

People like me who came to England in the 1950s have been there for centuries; symbolically, we have been there for centuries. I was coming home. I am the sugar at the bottom of the English cup of tea. I am the sweet tooth, the sugar plantations that rotted generations of English children’s teeth. There are thousands of others beside me that are, you know, the cup of tea itself. Because they don’t grow it in Lancashire, you know. Not a single tea plantation exists within the United Kingdom. This is the symbolisation of English identity – I mean, what does anybody in the world know about an English person except that they can’t get through the day without a cup of tea?

(S. Hall 1991: 48-49)

Just like tea, in the above case black tea, is associated with ‘Englishness’, I would suggest that the tea which is consumed in the tatami-clad tea-room in “A Family Supper”, is meant to emphasise traditional, or in other words ‘Japanese’ values in the story. Indeed, the father is described as a very strict and traditional man who is “proud of the pure samurai blood” in the family (Ishiguro 1). Additionally, it is implied that he shares some character traits with his business partner Watanabe, “a man of principle and honour”, and he seems to have nostalgic feelings for the past: “[b]usiness these days has become so different. Dealing with foreigners. Doing things their way. I don’t understand how we’ve come to this” (Ishiguro 1). This allusion to the infamous Japanese work ethic is also discussed by Iwabuchi who states that “[a]fter all, diligence, loyalty and

systematic work are now widely acknowledged as national cultural `traits` of the Japanese and are expected as such (Iwabuchi 1), but at the same time he makes clear that national identity is far from being a stable entity and calls it a “battleground where various social groups compete with each other to define the meaning of the `national` (Iwabuchi 1). This view of nationality confirms what has been said about nationalism in chapter 2 of this paper.¹²

The seemingly coherent narrative of nationalist values emphasised by tea is broken up by the reference to the tea-room. It might seem appropriate to drink tea in a tea-room, but in fact Japanese tea-rooms are not meant to be a place for informal gatherings, like a living room, for example. On the contrary, they are reserved for a rather formal way of tea-consumption, namely for tea ceremony. The cult of tea – also called *chanoyu* – is “a highly ritualized ceremony during which powdered green tea is prepared by a skilled practitioner and served to a small group of guests in a tranquil setting” (Cwierka 108). These occasions are marked by a set of rules “of comportment and behaviour” (Cwierka 109), as how to serve, and how to consume the green tea, and thus characterised by formal acts of all participants. In addition, there is a fixed set of tools used during these tea ceremonies, and the most important of them are described in the following passage: “[t]o brew the tea, a small amount of powder is put in an individual bowl, water that has boiled and cooled somewhat is added, and a bamboo whisk is used to whip the mixture to an even, slightly foamy texture” (Ishige 260).

The tea served in “A Family Supper”, however, does not come in a bowl but in a tea pot, and this tiny detail suggests that it can only be leaf tea that is consumed here:

When we had finished the meal, my father stretched out his arms and yawned with an air of satisfaction.

“Kikuko,” he said. “Prepare a pot of tea, please”

(Ishiguro 4)

Interestingly enough, there exists a different form of tea ceremony for green leaf tea or *sencha*, and the tea rooms are “quite similar to *chanoyu* tea rooms, with

¹² See chapter 2.3. The myth of the nation, p. 21.

tatami mats and plain wood surfaces [...]” (Graham 186). The crucial difference between the two is that leaf tea is associated with “the refined culture of China”, and Graham states that sencha “can be viewed as a symbol of `cultural trespass,` as its association with Chinese learning, once the exclusive domains of elite classes, came to be appreciated by all” (Graham 3). One does not need to be an expert to associate tea with issues of colonialism and postcolonialism, but the fact that sencha tea signifies `Chineseness` or the merging of `Chinese` and `Japanese` cultures, emphasises the hybridity-aspect of the short story even more.

Curiously enough, only leaf tea and not the powdered green tea-version is associated with China, although the practice of drinking tea had been imported from China already in the sixteenth century. Clearly, the reference to tea in the text points towards the colonial past of Japan, and the fact that the family consumes leaf tea enhances this connection with China even more. On top of that, various other instances in the text seem to refer to China, as for example the narrator`s comparison of the `traditionally Japanese` father to an important person in the Chinese Communist Party, Chou En-lai: “[m]y father was a formidable-looking man with a large stony jaw and furious black eyebrows. I think now in retrospect that he much resembled Chou En-lai, although he would not have cherished such a comparison, being particularly proud of the pure samurai blood that ran in the family” (Ishiguro 1). The reader is left in the dark as to who Chou En-lai is, although the juxtaposition with the samurai hints towards the `foreign` identity of the character. Chou En-lai, or Zhou Enlai, was a leading figure in the Chinese Communist Party, and he served as premier, as well as foreign minister in the People`s Republic of China from 1949-76 and 1949-58 respectively.¹³

The occurrence of not only this comparison, but also of a little plastic battle ship, and the father`s confession that he spent some time on a similar ship during the war contribute to this postcolonial motif:

Then I noticed something on a low table in the corner of the room. I came nearer and saw it was a plastic model of a battleship, the kind

13 See <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/656977/Zhou-Enlai>.

constructed by children. [...]. My father gave a laugh. He came up to the table and picked up the model.[...]. `During the war I spent some time on a ship rather like this. But my ambition was always the air force. [...]
(Ishiguro 3)

All this, in connection with the consumption of tea, adds to the subtle criticism of the father character and thus to that of the nation. It is not exactly clear why these cultural and political references to China are featured in the text, but they can be interpreted as criticism of the colonial `endeavours` of Japan in China and South East Asia until the end of the Second World War, as well as a rejection of the “concept of absolute loyalty to nation” (L. Hall 104). Additionally, it might be of interest in this context that the word *fugu* has also been used in war discourse. The name `Fugu Plan` was established by Marvin Tokayer “for schemes by Japanese military officers and diplomats to exploit Jews for the benefit of the Japanese empire during the Asia-Pacific War” (Goodman 250). In 1939, the navy captain responsible for the Jews of Shanghai from 1939 to 1942, Koreshige Inuzuka, compared Jews to the deadly puffer fish in a report called the `Joint Report on the Jews of Shanghai`, which he co-wrote with army colonel Norihito Yasue and Shanghai consul general Shiro Ishiguro. According to David G. Goodman, “Jews were to be used to influence U.S. policy, to attract `Jewish capital` to the Japanese Empire, and to establish a Jewish settlement in Manchuria, where 30,000 Jews could exercise their talents to aid the Japanese war effort” (Goodman 251). However, this plan was never realised.

As far as war crimes are concerned, Laura Hall also says that “Ishiguro`s constant comment on the art of memory still has significance in contemporary Japan where school textbooks have repeatedly failed to refer to the atrocities committed in China and the government has been reluctant to acknowledge the claims of the `comfort women` forced to prostitute themselves for the Japanese army” (L. Hall 105). As it can be seen, the incorporation of tea in the analysis opens up a whole new universe in the interpretation of “A Family Supper”, and through the combination of two seemingly random foodstuffs, *fugu* and leaf tea, the story acquires a powerful new meaning, and, as I would suggest, a Chinese subtext.

The subtext, however, is of greater significance than one might realise at first. The stereotyping only takes place on the surface, via the inclusion of words and concepts that signify Japan, as for example the “pure samurai blood”, the reference to not only Tokyo but also to the location of the family house in the “Kamakura district”, and also the name of the father’s business partner and friend “Watanabe” as well as his definition as “[a] man of principle and honour” (Ishiguro 1). Moreover, there are also some instances where dubbing occurs in the text. The term has been defined by Susanne Reichl as

[...] a technique by which the language that a character would naturally speak in the *histoire* of the novel is replaced by the language of narration, so that the reader on the discourse level understands what this particular character says. This is necessary in those novels which use English as the language of narration but whose characters speak another language.

(Reichl 2001a: 116)

These instances of dubbing serve as “illusion breakers” (Reichl 2001a: 117), and can also function as “a sociolinguistic metasign” and support characterisation (Reichl 2001a: 118), as the following examples from “A Family Supper” exemplify. As we have already seen, the father in the story is presented as a rather old-fashioned and traditional character. This is even emphasised by his formal speech. When the conversation between the father and the other two characters seems to stagnate, he suddenly stands up and says “I must attend to the supper. Please excuse me for being burdened down by such matters. Kikuko will look after you” (Ishiguro 1). The formality of the exclamation in connection with the humbleness suggest ‘Japanese’ politeness at its best, and thus this seemingly typical phrase contributes to the ‘Otherness’ of the whole scene and along with other items such as chopsticks, a big lantern hanging over the dining table, and the fact that the characters bow to each other before starting the meal (Ishiguro 3). Again, on the surface these items and practices seem to give an authentic and coherent picture about a typical Japanese dinner. However, when taking a closer look at the actions of the characters, the situation lacks coherence.

The family starts eating supper and their conversation turns to a picture on a wall and to the dead mother of the protagonist. The reader does not know what

their dinner consists of, it is only referred to as food: “When I made a polite comment about the food, Kikuko giggled a little” (Ishiguro 3). Only after their discussion of the photograph does the fish soup appear in the story: “There was a large pot left unopened at the centre of the table” (Ishiguro 3). It is curious to note that the soup is not served at the beginning, but at the very end of the meal. For the reader, this might seem to tie in with the overall ‘otherness’ of the setting and thus it might not attract too much attention. However, it is very interesting to note that the custom of consuming the soup as the last course of the meal is common in China, not in Japan however.

Furthermore, the consumption of tea seems to work as a framing device in the text. During their first and during their last conversation, father and son are sitting in the tea-room. Interestingly enough, both the tea-room as well as the term tea are mentioned three times in the text. In contrast to the word *fugu*, which is semantically linked with words such as shadow and darkness, tea is mentioned in connection with other terms, such as garden and traditional Japanese items such as tatami floors and sliding windows. Moreover, Kikuko, the sister character, is always mentioned in connection with tea, syntactically speaking:

‘[...] More tea?’
Just then a girl’s voice came echoing through the house.
‘At last.’ My father rose to his feet. ‘Kikuko has arrived.’
(Ishiguro 1)

‘Things will improve then.’
‘Yes, I’m sure they will.’
We fell silent once more, waiting for Kikuko to bring the tea.
(Ishiguro 4)

In my opinion, this also shows the transition from colonialism to postcolonialism on a metalevel, because the very first word in the story is “Fugu” and the last word is “tea”. Thus, one possible interpretation of the two items could be that *fugu* stands for the past and for colonialism, since it is associated with the father, his friend Watanabe, and the war, whereas tea and its appropriation in the story points towards the artificiality and constructedness of the text.

Essentially, Kazuo Ishiguro admitted during an interview that he wanted to

confront the reader with the stereotype he or she might hold about Japan in “A Family Supper”, but in my view he himself subverts the very stereotype he creates. The `othering` of the characters seems to be coherent at first glance, but if one looks deeper into the matter, one discovers that the seemingly `Japanese` characters are appropriating different foodstuffs and traditions, and thus different ethnicities. The act of casually drinking tea in the rather formal setting of a tea-room, or the failure to observe the rules of etiquette appropriate for the setting, result in the break with tradition. The seemingly traditional father figure initialises this break when he invites the other characters to retire to the tea-room and is not only willing to disregard the formality of the traditional setting, but also admits that he thinks it was “a mistake” of his friend and business partner to kill himself and his family (Ishiguro 4). Or, as Hall puts it, [g]radually the reader is let in on the sly joke – that `tradition` itself has been invented or is at best a half-remembered thing” (L. Hall 93).

This is also what the title of the short story, “A Family Supper”, suggests. It seems to leave out the `Japaneseness` of the family members, and for a good reason. As a close analysis demonstrates, the family supper it is not quintessentially Japanese. The Chinese subtext creates a hybrid picture and leaves the characters behind, as it were, without a clear-cut ethnicity. Moreover, when reading through the first paragraph of the short story, one gets the impression that there is something dangerous lurking behind this harmless title, and in the course of the story this feeling seems to be confirmed and the reader is led to the conclusion that it might be a fatal dinner for all family members. Only on the last page does the breath-holding suspense end, and the father reveals his lack of understanding for his business partner`s suicide. After all, it is really just that: one of many family suppers, not the final one.

4.3. Conclusion

In essence, the Japan that is presented here is a pure fabrication and although it seems to confirm various stereotypes of this country at first glance, it does the exact opposite. Concepts like authenticity, tradition and heritage are mocked by various inconsistencies on the plot level and through the deliberate use of colonial or postcolonial items such as fugu and tea which emphasise the

impossibility of clear-cut borderlines between nations, and between `us` and `them`. This leads us back to the absurdity of trying to define Ishiguro`s nationality. Is he Japanese, or British, or indeed a homeless writer with no country to speak for? What most critics of his oeuvre neglect (because they are so occupied with trying to locate Ishiguro on a postcolonial map) is that it does not really matter which nation or whose tradition he is writing about, the most important thing is that he tries to subvert these fixed concepts and thus demonstrates that they are no longer valid. Laura Hall comments on this by saying that “[t]he project of writing `within and between two worlds` is further obfuscated by the realisation that those `two worlds` cannot be separated into discrete entities but are inextricably interwoven” (L. Hall 90-91). Above all, Ishiguro`s texts are about characters, and he rejects the claim that they are either typically Japanese or typically British, because they are above all human beings.

5. Timothy Mo`s *Sour Sweet*

In terms of general themes and motifs, Timothy Mo`s oeuvre can be equated with Ishiguro`s: “Wherever Mo [sic!] and Ishiguro`s characters invoke tradition, whether for the purposes of survival or as a trope of power, the results are either comic or pitiable. In neither case does their work yield itself to the orientalist quest to understand ‘Chineseness’ or ‘Japaneseness’” (L. Hall 91). Interestingly enough, their work has been compared by a number of critics, and these always seem to be eager to put them in a group of British writers dealing with “the experience of empire from the other end”,¹⁴ which means that the two are usually named with other authors such as Salman Rushdie and Ben Okri, and essentially classified as English writers who were “born outside England” (Shaffer and Wong 36). Before I turn to an analysis of Timothy Mo`s novel *Sour Sweet*, I would like to talk about the writer`s biography, mainly because I want to point out the fact that the nationality or rather the perceived race of an author, however appalling this might sound, seems to influence the perception of his or her work to an enormous extent.

5.1. Timothy Mo

Timothy Mo was born to a Cantonese father and an English mother in Hong Kong in 1950. He has lived in Hong Kong and England, where he graduated from St. John`s College, Oxford. After his graduation he worked as a journalist, but it is not stated when he decided to become a novelist. The only reference point is the year of the publication of his first book *The Monkey King*, which was released in 1978. According to the British Council website on contemporary British writers, “[...] Timothy Mo [along with Salman Rushdie and Kazuo Ishiguro] emerged in the 1980s as one of the most important novelists writing about bi-cultural diversity, reflecting both his Anglo-Chinese background and his concerns for the effects of imperialism and colonial rule in South-East Asia”.¹⁵ Timothy Mo was shortlisted for the Booker prize three times, and for the three novels that followed his debut, namely for *Sour Sweet* (1982), which won the Hawthornden Prize, for *An Insular Possession* (1986), and for *The Redundancy*

¹⁴ This eagerness to essentially classify British writers in terms of in-and outsiders is quite dubious in my opinion, see also chapter 4 for further reference.

¹⁵ See <http://www.contemporarywriters.com/authors/?p=auth74>.

of *Courage* (1991).¹⁶

As I already mentioned in the beginning of the section, Timothy Mo is often put in a group of writers which includes, among others, Kazuo Ishiguro. While Ishiguro rejects such attempts of classification and does not want to be compared with other postcolonial writers such as Mo: “[f]rom a literary point of view, I can’t see anything that links me with someone like Salman Rushdie or Timothy Mo” (Ishiguro qtd. in Shaffer and Wong 71), Timothy Mo himself does not seem to mind such equations. On the contrary, he states that “[w]e [Salman Rushdie, Kazuo Ishiguro and himself] came when we were quite young, we’re writing mainstream English novels, deploying English novelistic techniques” (Mo qtd. in Spicer 299).

Moreover, Timothy Mo, just like Kazuo Ishiguro, is said to perceive himself as a wanderer between cultures, or as a “complete outsider” (Spicer 295), and critics like to quote from interviews in which he clearly establishes that he is not part of the Chinese community in London¹⁷, but they fail to recognise that he does see himself as a “mainstream Western novelist” (Spicer 298) writing in the “English tradition”, in which he includes names such as Paul Scott and Angus Wilson (Mo qtd. in Spicer 299). Thus, even if he does not have anything else in common with Ishiguro, they at least share the fate of being put in the “other” category of contemporary writers.

In addition, it is curious to note in this context that copies of Mo’s novel *Sour Sweet* are available at both the English and the Chinese department library of the University of Vienna. On the other hand, Ishiguro’s novels are only in stock at the library of the English department, a fact which clearly suggests that he is by no means a liminal, as it is often claimed, but a British author, at least in the academic context of Vienna University. The reason why Mo’s books can be found in both libraries, however, remains a mystery to me. I can only speculate that the Hong Kong-section in the Chinese library is in itself perceived as a territory for “the other” (from a mainland Chinese point of view), which is why

16 See <http://www.contemporarywriters.com/authors/?p=auth74>.

17 See, for example, Spicer 296.

the incorporation of a British author seems to be perfectly natural and justified.

5.2. *Sour Sweet*

Timothy Mo's story is set in London in the 1960s. As the title suggests, it deals with food "in its relation to cultural identity", and Wachinger adds that "[...] *Sour Sweet* explicitly states the fake character of what is presented as 'authentic' food in the numerous restaurants in London's China Town" (Wachinger 126). It is a story of a family of Hong Kong immigrants living in London. Laura Hall claims that the Chens are "inwardly oriented and self-reliant", and describes their situation in a very adequate manner:

Lily and her husband Chen (we never learn his given name), live in London with their son Man Kee, Lily's sister Mui, and, later on, Chen's father. The Chens have no illusions about their status in life, they had little in China and they have less in England. But Lily, the heart of the exiled family, has ambitions for the future. [...] Thanks to Lily's frugality, they are able to open their own Chinese takeaway in South London, the Dah Ling. The takeaway counter becomes the symbolic barrier between Lily and Chen and the alien world of the pink-faced consumers of their specially concocted Chinese dishes. (L. Hall 95)

This seemingly idyllic family plot is countered with the incorporation of another plot-level about the Hung family, one of the triad societies operating in London. Since I will primarily focus on instances where food occurs in connection with the Chen family, I will not deal with the triad society in my analysis, in spite of the fact that Mo consciously created the two worlds to express that "the negative aspects of a culture are very intimately related to the positive aspects [...]" (Mo qtd. in Spicer 300). Suffice it to say, towards the end of the story, Chen is taken away and killed by members of the Hung family, and Lily, convinced that her husband took on another restaurant job abroad so that he can add more money to the family income, happily takes the envelopes filled with money which arrive regularly as a sign of Chen's well-being.

It is argued by Tobias Wachinger that *Sour Sweet* confirms virtually all the stereotypes about China, and he claims that "[i]t is difficult indeed to think of a Western stereotype about the Chinese that is not somehow contained in and negotiated by Mo's narrative. The *Sour Sweet* blend includes the Chinese predilection for gambling, sticks of incense and a pot-bellied household god, as

well as on the [sic!] Kung Fu kind of violent fights between the competing gangs” (Wachinger 126-127). In my view, Mo makes use of various stereotypes in *Sour Sweet*, but in contrast to Wachinger’s perception, I think that these mainly consist of inversions of commonly-held convictions about the East which are meant to confront the reader with his or her own prejudice against the East in general and China in particular. In the course of my argument, I will refer to a stereotype that is commented on in *Sour Sweet* on several occasions, namely the infamous Asian smile, itself part of a practice referred to as “food pornography” (Wong 55). Now, however, I will start by analysing the meaning of various occurrences of food in the text.

5.3. Food in *Sour Sweet*

Already on page two of Timothy Mo’s novel, the reader is introduced to the evening routine of Lily and her husband. In spite of the fact that Chen usually eats a rather large dinner at his workplace,¹⁸ his wife feels obliged to serve him something as well when he returns home, as the following passage exemplifies:

Lily Chen always prepared an `evening` snack for her husband to consume on his return at 1.15 a.m. This was not strictly necessary since Chen enjoyed at the unusually late hour of 11.45 p.m. What the boss boasted was the best employees` dinner in any restaurant. They sat, waiters, boss, boss`s mother too, at a round table and ate soup, a huge fish, vegetables, shredded pork, and a tureen of steaming rice. Lily still went ahead and prepared broth, golden-yellow with floating oily rings, and put it before her husband when he returned.
(2)

This very first passage displaying food in the story sets the scene for the events to come and creates an almost “authentic” atmosphere, which is to say it plays very much with the expectations of the readership. Preconceived notions of “Chineseness” seem to be confirmed with the image of the whole “clan”, employees and family members alike, sitting at a round table, enjoying “authentic” Chinese food including steaming rice, the ultimate signifier for “Asianness”. Moreover, Lily confirms the image of the dutiful and submissive wife, a Western construction, one has to add, of Eastern femininity.

18 In the beginning, Chen is a waiter at a Chinese restaurant in Soho. Only later does the family open their own take-away.

As it can be seen, food is very much at the core of the novel. So much in fact, that it is featured so many times throughout the story that it is virtually impossible to “translate” all the information and all the subtle meanings it conveys to the reader. Therefore, I will focus my analysis on only a few instances, but which bear, in my view, tremendous significance. First and foremost, food descriptions are used to get in touch with the readers, to serve them the very “Chinese-ness” that seems to comply with the horizon of expectations of, as Reichl points out, an essentially Western readership (Reichl 2002: 188). Gradually, however, the seemingly coherent notion of “Chinese” food is broken up by the introduction of a discrepancy between “Chinese” food for in-group members, and “Chinese” food for all the others: “[...] the food [Chen] served from the `tourist` menu was rubbish, total *lupsup*, fit only for foreign devils” (16). Here, Susanne Reichl has pointed out that *lupsup* is the Cantonese word for the English “rubbish”, and that the expression “foreign devils” does not only address tourists but white people in general (Reichl 2002: 189). Furthermore, this dichotomy between “us” and “them” continues to be enforced in the course of the narrative. When Chen is still working at the Soho restaurant, he is at one point so absent-minded that he confuses orders and brings “[...] lurid orange sweet and sour pork with pineapple chunks to the outraged Chinese customers and white, bloody chicken and yellow duck`s feet to appalled Westerners” (61). This appropriation of Chinese dishes for Western customers continues when Chen and Lily open their own little food take-away:

The food they sold, certainly wholesome, nutritious, colourful, even tasty in its way, had been researched by Chen. It bore no resemblance at all to Chinese cuisine. They served from a stereotyped menu, similar to those outside countless other establishments in the UK. The food was, if nothing else, thought Lily, provenly successful: English tastebuds must be as degraded as the care of their parents; it could, of course, be part of a scheme of cosmic repercussion. `Sweet and sour pork` was their staple, naturally: batter musket balls encasing a tiny core of meat, laced with a scarlet sauce that had an interesting effect on the urine of the customer the next day. Chen knew because he tried some and almost fainted with shock the morning after, fearing some frightful internal haemorrhaging (had Lily been making him overdo it lately?) and going round with a slight limp until the mid-afternoon the stream issued clear as ever. `Spare-ribs` (whatever they were) also seemed popular. So were spring-rolls, basically a Northerner`s snack, which Lily parsimoniously filled mostly with bean-sprouts. All to be packed in the rectangular silver

boxes, food coffins, to be removed and consumed statutorily off-premises. The only authentic dish they served was rice, the boiled kind; the fried rice they sold with peas and ham bore no resemblance to the *chow faan* Lily cooked for themselves, although it was popular enough with their West Indian customers. The dishes were simple to cook; well within Chen`s capabilities, which was hardly surprising since they had been invented by the Chinese seamen who had jumped ship or retired in East London a generation ago. (105-106)

This rather long paragraph consists of a list of familiar dishes and items that the Chens sell at their little shop. These dishes are clearly set apart from what is called “Chinese cuisine” in the second line, and the English customers are even criticised for liking such lupsup food, fittingly delivered in what is described as “food coffins”. As Reichl suggests, this expression “reflects the unnaturalness which the Chens feel has gone into their food” (Reichl 2002: 240). Interestingly enough, the origins of this “lupsup” food are also commented upon, and the use of the word “invented” refers back to what Hobsbawm and Ranger have called “invented traditions”¹⁹. Thus, the tradition of not only the Chens` appropriated “Chinese” food, but of national dishes in general is cast into doubt, also because the adjective “authentic” is not used in connection with Chinese food in this passage, but only with rice.

It can be argued that the notion of authenticity is a very prominent one in *Sour Sweet*. In fact, both seemingly “authentic” and “lupsup” dishes, the former to be consumed by Chinese customers, the latter by English ones, are described in great detail. The more the story progresses, however, the closer they seem to move towards each other. When Mrs Law and Mr Lo are introduced by Lily at the restaurant he works at, a variety of dishes are recommended by the proprietor: “[w]hat about a baked crab with ginger and spring onion, roast pork and duck, a whole steamed sea brass, baked chicken or pigeon with potato puffs, and noodles and fried rice? Shark fin soup to start, of course, and half-way through a sweet soup of almond or peanut. Fresh fruit and tiny sweet buns to end” (50).

19 See Hobsbawm and Ranger, 1986.

It is curious that this menu does not correspond to the rules to which Lily usually adheres, namely the principles of yin and yang: “[s]weet after salty was dangerous for the system, so she had been taught; it could upset the whole balance of the dualistic or female and male principles, *yin* and *yang*” (2-3). Because of these parameters, Chen is never allowed to eat sweets or drink water after his evening soup, which was mentioned at the beginning of the section. Therefore, Chen is always “[...] going to bed tortured with the last extremities of thirst but with his dualistic male and female principles in harmony” (3).

Furthermore, it is interesting to note here that soup is served both as a starter, and in the middle of the meal, but not, as it is common in Chinese meals, at the end. Additionally, noodles and fried rice seem to be more “authentic” dishes, opposed to the suggested potato puffs, which are clearly pointing to some kind of fusion cooking, or function as a sign for what Reichl has called “culinary convergence” (190). In the end, fish and chips are not only consumed by the Chen family during a trip to the seaside, but also “appropriated” by Mui and her husband, who plan to open a fish and chip shop themselves.

As far as “authenticity” and “appropriation” are concerned, Allison James offers some interesting insights into the matter in connection with British food. In her analysis of the degree of Britishness of British food, James arrives at two distinct parameters which characterise British cuisine: it has to be both time-and money saving. In essence, she states that “British food is food you can trust, quick and easy to prepare, wholesome and nutritious” (James 83). Thus, the Chens` culinary creations also fall in the category of “creolised foreign food”, as James calls it, and she adds that the integration of “take-away or pre-prepared products” speaks of the “continuity [...] rather than a diminution” of British food (James 83). This statement suggests that the Chens` food shop is not the antithesis but the very epitome of Britishness, and I will come back to this point towards the end of this chapter.

Another prominent signifier in the text is rice. It has already been featured in the beginning of this chapter as one of the many significant markers of identity. Not

only does Chen eat rice at his workplace, but naturally he and his family eat it at home, and it is even referred to, as the quotation on page 5 shows, as the only “authentic” dish the Chens sell in their take-away. It can be said that rice is indeed a signifier for Asianness and for the “Asian Self”, as Ohnuki-Tierney has claimed in her well-known book *Rice as Self*.

5.3.1 Rice as a marker of identity

In her survey, Ohnuki-Tierney states that “[f]ood plays a dynamic role in the way people think of themselves and others”, and she elaborates on this by saying that “[a] people`s cuisine, or a particular food, often marks the boundary between the collective self and the other [...]” (Ohnuki-Tierney 1). Additionally, she claims that there are significant parallels between rice, bread and sugar, since “[a]ll three foods have been closely associated with political power, both within and outside of society” (Ohnuki-Tierney 116). This connection also has obvious postcolonial implications, as Stuart Hall`s argument involving tea and sugar in chapter four has already shown.²⁰

Furthermore, this observation is linked to another important argument, namely that bread and rice are so-called staple foods, which means that they are “quantitatively the most important food” (Ohnuki-Tierney 4), and this is also the primary reason why they have come to be associated with, or a metaphor for, a people. In spite of the fact that Ohnuki-Tierney`s analysis mainly deals with rice in the Japanese context, or in other words with rice as a metaphor for the “Japanese Self”, there are nonetheless some trends which exemplify that rice can also be interpreted as a signifier for an “Asian Self”: “[a] new magazine for Asian-Americans is entitled *Rice*; all Asians in the United States are represented by the metaphor of rice, in contrast with bread-eating white Americans, tortilla-eating Latinos, and so forth” (Ohnuki-Tierney 117).²¹

Therefore, it is quite pertinent that rice, as a signifier of “us” versus “them”, plays a crucial role throughout the text. The fact that the first things Lily and Mui

²⁰ See 4.2.2. for further reference, p. 51.

²¹ However, it must be pointed out here that these classifications are arbitrary and fall under the heading cultural stereotype.

pack up when they move to their new home in South London are their Sony rice cooker, bowls, spoons, and chopsticks (87) is quite telling. Moreover, the division between cultures is emphasised when Grandpa is served “a bowl of white rice with beef and some pickles on top”(251) at his banquet, whereas his guests are presented with mince, jam tart and custard, and Mui even prepares “paper napkins, cutlery (borrowed from Mr Constantinides [the family’s neighbour]) and sliced bread [...]” for them (250). Furthermore, white rice, almost as a “last resort of authenticity” (Reichl 2002: 190), is given to customers who complain about the Chens’ “inauthentic” Chinese food: “You’re quite right,” she [Lily] would say, forcing extra white rice on them. “I congratulate you on your acumen and advise you not to return. We have a living to make, too, you know.” (157).

This inauthenticity that their customers seem to complain about is not limited to the Chens’ take-away food, however. There is one instance in the text when Lily uses carrot instead of rhino horn to produce a medicine for her husband: “[i]n a great improvising tradition, worthy of the host country, Lily stuck to the originals where she could and where this was not possible she included something she considered similar (i.e. carrot for rhinoceros horn)” (7-8). Likewise, Lily is overjoyed at the outlook of celebrating the Chinese New Year, which is usually set in spring, during Man Kee’s Christmas break so that the family can be together, and she tries to convince herself that “such flexibility” is typically Chinese (173).

5.3.2. Stereotyping and the smile of the “Chinaman”

In fact, this “very pragmatic approach to things” (Reichl 2002: 191), as Reichl calls it, is extended to the Chens’ view of their customers. The English are repeatedly referred to as “foreign devils”, or as an unknown homogeneous mass of pink-faced foreigners. It seems to be very difficult for Lily, and to a somewhat lesser degree for Chen, to tell them apart: “[...] Lily found it difficult except in certain obvious cases to distinguish between those bland, roseate occidental faces. They all looked the same to her. [...] How few types of face there were compared to the almost infinite variety of interesting Cantonese physiognomies: rascally, venerable, pretty, raffish, bumpkin, scholarly” (136).

Especially when Lily discovers that her sister Mui can distinguish between individual customers, she is completely taken aback: “Lily suspected financial incentives lay behind her sister`s new skill. She probably got bigger tips if she could greet the drivers by name” (137).

In my view, this stereotyping of British people in the story serves a special purpose, beside the obvious comic effect. It might be a way of wanting to teach the reader a lesson by stating a stereotype about Westerners, who are cast in the “other” group, as it were. In reversing the very stereotype that is propagated about people of Asian descent, namely the similarity of physiognomy of individuals, the, presumably Western, reader can recognise the stupidity of such bland over-generalisations. Such subtle hints towards the superficiality of stereotypes are sometimes replaced by bland accusations, as the following excerpt about “the various idiosyncracies [sic!]” (29) of the English demonstrates:

[a]mong these eccentricities was the strange and widespread habit of not paying bills, a practice so prevalent as to arouse suspicions it was a national sport and which involved even the most respectable-looking of customers. Loud and rowdy behaviour was more comprehensible, including fencing with chopsticks and wearing inverted rice-bowls on the head like brittle skull-caps, writing odd things on the lavatory walls, and mixing the food on their plates in a disgusting way before putting soya sauce on everything. (29)

The above-mentioned behaviour of customers in the Soho restaurant Chen works at at the beginning of the story does not seem to be very different from the experience Lily has with their clients in East London. They are described as rowdies who flock to their shop after the closing time of the “public houses”, not looking for food but for alcohol, as it is vaguely suggested (136). Lily finds the young girls especially scandalous: “[w]hat possible sense of decency and family honour could these reckless girls have? All running round together until a scandalous hour. It was after ten o`clock when they came in. No wonder they were always getting themselves pregnant. [...] Really, there was no question how superior Chinese people were to the foreign devils” (136).

As it can be seen, the text is full of stereotypes, not only, as Wachinger

suggested, at the expense of the Chinese characters, but also concerning the “foreign devils”. There are, however, some clichés that Mo did not tap into, or at least very reluctantly, so to say. One of these is the “smile of the `Chinaman`” (Kwok 73). According to Kwok, China is seen as the “country of smiles”, a fact which bears some meaning for Chinese restaurateurs and their staff: “[...] the Chinese personnel in the Chinese restaurants are expected to deliver their smile. This is considered to be one integral part of the `authentic` Chinese culture”, and Kwok adds that “[w]hile expecting the stereotypical smiling faces which could supposedly convey an authentic touch and evoke fantasies of the East, language incompetence of the Chinese personnel seems to be tolerated [...]” (Kwok 73).

This obligation to smile goes hand in hand with a “survival strategy”, as it is termed by Wong, which Frank Chin has called “Food Pornography” (Chin qtd. in Wong 55). Essentially, this term is described as “making a living by exploiting the `exotic` aspects of one`s ethnic foodways”, or in other words as “[...] exaggerating one`s otherness in order to gain a foothold in a white-dominated social system” (Wong 55). In her article about Asian food pornography, Anja Michaelson addresses these issues of self-dramatisation and claims that restaurant staff of Asian descent is subject to constant feminisation and thus put in the “other” category by the consumer: “[d]as Lächeln des Personals in der asiatischen Gastronomie ist Teil einer Selbstinszenierung, die fremdes Essen ´verdaulich´ macht. Es ist sichtbare Metapher einer Überlebensstrategie, die darin besteht, geschluckt zu werden” (Michaelson 10).

In *Sour Sweet*, however, customers are not treated in the above-mentioned manner. Lily, usually sitting behind the counter, is the one in charge of dealing with the customers, while her sister Mui delivers food to neighbours and lorry drivers. Curiously enough, Lily is the exact opposite of the submissive female pointed out in the last paragraph. When some of their customers lean against the wall, Lily is about to scold them, and only Chen`s motto “please the customer” holds her back (135). Moreover, she serves the customers with what she thinks of as her “`closed` face” (136) and generally ignores them as much as they ignore her (135).

However, one time she does show her sympathy in the form of a smile: “[o]nce she had smiled at a young girl whom she thought particularly ill-favoured and pig-like [...]. And yet this girl towards whom she felt only kindness and pity had snubbed her; had stared insolently and rudely at Lily until she was forced to drop her eyes. [...] Well, that would teach her to feel sorry for people”(136). Later on in the novel, this “closed face” is commented on again, when Lily has an argument with Mui: “[Lily`s] face showed bewilderment, annoyance, hurt pride. She didn`t trouble to conceal it from Mui, as she would have done with a stranger” (202). This practice of aiming to keep one`s face might be a familiar concept for some of the readers. Pohl claims that one`s status is of utmost importance in Chinese society, and it is closely connected to the concept of face. Individuals strive to prevent conflicts from arising at all times, which is why they do not show their feelings to others, as this could cause a loss of one`s face. However, smiling can also be a means of giving others face in public. In essence, Pohl states that people both aim to keep face, and to give others face in order to sustain a state of harmony (Pohl 154-158).

Of course I am aware that Pohl`s statements clearly fall under the heading “Orientalist discourse”, as he describes Chinese values which seem to stand in stark contrast to “our” understanding of the world. Pohl himself points out that the image of the “laughing Chinese” has become a well-known stereotype in Germany (Pohl 154), but he fails to acknowledge that his descriptions of Chinese culture entail an over-generalising of individuals as well. Laura Hall briefly mentions this issue of “othering” by quoting a phrase from Rey Chow, as she refers to the “sinologist`s `idealistic preoccupation with “authentic” originariness`” (Chow qtd. in L. Hall 91), a statement which shows that this practice seems to be a common one even in the academic world. Be that as it may, the purpose of the integration of this face-feature into the narrative remains unknown, but it definitely adds some exotic, if unexpected, flavour to the text. One could also argue that one stereotype is simply replaced with another, but this would lead a bit too far in my opinion. At any rate, the “smiling Chinaman”, as Kwok has called it, is present somewhere else in the text.

The smiling is not done when customers are served, but rather when “white

devils” with unknown concerns have to be faced, usually not in the shop but outside, in public. For example, when Chen, Lily and Mui are looking for a suitable spot for their take-away, they take a trip to the other side of town by bus. They attract the attention of the bus conductor by an excessive pressing of the button and a resulting ringing of the halting signal, and Chen feels so embarrassed that he basically forces the women “into the empty road” a hundred yards before the bus stop, and the party is described here as “lunatic Chinese” who smile “serenely, bafflingly, maddeningly” at the conductor (81).

Then, when they are about to establish their business, the Chens make the acquaintance of their neighbour, Mr. Constantinides: “Lily saw a large, balding man in clean overalls with extremely hairy arms come through the door. She smiled at him. ‘No, don’t smile at me dear, because I’m not in a laughing mood.’” (103). This passage is particularly telling because it not only features the act of smiling but also the reaction of Mr. Constantinides, who brushes the soothing smile aside with an insulting remark. Indeed, the cause of the smile in this context does not seem to be embarrassment but the rather the intrusion of an outsider which is countered with an expression of harmlessness.

Michaelsen has identified this specific act of smiling as a conscious staging of otherness (Michaelsen 8), and she points out that the submissive smile of the Oriental is what fosters both acceptance and a continual position as the “other” of people of Asian descent (Michaelsen 9). Here, this stereotype is reproduced by Lily, but interestingly enough it is not accepted by the recipient. Only when Chen makes an excuse for Mui’s nervous giggling a few lines below, giggling being another stereotype about especially Asian girls, does Mr Constantinides’ anger subside: “[d]on’t take notice please. Just stupid girl doing laughings. She didn’t mean anything.” (104).

At one point, this self-orientalising quality of smiling is even commented on in the story when it is stated that “Lily smiled her charming (for Westerners) smile” (139). This sentence is quite ambiguous, because it could mean that Lily’s smile is only charming for Westerners, or, more likely, that this is the kind of smile she features for Westerners. At any rate, it uncovers the purpose of this

smile, namely the rendering of oneself as being the “other”, seemingly both harmless and inferior. As I already mentioned above, the Chens never give a smile while selling or delivering food, and this very fact suggests that they do not want to put themselves on display or be consumed by the English who buy their food. Therefore, although it is argued by Michaelsen that Asian restaurateurs have to exploit the notion of difference in order to make a living, the characters in Timothy Mo`s novel do not conform to these stereotypes. Lily and Mui are both very self-reliant and self-confident young women, who basically handle the take-away business by themselves, apart from the cooking which is done by Chen. Even when he disappears, Lily is able to take care of their shop by herself. Thus, I would argue that the two women do not fit into the category of the submissive Asian woman.

5.3.3. Tea as a bridging device

The consumption of tea is not only a very prominent feature in Kazuo Ishiguro`s *A Family Supper*, it is also a vital part of Timothy Mo`s novel *Sour Sweet*. As already shown in chapter 4, tea is up to this day a very prominent marker of identity and nationality, first and foremost of course of English identity.²² Even Ohnuki-Tierney ascribes it special importance. When the author seeks to underline the validity of rice symbolism, she states that tea expresses belonging as much as, if not even more than, rice: “[n]o other food item, even tea [...], has received such consistent attention throughout history” (Ohnuki-Tierney 132). This tiny reference to rice in relation to tea seems to confirm the significance of both as national symbols. In the context of *Sour Sweet*, however, tea is not so much used as a marker of difference, but rather, I would argue, as a bridge between cultures, and as a signifier for hybridity.

With all the very rich and detailed descriptions of food in the story one almost overlooks the occurrence of tea in the text. It seems to be so natural, so ordinary that tea is poured and consumed during conversations between the main characters Chen, Lily and Mui (111, 176), but also during get-togethers with other members of the community, such as Mrs Law or Uncle Lo (48, 50,

²² See section 4.2.2. for further reference, p. 51.

51, 52, 129). At one point in the story, it is implied by Lily that tea can also be interpreted as a “yardstick of civilisation”, so to say.²³ She perceives the fact that the English not only drink tea but even have a tea song as a sign for sophistication and culture. Her son, Man Kee, gives a little performance of what he has supposedly learned at school, and starts singing a song about a teapot: “[...] in a clear, higher than treble voice, without an ounce of self-consciousness, [he] began to sing in English a song about being a teapot. He mimed the words with gestures: crooked arm on hip for the handle, other arm for spout. [...] *‘Here’s my handle, here’s my spout. Tip me over, pour me out.’*” (212). Lily is delighted with her son’s performance and asks him to repeat it: “Show Mar-Mar how you do with your hand again. How clever! Imagine the English having a tea song. This was really quite civilised of them – for a change” (212).

As it can be seen, the reversed stereotyping I was referring to above is carried out here again. Through the implied equation of English people with barbarians, the reader is reminded of the fact that such over-generalisations are not only inaccurate but also very offensive. However, there is another possible interpretation of Lily’s accusation, as it might actually lead back to Britain’s colonial past and specifically to the Opium Wars, also known as Anglo-Chinese Wars, taking place between Britain and China in the nineteenth century. Curiously enough, these Opium Wars were triggered by the need for tea and china on the side of the British. According to Pohl, China was “opened” for foreign trade by the British during the First Opium War in 1839-42 (Pohl 43). Essentially, Britain wanted to make up for its negative trade balance with China by the introduction of the drug:

Growing opium in India, the East India Company shipped *tons* of opium into Canton which it traded for Chinese manufactured goods and for tea. This trade had produced, quite literally, a country filled with drug addicts, as opium parlors proliferated all throughout China in the early part of the nineteenth century. This trafficking [sic!], it should be stressed, was a criminal activity after 1836, but the British traders generously bribed Canton officials in order to keep the opium traffic flowing. The effects on Chinese society were devastating [sic!]. In fact, there are few periods in Chinese history that approach the early nineteenth century in

23 This expression was originally coined by Sigmund Freud who referred to soap as the yardstick of civilisation, see <http://faculty.fullerton.edu/abullock/305/Freud%20study%20guide.htm>.

terms of pure human misery and tragedy.²⁴

The introduction of opium not only resulted in a mass-addiction to the drug among the population, but also in a decrease of economic power. Therefore, the Imperial commissioner of Canton, Lin Tse-hsü, immune against bribery, cut off the opium trade by taking action against Chinese merchants and Western traders, and by the destruction of all existing stores of opium. This in turn was seen by the British as a “casus belli”, as enough reason to start a war, which was also won by the British because of their military and technological superiority (Pohl 44). In this context, Richard Hooker points out that the main reason for the war was not the prohibition of the opium trade, but the failure of the British to adhere to the Chinese legal system which they perceived to be “vicious and barbaric”.²⁵ At any rate, after its defeat in 1842, China was forced to agree to various treaties, and as a consequence had to accept British “extraterritoriality”, and, among other things, the cession of Hong Kong to the British. This defeat turned the former self-confident Chinese empire into a nation with semi-colonial status (Pohl 44).

Hence, Lily`s comment about the “English barbarians” demonstrates that this stereotyping of the “other” as the ultimate evil is, on the one hand, not a recent phenomenon, and that this deep distrust between the nations can be said to have historical reasons, on the other hand. Moreover, I think that tea has the characteristic quality of being a bridge between “cultures”, in spite of the seemingly great gap that is presented between them in the text. In chapter one I have already pointed out that there is no such thing as a closed and static culture, since cultures, just like nations, are in constant flux.

This very concept that cultures are always in motion and constantly evolve is emphasised by the consumption of tea in the novel. Tea signifies both Britishness and Chineseness in the text, the former is at times distinguished from the latter by the insertion of milk in the beverage. On page 83, for example, the family encounters what Chen believes to be “English” workmen on

24 See Richard Hooker, <http://www.wsu.edu:8080/~dee/CHING/OPIUM.HTM>.

25 See Richard Hooker, <http://www.wsu.edu:8080/~dee/CHING/OPIUM.HTM>.

the street: “[t]he workmen were brewing tea over a primus, stirring gobs of condensed milk into the pan which contained the boiling tea” (83). Moreover, the Chens serve milk tea to the guests attending grandpa’s banquet: “Mui then served milk tea in paper cups. At the sight of this, the old folk began to perk up much in the same way as jasmine tea would have cheered Chinese grandparents” (250).

Here, the two countries are clearly distinguished by a reference to the difference in tea culture. While China is symbolised by Jasmine tea, the ultimate signifier of Englishness seems to be the fact that milk is inserted before tea is consumed. It could be argued in this context, although it might seem a bit far-fetched, that cow’s milk points towards the epitome of British food, to beef. According to Allison James, the roast beef of Old England can be interpreted as a “core symbol of national identity” (James 72). It makes sense, therefore, to link the single most powerful culinary signifier of Britishness, beef, to the second most important, to tea. Hence, the two seemingly opposing forces England and China share one of their “national symbols” so to say, which is tea in my interpretation. There are only two instances in the text when jasmine tea is mentioned, but there are many references in the story where it is not clear which kind of tea, black, green, or jasmine tea, is consumed. The fact that it is shared between different characters, often of different backgrounds, underlines its hybrid, as well as its connecting quality in my opinion. For example, when Mr. Constantinides comes to the Chens’ place to complain about their customers’ lorries “blocking” his forecourt, a compromise is worked out between him and Chen in what is referred to as “that admirable Chinese way”, although Mr. Constantinides does all the talking (104). Essentially, tea is consumed while the two men make a bargain. Thus, tea can be interpreted as a unifying bond between the people who consume it, and therefore also as a marker of hybridity.

5.4. Conclusion

In my view, *Sour Sweet* demonstrates that there is no clear-cut answer to the question of identity and belonging. Since all cultures are in constant flux, there is and always has been cultural exchange between nations. Essentially, this is

demonstrated via the use of food in the novel. What at first sight seems to be typically Chinese food turns out to be a hybrid version of it, as it was demonstrated with the potato puffs, for example. The “lupsup” dishes, being an appropriated version of Chinese food, are successfully sold to British customers, and this is the very reason why they can be called truly British in my view. Allison James has suggested that take-away food has the very characteristics which signify Britishness, namely being both time-saving, as well as money-saving (James 83). Hence, James claims that the very act of appropriation signifies Britishness, since Britain has always adopted food practices. If one looks at the history of Great Britain with the British Empire and the East India Trading Company, this makes perfect sense.²⁶ Furthermore, I agree with Susanne Reichl who has claimed that the title *Sour Sweet* can be interpreted as a “metafictional comment”, as the “*lupsupping*” of food in the novel is equivalent with the “*lupsup* Chineseness” which is served to the reader (Reichl 2002: 196). By mimicking the cultural stereotypes about China, the characters show that the “us” versus “them” dichotomy has become obsolete. Therefore, the people looking at Timothy Mo’s work as one by a “cultural informant” will not find any clues about an essential “Chineseness”, nor “Englishness”:

The binary of primordial notions of ethnicity and ‘cultural authenticity’ on the one hand and the modern and thus assimilated and alienated native on the other are rendered banal by the innovativeness of writers such as Ishiguro and Mo. To read them either as cultural informants or as deracinated cosmopolitans misses the point that these two writers are not only re-imagining what it means to be Chinese or Japanese but, more significantly, what it means to the ‘British’.

(L. Hall 92)

This is also expressed via the yin and yang symbolism, which works as a framing device in the story, as it occurs both at the beginning and at the very end of the novel. In the story, it is only applied to a harmonious food regime, but Pohl points out that the thinking in terms of yin and yang, of a female and a male principle, transcends the everyday-life discourse in China up to this day (Pohl 61). It is interesting to note that these two forces cannot be equated with a strict dichotomy, since both forces are part of a larger structure and similarly

²⁶ However, one has to bear in mind that Britain has adopted food practices earlier on, long before the existence of the British Empire, as well.

contain elements of each other. Moreover, the yin yang model is a very dynamic one, both forces are so to say always in motion in their quest for harmony (Pohl 61-62). Thus, the fact that yin and yang are incorporated as key elements in the text seems to refer to the impossibility of an “authentic” representation of East and West. In my view, the story features a lot of cultural stereotypes, but they are not only about a distinct “Chineseness” as Wachinger has stated (Wachinger 126-127). I think that they rather point towards the oddity of thinking in terms of stereotypes which is also why Westerners or English people are constantly subject to an “othering” from the side of the Chens. Moreover, the “lupsup”-quality of the food sold by the take-away does not point to the “lupsup”-quality of the novel but rather to the fact that any form of cultural stereotype is total “lupsup”. Thus, the story can be read as a subtle critique of both sides because both make assumptions about each other, but broad generalisations can and will never live up to the diversity of the realities of life. Therefore, the text can be said to have a didactic function, as it teaches the reader that concepts like nationality and culture are highly volatile.

Additionally, the two food items I have focused on in my analysis, rice and tea, both point towards the fact that there can be no clear-cut distinction between Chinese and English foodways. Although the Chens claim that white rice is the only “authentic” dish they sell at their take-away, the reader is presented with various descriptions of Chinese dishes that turn out to be as “appropriated” as the “lupsup” dishes the Chens serve. Therefore, the food the Chens consume is as much a marker of hybridity as the food they sell to Westerners. Moreover, tea is consumed in the novel by Westerners and by Chinese people alike, which is why I would argue that it functions as a signifier of hybridity in the novel, and as a bridge between cultures. This is also what the title *Sour Sweet* suggests. Being a reference to the Chens’ sweet and sour pork, it can be read as a hint for the reader that the novel does not deal with any form of “authentic Chineseness” or “authentic” cuisine, but rather with an appropriated version of both. If I follow James’ line of argument, this very act of appropriation is what constitutes “Britishness”. In the next two chapters to come, I will again try to analyse food and foodways in terms of their dichotomising and hybridising qualities.

6. *Eat Drink Man Woman* by Ang Lee

In the next two sections, I am going to analyse two films which have essentially been called “food films”. First, I am going to turn to Ang Lee’s *Eat Drink Man Woman*, which is set in Taiwan, and then I will deal with *Tampopo* by Juzo Itami, which is set in Japan. The reason why I do not want to restrict myself to an analysis of prose is that I aim to demonstrate that food functions as a cultural signifier in various different texts. Here, I agree with Abu Hassan Bin Hasbullah who has stated in his dissertation that over the past century, film has taken over the crucial role of an identity-conveyor from literature, so to speak. Specifically, Bin Hasbullah argues that “[o]ver the past 80 years, film has emerged as a major supplement to literature”, and he adds that film often mirrors “who we believe we are, what we are striving to be, and sometimes what we fear becoming [sic!]” (Bin Hasbullah 28).

Moreover, food is featured in virtually every film and thus, at least in my opinion, adds subtle layers of meaning to the interpretation of what is depicted on screen. In this context, Griem points out that “[...] food is never only the ‘real thing’, but also always a cultural spectacle containing messages that need to be decoded” (Griem 252). In her view, eating and cooking are “[...] cultural signifiers open to interpretation”, and she adds that “[...] they can no longer be relied on and taken for granted as markers of authenticity” (Griem 252). Therefore, the following sections will exemplify that filmic depictions of stories related to issues such as identity, nationality and hybridity are as vulnerable to stereotypical readings as other, written, works of fiction.

Now, however, I will turn to Ang Lee’s oeuvre and first of all to his biography, since his nationality, just like Ishiguro’s and Mo’s, has been subject to debate. Thus, the topics of appropriation, othering and a convergence of various cultures and nationalities are not only expressed via the production and consumption of food in the film, but they are generally applied to the director’s life as well.

6.1. Ang Lee

The film director Ang Lee was born on October 23 in 1954 in P’ing-tung county,

Taiwan. After his graduation from high school, he studied at the Taiwan Academy of Art, where he became interested in acting. In 1978, he moved to the United States and studied at the University of Illinois and at New York University, where he enrolled in theatre studies and film studies respectively.²⁷ His master`s project *Fine Line* received best film and best director awards. However, after his graduation in 1984, he faced six years of “[...] stagnancy of his film career in the United States” and returned to Taiwan where Lee took part in a screenplay contest with two scripts and turned out to be successful with both, since they went in first and second place. Lee`s success led to a sponsorship by two “independent film production companies” which produced and financed his two films.<sup>28</sup> Interestingly enough, his career seems to be much more straight-forward in Dariotis` and Fung`s terms, who primarily focus on his first success and state that “[...] his career has developed quickly since the debut of his first film, *Pushing Hands* (Tui shou), in 1992” (Dariotis and Fung 190).

Indeed, his fame and reputation as a director have been rising steadily with the release of Lee`s film trilogy, as it is often termed, as it consists of three films which deal with similar issues. The main theme of his first two films, *Pushing Hands* and *The Wedding Banquet* (Xiyan), is a generation conflict between Chinese parents and their “westernised” offspring, combined with migration and relocation (Dariotis and Fung 190). The third film in the trilogy, *Eat Drink Man Woman* (Yin shi nan yu), also features the gap between parents and children, but the aspect of migration is only touched upon in a rather peripheral way. However, I will elaborate on the details of the content of the film in the next section.

What causes much commotion is the nationality or identity of the director. As stated above, his first three films deal with a certain amount of “Chineseness” or “Taiwanese” in various settings, but his later film projects altered the perception of Lee`s reputation as a “Chinese” director. The screen adaption of

²⁷ It is curious to note here that the account of Lee`s career by Dariotis and Fung is quite different. They state that Lee went to New York in 1977 in order to study theatre at New York University, but that he switched to film studies there, cf. Dariotis and Fung, 190.

²⁸ See Encyclopaedia Britannica, <http://www.search.eb.com/eb/article-9444163>.

the Jane Austen novel *Sense and Sensibility* “marked a turning point in his career”, as Lee worked with Emma Thompson, Kate Winslet and Hugh Grant and therefore proved to the world that “he could handle a British period piece”.²⁹ It is interesting to note that Ang Lee is clearly put in the “other” category, as even the entry in the Encyclopaedia Britannica refers to his insufficient language abilities and his presumable “authenticity” as far as Chinese identity is concerned: “Despite his admittedly clumsy English, Lee worked with the actors – sometimes even employing t'ai chi chuan exercises – to evoke poignant performances, a hallmark of his directorial style. The movie [*Sense and Sensibility*] was a success, garnering seven Oscar nominations”.³⁰

However, this artistic transition from East to West was not as straightforward as critics often claim. After *Sense and Sensibility*, Lee “returned to Hollywood” and directed *The Ice Storm* in 1997, before engaging in a very successful project, *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* (Wo hu cang long) in 2000. Ang Lee received his first Academy Award nomination for this martial arts-film and “expand[ed] his repertoire” by directing *The Hulk* in 2003 and *Brokeback Mountain* in 2005, the latter earned him an Oscar for best director. Then, in 2007, he directed *Lust, Caution* (Se, jie), a film set at the time of the Japanese occupation of Shanghai during the second World War, and in 2009 he made the comedy *Taking Woodstock*.³¹ As it can be seen, Lee did and does not limit himself to a specific film genre, since he has directed martial arts films and comedies, as well as action-thrillers and Westerns. This renders him an international filmmaker, but similarly it leads to a certain confusion about his identity since he cannot be labelled or grasped so easily as a director.

Dariotis and Fung also raise the issue of Lee`s identity. Interestingly enough, they assign him a “shifting transnational identity” (Dariotis and Fung 190), and this labelling ties in with the Encyclopaedia Britannica entry, in which he is referred to in the first paragraph as a “Taiwan-born film director who transitioned

29 See Encyclopaedia Britannica, <http://www.search.eb.com/eb/article-9444163>.

30 See Encyclopaedia Britannica, <http://www.search.eb.com/eb/article-9444163>.

31 See Encyclopaedia Britannica, <http://www.search.eb.com/eb/article-9444163>.

from directing Chinese films to major English-language productions”.³² Moreover, the two authors argue that “[t]he question of how to label him as a director and his films – Taiwanese, American, or some kind of Asian American – is in some ways best answered by the content of the films themselves” (Dariotis and Fung 190). Merely two pages later, Lee is described as a “native” by the two authors, as they claim that “[h]e sees the `East` from the perspective of the “native”” (Dariotis and Fung 192). Therefore, in their attempt to prove that Lee is anything but an “imperialist ethnographer”, they clearly put him in the “other” category, even if they argue that he challenges “the consuming hegemonic views of the `West`” (Dariotis and Fung 192).

The issue of where to “put” Lee in terms of identity and nationality evokes the presumptions of Ishiguro and Mo as liminal or hybrid authors mentioned earlier in this paper. The fact that Lee is often claimed to be a “Chinese” director is particularly disturbing since he is not Chinese. What can be observed through this discourse about identity is that individuals tend to be subsumed either under the heading “East” or “West”, and the fact that Taiwan is not a part of China seems to be neglected in favour of a more common Chinese stereotype. This dichotomising in terms of “East” versus “West” can also be found in critical essays about the film *Eat Drink Man Woman*, as I am going to point out in the next section.

6.2. *Eat Drink Man Woman*

Ang Lee’s successful film *Eat Drink Man Woman* deals with a family in contemporary Taiwan. Some of its themes are basically expressed through the title, as the film deals, on one level, with gender relations and food. Lee himself has even pointed out that his intentions behind the film were a demonstration of the “sophisticated Chinese civilization in cuisine (`Eat Drink` in title) blended with the primitive sex drive (`Man Woman` in title)” (Chen qtd. in Ma 199).

The story is about a widower, who is a professional cook, and his three daughters who are all grown up, but still live together under the same roof.

³² See Encyclopaedia Britannica, <http://www.search.eb.com/eb/article-9444163>.

However, their relations are not as harmonious as one might suspect at first glance. The father, Mr. Chu, does not understand his daughters, and at one point admits to his friend and colleague Wen that he does not even want to be able to understand them. It seems as if the Chus lead separate lives despite the fact that they reside in the same house. The oldest of the three daughters is a teacher and a strict Christian, the middle daughter, as she is termed by Dariotis and Fung (208), is a successful businesswoman, and the youngest daughter is a student with a part-time job at a fast food restaurant.

In the course of the film, there are six family dinners which alter the lives of all family members, as each of these get-togethers is characterised by a confession of one of the individuals. These individual statements result in a form of change in the family situation, however, they do not cause further feelings of alienation between the characters, but rather bring them back together as each of them is now able to live according to his or her wishes. This seeming contradiction is also reflected by the technical choices of the filmmakers. What is so remarkable about the film is not only the sheer quantity and quality of foodstuffs, but also the sharp contrasts between scenes in the form of cuts.

The opening sequence depicts a busy intersection in the middle of Taipeh, and bears great significance, as it can be interpreted as a “visual leitmotif” of the film, as Griem has pointed out (Griem 248). According to Dariotis and Fung, the “[...] empty intersection [which is] soon filled with the chaos of motorbikes and cars unleashed by a changing traffic light [...] becomes a metaphor for a Taiwan growing in many different directions at once” (Dariotis and Fung 207). This busy site of progress and industrialisation in the form of traffic is then superseded by a “culinary pastoral” as Griem has called it (Griem 246), or in other words a sequence in which the father prepares a lavish Sunday dinner for his daughters in a “traditional” kitchen with, seemingly, typical “Chinese” tools such as chopsticks, huge knives and colourful china bowls painted with Chinese characters. In short, the chopping and cooking takes place in “[...] an old house and a kitchen where food still seems to be prepared in the traditional style” (Griem 246).

However, these Sunday evening dinners are far from being harmonious. They are characterised by silences, accusations, gossip and misunderstandings. Romney seems to capture the spirit of these weekly dinners best in saying that “[a]ll the Chu family, one way or another, have their appetites suppressed” (Romney 33). Essentially, not only their appetites, but also their feelings are kept hidden underneath the surface. No one dares to speak about his or her emotions or express what is really on his or her mind. Ang Lee has commented on this Sunday evening tradition of the Chu family by saying that “[s]ometimes the things children need to hear most are the things parents find hardest to say, and vice versa. When that happens, we resort to rituals” (Comer 62). Thus, conversations take place on a very superficial level, as the latest gossip about aunt Liang is exchanged or disagreements between the characters are expressed.

The “violence of unresolved relations”, as Dariotis and Fung call it, is finally broken up:

[the] resolution comes as first the youngest daughter gets pregnant and marries, then the eldest daughter breaks through her “old maid” demeanor and gets married, and finally the father both finds love (with a younger woman) and regains his tastebuds through the cooking of the middle daughter, whose culinary talents he had years earlier refused to encourage. (Dariotis and Fung 208)

Griem argues that the dinner scenes in which these changes are portrayed are symbolic of contemporary life in Taiwan where “traditional and modern gender roles have to be permanently negotiated” (Griem 247). The author stresses her point with an anecdote about the filmmakers. The screenplay for *Eat Drink Man Woman* was put together by Ang Lee, Hui-ling Wang and James Schamus. At one point, Lee seems to have been worried that the “characters` psychology” was not Chinese enough, and “[a]fter Schamus had given up trying to be as `Chinese` as possible and simply written the scenes as Jewish as he could imagine, Lee was satisfied. He exclaimed `very Chinese!` when he was reading the new scenes” (Kroll qtd. in Griem 247).

In my view, this discourse of a “breakdown of traditions” which Griem is referring to is somewhat problematic, mainly because it presupposes that there is

something like a fixed tradition and a stagnant culture and nationality in the first place. As I have already demonstrated in the last chapters, this is simply not the case. Moreover, what Griem seems to neglect here is that especially in the context of Taiwan, the notion of a fixed tradition does not make much sense since the country has been subject to colonisation and conquest not only in its ancient but also in its recent history. Due to its strategic value “ [...] in an area of the world inundated with new European trade and missionary activity” (Davison and Reed 10), the island was occupied by Dutch, Spanish, Chinese and Japanese forces in the past, before Chiang Kai-shek retreated to Taiwan in 1949 and thus shaped more than just the political landscape up to the present time (Davison and Reed 21). It is no surprise, therefore, that these influences are still visible in Taiwan today, be it in the form of religion, architecture, art and literature, and of course food. In this context, it is curious to note that Lee himself speaks about a “Chinese” cuisine and “Chinese” character traits in his film. In my opinion, the argument that “traditional” values can be equated with “Chinese” values in the story is unjustified.

Similarly, it does not make much sense to turn the seemingly typical “Chineseness” depicted in the film into “Taiwanese-ness”. Dariotis and Fung are well aware of this danger, however, in their argument that “it would be simplistic and inaccurate” to interpret Mr. Chu as a traditional Taiwanese man and his daughters as Westernised women, Dariotis and Fung completely disregard an alternative reading of John Powers’ view of the film. Essentially, Powers states that for him, “[e]ach daughter embodies one facet of a culture that’s surging wildly forward, just like the swarms of motorbikes whose restless, apparently chaotic motion becomes one of Lee’s defining images of Taiwanese modernization” (Powers 139).

This interpretation is very interesting in my view, because it incorporates political and economic factors in the reading of the film. There must be a reason, after all, why Lee features a member of the Christian minority, a fast food restaurant employee and a manager in an unnamed international airline in his story. However, the father figure is not as traditional as one might think, because he is the one who wants to move out of the family house from the start,

but ends up declaring his plans of selling the house as the last one, so to say. Therefore, the father turns out to be the one in the household who is ready to leave the past behind in order to “wildly surge forward”.

This is also reflected by his cooking performance at the night of the banquet at the Grand Hotel. All the other cooks at the restaurant are startled when they discover that the steaming causes the shark fins to crumble to pieces. They do not know what to do, but Master Chu, as he is respectfully called by the manager, quickly comes up with a solution, although this means that the wedding couple have to abide without the “traditional” dish served at weddings, which is shark fin soup. From a certain point of view, the bad quality of the shark fins could be seen as a bad omen and hence interpreted to mean bad luck for the couple. This is why Chu transforms the dish into a “lucky dragon”, the dragon being not only a highly valued harbinger of wealth and good luck in China, but also a signifier for the male principle, in this particular context the groom. Thus, he merges the “tradition” of serving shark fins with the “traditional” signifiers of groom and bride, or dragon and phoenix. Through this bending of the rules and the appropriation of “traditional” symbols something new is created by the chef.

Similarly, Mr. Chu declares his unwillingness to stick to the production of “traditional” cuisine. He wants to retire after the death of his best friend and colleague, Mr. Wen. When the manager of the Grand Hotel shows up at his home and wants to convince him to stay, he refuses and states that Chinese cuisine has long lost its essence and taste, and he says that even former culinary delights no longer differ from ordinary foodstuffs. Most importantly, he argues that he does not want to dedicate his life to the preservation of culinary traditions and thus traditional values. In fact, this situation can be compared to the ending of Ishiguro’s “A Family Supper”, where the father figure, a seemingly conservative and traditional man who retired recently, states that there are other things in life beside work. Thus, both father characters do not lament for the past and for the “national” heritage, on the contrary, they are rather pragmatic as far as their future is concerned.

Therefore, I would argue that Mr. Chu is not subject to a transition from a traditional character to a more “modern” one, as Dariotis and Fung have suggested (Dariotis and Fung 212), but that he is a versatile and flexible character from the start. In addition, he can be interpreted as a signifier of hybridity since, in Bhabha’s terms, he changes society from within, and appropriates different “traditions” for his own purposes. Hence, Chu undermines a coherent picture of “tradition” and “national” identity by employing subversive strategies in the kitchen, as well as in his love life. This is also why the argument for a simple equation of Westernisation and modernisation is revealed to be total “lupsup”, in Timothy Mo’s words, in the film.

In the next section, I will take a closer look at the dishes served and consumed in the film. Since there are so many instances where food is prepared and eaten, the task of aiming to incorporate this wealth of Taiwanese culinary items seems to be impossible. Thus, I will first point out some general observations about the food featured in the film and then go into detail with the, in my view, most significant and telling foodstuffs.

6.3. Food in *Eat Drink Man Woman*

Food is omnipresent in *Eat Drink Man Woman*. Not only does Mr Chu cook throughout the film, both at home and in the kitchen of the Grand Hotel, but naturally the other characters also cook and consume food. Right at the beginning, for example, it is pointed out by Shan-shan that her mother burned the fish which was supposed to be their dinner. Then, the viewer learns that the middle daughter, who is called Jia-chien, would like to cook at home but is not allowed by her father, as he lays claim on the kitchen as his own territory. Thus, she cooks for her lover Raymond in his “sterile” kitchen (Griem 247), where she produces some culinary delights that are no less impressive than her father’s. Interestingly enough, the concept of *yin* and *yang* is mentioned briefly here, more or less like an aside by Raymond, and it is treated like a big joke by both Jia-chien and her lover.³³ The youngest of the three daughters, Jia-ning, is also cooking in the widest sense of the word, as she works at a fast food chain

³³ For a more detailed discussion of yin and yang see p. 76.

called *Wendy*'s where she is depicted preparing french fries at one point. Julika Griem has commented on the occurrence of different kitchens in the film by saying that

[i]n these different culinary locales, the historical configurations of tradition and modernization are spatially coded as the opposition of centripetal versus centrifugal movements and of closed versus open spaces. While in the father's kitchen people still seem to come together, in the other places people and objects drift apart, stumble over each other, and engage in permanently changing chaotic relationships.

(Griem 248)

Thus, for Griem, the kitchen at the Chu's house signifies tradition whereas the other "locales" stand for modernisation. In my view, this juxtaposition is not valid since the Chus are "drifting apart" as well, and there seem to be more feelings expressed in the hotel kitchen between Chu and his friend Wen than in the family home, where one argument is followed by another. Moreover, the "changing chaotic relationships" rather concern the immediate family members than other characters, and this is also emphasised by the fact that the relationships between Jia-jen, Jia-ning and their respective spouses are rather uncomplicated and straightforward.³⁴

Nevertheless, there are quite a few dichotomies featured in the film. Food is not only portrayed as a life-giving, but also as a destructive force. This is emphasised by the character of Wen, who collapses at work because he ate too much, as Chu argues, or because of constipation, as he himself declares. When Chu and his daughter Jia-chien visit him in hospital, the audience learns through a conversation between Wen and Jia-chien that she would have wanted to follow in her father's footsteps and become a cook, but that her father sent her to university to study. Wen offers some placatory remarks as he tries to convince her that her father's unwillingness to let her stay in the greasy kitchen was for her own good, and not, as she herself thinks, a result of the "traditional" dictum that women do not make good cooks.

Interestingly enough, this is one of the rare occasions in the film where two characters speak very openly about their feelings, and Wen comments on this

³⁴ However, it has to be pointed out here that the relationships of the two sisters with their spouses have been criticised for being too "flat" and also "dangerously complicated" (Dariotis and Fung 211).

on a quasi-metafictional level as he urges Chu's daughter to speak with her father: "Look at him. So many feelings and emotions which he keeps repressed. If he does not speak to you about them soon, he will sooner or later end up in hospital as well. And it will not just be because of an upset stomach either".³⁵ Hence, the character addresses one of the major themes in relation to food in the film, namely the suppression of feelings. This situation is also exemplified by the fact that the characters eat almost nothing from the generous Sunday meals Mr. Chu prepares. Only when everybody brings along their spouses for the fifth dinner does the situation change, and the spectator sees the characters "digging in" without any hesitation in the true sense of the word.

As already stated above, a deconstruction of the concept of "authenticity" is also achieved by the fast succession of antagonistic scenes in the film. For example, at the beginning the oldest daughter Jia-jen, a conservative Christian, is shown attending a mass in church, and with one quick cut the scene is transplanted to Jia-chien making love with Raymond, and then in the next scene, the father is depicted blowing in a duck's raw throat, perhaps, as Ma argues, in order to prepare the famed Peking Duck (Ma 198). Here, Ma claims that "Lee consciously choreographs these scenes as a strange blending of the aesthetic and the abhorrent; the chef's metier comes to fuse beauty and brutality" (Ma 198).

Furthermore, the author calls this practice "gastronomic tourism", or an example of the concept of food pornography. I have briefly touched upon this notion in the last section, therefore I will not reproduce the entire discourse revolving around the term again.³⁶ However, I do not see a connection between self-orientalism as a strategy to make exotic food easier to digest for the western consumer, and this mise-en-scène device, through which it is actually made more difficult for the consumer of the film to swallow what is presented. Therefore, one could argue that the quick succession of cuts leads to a disillusionment with the theme of a culinary tradition in this family, and on a wider scale, with the culinary tradition of Taipeh and even of Taiwan.

³⁵ *Eat Drink Man Woman*, [my own translation of German subtitles].

³⁶ For a definition of the term "food pornography" see chapter 5.3.2, p67.

In other words, I think that the different food scenes merely interrupt a coherent notion of “Chinese cuisine” in Taiwan, as the culinary items presented reflect that “Chinese” cuisine cannot be equated with “Taiwanese” cuisine. These juxtapositions serve to deconstruct an image of one merged “Taiwanese-Chinese” identity, and demonstrate that identity is always composed of a variety of different factors and influences. In the case of Taiwan, it is due to the island’s location and its complex history. Hence, “Taiwanese” cuisine reflects these changes and is comprised of versatile ingredients and recipes. According to Wu, “[t]he content of Taiwanese ethnicity, if represented by food items and eating habits, shows a mixture of elements from different parts of China and Japan” (Wu 91). In other words, Wu claims that Taiwanese food culture is shaped by influences from very different regions, and this points towards the hybrid character of food in Taiwan. In the sub-sections to come, I will analyse specific foodstuffs in relation to the concepts of hybridity and appropriation.

6.3.1. Fish

Fish is featured as the very first food item in the film. After the shot of a busy intersection in Taipeh, Lee cuts directly to the family house surrounded by lush greenery. Then, the audience sees a big china vessel containing three fish, and suddenly Chu reaches inside, catches one of them with his hands, and after another cut we see the fish with two chopsticks in its mouth. What struck me most in this sequence is not the fact that the exotic-sounding music accompanying the images of food starts only after Mr. Chu has finished preparing the fish, but the fact that the fish is killed by the insertion of chopsticks into its mouth and disembowelled before it dies. Thus, the very first image of Chinese cuisine is anything but mouth-watering. This is also commented upon by Dariotis and Fung who state that “[t]he violence with which Mr. Chu captures the fish in the small container to prepare it for dinner signals that these dinners, ‘the Sunday torture ritual,’ are not the nurturing feasts they appear to be” (Dariotis and Fung 208).

However, after this initial setback, so to say, the audience can feast their eyes on a pair of extraordinary skilled hands preparing a variety of exotic dishes with

well-familiar ingredients, ranging from fish, meat, frogs and poultry, to vegetables which are rinsed and chopped in a fast and very impressive manner, and finally the scene closes with a bamboo basket containing several hand-made dumplings. This initial food scene is almost five minutes long. Although the harmony of the cooking, which is underlined by the music in the background as well as the lighting technique which endows it with a certain amount of “oriental authenticity”, is interrupted by the violent killing of a fish and a chicken, as well as the occurrence of living frogs in the kitchen, I would argue that the scene leaves the audience in a state of bewildered awe. In my view, Lee plays with the expectations of the audience since the sequence stages and similarly ridicules the common stereotype that Chinese people eat almost anything.

This is not the only point in the story when fish is featured. It occurs in almost every food scene, most prominently in the form of crumbled shark fins at the restaurant, where a wealth of other dishes consisting of fish is prepared for the wedding banquet as well. It is interesting to note that Jia-chien later tells her lover Raymond that “fish with garlic” was the first dish she could cook. Moreover, it is not her father who told her how to make it, but his friend Wen, from whom she acquired most of her cooking skills. Furthermore, fish or other types of seafood also appear in each of the four Sunday dinners, and when Chu finally holds a big banquet with all the new family members to announce his plans of marrying Jin-rong, her daughter Shan-shan even comments on the fish as being too big for the feast. Therefore, fish is a very prominent ingredient in *Eat Drink Man Woman*.

Consequently, the presumably Western audience gets the impression that it must be a typical feature in “Chinese” cuisine. However, it is interesting to note that fish is not consumed on a regular basis in the most part of mainland China. According to Davison and Reed, fish is mainly featured in the Eastern style of Chinese cooking, and they add that Taiwan is mostly influenced by the so-called Fujianese style, itself being a sub-variant of Eastern cooking practices (Davison and Reed 143). On the other hand, Wu points out that Cantonese cuisine has had a great impact on the Taiwanese culinary landscape, since many refugees from the mainland opened restaurants in Taiwan from 1950 to 1970 (Wu 87).

Moreover, Wu claims that contrary to common perception, “expensive high status dishes” including ingredients such as “shark fins, fish lips, abalone and bird nests” could be found in Taiwan even before the exodus of Cantonese people to Taiwan, namely already in the Japanese period (Wu 88). Although Wu claims that this means that “[...] the high class cuisine during the Japanese period in Taiwan was on a par with that of mainland China before the Second World War” (Wu 88), I interpret the fact that seafood gained in popularity as a consequence of the demand created by the Japanese. Essentially, the “Japanese” culinary habit of eating fish and seafood fostered the incorporation of these items in restaurant menus, and later on also in home cooking. This points to what I have already demonstrated in chapter four, where I have argued that fish can be regarded as one, if not the most important signifier for Japaneseness.³⁷

In addition, Davison and Reed also suggest that the great variety of seafood in Taiwanese cooking is rooted in the Japanese period: “[t]he Japanese influence can be seen in the Taiwanese preference for lighter, more delicate, and less oil-heavy foods than other Fujianese styles, with the Japanese love of seafood having reinforced that tendency on the Beautiful Island” (Davison and Reed 145). Therefore, the omnipresence of fish in the film, and the fact that it is featured in many key scenes, signifies the hybrid character of Taiwanese cooking and uncovers the liminal character of Taiwanese identity. The state of in-betweenness of Taiwanese identity is also exemplified by another culinary item, namely the infamous “Chinese” dumpling, along with noodles, the presumably Northern staple-food of China.

6.3.2. Noodles and dumplings

Both dumplings and noodles are featured throughout the film. Interestingly enough, the cooking sequence at the beginning of the film opens with fish, as I have already established above, and it ends with a hand-made dumpling. Furthermore, Chu talks to Jin-rong, his wife to be, on the telephone right after that scene, and advises her to quickly prepare some noodles for dinner and tells

³⁷ See chapter 4.2.1. for further reference, p 46.

her how to prepare the fish she bought. Moreover, the four family dinners always either incorporate some types of “flour food”, mostly noodles or dumplings, and Jin-rong and her daughter are given some leftover-dumplings after the family’s first Sunday dinner featured in the film. This scene is paralleled by a shot at the restaurant where Chu works. When he sees a younger colleague throwing leftover-dumplings in the bin, he suggests to him that he should take them home for his children. However, the younger cook feels insulted upon this remark and counters that Chu might as well take them for his own children. Additionally, the first food Jia-ning eats with her broken-hearted companion, who later becomes her husband, is a bowl of soup with noodles.

Hence, it is important in this context that Anderson states that rice cannot be interpreted as the sole signifier of Chinese cuisine, since other staple foods are of equal importance. According to the author, “flour foods” are mostly made of wheat flour, and originated in the north of China: “China’s regional differences create problems for a definition of Chinese food. The Westerner automatically thinks of rice, but a third of China’s people – living in the north and west – rarely saw rice until recent years and still depend largely on wheat, maize, and various millet species” (Anderson 1994: 39). Additionally, Anderson refers to some dishes that are made of flour, and it is curious to note that he mentions dumplings even before noodles in his descriptions. He states that dumplings “[...] consist of thin sheets of dough wrapped around various stuffings”, and adds that they are either boiled in soup, fried, or steamed (Anderson 1994: 39). As far as noodles are concerned, Anderson claims that they are “very possibly” a Chinese invention and the dominant staple in many areas: “[t]ypically served as snacks, often in humble street stalls or informal cafes and inns, they are prototypic popular foods. The commonest noodles are *mian*, made of wheat, but rice and mung-bean-starch noodles are common, and noodles are even made of such things as maize, buckwheat, and sweet potatoes [...]” (Anderson 1994: 40).

In my opinion, this definition of “flour foods” as the “other” signifier of Chinese identity already suggests the artificiality of national cuisine and identity, and thus

points towards the hybrid quality of not only “Chinese”, but mainly “Taiwanese” food and identity. Wu claims in this article that the “Taiwanese” cuisine of the 1990s is an invention “[...] combining the influence of Japanese, western, and mainland Chinese cooking” (Wu 96). Therefore, I would suggest that fish stands for the Japanese influences on Taiwanese cooking in the film, and dumplings and noodles signify the connection to mainland China. Interestingly, this stance is exemplified by the very first food-scene, which features both fish and dumplings, and the appropriation of food items such as fish, rice, soup and noodles, which then form one meal emphasises the artificial appropriation of many elements in order to create something new.

As a result, the various foodstuffs presented in the film stand for a convergence of various different national or regional cuisines which come to form a new sort of tradition. I think that the foodstuffs which are featured throughout the film demonstrate that tradition is always invented through an appropriation of markers of “other” cultural identities. The incorporation of various ingredients shows that one`s identity is always made up of many components which are appropriated to match one`s needs.

This then also means that Taiwan serves as a primary example for the superficiality of national identities and nations as cultural constructs. In his article on Taiwanese identity, Mark Harrison refers to the fragmented and unfinished state of Taiwanese identity today, and states that “Taiwan`s marginal position in global geopolitics makes the problematic of orientalism all the more acute” (Harrison 253). Moreover, he stresses that identity is never something finished, but something that evolves constantly. This goes hand in hand with Bhabha`s view of identity and difference: “The signs of cultural difference cannot then be unitary or individual forms of identity because their continual implication in other symbolic systems always leaves them `incomplete` or open to cultural translation” (Bhabha 1990: 312).

In my opinion, this point of an “unfinished identity” which is altered with every representation is emphasised by *Eat Drink Man Woman*. In the course of the film, the identities of the protagonists are subject to various changes. Although they

seem to follow linear developments, they remain unfinished in the end. Moreover, the hybridity and the incoherent character of identity are also exemplified by the ending of the film. In the final scene, the middle daughter Jia-chien and her father sit at the family table, but this time the daughter has prepared the meal. When Chu starts eating and tastes the soup, he instantly complains about its flavour and argues that his daughter has put too much ginger in it. In uttering the complaint, however, he realises that his sense of taste has returned to him and the argument of the two characters turns into a happy ending, as the father is healed by his daughter's cooking abilities. Essentially, some critics have argued that this ending advocates a return of women to the stove so to say, as Lizzie Francke, for example, who has stated that Jia-chien's return to the kitchen "makes manifest the various needs that bind a family by setting a mother back at the heart of it" (Francke 63).

However, I agree with Griem's interpretation that this harmonious moment of "reconciliation" is essentially unfinished: "[a]s if the director had wanted to add a sceptical note to his comedy, the film at last suggests that Jai Chen's [sic!] epiphany can only be temporal. The old house and its kitchen [...] is [sic!] going to be sold" (Griem 249). Hence, the old house, a seemingly traditional and nostalgic space, is anything but stagnant. On the contrary, it serves as a reminder that identity and belonging are always in flux and thus can be interpreted as a form of "third" space in Bhabha's terms.³⁸

6.4. Conclusion

In essence, it can be said that hybridity is not only presented in terms of East and West in *Eat Drink Man Woman*, but also in terms of an inner-Asian hybridity so to say. With his presentation of four family members who each "strive forward" in different directions, Lee demonstrates that identity cannot be seen as something fixed that is shared by many people. Thus, he confirms the view that traditions are invented to keep individuals together, however, he also shows that this strategy does not seem to be a very successful one. In my opinion, it is stressed that the characters are neither typically "Chinese", nor

³⁸ See chapter 2.4. for further reference, p. 26.

“Taiwanese”, or “Western”, for that matter, but that they are merely characters. In Mal Vincent’s words, who has commented on Ang Lee’s oeuvre, “[h]is films [...] have reached huge audiences and proved that people, after all, are merely people” (Vincent qtd in Dariotis and Fung 192).

This depiction of the concept of identity as being fragmented is enforced by the incorporation of food in the film. The audience is presented with an array of mouth-watering dishes, as well as with foodstuffs which provoke feelings of disgust. This conscious and clever mixture of “exotic” dishes plays with a commonly held stereotype about “Chinese” food on the one hand, and similarly reveals the absurdity of a national cuisine, on the other hand. Therefore, I aimed to demonstrate that “Taiwanese” food or food in Taiwan is essentially a culinary merger and an “invented tradition” which again refers back to Hobsbawm’s and Ranger’s assumptions.³⁹

After all, Lee’s characters, just like Ishiguro’s and Mo’s, are merely people, and the simple title *Eat Drink Man Woman* cleverly points towards this fact, as it leaves out any reference to a cultural or national identity. The fact that hybridity is so omnipresent in the film leads back to the question of the director’s identity. He himself has described his identity as an essentially fragmented one: “I’m a mixture of many things and a confusion of many things....I’m not a native Taiwanese, so we’re alien in Taiwan today, with the native Taiwanese pushing for independence. But when we go back to China, we’re Taiwanese. Then, I live in the States; I’m a sort of foreigner everywhere. It’s hard to find a real identity” (Berry 54). In my opinion, Lee’s words demonstrate that a person’s identity cannot and should not be defined through his or her national belonging. After all, the comparison between Ishiguro, Mo and Lee remains valid since all of them successfully exemplify that identity is always in flux. This essential volatility of a national and cultural identity will be elaborated on via the aspect of inner-Asian food convergence in the next section, where I am going to deal with a famous “Chinese” noodle dish, ramen, which has been appropriated by Japanese chefs in the film *Tampopo*.

39 See Hobsbawm and Ranger, 1986.

7. *Tampopo* by Juzo Itami

In the final analytical section of this paper, I am investigating the central issues and underlying motives of another “food film”, namely of Juzo Itami’s infamous *Tampopo*. In spite of the fact that Itami’s national identity has not been subject to debate, in comparison to the identity discourse surrounding Ishiguro, Mo and Lee, the director has been very critical of Japanese society. Thus all of his films ultimately deal with a subversion and criticism of the nation and its institutions, so to say. In the case of *Tampopo*, however, there is not only a very significant Chinese, but a colonial subtext to the story, and thus in my view the film is highly significant as far as postcolonial matters are concerned. Before I engage in a plot summary and in my analysis, however, I will, for the sake of completeness, very briefly turn to Itami’s biography.

7.1. Juzo Itami

Itami Juzo was born in Kyoto on May 15, 1933 and died on 20 December, 1997 in Tokyo, Japan. According to the Encyclopaedia Britannica, the Japanese film director gained international fame through the creation of “satiric comedies that challenged authority and satirized social conventions”.⁴⁰ Even before he started his career as a screenwriter and director, he had been a successful actor for twenty years. Thus, he only became a director at the age of fifty. This “late career shift” as it is termed on the International Movie Database, was characterised by a very personal approach to filmmaking: “[k]nown to choose the subjects of his films through everyday observations, he often followed up significant events in his life with films depicting idiosyncrasies that he felt were unique to the evolving Japanese culture”. Moreover, it is stated that “[h]e was the definition of an iconoclast who took the great Molière’s words to heart, ‘castigat ridendo mores’ (criticise customs through humour)”.⁴¹

Itami directed his first film, *Ososhiki* (*The Funeral*), in 1984. It is a black comedy about a family quarrelling after the death of a relative, and about Buddhist monks exploiting the bereaved for financial gain. Here, the director’s critical posture towards cultural institutions became apparent, and this is also

⁴⁰ See Encyclopaedia Britannica Online, <http://www.search.eb.com/eb/article-9114743>.

⁴¹ See International Movie Database, <http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0411631/bio>.

confirmed by the Encyclopaedia Britannica: "Itami's refusal to hold anything sacred was a novelty in Japanese cinema, and the film won great critical and popular acclaim". After his filmic debut followed his probably "best-known film abroad", *Tampopo (Dandelion)* in 1986.⁴² The film's frame story deals with a noodle-shop proprietor and her struggles to improve her culinary oeuvre, as well as herself as a cook. The film's international success is also commented on in the International Movie Database, and it is stated that "[t]he gastronomic 'noodle western' as Itami himself had coined it, was an episodic venture (which formed the structure of his other films) of a restaurateur determined to create the best possible noodle for the best possible noodle eatery".⁴³

Apart from this work, Itami directed other films such as *Masura no onna (A Taxing Woman)*, released in 1987, and *Minbo no onna (The Gentle Art of Japanese Extortion)*, in 1992.⁴⁴ The latter seems to have caused great commotion in the mafia-underworld of Japan, as the yakuza were not portrayed too favourably in the film. Thus, Itami was attacked by a group of yakuza after the film's release, and badly injured. This incident also led to the claims that his death in 1997 might not have been suicide, as it was stated in public. Itami allegedly jumped from the roof of the building in which his office was located, because a magazine was to publish an article in which Itami was accused of being unfaithful to his wife, the actress Nobuko Miyamoto, who also starred as the female protagonist in all of his films. The director left a suicide note in which he denied accusations of adultery.⁴⁵ However, the true circumstances of his death were never discovered.

Interestingly, Itami has been compared with the well-known European director Jacques Tati, seemingly because both only directed a small number of films, ten in Itami's case, and utilised similar styles of social criticism and thus created films with "trenchant distinctions in humour and sadness".⁴⁶ Furthermore, regarding the pillorying qualities of his oeuvre, I think that Juzo Itami can be

42 Most sources state the film was released in 1985 (Griem; Ashkenazi), Cheung even claims 1987 as the year of release.

43 See International Movie Database, <http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0411631/bio>.

44 See Encyclopaedia Britannica Online, <http://www.search.eb.com/eb/article-9114743>.

45 See Encyclopaedia Britannica Online, <http://www.search.eb.com/eb/article-9114743>.

46 See International Movie Database, <http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0411631/bio>.

compared with Kazuo Ishiguro, as he questions the foundations of the “nation”, as well as national practices and belief systems in his films as much as Ishiguro does in his texts about “Japanese traditions”.

In the next section, I am going to refer to the plot of Itami`s most famous film *Tampopo*, before pointing out the significance of foodstuffs in relation to identity in the film.

7.2. *Tampopo*

As I already indicated above, the film *Tampopo* consists of a dominant frame story, and many sub-stories so to say, with no apparent connection apart from the all-encompassing food theme. In my analysis, however, I aim to prove that there is a significant thematic connection between them, as they reinforce a sense of “Japanese” cultural and national identity that stands in stark contrast to a clearly distinguished “Chinese” or “Western” identity. Of course, this is just one possible interpretation, and up to the present, Itami`s film has been analysed by different scholars in a variety of different ways. Julika Griem, for example, points out that she sees the film as a “story of emancipation” of a self-confident and active heroine (Griem 249), and as far as the structure of the film is concerned, she says that “[t]o tell *Tampopo*`s success story, Itami does not rely on narrative closure and linear plot construction but employs a deliberately disintegrated and fragmented manner of storytelling” (Griem 250). These fragments, as Griem calls them, are referred to by Ashkenazi as “asides”. The author claims that Itami looks at Japan “through the lens of food” in his film, and he clearly links the episodes which deviate from the main story to Japanese Kabuki and Noh drama, where “[...] these asides embellish the theme rather than the main story” (Ashkenazi 27-28).

As a linear explanation of the plot, which is often interrupted by food episodes exploring the various meanings of food, is a rather difficult task, I will focus on a plot summary of the main story and engage in a more detailed discussion of relevant asides in the section about the foodstuffs depicted. The frame story deals with *Tampopo* (Nobuko Miyamoto), the owner of a run-down ramen shop in Tokyo, and with two truck drivers, Goro (Tsutomu Yamazaki) and Gun (Ken

Watanabe) whom she convinces to help her to improve the quality of her ramen cooking. The two stop by her shop one rainy evening and the older of the two, Goro, first defends her little son from bullies and then saves Tampopo herself from the dubious customers occupying her shop, including the builder Pisken (Rikiya Yasuoka). Battered and bruised, Goro wakes up the following morning and is treated with what one would call a “traditional Japanese breakfast” by Tampopo. This is when the audience learns that although she is a good cook as far as “Japanese” dishes are concerned, Tampopo’s ramen noodles are, as Gun states quite frankly, “bad”. Thus, after getting some advice from Goro in terms of “business strategy”, she asks him to take her on as his disciple. Here, Ashkenazi points out that “Goro’s training regimen, known as seishin (spiritual training: a form of training for personnel in large Japanese corporations) includes not only speed and quality trials, but physical education” (Ashkenazi 28). Furthermore, from then on the two explore a variety of different noodle shops in Tokyo, extricate recipes from Chinese chefs, and ask many “food experts” to join their team. This joint effort ultimately leads to Tampopo’s successful appropriation of the dish and she re-opens her newly decorated ramen shop under the name Tampopo.

As I already pointed out above, there are numerous scenes which are skillfully interwoven in the main plot and thus provide further entertainment. In fact, the film does not even begin with the frame story, but with an aside. I will describe this opening scene very briefly because it adds meaning to the text in two significant ways. The action starts with an episode in a cinema. A yakuza, or in other words a member of the Japanese mafia, walks in the auditorium with his girlfriend and with three fellow gangsters, and has a luxurious meal consisting of various foodstuffs and champagne put in front of him, before he addresses the viewer directly by looking straight in the camera and asks what we, the spectators, are eating. Thus, this very first scene destroys the “illusion of realist space” and is highly unusual because it “confronts the viewer with a defamiliarizing mirror-scene” (Griem 251). Griem elaborates on the importance of this point by saying that

[...] whereas realistic filmic storytelling relies on the illusion of an apparently independent diegetic space, this scene reveals filmic space

to be based on an illusionary effect right at the beginning of Itami`s film. By having the audience look at another expectant audience in a movie theater on the screen, the make-believe of filmic space is destroyed, and the audience is forced to think about the very conditions of filmic illusion. (Griem 251)

The yakuza boss keeps talking directly to the camera and expresses his resentment towards people who loudly consume potato chips or other foods while a film is shown. Incidentally, there is someone in the row behind the couple who does exactly that, and the gangster violently makes clear to him that he does not wish to be interrupted by any noise during the screening of the film. Moreover, he comments on the saying that one sees something similar to a short film when one dies, and he states that he does not want to be interrupted while watching his last film, especially not by cries saying “please don’t die!”. This statement is quite important as far as the cohesive structure of the film is concerned, since the yakuza boss is shot just before the ending, and after elaborating on the consumption of sausages made from the intestines of wild boars, asks his sobbing girlfriend to stop crying as his last film is about to start.

Ashkenazi and Griem have analysed the four yakuza-scenes in terms of the gender and sexuality aspects they address (Ashkenazi 36; Griem 251), but since the focus of my analysis lies with the signification of culture and identity of food, I will not reproduce them here. What is important, however, is that the “white-clad dandy-gangster” is interpreted as a frame narrator by Griem, and she also calls him “one of the most important characters” in the film (Griem 251). I agree with Griem that the continuous appearance of the yakuza has an important function, as it links the sub-stories with the main story of the heroine Tampopo and thus provides some kind of coherence between them. This second frame, so to say, is necessary as the film would otherwise lack balance, or be too fragmented. In my opinion, the second framing story endows the film with just the right equilibrium between the scenes. Therefore, the opening scene is relevant because it confronts the audience with the fact that what they see in the film is not reality but fiction, and because the yakuza boss establishes himself as a narrator in the story. Moreover, the frame narrator`s death signals the ending of the film.

Nevertheless, the other short sequences or asides are no less valuable than the main story. There are seven asides apart from those about the yakuza and his girlfriend, and each adds meaning to the frame story. Incidentally, three of these scenes revolve around Chinese food, three depict Western dishes, and one includes “Japanese” food, but I will elaborate on them in the following section.

At first glance, *Itami* does not seem to employ cultural stereotypes and clichés to express identity. Here, Ashkenazi states that he is almost relieved that the typical “national” symbols are not depicted in the film: “[w]hether in the film’s main storyline or in the various asides, the setting is almost wholly within an urban landscape, making this Japanese film remarkable for the fact that there is not a cherry blossom, nor a pretty temple, shrine, or perfect volcano to be seen: *Itami*’s Japan is a thoroughly modern and cosmopolitan one” (Ashkenazi 29). What Ashkenazi disregards in my view, however, is that “Japaneseness” is enforced by the use and inversion of “Chinese” stereotypes. There are various scenes in which “Chinese” characters are depicted, and they are clearly labelled as the “other” in the film. As I have pointed out in the theoretical chapter, Elleke Boehmer has identified the practice of “othering” as a means to create and enforce identity.⁴⁷ Thus, the fact that *Itami* does not portray Japanese stereotypes does not mean that he leaves out the issue of “Japaneseness” altogether, it merely means that he enforces it by a juxtaposition with “Chineseness”.

Additionally, this “othering” is stressed by the play with conventions usually used in the Western film genre. The male protagonist Goro, for example, is clearly presented as a cowboy. The big brown cowboy hat, the check patterned shirt, the scarf around his neck, the boots, and the cigarette between his lips are all typical elements in Westerns. It seems that only the ubiquitous gun in his waist belt is missing, but instead of carrying a real colt he is supported by a “sidekick” who is called Gun. On top of this, there are many other references to the genre of the Western, but they are much more subtle than the clothing of the protagonist. For example, the truck that Goro and Gun are riding in the

47 See chapter 2.1. for further reference, p. 7.

beginning of the story is a “milk-tanker” according to Ashkenazi (Ashkenazi 28). In my view, this is an allusion to the fact that cattle and cattle breeding are a vital part of Westerns. Thus, although there are no cattle involved in the film, it is, after all, set in urban Japan, the fact that they transport milk in a vehicle with cattle horns on its roof is quite telling. Likewise, the bar brawl in Tampopo’s ramen shop during the first sequence speaks volumes.

Moreover, trains are featured very prominently in Tampopo, and they are an important feature in Westerns as well. However, instead of shots of the desert and wild untamed nature, Itami provides the audience with shots of a concrete desert and the wild urban cityscape of Tokyo. All these elements contribute to the colonial theme of the film. At first sight, the only thing that seems to be missing in this “noodle Western” are the natives, but through a close analysis, it becomes apparent that in this case, the “other” is signified by “Chinese” characters.⁴⁸ I will engage in a more detailed discussion of the colonial subtext in the chapter about ramen, and analyse the shorter sequences on various appropriated foodstuffs in the following sub-section.

7.3. Food featured in *Tampopo*

As already pointed out above, food is omnipresent in Itami’s film. Apart from the main story which, on the whole, revolves around the production and consumption of ramen, the shorter scenes deal with a variety of different foodstuffs. Among these “culinary key scenes”, as Griem calls them (Griem 250), are the sequence which introduces ramen to the audience via the explanations of an old Japanese noodles-master, the business meeting in a French restaurant in which the businessmen are struggling with the French menu because it is written in Roman letters, and the course in table etiquette in which a group of young women is taught how to eat “western-style” spaghetti.

Moreover, there is a scene depicting a man with toothache riding a train. He is apparently fantasising about a Chinese girl serving him an array of Chinese dumplings in bamboo baskets. When he attempts to consume them, however,

48 For a basic guide of Western elements, see <http://www.filmsite.org/westernfilms.html>.

his toothache gets worse and the scene cuts to a dentist's office. After having an apparently very big abscess removed, he retires to a park bench where he soothes his pain with ice cream. Upon seeing a boy who carries a badge saying that he is not supposed to eat sweets, he hands him his ice cream and thus introduces him to a whole new culinary world, so to say.

Furthermore, an elderly woman is shown damaging various products, as for example a peach, cheese and different pastries, in a convenience store late at night. She hurries through the aisles and picks items which she hastily deforms with her crooked hands, and is eventually caught in the act by the shop assistant. In the next sequence, two elderly men are negotiating money matters over a Chinese luxury feast consisting of slices of the infamous Peking Duck. The action reveals that both are thieves, trying to steal money from each other, and the seemingly more notorious of the two is taken in custody by a policeman. The last aside is about a father, who in his desperation orders his dying but dutiful wife to cook a meal for the family, and thus delays her inevitable death for a short time.

These shorter sequences of the film are said to have no apparent connection apart from the fact that they all revolve around food as a signifier for identity. What is quite curious, however, is that they essentially deal with an appropriation of food. Broadly speaking, they can be divided into three categories according to the food that is depicted in them, namely in "Chinese", "Western", and "Japanese" food scenes. It is interesting to note in this context that Cwiertka describes "Japanese" cuisine as a "Japanese-Chinese-Western tripod" and states that it

[...] epitomizes the structure of modern Japanese cuisine as it began to take shape during the 1920s and '30s. *Washoku* ('Japanese food') manifested the Japanese tradition; *yoshoku* ('Western food') functioned as edible national icon of universal Japanese modernity; and Chinese cuisine (*Shina ryori*) stood for Japanese imperialist expansion into Asia. (Cwiertka 139)

In other words, Cwiertka points out that "Japanese" cuisine relies heavily on borrowings from other "national" cuisines, as well as on an internal differentiation between domestic and foreign food. Moreover, these three,

“Japanese”, “Western” and “Chinese” cuisine, are portrayed in *Tampopo* in the form of distinct dishes as well. “Western” food is accounted for in three scenes about European food.⁴⁹ For example, the businessmen trying to order from the French menu fall into this category, as well as the women’s course on how to consume spaghetti in the right way. Similarly, the elderly woman who deforms various Western food items with her hands belongs to this group. Secondly, Chinese food appears in the very first aside about a young man learning to appreciate a bowl of ramen, then again in the form of dumplings in a man’s daydream on a train, and as sliced Peking duck in the restaurant scene. Japanese food, however, is only featured in one of the shorter sequences, namely in the scene where the dying mother brings herself to prepare a last meal, fried rice, for her family before she dies. Interestingly enough, Ashkenazi has subsumed this rice dish under the “Chinese” category and has identified it as “*chahan*”, Chinese fried rice (Ashkenazi 32). In spite of this interpretation, I think that rice functions as a Japanese identity marker here, and I will explain this in further detail in the subsection to come.

In addition, Cwiertka claims that although these “foreign” influences have been assimilated into Japanese cuisine, they are still distinctive in terms of their origin: “[o]n the one hand, the Japanese-Western and Japanese-Chinese hybrids have become fully integrated within Japanese consumption patterns, and have acquired a solid position as components of Japanese national cuisine. On the other hand, they retained their distinctive identity as the *yoshoku* and *Chuka* categories” (Cwiertka 148). In other words, appropriated foodstuffs of “foreign” origin are subsumed under the “Japanese” category and at the same time keep their position as “non-Japanese” food.

This view is also shared by Ashkenazi and by Griem. The former calls the food depicted in *Tampopo* an “eclectic mixture of influences and foodstuffs that the Japanese have made uniquely their own”, and he adds that he interprets this as a celebration of the “diversity within homogeneity that is the true expression of Japanese culture” (Ashkenazi 31). Similarly, Griem points out that Itami’s film

49 It is curious to note here that Itami has left out American cuisine altogether. Ashkenazi argues that maybe “[...] he felt there were boundaries of taste he did not want to overstep“, see Ashkenazi 32.

emphasises innovation and hybridity, as the “[...] Ramen noodle soup Tampopo is trying to improve is a Chinese import to Japanese culture, and there is no fixed recipe for it” (Griem 250). What both critics seem to overlook here, is that the appropriation of ramen in this film can be said to equal the colonial endeavours of Japan in China. In my view, this seemingly harmless appropriation of a dish serves as a subtle legitimization of the violent colonial past, and thus can be interpreted as a signifier for the same. I will analyse the ramen noodle soup in terms of its validity as a cultural signifier in section 7.2.3. Now however, I will start my analysis with the incorporation of rice and soba as quintessential signifiers for “Japaneseness”, before engaging in a more detailed discussion of the “other” food category signified by the ramen noodle soup.

7.3.1. Rice and “Japanese” food

As I have pointed out in chapter five, rice has been interpreted by Ohnuki-Tierney as a signifier for “Japaneseness” and for the “Japanese Self”.⁵⁰ Therefore, it is curious that it is only featured three times in *Tampopo*. Ashkenazi claims that it appears only twice in the text and comments on the film’s dominant occupation with noodles by giving a precise distinction of different noodle types:

The major food in this film is noodles, and this would appear to be paradoxical. `Everyone` knows that the Japanese staple is rice, yet it appears only twice in the film, in very specific contexts. In fact, the Japanese eat a wide array of noodles. These can roughly be divided into three classes: indigenous Japanese noodles; noodles of Chinese origin; and European noodles, such as spaghetti. (Ashkenazi 29)

Rice and other “Japanese” foodstuffs in the film seem to maintain the “us” versus “them” dichotomy. In spite of the thematic dominance of the ramen dish, there are a few crucial scenes which revolve around “Japanese” dishes which ought to emphasise certain positive “national” character traits in the film. As I said above, Ashkenazi detects two sequences in which rice is consumed, however he only subsumes one under the “traditional Japanese” category and labels the other a “Chinese” dish. The first one is, without a doubt, the breakfast

50 See chapter 5.3.1. for further reference, p. 66.

which Tampopo prepares for her “teachers” Goro and Gun, as well as for her son. The scene includes foodstuffs such as rice, miso soup, fish, seaweed and home-made pickles.

According to Ashkenazi and Jacob, a typical Japanese-style breakfast normally consists of “[...] a one-tray variant of the standard meal structure of rice, soup, and side dishes” (Ashkenazi and Jacob 119-20). Therefore, this meal can be said to conform to these standards. Moreover, the infamous *natto*, a mass of fermented soybeans, is featured in one shot, in which a raw egg is mixed with it, and Ashkenazi claims that the occurrence of *natto* “[...] places the action in context” as the dish is mostly consumed and accepted in eastern Japan, and he adds that “[...] western Japanese from the Kansai (Osaka-Kyoto) area and farther westward are as horrified by the strong smell and unctuous texture of *natto* as are most foreigners” (Ashkenazi 31). Therefore, Tampopo’s preparation of a “traditional” breakfast clearly mark her as a “traditional” Japanese housewife and woman.

Curiously enough, Ashkenazi neglects two other crucial scenes involving the consumption of rice in his elaborations on “indigenous Japanese foods”, and sees the scene in the soba shop as the second instance in which “traditional” food is served. The inherent “Japaneseness” is stressed by the setting, as the soba shop is furnished with tatami mats and paper screens, and some of the characters appear in “traditional” dress, in other words in summer kimonos. In this sequence, Tampopo’s and her helpers’ meal is interrupted by an old man who is almost choking to death. They successfully save his life, and in return for their help, Tampopo is henceforth assisted by the chauffeur of the old man to improve her ramen noodles. It is interesting to note here that the man does not seem to choke on the “Japanese” dish but on its “foreign” ingredients. Ashkenazi claims that the three dishes he orders, *kamo-nanban soba*, *tempura soba* and *oshiruko* have “foreign referents”:

Foods labelled *nanban* (meaning “foreign” or “barbarian style”) are those introduced initially by the Portuguese and Spanish, who had great influence on Japan in the sixteenth century. The same is true of tempura, the deep fried delicacies that are today a mainstay of Japanese haute-cuisine; the term tempura, some scholars believe, is

derived from the Portuguese term *tempera* (with egg). And *oshiruko* is part of the class of *okashi*, confectionary, which, while it is usually called *wagashi* (Japanese sweets) to distinguish it from *yogashi* (cakes and other Western confectionery), was introduced into Japan from China.

(Ashkenazi 31)

Thus, appropriation is not only depicted as something positive and valuable in the film, but also as some kind of contamination of “tradition”. One possible reading of the soba noodles could be that they signify “Japaneseness” and nostalgia, and the fact that they are featured in the film contributes to the “us” versus “them” dichotomy inherent in “Japanese” cuisine. Consequently, Tampopo’s act of appropriation is juxtaposed with the hybrid version the “Japanese” soba dish, and it seems that hybridity has not automatically positive, but also negative connotations in the film.

Apart from the labelling of white rice and soba as “Japanese” dishes, there are two other instances in which “tradition” is emphasised via the consumption of food. Here again, rice, albeit the fried version of it, plays an important part. It is featured in two scenes, namely in the one in which a member of the homeless gang prepares a rice omelette, *omeraisu*, for Tabo, and in the sequence in which the dying mother prepares fried rice for her family. As already stated in section 7.2.1., Ashkenazi has labelled the fried rice dish as an example of “Chinese” cuisine, and this means that both rice dishes fall into this category, as both consist of fried rice. Nevertheless, in my view the use of rice in these crucial scenes points to parental and maternal care and thus seems to underline “national” or at least “traditional” values.

I already pointed out in chapter two that nationalist discourses are often, but not always, entangled with female virtues. Thus, a female element is often interwoven into a patriotic discourse about the “nation”, as it is exemplified by the notion of the “mother country” in the English language.⁵¹ Interestingly, Ohnuki-Tierney has commented on the connection between rice and motherhood as she interprets rice as “[...] the bond between mother and offspring” (Ohnuki-Tierney 94-95). Moreover, she says that “[t]he association

51 See chapter 2.3. for further reference, p. 21.

between mother and rice as the food for daily commensality [sic!] among family members is also expressed in the symbolism of the wooden spatula (*shamoji*) used to scoop rice into individual bowls [...]” and she adds that in most households, in both rural and urban areas, the female head of the household is responsible for the distribution of rice (Ohnuki-Tierney 95).

Hence, to me the two scenes in which the mother figure prepares rice are a perfect example of the “us” versus “them” discourse, and it has to be added that the above-mentioned spatula is featured in them as well. Firstly, rice, the spatula and maternal care are a vital part of the “traditional” breakfast Tampopo serves Goro, Gun and her son Tabo at her house. Similarly, it is featured in the sub-scene, in which the dying mother’s last brave deed is the preparation of a meal consisting of fried rice for her family. Even the sequence in which Tabo watches the homeless man preparing a rice omelette for him ties in with this notion, as Ohnuki-Tierney stresses that this symbolism not only works in terms a mother-child relationship, but also as a demonstration of group membership and, on a wider scale, of national belonging (Ohnuki-Tierney 97).

As it can be seen, my interpretation of the food depicted in the film is based on a clear differentiation between domestic and foreign foods in “Japanese” cuisine. This divide is sustained by the incorporation of “traditional” foodstuffs, as rice and soba noodles, on the one hand, and by a clear juxtaposition between these and “foreign” elements, as ramen for example, on the other hand. Thus, I will elaborate on the appropriation of the “Chinese” noodle dish in the next section.

7.3.2. Ramen

The second aside in the film functions as an introduction of the “Chinese” dish called ramen to the audience, and thus it paves the way for the main story, so to say. In this short sequence, an old “ramen-master” is teaching a young man how to consume a bowl of ramen in the right fashion. It is meticulously explained by the master of which basic ingredients a bowl of ramen consists, but the rules to the proper consumption are complex, and the disciple is eager to imitate every movement of his master. Here, Itami seems to ridicule the

“Confucian principle” of pupil and master, as Ashkenazi points out, and he goes on to say that “[t]he `way`, as many Japanese sages have noted gravely, can indeed be found in many things, and this includes, apparently, noodles” (Ashkenazi 36).

In my opinion, this first food sequence can be compared to the one at the beginning of *Eat Drink Man Woman*. In Lee’s film, the first food scene takes place in a kitchen where various ingredients are processed in order to appear in the form of a luxurious multi-course meal on the dinner table later on in the film. Additionally, the camera focuses on the skilled movements of the chef’s hands, and he prepares everything without additional explanations. Thus, the spectator can feast his or her eyes on the foodstuffs displayed, but is left in the dark as to which of the displayed foods are used together to make a particular dish, nor does he or she get to know the names of the dishes.

In the case of *Tampopo*, however, the audience does not see how or by whom the dish is prepared, but merely how it ought to look when it is finished, as well as how it is properly consumed. Furthermore, the close-ups of the food are not only accompanied by classical music, but also by the descriptions and instructions given by the master, and by his student’s questions and remarks. For example, the young man asks his master which part of the soup, broth or noodles, he should eat first. The master answers in a very zen-like manner that the first thing one has to do is to “eye the soup affectionately” in order to “appreciate its gestalt”. Here, it is stressed that the appearance of the dish is as important as the taste of it. Ashkenazi has pointed out that elegance and style are two decisive factors in “Japanese” culture. He claims that “[...] presentation is at least as important as the taste and consistency”, and he adds that “[...] elements of presentation are matter for lengthy and dedicated training” (Ashkenazi 37).

Furthermore, the master, clad in traditional Japanese attire, seems to be the epitome of a real gourmet, since it is pointed out that he has “studied ramen” for over forty years. According to Ashkenazi, the “[...] concept of *gurume* has become a significant linguistic icon. A *gurume* is not merely someone who

enjoys food. A *gurume* (of course, derived from the French word *gourmet*) is someone who knows food – who understands its *honne*, or essence” (Ashkenazi 34). Moreover, the concept of *gurume* seems to go back to more affluent economic times, as Ashkenazi and Jacob exemplify:

The 1980s were economic boom years in Japan, and the accompanying consumers` rush to spend affected food consumption patterns as well. It was at this period that the term *gourmet* (*gurume*) became a prominent feature of social discourse. Courses in proper table etiquette and the pursuit and appreciation of fine food, drink and dining became accessible to a wider audience than before, becoming a fashionable hobby. (Ashkenazi and Jacob 26)

Incidentally, the time when the term *gurume* was coined coincides with the production of the film *Tampopo*. Hence, it is not surprising that it features some of the above-mentioned elements, such as courses in etiquette and the seemingly never-ending pursuit of high-quality cuisine. Although the economic power of Japan declined in the 1990s, it seems that the idea of *gurume* is still prevalent in Japanese society. Irmela Hijiya-Kirschnerreit confirms the view of the importance of the concept and links it to patriotic advertisements involving foodstuffs. She refers to one particular advertisement in an in-flight magazine for a mobile telephone company in which Japan is titled a “gourmet superpower” (*gurume taikoku nippon*). Although the advertising text revolving around Japanese food has nothing to do with the product that is sold, presumably a mobile phone, the description of Japan as a land of plenty, along with the concept of *gurume* is used to increase the consumption of the item (Hijiya-Kirschnerreit 60). Therefore, it still is an important concept as far as consumption is concerned.

As I said before, *gurume* is a prominent factor in Itami`s film. It is interesting to note that the old “noodles instructor” in the first aside is not the only one who can be called a gourmet in the film. One character that is explicitly referred to as a gourmet is the homeless old man Goro introduces to Tampopo in order to improve the quality of her ramen broth. He is the leader of a group of homeless people who turn out to be true food lovers and connoisseurs of French haute cuisine. Undoubtedly, this instance in the film is supposed to provide comic

relief, as well as comment on food snobbery, as it might seem to be a paradox that the poorest of the poor know so much about the food of the rich, so to say. However, it must be pointed out here that among today`s homeless people, a majority is comprised of former stock brokers who lost their jobs after the end of the bubble economy. Thus, the demographic trends might have been similar in the 1980s, which could be one explanation of the gang`s taste in imported wine and other luxury items.

Therefore, the first of the many gourmets featured in the film introduces the noodle dish to the viewer. In my opinion, this scene with the noodle-master leaves the false impression that ramen is a typical Japanese dish, as the “traditional” attire of the master, as well as his intricate knowledge of its proper consumption, imply that it is an essential part of Japanese cuisine. It is never explicitly made clear that ramen is generally classified as a “Chinese” dish, but elements such as the dragon pattern in combination with Chinese characters on the china soup bowl signify “Chineseness”, and the occurrence of Chinese characters and chefs from whom Tampopo hopes to extricate ramen recipes points towards the colonial subtext that is inherent in the story in my view.

In spite of the fact that other Chinese culinary elements, like soy sauce and soybean paste, have “[...] become fully integrated in local consumption patterns and entirely stripped of their foreign connotations” (Cwiertka 140), ramen still retains its “Chinese” identity. Ashkenazi subsumes ramen under the category “Chinese-style noodles”, and points out that the name is a “Japanese rendition of the Chinese lo-mien” (Ashkenazi 30), whereas Cwiertka gives a more detailed account of the dish`s origin. The author claims that Japanese food habits were influenced by what she calls “the colonial legacy” (Cwiertka 140). Apparently, westerners who resettled from China to Japan in the 1860s brought their Chinese staff with them. In the following decades, the influx of “independent Chinese merchants” led to a considerable growth of the Chinese minority, but the real culinary impact, according to Cwiertka, only took place after the turn of the century, as “[p]opular restaurants serving Chinese food [...] mushroomed in Tokyo during the second and third decade of the twentieth century” (Cwiertka 140-44). Interestingly enough, the name ramen was only coined between the

1950s and 1960s, prior to this time the dish had been known as *Shina soba*, meaning “China” and “noodles” (Cwiertka 144). Additionally, Cwiertka states that [t]he word *Shina* [...] acquired a pejorative connotation through its association with Japanese imperialist aggression in Asia and was replaced with the word *Chuka*, which derives from the Chinese name for the People’s Republic” (Cwiertka 144-45). However, the name *Chuka soba* was only employed for a short while, and eventually the term ramen, which had been “[...] inspired by the chicken-flavoured instant version of the dish”, remained with the noodle soup (Cwiertka 145).

This colonial background of the dish surfaces in two key scenes, in which “Chineseness” or “otherness” is clearly emphasised by the use of stereotypes. In the first, Tampopo finds a noodle shop in which she consumes a bowl of ramen and is convinced that she has found the perfect taste for her appropriation of the dish. It turns out that the chef is not only “Chinese”, this is emphasised by his dress and his accent, but he is also a gambler and thus it is implied that he cannot be trusted by Tampopo. Instead of lending him a large amount of money as he requests, she pays his neighbour a much smaller sum, and spies in order to get the recipe from him. Then, later on in the story, she visits a ramen shop with Shohei, the driver of the old man whose life she saves at one point in the story, and who now aims to help her to improve the quality of her noodles. Both are impressed by the quality of the ramen noodles in a particular shop, and again Tampopo asks the chef for his recipe, this time, however, in the form of a complaint. In the end, she is able to retrieve it from him, without his formal consent or knowledge.

Therefore, the protagonist is not merely appropriating the dish for her ramen shop, but she is in fact stealing it from the “Chinese” characters. Interestingly enough, the stereotype of the “sly Chinese” is inverted here, as Tampopo is the one performing evil deeds, and her “Chinese” competitors are merely the victims of her search for originality and taste. It is curious to note here that she visits other ramen shops with Goro as well, but never tricks other characters in the film. In my view, this motif of an aggressive exploitation of the “Chinese” characters is stressed by a parallel in the fighting scene involving Tampopo’s

son Tabo and the three boys who later become his friends. Tampopo's struggle of appropriation is equated with Tabo's increasingly aggressive fighting skills. Thus, this scene not only comments on the relations full of prejudices between China and Japan⁵², but it also ties in with the Western theme prevalent in the film. As stated in the last section, instead of gunfights with natives, this "noodle western", as *Tampopo* has been called, features a competition for taste as far as ramen noodles are concerned.

Despite or maybe because Tampopo makes use of these methods, she succeeds in her appropriation of the noodle dish, and her five helpers, who are also her fiercest critics, are satisfied with her version of a perfect bowl of ramen in the end. Hence, after she passes the test, her little ramen shop is completely remodelled, so that it becomes a modern kitchen with stylish interior. Her success in terms of appropriation is also signified by the colours of her new business. When she puts up the red *noren*, which is a "small banner suspended over the shop entrance to announce it is open" (Ashkenazi 30), outside the shop, it inevitably makes me think of the Japanese national flag, the *hinomaru*, consisting of a big red dot and a white background. Tampopo's shop looks just like the flag, with the red curtains framing the entrance in the middle of the front of the building and the white walls in the background. Thus, it is not only implicitly but figuratively suggested that the act of appropriation has made her truly "Japanese", and on a wider scale this could mean that "Japaneseness" essentially consists of an appropriation of the "other".

What also ties in here is the closing scene of the film depicting a mother breastfeeding her baby. Griem has commented on this picture: "[t]he last shot of Itami's film, showing a young Japanese woman breastfeeding her baby, offers another cliché from the history of culinary culture, inviting us to see Tampopo as an Ur-mother who has managed to develop the recipe for a noodle soup Japanese men will be slurping just like mother's milk" (Griem 252). Naturally, Ashkenazi offers a different view of the scene: "[t]he baby's expression says it all, and very smugly: no matter what our style, we're [sic!] all obsessed with

52 Cwiertka offers some explanations for the origin of these intercultural prejudices, see Cwiertka 143-44.

food” (Ashkenazi 39). My own interpretation of this shot is quite different from both because I think the image of the mother breastfeeding her child ties in with the colonial subtext of the film, and thus I see it more in terms of an exploitation for resources. In fact, it conjured up the breastfeeding advertisement by Benetton in my mind, in which a “black” mother is breastfeeding a “white” baby. In my interpretation, the mother can be equated with “China” and the child with “Japan”, and therefore this image expresses the power relations between the two countries quite accurately in my view. Hence, it can be said that the message of the *hinomaru* image of the former scene is emphasised even more by the mother and child image, as the appropriation is extended to mean exploitation.

7.4. Conclusion

Through a clever combination of “Chinese” stereotypes with “Japanese” urban lives, Juzo Itami successfully portrays an inherent colonial subtext in his film. Although he does not deal with Japan`s past in a straightforward manner, he hints towards the fact that the “nation” is an artificial construct grounded on an appropriation of “Western” and especially of “Chinese” influences. Moreover, although the distinctions between “us” versus “them” are clearly drawn by the use of food in the film, it turns out in the end that all foodstuffs that are featured are, in one way or another, appropriated. Ashkenazi sums this up quite aptly by terming this assimilation “Japanization”, and he goes on to say that “[f]oreign influences are absorbed, then transformed and fitted into the Japanese scheme of things socially, behaviorally, and aesthetically” (Ashkenazi 32).

Furthermore, Itami at the same time criticises and ridicules the societal institutions and value systems in his film, both by the use of humour and unorthodox devices such as the destruction of the “make-believe of filmic space” (Griem 251). Hence, this film, just like the other texts I presented in this paper, addresses the fact that identity is always made up of many different components and is thus an arbitrary and hybrid construct.

As there is an undeniable postcolonial element in the film, it would be interesting in this context to refer to it as a postcolonial film. In spite of the fact

that Itami Juzo's "national" identity has not been subject to debate, as the identity of Ishiguro, Mo and Lee clearly has, his text is as critical of stereotypical cultural representations and of existing power relations as the others mentioned in this paper. Essentially, this raises the question of who can be called a postcolonial author, and who cannot. Is a "liminal" identity really necessary for being able to write about the margins of a society?

If one assumes, as I have done in this paper, that there is no such thing as a fixed notion of nation and identity, everyone classifies as a hybrid individual. Therefore, Itami's "Japanese" nationality does not necessarily limit him to a portrayal of "Japanese" customs and world views. In my view, *Tampopo* demonstrates that colonial exploitation is still a prevalent or lingering subtext of the modern urban world. Moreover, the Japan of today is equalled with the act of appropriation, and according to Ashkenazi's view of "Japanization", all of Japan consists of appropriation and thus of hybridity. In assessing that Japan is a hybrid construct, one is lead to the conclusion that every nation is essentially a hybrid one, as there are no clear-cut borderlines between them. Hence, hybridity cannot only be found in Japan, but in all "nations", and especially in the ones presented in this paper: Great Britain, China, and Taiwan. I will elaborate on the omnipresence of hybridity in my general conclusion for this paper in the next section.

8. Conclusion

As this paper has shown, a clear-cut analysis of food as a signifier for the “nation” or for a cultural identity is by no means simple. Various factors have to be taken into account when one attempts to investigate matters of identity. Far from being a coherent concept, identity, just like the concept of the “national” cuisine, is a conglomerate of many different recipes and ingredients.

Essentially, I have demonstrated in this paper that “otherness”, and a clear differentiation between notions of “us” and “them”, are a vital part of the discourse surrounding food and “national” cuisine. Here, Said’s work *Orientalism*, as well as Hobsbawm and Ranger’s idea of the “myth of the nation” and the superficiality of tradition in *The Invention of Tradition* have been important tools for an analysis of the signification of a variety of foodstuffs. Additionally, the expression “food pornography”, coined by Chin, has been very helpful in this respect, as it allowed for a connection between the above-mentioned discourses and “national” cuisines, or between orientalist and self-orientalist concepts, and the consumption and production, or rather preparation, of foodstuffs.

Moreover, apart from concepts such as orientalism and nationality, I also discussed the meaning and value of postcolonialism in general. As I have stated in chapter 2, postcolonialism is not merely something which was established after, or post, the colonial era. On the contrary, the idea of a criticism of established power structures and of colonial endeavours had been there in colonial times as well, and is, in my view, still prevalent in contemporary texts, as the discussion in the practical part of my paper has shown.

In the case of Ishiguro’s short story “A Family Supper”, a close reading of food-related terminology has revealed a Chinese subtext in the seemingly stereotypical representation of a “Japanese” family and “Japanese” identity. In my analysis, the consumption of fish and tea played a very prominent role, as the former emphasised an underlying reference to Japan’s past as a colonial aggressor, whereas the latter pointed towards the hybrid aspect of “Japanese” cultural identity.

Similar to Ishiguro's story, Timothy Mo's novel seemed to play with the expectations of the readers, too. As the story deals with Chinese restaurateurs, the concept of "food pornography", denoting a kind of self-orientalism or an exploitation of the "otherness" of the self, was highly relevant in this context. Moreover, the "lupsup" dishes of the Chen family in *Sour Sweet* have demonstrated that "Chineseness" on the one hand seems to stand in stark contrast to notions of "Britishness", but on the other hand, the success of the appropriated dishes also exemplified that "British" cuisine and thus also "British" identity are both made up of these acts of appropriation, and thus of hybridity.

This notion of a "hybrid" identity is also reflected by a form of "hybrid" cuisine in the film *Eat Drink Man Woman*. Although it has been analysed previously in terms of gender identity and in terms of culinary spaces and non-places, none of the critics seems to have elaborated on the connection between the food on display and the identities of the family members. Here, I pointed out that the "Taiwanese" cooking scenes can be said to reflect a liminal "Taiwanese" identity, as the island has historically been, and still is, in a state of in-between, so to say. This inherent marginality of identity was expressed via the multitude of influences on "Taiwanese" cuisine, which has surfaced as a very rich and varied cuisine in the text.

Furthermore, I detected an essential Chinese subtext in the film *Tampopo* by Juzo Itami. Here, the story about the appropriation of a Chinese noodle dish signified cultural assimilation and "Japanisation". Hence, I compared the act of appropriating a noodle dish with the appropriation of "Chinese" culture in general, which led me to the conclusion that "Japan" as a "nation" is made up entirely of "invented traditions". Moreover, I interpreted the rather violent (but nevertheless comic) act of culinary appropriation as a form of colonialism, and thus the story can again be linked to historical events involving Japan as a coloniser in East Asia.

The reading of this last text then stressed that the fictional texts I have dealt with in my paper all revolve around an appropriation of cultural items and thus

point to the superficiality of the construct of a coherent “nation” and “national” identity. In other words, the artificial constructedness of the concept of the “nation”, as well as the fact that appropriation has played such an important role in the interpretation of the texts suggest that every nation is ultimately a hybrid one. In essence, Hobsbawm and Ranger’s claim that “traditions” are invented seems to apply to culinary traditions as well. I would argue that through the production and consumption of various foodstuffs, the identity of the characters in the texts has been expressed in an essentially fragmented way. Additionally, the liminal character of identity in these four texts was not only expressed through a hybridity in terms of a dichotomy between East and West, but essentially also with an inner-Asian form of hybridity. Therefore, it can be said that the “orient” has been approached as a political construct, and I hope that I could express the fluidity of this construct in an adequate manner.

To sum up my findings in this thesis, identity and culture are by no means coherent and complete entities. Essentially, I attempted to demonstrate this through a close reading of fictional cultural representations, in which the seemingly obvious “otherness” of the “Chinese” and “Japanese” characters was exposed to be just that: fiction. Thus, I want to conclude my analysis of the signification of food in relation to identity with Stuart Hall’s words:

Identity is not as transparent or unproblematic as we think. Perhaps instead of thinking of identity as an already accomplished fact, which the new cultural practices then represent, we should think, instead, of identity as a ‘production’ which is never complete, always in process, and always constituted within, not outside, representation.

(Hall 1990: 222)

Hall’s statement refers back to chapter 3 of this paper, and to what Michael Billig has termed “banal nationalism”. Billig suggested that “nationality”, like, or as one form of identity, has to be constantly redefined and reconstructed in order to remain valid. However, through this continuous re-enactment of “national” identity, new meanings and forms of identity are created, which is why there can be no clear-cut definition of the notion of a coherent “national” identity. It is, as Hall rightly states, “always in process”.

Similarly, my analysis of the four texts in the past few chapters can be seen in

terms of an unfinished process. In all four cases, food has been very much at the core of the text, so much in fact, that it has been very difficult for me as a writer to choose instances in which particularly telling dishes were prepared or consumed. Therefore, I limited myself to an exploration of only a handful of foodstuffs in the texts. The most interesting of them included rice, tea, fish and noodles. All of them offered a wealth of possible interpretation in terms of identity, and I have to say that the complexity of the discourse surrounding tea has been particularly interesting, and might serve for more detailed explorations of the signification of food items in the future. Despite the fact that I focused on the representation of “culture” and “ethnicity” through culinary items, other interpretations of these foodstuffs are equally possible, which is why I think that this field of culinary analysis deserves more academic attention in the years to come. As I said before, there are still many food items and underlying meanings, in not only these four, but in most cultural texts, which are, I am afraid, still waiting to be decoded.

9. Bibliography

Primary Sources

Written Texts

Ishiguro, Kazuo. "A Family Supper." 1982. Rich Text Format. 29 April 2009

<<http://www.fhv.umb.sk/app/cmsFile.php?ID=1308>>.

Mo, Timothy. *Sour Sweet*. London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1990.

Films

Eat Drink Man Woman. Screenplay by Hui-ling Wang, James Schamus and Ang Lee. Dir. Ang Lee. DVD. Taiwan/ USA: Central Motion Picture Corporation 1994.

Tampopo. Screenplay by Juzo Itami. Dir. Juzo Itami. DVD. Japan: Savoy Film 1985.

Secondary Sources

Ahmad, Aijaz. *In Theory: Classes, Nations, Literatures*. London: Verso, 1992.

Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism*. London: Verso 1983.

Anderson, E. N. *Everyone Eats: Understanding Food and Culture*. New York: New York UP, 2005.

-----, "Food." *Handbook of Chinese Popular Culture*. Ed. Dingbo Wu and Patrick D. Murphy. Westport, Conn: Greenwood Press, 1994.

Ashcroft, Bill, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin. *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader*. 2nd ed. Oxford: Routledge, 2006.

Ashkenazi, Michael. "Food, Play, Business, and the Image of Japan in Itami Juzo's *Tampopo*." *Reel Food: Essays on Food and Film*. Ed. Anne L. Bowler. New York: Routledge, 2004.

Ashkenazi, Michael, and Jeanne Jacob. *Food Culture in Japan*. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 2003.

Ashley, Bob. *Food and Cultural Studies*. London: Routledge, 2004.

Atkins, Peter, and Ian Bowler. *Food in Society: Economy, Culture, Geography*. London: Arnold, 2001.

Barthes, Roland. *Mythen des Alltags*. Frankfurt: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1964.

Bell, David, and Gill Valentine. *Consuming Geographies: We Are Where We Eat*. London: Routledge, 1997.

Bestor, Theodore C. *Tsukiji: The Fish Market at the Center of the World*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004.

Bhabha, Homi K. "DissemiNation: Time, Narratives, and the Margins of the Modern Nation." *Nation and Narration*. Ed. Homi K. Bhabha. London: Routledge, 1990, p. 291-323.

-----, *The Location of Culture*. London: Routledge, 1994.

-----, "Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse." *The Location of Culture*. London: Routledge, 1994.

Billig, Michael. *Banal Nationalism*. London: Sage, 1995.

Boehmer, Elleke. Introduction. *Colonial and Postcolonial Literature: Migrant Metaphors*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005.

Bourdieu, Pierre. *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*.

- London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1984.
- Caplan, Pat. Introduction. *Food, Health and Identity*. By Caplan. London: Routledge, 1997. 1-31.
- Chatterjee, Partha. *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World*. Tokyo: Zed, 1986.
- Cheung, Sidney C. H. "The Invention of Delicacy: Cantonese Food in Yokohama Chinatown." *The Globalisation of Chinese Food*. Ed. Davis Y. H. Wu and Sidney C. H. Cheung. Honolulu: U of Hawai'i P, 2002.
- Childs, Peter. *Contemporary Novelists: British Fiction Since 1970*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005.
- . Introduction. *An Introduction to Post-Colonial Theory*. NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1997.
- Clark, Robert. Introduction to Christopher Bigsby "Interview with Kasuo [sic] Ishiguro." *European English Messenger*. Zero Issue (1990), 26.
- Comer, Brooke. "Eat Drink Man Woman: A Feast for the Eyes." *American Cinematographer* Jan. (1995). 62-67.
- Counihan, Carole, and Penny Van Esterik. *Food and Culture: A Reader*. New York: Routledge, 1997.
- Cwiertka, Katarzyna J. *Modern Japanese Cuisine: Food, Power and National Identity*. London: Reaktion Books, 2006.
- Dariotis, Wei Ming and Eileen Fung. "Breaking the Soy Sauce Jar: Diaspora and Displacement in the Films of Ang Lee." *Transnational Chinese Cinemas: Identity, Nationhood and Gender*. Ed. Sheldon Hsiao-peng Lu. Honolulu: U of Hawai'i P, 1997.
- Davison, Gary Marvin and Barbara E. Reed. *Culture and Customs of Taiwan*. Culture and Customs of Asia. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1998.
- Donald, James. "How English is it?" *New Formations* 6 (1988).
- Döring, Tobias, Markus Heide and Susanne Mühleisen. Introduction. *Eating Culture: the Poetics and Politics of Food*. Ed. Tobias Döring, Markus Heide and Susanne Mühleisen. Heidelberg: Winter, 2003.
- Douglas, Mary. "Deciphering a Meal." *Implicit Meanings*. By Douglas. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1975.
- Edwards, Justin D. *Postcolonial Literature: A Reader's Guide to Essential Criticism*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008.
- Fanon, Frantz. *Black Skin, White Masks*. 1952. NY: Grove Press, 1989.
- . *The Wretched of the Earth*. 1961. London: Penguin Books, 1990.
- Fieldhouse, Paul. *Food and Nutrition: Customs and Culture*. London: Croom Helm, 1986.
- Fludernik, Monika. *Hybridity and Postcolonialism: Twentieth-Century Indian Literature*. Tübingen: Stauffenburg, 1998.
- Foucault, Michel. *The History of Sexuality. Volume One: An Introduction*. Trans. Robert Hurley. London: Allen Lane, 1978.
- Fraiman, Susan. "Jane Austen and Edward Said: Gender, Culture and Imperialism". *Janeites: Austen's Disciples and Devotees*. Ed. Deidre Lynch. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000. 206-23.
- Francke, Lizzie. "Yin Shi Nan Nu (Eat Drink Man Woman)." Rev. of *Eat Drink Man Woman* by Ang Lee. *Sight and Sound* 5, No.1 (1995): 63.
- Garrison, Jim, and Bruce W. Watson. "Food from Thought." *Journal of Speculative Philosophy*, Vol. 19, No 4. (2005): 242-256.
- Gellner, Ernest. *Nations and Nationalism*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1983.

- Geertz, Clifford. *The Interpretation of Cultures*. New York: Basic Books, 1973.
- Goodman, David G. "Fugu Plan." *Antisemitism: a Historical Encyclopedia of Prejudice and Persecution, Volume 2*. Santa Barbara, CA: ABC_Clio, 2005.
- Graham, Patricia J. *Tea of the Sages: The Art of Sencha*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1998.
- Griem, Julika. "A Room of One's Own?: The Kitchen as Spatial Trope in *The Scent of Green Papaya*, *Eat Drink Man Woman*, and *Tampopo*." *Eating Culture: the Poetics and Politics of Food*. Ed. Tobias Döring, Markus Heide and Susanne Mühleisen. Heidelberg: Winter, 2003. 241-253.
- Hall, Laura. "New Nations, New Selves: the Novels of Timothy Mo and Kazuo Ishiguro." *Other Britain, Other British: Contemporary Multicultural Fiction*. Ed. Robert Lee. London: Pluto Press, 1995.
- Hall, Stuart. "Old and New Identities, Old and New Ethnicities." *Culture, Globalisation and the World-System*. Ed. A. King. Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1991.
- . "Cultural Identity and Diaspora." *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference*. Ed. Jonathan Rutherford. London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1990. 222-37.
- Harrison, Mark. "Where is Taiwanese Identity?" *The Margins of Becoming: Identity and Culture in Taiwan*. Ed. Carsten Storm and Mark Harrison. Studia Formosiana 5. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2007.
- Hasbullah, Abu Hassan Bin. *Film as a Lens of Cultural Identity: A Critical Analysis on Malaysia Film*. Diss. U of Vienna, 2004.
- Hijiya-Kirschner, Irmela. "Der Patriotische Gaumen – Kulinarik und Nationale Selbstbehauptung in Japan." *Selbstbehauptungsdiskurse in Asien: China – Japan – Korea*. Ed. Iwo Amelung, Matthias Koch, Joachim Kurtz, Eun-Jung Lee and Sven Saaler. München: Iudicium Verlag, 2003. 49-85.
- Hobsbawm, Eric. Introduction. *The Invention of Tradition*. Ed. E. Hobsbawm and T. Ranger. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1983.
- Hobsbawm, Eric J, and Terence Ranger. *The Invention of Tradition*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1986.
- "Hybrid." *The Oxford English Dictionary*. 2nd ed. Eds. J.A. Simpson and E.S.C. Weiner. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989.
- Innes, C.L. Introduction. *The Cambridge Introduction to Postcolonial Literatures in English*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2007.
- Ishige, Naomichi. *The History and Culture of Japanese Food*. London: Kegan Paul, 2001.
- Ishiguro, Kazuo. *A Pale View Of Hills*. New York: Vintage Books, 1990.
- James, Allison. "How British is British Food?" *Food, Health and Identity*. Ed. Pat Caplan. London: Routledge, 1997. 71-86.
- Kwok, Kim. "Desiring Authenticity: On Eating Chinese Food in Vienna." *Die Maske* 4 (2009): 71-73.
- Lévi-Strauss, Claude. "The Culinary Triangle." *Food and Culture: A Reader*. Ed. Carole Counihan and Penny Van Esterik. New York: Routledge, 1997. 28-35.
- Lewis, Barry. *Kazuo Ishiguro*. Manchester: Manchester UP, 2000.
- Ma, Sheng-mei. "Ang Lee's Domestic Tragicomedy: Immigrant Nostalgia, Exotic/Ethnic Tour, Global Market." *Journal of Popular Culture*. 30.1 (1996): 191-201.
- MacKenzie, John. *Orientalism: History, Theory and the Arts*. Manchester: Manchester UP, 1995.
- McLeod, John. *Beginning Postcolonialism*. Manchester: Manchester UP, 2000.

- Mee, Jon. "Austen's Treacherous Ivory: Female Patriotism, Domestic Ideology, and Empire." *The Postcolonial Jane Austen*. Ed. You-Me Park and Rajeswari Sunder Rajan. London: Routledge, 2000. 74-91.
- Mills, Sara. *Discourses of Difference: An Analysis of Women's Travel Writing and Colonialism*. London: Routledge, 1992.
- Nietzsche, Friedrich. *Ecce Homo*. 1888. London: Penguin, 1979.
- Ohnuki-Tierney, Emiko. *Rice as Self: Japanese Identities Through Time*. Princeton NJ.: Princeton UP, 1993.
- Palmer, Catherine. "From Theory to Practice: Experiencing the Nation in Everyday Life." *Journal of Material Culture* 3. 2. (1998): 175-199.
- Pang, Chin Lin. "Beyond 'Authenticity': Reinterpreting Chinese Immigrant Food in Belgium." *Eating Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Food*. Ed. Tobias Döring, Markus Heide and Susanne Mühleisen. Heidelberg: Winter, 2003. 53-70.
- Parry, Benita. "Signs of Our Times: Discussion of Homi Bhabha's *The Location of Culture*." *Third Text* 28/29 (Autumn/Winter 1994).
- Pohl, Karl-Heinz. *China für Anfänger: Eine faszinierende Welt entdecken*. 2nd ed. Freiburg: Herder, 2005.
- Powers, John. "Wine, Song and Right-Wing Humour." *Vogue* 184, No. 18 (1993).
- Prättälä, Ritva. "Outlining Multidisciplinary Food Research." *Palatable Worlds: Sociocultural Food Studies*. Ed. Elisabeth L. Fürst, Ritva Prättälä, Marianne Ekström, Lotte Holm, and Unni Kjaernes. Oslo: Solum Forlag, 1991. 17-32.
- Reichl, Susanne. *Cultures in the Contact Zone: Ethnic Semiosis in Black British Literature*. Diss. U of Vienna, 2001a.
- Reichl, Susanne. "Ethnicity." *Encyclopedia of Postcolonial Studies*. Ed. John C. Hawley. Westport, Conn: Greenwood Press, 2001b. 158-59.
- Reichl, Susanne. *Cultures in the Contact Zone: Ethnic Semiosis in Black British Literature*. Trier: WVT, Wiss. Verl. Trier, 2002.
- Reichl, Susanne. "'Like a Beacon Against the Cold': Food and the Construction of Ethnic Identities in Black British Novels." *Eating Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Food*. Ed. Tobias Döring, Markus Heide and Susanne Mühleisen. Heidelberg: Winter, 2003. 177-193.
- Romney, Jonathan. "Food Glorious Food." *New Statesman and Society* 8, No. 336 (1995): 33.
- Said, Edward W. *Orientalism*. 1978. London: Penguin, 1995.
- Schirmer, Dominique, Gernot Saalman and Christl Kessler. *Hybridising East and West: Tales Beyond Westernisation. Empirical Contributions to the Debates on Hybridity*. Berlin: Lit, 2006.
- Shaffer, Brian W. *Understanding Kazuo Ishiguro*. Columbia SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1998.
- Shaffer, Brian W., and Cynthia F. Wong. *Conversations with Kazuo Ishiguro*. Jackson, Miss.: University of Mississippi Press, 2008.
- Smith, Andrew. "Migrancy, Hybridity and Postcolonial Literary Studies." *The Cambridge Companion to Postcolonial Literary Studies*. Ed. Neil Lazarus. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2004. 241-261.
- Spicer, Andrew. Notes. *Sour Sweet*. By Timothy Mo. London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1990. 278-309.
- Wachinger, Tobias A. *Posing In-Between: Postcolonial Englishness and the Commodification of Hybridity*. Frankfurt: Lang, 2003.

- Walder, Dennis. Introduction. *Post-Colonial Literatures in English: History, Language, Theory*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1998.
- Warde, Allan. *Consumption, Food and Taste: Culinary Antinomies and Commodity Culture*. London: Sage, 1997.
- Williams, Patrick and Laura Chrisman. *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory: A Reader*. New York: Harvester, 1994.
- Williams, Patrick and Laura Chrisman. Introduction. *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory: A Reader*. New York: Harvester, 1994.
- Wisker, Gina. *Key Concepts in Postcolonial Literature*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007.
- Wong, Sau-ling C. *Reading Asian American Literature: From Necessity to Extravagance*. Princeton, NJ.: Princeton UP, 1993.
- Wu, David Y. H. "Cantonese Cuisine (Yue-cai) in Taiwan and Taiwanese Cuisine (Tai-cai) in Hong Kong." *The Globalisation of Chinese Food*. Ed. Davis Y. H. Wu and Sidney C. H. Cheung. Honolulu: U of Hawai'i P, 2002.
- Young, Robert J.C. *Colonial Desire: Hybridity in Theory, Culture and Race*. London: Routledge, 1995.
- . *Postcolonialism: A Historical Introduction*. Oxford: Blackwell, 2001.

Online Resources

- British Council Website. 30 July 2009.
<<http://www.contemporarywriters.com/authors/?p=auth52>>.
- British Council Website. 30 October 2009.
<<http://www.contemporarywriters.com/authors/?p=auth74>>.
- Ch'ing China: The Opium Wars. 1996. Ed. Hooker, R. 3 November 2009.
<<http://www.wsu.edu:8080/~dee/CHING/OPIUM.HTM>>.
- Chou En-lai. 14 August 2009
<<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/656977/Zhou-Enlai>>.
- Ed. Dr Bullock, A. Sigmund Freud. 30 October 2009.
<<http://faculty.fullerton.edu/abullock/305/Freud%20study%20guide.htm>>.
- Itami, Juzo*. Britannica Book of the Year, 1998. 2009. Encyclopaedia BritannicaOnline. 12 November 2009.
<<http://www.search.eb.com/eb/article-9114743>>.
- International Movie Database*, Justin Deimen. 12 November 2009.
<<http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0411631/bio>>.
- Iwabuchi, Koichi. "Complicit Exoticism: Japan and its Other." *Continuum: the Australian Journal of Media and Culture* 8. 2, (1994). 4 December 2007
<<http://www.mcc.murdoch.edu.au/ReadingRoom/8.2/Iwabuchi.html>>.
- "Lee, Ang." Encyclopaedia Britannica. 2009. Encyclopaedia Britannica Online. 12 Nov 2009
<<http://www.search.eb.com/eb/article-9444163>>.

Michaelsen, Anja. *Asian Food Porn: Fremdheit, Geschlecht und Visualität in Metaphern der Einverleibung zeitgenössischer Populärkultur*. 17 October 2009

<http://www.gender.huberlin.de/w/files/ztgbulletintexte32/michaelsen_asian_food_porn.htm>.

Tetrodotoxin, Fugu Poisoning. 30 July 2009

<<http://vm.cfsan.fda.gov/~mow/chap39.html>>.

Western Film Site. Ed. Tim Dirks. 19 November 2009.

<<http://www.filmsite.org/westernfilms.html>>.

10. Index

A

A Family Supper 5, 42, 44, 52, 55-57, 116
appropriation 4, 63-67, 76, 85, 89, 93, 99, 112-115
authentic 29, 46, 55
authenticity 3, 5, 36, 39, 57, 62-65, 78, 88, 90

B

banal nationalism 30
belonging 25, 35, 75, 94
British Cuisine 36
Britishness 38, 43, 51, 58, 73, 74, 76-77

C

capitalism 21, 33
chicken tikka masala 36-37
China 3, 53, 54, 68, 89, 92, 111, 113
Chineseness 53, 59, 62-63, 69, 74, 76-79, 81, 96
colonial 18, 27-28, 73, 102, 112, 114, 116
colonialism 7-9, 14-15, 19-20, 53, 56, 73
Commonwealth 9
consumption 31, 34, 40, 46, 110
culture 4, 5, 25, 45, 51, 61, 84, 116, 118-119

D

difference 24, 26, 28, 93
discourse 15, 25, 27
dubbing 55

E

Eat Drink Man Woman 5, 78-90
East Asia 3, 90-91
ethnicity 24, 50, 119
eurocentrism 27
exotic 19, 39, 89, 95
exoticism 3, 17, 40

F

female 17, 18, 34, 69, 107
femininity 17, 72
fish 45-48, 50, 89
food 5, 31-32, 34, 37, 40, 45, 61-67, 86, 106-107
food pornography 39, 45, 67, 69, 71-72, 88
foodways 29, 31, 36, 39, 77
fugu 44-49, 54, 56

H

hybridity 4, 7, 13, 26-29, 38, 41-42, 50, 72, 77,
78, 86, 89, 104, 106, 115, 117

J

Japan 3, 43, 46, 50, 53-54, 113
Japanese food 46, 49, 101-106, 111
Japaneseness 5, 51, 57-59, 91, 96, 103-106

L

language 10-11, 13, 15

M

mimicry 13, 20
multiculturalism 42

N

nation 21-26, 30, 32, 35, 40, 116, 118
nation, myth of the 21, 24, 93
national cuisine 35-36, 75, 93, 116
national identity 5, 22, 30, 37-38, 41, 51, 113
nationalism 21, 24, 30, 34
negritude 11-12

O

Occident 14
Orient 3, 14, 16, 90
Orientalism 7, 12-18, 43, 70, 116
Other 11, 12, 16-20, 43, 47, 49, 60, 113
othering 10-11, 15, 37, 57, 63, 70, 77
otherness 40, 55-56, 69

P

performative aspect 23, 24-25
postcolonial 13-14, 19, 38, 44, 57, 66
postcolonialism 7-9, 19, 29, 53, 56, 116
power relations 7, 13-14, 20, 115

R

rice 50, 65-66, 105-108

S

self-orientalism 12, 69-71, 88, 117
Sour Sweet 5, 40, 50, 59
stereotypes 3, 17-19, 36, 40, 50, 67-70, 114

T

Tampopo 78
tea 45, 49-54, 56-57, 72, 74
tea ceremony 52-53
third space 27, 50, 94
tradition 3, 25, 29, 39, 55, 57, 64, 82-85, 94,
95, 106, 117

11. Zusammenfassung

Die vorliegende Diplomarbeit versucht zu veranschaulichen, wie nationale und kulturelle Identität durch Essen veranschaulicht wird. Im Theorieteil wird hierfür mit einer Analyse der wichtigsten Grundbegriffe, wie Postkolonialismus, Orientalismus, Nation und Nationalismus, sowie Hybridität der Grundstein gelegt. Danach wird mit einem Überblick über verschiedene Ansätze in der Disziplin „food studies“, sowie einer Erklärung von dem Zusammenhang zwischen Essen und nationaler Identität anhand von einigen Beispielen zum Thema „Nationalgericht“ der Bogen zwischen Theorie und Praxis gespannt. Der analytische Teil der Arbeit beschäftigt sich mit der Darstellung von Identität durch die Zubereitung und den Konsum von verschiedenen Speisen in vier fiktiven Werken, wobei zwei davon geschriebene Texte sind, und weitere zwei aus Filmen bestehen, welche sich mit dem Thema Essen besonders intensiv auseinandersetzen. Hier wird zunächst Kazuo Ishiguro's Kurzgeschichte „A Family Supper“ auf japanische Stereotype hin untersucht. Danach folgt eine Analyse von Timothy Mo's Roman *Sour Sweet*, in dem es um eine chinesischstämmige Immigrantenfamilie im London der 1960er Jahre geht. Des weiteren wird der Film *Eat Drink Man Woman* von Ang Lee genauer unter die Lupe genommen, bevor die Arbeit mit Itami Juzo's *Tampopo* und einer Zusammenfassung der relevanten Erkenntnisse aus den Textanalysen schliesst.

Im Zuge der Arbeit wird gezeigt, dass Konzepte wie „Kultur“, „Nationalität“, „Authentizität“ und „Tradition“ kritisch hinterfragt werden müssen, da sie in keiner Weise stabile Zustände beschreiben, sondern viel eher als Prozesse und imaginäre Konstrukte zu deuten sind. Darüberhinaus werden Stereotypisierungen, welche den Versuch unternehmen, eine essentielle japanische beziehungsweise chinesische Identität darzustellen, entlarvt. Mit anderen Worten wird beschrieben und durch mehrere Beispiele veranschaulicht, dass kulturelle Identität immer von mehreren Faktoren beeinflusst wird, und genauso wie das Konzept der „Nation“ ein moderner Mythos ist. Demnach wird gezeigt, dass „Hybridität“ keine moderne Erscheinung des globalisierten Zeitalters ist, sondern immer bei der Formierung von Identität mitspielt.

12. Curriculum Vitae

Name	Katharina Hoff
Geboren	25. 11. 1982 in Graz
Staatsbürgerschaft	Österreich

Ausbildung

2002	Abschluss des BORG mit Matura
2003-	Diplomstudium der Anglistik und Amerikanistik, sowie der Japanologie an der Universität Wien

Weiterbildung

2003	WWOOF Dreimonatiger Auslandsaufenthalt in Australien
2006-2007	Joint Study Einjähriger Auslandsaufenthalt in Kyoto/ Japan im Zuge des Studiums an der Kyoto University
2008	Wien Museum Einmonatiges Praktikum im Bereich Vermittlung, Bildung und BesucherInnenservice
2008	China Know-How Summerschool Einmonatiger Chinaaufenthalt und Weiterbildung an der Peking University, sowie der Fudan University in Beijing und Shanghai
2009	Connecting Cultures Summerschool Weiterbildung im Bereich der Postcolonial Studies an der Leibniz Universität/ Hannover

Berufserfahrung

2005	Hofburg Wien Aufsicht im Kulturbetrieb
2007-	AHRC Asian Human Rights Commission

2008/ 2009

Freiwillige Mitarbeit als Online Übersetzerin

Hofburg Wien

Deutsch-, und englischsprachige Führungen im
Kulturbetrieb