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Othering and Celebration of Diasporic Identity: An Analysis of Nadiya Hussain's Food Discourse in *Nadiya Bakes* Cooking Show

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Abstract

In the last few decades, in a context of media globalization, TV shows have become a place of enunciation for numerous types of discourses, one of which is food discourse. However, to date, there have been few studies that examine food discourse, particularly from a post-colonialist perspective (see MacKenzie 2020). This thesis aims to fill this research gap by examining the ways in which food discourse is used to construct and celebrate a diasporic identity by using South Asian culinary practices and ingredients. For these purposes, I analyse Nadiya Hussain's (2020) *Nadiya Bakes* BBC show, concentrating on the storytelling surrounding her preparation of traditional British recipes with a Bangladeshi twist. The analysis focuses on Hussain's food discourse strategies around both her use of allegedly non-British ingredients and her nostalgic remembering of familial memories. The findings show that Hussain's food discourse is ambivalent: while she tries to vindicate her diasporic identity as third-generation British-Bangladeshi, Hussain subtly reinforces (self) exoticizing and othering stereotypes, thus foregrounding the difference between the West and the East. This leads me to conclude that orientalism is still embedded in today's food discourse.

Keywords: diasporic identity, food discourse, media, storytelling, locality, historicity, (self-) exoticization, Orientalism.

1. Introduction

Globalization is usually understood as the current global and technological spread of information at an unparalleled pace. However, rather than as an unprecedented phenomenon, some scholars, such as Gupta (2012), claim that the synchronic process of globalization is just another instance in a diachronic chain of similar processes. They argue that globalization has not only fostered the spread of information today, but it has also historically enabled the spread of more tangible, commonplace products like food.

In this regard, Gupta identifies the historical movement of crops resulting in new culinary ingredients as a further instance of globalization (2012, p.33). Although these ingredients also appeared through transnational commerce, Gupta argues that their spread was undoubtedly boosted by colonization. Hitherto, their spread, as well as that of culinary practices has been increasingly associated with Commonwealth immigration and, especially, with Indian and Bangladeshi diasporas between the 50s and the 60s. Migratory movements have been regarded as a threat to the alleged authenticity of so-called British national cuisine.

Recently, this rejection of the postcolonial "Other" (see sections 2.2. and 2.3), epitomised in their culinary practices, has been enunciated in the food media industry. As Gupta maintains, "the production, distribution, and consumption of food provides us with excellent material to pursue [the] history [of globalization]" (2012, p. 33) and, I would argue, to detect new instances of discrimination against racialized communities and their gastronomy. Indeed, among other semiotic assemblages, the discourse present in the food media industry, which I henceforth will call food discourse, is being used to construct a discriminatory narrative against racialized communities and their gastronomy. In this regard, cooking shows are arguably influential in constructing the British identity as part

of the "Western cuisine" scenario (Lakoff 2006) and that of diasporic communities as exotic and different.

Nevertheless, apart from MacKenzie (2022) few scholars have focused on food discourse within the audio-visual food media industry in today's globalized world, Furthermore, only Mackenzie have linked food discourse to discourses about the "Other", hence dealing, I will argue, with orientalist food discourse, which is still undertheorized. Mackenzie's (2022) food discourse analysis has nonetheless failed to acknowledge those instances in which 'the Other' and foreign cuisines are no longer being constructed by privileged white cooks but by diasporic subjects themselves who subtly rely on self-exoticisation to present their gastronomic culture as different from the European one. Trying to fill this research gap, in this thesis, I will analyse the different food discourse strategies that Nadiya Hussain –a third-generation British-Bangladeshi cooking show host– employs, so as to answer the following research questions:

1) What discourse strategies does Hussain use to either silence or construct, and vindicate, her Bangladeshi diasporic identity in Britain?
2) Does Hussain's storytelling (re)produce stereotypes about South Asian migrants in Britain and/or does she construct a more hybrid discourse about diasporic identity in food preparation?

2. Theoretical background

2.1 Critical Discourse Analysis

According to Blommaert and Bulcaen (2000), Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) aims to analyze "opaque as well as transparent structural relationships of dominance, discrimination, power and control as manifested in language" (p. 448). This relationship between power and language, or discourse, was foregrounded by Foucault (1971), who

claimed that linguistic productions are embedded in relations of power. Furthermore, what he called "the ordering of discourse" has a direct effect in the social structuration of thought and individual and collective agency. Foucault's (1971) approach to discourse was, thus, connecting language not only with power but also with social behavior. Parallelly to the publication of Foucault's influencing work, Gramsci (1971) coined the concept of "hegemony". It refers to the social groupings that reach a position of power from which they can exert influence over other social groups and, extensively, their practices, including discourse.

Regarding CDA, Blommaert and Bulcaen focus on the work done by Fairclough, who in 1992 published what they consider the landmark publication for the start of CDA, *Discourse as social* change. Inspired by Foucault, Fairclough (1992, quoted in Blommaert & Bulcaen 2000) identified a bidirectional influence between power or political hegemonic forces and linguistic discursive performances: firstly, language constructs social structure because of forces such as institutional language policies; secondly, politicized social structures construct language by granting access to individual speakers to a dynamic set of available resources and patterns. These resources change depending on a context linked to "larger conditions of production and circulation of semiotic resources" (Blommaert & Bulcaen 2000, p. 459). According to Lippi-Green (2011), this dialogical relationship could be seen in the use of a standard variety of a language in education, for instance, which reflects discrimination against minoritarian languages and their speakers and deprives the latter of the resources available in their native tongues, forcing them to adequate to the hegemonic norm.

As for the methodology of CDA, Foucault (1992) developed a three-dimensional framework for analysing discourse: discourse as, as discursive practice, and as social practice. In short, within the resources accessed by speakers, the CDA methodology pays

attention to the linguistic devices (choose of vocabulary, punctuation, use of intertextuality) as well as to rhetorical strategies, such as linguistic register, gender, or style (with special emphasis on the ideological effects of discourse depending on the hegemonic processes under which it takes place). A thorough analysis of these resources will allow the discourse analyst to uncover the ways in which speakers may endorse or refuse overarching hegemonic discourses.

2.2 Discourse, globalization, and national identity

CDA also examines the multiple ways in which discourse is used to construct identities, that is, "how individuals move through such institutionalized discursive regimes, constructing selves, social categories, and social realities" (Blommaert & Bulcaen 2000, p. 449).

Scholars like Blommaert (2005) and Bucholtz and Hall (2005) have dealt in detail with identity, understanding it as dynamic and multiple rather than inborn or culturally inherited, thus going beyond determinism. Bucholtz and Hall (2005) approach identity as the different "social positionings" of individuals depending on their "discourse contexts of interaction" (p. 586), which are constructed through social performance and linguistic choices or discourse.

In addition, Blommaert (2005) links globalization (see definition in the *introduction* Section) to processes of self-identification in which stereotypes are reinforced to construct a national identity based on essentialist national self-representations. As Blommaert (2005) argues:

> as one moves around through various social and spatial environments, group and categorical identities change and become less clear cut or less well understood by those involved in acts of categorisation. That is why we tend to produce stereotypes about our country of origin abroad, thus providing narratives of identity the ingredients of which are probably very irrelevant at home but reflect, in our minds, what others may (want to) know about us (p. 206).

Gupta (2012) establishes a connection between globalization, food, and identity. Indeed, he claims that instances of globalization had already taken place far before today's "modern phase of globalization" (Gupta 2012, p.6) – the communicative and technological one. To illustrate his claim, Gupta refers to the movement of crops from the New World and the European importation of spices from Southeast and South Asian territories before and after colonization. With regards to the exploitation of spices, and their territories, the author identifies the interests on and "conflicts over spices" (p.8) as the beginning of today's global geopolitics. He does so especially with regards to its discrimination against non-Western sociographical identities, which started with the enslavement of the natives of the colonies.

Furthermore, Gupta argues that the historical movement of crops can be regarded as the source of current "agricultural patterns and eating habits […] in South Asia" (Gupta 2012, p. 10), as ingredients from the New World such as potatoes and chillies were also exported there. Thus, in this instance of globalization, the physical movement of crops favoured the hybridity of identities due to the proliferation of diverse gastronomic and, hence, cultural knowledge. According to Gupta, "the historical evidence demonstrates a truly remarkable plasticity in tastes and consumption patterns" (Gupta 2012, p. 11). In this regard, this propagation of gastronomic culture can be regarded as globalization, and it can be to an extent comparable to today's technological and media globalization.

Linked to discourses of power and identity altogether, one of the themes that gained strength during the 19th century is the model of nation-states, a European notion that, like ingredients, was exported through colonisation. Indeed, metropolitan hegemonic powers started endorsing a national discourse to differentiate privileged territories from disempowered ones, in the meantime constructing the narrative of the "Other". This narrative constructed the colonized natives as eminently different from white privileged

Europeans, to legitimize the Western hegemonic position according to differences (see next section for more details).

Although nationalism have been a constant explicit theme in world politics, some argue that it might have been losing ground in the context of an increasingly globalized world, where differences seem to fade. Opposing such view, Billig (1995) introduced the concept of banal nationalism in his homonymous book to uncover the almost unnoticed ways in which nationalism is still being constructed and performed on an everyday basis. Billig finds banal nationalism, for instance, in the use of national flags, hymns and in the media through national TV channels. In this regard, I personally find the concept of banal nationalism applicable to the food discourse present in national channels such as the BBC.

2.3 Orientalist discourses and postcolonial narratives

One of the terrains in which the discriminatory tint of discourse due to power asymmetries is especially noticeable is orientalism or the construction of the cultural Other. The concept of Orientalism coined by Said (1978, cited in Hall 1992) has gained increasing relevance during the last decades, especially in post-colonialist cultural approaches such as postcolonial narrative, one of the interests of the New Left movement to which Stuart Hall belonged. Hall (1992) uncovers the ideologies behind the construction of the idea of the West, and its accompanying ideals, in contrast with the alienated and excluded East. Indeed, Hall discusses orientalist discourse or the discourse of "the west and the rest" (1992), the rest being his translation of Said's "Orient".

Hall describes the idea of the West as an historical and social construct that categorizes human beings depending not solely on their geographical spaces but on their educational level or cultural practices by means of four discursive strategies. Among them, I find the following relevant to my thesis: "idealization [….] and the tendency to impose European categories and norms, to see difference through the modes of perception

and representation of the West" (Hall 1992, p. 215). Hall describes the former as the excessive romanticization of the cultural practices of the East by framing them in an aura of mystery. That is, Hall's idealization would be another term for exoticization. An example of this would be assuming that Eastern, allegedly underdeveloped populations are living in "a pure state of nature" (Hall 1992, p. 209) rather than in a more mundane, urban way of living.

With regards to Hall's latter discursive practice, it consists in assuming that the East is underdeveloped in contrast with the West just because of their different cultural practices and behaviours, such as their economic system. Hall argues that the idea of the West is used as a standard to measure how human beings deviate from who is assumed to be 'the norm' in terms of behaviour and level of education. This "who" usually corresponds to white middle-class men. What or who deviates from this 'norm' is stereotyped as the "Other", that is, simplified with a set of fixed, homogenizing traits like underdevelopment, lower level of education or unintelligence to legitimize their subordination through colonization. Indeed, as Rosa and Flores argue:

> The construction of race was an integral element of the European national and colonial project that discursively produced racial Others in opposition to the superior European bourgeois subject […] This positioning of Europeanness as superior to non-Europeanness was part of a broader process of national-state/colonial governmentality (Flores 2013), a form of governmental racialization that imposed European epistemological and institutional authority of colonized populations worldwide as a justification for European colonialism. (Rosa and Flores 2017, p. 621)

Finally, it is this false homogeneity that Hall criticizes, for the categories of the West and the East are simplified and the variation within them erased: for "Europeans lump all distinctions together and suppress differences in one, inaccurate stereotype" (Hall 1992, p. 212).

2.4 Food discourse and world views

Food discourse has not only been limited to the propagation of knowledge about the preparation of food, but about different world views. Indeed, food discourse has been regarded as indexing particular social attitudes. To reveal such attitudes, several analyses have feen done on the food discourse present in the media, though especially in its written forms, like food criticism or advertising. We can find, for instance, an analysis of restaurant critiques from the New York times food section done by Mapes (2018). Regarding food advertising, the analysis on the marketization of carnic products in Switzerland also done by Mapes (2020) is highly interesting. In this analysis, the sociolinguist focuses on the interplay between food, market dynamics, and the evocation of nostalgia through the discourse used in the packaging and marketing of carnic products.

As I stated in Section 1, few scholars have however focused on audio-visual food discourse and only MacKenzie (2012) have focused on orientalist food discourse. Indeed, MacKenzie (2022) examines Nigella Lawson's cooking shows (available on her YouTube channel) seeking features in her food discourse that may index an orientalised version of 'the Other's cuisine', while considering Lawson's position as a privileged white British woman. MacKenzie focuses on "spice talk", the discourse Lawson uses when she incorporates spices into her plates and through which she reinforces stereotypes about Eastern communities. The scholar emphasises Lawson's storytelling, by which she tells exoticizing stories about spices and dishes. Lawson imagines spices and, extensively, their place of origin as distant, exotic, and, hence, appealing to her audience. Among the strategies that her spice talk use to index the other, MacKenzie draws attention to the construction of an oneiric, stereotyped atmosphere around the exotic places it describes in the preparation of allegedly Eastern dishes.

By analysing Lawson's spice talk food discourse, MacKenzie aims to prove that food discourse perpetuates essentialist conceptions of identity in the postcolonial world. Indeed, she states that current food discourse works as an indexing tool to assert the power of Western white culinary communities as opposed to Eastern ones, whose culinary practices are bound to be ameliorated by Western cooks, in turn legitimised as gastronomic authorities.

2.4.1 Diasporic identities

Diasporas are understood as the migration of a community, such as the South Asian, from their original country to a host country. Diasporas from former postcolonial colonies to Britain following World War Two could have eased the reconciliation between the two worlds depicted by Said (1978) and Hall (1992). However, as Hinted by Rosa and Flores (2017), rather than finishing off with discrimination against the historically alienated Orient, postcolonial diasporas boosted it. To illustrate this, scholars such as Hussain (2005) and Buettner (2012) discuss the arrival of increasing migration to the UK and the discrimination they had to face due to their culture and food practices. Buettner (2012) focuses on the catering sector and chiefly on those South Asian restaurants that have contributed to what Buettner names Britain's "curry culture" (p. 4). After opening these restaurants, immigrants had to cope with a highly racist British society that saw the discursive construction of British cuisine jeopardized. Immigrants' cultural practices, seen as "Other", were rejected, and they were expected to accommodate into British culture.

For these immigrants to find a sense of Britishness, they had to construct new identities, sometimes relying in adequation to British dominant culture, or their self-construction of a migrant identity by relying on stereotypes about their origin communities, just as Blommaert (2005) explains. To emphasize the difficulties faced by

migrants, Hussain (2005) states that their search for identity even permeated to the second and third-generation migrants – that is, those who had been born in Britain, a community to which Nadiya Hussain belongs, as will be discussed in the following section.

2.4.2 Food discourse rhetorical strategies

To construct their diasporic identity, diasporic subjects turn to several strategies, including food discourse. In this regard, some authors (Mannur 2007, Maxey 2012, Fellner 2013, Cavanaugh and Shankar 2014, Cavanaugh and Riley 2017 and Mapes 2018, 2020) identify food as a potentially semiotic and discursive device to construct identity and social allegiances. These authors focus on fictional and food literature, food criticism and/or advertising, However, I find the narrative strategies they identify extensible to food media discourse, where narrative takes a pivotal role in the construction of diasporic identities in relation to food. This is especially relevant where food media deals with exoticized dishes because it is in those instances where the characterization of food as different is made extensible to both its place of origin and its *natural* consumers.

2.4.2.1 Diasporic nostalgia

Mannur (2007) identifies a partial dememorization of the migrants' background after migration has taken place that leads to their nostalgic construction of their past. Diasporic subjects, including the migrant and their descendants, reconstruct their memories by using nostalgia and romanticizing their past. Through this process, not only do they alter the factuality of their memories, but they also construct a national diasporic identity that is heavily dependent on stereotypical representations, which do nothing but exacerbate the differences between their diasporic origins and the "host country". What is also noteworthy is that this aim to recover an almost forgotten past results from their need to construct and vindicate –though in subtle ways– a reliable identity in a setting in which they feel discriminated against (Mannur 2007).

Maxey (2012) also highlights the significance of foodways for diasporic subjects to construct their identity in the host country. She focuses on the South Asian diasporic community, for which food "has become a tired means for depicting […] diasporic life" and of "making a living by exploiting the exotic aspects of [their …] foodways" (Maxey 2012, p. 163). For the purposes of this thesis, it is worth mentioning that Maxey includes another variable in the construction of gastronomic nostalgic narratives by South Asians: family. The author maintains that food works as a "marker of ethnic identity", allowing the diasporic subject to "illustrate the tension between preserving [their] ancestral [family] heritage and the formation of new cultural and social identities" (Maxey 2012, p. 164). This is so because the diasporic subject, a term that as aforementioned works for the direct migrant and for their descendants, takes the role of the preserver of the family's culinary traditions and skills or "homeland culture" (p. 171). In other words, the diasporic subject uses food to vindicate their identity as well as the memory of their family.

This familial or diasporic nostalgia, a self-identifying strategy, can arguably not be used from an outsider perspective. Hence, Lawson's food discourse about spices (see MacKenzie 2022) cannot be considered nostalgic but orientalist, as opposed to Hussain's one (see Section 5). This distinction, however, needs further unpacking because, although some analysts (Mannur 2007, Maxey 2012 and Fellner 2013) have dealt with this type of narrative within written literature, analyses of doubly nostalgic and self-exoticizing narratives in audio-visual food media discourses have yet not been done.

2.4.2.2 Historicity and Locality

Furthermore, Mapes (2018) devises a set of rhetorical strategies present in food discourse that index elite authenticity as well as attitudes to certain social groups: historicity, simplicity, lowbrow appreciation, pioneer spirit and locality / sustainability. Among these, I find historicity and locality the most relevant ones for the purposes of this thesis.

The former focuses on "origin, longevity and continuity, tradition" (Mapes 2018, p. 271) through "nostalgia-producing narratives of origin and continuity" (p. 274) that usually involve references to the cook's background, and is, thus, connected to diasporic nostalgia (see previous subsection). The latter has to do with emphasizing the local origin and, thus, the authenticity of certain ingredients and/or food practices through "consistent references to […] sourcing of ingredients and/or environments and community practices" (Mapes 2018, p. 271).

Considering Maxey's (2012) arguments and Mapes' (2018 and 2020) rhetorical strategies, the diasporic subject seems to adopt both strategies: historicity and locality. In this thesis, historicity will be found in those instances in which Hussain resorts to the nostalgic remembering of her family life while cooking, as I will show in my analysis (see Section 5). With regards to locality, it is also linked to authenticity, described by Mannur (2007) as the strategy to present food products as faithful as possible to the original recipe by using imported ingredients and inherited culinary techniques –note the connection with Mapes (2018)– which are imagined as "Other". Mannur (2007) even links authenticity to nostalgia, which helps to authenticate foods products as national (2007, p.15).

2.4.2.3 Commodification

Cavanaugh and Shankar (2014), in turn, recognize more authenticity-constructing strategies with regards to food preparation, which I also find relevant for my analysis: the allusion to traditional producing techniques, the emphasis on the place of origin of certain ingredients and the reference to well-known stereotypes. All these strategies, according to Cavanaugh and Shankar (2014) lead to the commodification of the food products, that is, to their having an increased value for the market in which they are displayed.

3. Corpus and Methodology

In this thesis, I will analyse some fragments of the TV cooking show *Nadiya Bakes* (2021), composed of 8 episodes, initially broadcasted by the BBC and now also available on Netflix. For my analysis I will focus on the storytelling surrounding the introduction and preparation of recipes appearing in the episodes 1, 2, 5 and 7. In *Table 1*, a list of these episodes with their corresponding recipes and the excerpts in which you can find them is available:

Episodes	**Recipes and excerpt**
Episode 1	Toad in the hole (*Excerpts 2* and *4*), Victoria sponge cake (*Excerpt 5*).
Episode 2	Znoud El Sit – Lebanese treats (*Excerpt 6*).
Episode 5	Cranberry and chilli brioche (*Excerpts 1* and *3*).
Episode 7	Turmeric and ginger diamonds.

Table 1. List of episodes and recipes

My food discourse analysis methodology will be inspired by Maxey's (2012), Mapes's (2018, 2020), Cavanaugh and Riley's (2014, 2017), and MacKenzie's (2022) analyses, which move around the identification of the food discourse rhetorical strategies that index different values ways of seeing through the language use in food preparation (see Section 2.4.2). Fragments of the food discourse present in the selected episodes will be transcribed following Heller, Pietikäinen and Pujolar's (2017) minimalist transcription conventions, the most relevant words highlighted according to the degree to which they index othering, (self-) exoticisation and diasporic nostalgia. The analysis will focus on Hussain's use of two of the food rhetorical strategies identified in the literature: locality and historicity (see Section 2.4.2 for more details). I will examine these strategies bearing in mind the host's hybrid identity as a third generation British-Bangladeshi person.

4. Contextualisation: Getting to know Nadiya Hussain

Nadiya Hussain is a 39-year-old, third-generation British-Bangladeshi TV cook and cooking book author who was born in Luton (Southern UK) in 1984 in a working-class environment. She "made it into the university but never had the opportunity to go" (Hussain 2023); instead, she had to take two jobs. Later, she tried to study online through Open University, but she did not manage to finish her studies on Religion, English Language and Psychology there either. She gained international fame due to her participation and victory in the British TV show *The Great British Bake Off* (2015).

On her webpage, she does not overtly mention her Bangladeshi background. In other words, apparently, she does not seem to construct her online identity there as a third-generation British Bangladeshi or, to put it in Mannur's words (2007), as a diasporic subject. Her Muslim identity is subtly hinted, however, through her wearing an identificatory piece of clothing both in the front picture of the "about me" section of her webpage: a turban or a hijab. The decision to show herself in this way, hence, already points to her implicit vindication of her diasporic identity in Britain.

Hussain constructs her online identity as a woman who loves baking and is professionally successful. She also presents herself as an assertive and non-conformist woman but, paradoxically enough, as a traditional woman who, although develops a professional life, got married young and now devotes much of her time to home labour: as she states, she is the one in charge of cooking, doing the laundry and raising her 4 children. By stating so, she also constructs herself as both "stay-at-home mum" and a professionally successful woman: "I don't know if I can still call myself a stay-at-home mum anymore, but it feels like I am still one but with the added bonus of doing the most amazing job" (Hussain 2023).

In the BBC cooking show *Nadiya Bakes*, Nadiya openly constructs her hybrid identity as a third-generation British-Bangladeshi cook who fuses traditional British and Bangladeshi dishes. Furthermore, she makes constant references to her family homeland and the experience of her family in Britain soil after migration. In this regard, although in her website she does not explicitly mention her Bangladeshi origins, it is interesting that Hussain presents herself as a "family woman and family cook" (Hussain 2023). This connection to her family will be a significant aspect of her diasporic identity construction, which (see Section 5.1).

Hussain's decision to enact her hybrid identity both in her website –though in subtle ways– and in her cooking show, while emphasizing the fact that she lives and was born in Britain, may suggest a simultaneous need to accommodate into the British dominant culture and to preserve her inherited tradition in forms of cultural practices such as foodways.

5. Analysis

I will devote this section to the analysis of different instances of Nadiya's food discourse in the BBC cooking show *Nadiya Bakes*, that is, her language use surrounding the introduction and preparation of her recipes. In this analysis, following Cavanaugh and Riley's (2017) and Mapes' (2018 and 2020) classifications of rhetorical strategies, I will focus on historicity and locality (see Section 2.4.2).

As I will argue, the two strategies are intertwined with Hussain's search for authenticity as well as recognition of her Bangladeshi background in Britain, where the show was first broadcasted by the BBC. Regarding "historicity", I will analyse it as a strategy used by Hussain to tell nostalgic stories about her childhood memories in a familial setting, where food played a pivotal role. With regards to "locality", it is, in

Hussain's case, the strategy used to construct the dishes she prepared as authentically "Other", that is, in opposition to the gastronomic culture of the UK, her host country, so as to demarcate herself and find a place in the mainstream food industry.

5.1 Historicity: nostalgia, family, and diasporic identity

Both in the presentation and within the preparation of her recipes, Hussain tells nostalgic stories about her family background. In these stories, she constructs the identity of her family as different from the normative British family –white, middle-class and all British-born. In other words, she employs a rhetorical strategy of historicity (see Section 2.4.2.1 for more details), described by Mapes (2018) as a strategy used in food discourse to allude to the rootedness of certain food practices and products in tradition. To illustrate this, I have selected three fragments from Hussain's TV show *Nadiya Bakes.*

> Excerpt 1:
>
> NH: A recipe like this is great for a family get-together / which was what my childhood was all about // My dad is the kind of guy that would ring the landline / back in the days when we used to have landlines // Dad would ring and say / 'Open the door / I'm coming' // That's because he had a whole sheep on his back. And then he would whack on a fire / and he would **cook** // He'd ring all of us **relatives** and that's / together / maybe 45 / 50 / 60 people in one **teeny-tiny little terraced house** // We grew up **sharing** / and that has rubbed off on all of us / really //

In *Excerpt 1* we can clearly see that her nostalgic remembering of the past is linked with her family and the values associated with it: sharedness and togetherness. Hussain starts the story in *Excerpt 1* by situating it in the distant past, "in the days when we used to have landlines". After referring to her father, she describes her typical family gatherings in which the sharing of food seemed to be the unifying thread. The concept of sharing is significant here because it implies that the family was united and had a well-developed sense of togetherness. Nevertheless, what brought them was food and especially Hussain's father, who prepared it. By stating so, she may be implying that she

has inherited her gastronomic passion from him, which in turn points to food being deeply embedded in the traditional customs of her family. Arguably, she is vindicating her culinary knowledge and, thus, authority in the kitchen. In other words, by remembering the past, she is celebrating both her diasporic identity and her own gastronomic abilities.

In *Excerpt 2*, we can see how Hussain links the need to share to the historically humble economic situation of her family, initiated by her grandfather's migration to Britain and the struggles he had to face there. This is why when asked "who would be [her] perfect dinner party guest", she thinks immediately of him so as to offer him the opportunity to "have [food] all for [him]self".

> Excerpt 2:
>
> NH: I get asked all the time / who would be my perfect dinner party guest? I // You know what? / It'd be **my granddad** // He died when I was quite young / and he didn't even know me as a teenager // I'd bake him a loaf of bread and I would give him lots of butter // I'd tell him / 'This is the only time in the world **you don't have to share** // You can have it **all for yourself'** //

Finally, she refers to another differentiating aspect of her family when she describes that they all use stools to reach the kitchen surface because of their short height. After using a stool to be able to roll pastry, she explains: "my dad used the wood from my granddad's village to make us all a little stepping stool" (Hussain 2021, chapter 5). Interestingly, her father handcrafted these stools with materials imported from their diasporic homeland. This once again adds authenticity to her story and, extensively, to her culinary practises.

Scholars such as Maxey (2012) identify a purpose in diasporic cooks' and authors' insistence on traditional culinary practices. Maxey argues that food is used by them "to maintain homeland culture", one that may be in danger of extinction (2012, p. 171). In this regard, Hussain's tendency to remember her origins to vindicate her Bangladeshi

identity amidst an environment, the British context, in which she must have faced discrimination goes in line with the diasporic community tendency to

> assume responsibility for recording and celebrating, learning and therefore perpetuating South Asian culinary skills in the diaspora, these varied tributes across different forms actually spell out the fear that such skills are nearing extinction. Thus, beyond a sense that one cannot match the older generation's culinary skills, love for an ageing mother, now appreciated through the eyes of an adult rather than a child, becomes intricately and intimately bound up with the preparation and consumption of traditional foods. (Maxey, 2012, p. 169)

To add to this "nostalgic" remembering of her diasporic traditions, Hussain describes the "set of spices" Middle Eastern migrants typically take to their destiny country in order to preserve their culinary traditions intact and, as a result, a sense of national identity: "growing up, we had our set of spices that we used for our curries, and that's the way my mum taught me, and my granny and my dad taught me" (Hussain 2021, episode 7). Through this anecdote, she expresses once more her determination to keep her Bangladeshi traditions alive.

> Excerpt 3:
>
> NH: The reason why I love baking so much is because / up until the age of 20 / you know / we never used the **oven** // I know people who have grown up with parents who bake / and I / I didn't have that // Great cooks / but they didn't bake / so the oven wasn't a thing in our house //

Although Hussain's remembering of family memories, usually framed in nostalgia, may point to her vindication of her diasporic identity, there are instances in which she seems to portray a need to accommodate into British cultural mainstream so as to be recognised as one of its members. This attitude is present, for example, In *Excerpt 3*, where Hussain discusses the origin of her interest in baking. In this case, rather than focusing on her inherited familial culinary traditions, she explains that "up until the age of 20" she had not used the oven much. This was so because this household appliance

was not really used by her family, as opposed to other families. That is, she establishes differences between her family' and British families' culinary traditions. In her mind, there seem to exist two types of households: one in which the oven "isn't a thing" when it comes to cooking, and another in which people grew up with "parents who bake".

This distinction suggests that, although she has inherited her gastronomic passion from her father (see *Excerpt 1*), a second generation British-Bangladesh, she has been able to develop her baking expertise due to her living in the UK. In this country, there is a long tradition of baking, as we can see in most of its traditional recipes, usually including a dough that need to be baked: savoury recipes such as Yorkshire Pudding and "toad in the hole" and desserts like Victoria sponge cake (notice, in the following subsection, that Hussain reinterprets the last two recipes).

Overall, Hussain's nostalgic storytelling about her family's culinary customs and practices (or foodways) suggests that she wants to express her Bangladesh identity so as to demarcate herself. However, as she grew in the non-baking family, her interest in baking could have been originated by a desire to accommodate into the culture of the baking families of her host country. This ambivalence in her identification as both a Bangladeshi diasporic and a British subject through food discourse show the hybridity of her identity in a similar way to her online identification (see Section 4). This is understandable, as Hussain is a third generation British-Bangladeshi.

5.2 Locality: discourse about ingredients, othering, and difference

A further example of this differentiation among families, nationalities and their foodways is Nadiya's urge to transform traditional European recipes so as to make them appropriate for the tastes of her Bangladeshi family: Hussain "love[s] taking classic desserts and turn them into desserts that suit [her] family" (Hussain 2020, episode 5). Following Maxey's (2012) line of thought, Hussain might add spices to almost all her dishes throughout the

show to preserve some remnant of her diasporic origins through the food she prepares and consumes. Hence, she both accommodates to and alienates from the British. Indeed, by altering British traditional recipes, she gets closer to her Bangladeshi identity. She does so by introducing ingredients considered South Asian in origin, which she makes explicit through Mapes' (2018, 2020) rhetorical strategy of locality.

This strategy also allows Hussain to extend the narrative of difference, initiated with her nostalgic storytelling, from her family to the depiction of spices and other ingredients, such as "mango", "coconut" and "pistachios (see *Excerpt 4*). In fact, Hussain characterizes the Bangladesh culinary tradition as being made of different flavours than those of the British gastronomy. This "local" representation of ingredients is especially evident in her use of spices, as she constantly links these to her diasporic origins.

Hussain's differentiating strategy may be not solely aimed at preserving her Bangladeshi identity but also at presenting herself as a successful diasporic migrant and a gastronomic authority despite being non-white and non-Anglican. However, the fact that she insists on the local origin of the ingredients she uses to alter traditional recipes leads her to construct an exoticized image of spices and, extensively, to reinforce stereotypes about South Asian cuisine in general. Hussain may do so on purpose to an extent, in order to commodify (see Section 2.4.2.3) her racialised and ethicised identity on a competitive market and, more importantly, on a traditionally hegemonic institution like the BBC.

To make her food discourse –deeply inspired, as herself, by Bangladeshi odours and flavours– attractive to her BBC audience, Hussain needs to construct an exoticizing narrative of South Asian ingredients. This is evident when she refers to Middle Eastern flavours as "exotic" (see *Excerpt 6*), hence endorsing the exoticizing British discourse towards these ingredients, which are automatically overvalued and commodified.

Excerpt 4:

> NH: Toad in the hole is a comfort-food classic / and my version has a **spicy Asian kick** // I'm making my heart-warming toad in the hole with minced Lamb seekh kebabs / sweet roasted vegetables in a light and crispy batter like you've never tasted before // We're taking the sausages out and we're putting the seekh kebabs in […] If you go to an **Indian restaurant** and tell them / 'Can you make it Desi style for me?' / That means / 'Can you make it the way they make it **at home**?' // They'll add more **coriander** / more **chilies** and probably a lot more onions // So this is my **Desi style** version of toad in the hole // In goes some **garam masala** / a spicy blend with coriander and cumin, **packed with flavour**//

In *Excerpt 4* we can see how Hussain creates differences between South Asian and British cuisine so as to commodify the food she prepares –note the insistence on words such as "Asian" and "Indian" to highlight this difference. Another example is the expression "Desi style" that she uses to explain the experience of going to an Indian restaurant. This expression is typically used by diasporic subjects to refer to the act of asking for a dish prepared following the culinary methods of the diasporic family's culinary tradition, of "home". Lastly, this differentiation is also evident if we attend both to her use of personal pronouns. For instance, she repeatedly talks about the Bangladeshi culinary practices from a first-person plural perspective: "us", "we", in opposition to her description of British practices which she connects to a 'they', or, perhaps, a "you" – the British viewers of the BBC cooking show.

Hussain's categorization of Bangladeshi and British cuisines as eminently different is also visible when she emphasizes her non-conformity with so-called British traditional recipes and includes spices in their preparation. In *Excerpt 4*, for example, we can see how she proceeds to add a "spicy Asian quick" to a British recipe, toad in the hole.

Furthermore, by altering British traditional recipes, Hussain may be emphasizing not only the difference between these and Asian flavours, but the pre-eminence of the latter over the former. That is, she may be suggesting that Asian cuisine is more flavourful

than the bland European one. As Maxey puts it, Hussain is characterizing "British food, admittedly not world renowned [...] by what it is not in relation to the spicy flavours demanded by a South Asian palate" (Maxey 2012, p. 179). Hence, although she does not state the inferiority of British dishes as opposed to South Asian ones overtly, this is implicit in her aim to alter such dishes. In connection with the previous rhetorical strategy, historicity, the hybridity of the resulting recipes may result not only from Hussain hybrid identity but from a need to vindicate the traditions embodied by her family as well as well as an "intergenerational need to protect ancestral cuisine" (Maxey 2012, p. 180).

In *Excerpt 5*, Hussain also seems to endorse this narrative of the superiority of spicy Bangladeshi cuisine over the plain British one. She does so by describing Victoria sponge cake, a traditional British recipe, as a "simple old cake". The use of the adjective "old" is problematic, though: it may point to the traditional British nature of this dessert alone, or, rather, to its being old-fashioned as opposed to its "new" Bangladesh reformulation, which assumes an air of cosmopolitanism on the latter.

> Excerpt 5:
>
> NH: We're finishing off with a twist on the most classic bake of all // the Victoria sponge // I've taking the classic Victoria sponge up a notch // Filled with fruity mango / nutty coconut […] And **mango** and **coconut** / for me / those are the flavours **we** grew up with / and so to put the two together / it just takes just a **simple old cake** to somewhere completely new / **Bangladesh** even // We take **mangoes** for granted, but when **my nan first came to this country** / the one thing she really craved was mango / and she couldn't find it anywhere // So whenever my nan eats mango / even now / she gets very excited //

In her aim to alter traditional British recipes, Hussain reinterprets Victoria sponge cake, which is traditionally prepared with a vanilla buttery cake filled with a fruity cream made of heavy cream and strawberry jam. To adapt this dessert to what she considers the Bangladesh palate and "take [it] up a notch", she needs to change the fruit. Hence, instead

of strawberries, she chooses mango and adds coconut to the cake mixture. This could be a trivial change were it not for what she says immediately afterwards.

Hussain uses the word "mango" to symbolize the diasporic identity of her grandmother, who belonged to her family first generation of migrants. Broadly, her grandmother possibly personifies the identity of the diasporic Bangladeshi migrant in general. Hussain refers to the moment of her arrival to Britain, where mango had not yet been exported there. According to the cook, "the only thing [her grandmother] really craved was mango", which undoubtedly looks like an exaggeration. By stating so, Hussain seems to minimise the real issues behind migrants deciding to migrate from the homeland to ignored territories in postcolonial times, including political and economic affairs, as well as the real struggles they faced after their arrival to the European continent, such as discrimination by the British. Perhaps, as Maxey argues, the emphasis put by Hussain on the lack of this ingredient in a way epitomises the struggles faced by her family, similarly to other diasporic communities, to preserve a "sense of pride [… through] the daily preparation of traditional […] fare" (2012, pp. 165-166). In this regard, the fact that she does not assertively state this may derive from her show being broadcasted in a hegemonic institution, the BBC, and, hence, having to use an "institutionalized discourse" (Blommaert & Bulcaen 2000).

> Excerpt 6:
>
> NH: Sometimes / I want to make a dessert that's guaranteed to **impress /** and these Lebanese treats are so beautiful / they blow my mind every time I make them // These **exotic** pastries filled with fragrant orange cream are drenched in a **cardamom** and **saffron** syrup / crowned with crunchy **pistachios** […] I went to a **Middle Eastern restaurant** and saw this on the dessert menu //

Now, I want to consider a different example of exoticization in which Hussain constructs Middle Eastern food as explicitly "exotic", in contrast to her nuanced establishment of difference between Bangladeshi and British dishes. She does so in

Excerpt 6. In this case, she refers to a diasporic culinary tradition as well. Hussain may just want to recognise the similarities with her own diasporic culinary tradition, but, by describing these pastries as "exotic", she is actively commodifying them, that is, making them more alluring to her British audience.

To create this image of exotism, she starts by emphasizing the distant origin of these pastries as Lebanese. Hussain proceeds to list its spices: cardamom and saffron, as well as the use of pistachios "to give this Middle Eastern treat an authentic topping" (Hussain 2021, episode 5). The use of these ingredients in a way authenticates the exoticizing narrative Hussain is constructing around these pastries. She wants to frame them as mysterious and intriguing, and that is why they are bound to "impress" dinner guests. Finally, she refers to these pastries being prepared in a Middle Eastern restaurant that she visited and from where she took inspiration for the recipe. In short, Hussain links these pastries with Middle Eastern cuisine, which illustrates that Hussain's food discourse endorses the strategy of locality to authenticate and commodify her cuisine (see Section 2.4.2.3) while simultaneously constructing Middle East as the mysterious and idealized, exotic Other.

6. Discussion

As has been shown, the use of different rhetorical strategies, allow Hussain to construct her hybrid identity in differently ways, that is, either foregrounding or silencing certain aspects of her identity. As other diasporic subjects, Hussain may be "us[ing] food to illustrate the tension between preserving one's ancestral heritage and the formation of new cultural and social identities" (Maxey 2012, p. 164). According to this scholar, the different ways in which Hussain performs her hybrid identity reflect the second and third generation South Asian Britons' performance of biculturalism (Maxey 2012). This is why, when she expresses her knowledge of food practices and recipes, she claims an

expertise on both British and Bangladeshi traditional recipes, and this is what allows her to mix their ingredients. In Hussain's food discourse throughout her BBC cooking show, we can see a continuous tension between her vindication of her Bangladeshi diasporic origins and her othering (see Section 2.3) of her inherited diasporic culinary practices. This is so because she needs to secure her place in the British mainstream food discourse, and the only way she seems to find is through presenting herself and her cuisine as eminently different from British one.

This tension can be seen in Hussain's semiotic use of the strategy of locality with regards to spices and other ingredients (see Section 5.2). Perhaps due to the value she attaches to them, she constantly emphasizes their origin, implicitly pointing to the West and the Rest –or East– distinction that Hall (1992) and said (1978) emphasized (see Section 2.3). By doing so, rather than naturalizing Eastern ingredients and foodways, she sometimes endorses what MacKenzie's calls "spicetalk" (2022), a strategy commonly used by white privileged cooks to construct certain spices as alien and mysterious, that is, as "exotic" (see her presentation of Lebanese pastries in *Excerpt 6*). MacKenzie (2022) exposes this strategy by looking closely at Nigella Lawson, a white British privileged woman whose food discourse functions as the channel for voicing British stereotypes against the Other.

Paradoxically, given Nadiya Hussain's diasporic identity, she uses a similar narrative to Lawson's regarding "spice talk". However, as I argue, this results from Hussain's stance towards cuisine and her place in nothing less than a BBC show broadcasted initially in Britain. She is using spices both because she wants to claim cultural membership to her diasporic community and because using them is an inescapable aspect of her diasporic foodways. Furthermore, she seems to include South Asian flavours in her recipes because she subconsciously values them over British ones

(Maxey 2012). All in all, we could say that Hussain's talk about spices is not purposedly exoticizing, as opposed to Lawson's, but a strategy to authenticate and commodify (see Section 2.4.2.3) her historically racialised and exoticized diasporic identity.

Another salient strategy in Hussain's food discourse is her use of what I have called "diasporic nostalgia" (see Sections 2.4.2 and 5.1) to depict the past of her family, which is closely linked to food. It is remarkable that she focuses on her family's inherited values with relation to food: the notion of sharedness and togetherness (see *Excerpt 1*). By highlighting these qualities, she celebrates her identity in a hostile and xenophobic environment such as Brexit UK.

Due to Hussain's focus on difference, her efforts to celebrate her hybrid identity seem unsuccessful. For example, as she insists on the differences between her family and Anglican families (see *Excerpt 3*), by which she indirectly contributes to the British, and Western, mainstream discourse of difference (see Section 2.3). Thus, although she may foreground difference to vindicate the peculiarities of her hybrid identity, she ends up constructing two separate categorical groups associated with different culinary practices: either British or diasporic (see *Excerpts 4, 5* and *6*). It should be observed, nonetheless, that her food discourse is constrained by a script and, more importantly, is voiced in a traditionally hegemonic institution such as the BBC. Hence, the struggles (see *Excerpt 2*) and discrimination migrants had to face when they arrived in Britain in postcolonial times cannot be overtly exposed in this show.

7. Conclusion

In today's globalized world, there exist more opportunities than ever for diasporic communities to voice their hybrid identities. Paradoxically, in Britain, political hegemonic discourses leading to measures such as Brexit seem to have boosted prejudices

against migrants, still understood as the Other. This discourse has been expressed, for instance, through food media industry, usually by white Western privileged hosts.

Nevertheless, members of traditionally discriminated communities, such as the diasporic one, are increasingly being granted access to these places of enunciation; an example is Nadiya Hussain. However, the fact that her TV show is broadcasted on the BBC, the British national channel, makes it challenging for her to explicitly celebrate her hybrid British-Bangladeshi identity. To do so in a subtle way, she resorts to the food discourse rhetorical strategies of historicity and locality. However, these strategies, being part of the mainstream discourse, are rooted in the European dichotomy between the West and the East. This makes Hussain establish differences between British and diasporic cuisine, thus (re)producing stereotypes against her own diasporic community.

In writing this thesis, I have striven to disclose the different ways in which Hussain's food discourse constructs a differentiating, exoticizing image of her diasporic culinary culture and herself, even though she may have wanted just to celebrate it so as to frame herself as an acceptable gastronomic authority. My modest analysis has been, nonetheless, only an initial step towards the dismantling of exoticizing food discourses as voiced by historically exoticized diasporic subjects themselves. Arguably, the analysis of food discourse has lately been gaining prominence owing to the work of Cavanaugh and Riley (2017), Mapes (2018, 2020) and MacKenzie (2022), among others. Nevertheless, further research needs be conducted to expose the subtle ways in which orientalism has not ceased to exist in postcolonial times.

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