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# *Bizarre Foods: White Privilege and the Neocolonial Palate*

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## Chapter Two

### *Bizarre Foods*

#### *White Privilege and the Neocolonial Palate*

Casey Ryan Kelly

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Whiteness, that invisible and unnamed center from which all others are marked with the category of race, can be best characterized as a space of abundance. From an unmarked position of whiteness flows the private accumulation of unearned and often unacknowledged privileges. As Peggy McIntosh so aptly observes, white privilege is like an “invisible knapsack of special provisions, maps, passports, codebooks, visas, clothes, tools, and blank checks.”<sup>1</sup> Indeed, whiteness can produce a surplus of material and cultural capital, including the ability to navigate the world with ease, discernment, ethos, confidence, and relative comfort without the constraint of skin color.<sup>2</sup> Yet, in a globalized world where transnationalism and multicultural identities are celebrated as the new progressive features of a cosmopolitan marketplace, the invisible center of whiteness can seem like a cultural-less void, a bland dish desperately in need of seasoning.<sup>3</sup> Richard Dyer suggests that this white identity crisis is less attributable to the material demise of white hegemony (whose homogenizing cultural forms he suggests are actually still in ascendance) than to the mistaken perception that the imperatives of multiculturalism and globalization have displaced white supremacy. Dyer writes, “postmodern multiculturalism may have genuinely opened up space for the voices of the other, challenging the authority of the white West . . . but it may also simultaneously function as a side-show for white people who look on with delight at all the differences that surround them.”<sup>4</sup> In other words, the challenges of multicultural diversity and transnational identity to white hegemony are quite often diffused by commodifying difference into a surplus, or by absorbing racial Others into a system of white abundance. Through appropriation and consumption, bell hooks observes, “ethnicity be-



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comes spice, seasoning that can liven up the dull dish that is mainstream white culture.”<sup>5</sup> The threat of Otherness is converted into both desire and opportunity: (1) to assimilate the authentic experience of culture and color into the mundaneness of white identity without fundamentally challenging white Eurocentric privilege;<sup>6</sup> (2) to assuage the collective guilt of our racial history with narratives of progress and transcendence;<sup>7</sup> (3) govern culture and identity by the logics of a Western capitalist marketplace;<sup>8</sup> and (4), above all, to show Others how enlightened white Westerners have become by putting their appreciation and tolerance for foreign cultures on public display.<sup>9</sup>

This chapter contributes to a growing number of studies concerned with the consumption of Otherness as a strategy for disavowing whiteness and its attendant histories of racism and colonialism; it takes the metaphor of consumption quite literally by examining the practice of culinary adventurism and its representation in contemporary media culture. Culinary adventurism is, in hook’s words, the practice of “eating the Other”: vicariously experiencing cultures other than one’s own through the consumption of food indigenous to a particular locale or people.<sup>10</sup> While the practice revels in an exhilarating and open-armed celebration of difference, culinary adventurism reveals the ambivalence that is at the heart of contemporary whiteness: an identity that is at once the assumed norm, the generic template for humanity, and yet remains a lack, an absence, a meaningless void. Among many other practices of cultural appropriation, “eating the other” manages this crisis of white ambivalence by giving white Westerners the illusion of experiencing authentic Otherness through a practice that is both intimate and universal. Whites can retain the privilege of being unmarked while experiencing, and ultimately domesticating, the exhilaration of the exotic. Laura Lindenfeld suggests that when the experience is mediated, and therefore vicarious, culinary adventurism allows white Westerners to consume the Other “without ever coming into contact with actual, potentially fear-invoking racialized bodies.”<sup>11</sup> Moreover, culinary adventurism offers white audiences a pleasant and celebratory image of the globe, one in which race, geographic location, nationality, class, and gender are no longer barriers to global upward mobility. Instead, exotic cultures and their bizarre edibles seem poised to compete in the global cosmopolitan marketplace, forged by the imperatives of neoliberal globalization and sustained by the insatiable demands of a Western consumer economy.<sup>12</sup> Elspeth Probyn adds that it is this “hearty enthusiasm for ‘foreign food’ that is supposed to hide the taste of racism.”<sup>13</sup> Thus, examining culinary adventurism, its representational and rhetorical dynamics, offers a profile of how consumption (a market metaphor, bodily function, and audience viewing practice) helps stabilize whiteness that is at once under siege by multiculturalism but delighted by its potential abundance.

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The practice of culinary adventurism has long been a popular ritual among Western tourists, as has been their effort to document, represent, and understand the experience.<sup>14</sup> In the past ten years, there has been an explosion of popular ethnographic and tourist television that explores global culture through the culinary experience.<sup>15</sup> On The Food Network, The Cooking Channel, and The Travel Channel (all Scripps-owned networks), Western audiences are offered the vicarious experience of eating exotic edibles across the globe without either having to leave their home or actually consume the risky cuisine ingested by the program's intrepid hosts. Popular programs include The Food Network's *\$40 a Day*, *Appetite for Adventure*, *Have Fork/Will Travel*, *Mario Eats Italy*, *Ming's Quest*, *Rachel Ray's Tasty Travels*, *The Thirsty Traveler*; the Cooking Channel's *A Cook's Tour*, *Eat Street*, *Food Crawl with Lee Anne Wong*, *Giada in Paradise* and *Jamie's Food Escapes*; and The Travel Channel's *Bizarre Foods with Andrew Zimmern*, *Dangerous Grounds*, *Man vs. Food Nation*, *No Reservations*, *Samantha Brown*, and *The Layover*. Similarly, Helene Shugart finds the simultaneous emergence of an array of other "sumptuous texts" in U.S. feature films, that for her illustrate a broader latent desire among Westerners to domesticate Otherness through the experience of food. In light of the genre's popularity, this chapter examines how the televised food adventure manages the racial and cultural differences that threaten white supremacy and white privilege in a globalized, postcolonial world. As an exemplary case study, I examine the Travel Channel's hit program *Bizarre Foods with Andrew Zimmern*, a light-hearted chronicle of a Western culinary explorer sampling foods considered to be "acquired tastes," otherwise exotic, inedible, or disgusting to most mainstream white audiences. First, I argue that host Andrew Zimmern's delighted consumption of mealworms, grubs, spiders, rodents, and other foods considered to be inedible in most parts of the Western world mediates the crisis of white identity by constructing and then assimilating the exotic into the abundance of white privilege. Second, consuming radical Otherness (even if it disgusts) contributes to a narrative of Western exceptionalism whereby tolerance and cultural appreciation signal the transcendence of global power inequities and validate the superiority of Western democratic values. Finally, because the Other must be rendered exotic enough to be considered authentically cultural, especially when contrasted with the blank slate of whiteness, *Bizarre Foods* ultimately reinforces the difference between self and Other; an Other permitted to exist according to what suits the Western palate. In accordance with the goal of this volume, I show how the commodification and cultural appropriation of Otherness evinces the durability and resilience of white hegemony and contemporary Orientalism against the globalizing forces of cosmopolitanism that might uproot its dominance.





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## AN APPETITE FOR DIFFERENCE

[2.3]

Thomas Nakayama and Robert Krizek explain that whiteness is a “strategic rhetoric,” a malleable set of discourses, performances, and everyday talk that imply the normalcy and desirability of white identities and experiences.<sup>16</sup> Whiteness is operative, often unconsciously, in discourses that mark Others as different by virtue of their deviation from the implied norm of white skin color, geography, history, cultural practice, and even consumer items. As whiteness exempts white identities from the scrutiny of visibility, it privileges nonracialized bodies with the structural capacity to navigate the world with presumption and superiority. As a strategic rhetoric, whiteness not only operates through the negation of racialized bodies, but also through “feel-good” tropes of reverence and appreciation for authentic racial difference. Put differently, when the privileged normality of whiteness transforms into an experience that is dull and prosaic, and when the world’s diversity seems on the precipice of displacing the invisible center, white culture eradicates the threat through assimilation and domestication. Bringing racial and cultural difference within the fold enables mainstream white culture to transcend and disavow its racial ambivalence without ceding its privilege. Eric King Watts and Michael Orbe suggest that the consumption of racial difference and cultural authenticity as *sameness* disguises how “blackness as *otherness* is annexed and appropriated as a commodity and hides from view the fact that American culture exhibits a profound ambivalence toward ‘authentic’ blackness.”<sup>17</sup> Paradoxically, consuming the cultural forms of people of color allays white ambivalence by rendering the experiences and expressions of others to be both universal and distinct. Watts and Orbe suggest the importance of attending to “how the act of consumption transforms the relation between the consumer and the consumed.”<sup>18</sup> What pleasures are amplified by the consumption of “authentic difference”? Does incorporating difference into mainstream culture contribute to the long-term durability of whiteness? Indeed, the ability of white culture to simultaneously incorporate racial difference as a kind of universality and yet still mark Others as distinctive and authentic speaks to the strategic flexibility of whiteness. Moreover, this reflects white ambivalence not only about racialized subjects, but also about the privileges and inadequacies of whiteness itself. Thus, this chapter considers how mediated consumption of Otherness in popular culture seeks to replenish whiteness by embracing the discourses and experiences that might displace white hegemony as the global norm.

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Many critical communication scholars suggest that the rhetoric of Western imperialism and otherwise overt defense of white hegemony have been eclipsed by the representational celebrations of authentic difference, progressive democratic narratives extolling the emancipatory forces of neoliberal globalization, declarations of universal human rights, and appeals to benevo-

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lent humanitarianism, only to name a few.<sup>19</sup> These scholars suggest that whiteness and Western privilege are now most effectively maintained by discourses that accommodate, rather than explicitly prohibit, Otherness. Difference can therefore be rendered useful, pleasurable, even titillating to white onlookers besieged by a complicated world of fragmented and hybrid identities. Others can be permitted to exist by virtue of what they can productively contribute to white Western experiences.<sup>20</sup> With consumption also comes the power to manage and regulate what differences are allowed to be a part of the cosmopolitan marketplace. Wendy Brown contends that tolerance, a prominent feature of contemporary neoliberal governance, is “a posture of indulgence toward what one permits or licenses, a posture that softens or cloaks the power, authority, and normativity in the act of tolerance.”<sup>21</sup> Ultimately, white Western culture will determine which kind of cultural differences are authentic, meaningful, and tasteful. Meanwhile, the magnanimity and earnestness with which white culture conducts this exercise disguise the power and privilege of deciding which cultural differences constitute a world that remains entertaining and safe for white Westerners. For instance, in a program like *Bizarre Foods*, the portly white host invites his Western audience to vicariously taste the bounty of the lesser-developed world and decide what is edible or revolting to the Western palate. Here, globetrotting tests the boundaries of Western tolerance by discerning which cultural practices are permissible within the universal experience of food.

**[2.6]**

Paradoxically, to consume and celebrate difference under the banner of sameness and unity requires that differences be so distinct and authentic that it clearly demarcates self from other. Thus, for the contrast to be stark, the logical limits of consumption extend into the realm of the exotic, a vision of racial Others as mysterious, primitive, bizarre, and romantic. The history of representing the exotic “Orient” in literature, art, anthropology, journalism, travel writing, and later in film and television, satisfies the desire to domesticate and ultimately control Otherness while confirming the superiority of Euro-American modernities. As Edward Said argues, the Orient itself is a construct of Western discourse, invented as a way “dealing with it by making statements about it, authorizing views of it, describing it by teaching it, settling it, ruling over it.”<sup>22</sup> The Orient is a geography constructed in discourse alone, a place that is at once barbaric, mysterious, exotic, romantic, primitive, threatening, repulsive, and alluring. While consumption contributes to a narrative of difference as sameness, for whiteness to be replenished the exotic must be continually renewed and held at arms length. Anthropologist Stephen William Foster explains that “to domesticate it [the exotic] exhaustively would neutralized this aspect of its meaning and regretfully integrate it into the humdrum of everyday routines.”<sup>23</sup> The primitive, the “exotic,” or the experience of non-Western modernity must continually be invented so that it can adequately provide adventure, “spice,” and diversity to





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the white Western world without fundamentally challenging the categories of us/them, modern/primitive, light/dark, first world/third world, and civilized/savage that have historically licensed the West to colonize and dominate the globe. In this way, the televised food adventure can be read as a neocolonial rhetoric, a masked and updated discourse shaped by assumptions and inferences derived from the long history of Western colonialism. Beneath Zimmerman's hearty and quite earnest embrace of global food cultures lie a set of colonialist assumptions that the non-Western world is a place of mystery, torn between tradition and modernity, and the starting point for romantic adventures.<sup>24</sup>

The mediated culinary adventure is a useful site at which to examine how whiteness remains durable in a world that increasingly commemorates, if at least nominally, our supposed "post-racial" multicultural moment.<sup>25</sup> Scholars who study the communicative and cultural practices surrounding foodways explain that food is a significant marker of cultural identity and is therefore a conspicuous symbol of global power differentials.<sup>26</sup> Patterns of food consumption often represent vast disparities in income, geography, accessibility, and cultural values. For instance, the United Nations recently advocated the consumption of insects as an alternative sustainable protein source but acknowledged that "consumer disgust" in the West remains the primary impediment to their adoption.<sup>27</sup> In parts of Asia, South America, and Africa insects have long been a significant protein source because they are cheap and widely accessible. The Western palate remains a significant force in not merely determining global food trends, but as a marker for what cultural practices are allowed to participate in the spirit of multiculturalism. Moreover, discourses about global food cultures and consumption patterns access the tensions between universality (i.e. the *sameness* of food needs) and difference (i.e., the *otherness* of exotic foods). An increasing number of scholars explain that the intimacy of food makes consumption practices an important site that marks the separation between Western self and exotic Other. In his study of Western attitudes toward the notorious durian fruit, Alan Han argues that, "food consumption works to construct a distinction between race-abject-Other-bodies, and clean white eaters"<sup>28</sup> Scholars such as Michael Dietler, Lisa Heldke and Laura Lindenfield explain that food is the primary means by which Westerners begin to exoticize and essentialize the differences between themselves and others.<sup>29</sup> Shugart adds that representations of culinary adventurism are, at root, "templates for the desire and consumption of otherness more broadly, including as market practices, establishing the terms for them in such a way as to restablize privilege against the threat that they pose."<sup>30</sup> I add that representations of food and global culinary experience serve as one of several primary vehicles by which white Westerner subjects are invited to embrace their position of superiority in a globalized world. That is to say, the televised food adventure positions that Western

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audience to see a globalized, cosmopolitan world as an emporium of exotic delights, exhilarating experiences, colorful people, romantic traditions, and pastoral landscapes seemingly untouched by Western modernity. Instead of seeing a world plagued by famine and poverty, white Western audiences are invited to see the world as a source of titillating food trends that spice up the drab dish that is mainstream culture. They are given the power to symbolically carve up the world according to taste and choose which culture's edibles to integrate and which to keep at arm's length. Food consumption and the consumption of food television mediate, manage, and reproduce difference in a controllable form. Here, the consumption of Otherness establishes a multicultural world that helps stabilize, sanitize, and replenish the privilege of whiteness.

**[2.8]**

The growing popularity of exotic culinary adventurism and foreign food television in the United States reflects the emerging multicultural and cosmopolitan ethos of contemporary neoliberal globalization.<sup>31</sup> Where corporate globalization seeks to open new markets, globally source inexpensive labor, and internationalize global capital flows, it leads the way in extolling the virtues of multiculturalism represented as a diverse world community united by what is presented as a common economic imperative.<sup>32</sup> The construction of a delightful world of digestible cultural experiences renders the practice of consumption a progressive endorsement of multiculturalism. Scholars such as Henry Giroux, Bradley Jones, Roopali Mukharejee, Raka Shome, Radha Hedge, and Darrel Wanzer, among others, suggest that this discourse of "neoliberal multiculturalism" presents a world in which race and culture are valuable commodities in a cosmopolitan marketplace, as opposed to a time when they were substantive barriers to social and economic justice.<sup>33</sup> Thus, in the discourse of neoliberal multiculturalism, Western consumerism positively monetizes the Western experience of the global South while elevating the act of consumption to racial transcendence. The problem with this rhetoric goes beyond its unproblematic faith in market capitalism as the solution to many of the long-standing global inequalities it, in part, helped to create. The larger failure is that this rhetoric is entirely ahistorical, silent on the legacies of Western colonialism and exploitation that continue to structure the relationship between "first" and "third" world. As Shome and Hedge elaborate,

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The liberal approach to multiculturalism is couched in a sanitized version of difference where the unspoken centers of power, and the normativity of whiteness, remain unquestioned. This cosmetic approach to multiculturalism does not question the systemic structures of power nor does it touch the contradictions and tensions written into the realities of everyday life. This is the colonial legacy that postcolonial criticism marks, unpacks, and questions.<sup>34</sup>







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When adventurous consumption, cultural appropriation, and fascination with the exotic are situated within ongoing histories of colonialism, the discourses of neoliberal multiculturalism show themselves to be driven by the same set of assumptions and imperatives: to absorb the threat and allure of difference. Therefore, Lindenfield argues that the consumption of Otherness—as both a bodily process and experience of mediated voyeurism—must be “considered within the framework of racist, sexist, and, neocolonialist society.”<sup>35</sup> As such, the remainder of this chapter explore the dynamics of whiteness, consumption, and neoliberal multiculturalism in *Bizarre Foods* to show how the seemingly innocuous televised food adventures contributes to a much larger process of stabilizing a world order that is sanitized for racism and colonialism, exciting but ultimately secure for white privilege.

[2.10]

### THEY ARE WHAT YOU EAT

[2.11]

*Bizarre Foods with Andrew Zimmern* is a serial one-hour travel documentary in which former chef and dining critic Andrew Zimmern seeks out, samples, and explains the production processes of regional cuisines around the globe that might be considered strange or disgusting to many Americans. The program is shot on location, narrated by Zimmern, and focuses on a specific region of the globe in each episode. The producers of the program put Zimmern in contact with local guides, restaurateurs, chefs, food manufacturers, and translators to help him find foods that according to the show “stray far from the normal culinary path.” Episodes typically feature visits to local food markets and street vendors, a home-cooked meal with a local family, and a wilderness or ocean hunt for delicacies that are more difficult to find in urban markets. Each show provides an interactive map that charts Zimmern’s travels over a multi-day journey. On the screen texts appear throughout the episode to provide background information such as country demographics, explanations of cultural rituals witnessed on camera, and facts about the production of specific food items. After originally airing as a highly rated stand-alone one-hour documentary titled *Bizarre Foods of Asia*, the Travel Channel began production of the first season in 2006. Since 2007, *Bizarre Foods* has aired six seasons that includes seventy-six episodes. The program’s success has resulted in several spin-off programs hosted by Zimmern, including *Bizarre World*, *Bizarre Foods America*, and *Border Check*. *Bizarre Foods* is one of the most popular programs on the Travel Channel. Along with *No Reservations* and *Man v. Food*, *Bizarre Foods* is credited by Travel Channel spokespersons with boosting the networks ratings by 35 percent in their first two years (up 46 percent with its 18–49 audience).<sup>36</sup>

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Since making the leap from chef and dining columnist to television, Zimmerman has become an evangelist and unofficial U.S. ambassador for “exotic” global cuisine.<sup>37</sup> In 2010, Zimmern was awarded Outstanding TV Food Personality by the James Beard Foundation.<sup>38</sup> He is now a popular columnist, blogger, celebrity endorser, talk show guest, and now a go-to expert on adventurous food. As an international brand, Zimmern now promotes everything from Eyebob Eyewear to Pepto-Bismol.<sup>39</sup> With slogans like “If it looks good eat it!” and “Experiencing food, sharing culture,” Zimmerman’s intrepid persona fits perfectly within the cosmopolitan brand identity cultivated by the Travel Channel.<sup>40</sup> Indeed, *Bizarre Foods* benefits from not only a growing interest in culinary tourism and food programming, but also the growing media brand of Scripps networks. The Travel Channel is available in approximately 96 million U.S households. *Bizarre Foods* is embedded in a line up of similar adventure-style programming targeted at relatively affluent American consumers interested in domestic and international travel, human interest, food, geography, and foreign culture. In short, the Travel Channel and *Bizarre Foods* are marketed to a highly educated, progressive, and cosmopolitan consumer. The Travel Channel boasts that their brand “is a place for consumers to experience great storytelling, shared human connections, and engaging talent that celebrate the surprising encounters that happen right here and right now. The Travel Channel personality is authentic, inquisitive, surprising and fun. It’s open-eyed and open-minded, living in the moment, and finding surprises where others might not see them.”<sup>41</sup> *Bizarre Foods*, its audience, and the paratexts that surround it make it an exemplary program with which to explore the relationship between culinary adventurism and the mediation of whiteness. In this analysis, I examine the first season of *Bizarre Foods*, which includes twelve episodes and the one-hour documentary pilot titled *Bizarre Food’s of Asia*. The first season offers a template of the program’s generic features that are replicated throughout the later seasons, including plot, style, framing choices, production values, and dialogue. I examine the recurring patterns throughout the season, each episode a fragment contributing to a larger narrative about food and culture. I analyze the ways in which Zimmern contextualizes and translates his experiences to the audience, attending to narration as well as dialogue deployed by Zimmern as a sense making device. Piecing together these fragments evinces a kind of patterned response in Western culture to the challenges of confronting difference, showing how the program implicitly accesses much larger discourses of neoliberal multiculturalism, whiteness, and neocolonialism.





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THE ABJECT/EXOTIC

[2.14]

To authenticate a world of excitement and cultural diversity beyond the invisible center, *Bizarre Foods* seeks out cuisine and experiences that are perhaps the most incommensurate with Western norms of cleanliness and appropriateness. As Zimmern quips, “there’s nothing like gnawing on a turtle leg to immerse yourself in another’s culture.”<sup>42</sup> The program gauges the authenticity of the Other by how much their cultural rituals and foodways test the limits of the white West’s most sacrosanct food taboos. While the program tries to maintain a stance of objectivity and reserve judgment, the audience is positioned as the assumed norm from which all-else deviates. Regardless of Zimmern’s enjoyment or displeasure, the invisible audience, or what one might call the vicarious voyeur, is the implied auditor of the pleasure and authenticity of the experience. The program is less interested in the everyday and the routine than it is the extremes of another’s food culture. After all terms like “bizarre” and “strange” only acquire meaning when they are contrasted against a state of normalcy, natural order, or a set of acceptable behaviors. By seeking out the most extreme forms of deviance from the experience of the audience (and in many cases the region itself), the program engages the Other at the moment in which they might seem the most repellent, primitive, and backward.

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The program finds a kind of radical Otherness that can be vicariously consumed without being fully incorporated. To remain exotic, a foreign culture must be continually tethered to a feeling of strangeness and dis-ease that cannot be assimilated into the norm. *Bizarre Foods* continually renews this sense of exoticism by aligning authentic difference with disgust. To use a metaphor of consumption, the program constructs a kind of difference that can be consumed with nose held, but will eventually be expelled. In fact, *Bizarre Foods* revels in disgust. The menu includes but is not limited to pig testicles, chicken uterus, frog heart, lizard sake, poisonous blowfish, turtle, bird’s nests, unfertilized duck eggs, putrid lamb meat, coconut grubs, mosquito eggs, ant larva, organ meat, intestines, stomach, blood, and bile. By “bizarre,” it is clear that the program means foods that will likely provoke revulsion in a mainstream Western audience. In this regard, the program finds foods that are threatening, dangerous, polluting, taboo, and above all, abject. Abjection is a state of filth, degradation, and monstrosity, a hidden or taboo element that has been cast off from the self.<sup>43</sup> Julia Kristeva explains that the abject is the “immoral, sinister, scheming, and shady: a terror that disassembles, a hatred that smiles, a passion that uses the body for barter instead of inflaming it, a debtor who sells you up, a friend who stabs you.”<sup>44</sup> Food revulsion sets aside or expels unclean and improper elements from the self, forming the subject “I” that separates it from “other.” As Kristeva writes, “food loathing is perhaps the most elementary and most archaic form

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of abjection” (p. 2). In *Bizarre Foods*, the abject serves as a form of demarcation between the Western audience its unclean Other. As fascinating as their culture may be, the authentic Other is rendered disgusting; lacking refinement, manners, and above all taste. The consumption of exotic culture flirts with but ultimately demands that the Other be cast off as a reaffirmation of the Western self. Moreover, by conflating authentic culture with disgust, the program confirms the controlled and civilized nature of Western eating practices while relegating the filth and monstrosity of more primitive consumption cast off by the West when it embraced modernity.

[2.17]

Throughout the program, disgust and exoticism transform the cultures and places depicted in each episode into a spectacle of primitive eating. This process is enhanced by a number of common tropes featured in each episode. First, the program constructs non-Western cultures as being closer to their food sources and, therefore, more connected to primitive traditions, ancient rituals, and the premodern past. For instance, when viewing bugs and live fish at a Tokyo market, Zimmern generalizes that “Asians are very close to their food source.”<sup>45</sup> In the Philippines he explains how the open-air market is a sign of culinary “pride . . . without any modern trappings.”<sup>46</sup> Delighted by a traditional meal of coconut grubs and cows stomach soup he remarks “for me making traditional dishes . . . brings us closer to our past and reconnects us to our food source.”<sup>47</sup> While greater awareness of where our food comes from seems to be a valuable insight, it is framed as a practice associated with a premodern way of life, or a deviation from a fast-paced civilized existence. Additionally, people in South America, Africa, and Asia are depicted as more in tune with nature and, therefore, more willing to accept food that is considered unclean in most parts of the United States. For instance, in Ecuador he remarks, “like most cultures around the world, Ecuadorians eat all parts of the animal.”<sup>48</sup> If this is indeed the case, then why is Ecuadorian cuisine considered bizarre at all? If anything, the repetition of experiences involving the “whole animal” throughout the series should lead one to conclude that Western nations are perhaps wasteful and deviant in contrast to global food culture. Yet, for *Bizarre Foods*, being close to one’s food source and using the whole animal are romanticized as being part of an idyllic past; a history the Euro-American world discarded in the process of building an industrialized civilization. Its deviance from modernity, not from the accepted foodways of most of the world, is what makes head-to-tail cuisine “bizarre.” As Zimmern quite frequently laments, modern conveniences are “slowly replacing traditional ways.”<sup>49</sup> It is this perception of Western temporality that explains why he instinctively knows “with a larger indigenous population its also home of some of the most bizarre foods.”<sup>50</sup> What the show ultimately marks is the difference between clean, modern cuisine and primitive rituals of eating that involve knowledge and respect for the food source.





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Second, the program suggests that there are some foods that Westerners are literally unable to consume. This contention not only saves Zimmern from eating exceptionally bizarre foods but, more importantly, confirm the incommensurability of Western and non-Western cuisine. Even the most seasoned and intrepid adventurer will have their limits tested, and ultimately reestablished. When transitioning from commercial, Zimmern often provides a teaser in which he suggests that he is going to find “the most bizarre foods we can stomach.”<sup>51</sup> While showing respect for the practice, Zimmern explains that saving all parts of the animal “goes a bit too far for me.”<sup>52</sup>

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He even turns down sausage at an open market because there is “too much funky stuff in there for my Western system.”<sup>53</sup> After he attempts to consume fermented tofu in Taiwan he concedes that “its just too putrid and foul for me.”<sup>54</sup> In another episode, when confronted with the pungent durian fruit in Thailand, Zimmern gags while proclaiming that “it tastes like completely rotten mushy onions.”<sup>55</sup> At the end of the episode, Zimmern jests that, “all I feel like right now is just a cheeseburger.”<sup>56</sup> Viewing Zimmern’s limits helps allay any audience’s fears that their own tastes may be too pedestrian and mundane for a cosmopolitan society. At the same time, it also confirms that some food cultures are simply beyond the pale. In other words, even an open-armed embrace of the Other has limitations and some differences are insurmountable. Even though Zimmern and his audience may celebrate the difference that he encounters, they can remain certain that there are indeed significant differences that demarcate the first and third world. The fantasy of the cheeseburger at home provides a remedy for the spectacle of primitive eating and confirms the safety and comfort of modern amenities not available to most of the world. Representations of abject/exotic cuisine help mark the separation between modern/ primitive, civilized/savage, and clean/unclean.



## IMPERIALIST NOSTALGIA

[2.19]

Renato Rosaldo argues that one of the many ironies of imperialism is that it produced in Western nations an antithetical yet romantic longing for the things and people it destroyed.<sup>57</sup> “Imperialist nostalgia” was a way by which Westerners could absolve their feelings of guilt associated with conquest and transform from “responsible colonial agent into an innocent bystander.”<sup>58</sup> Nostalgia of this kind is operative in discourses that romanticize the beauty and simplicity of the precolonial world and lament the seemingly inevitable yet tragic onslaught of Western modernity.<sup>59</sup> It is also a discourse that implicitly excludes the survivors of colonialism from modernity. Whereas Western civilization evolves as it marches forward, the authentic cultural tradi-

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tions of non-Western societies are seen as ancient, unchanging, and part to a distant and irretrievable past.

**[2.21]**

*Bizarre Foods* is symptomatic of a long history of imperialist ambivalence toward the cultures it eradicated. To make Zimmern's encounter with traditional foods more meaningful, the program embraces a sentimental posture toward cultural practices that are in jeopardy of extinction. Whereas Western civilization is dynamic and universalizing, non-Western culture clings to tradition, moves slowly, and resists change. This posture is expressed in program through voice-over narration, in which Zimmern attempts to summarize (often overgeneralizing) the culture and history of the country or region he has explored. For instance, in Thailand Zimmern describes "mystical Chang Mai" as an a place with "enthraling scenery, ancient temples, [and] elephant rides."<sup>60</sup> He explains that here one would find "a simpler way of life" and feel as if they were "going back in time," an experience "exotic to most Westerners."<sup>61</sup> In the Philippines, he expresses admiration for the "quaint" villages that populate the countryside, remarking that the country's lack of paved roads made it a kind of "prehistoric setting from a dinosaur movie."<sup>62</sup> Similarly, while surrounded by snake charmers and carnival performers in an open-air market, Zimmern notes that Morocco is a nation that "embraces its Berber history" and is "mysterious and exotic."<sup>63</sup> Despite all the pressures of modernity, "the lifestyle here [Morocco] has remained unchanged for a thousand years."<sup>64</sup> In the context of the bizarre, Zimmern's contextualizing explanations position these regions outside of modernity. They provide a present-day referent for a simple and bucolic world that existed before the imposition of Western colonialism.

**[2.22]**

Though his tone is reverent, Zimmern's narration implicitly consigns non-Western traditions to the ancient past. For these regions to be considered "modern" would require them to update or abandon their "primitive traditions" altogether. This is evident in Zimmern's description of non-Western societies as trapped between two worlds. He frequently refers to foreign places as lands of "contrast," suggesting that non-Western nations have yet to reconcile their primitive traditions with modern living. For example, he contends that the Japanese "revere tradition but worship trend setting."<sup>65</sup> He also describes Quito as "a tale of two cities: old town and new town" a city with a "more modern way of life" that "still celebrates food culture despite its surroundings."<sup>66</sup> In a romantic tone, he explains that Ecuador's proximity to the Amazon Rainforest provides an opportunity for Westerns to still "experience that way of life."<sup>67</sup> Moreover, the persistence of traditionalism amidst modern amenities implies the ongoing presence of pre-modern beliefs in magic and mysticism. In Taiwan he notes that, "many Taiwanese feel a spiritual connection to the land."<sup>68</sup> As the camera depicts a bustling financial district contrasted with a background of tropical mountains bathed in fog, Zimmern says, "contrast that vibe with the symbols of modern Asia."<sup>69</sup>





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He marvels at their engineering and financial feats while expressing amazement that the Taiwanese have “a keen sense of upholding tradition” and that “the Taiwanese food scene looks forward and backwards.”<sup>70</sup> As he meanders through markets of medicinal foods, he surmises that Taiwan is a “magical blend of ancient and modern.”<sup>71</sup> Similarly, in Vietnam the show depicts a man who believes that the consumption of cobra hearts and blood has “magical” healing properties.<sup>72</sup> Overall, the East is represented by stereotypes of mysticism, torn between its primitive medicinal culture and its modern acumen for engineering and finance. Throughout each episode, Zimmern locates the bizarre in the ancient and mysterious traditions “handed down from generation to generation.”<sup>73</sup> Indeed, there seems to be nothing magical or mystical about modern mass produced cuisine or foreign foods already appropriated by Western nations. In sum, when the show is in Asia, Africa, or South America, it only considers cuisines that can be linked to the region’s ancient past or reflects a struggle between primitive and modern eating. The show romanticizes primitive eating and laments the modern industrial society that destroyed it.

Yet, the program is relatively silent about the consequences of historic colonialism on each region’s culture and cuisine. If colonialism is referenced, it is always as something that adds “spice” to the local cuisine and explains the beauty and diversity of the region’s people. In Trinidad and Tobago, Zimmern explains that the beauty of the buildings harkens “back to the colonial occupation.”<sup>74</sup> This “picturesque place” shows the audience how European colonials “all left their mark on the island.”<sup>75</sup> Today, the audience is told the country is “melting pot of cultures . . . celebrating our common cultural love for great food.”<sup>76</sup> In the Philippines, he praises the nation’s cultural hybridity for enhancing the local cuisine. From the “remnants of the Spanish occupation” the audience is offered a “spicy checks mix” or figurative “melting pot.”<sup>77</sup> As these examples illustrate, colonial histories are only referenced as advantageous for each region and the tourists who take in its natural beauty. Though the show cannot give an exhaustive history of each region it visits, glib references to colonialism and culture hybridity as alluring features for the adventurous eater elides the pain and suffering inflicted by colonization. Zimmern becomes a passive bystander who remains unconnected to the colonial legacies he casually references. His romantic posture keeps the darker histories of colonialism out of the picture, leaving the audience with images of happy natives serving tourists unaffected by histories of imperialism.

[2.23]





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[2.24]

## THE MODERN BIZARRE AND THE PRIMITIVE WITHIN

[2.25]

*Bizarre Foods* features several episodes in the United States and Europe. This includes an episode in Spain, the United Kingdom, Alaska, the U.S. Gulf Coast, and New York City. These episodes vacillate between exoticizing the poor, marginalized, and otherwise unincorporated populations within modern nations and announcing the triumphant and quite scientific mastery of the bizarre by elite Euro-American restaurateurs. For the former, the program seeks out cuisines of necessity, born of poverty and oppression. Throughout his tour of the Gulf Coast—which includes some of the poorest rural regions in the United States—Zimmern focuses on “soul food,” a food tradition that traces its roots to American slavery.<sup>78</sup> “Soul food” refers to cuisine made up of the “lesser cuts” of meat and produce deemed inedible by whites and thus left to the slave class. Historically, cooking soul food is about making do with the scraps of the slaveholder and white bourgeois society. Zimmern’s tour of the American South involves samplings of chitterlings (pig intestine), nutria, squirrel, alligator, and other foods historically considered inedible by the white Southern elite. Though soul food has a more mainstream presence in the United States today, it is “bizarre” because it represents the experience of those excluded from modern America: African Americans, the poor, and the dispossessed. Like the exotic abroad, the bizarre within are closer to their food source, cling to tradition, and defy assimilation into mainstream culture. Zimmern describes the rural South as a place with “mystical bayous” and where “the people are spicy, earthy, and full of character.”<sup>79</sup>

[2.26]

In Alaska, Zimmern spends a majority of his time exploring the cuisine of Alaskan Native and Aleutian nations. Here he also finds a land of “mystery” populated by food traditions based in basic survival. In this episode, Zimmern samples several varieties of seal, whale (and whale fat), preserved white fish, moose, and other wild game. He describes Alaska as a “final frontier, raw, rugged,” where the people “retained customs” by “living off the land.”<sup>80</sup> As a result, it is “a land that is as wild as the food provides.”<sup>81</sup> In this episode, Alaska’s exoticism is derived from the fact that it has not been fully conquered and subdued by its inhabitants. Its Native residents “make do” to survive the harsh landscape. What makes Alaska bizarre is its likeness to the regions of South American, Africa, and Asia in the episodes analyzed earlier in this analysis. Alaskans remain tied to a primitive past, rich in tradition, and unable to be fully assimilated by Western modernity. By exoticizing the cuisine and culture of the poor, the marginalized, and the unassimilated, *Bizarre Foods* invites the audience to view the programs subjects from a position of privilege and abundance. In other words, what makes soul food “bizarre” is that it repurposes the scraps of elite







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white cuisine; yet, it offers a new realm of cuisine once discarded by mainstream culture. It could only be considered deviant or exotic from the position of someone who has not been forced to consider eating the lesser cuts. Thus, the primitive within is the subject marked by food habits of those without racial and economic privilege. At the same time, white culture would like a second chance to sample the cuisine that it once discarded.

By contrast, Europe is valorized for both its technical mastery of the bizarre and its ability to update their traditions to modern times. In Spain, Zimmern is treated to a five-star meal at a restaurant (El Bulli) renowned for molecular gastronomy, a modern cooking technique that creates flavor profiles, textures, and appearance of ingredients by manipulating their physical and chemical properties.<sup>82</sup> Zimmern describes the restaurant as a “flavor laboratory” led by the “father of molecular gastronomy.” His experience was “scientific” and “beyond comprehension.”<sup>83</sup> Spain’s food culture is praised for harnessing Western scientific know-how to master the bizarre, to control and manipulate ingredients to produce any flavor or texture the chef desires. El Bulli is portrayed as an industrial machine, staffed by food engineers and technicians testing, observing, manipulating, and torturing each morsel until it produces the exact taste they desire. In modern Spain, the bizarre is an intentional result of academic discipline, advanced knowledge of chemistry and physics, and complete mastery of the craft of cooking. In the show’s depiction of Europe, the bizarre symbolizes the triumph of modernity and its ability to enliven the mundane experience of eating. A key distinction is how European chefs see the role of tradition. Whereas in places like Morocco, Ecuador, and the Philippines, traditions tether people to their primitive pasts, in Spain, Zimmern explains, they “understand the values of tradition but embrace the unique and the bizarre.”<sup>84</sup> For Europeans, to be bizarre is a choice and privilege, not an innate characteristic that defines their history and identity.

[2.27]

In the United Kingdom, however, *Bizarre Foods* suggest that the triumph is in the country’s ability to bring back spice and exoticism to what was notoriously bland cuisine. Zimmern suggests that British food has experienced a renaissance that makes it both familiar and intriguing. He proclaims that the United Kingdom is “back on top of the food chain,” primarily because a “populist food movement” is reviving traditions that give British food character.<sup>85</sup> The bizarre aspects of new British cuisine are presented as familiar, comforting, and nonthreatening. For instance, Zimmern remarks that, “even if you’ve never been to the UK before, the moment you arrive it feels familiar.”<sup>86</sup> After a five-star meal consisting of wild hare and poultry, he explains “if game birds were cooked like this in other countries, more people would eat them.”<sup>87</sup> This comment suggests that what seems to be remarkable about new British cuisine is its ability to make bizarre foods palatable to Westerners. He describes this upscale eatery as a “food palace,”

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the “Mt. Olympus of food” yet steeped in “heritage” and “tradition.”<sup>88</sup> Indeed, the Europeans have not only mastered and tamed the bizarre, they have fashioned their traditions to make the bizarre both familiar and exciting. As Zimmern concludes, “It’s the Brits that are finally having the last laugh.”<sup>89</sup>

**[2.29]**

## EATING AS TOLERANCE

**[2.30]**

In the recurring introduction to *Bizarre Foods*, Zimmern stands in the center of a circular conveyor belt, stocked with bowls, plates, and containers of what appear to be different cuisine. Zimmern rubs his hands together with a look of excitement and randomly opens different dishes as they pass him. To his delight, he finds and shows off to the audience a large insect, a plate of brains, and other animated and exotic ingredients. A whimsical jingle plays with the repetitive lyrics “bizarre . . . its so bizarre.” Zimmern stands over a world of abundance. The world is an emporium of exotic edibles and fascinating cultures that all promise to spice up the life of the global consumer. Zimmern—white, portly, lighthearted—symbolizes the Western consumer’s appetite for dishes and experiences that confirm their status as progressive, tolerant, cosmopolitan individuals. Through vicarious consumption the audience is invited to view global food consumption as a kind of test, a conspicuous sign of their own embrace of neoliberal multiculturalism. Western audiences get to vicariously consume the Other without the risk of encountering threatening, racialized bodies. What the audience consumes directly is tolerance for the Other; that is, a feeling that they have assimilated them into their own experience and in doing so display the progressivism of the new Western self.

**[2.31]**

In *Bizarre Foods*, consumption is the test of tolerance. In other words, Zimmern’s ability to consume exotic ingredients is a testament to his good nature, his respect for other cultures, and his liberal sensibilities. For the audience, their ability to bear with him throughout his journey validates their status as cosmopolitan citizens, without all the risks. In many episodes, he reminds the audience “if you really want to understand the culture of a country, you try everything, you eat everything.”<sup>90</sup> In many ways, he sells the entire experience as an adventure, that which at times may test your limits but will ultimately make you stronger and more interesting. In *Bizarre Foods of Asia*, he even suggests that culinary adventurism is “a real life Indiana Jones adventure for those of us from the other side of the world.”<sup>91</sup> The culinary adventure is the ultimate test of one’s own personal tolerance. While facing down a plate of organ meat in Morocco, Zimmern asserts, “if you consider eating a full contact sport, this is the stuff that makes a champion seasoned.”<sup>92</sup> Often, he goads his audience by saying things like “this is not





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wimp food,” this is “not for the tame-minded eater,” and “to some people this kind of stuff is scary, to me, it’s just good.”<sup>93</sup> He testifies to his own endurance by eating with courage and encouraging the audience to face their food taboos directly. The show suggests that one’s willingness to accept the bizarre is a marker of their enlightenment. Moreover, the white Westerner’s experience is enhanced more by assimilating difference rather than excluding it. The show fortifies the Western self by testing the limits of their tolerance, and showing them all the options of a life of privilege and abundance.

In the last episode of the season, Zimmern returns to his hometown of New York City. This episode marks a homecoming to “the world’s greatest food town” where bizarre foods are “all just comfort food.”<sup>94</sup> New York is portrayed as a “melting pot of lifestyles and cultures” with neighborhoods that are “hip, bohemian, [and] gritty.”<sup>95</sup> Zimmern visits iconic sites such as the Carnegie Deli and unique pubs in Brooklyn where you can grill your own dinner. The foods he consumes in this episode are less abject than they are the greatest hits of Zimmern’s hometown favorites. After eleven episodes of consuming food that many Westerners would consider repulsive, the familiarity of New York provides an interesting point of contrast. New York is represented as a cosmopolitan city that encompasses the entirety of global cuisine, including the bizarre. The city symbolizes the overwhelming advantages of assimilating difference, the limitless choice and experiences that it offers to an audience with means and privilege. New York City also symbolizes that tolerance for difference is what makes Western societies exceptional. In New York, Zimmern contends that he feels “recharged” and “energized” by his return home.<sup>96</sup> Zimmern’s return is also a reminder that it is possible to experience and display one’s acceptance of the Other without giving up their privilege or creature comforts.

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## CONCLUSION

The Food and Agriculture Organization reports that 925 million people do not have enough food to eat, which is “more than the combined populations of the USA, Canada and the European Union.”<sup>97</sup> This is hardly the whimsical and romantic world that we vicariously experience through Zimmern’s travels. Many of the world’s bizarre foods are born of necessity and are consumed for their life-saving calories, not their taste. Yet, *Bizarre Foods* invites its audience to see the world as full of abundance, rich in exotic edibles and people happy to share their culture with Western culinary adventurers. This chapter is less concerned with the capacity of *Bizarre Foods* to accurately represent the challenges of global food consumption than it is the tropes it employs to cultivate care and interest in the world. The globe as an exotic playground that tests the will and endurance of the Western individual

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[2.34]





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is, in fact, a discourse with a long history. Stuart Hall argues that in earlier imperialist literature “the very idea of *adventure* became synonymous with the demonstration of moral, social and physical mastery of the colonizers over the colonized.”<sup>98</sup> The concept of adventure requires a proving grounds, a terrain that can test the constitution of the rugged Western individual, a frontier that can be conquered. Though guided by a magnanimous spirit, culinary adventurism is an updated and refashioned justification for consuming and controlling the globe. Of course, *Bizarre Foods* is unlikely to be cited as a justification for economic or military conquest by this or any future governmental administration. The central concern of this chapter is how representations of culinary adventures are embedded in a series of larger discursive practices that prevent neoliberal multiculturalism from becoming global economic equilibrium. The adventure belies the substantive task of eradicating structural economic inequalities that allow nearly a billion people to go to bed hungry every night. Given that global hunger is a clear divide between North and South, the cultural differences of the world are not yet assets that can be sold for gain in a global cosmopolitan marketplace.

**[2.35]**

*Bizarre Foods* and the culinary adventure certainly construct a new frontier; however, it is a boundary that exists within the Western mind. How much difference can the white Westerner endure? How far are they willing to go to prove they are as tolerant and progressive as they claim to be? What kind of adventures can adequately season their experience? This chapter suggests that *Bizarre Foods* illustrates the ambivalence of white society, both toward itself and Others. The program illuminates how whiteness cultivates a desire to consume racialized Others as both a form of domestication and self-affirmation. The requirement that difference always be authentic and communicate stark contrasts between self and Other mandates that foreign cultures be continually exoticized until they reach the point of incommensurability. The vicarious consumption of difference then enables Westerners to incorporate cultural diversity into their experience without sacrificing their accumulated privileges. This chapter suggests that the world can be engaged without words like “mystical,” “exotic,” and “bizarre.” The non-Western world need not be a resource for white Westerners to work out their anxieties about themselves and the perceived decline of their own cultural forms. Instead of being continually replenished, whiteness and white privilege need to be exposed, deterritorialized, and injected with self-reflexivity. White hegemony has proven to be a durable and quite flexible system, resistant and adaptive to the challenges of globalization and multiculturalism. Travel television, food culture, and entertainment are all popular venues in which white hegemony continually replicates itself as the taken-for-granted norm, the invisible center of the universe. Perhaps, popular programming about global food and culture can find a way to move forward in acknowledging one another, rather than just looking at ourselves.





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NOTES

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1. Peggy McIntosh, "White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack" in Paula S. Rothenberg, *White Privilege: Essential Readings on the Other Side of Racism* (New York: Worth Publishers, 2005), 109.

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2. See also George Lipsitz, *The Possessive Investment in Whiteness: How White People Profit from Identity Politics* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1998); and Thomas K. Nakayama and Robert L. Krizek, "Whiteness: A Strategic Rhetoric," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 81 (1995): 771–807.

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3. See Ruth Frankenberg, *White Women, Race Matters: The Social Construction of Whiteness* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993).

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4. Richard Dyer, *White*. (London and New York: Routledge, 1997), 3–4.

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5. bell hooks, *Black Looks: Race and Representation* (Boston, MA: South End Press, 1992), 21.

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6. For instance, see Rachel E. Dubrofsky, "The Bachelor: Whiteness in the Harem," *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 23 (2006): 39–56.

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7. See Kent A. Ono, *Contemporary Media Culture and the Remnants of a Colonial Past* (New York: Peter Lang, 2009).

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8. See Amy A. Hasinoff, "Fashioning Race for the Free Market in America's Next Top Model," *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 25 (2008): 324–43; Eric K. Watts and Michael Orbe, "The Spectacular Consumption of 'True' African American Culture: 'Whassup with the Budweiser Guys?,'" *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 19 (2002): 1–20; and David C. Oh and Omotayo O. Banjo, "Outsourcing Postracialism: Voicing Neoliberal Multiculturalism in Outsourced," *Communication Theory* 22 (2012): 449–70.

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9. See Casey Ryan Kelly, "Strange/Familiar: Rhetorics of Exoticism in Ethnographic Television," in *Communicating Colonialism: Readings on Postcolonial Theory and Communication*, ed. Rae Lynn Schwartz (New York: Peter Lang, 2013)..

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10. hooks, *Black Looks*, 21.

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11. Laura Lindenfeld, "Visiting the Mexican American Family: *Tortilla Soup* as Culinary Tourism," *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies* 4 (2007): 303–20.

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12. See Henry Giroux, "Beyond the Biopolitics of Disposability: Rethinking Neoliberalism in the New Gilded Age," *Social Identities* 14 (2008): 587–620.

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13. Elspeth Probyn, *Carnal Appetites: Foodsexidentities*. (New York: Routledge, 2002), 2.

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14. For more on the history of Western travel writing and its relationship with colonialism, see Mary B. Campbell, *The Witness and the Other World: Exotic European Travel Writing, 400–1600* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1991); Mary Louis Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (New York and London: Routledge, 2007); and David Spurr, *The Rhetoric of Empire: Colonial Discourse in Journalism, Travel Writing, and Imperial Administration* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1993).

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15. Breeanna Hare, "Obsessions: Getting our Fill of Food TV," *CNN*, 6 May 2011, www.cnn.com/2011/SHOWBIZ/TV/05/06/food.television.shows/index.html (accessed May 30, 2013).

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16. Nakayama and Krizek, "Whiteness," 771.

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17. Watts and Orbe, "Spectacular," 3.

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18. Watts and Orbe, "Spectacular," 3.

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19. For a partial list of works not cited a various points throughout this chapter, see Dana Cloud, "'To Veil the Threat of Terror': Afghan Women and the 'Clash of Civilizations in the Imagery of the U.S. War on Terrorism,'" *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 90 (2005): 285–306; Radha Hegde, "Disciplining Spaces and Globalization: A Postcolonial Unsettling," *Global Media and Communication* 1 (2005): 59–62; Raka Shome, "Mapping the Limits of Multiculturalism in the Context of Globalization," *International Journal of Communication* 6 (2012): 144–65; and Raka Shome, "Postcolonial Interventions in the Rhetorical Canon: An 'Other' View," *Communication Theory*, 6 (1996): 40–59.

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20. Marianna Torgovnick makes a similar argument about the pleasure of the "primitive" in Western mythology of the Other. In art, literature, anthropology, film, and consumerism, so-called primitive peoples and objects are animated not only to draw power lines between the

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Western and non-Western world, but to gratify the Western “us” in seeing what is thought to be the ancient roots of “ourselves.” See Marianna Torgovnick, *Gone Primitive: Savage Intellectuals, Modern Lives* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990).

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21. Wendy Brown, *Regulating Aversions: Tolerance in an Age of Identity and Empire* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006), 26.

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22. Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979), 3.

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23. Stephen William Foster, “The Exotic as a Symbol System,” *Dialectical Anthropology* 7 (1982): 22.

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24. For work on neocolonial rhetoric, see Derek Buescher and Kent A. Ono, “Civilized Colonialism: Pocahontas as Neocolonial Rhetoric,” *Women’s Studies in Communication* 19 (1996): 127–53; Stuart Hall, “The Whites of Their Eyes: Racist Ideologies in the Media,” in *Gender, Race, and Class in Media: A Text-Reader*, ed. G. Dines and J.M. Humez (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2003/1981); Casey Ryan Kelly, “Neocolonialism and the Global Prison in National Geographic’s *Locked Up Abroad*,” *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 24 (2012): 331–47; Kent A. Ono, *Contemporary Media Culture and the Remnants of a Colonial Past* (New York: Peter Lang, 2009); and Gayatri Chakrovorty Spivak, “Neocolonialism and the Secret Agent of Knowledge,” *Oxford Literary Review* 13 (1991): 220–51.

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25. See Catherine Squires, Eric King Watts, Mary Douglas Vavrus, Kent A. Ono, Kathleen Feyh, Bernadette Marie Calafell, and Daniel C. Brouwer, “What is the This ‘Post’ in Postracial, Postfeminists . . . (Fill in the Blank)?” *Journal of Communication Inquiry* 34 (2010): 210–53.

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26. See Janet M. Cramer, Carlita P. Greene, and Lynn M. Walters, *Food as Communication/Communication as Food* (New York: Peter Lang, 2011); Lindenfield, “Tortilla Soup”; and Helene Shugart, “Sumptuous Texts: Consuming “Otherness” in the Food Film Genre,” *Critical Studies in Media Communication*, 1 (2008): 73.

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27. Jemma Crew, “UN has New Nutritional, Sustainable Diet for Hungry World: Insects.” *The Independent*, May 13, 2013, [www.independent.co.uk/news/world/politics/un-has-a-new-nutritional-sustainable-diet-for-a-hungry-world-insects-8614691.html](http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/politics/un-has-a-new-nutritional-sustainable-diet-for-a-hungry-world-insects-8614691.html) (accessed 1 June 2013).

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28. Alan Han, “Can I Tell You What We Have to Put Up With?: Stinky Fish and Offensive Durian,” *Continuum: Journal of Media & Cultural Studies* 21 (2007): 361–77.

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29. Michael Dietler, “Culinary Encounters: Food, Identity, and Colonialism,” in *The Archaeology of Food and Identity*, ed. K. Twiss (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 2007); Lisa Heldke, “Lets Cook Thai: Recipes for Colonialism,” in *Food and Culture: A Reader*, eds. Carole M. Counihan, Penny Van Esterik (New York: Routledge, 2012); and Lindenfield, “Tortilla Soup.”

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30. Shugart, “Sumptuous Texts,” 73.

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31. Accounts of the social history of American culinary commodification and the present popularity of adventurous foreign cuisine can be found in Andrew P. Haley, *Turning the Tables: Restaurants and the Rise of the American Middle Class, 1880–1920* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2011); and Jennifer Jensen Wallach, *How America Eats: A Social History of U.S. Food and Culture* (New York: Rowan & Littlefield, 2013). In addition, the Travel Industry Association reports that 17 percent of American tourists seek out culinary activities while on vacation and a large portion (89 percent) reported enjoying their food adventures. See Sarah Peters, “Adventurous American Eaters Going Abroad,” *The Daily Pilot*, August 23, 2010, [articles.dailypilot.com/2010-08-23/news/tn-dpt-0824-mcdonald-20100823\\_1\\_travel-agents-american-leisure-travelers-culinary-tourism](http://articles.dailypilot.com/2010-08-23/news/tn-dpt-0824-mcdonald-20100823_1_travel-agents-american-leisure-travelers-culinary-tourism) (accessed May 31, 2013).

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32. See Raka Shome and Radha Hedge, “Culture, Communication, and the Challenges of Globalization,” *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 19 (2002): 172–89; and Raka Shome and Radha S. Hegde, “Postcolonial Approaches to Communication: Chart the Terrain, Engaging the Intersections,” *Communication Theory* 12 (2002): 249–70.

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33. See Giroux, “Disposibility”; Bradley Jones and Roopali Mukherjee, “From California to Michigan: Race, Rationality, and Neoliberal Governmentality,” *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies* 7 (2010): 401–22; Darrel Enck Wanzer, “Barack Obama, the Tea Party, and the Threat of Race: On Racial Neoliberalism and Born Again Racism,” *Communication, Culture, and Critique* 4 (2011): 23–30; For scholarship from outside communication studies see David Goldberg, *Threat of Race: Reflections on Racial Neoliberalism*. (Malden, MA: Wiley Blackwell, 2007).



34. Shome and Hegde, "Postcolonial Approaches" 263. [2n34]
35. Lindenfield, "Tortilla Soup," 305. [2n35]
36. Andy Fixmer and Sarah Rabil, "Food is New Real Estate as Cooking Show Ratings Jump (Update 3)," *Bloomberg News*, August 20, 2009, [www.bloomberg.com/apps/news?pid=newsarchive&sid=aq3rYSGydhJ0](http://www.bloomberg.com/apps/news?pid=newsarchive&sid=aq3rYSGydhJ0) (accessed June 2, 2013). [2n36]
37. It is important to note that when I refer to Andrew Zimmern throughout this chapter, I am not referring to the flesh-and-blood individual but instead to the persona of Zimmern that is constructed and mediated by television. Celebrity identities are the product of writing, editing, camera work, make-up, and other elements of television production. Zimmern, the private individual, is distinct from the brand constructed around his personality by himself, the producers of *Bizarre Foods*, his publicists, agent, and advertisers. In her critique of Oprah Winfrey's rags-to-riches biography, Dana Cloud also makes this distinction between the celebrity and the private citizen, focusing her analysis not on an individual Oprah Winfrey but the rhetorical construction of Oprah the billion-dollar brand. See Dana Cloud, "Hegemony or Concordance?: The Rhetoric of Tokenism in 'Oprah' Winfrey's Rags-to-Riches Biography," *Critical Studies in Mass Communication* 13 (1996): 115–37. [2n37]
38. Jeff Gordinier, "Waiter, There's Soup in my Bug," *New York Times*, September 22, 2010, D1. [2n38]
39. "Adventure Traveler Andrew Zimmern Partners with Pepto-Bismol to Share How to Have a Taste for Adventure," *Health Business Week*, November 7, 2008, p. 1533. [2n39]
40. "If It Looks Good, Eat It!: Interview with Andrew Zimmern," *South Coast Today*, July 30, 2008, [www.southcoasttoday.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20080730/SC24705/80730008/-1/SC24705](http://www.southcoasttoday.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20080730/SC24705/80730008/-1/SC24705) (accessed May 30, 2013); and see [andrewzimmern.com](http://andrewzimmern.com) (accessed May 30, 2013). [2n40]
41. The Travel Channel, "About Us," [www.travelchannel.com/about/about-us](http://www.travelchannel.com/about/about-us) (accessed May 31, 2013). [2n41]
42. *Bizarre Foods*, "Bizarre Foods of Asia," Travel Channel, November 1, 2006, written by Andrew Zimmern. [2n42]
43. While derived from psychoanalytical and poststructural theories of subject formation, here I provisionally use the abject to explore how disgust and revulsion help demarcate the Western self (a collection of "clean eaters") from the Other that is unclean, defiled, and monstrous. [2n43]
44. Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*, trans. Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia University Press), 4. [2n44]
45. *Bizarre Foods*, "Asia." [2n45]
46. *Bizarre Foods*, "Philippines," Travel Channel, February 26, 2007, written by Andrew Zimmern. [2n46]
47. *Bizarre Foods*, "Asia." [2n47]
48. *Bizarre Foods*, "Ecuador," Travel Channel, March 12, 2007, written by Andrew Zimmerman. [2n48]
49. *Bizarre Foods*, "Ecuador." [2n49]
50. *Bizarre Foods*, "Mexico," Travel Channel, July 16, 2007, written by Andrew Zimmerman. [2n50]
51. *Bizarre Foods*, "Asia." [2n51]
52. *Bizarre Foods*, "Asia." [2n52]
53. *Bizarre Foods*, "Asia." [2n53]
54. *Bizarre Foods*, "Taiwan," Travel Channel, July 30, 2007, written by Andrew Zimmerman. [2n54]
55. *Bizarre Foods*, "Asia." [2n55]
56. *Bizarre Foods*, "Asia." [2n56]
57. Renato Rosaldo, "Imperialist Nostalgia," *Representations* 26 (1989): 107–22. [2n57]
58. Rosaldo, "Nostalgia," 108. [2n58]
59. Randall Lake explains how American apologists for American Indian genocide often lamented the destruction of the "noble savage" as a necessary though tragic result of historical forces beyond their control. The nineteenth century "cult of the noble savage" was an oratorical and literary tradition of commemorating the tragic loss of American Indian peoples. While its [2n59]

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adherents romanticized American Indian life before encounter, they often made appeals to what Lake calls “time’s arrow,” the belief that time is a linear and one-directional force that moved Western civilization forward (and was quite often was accompanied by a divine mandate). See Randall Lake, “Between Myth and History: Enacting Time in Native American Protest Rhetoric,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 77 (1991): 123–51.

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60. *Bizarre Foods*, “Asia.”
61. *Bizarre Foods*, “Asia.”
62. *Bizarre Foods*, “Asia.”
63. *Bizarre Foods*, “Morocco,” Travel Channel, March 5, 2007, written by Andrew Zimmerman

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64. *Bizarre Foods*, “Morocco.”
65. *Bizarre Foods*, “Asia.”
66. *Bizarre Foods*, “Asia.”
67. *Bizarre Foods*, “Ecuador.”
68. *Bizarre Foods*, “Taiwan.”
69. *Bizarre Foods*, “Taiwan.”
70. *Bizarre Foods*, “Taiwan.”
71. *Bizarre Foods*, “Taiwan.”
72. *Bizarre Foods*, “Vietnam,” Travel Channel, August 13, 2007, written by Andrew Zimmerman.

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73. *Bizarre Foods*, “Trinidad and Tobago,” Travel Channel, July 9, 2007, written by Andrew Zimmern.

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74. *Bizarre Foods*, “Trinidad and Tobago.”
75. *Bizarre Foods*, “Trinidad and Tobago.”
76. *Bizarre Foods*, “Trinidad and Tobago.”
77. *Bizarre Foods*, “Philippines.”
78. *Bizarre Foods*, “Gulf Coast,” Travel Channel, March 26, 2007, written by Andrew Zimmern.

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79. *Bizarre Foods*, “Gulf Coast.”
80. *Bizarre Foods*, “Alaska,” Travel Channel, July 23, 2007, written by Andrew Zimmerman.

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81. *Bizarre Foods*, “Alaska.”
82. *Bizarre Foods*, “Spain” Travel Channel, March 19, 2007, written by Andrew Zimmerman.

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83. *Bizarre Foods*, “Spain.”
84. *Bizarre Foods*, “Spain.”
85. *Bizarre Foods*, “United Kingdom,” Travel Channel, April 2, 2007, written by Andrew Zimmern.

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86. *Bizarre Foods*, “United Kingdom.”
87. *Bizarre Foods*, “United Kingdom.”
88. *Bizarre Foods*, “United Kingdom.”
89. *Bizarre Foods*, “United Kingdom.”
90. *Bizarre Foods*, “Spain.”
91. *Bizarre Foods*, “Asia.”
92. *Bizarre Foods*, “Morocco.”
93. *Bizarre Foods*, “Morocco”; *Bizarre Foods*, “Spain.”
94. *Bizarre Foods*, “New York City,” Travel Channel, August 6, 2007, written by Andrew Zimmern.

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95. *Bizarre Foods*, “New York City.”
96. *Bizarre Foods*, “New York City.”
97. Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, September 2010, “Global Hunger Declining, But Still Unacceptably High,” [www.fao.org/docrep/012/a1390e/a1390e00.pdf](http://www.fao.org/docrep/012/a1390e/a1390e00.pdf) (accessed June 2, 2013).

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98. Hall, “Whites,” 91.



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