Part 2:

Food, Subjectivities, Identities

Food is not rational. Food is culture, habit, craving and identity.
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The saying 'You are what you eat' is not just a nutritional adage (Guptill, Copelton and Lucal 2013: 18-19). Food holds a special meaning, not only because it is a micronutrient that provides vitamins and minerals for life and good health. While nutrition is essential, food is about much more than *what* humans need for biological function. As this section and the book will illustrate, food is multilayered in its relevance to individuals, communities and societies and holds a particular salience that is fundamentally human and social. Food triggers and enables a deep suite of entanglements that signal relationships that have much to do with social identities, values and cultural practices. Food is also, as we note in the essays in this section, about ontology (our being in the world) and its epistemology (the knowledge that it produces). It is a mode of inquiry and practice, a set of ideas and beliefs. It moves beyond the private and the public domains within which it arises and is shape-shifting and dynamic. Food, its ingredients, production, preparation, cooking and eating form an indelible part of extended relationships and interactions, not simply as acts of gendered labour, technology and care. Therefore, as the chapters in this section will illustrate, food, cooking and eating are more than the material. Instead, they encode what we have as "shared knowledge and experiences". In other words, food addresses us materially, aesthetically, viscerally, visually, sensorially, biologically and much more. It encapsulates many meanings that speak to its multimodal dimensions, including food justice, food archives, food memories, food systems, food labelling, genetic modification, collective action, hunger and food ethics.

Additionally, food opens up dimensions of mediated intimacies if, by the latter, we mean proximity, shared understanding, affection, and warmth in both spatial and temporal terms. According to Pratt (1991), it is a 'contact zone', and essential 'groundwork' (Baderoon 2017) (especially in its relationship to land, soil, and sand) in its imbrication in deep and shared histories. Food is also what Kopczyńska (2017: 637) calls 'economies of acquaintance', especially its deep embeddedness in its network of relations (the author emphasises the location of food in its economic exchanges) from farm to

fork. Perhaps equally relevant is what literary and cultural scholars label food as intertextual (in other words, its relationship to interconnected systems of traces that give rise to and constitute its meanings).

Section 2 of the book titled '**Food, Subjectivity and Identities**' provides a template for a suite of essays that offer broad coverage of the theme in distinctive, diverse and rich ways that represent some emerging bodies of work. If we have claimed earlier, either implicitly or explicitly, that food matters in its textured and nuanced ways beyond its singularity as a human necessity, this section uncovers a set of perspectives that also confirm the idea that food is also illusive and elusive, perhaps even contradictory and complicated that prompts more profound interpretations to unsettle its paradoxical meanings. By "subjectivity", we mean the act and processes that lead to knowing and making sense of the world through various processes (for example, feelings, emotions, experiences), noting that subjectivity is not cohesive and highly differentiated). According to Hall (2011), identity is deeply immersed in and shaped by culture. In Hall's (2011) view, identity arises to 'rearticulate the relationship between subjects and discursive practices' (2) and is 'constructed on the back of a recognition of some common origin or shared characteristics with another person or group, or with an ideal, and with the natural closure of solidarity and allegiance established on this foundation' (3). For Hall (2011) identities are never uniform, stable and fixed, they are inherently fractured and 'multiply constructed across different, often intersecting and antagonistic, discourses, practices and positions' (4). Hall (2011) further argues that 'identities can function as points of identification and attachment only because of their capacity to exclude, to leave out, to render "outside", and abject. Every identity has its "margin", an excess, something more' (5).

Several scholars have made strong links between food and identity, including food as cultural heritage (Brulotte and Di Giovine 2016), food as cultural politics (Ayora-Diaz 2021), and food as an edible identity (Xu 2007). Others, like the authors in this section, have written about food as a cultural symbol and inter-relationality with several identity markers, such as race, class, gender, sex, place, gender, ethnicity and taste. In Chapter 7: *'Symbolic Meaning-making in Traditional Wedding Foods amongst the AmaZulu in KwaZulu-Natal'*, for example, Balungile Zondi writes on the cow as a cultural symbol and beef as a staple food in traditional AmaZulu weddings in KwaZulu-Natal province, in South Africa. Notably, Zondi highlights how, as a form of food, beef fulfils our energy needs and has a social function. Moreover, beef reflects and influences perceptions of masculinity and femininity and conveys gender stereotypes that marginalise women and impact people's food choices.

The second chapter in the section is Ayanda Tshazi's *'Thinking Through Food in South Africa: Identity-making, Embodiment and Representation'* (Chapter 8), which focusses on addressing the marginalisation of black, elderly women in rural KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa from knowledge generation in critical food studies and related fields. Ironically, this is one of the provinces where, due to the migrant labour system, grandmothers are primarily responsible for the care of young children, including their nutrition. The nature of this knowledge, how it is inventively adapted, preserved, and passed through generations, is not always apparent to most researchers in the academic community. Rather than focussing on written or cognitive knowledge, Tshazi's chapter identifies and analyses their grandmothers oral and sensory understanding of food. Through participatory visual methodology, specifically collage-making, we follow Ayanda Tshazi and the grandmothers as they engage and narrate food knowledges and food practices, and the latter's role in preserving and transferring the indigenous knowledge and the many crucial traditional food practices to the younger generation.

In Chapter 9, *'Recipes as Alternative Archives: A South African Perspective'*, Rachel Botes argues that throughout history, researchers have relied on established and formally recognised methodologies and sources and to ignore significant alternative resources, Botes weaves people's narratives, nuances, and lived experiences that accompany recipes in manuscripts, cookery books and other formats in alternative archives, into the history of food. The chapter uses an inclusive historical lens to explore a slice of South African history using local recipes, manuscripts, and recipe books written primarily by women. In this gendered food archive, the chapter analyses the trans-cultural role that food has played for many women and the enduring silences that influence our understanding of the archive. Notably, the methodology deepens one's understanding of the relationship between food, memory, provenance, and sentiment, an outcome that is often challenging to achieve through conventional sources.

Following this memory trend, in *'Pakkies aan Boetie: Christian Afrikaner Women Remembering Conscription in South Africa between 1980 and 1990'* (Chapter 10), Dominique Wnuczek-Lobaczewski uses food as a lens to offer a historical analysis of the narratives told by mothers, sisters and wives as they remembered those conscripted as troops into the apartheid South African Defence Force between 1980 and 1990. To maintain contact with their families, the women sent letters and photographs to the border to keep in touch, and *[p]akkies* (packages) containing durable homemade snacks such as *Troepekoekies* (troop cookies) to keep them connected to home. The

tokens depict the reality of Christian mothers whose sons were conscripted into the military during apartheid. Wnuczek-Lobaczewski uncovers a narrative that we seldom read about, mainly through the Critical Food Studies lens, that of the trauma and survival of the conscription of young white men into the apartheid army. The un-silencing of this narrative signifies the essential analytical and pedagogical role food, narratives of food and food archives might play in facilitating the much-needed dialogic engagement South Africa needs to inform a national identity.

In Chapter 11, Nina du Preez and Christi Bleeker's visual essay, *'Goeie Grond: A Visual Journal on the Elandskloof Community Garden Project'* focusses on a collaboration between members of a particular community and the CRITICAL Project to develop a garden project. The essay (journal) depicts the journey of the Elandskloof garden, highlighting the influence of indigenous knowledge systems and food heritage on the cultivation of the garden. However, the authors note the continuing adverse impact of climate change in Elandskloof, not only on the physical environment, but also on how residents interact with their heritage. The visual essay features vital figures from Elandskloof who have shown significant resilience, leadership and creativity in addressing community challenges. With the garden's success, Du Preez and Bleeker suggest collaboration with marginalised indigenous communities to redeem and restore their autonomy.

To conclude the section, the final two chapters (Chapters 11 and 12) are interviews conducted by Rory Bester. In Chapter 11 (Interview 1: *'On kitchens and cookbooks'*), Bester interviews Karen Dudley, an internationally recognised South African chef, restaurateur, cookbook author, and food entrepreneur. In their conversation, Bester and Dudley explore food, memory, identity and roast chicken 101 through their interest in kitchens and cookbooks. In the last interview presented in Chapter 12: *'Kitchens, Archives and Cookbooks'*, Bester is in conversation with three students: Shireen Abrahams, Limpho Makapela and Amber Poggenpoel. The focus of the discussion was on the cookbooks the students had produced as part of the assessment task in the Department of History module, '*"Kitchen Histories" in 2023: Cooking Curiously'* by Shireen Abrahams, '*Ous Beauty's Kitchen'*, the '*Kitchen of a Trade Unionist'* and '*Pseudo Vegan'* by Limpho Makapela and '*Poggenpoel Cookbook'* by Amber Poggenpoel. Using the History Making Lab as a methodology for thinking history through making history that views the kitchen as a complex site of memory and archive with cooking as an opportunity to engage and curate, the cookbooks were created over four months of intense creativity, a series of seminars on creolisation, migration and diaspora. In the interview, we hear (read) about lovingly prepared meals, generously shared with others. Finally, we "hear" about

the students' debating issues with friends, family and strangers and getting enabling feedback and insights from expert cookbook authors who engendered rigour in the work.

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