

TASTE OF DEFIANCE: CULINARY IDENTITY IN WILLIAM FAULKNER'S "*INTRUDER IN THE DUST*" AND THE PALESTINIAN CONTEXT

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Abstract. Generally approached as a source of sustenance, food can transcend its basic function, evolving into a powerful nonverbal idiom articulating identity, resilience and cultural continuity. This concept is vividly illustrated in William Faulkner's *Intruder in the Dust* (1948), through the character of Lucas Beauchamp, whose culinary practices serve as a profound expression of his identity and resistance against white marginalisation. Similarly, for the Palestinian people, food becomes a vital emblem of cultural heritage and defiance in the face of colonial oppression. By employing post-colonial theories, this article examines how food operates as a medium of expression that captures the complexities of identity, community, and survival amidst the forces of erasure and alienation. Through a comparative analysis of Lucas's relationship with food and that of the Palestinian colonised people, the essay unveils the intricate ways in which culinary practices serve not merely as acts of sustenance but as profound statements of existence, resilience, and assertion of identity.

Keywords: food, identity, resilience, memory, agency

INTRODUCTION

In addition to the vitamins and nutrients vital to the growth and well-being of humans and other living organisms, food carries an intrinsic cultural significance, functioning as a depository of collective memory and a vessel for the transmission of traditions. It not only nourishes the body but also embodies the values, histories, and identities of communities, shaping and sustaining their cultural fabric across generations. In this way, food transcends its biological

purpose, becoming a profound symbol of identity, resilience, and the continuity of shared heritage. This notion is strikingly evident in William Faulkner's *Intruder in the Dust* (1948), particularly through the character of Lucas Beauchamp, whose engagement with food functions as a powerful articulation of personal identity and a form of resistance to white marginalisation. Lucas's culinary practices go beyond the mundane, serving as an expression of resilience in the face of white oppression, and asserting agency within a racially stratified world. Similarly, for the Palestinian people, food is a potent symbol of cultural heritage, insubordination, and survival in the face of colonial subjugation. The sharing of traditional dishes serves as an act of resistance and a way of maintaining a vital connection to their ancestral identity facing colonial forces of displacement and erasure.

Building on postcolonial theories as a general framework, this essay draws a parallel between Lucas's culinary practices and those of the Palestinian people. In doing so, it seeks to uncover the implicit ways in which food transcends mere sustenance, operating instead as a sophisticated statement of existence, a profound assertion of identity, a way of native culture's preservation, and a dynamic medium of expression that articulates the complexities of identity, community, and survival under the pressure of erasure and alienation. This comparative analysis aims to emphasise how culinary traditions function not just as daily rituals but as universally symbolic acts of resistance and self-definition, asserting continuity and resilience in the face of hegemonic forces that seek to undermine them.

1. FOOD IN A THEORETICAL CONTEXT

The works of Roland Barthes, Pierre Bourdieu, and Claude Lévi-Strauss offer valuable insights into the cultural significance of food. In *Toward a Psychosociology of Contemporary Food Consumption*, Barthes argues that food serves a purpose beyond sustenance. He sees it as

more than just something we eat as it “encapsulates and conveys a situation; it serves as information; it signifies (...) functioning as a real sign, perhaps the fundamental unit of a communication system” (Barthes 1961, 21). According to him, the type of food, its preparation, and the way it is consumed reflect a society’s culture, shaping how we see ourselves and others. As a result, food becomes a powerful symbol of social and political realities.

Bourdieu, in *Distinction*, similarly examines food habits in French families, particularly focusing on how class distinctions manifest through lifestyle and “habitus”. He maintains that social class and work conditions shape everyday practices, including eating, explaining that “it is clear that tastes in food cannot be considered in complete independence of other dimensions of the relationship to the world, to others and to one’s own body, through which the practical philosophy of each class is enacted” (Bourdieu 1984, 193). For Bourdieu, food choices are not just culinary acts but also expressions of a family’s social identity.

Lévi-Strauss, in his *Culinary Triangle*, provides a structuralist reading of food, pointing out different ways of understanding its preparation. He argues that how societies prepare food reflects deeper thought structures, particularly how humans distinguish between nature and culture. The triangle consists of three poles: the “raw”, the “cooked”, and the “rotten”, each representing a stage in the transformation from nature to culture. Lévi-Strauss’s model shows that food preparation is symbolic, representing human efforts to control and transform nature into culture. The interaction between these categories reveals how societies assign meaning to cooking and eating, linking these practices to broader symbolic systems (Wood 2008, 445). Although these approaches differ, they all show that culinary practices are cultural performances that communicate much about one’s social background and identity.

Recent research has increasingly focused on food as a lens through which to explore a range of contemporary issues, particularly within the postcolonial framework that serves as the primary analytical approach of this paper. Scholars have examined

the profound significance of food in the context of diaspora and immigration, highlighting its role in the construction of identity and cultural preservation. For instance, in *We Are What We Eat*, Donna R. Gabaccia explores how food functions as a powerful marker of ethnicity and identity among immigrant communities in the US, showing how ethnic foods preserve cultural heritage while integrating into the broader American culinary landscape (Gabaccia 1998, 6-7). Similarly, Krishnendu Ray's *The Migrant's Table* examines the role of food in shaping identity and memory within Bengali-American households, illustrating how Bengali immigrants use food as a strategy for both social assimilation and cultural retention. His work illuminates the ambivalence of modern actors toward concepts of locality, community, authenticity, and their relationship to both home and the world (Krishnendu Ray 2012, 11). In *Curried Cultures*, Ray and Srinivas discuss the global spread of South Asian cuisines, analysing how migration and cultural exchange have transformed food practices in South Asia and among its diasporic communities (*Ibidem*, 7-8). They argue that food serves as a site of negotiation in the immigrant experience, representing cosmopolitanism, localism, traditionalism, or nationalism in relation to global hierarchies of value (*Ibidem*, 6). Collectively, these works underscore the dynamic role food plays in identity construction, cultural preservation, and adaptation in the context of diaspora and migration.

Meredith E. Abarca's *Voices in the Kitchen* sheds light on the experiences of Chicana and Mexican-American women, examining how food practices shape their identity, labour, and cultural knowledge. Abarca criticises traditional views of cooking as a domestic task and argues about the complex role of food in cultural production and identity preservation. She argues that for these women, the kitchen is a studio and cooking is an artistic endeavour (Abarca 2006, 5). She explores how cooking and food preparation are significant forms of knowledge transmission within Mexican communities, emphasising the voices of working-class women and claiming the kitchen space and food practices as sites of resistance, cultural preservation, and empowerment. In a feminist manner,

Abarca claims that the act of cooking is to the Mexican-American working class a culinary epistemology with practical and emotional articulation through which they can express themselves as subjects, as agents of their own lives (*Ibidem*, 6).

In the same vein, Psyche A. Williams-Forsen, in *Building Houses out of Chicken Legs*, explores the cultural and historical significance of food, particularly chicken, in the life of African American women from past to present (Williams-Forsen 2006, 2). She investigates the intersection of food, race, and gender, illustrating how African American women have used food as a tool for economic freedom, survival, business, and empowerment (*Ibidem*, 2). By focusing on the symbolism of chicken in African American culture, Williams-Forsen reveals how food can be both a source of sustenance and a means of negotiating power, identity, and economic agency.

These scholars and others provide important insights into how food functions within marginalised communities. They highlight how culinary practices serve not only nutritious purposes but are also powerful tools for cultural expression, resistance, and identity formation. Following the same frame of thought, this paper attempts to analyse the significance of food in the context of Faulkner's South and Palestine, where the colonised find in culinary acts a way to claim identity and resist the coloniser's attempts of cultural erasure.

A postcolonial analysis of food in the Palestinian context highlights the intricate connections between culture, identity, and resistance under colonial rule. In Palestine, food plays a vital role in shaping and expressing both personal and collective identities. The ways in which Palestinians prepare and share food under colonisation reflect a profound sense of resistance and reclamation of identity. In this context, food serves multiple purposes as it symbolises identity, acts as a site of defiance, and underscores the power dynamics between the coloniser and the colonised. Additionally, food has both personal and political dimensions, providing a lens through which one can better understand the broader struggles faced by the Palestinian people. Under occupying

forces, food becomes an important marker of identity and a form of cultural resistance. For Palestinians, maintaining traditional food practices, such as making *maqluba*, *musakhan*, or *knafeh*, asserts cultural continuity despite attempts at erasure. This act of preserving culinary traditions can be viewed as a silent form of defiance against appropriation. By holding on to these practices, Palestinians resist the colonial narrative that seeks to diminish or appropriate their culture.

In the same way, in *Intruder in the Dust* (1948), William Faulkner portrays Lucas Beauchamp, a black man, as resisting the racial stereotypes of servitude and obedience imposed on him. Scholars have highlighted Lucas's resilience and defiance in the face of white oppression. Michael Schmidt emphasises the rebellious nature of Lucas's character, posing the question "Why do we demand obedience from fictional characters that we might condemn in real life?" and concluding that "this is the challenging territory Faulkner explored with Lucas Beauchamp in *Intruder in the Dust*" (Schmidt 2014, 72). Robert W. Hamblin similarly highlights Lucas's resistance to efforts aimed at erasing his identity. He notes that in the black man's home, the typical power dynamic between black and white is inverted when Lucas orders the white Chick to strip off his wet clothes and later eat food prepared by a black woman. Hamblin explains that Chick, unaccustomed to taking orders from a black man, attempts to assert dominance by offering to pay Lucas for his trouble. This initiates a series of actions where Chick tries to push Lucas into traditional roles of submission and inequality, yet Lucas consistently refuses to comply (Hamblin 2022, 206).

Likewise, William J. Sowder observes that much of the novel focuses on the ongoing struggle between Lucas and Chick, as each tries to assert dominance over the other. The central theme, he argues, revolves around the strategies both characters employ in their efforts to reduce the other to an object while affirming their own humanity (Sowder 1991, 125). Philip Weinstein also contends that Lucas strives to overcome stereotypes associated with "Black smell, Black food, Black irresponsibility", arguing that these

“habits” can be unlearned and transcended. According to Weinstein, Lucas’s masculine courage demonstrates his success in surpassing these imposed limitations (Weinstein 1997, 67).

While these scholars have effectively highlighted the conflict between white societal norms and black identity, as well as the tension between coloniser and colonised, they have overlooked the specific devices Lucas employs to resist white marginalisation.

2. FOOD AS APPROPRIATION/ABROGATION

Central to the postcolonial discussion of food sovereignty are the notions of “appropriation” and “abrogation”. In *The Empire Writes Back* (2002), Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin define “appropriation” as the coloniser’s takeover of the colonised people’s culture, land, and resources, often distorting or erasing indigenous knowledge systems. In contrast, “abrogation” involves rejecting and resisting the authority of the coloniser, particularly in how they define and control the cultural, political, or economic aspects of the colonised society (Ashcroft *et al.* 2002, 37-38).

In the Palestinian context, food sovereignty becomes a site of both “appropriation” and “abrogation”. The Israeli occupation of Palestinian land is a direct form of appropriation, where fertile agricultural areas, especially in the West Bank, have been expropriated for settlement expansion, leaving Palestinian farmers with restricted access to their own land and water resources. This not only appropriates Palestinian land but also disrupts traditional agricultural practices, replacing them with industrial, often settler-centric agricultural systems.

In response to these forms of appropriation, abrogation appears in the ways Palestinian communities resist the imposition of colonial systems. They actively reclaim indigenous farming practices and seed varieties, often defying Israeli-imposed restrictions on water access, land use, and mobility. An example of initiatives which fall within the context of “abrogation” is local cooperatives or legal

entities representing a group of individuals working together to achieve the common purpose of serving themselves and their community¹. These local communities often emphasise agroecological practices that prioritise sustainability and community control over food production, rejecting the imposed dependency on Israeli markets and products and adapting their farming strategies to the reality of colonisation.

In this light, appropriation and abrogation intersect in the Palestinian struggle for food sovereignty. While Israeli occupation appropriates land, resources, and agricultural knowledge, Palestinian resistance abrogates this control by reviving traditional, local food systems that challenge the occupation's dominance and assert Palestinian agency over their land and food production. This process is also imbued with a cultural and political assertion of identity, as food sovereignty in Palestine is not only about access to food but also reclamation of heritage and autonomy.

Simon Lambert writes in this vein that indigenous societies have always exercised agency within economic spaces. They have resisted colonisation, adapted modernisation to serve their own needs, and, drawing on the collective memory of their past struggles, continue to reject the marginal and passive roles imposed upon them (Lambert 2008, 211). Lucas Beauchamp in Faulkner's *Intruder in the Dust*, as well as Palestinian people, insists on claiming agency through culinary practices and fighting attempts to position them as marginal.

Lucas's resilience through culinary practice is implicitly depicted as his habits of food cooking are referred to as symbols of autonomy, dignity, and cultural heritage. Such culinary acts highlight the black character's resistance to white dominance and stereotypes of black subordination. One of the most notable moments where Lucas expresses his autonomy through food is during his interactions with Chick Mallison. Early in the novel, Chick recalls when he was invited by Lucas to a meal. Lucas's manners during this food event reveal a lot about his rebellious character:

The man neither protested nor acquiesced. He didn't stir; he was not even looking at him. He just said, inflexible and calm: "She done already dished it up now:" and he went on past the old woman who stood aside from the door to let him pass into the kitchen: an oilcloth-covered table set in the bright sunny square of a southern window where—he didn't know how he knew it since there were no signs, traces, soiled plates to show it—Edmonds' boy and Aleck Sander had already eaten, and sat down and ate in his turn of what obviously was to be Lucas' dinner—collard greens, a slice of sidemeat fried in flour, big flat pale heavy half-cooked biscuits, a glass of buttermilk: nigger food too, accepted and then dismissed also because it was exactly what he had expected, it was what Negroes ate, obviously because it was what they liked, what they chose; not (at twelve: he would be a man grown before he experienced his first amased dubiety at this) that out of their long chronicle this was all they had had a chance to learn to like except the ones who ate out of white folks' kitchens, but that they had elected this out of all eating because this was their palates and their metabolism; afterward, ten minutes later and then for the next four years he would be trying to tell himself that it was the food which had thrown him off. (Faulkner 1982, 14)

The passage highlights Lucas Beauchamp's calm, composed demeanour and unspoken authority. He neither protests nor agrees when faced with a situation involving a boy, Roth Edmonds, sitting down to eat, but asserts control through quiet resolve. His nonchalant statement and entry into the kitchen reflect his defiance of social expectations without being passive or submissive. Lucas accepts the stereotyped smell of the "nigger food" without emotional reaction, demonstrating his quiet dignity and refusal to let racialised expectations dictate his behaviour. Lucas's manners, therefore, seem to reflect a calm, measured control over his environment. He neither overreacts to nor ignores the complex social dynamics surrounding him but instead navigates them with a stoic, inflexible composure, maintaining his own sense of agency and dignity in a world where such traits are often undermined by racism. His silence and composed response reflect a sense of unshakable self-respect.

Thus, through this culinary event, Lucas performs an act of defiance against the stereotypical expectations of how black people were supposed to serve white people in the South. It is also an act

of mimicry through which Lucas imitates white rituals to acquire authority and control. The preparation and serving of food are under his control, becoming a symbolic gesture of his resistance to being subjugated or reduced to a servant's role. By serving food on his terms, in his home, Lucas reclaims power and agency, making it clear that he is the one in charge of the situation.

Another significant scene in *Intruder in the Dust* is Lucas chewing food to face white men's oppression in an act of defiance and abrogation. At the local store where Lucas went to buy himself a box of gingersnaps, another white customer made a rude comment on him. Lucas's reaction was one of resistance that not only expresses a sense of culinary pleasure but also causes white anxiety:

Lucas looked at the white man with a calm speculative detachment; slowly the carton in one of his hands tilted further until another gingersnap dropped into his other palm, then lifting the corner of his lip he sucked an upper tooth, quite loud in the abrupt silence but with no implication whatever of either derision or rebuttal or even disagreement, with no implication of anything at all but almost abstractedly. (Faulkner 1982, 20)

Lucas's calm and detached posture as he accepts the insult indicates a refusal to be provoked or diminished by the white man's words. Instead of responding with anger or confrontation, Lucas engages in an act of eating by tilting the carton to let another gingersnap fall into his palm. This seemingly simple action becomes a powerful statement, as he deliberately turns to culinary pleasure, asserting his autonomy and enjoying his choice while ignoring the white man's hostility. The loud sucking of his upper tooth, set against the backdrop of silence, further amplifies his defiance, signifying a deliberate choice to remain firm in front of the hostility directed at him.

The reaction of the store's proprietor's son embodies a stark moment of violence and exclusion, illustrating the racial dynamics at play. When he shouts, "Get out of here, Lucas!" (Faulkner 1982, 21), his words reflect an attempt to assert dominance and reinforce social boundaries that seek to exclude the black man from the white space. Despite the hostility directed at him, Lucas remains

remarkably calm, demonstrating an inner strength that contrasts sharply with the aggression surrounding him. His calmness, leisurely posture, and continued engagement with the culinary pleasure he finds in the gingersnaps signal a refusal to be intimidated or provoked. Lucas's quietness and enjoyment of the food serve as an assertion of his identity and agency, challenging the violent exclusionary practices of the proprietor's son and reaffirming his right to occupy space in a world that attempts to erase him.

Lucas's act of "chewing" as he exits the store (*Ibidem*, 21) can indeed be interpreted as an empowering act. In this scene, chewing symbolises both culinary pleasure and a deliberate assertion of autonomy in the face of hostility. By choosing to engage in this act despite the aggression directed at him, Lucas expresses a refusal to be cowed or defined by the negative perceptions of those around him. "Raising his right hand to his mouth so that as he went out the door, they could see the steady thrust of his chewing" (*Ibidem*), Lucas visually engages in an act of abrogation, where he actively resists the oppressive forces trying to eliminate him. The visibility of his chewing further emphasises defiance, asserting that he does not need to conform to the expectations or behaviours dictated by the proprietor's son or the racist white customer. Instead, he embraces his right to exist in the space, savouring his experience and asserting his autonomy against a backdrop of racial tension. In this light, chewing becomes a powerful act of abrogation and resistance, where Lucas not only sustains himself physically but also symbolically nurtures his identity in a society that seeks to erase it.

3. FOOD AND LAND

Indigenous peoples are generally described as being closer to nature than Western ones (Morris & FitzHerbert 2017, 98). In colonial discourse, being connected to nature is viewed as a mark of barbarism and primitiveness. However, in the culinary context, being associated with nature means "being in touch with what is

authentic, original and uncontaminated (*Ibidem*, 100). The connection between food and land is especially profound in Palestinian society, where agriculture has been a crucial part of life. Olive trees, in particular, are symbolic, representing deep roots in the land and the struggle for survival. The destruction of olive groves, repeatedly occurring by Israeli forces, represents not just an economic blow but a direct assault on Palestinian identity and connection to the land. In this context, food represents more than sustenance; it embodies the struggle for autonomy and connection to ancestral lands.

Agriculture, particularly olive farming, has been a cornerstone of Palestinian society for centuries. As Lara Jazairi notes, the olive tree has been “an integral part of the Palestinian landscape for thousands of years, symbolising Palestinian identity, culture, and tradition” (Jazairi 2010, 5). She cites Abu Suleim, a Palestinian farmer, who emphasises that “olive trees root and anchor us in our land, providing a sense of belonging, home, and hope. Investing in olive oil is investing in our future” (*Ibidem*). The olive tree represents more than economic value, for it embodies resilience, longevity, and a deep connection to ancestry. In Palestinian folklore, music, and art, the olive tree frequently appears as a symbol of rootedness, survival, and continuity. Its cultivation connects Palestinians not only to the land but to traditions passed down through generations. This connection reinforces the idea that “local people and their foodways are reservoirs of hopes and knowledge, essential to creating a sustainable food system economically, socially, culturally, and environmentally” (Morris & FitzHerbert 2017, 100). Yet, for the colonised Palestinian people, the olive tree, an emblem of their right to land and identity, continues to face the coloniser’s oppression and systematic erasure attempts.

Standing for centuries of food abundance and continuity, the uprooting of these trees symbolises the severing of Palestinians’ ties to their land, culture, and identity. The tree, much like the people, is forcibly removed from its natural place, symbolising the broader attempts to erase Palestinian identity and history from the region.

Uprooting olive trees and displacing Palestinian people are part of a broader settler-colonial strategy to replace indigenous populations and erase their connection to the land. In this case, both the olive tree and the Palestinian people are viewed as obstacles to settlement expansion and the creation of new spaces for the coloniser.

The same practice existed in Faulkner's colonial South. In *Go Down Moses*, the indigenous peoples, "them damn niggers (...) might just as well be a damn herd of wild buffaloes" (Faulkner 1990, 147), implicitly refer to an important moment in American history when the US Army resorted to the extensive slaughter of these animals as a strategy to force Native Americans, dependent on the buffalo for food and material, into starvation, displacement, reservations and containment (Colvin 2014, 97). Thus, the history of the American buffalo serves as a poignant parallel to the history of racial discrimination. The metaphor of the "damned herd of wild buffaloes" unites the colonised peoples in their shared fate of marginalisation, underscoring their collective struggle against systemic oppression.

Both the olive tree and the Palestinian people embody resilience in the face of adversity. Despite being uprooted, Palestinians have persistently resisted the occupation, much like the olive tree, known for its strength and ability to regenerate even after severe damage. The act of replanting olive trees by Palestinian farmers serves as a powerful symbol of resistance, representing the enduring connection to their land despite the occupation's attempts to sever it. Similarly, Palestinian people's resilience in the face of ongoing displacement is reflected in the olive tree's capacity to endure. Both the tree and the people have faced the coloniser's attempts of elimination, yet they remain unbroken, resisting colonial abuse.

In *Intruder in the Dust*, the mulberry tree, through which the sun comes to Lucas's dining table (Faulkner 1982, 22), is deeply rooted and capable of thriving even in challenging conditions. Bringing to Lucas sun rays, the tree grants him power and resilience. Though a "Negro", he owns a house and ten acres of land (*Ibidem*, 9). His

character is a testament to the endurance and survival of black identity in a world determined to erase it.

The last of the sun coming through the mulberry tree then the window behind him onto the table the stacked untidy papers the inkwell the tray of paperclips and fouled rusted penpoints and pipe cleaners and the overturned corncob pipe in its spill of ash beside the stained unwashed coffee cup and saucer and the coloured mug from the Heidelberg stübe filled with twisted spills of newspaper to light the pipes with like the vase sitting on Lucas' mantel that day and before he even knew he had thought of it he rose taking up the cup and saucer and crossed the room picking up the coffeepot and the kettle too in passing and in the lavatory emptied the grounds and rinsed the pot and cup and filled the kettle and set it and the pot the cup and saucer back on the shelf and returned to the chair and sat down again after really no absence at all, still in plenty of time to watch the table and all its familiar untidy clutter all fading toward one anonymity of night as the sunlight died. (Faulkner 1982, 22-23)

As the last light of the sun comes through the mulberry tree and onto the cluttered table, it underscores Lucas's steadfastness, suggesting that, like the tree, he is deeply grounded in his identity. The image of the tree and the fading sunlight also evokes a sense of cyclical continuity, highlighting Lucas's ability to endure time and oppression with quiet strength unshaken by the external world.

The act of picking up the coffee pot, cup, saucer, and kettle reflects Lucas's sense of agency and control over his environment, symbolising his resilience. These small, domestic actions, carried out with precision and care, demonstrate Lucas's refusal to be overwhelmed by disorder or neglect, as seen in the untidy papers and clutter around him. His deliberate movement in maintaining order in his space, even though mundane acts like rinsing out the coffee pot, suggests that he holds onto his dignity and self-determination in a world that often seeks to diminish him. Thus, the mulberry tree and the handling of food and domestic items reinforce Lucas's resilience. The tree symbolises his rootedness and enduring strength, while the careful management of his surroundings through simple but deliberate actions reflects his ability to assert control and maintain dignity, even in the face of white oppression.

Through Lucas, Faulkner presents a character who refuses to be abrogated or appropriated by the dominant culture. Just as Faulkner's black characters "endured" (Faulkner 1987, *The Sound and the Fury*, 302), many displaced Palestinians continue to preserve their cultural and historical ties to their homeland. Through these acts of endurance, the olive tree, the mulberry tree, and the people demonstrate their resilience, standing firm and unvanquished. Through culinary acts, they stay connected to their land and assert their identity. They are in Samih el Qassem's words:

منتصب القامة أمشي مرفوع الهامة أمشي
في كفي قصفة زيتونٍ وعلى كتفي نعشي
وانا امشي وأنا أمشي وانا امشي وانا وانا وانا امشي

Walking with a stature
Walking with my head held high
Carrying an olive branch in my hand
And my coffin on my shoulders
As I walk and walk²

For Palestinians, land and the olive tree are not only an economic resource but a critical part of identity and history. Similarly, in *Intruder in the Dust*, "the food had been not just the best Lucas had to offer but all he had to offer" (Faulkner 1982, 18). Food is deeply connected to the Black man's identity in a racially charged context.

4. FOOD AND MEMORY

The link between food and the past is reflected in colonised peoples' veneration of their native cuisines. The significance of traditional dishes functions as a shared sentiment in the collective nostalgia of a community. In *Food to Remember: Culinary Practice and Diasporic Identity*, Razia Parveen asserts that cooking traditions serve as a cultural thread, weaving a community into a cohesive whole. In the same context, in *The Recipe Reader*, Janet Floyd and Laurel Forster argue that "personal histories or pasts, constructed through memory, or the process of remembering with others, are often

centred on food” (Floyd 2010, 7). Trying to recover a lost history, individuals and communities seek to recreate it in their imagination through culinary and olfactory stimuli that enable them to metaphorically re-experience past memories of time and place. Food in postcolonial contexts is often linked to memory and nostalgia for a homeland. In fact, recipes are narratives with the power to show how people link their life memories with specific acts of culinary practice (Parveen, 51).

For Palestinians in exile or the diaspora, traditional Palestinian dishes serve as a way to preserve memories of the homeland and pass on cultural knowledge to future generations. Cooking and eating together can be viewed as acts of resistance against displacement, embodying the longing for return and the hope for future liberation. Palestinian recipes in the diaspora and even inside the occupied land express a sense of “nostalgia for an idealised past identity that may never have existed” (*Ibidem*, 50). Food turns into a narrative of survival as each traditional dish is a silent text rooted in the deep history and psychology of the colonised. “It is nostalgia, that sense of romance and loss”, which pushes the colonised “to recreate a small part of home out of place through culinary practice” (*Ibidem*, 53).

In *Imagined Communities*, Benedict Anderson observes that “communities are to be distinguished not by their falsity/genuineness but by the style in which they are imagined” (Anderson 1983, 6). Accordingly, native food becomes an imagined narrative of belonging and resistance as it contains layers of meaning beyond its material existence, representing cultural heritage, social memory, and identity. In the context of colonisation, where cultural homogenisation is a threat, native food becomes a form of resistance, a marker of identity that resists erasure. The practice of preparing and consuming traditional food reinforces collective identity, asserting the persistence of cultural values and distinctiveness against external pressures.

Correspondingly, native food, much like Anderson’s concept of imagined communities, operates not based on its intrinsic

“genuineness” but through the style and context in which it is imagined and performed by the community. It becomes a means through which people navigate and negotiate their identities, resisting the forces that seek to obscure their traditions. “The pursuit of nostalgia is legitimised by authenticity and validated by invoking the mother as a source of knowledge” (Parveen, 52); the mother or the motherland whom poet Mahmoud Darwish, on behalf of Palestinians, nostalgically evokes through culinary pleasure:

أحنُّ إلى خبز أمي
وقهوة أمي
ولمسة أمي
وتكبر في الطفولة
يوماً على صدر يوم
وأعشق عمري
لأنني إذا مت ،
أخجل من دمع أمي

I yearn for my mother's bread
To my mother's coffee
And touch
Childhood grows in me
Day after day
I must be worth my life
So if I die
I will not be worth my mother's tears³

Through these verses, Darwish captures the intimate connection between personal memory and national identity, illustrating how olfactory and culinary longing for a mother's bread and coffee transcends mere nostalgia and embodies a deeper connection to homeland and cultural heritage.

By the same token, the land is to Lucas a nurturing mother who keeps him rooted in a collective memory of endurance and resilience.

(...) and now he seemed to see his whole native land, his home—the dirt, the earth which had bred his bones and those of his fathers for six generations and was still shaping him into not just a man but a specific man, not with just

a man's passions and aspirations and beliefs but the specific passions and hopes and convictions and ways of thinking and acting of a specific kind and even race. (Faulkner 1982, 146)

Lucas's connection to the land is a source of memory and empowerment. To him, it represents ancestral roots, shaping his identity across generations. His deep connection to the earth, which granted him culinary sustenance, breeding his bones and those of his ancestors for six generations, ties him to a collective memory of survival, resilience and continuity. This nurturing relationship empowers Lucas, reinforcing his sense of self as not just any man, but a specific man molded by his heritage, his race, and the shared experiences of those who came before him. Thus, the land becomes a source of memory that shapes his existence and grants him power and defiance. Through this bond, Lucas gains a deeper sense of empowerment, as it nurtures his body and spirit, and nurtures his racial identity.

5. FOOD AND SOVEREIGNTY

Food sovereignty, or the right to control one's food systems, is a central theme in the postcolonial context. In fact, "food sovereignty and alternative food networks projects are embedded within systems of power and inequality that privilege certain perspectives and voices, resulting in alienation, disenfranchisement and even exclusion" (Wilson 2017, 31). A core idea about food sovereignty in the postcolonial context is that the coloniser works to deprive the colonised of authority and autonomy over the food they consume. Accordingly, food sovereignty "is imagined as emerging from spaces outside the capitalist food system, spaces defined as 'alternative'" (Morris and Fitzherbert 2017, 98). Thus, subaltern spaces where traditional modes of food production and consumption are revisited can be a good alternative to stand against the coloniser's attempts to erase the native culture/identity of the colonised.

In *Can the Subaltern Speak?*, Gayatri Ch. Spivak addresses how the voices and identities of colonised people are silenced. Spivak's and other postcolonial theorists' focus on subaltern agency can be

extended to the analysis of food as it becomes a means for marginalised communities to assert their identities and resist cultural erasure. Benita Parry states in this vein that the native subaltern is capable of producing “a counter-discourse displacing imperialism’s dominative system of knowledge” (Parry 1987, 55). Correspondingly, culinary resistance is one of the counter-hegemonic subaltern manifestations.

In the Palestinian context, the right of food sovereignty is repeatedly violated due to land expropriation, water scarcity, and restrictions imposed on farming and trade. Israeli policies undermine the Palestinians’ ability to grow, access, and share their food, framing food as an instrument of colonial violence. However, for Palestinians, food operates as a symbol of identity and a site of resistance. It embodies both the personal and political, offering a lens through which to understand the broader struggles of the Palestinian people. The act of producing and sharing traditional food in the midst of chaos is a modality of identity that validates the argument about the subaltern’s ability to speak through nonverbal signifiers, including the register of the culinary. In this respect, Arjun Appadurai argues that, within the postcolonial context, food is not only an element of survival but also a physical and psychological treatment of the coloniser’s oppression. It is believed to strengthen the relationship between men and the divine as well as between men and their fellows, for “eating together, whether as a family, a caste, or a village, is a carefully conducted exercise in the reproduction of intimacy” (Appadurai 1988, 10). Appadurai adds that food has moral, social, medical, and soteriological implications for the colonised (*Ibidem*, 11), turning into a political and spiritual form of survival and salvation.

In the same context, in *Intruder in the Dust*, Chick Mallison’s deeply ingrained connection to the black Southern experience is particularly reflected through the smell of food and shared childhood memories with Aleck Sander:

So he just smelled it and then dismissed it because he was used to it, he had smelled it off and on all his life and would continue to: who had spent a good

part of that life in Paralee's, Aleck Sander's mother's cabin in their back yard where he and Aleck Sander played in the bad weather when they were little and Paralee would cook whole meals for them halfway between two meals at the house and he and Aleck Sander would eat them together, the food tasting the same to each; he could not even imagine an existence from which the odor would be missing to return no more. He had smelled it forever, he would smell it always; it was a part of his inescapable past, it was a rich part of his heritage as a Southerner. (Faulkner 1982, 13)

The scent of food in Paralee's cabin, where Chick and Aleck spent time during bad weather, represents a powerful sensory connection to his past. According to Carol Rigsby, the smell of food which is like the smell of Lucas's house is exactly what Chick expected of Negroes (Rigsby 1976, 390). However, the narrator's careful attention to smell and taste hints at how cultural practices, like cooking, transcend the boundaries of race and class, while still highlighting their complexities. The repeated emphasis on the scent of food Chick has "smelled forever" and will continue to smell illustrates the permanence of this culinary recollection in his life. This sensory memory becomes a vital part of his Southern heritage. The fact that Chick "could not even imagine an existence" (Faulkner 1982, 13) without this taste underscores how deeply it is embedded in his identity as a Southerner.

The white Chick and the black Aleck Sander share meals together despite racial differences, reinforcing the idea that black and white lives have to be interwoven in the South, particularly in domestic spaces. The food "tasting the same to each" reflects the shared experience of eating despite racial division, with Paralee cooking in a separate space from the main house. This shared yet divided culinary experience conveys the tensions between racial intimacy and the larger societal segregation that governed Southern life. While Chick's memory of the food is fond and nostalgic, it is rooted in a system that relied on black labour to sustain white families, with Paralee's cooking aside representing both sustenance and the imposed separation of race.

Thus, through dialectical gustatory interaction, the colonised go beyond the confines of occupation and festively celebrate a

sovereign identity that takes pride in its original tastes. Food becomes a nonverbal instrument of human interaction that goes beyond the boundaries of the coloniser's dominant discourse, providing the colonised with a sense of moral and physical comfort and allowing them to transcend the oppressive experience of colonisation.

By describing the smell of food as an inescapable part of Chick's past and Southern heritage, Faulkner demonstrates how Southern identity is deeply tied to the labour and presence of black people, even though white Southerners often dismiss or minimise their contributions. Chick's ability to dismiss the smell because he is "used to it" bespeaks the normalisation of black labour and cultural contributions in the South, where white families were dependent on black workers like Paralee, but often took this dependency for granted.

CONCLUSION

Though geographically and historically distant, the Palestinian context and William Faulkner's South reveal that food is a powerful nonverbal idiom that claims to identity, resilience, and resistance against colonial attempts of erasure. Considered from a postcolonial lens, culinary practices become acts of sovereignty, through which marginalised peoples claim power and sovereignty.

In the Palestinian context, food not only embodies cultural heritage but also serves as a means of preserving memory and collective identity amid ongoing struggles. The act of preparing and sharing traditional dishes reinforces community bonds and acts as a form of resistance against the forces that seek to obliterate their history and existence. Similarly, in *Intruder in the Dust*, Lucas's relationship with food highlights how culinary pleasure becomes an assertion of autonomy and identity. By claiming space for gustatory satisfaction in the face of hostility, Lucas embodies resilience against the dehumanisation inflicted by a racially stratified society.

The notions of “subaltern”, “appropriation”, and “abrogation” further enrich our understanding of how food functions as a site of resistance. Culinary practices can be seen as a form of abrogation, subverting dominant narratives and challenging the status quo. Through these acts, marginalised groups reclaim their narratives, asserting their right to exist and thrive despite attempts to render them invisible. The appropriation of food and culinary traditions also highlights the ongoing negotiation of identity within postcolonial contexts, where the act of consuming and celebrating one’s cultural heritage becomes an assertion of power and self-definition. Finally, recognising food as a nonverbal idiom of resistance is crucial for understanding how culinary practices play a significant role in the struggle for identity and sovereignty against historical and contemporary injustices.

NOTES

1. See “The Importance of Cooperatives in Palestine,” Naser Qadous, July 5, 2019.
<https://www.anera.org/blog/the-importance-of-cooperatives-in-palestine/>
2. https://machahid24.com/paroles/79164.html#google_vignette (My own translation).
3. <https://www.ialigner.com/ugarit/userProfile.php?userid=2&tgid=159>

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