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Eating in Opposition: Strategies of Resistance Through Food in the Lives of Rural Andean and  
Appalachian Mountain Women

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A thesis  
presented to  
the faculty of the Department of Liberal Studies  
East Tennessee State University

In partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree  
Master of Arts in Liberal Studies

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by  
Veronica Limeberry  
December 2014

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Dr. Jill LeRoy-Frazier, Chair  
Dr. Tess Lloyd  
Dr. Daniel Newcomer

Keywords: food, resistance, culture, power, hegemony, mountain, rural, agriculture, identity,  
Appalachia, Peru, Andean

## ABSTRACT

Eating In Opposition: Strategies Of Resistance Through Food In The Lives Of Rural Andean

And Appalachian Mountain Women

by

Veronica Limeberry

This thesis examines ways in which rural mountain women of Andean Peru and southern Appalachia use their lived histories and food knowledge in ways that counter Cartesian epistemologies regarding national and international food systems. Using women's fiction and cookbooks, this thesis examines how voice and narrative reclaim women's spaces within food landscapes. Further, this thesis examines women's non-profits and grassroots organizations to illustrate the ways in which rural mountain women expand upon their lived histories in ways that contribute to tangible solutions to poverty and hunger in rural mountainous communities. The primary objective of this thesis is to recover rural mountain women's voices in relation to food culture and examine how their food knowledge contributes to improving local food policy and reducing hunger in frontline communities.

## DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to the many people who have supported me through my work, including my family and my loving partner, and to the memory of my grandfather, Doug Limeberry—who loved good food above all.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

Dawn creeps over the dark mountains in the horizon. Street lights slowly fade out, surrendering to the increasing brightness of the morning sun. While most of the city is quiet, slowly inching out of bed and preparing for the day, the market street is a chaotic hub of activity. Vendors with trucks and carts full of produce, salted meats, flowers, and other fresh items hurriedly set up tables, shout to their children, chop free samples, tape price lists to their tents, and hang attractive banners over their goods. The smells of baked breads, overripe vegetables and fruits, barbeque fires, hay, and flowers rise into the air. By the time the sun has fully peered over the mountains, the farmers have settled into their market stalls, casually talking amongst themselves. The rest of the city, in search of breakfast, fresh snacks, or groceries for the day, will soon flood into the small market space. As food historian Laura Schenone articulates, “We are born into this world as hungry infants, and until we die, we must eat to survive.”<sup>1</sup> Thus, the daily life of every city, town, or village begins with these farmers in some way---perhaps like this, with their market stalls and their offerings of sustenance to the larger public.

While human beings must eat to survive, eating is not simply about surviving. Any time a person eats, they must make a choice: what to eat, how to eat, when to eat, with whom to eat, where to eat, and so forth. One of the first recognized gastronomic scholars, Jean Anthelme Brillat-Savarin, claimed in 1825 that “The destiny of nations depends on the manner in which they are fed.”<sup>2</sup> As Michael Pollan further argues, “We forget that, historically, people have eaten for a great many reasons other than biological necessity. Food is also about pleasure, about

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<sup>1</sup> Laura Schenone, *A Thousand Years Over a Hot Stove: A History of American Women Told through Food, Recipes, and Remembrances*. (New York, London: W.W. Norton and Company, 2003) xii-xiii

<sup>2</sup> Jean Anthelme Brillat-Savarin, *The Physiology of Taste: Or Meditations on Transcendental Gastronomy* ( New York, Toronto: Vintage Books, a division of Random House, 2009) [originally published 1825; translation originally published 1949], 15



community, about family and spirituality, about our relationship to the natural world, and about expressing our identity. As long as humans have been taking meals together, eating has been as much about culture as it has been about biology.”<sup>3</sup> Intrinsic to eating are implications of culture, power, and politics. Nations thrive depending on how well their populations are fed.

Communities are born out of food choice and how food choice affects social taboos, religious rites, and rites of passage.<sup>4</sup> Food is both a sacred artifact of celebration and a mundane necessity repeated throughout daily living. Human history has evolved around food. In his examination of the psychology of food, Leon Rappoport argues that

Food consumption has been an object of significant religious attention and regulation for the same reason as has sexual activity: both stand as central features determining the organization of human communities, and both can be powerful sources of the conflicts, anxieties, guilt feelings, and diseases that can destroy human communities. Both have always been, and still remain, fundamentally mysterious, because it is apparent that normal, responsible people every so often seem unable to avoid falling into serious problems over food and sex.<sup>5</sup>

Accordingly, in the same way that sexuality has been fundamentally linked to culture and power,<sup>6</sup> food has integrally shaped cultural systems and codes of power. However, as Rappoport contends, food “was generally taken for granted as a fact of life, worthy of attention only when symptomatic of some other, more significant problems.”<sup>7</sup> Consequently, food is rendered invisible by its necessity.

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<sup>3</sup> Michael Pollan, *In Defense of Food: An Eater's Manifesto*, (Penguin Group: New York, 2008), 8

<sup>4</sup> Sydney Mintz, *Tasting food, tasting freedom: Excursions into eating, culture, and the past*, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1996) is an excellent introduction to anthropological research on culture and food. Also see, Carole Counihan and Penny van Esterik (eds), *Food and Culture: A Reader*, (Routledge: New York, 1997); Linda Civitello, *Cuisine and Culture: A History of Food and People*, (John Wiley & Sons, Inc.: Hoboken, 2011); and Peter Atkins and Ian Bowler, *Food in Society: Economy, Culture, Geography*, (2001; repr., Hodder Arnold: London, 2007)

<sup>5</sup> Leon Rappoport, *How We Eat: Appetite, Culture, and the Psychology of Food*, (ECW press: Ontario, 2003), 40-41

<sup>6</sup> For an introduction to the history and anthropology of sex and power in culture, see Leonard Shlain, *Sex, Time, and Power: How Women's Sexuality Shaped Human Evolution*, (Penguin Group: New York, 2003).

<sup>7</sup> Rappoport, 22

Similarly, the producers and preparers of food—women--are overwhelmingly erased from the historical human timeline.<sup>8</sup> However, anthropologists, linguists, historians, and others have begun to look more closely at food and the ways in which it has shaped human relations of power. At the center of this discussion is how women have contributed to food and how gendered understandings of food have constructed human social orders. This thesis works to illustrate ways in which food may be constructed as gendered, how food shapes human identity, and how food could relate to power and resistance. Specifically through the voices of Andean women in Peru and women residing in southern Appalachia, this research seeks to portray both the pleasures and struggles that food invites--the ways in which everyday women live within gendered norms of food and how they potentially resist and reconstruct such norms and the ways in which they harness power through food and evolve their power into forms of cultural resistance.

This analysis is firmly situated in the reality that the future of this planet relies on sustainable, culturally relevant, and local food production.<sup>9</sup> As authors Allison Hayes-Conroy and Jessica Hayes-Conroy eloquently articulate,

Global food realities weigh on the possibility of a just and sustainable future. Critical questions emerge when scholars move past the suggestion that worries about what to eat are elite concerns; along with the questions of who can afford food (economic inequality) and who prepares the meals (gender inequality). Scholars have begun to ask: what counts as quality, who controls knowledge about food, and how are power hierarchies in food chains reinforced?<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> See Laura Schenone, *A Thousand Years Over a Hot Stove: A History of American Women Told Through Food, Recipes, and Remembrances*, (New York and London: W. W. Norton and Company, 2003) ix-xxiii

<sup>9</sup> For more information on the importance of sustainable food systems, see Raj Patel, *Stuffed and Starved: The Hidden Battle for the World Food System*, (2007; repr. Melville House: Brooklyn, 2012); C. Clare Hinrichs and Thomas A. Lyson (eds), *Remaking the North American Food System: Strategies for Sustainability*, (University of Nebraska Press: Lincoln, 2007); Mark Winne, *Closing the Food Gap: Resetting the Table in the Land of Plenty*, (Beacon Press: Boston, 2008); and Robert Gottlieb and Anupama Joshi, *Food Justice*, (Cambridge and London, The MIT Press, 2010).

<sup>10</sup> Allison Hayes-Conroy and Jessica Hayes-Conroy, "Taking Back Taste: Feminism, Food, and Visceral Politics." *Gender, Place and Culture: A Journal of Feminist Geography*. (15.5), 462.

Importantly, as these authors suggest, food “is a strategic place from which to begin to understand identity, difference, and power.”<sup>11</sup> Hence, how does analysis of rural mountain communities of women enable connection from issues of hunger and sustainable development to underlying systemic relations of identity, difference, and power? In other words, how do the identities and power structures that shape these women’s lives inform their ability to secure food for themselves, their communities, and for the future? Importantly, why focus on rural mountain women?

A joint project undertaken by the United Nations, the Food and Agriculture Organization, and the World Food Programme has provided research that declares

Women are central to the development of rural areas and to national economies: they account for a significant proportion of the agricultural labour force, play a key role in food production and perform most of the unpaid care work in rural areas.<sup>12</sup>

Importantly, rural mountain communities are uniquely situated in regard to food production. The United Nations argues that the cultural histories of indigenous and traditional mountain communities are largely based on an agriculture of survival—an agrarian lifestyle that is “shaped by harsh climates and rough terrain as well as the seasonal rhythms of planting, harvesting, and transhumance.”<sup>13</sup> The necessity of working with the land, as opposed to exploiting the land for resources, has led many mountain communities to survive through histories of environmental stewardship and sustainability. Thus, rural mountain communities are often most knowledgeable about land usage practices and sustainable development. This is in contrast to Westernized

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 262

<sup>12</sup> United Nations, Food and Agriculture Organization, World Food Programme. “Accelerating Progress toward the Economic Empowerment of Rural Women.” 67<sup>th</sup> Session of the U.N. General Assembly. (Accessed September 25, 2012). <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/feature/ruralwomen/documents/event-joint-programme-concept-note-rome.pdf>.

<sup>13</sup> United Nations. “International Mountain Day.” [www.un.org](http://www.un.org). (Accessed August 15, 2012). <http://www.un.org/en/events/mountainday/2010/index.shtml>. 1

models of development that model Cartesian worldviews. According to United Nations researchers, Subramanian and Pisupati,

Many argue that the predominant discourses on knowledge and science show an inherent bias towards the Cartesian/modern worldview, preferring principles advocated by this stream of knowledge system to explain the underlying basis of all phenomena and actions. The relevance of [traditional knowledge] systems has generally been obscured, irrelevant, and/or exotic, despite the fact that almost 370 million indigenous people are estimated to live in 90 countries, with the population in some countries predominantly subscribing to traditional worldviews.<sup>14</sup>

In other words, despite the fact that traditional knowledge is critical to many peoples of the world, and while traditional knowledge is framed in contexts of sustainability and appreciation for diversity, Western models of Cartesian thought still comprise the predominant paradigm of food and land use knowledge. Clarifying this argument, researchers Haverkort and Reijntjes claim that “early nineteenth-century western science was inextricably linked to the great technological advances that led to the Industrial Revolution and the market-oriented, fossil-fuel intensive and interdependent global order and western hegemonic ideologies.”<sup>15</sup> Hence, modern paradigms emerged from a system of capitalist market-focused thought, dependent upon unsustainable usage of fossil fuels, along with international hegemonic regimes of control. Haverkort and Reijntjes go on to argue that “in all [European] settlement colonies, indigenous systems for understanding, learning, teaching and experimenting were pushed to the periphery. Ethnologists studied indigenous belief systems and traditions for their folklore or antiquarian value, not because they had something to teach to the colonizer.”<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Suneetha M. Subramanian and Balakrishna Pisupati. *Traditional Knowledge in Policy and Practice: Approaches to Development and Human Well-Being*. (Tokyo, New York, Paris: United Nations University Press. 2010), 1

<sup>15</sup> Bertus Haverkort and Coen Reijntjes, “Diversities of Knowledge Communities, their worldviews and sciences: On the challenges of their co-evolution,” in Subramanian and Pisupati, 15

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

Subramanian and Pisupati further maintain that traditional knowledge has been historically undermined and rendered invisible.<sup>17</sup> However, as these authors vehemently argue, “respect for and promotion of the knowledge, innovations and practices of indigenous and local communities will be central to these future efforts to save life on Earth.”<sup>18</sup> Thus, the problems of disappearing biodiversity, extinction of varying species of plants and animals, and related hunger crises can be addressed by examining systems of local and/or indigenous knowledge production—specifically how such knowledge shapes land use practices and policies. Due to these factors, the authors encourage reclamation of the terminology “traditional knowledge.” As defined by United Nations researchers Castillo and Castillo, traditional knowledge refers to “the knowledge that people in a community, based on experience and adaptation to a local culture and environment, have developed over time and used to sustain and enhance the community.”<sup>19</sup> Traditional knowledge is a term for epistemologies that are based in lived experience, and thus in identity. It is through traditional knowledge that people who experience the intersections of gender, race, class, and place are able to create ways of knowing that are localized and relevant to the sustainable development of their communities and their world.

As this thesis explores, rural mountain women are uniquely situated at the forefront of poverty, hunger, and food production. Within their traditional knowledge exists the possibility to gain innovative insights into how to build a sustainable, food-secure future; their traditional knowledge offers illuminations of how such a sustainable future must be informed by requisite needs for social justice. Examining rural mountain women’s experiences with food can

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<sup>17</sup> Subramanian and Pisupati, 12-30

<sup>18</sup> Ibid, xxi

<sup>19</sup> Fatima Alvarez Castillo and Maria Nadja A. Castillo, “Gender and Traditional Knowledge: Seeing Blind Spots, Redressing Inequities for Women,” in Suneetha M. Subramanian and Balakrishina Pisupati. *Traditional Knowledge in Policy and Practice: Approaches to Development and Human Well-Being*. (Tokyo, New York, Paris: United Nations University Press. 2010), 78.

potentially uncover the ways in which identity, power, and difference negotiate sustainable development and food production. Significantly, the ways in which these women resist hegemonic food systems and structures of inequality suggests possible paths forward. As the joint effort by the UN, FAO, and WFP suggests, “A food secure world and a world in balance require gender equality and women’s empowerment. By strengthening women’s economic role and opportunities, economic recovery would be faster, deeper, and more sustainable.”<sup>20</sup> Consequently the goals of this thesis are to first examine practical ways that rural mountain women use food to survive and evade hunger, and second to explore the exploring theoretical implications of rural mountain women’s traditional knowledge and how this can offer alternative systems of living and being that are not rooted in hierarchies of power and difference.

### *Methodology*

I come to this research as a white-identified woman from the southern Appalachian Mountains. I have been educated through structures of Western/Cartesian knowledge in the school systems of the United States. I acknowledge privileges of race, location, and epistemology. However, I also share the lived experience of being a mountain woman—even as my identity exists in a multiply-privileged sphere. Thus, as with all research, there are complex intersections and experiences that inform and shape my work. I was raised eating poke salad, morel mushrooms, and sorghum molasses. My family always kept a garden and we spent the end of every summer canning and preserving food. Simultaneously, I also had access to some of the best schools in the world. The poverty of my geographical region, while substantial, rarely reaches levels that many people in the world experience day to day. Thus, I can share some experiences of many mountain women worldwide, but I must also acknowledge that my

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<sup>20</sup> UN, FAO, WFP, 2

privilege has shaped my existence in ways that differ from most mountain women around the world. Importantly, privilege is often blinding to ways in which sustainable development and access to food for all peoples can be created in a socially just, diverse, and equitable manner.

To address issues of privilege and embrace diverse, multifaceted worldviews, it becomes necessary to explore the lived experience of mountain women who do not share similar identities, histories, or cultures in order to broaden the scope of analysis and illuminate blind spots in my own lived experience. As Subramanian and Pisupati argue, future behavior must “encourage participatory planning processes and facilitate endogenous development pathways that allow people to choose from the abundance of tools and methods and from different knowledge systems.”<sup>21</sup> An overarching goal for this thesis is not only to illuminate ways in which rural mountain women’s possibilities for food resistance can build alternative food systems but also to examine how varying mountain communities offer differing forms of traditional knowledge that may help foster sustainable development for diverse communities worldwide.

Before undertaking this research, I spent several years pursuing international field work and ethnographic observation. I first became aware of the linkage between women and food while interning under internationally renowned ecofeminist Vandana Shiva at her sustainable farm, Navdanya, located in the foothills of the Himalayas. After spending several months learning how to farm sustainably and attending lectures on sustainable development, food security, and women’s empowerment, I returned to the Appalachian Mountains to undertake research on how women here relate to food. As my research began to address rural mountain communities, I became interested in the Andes Mountains of Peru. I lived in Cusco for several months during the summer of 2011 and spent time with women market vendors in the informal

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<sup>21</sup> Subramanian and Pisupati, 10

food markets of the region. In the fall of 2011 I participated in a course that interviewed rural Appalachian farmers and gauged their response to and practices regarding sustainable development. These interviews are housed in the Archives of Appalachia at East Tennessee State University and were used to build a model for agro-tourism, including a local foods guide, for Unicoi County in northeastern Tennessee. Expanding on my foundations in exploration of women's work with food, this thesis uses an interdisciplinary focus to examine emerging research on ways in which women of the Peruvian Andes and North American Appalachian Mountains cultivate usage of food as potential forms of cultural empowerment and resistance to dominant food system



## CHAPTER 2

### WOMEN, FOOD, POWER, AND RESISTANCE: THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS

During the last few decades many ethnographers and qualitative researchers have found that numerically based quantitative research is an inadequate tool by which to reflect the complex lived realities of many peoples.<sup>1</sup> For instance, how could surveys and numbers represent the dialectical struggle over identity that many rural mountain women face in their everyday meal preparation? Rather than singular truths that can be achieved, stories such as these compel a new kind of academic lens. Laurel Richardson states that “there are multiple ways by which you might come to know something.”<sup>2</sup> In the case of rural mountain women it is critical to examine their lives in relation to food from a culturally relative, contextual, and situated perspective. This engenders a multivocal ability to understand the varied structure of perception, reality, and social construction that shape these women's lives. Without a nuanced, multifocal perspective, there is a risk of allowing women's work with food to remain in the realm of invisibility where it has lived throughout much of human history.

While the stories of rural women are fundamental to understanding their experiences in shaping and being shaped by food, these voices must do more--they must be invited into our own experiences, dialogued with, and constructed within our own histories. As Elliot Eisner articulates, we must “bring the message forward.”<sup>3</sup> In other words, the voices of rural mountain

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<sup>1</sup>For more information see H.L. Goodall Jr., *Writing the New Ethnography*, (Lanham, New York, Toronto, Oxford: Altamira Press, 2000); Ellis, Bochner, et. al, “*Talking and Thinking About Qualitative Research*,” *Qualitative Inquiry*, 14(2), 2008, 254-284; Richardson and Adams St. Pierre, “*Writing: A Method of Inquiry*,” in Denzin and Lincoln (eds) *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research, Third Edition*, (Thousand Oaks, London, New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2005).

<sup>2</sup>Ellis, Bochner, et. al, “*Talking and Thinking About Qualitative Research*,” *Qualitative Inquiry*, (14(2), 2008), 259-260.

<sup>3</sup>Elliot Eisner, “Art in Knowledge,” in ed. J. G. Knowles and A.L. Cole, *Handbook of the Arts in Qualitative Research*, (Thousand Oaks: Sage) 9

women and their work around food must be both heard and critically engaged within larger social structures.

*The Tomato Trajectory: Examining the Contemporary Food Paradigm*

In the sixteenth century, American food began to weave its way around the globe as conquistadors and explorers interacted with indigenous populations on the “new” continent. Imagine that on the fertile, vast, biodiverse American continent, a conquistador—clad in hot metal armor, sweating profusely, searching for life-saving nutrition---encounters an indigenous population that offers to him the humble tomato. The tomato, now cherished in dishes all over the world, was first shared in an exchange much like the one above. Indigenous peoples of Latin America gave tribute to new-comers with gifts of tomatoes, among other foundational foodstuffs. However, the tomato’s journey to Europe only occurred after the violent conquest of Tenochtitlan by Hernan Cortes in 1519. In Tenochtitlan, “the Spanish discovered the Aztecs eating a domesticated form of the tomato that they referred to as Xitomatl.”<sup>4</sup> Despite the numerous indigenous varieties of tomatoes present across Latin America five centuries ago, now “80 percent of the [indigenous] varieties [of tomatoes] have been lost in this century alone.”<sup>5</sup>

The story of the tomato offers a microcosm into the larger narrative of the contemporary food paradigm. After rapid industrialization following the turn of the twentieth century, and in the economic boom of the post-war 1950s, technologies such as plastic mulch “that kept the plants from direct contact with the earth,”<sup>6</sup> combined with the increasing use of greenhouses to sprout seedlings, revolutionized tomato cultivation. Plants were selected for mass production—to

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<sup>4</sup> Encyclopedia of Life. “Solanum lycopersicum: Tomato.” Available from <http://eol.org/pages/392557/overview>, (Accessed August 2, 2014).

<sup>5</sup>Deborah Barndt, “Across Space and Through Time,” in *Tangled Routes: Women, Work, and Globalization on the Tomato Trail, Second Edition*, (Rowman and Littlefield: New York. 2008), 13.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid.

export in the new international systems of trade that opened up as the United States came to power following the devastation of World War II. Other nations were forced to compete with the United States' technological advances and monocropped mass production. Due to increased war-time technology and capital, subsidization and corporatization of farming practices became a possibility in the United States. This new system of agriculture, combined with fears of the great depression, eventually led to increasingly protectionist policies to support U.S. agriculture against world markets. As Deborah Barndt illustrates, "in the late 1920s, U.S. surplus and protectionist policies forced Mexican producers to standardize packing tomatoes in wooden crates to compete with U.S. producers."<sup>7</sup> In other words, as the United States responded to new demand and increased ability to create profitable, mass agriculture, it forced other nations to change their agricultural systems to compete. Massive scale agriculture led to selecting plants that would best fit long-distance shipping and stocking, eventually leading to a decline in indigenously cultivated heirloom varieties that better suited local climates.

As monoculture grew, indigenous and culturally cultivated heirloom varieties of tomatoes disappeared. Simultaneously, former subsistence farmers---the very indigenous and rural peoples who had cultivated the tomato for centuries---became salaried workers in the new agribusiness system "built on a Western scientific logic and rationalism."<sup>8</sup> Workers were given specific tasks in a larger, routinized human machine---the new factory line assembly model. Importantly, "the industrialization of agriculture" was "accompanied by a feminization of agricultural labor."<sup>9</sup> Women became the primary workers in factories, greenhouses, and eventually in the new grocery stores and fast food restaurants taking the Western world by storm.

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<sup>7</sup>Ibid.

<sup>8</sup>Barndt, 13

<sup>9</sup>Ibid.

The story of the tomato is one of intercultural sharing, followed by conquest, advanced by industrialization, made profitable by mass production, recreated as monoculture, and built upon inequitable social systems of labor. Today, “agriculture---primarily industrial, petroleum-guzzling, chemical-heavy agriculture—contributes 13%-18% of the world’s greenhouse gases and uses 60%-70% of the planet’s diminishing fresh water supply.”<sup>10</sup> Simultaneously, “one-sixth of the world’s population is desperately hungry—just as many people suffer from obesity.”<sup>11</sup> As agribusiness policies and governmental subsidization and support of large-scale industrial farming practices increase, former small farmers and rural landowners are fleeing to cities to look for improved work opportunities. Critically, “in the United States, there are more people in prison than on the land.”<sup>12</sup> As Eric Holt-Gimenez and Raj Patel point out, “a financial cornucopia producing over \$6 trillion a year in wealth, industrial agrifood is tragically one of the planet’s major drivers of global poverty and environmental destruction.”<sup>13</sup> Thus, agribusiness and the emerging international food system create wealth at the expense of underpaid labor, overpriced food, and environmental devastation.

This leads to increasing inequity and food insecurity, upsetting frail social relations between those who have and those who don’t. As Deborah Bardnt illustrates, “Food flows constantly through our bodies. It flows steadily, too, through the arteries of highways, railways, waterways, and airways. Money flows in a reverse network through the veins of finance. Food, therefore, can reveal changes in the world economy.”<sup>14</sup> Wendell Berry goes as far to say that the industrial food system behaves in a totalitarian manner. He states that industrial agriculture “has

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<sup>10</sup>Eric Holt-Gimenez and Raj Patel. *Food Rebellions! Crisis and the Hunger for Justice*. (Food First Books: Oakland. 2009), 2.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid.

<sup>13</sup>Holt-Gimenez and Patel, 3.

<sup>14</sup>Bardnt, 2007, 36.

not asked for anything, or waited to hear any response. It has told nature what it wanted, and in various clever ways has taken what it wanted. And since it proposed no limit on what it wants, exhaustion has been its inevitable and foreseeable result.”<sup>15</sup> Ultimately, industrial agriculture has been about productivity and profit—exploiting labor and land to produce as much as could be bought. There were no conversations between the land, traditional or indigenous farmers, and the emerging system of mass agriculture. Much like the Spanish conquest of Tenochtitlan and the tomato, agriculture became a colonized model of production.

In 1992, as neoliberal policies began to shape industry and economics around the world, many poor indigenous and rural farmers began to organize to protect their land and lives. In Managua, Nicaragua, campesinos—or peasant farmers---from Latin America, the Caribbean, Europe, and North America, joined forces to begin a strategic plan of resistance against the growing commodified, industrialized agriculture model. Out of this conference emerged La Via Campesina, often referred to as “the most important transnational social movement in the world.”<sup>16</sup> La Via Campesina organized officially as an international-scale agricultural group of grassroots activist farmers in 1993 with over 70 peasant and small farmer leaders in Mons, Belgium, at the First International Conference of La Via Campesina. According to Martinez-Torres and Rosset, “It was at this conference that peasant and farm organisations worldwide formally committed to work collectively to defend their rights in the context of trade liberalisation, as producers of the world’s food.”<sup>17</sup> A founding principle of La Via Campesina is that peasants and farmers—of all social spectrums, across gender, ethnicity, location, religion,

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<sup>15</sup> Wendell Berry, *Bringing It to the Table: On Farming and Food*, (Counterpoint Publishing: Berkley, California: 2009), 6

<sup>16</sup> Maria Elena Martinez-Torres and Peter M. Rosset, “La Via Campesina: The Birth and Evolution of a Transnational Social Movement”, *Journal of Peasant Studies*, (37) 1, (2010), 150  
<http://www.agroecology.wisc.edu/courses/agroecology-702/materials/13-getting-it/martinez-torres-rosset-2010.pdf>

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 157.

and educational status--represent themselves. Members of the organization were tired of being represented without having their own voices heard through NGOs and non-profits at the international level. Martinez-Torres and Rosset point out that

The political style of La Via Campesina is that of a poor peoples' movement: people who have been pushed to the edge of extinction by dominant power in their countries and in the world, people who have usually not been taken into account, who have been 'fooled too many times' by smooth-talking politicians and NGOs, people who were never invited to sit at the table and had to 'elbow their way' into the seat they now occupy.<sup>18</sup>

In other words, La Via Campesina was built around a foundation of sharing the actual lived experiences of peasant farmers around the world to build a strong resistance against international trade policies that ignored their realities and needs for survival.

At the same time La Via Campesina was founded, over 500,000 farmers in India were holding a "Seed Satyagraha"---or nonviolent protest---to counter the patenting of seeds by multinational corporations under neoliberal international policies.<sup>19</sup> Brussels, Belgium, also saw a protest of 30,000 farmers from across Europe who marched against the new General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT, predecessor to the World Trade Organization) policies for agricultural and food systems. The increasingly commodified and industrialized monoculture agribusiness system emerging around the world had finally come to a head---the rural and peasant farmers who were most affected by these trade policies would no longer be silenced.

In the United States, similar movements are occurring against large-scale agribusiness policies. In a commentary on the U.S. farm bill in 2009, Wendell Berry points out that agricultural practices in the United States were built around the free trade implications of cheap

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<sup>18</sup>Martinez-Torres and Rosset, pg 158

<sup>19</sup>Vandana Shiva, *Earth Democracy: Justice, Sustainability, and Peace*, (South End Press: Cambridge Massachusetts, 2005), 2

fossil fuels, cheap labor, and destruction of the family farm in favor of mass industrial agriculture. He goes on to claim that

For 50 or 60 years, we have let ourselves believe that as long as we have money we will have food. That is a mistake. If we continue our offenses against the land and the labor by which we are fed, the food supply will decline, and we will have a problem far more complex than the failure of our paper economy. The government will bring forth no food by providing hundreds of billions of dollars to the agribusiness corporations.<sup>20</sup>

Berry's sentiments have rung true to many farmers in the past few decades. The United States Department of Agriculture finds that "there were a total of 2.1 million farms in the United States in 2012, down a little more than 4 percent from 2007. That follows a long-term trend of declining numbers of farms."<sup>21</sup> Simultaneously, farmers themselves are getting older: the average age of the US farmer in 2012 was 58.3. A small number of young people between the ages of 24-35 are beginning to farm; however, this is not enough to replace the need for new farmers as older farmers pass on. In fact, as of 2012 one-third of all farmers in the U.S. were over the age of 65.<sup>22</sup>

Many critical concepts have emerged out of the international and national food movements of the previous few decades. A driving force behind many food movements has been that of food sovereignty. La Via Campesina defined food sovereignty in their organizational work as "people's right to healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through ecologically sound and sustainable methods, and their right to define their own food and agriculture systems."<sup>23</sup> Food sovereignty is inherently a deeper, more radical concept than food security, which emerged out of governmental policy and aid programs. Food security seeks to improve basic access to food in general, while food sovereignty proposes "democratic control over food: from production

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<sup>20</sup> Wendell Berry, "A 50-Year Farm Bill," *The New York Times*, (January 4, 2009). [http://www.nytimes.com/2009/01/05/opinion/05berry.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2009/01/05/opinion/05berry.html?_r=0)

<sup>21</sup> Mary Clare Jalonick, "Number of US farms declines, farmers getting older." *Associated Press: The Big Story*. (February 20, 2014). <http://bigstory.ap.org/article/number-us-farms-declines-farmers-getting-older>

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Eric Holt-Gimenez and Raj Patel, *Food Rebellions! Crisis and the Hunger for Justice*, (Food First Books: Oakland, California, 2009), 86

and processing, to distribution, marketing and consumption,”<sup>24</sup> with the ultimate goal that communities have democratic, consensual decisions over their entire food systems.

Food sovereignty is linked with the concept of food justice, which emerged out of the journal *Race, Poverty, and the Environment* in 2000 when it published an issue dedicated to comparing the parallels between environmental justice and developing community food initiatives. Environmental justice emphasizes healthy environments where “we live, work, and play,”<sup>25</sup> with community-based movements that work to “reorient the environmental movement to address environmental disparities and better link the struggles to uncover and mitigate community hazards with broader system change.”<sup>26</sup> Similarly, the journal concluded that this environmental justice work could be extended to “where, what, and how we eat.”<sup>27</sup> While the concept of food justice is still in process, a general definition that has emerged is “ensuring that the benefits and risks of where, what, and how food is grown and produced, transported, and distributed, and accessed and eaten are shared fairly,” while identifying “a language and set of meanings, told through stories as well as analysis, that illuminate how food injustices are experienced and how they can be challenged and overcome.”<sup>28</sup> The emphasis on the lived experience of those facing food injustice pays homage to the concept of democracy and community involvement as seen in work toward food sovereignty.

As activists became immersed in increasing work around food, it became clear that there were multiple elements of a food system that created the paradigm of how food is cultivated, marketed, and consumed. This became termed the “food system” and includes “the entire set of activities and relationships that make up the various food pathways from seed to table and

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Robert Gottlieb and Anupama Joshi, *Food Justice*, (MIT Press: Cambridge, Massachusetts, 2010), 4

<sup>26</sup> Ibid. pg 5

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Gottlieb and Joshi pg 6



influence the ‘how and why and what we eat.’”<sup>29</sup> This includes the industry around agricultural resources such as land, soil, seed, land amendments and inputs, to the aggregation and processing of agricultural products, to the marketing and distribution of these products, to the way food is served or presented to consumers through various food outlets (such as restaurants, grocery stores, or farmers’ markets), to the choices that the consumer makes.

A primary opponent of those seeking food sovereignty and food justice became globalized, industrial agriculture that stripped communities of their ability to democratize their food systems, which often perpetuated food injustices. These injustices often include decreasing access to fresh, healthy food in communities (or eradication of stores themselves in impoverished areas),<sup>30</sup> decreasing access to healthy agricultural resources and practices (with increasing use of mass-mono-agricultural practices and resources such as genetically-modified seeds), increasing consumption of land by corporate agribusinesses (such as international land-grabs or the increasing size of farms as they transition to mass agriculture), decreasing quality of environment due to chemical inputs (causing soil erosion, air pollution, and water pollution), and increasing exploitation of farm labor as farmers transitioned from owning land to working for agribusiness monopolies. These injustices spurred resistance, often in the form of protests against rising food prices and decreasing food aid. Heather Rogers indicates that

The riots started in early 2007. The first country to erupt was Mexico. In just one year the price of corn, the key ingredient in tortillas, had shot up more than 80 percent. Suddenly, not just the poorest but also wage earners were unable to put food on the table. Tens of thousands of workers and peasants angrily took to the streets, marching down Mexico City’s main throughfare...In the ensuing months the world convulsed with violent unrest in over thirty countries<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid. pg 5

<sup>30</sup> Two works examining the inequitable distribution of stores that carry healthy food are Mark Winne, *Closing the Food Gap: Resetting the Table in the Land of Plenty*, (Beacon Press, 2009) and Raj Patel, *Stuffed and Starved: The Hidden Battle for the World Food System*, (2007; repr. Portobello Books, London, 2009)

<sup>31</sup> Heather Rogers, *Green Gone Wrong*, (Verso: London, 2010), 1

Food prices continued to rise, and the poor and lower-middle class in nations around the world continued to lose access to healthy food for their families. Simultaneously, “despite growing hunger, food aid fell globally by 15%” in 2007—to “the lowest level since 1961.”<sup>32</sup> This dangerous combination of reduced aid and increased food cost led many communities to believe that the food system was seriously flawed and that grassroots, localized mobilization to reclaim food for people over profit was necessary in order to correct the devastation incited by the industrialized food system that had emerged in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Multiple organizations have developed to combat neoliberal, industrial agriculture policies in the U.S., such as the National Farm Workers Association—now known as United Farm Workers--founded by Cesar Chavez and Dolores Huerta in 1962 to combat exploitation of cheap immigrant labor on industrial farms; the Coalition of Immokalee Workers, founded in 2001 by indigenous peoples in Florida to combat slave-like conditions on industrial farms and encourage “fair food practices”; the Organic Consumers Association, founded in 1998 to raise awareness about industrial agricultural practices such as genetic modification, overuse of toxic chemicals, and patenting of seeds for corporate ownership; Food Democracy Now, founded in 2007 to bring together small farmers across the U.S. to resist industrial agriculture pressure to sell-off family farms and influence national farm policy; and many more.<sup>33</sup> Based upon the ever-increasing number of farmer and consumer organizations that advocate for more sustainable, local, and community-based agricultural practices, it becomes clear that many people and

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<sup>32</sup> Holt-Gimenez and Patel, 88

<sup>33</sup> United Farm Workers of America, “About Us,” [http://www.ufw.org/page.php?menu=about&inc=about\\_vision.html](http://www.ufw.org/page.php?menu=about&inc=about_vision.html); Coalition of Immokalee Workers, “About CIW,” <http://ciw-online.org/about/>; Organic Consumers Association, “About OCA,” <http://www.organicconsumers.org/aboutus.cfm>; and Food Democracy Now, “About,” <http://www.fooddemocracynow.org/about>

organizations in the United States are actively engaged in resisting food systems of industrial monoculture agriculture. At the center of this work are women, indigenous peoples, and people of color---those most affected by new international food and agriculture policies.

### *Gendered Constructions of Food*

Due to social constructions of gender <sup>34</sup> as perpetuated by historical, cultural, economic, and political circumstances, women are often closely connected to food. In *A Thousand Years Over a Hot Stove*, author Laura Schenone claims that

Men may have cooked for aristocrats and kings, but it was women who devoted extraordinary energy to finding, growing, preparing, and serving food to the better part of the human race. We are born into this world as hungry infants, and until we die, we must eat to survive. This human necessity has helped shape the very nature of women's lives since the day we lived in caves. And in turn, women have shaped the very nature of food.<sup>35</sup>

Subsequently, women historically became linked to both food production and preparation, thus shaping not only their own lives and knowledge, but also food cultures and systems. Likewise, Debra Barndt illustrates that women link all aspects of the food chain. In the contemporary world economy women are most often responsible for growing food, harvesting food, packing food, processing food, cooking food, and serving food.<sup>36</sup> Additionally, as researcher Debbie Field states, “on the family and personal level, women all over the world still shoulder the major responsibility for meal preparation, even in households where men and women both work outside the home.”<sup>37</sup> Therefore, it is evident that many women are still connected to traditional

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<sup>34</sup>For more information on how gender is socially constructed, please see Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, (1990; repr. Routledge: New York, 2010) and Judith Lorber and Susan Farrell, *The Social Construction of Gender*, (SAGE Publications, 1990)

<sup>35</sup>Schenone, pg xii-xiii

<sup>36</sup>Deborah Barndt In the belly of the beast: A moveable feast. In ed. D. Barndt, *Women Working the NAFTA Food Chain: Women, Food, and Globalization*, (1997; repr. Toronto: Sumach Press, 2007) 14

<sup>37</sup>Debbie Field. “Putting Food First: Women’s Roles in Creating A Grassroots Food System Outside the Marketplace.” In *Women Working the NAFTA Food Chain: Women, Food, and Globalization*, edited by Deborah Barndt.(1999; repr., Toronto: Sumach Press, 2007), 202-203

gendered roles of motherhood and familial responsibility, which emphasize the unique relationship with food that many women have.

Food studies author and anthropologist Sydney Mintz highlights these claims, arguing that women in traditional “societies commonly did much of the labor to collect or grow food, as well as nearly all of the cooking.” However, Mintz points out that women’s work has been left out of the historical record, since “most anthropologists were men, and didn’t find such matters interesting,”<sup>38</sup> thus, men went on to publish accounts of fascinating and exotic food studies, such as Bronislaw Malinowski’s “studies of the Trobriand Islanders, which brought together yam cultivation, feasting, magic, and chiefhood”<sup>39</sup>—focusing primarily on men’s usage of food in society to gain political power and ignoring women’s daily experiences and contributions.

In order to examine how rural mountain women are integrally connected to issues of food, it is important to understand the unique situatedness of women to food—including physical proximity and cultural constructions that encode food as gendered. One dimension that connects women to food is the “feminization of poverty,”<sup>40</sup> which signifies that the majority of the world’s poor are women.<sup>41</sup> According to the International Poverty Centre, the term “feminization of poverty” is defined as

Change in poverty levels that are biased against women or female-headed households.

More specifically, it is an increase in the difference in poverty levels between women and men, or between households headed by females on the one hand, and those headed by males or couples on the other. The term can also be

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<sup>38</sup>Sydney Mintz. *Tasting food, tasting freedom: Excursions into eating, culture, and the past*, (Boston: Beacon Press:1996), 3

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 4

<sup>40</sup>Chris Weiss. “Organizing Women for Local Development,” in *Communities in Economic Crisis: Appalachia and the South*, eds. John Gaventa, Barbara Ellen Smith, and Alex Willingham. (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1990), 61

<sup>41</sup>G. Tyler Miller and Scott Spoolman, *Environmental Science*, (Belmont: Brooks/Cole Cengage Learning, 2010), 106

used to mean an increase in poverty due to gender inequalities, though we prefer to call this the feminization of the causes of poverty.<sup>42</sup>

Hence, the “feminization of poverty” is a term employed to describe changes in economic conditions that are biased unfavorably toward women, while the term “feminization of the causes of poverty” signifies that gender inequalities can create an increase in female poverty. According to the United States Census Bureau, the rate of single-female headed households below the poverty level in 2009 was 29.9%, while the rate of single-male headed households below the poverty level in 2009 was 16.9%.<sup>43</sup> Furthermore, the Southern United States faced the highest poverty level, with an estimated 15.7% of people in this region living below the federal poverty line.<sup>44</sup> According to the United States Department of Agriculture, single-female headed households comprised 36.6% of people who are food insecure in the United States, compared to 27.8% of single-male headed households.<sup>45</sup> The Southern region of the United States comprised the highest percentage of people living with food insecurity, at a rate of 15.9%, followed closely by the Western United States at 15.5%.

In 2011 in Peru, 38% of the population does not achieve minimum sufficient calorie intake on a daily basis; in rural areas this number is much higher, with approximately 80% of children in the rural Andean highlands in a state of malnourishment.<sup>46</sup> Additionally, the Peruvian national average of people living under the poverty line is 36.8%, with 12.6% in extreme poverty; however, in the rural regions of the Andean highlands this number doubles to 25.7% of

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<sup>42</sup>Marcelo Medeiros and Joana Costa. “What Do We Mean by “Feminization of Poverty”?” *International Poverty Centre* (no. 58. 2008),1 <http://www.ipc-undp.org/pub/IPCOnePager58.pdf>

<sup>43</sup>Carmen DeNavas-Walt, Bernadette D. Proctor, and Jessica C. Smith. “Income, Poverty, and Health Insurance Coverage in the United States: 2009.” (United States Census Bureau, 2009), 26 <http://www.census.gov/prod/2010pubs/p60-238.pdf>

<sup>44</sup>*Ibid.*, 25

<sup>45</sup>Mark Nord, Alisha Coleman-Jensen, Margaret Andrews, and Steven Carlson. “Household Food Security in the United States, 2009.” (United States Department of Agriculture: Economic Research Service, November 2010) 10

<sup>46</sup>World Food Programme, “Peru: Overview,” <http://www.wfp.org/countries/peru>. (2011)

people living in extreme poverty.<sup>47</sup> Internationally the percentage of women in poverty facing chronic hunger, according to the World Food Programme, is estimated to be about 60%.<sup>48</sup>

From these figures it is evident that women are the majority of not only the world's poor, but also the world's hungry. In both the United States and Peru, women are disproportionately affected by both poverty and hunger, with rural mountainous regions generally being the most affected geographical locations. While the scope of this paper does not permit detailed analysis of the international global economic structure that perpetuates these inequalities, it is critical to situate the connection of women to poverty and hunger in order to analyze how a focus on rural mountain women's work with food illuminates potential enactments of power and food resistance.

Beyond women's tangible, daily connections to food, many feminist authors argue that acts of cooking are themselves ways of "doing" gender and perpetuating social gender norms. Author Sherrie Inness states that "Food and its preparation are strongly gender coded as feminine."<sup>49</sup> She argues that cooking is a "significant form of gender socialization"<sup>50</sup> that often is used to subordinate women, devalue their work, and maintain the idea of separate public and private spheres for men and women. Inness goes on to argue that this is a social construction in which "cooking becomes an important way to identify whether a female is sufficiently womanly."<sup>51</sup> Thus, women's ability to cook well becomes coded as women's performance of gender. Acts of cooking, and thus nurturing, become acts of doing gender.

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<sup>47</sup>World Food Programme

<sup>48</sup>World Food Programme. "WFP Gender Policy: Promoting Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women in Addressing Food and Nutrition Challenges." (World Food Programme, 2009). 3  
<http://one.wfp.org/eb/docs/2009/wfp194044~2.pdf>

<sup>49</sup>Sherrie Inness, *Dinner roles: American women and culinary culture*. (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2001) 1

<sup>50</sup>*Ibid.*, 1

<sup>51</sup>*Ibid.*, 9

To analyze how gender plays a role in shaping women's work with food, it is essential to employ theoretical foundations that examine not only gender, but how gender intersects with other identities such as socioeconomic class and race. The concept of intersectionality shapes an important dimension of how oppression functions. Leslie McCall writes,

Feminist researchers have been acutely aware of the limitations of gender as a single analytical category. In fact, feminists are perhaps alone in the academy in the extent to which they have embraced intersectionality—the relationships among multiple dimensions and modalities of social relations and subject formations—as itself a central category of analysis.<sup>52</sup>

Consequently, a sole focus on gender limits the analytical perspective in significant ways that ignore other important experiences of women. Furthermore, it is critical to understand that the multiple identities of oppression cannot be separated or isolated from one another, but they intersect to create intricate webs that define personal experience. As Barbara Ellen Smith writes,

The analysis of race, class, and gender as separable relationships can be conducted only at an extremely general and ultimately hypothetical level, for in the realities of social life, these oppressions intersect with and transform one another. Their synergistic interaction creates additional complexities and obstacles, for it means that certain oppressions that are nominally shared—for example, gender among Black and White women—create different identities, experiences, and political agendas across race-class-gender groups.<sup>53</sup>

Therefore, understanding how rural mountain women are situated regarding their various identities is indispensable to recognizing how and why their work with food unfolds in the ways that it does. In addition to class and race, the mountain identity constructed for many mountain women can also be oppressive. A researcher on the links between international mountain communities, Moira P. Shaw, writes, “In the case of mountain women, patriarchy and

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<sup>52</sup>Leslie McCall. “The Complexity of Intersectionality.” *Signs*. Vol 30, No 3 (The University of Chicago Press, 2005), 1771

<sup>53</sup>Barbara Ellen Smith, “Crossing the Great Divides: Race, Class, and Gender in Southern Women's Organizing, 1979-1991.” *Gender and Society* vol 9, no. 6. (December 1995), 684

inhospitable economies, as well as discrimination against mountain people, stifle their voices.”<sup>54</sup>

However, oppression based upon regional status is multi-faceted and is not simply a mechanism of quiescence<sup>55</sup>--or a defeated sense of inactivity and lack of participation in society as cultivated by dominant elites. Instead, as author Mary K. Anglin claims,

The study of work and protest in Appalachia involves an analysis of regional culture as a force that informs the construction of class consciousness, gender relations, and community life. ...It reflects a particular history and set of socioeconomic conditions, and is the means by which individuals come to terms with, or contest, these particularities.<sup>56</sup>

These particular histories and socioeconomic conditions are not unique to the Appalachian Mountains but also inform the lives of many mountain peoples around the world.

The mountain identity constructed by and for some mountainous peoples often becomes a defining factor for them. As author James C. Scott articulates in his work on mountain communities, “To the degree that the identity is stigmatized by the larger state or society, it is likely to become for many a resistant and defiant identity. Here invented identities combine with self-making of heroic kind, in which identifications become a badge of honor.”<sup>57</sup> Geographic location often serves to instill identities that are reinforced and self-actualized over time. Scott clarifies that

All identities, without exception have been socially constructed: the Han, the Burman, the American, the Danish, all of them. Quite often such identities,

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<sup>54</sup>Moirra P. Shaw “From Every Mountainside, Let Freedom Ring: A Transnational Feminist Journey through the Experiences of West Virginian and Bolivian Mountain Women,” In *Beyond Hill and Hollow: Original Readings in Appalachian Women’s Studies*, eds Elizabeth S.D. Engelhardt (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2005), 203.

<sup>55</sup>In John Gaventa, *Power and Powerlessness: Quiescence and Rebellion in an Appalachian Valley*, (University of Illinois Press, 1982), Gaventa asks: “Why, in a social relationship involving domination of a non-elite by an elite, does challenge to that domination not occur? What is there in certain situations of social deprivation that prevents issues from arising, grievances from being voiced, or interests from being recognized?” ( 3). He answers that “in situations of inequality, the political response of the deprived group or class may be seen as a function of power relationships, such that power serves for the development and maintenance of the quiescence of the non-elite,” ( 4).

<sup>56</sup>Mary K. Anglin, “Engendering the Struggle: Women’s Labor and Traditions of Resistance in Rural Southern Appalachia” in *Fighting Back in Appalachia: Traditions of Resistance and Change* edited by Stephen L. Fisher (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1993), 263.

<sup>57</sup>James C. Scott, *The Art of Not Being Governed: An Anarchist History of Upland Southeast Asia*, (New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 2009), xiii



particularly minority identities, are at first imagined by powerful states, as the Han imagined the Miao, the British colonists imagined the Karen and the Shan, the French the Jirai. Whether invented or imposed, such identities select, more or less arbitrarily, one or another trait, however vague---religion, language, skin color, diet, means of subsistence—as the desideratum.<sup>58</sup>

Critically, identity is often constructed by a dominant culture in such ways as to produce inferior others, which the dominant culture can then subjugate. However, this stigmatized identity often becomes a factor of solidarity for people who share it, thus producing defiant and resistant identities. Scott discusses the case of Karen villagers who reside in the geographical region of Southeast Asia known as Zomia, a highland or mountainous zone that spans across eight nation states and is marked by governments' inability to control residents of the area.<sup>59</sup> Many Karen peoples escape to surrounding mountains to flee Burmese military rule and repression. Scott argues that “the quickest available refuge” from Burmese military control “lies, generally, farther up the water courses and higher in the hills...As the degree of military pressure increases, such so-called hiding villages split into smaller units.”<sup>60</sup> The goal of the Karen people is to evade visibility and to claim their identity as free people, even if this means living in the rugged, harsh terrain of the mountains surrounding Southeast Asia. Their inferior identity, as cultivated by Burmese rulers, engages them in a particular solidarity that allows Karen people to claim this identity in ways that will foster resistance to dominant oppression.

An example of a less extreme use of identity is the comparison of the identity of “mountain woman” as opposed to the identity of just “woman.” As previously elaborated, in the proclaimed identity of the “mountain” person, there is a presumption of defiance or resistance. However, as Scott goes on to claim, “hills, however, are not simply a space of political

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<sup>58</sup>Ibid.

<sup>59</sup>Scott, 14

<sup>60</sup>Scott, 181

resistance, but also a zone of cultural refusal.”<sup>61</sup> Thus, the resistance implied in mountain identity is more than resistance to dominant political structures of oppression but also resistance to cultural structures that would dissolve the identities imbued by mountain environments. The Karen people in Scott’s example have adapted a particular type of “escape agriculture”<sup>62</sup> based upon the consistent demand for mobility. They have adapted a particular culture around foraging and easily transplantable, mountain food crops. This is to protect not only their freedom but also their very identity as Karen people. The unique histories, conditions, and afflictions that shape mountain experience often become solidified as self-actualized identities of resistance for the peoples who live in these regions.

One predominant affliction for many mountain regions is that of resource extractive industry<sup>63</sup>. According to Karen J. Warren, “there are important connections between how one treats women, people of color, and the underclass on the one hand and how one treats the nonhuman natural environment on the other.”<sup>64</sup> The natural environment of many mountain women has been exploited in ways that shape and perpetuate other types of human oppression. For instance, an examination of the Yellow Creek pollution in Bell County, Kentucky by a local tannery provides insight into how women are oppressed due to environmental exploitation. Author Sherry Cable claims, “Because their homemaking role depends on the physical environment, the women of the Yellow Creek valley are very aware of their natural

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<sup>61</sup>Ibid., 20

<sup>62</sup>Scott, 187

<sup>63</sup>For more information on environmental exploitation of mountain communities see Michele Morrone and Geoffrey L. Buckley (eds), *Mountains of Injustice: Social and Environmental Justice in Appalachia*, (Ohio University Press: Athens, 2011); Rebecca R. Scott, *Removing Mountains: Extracting Nature and Identity in the Appalachian Coalfields*, (University of Minnesota: Minneapolis, 2010); N.S. Jodha, “Global Change and Environmental Risks in Mountain Ecosystems” in Jeanne X. Kasperson and Roger Kasperson (eds), *Global Environmental Risk*, (United Nations University Press: New York, 2001); and The International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD), “Mountain Agenda,” <http://www.icimod.org/> 2014

<sup>64</sup>Karen J. Warren, *Ecofeminism: Women, Culture, and Nature*, (Indiana University Press 1997), xi

surroundings.”<sup>65</sup> In this particular case women who were engaged in homemaking activities—acquiring, preparing, and preserving food to maintain sustenance for their families--were affected by the toxic air that emanated from the heavily polluted creek. Because of their gender and region, these women had less access to male-dominated local jobs (such as working for the tannery or in coal mines), and were instead expected to maintain the security and sustenance of familial life at home. This left them at home more often, forced to face environmental pollution in the home more so than men who often left to work outside the home.

When examining women’s roles in food production, preparation, and consumption, the implications of place and the natural environment become crucial to analysis. For instance, how does the movement of transnational corporations onto rural farmland affect women’s ability to produce food for their families and communities? How do toxic pesticides and chemicals affect the health of women working in the fields? What happens when these pollutants spread to farms that have never used synthetic chemicals? To where can rural mountain women relocate when their land has been usurped for such usage? Analyzing the food work of rural mountain women requires examination of how intersections of oppression based upon gender, class, race, and regional identity shape and influence their lives and work, as well as how these multiple layers of oppression are further complicated by the oppression of the natural, nonhuman environment.

Women, due to gendered social constructions, have often been prevented from obtaining formal wage labor. Simultaneously, their roles as homemakers and food providers have been socially enforced and the often invisible value of their work often leaves them without adequate expression of voice or active participation in the society around them. Importantly, grassroots activism or social movement participation is based around “perception of grievances, structural

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<sup>65</sup>Sherry Cable, “Women’s Social Movement Involvement: The Role of Structural Availability in Recruitment and Participation Processes,” *The Sociological Quarterly*, 33 no 1 (Spring 1992), 40

availability for participation, and social networks that facilitate participation.”<sup>66</sup> Economic inhibitions and cultural constructions that have served to oppress many rural mountain women have also provided them with the above “structural availability”<sup>67</sup> to participate in food resistance. According to Cable, structural availability “has been identified as a critical factor in social movement recruitment. The term refers to ‘a lack of alternative commitments and obligations that might limit an individual’s ability to participate.’”<sup>68</sup> Importantly, “Structural availability concerns social role obligations. Deep and extensive involvement in social relationships curtails time for movement participation.”<sup>69</sup>

Returning to the above example of the Yellow Creek pollution, women became the first people in the community to identify the grievance (in this case the toxic pollution emanating from the creek) because they were unlikely to be employed by the tannery (as it was perceived to be a manual-labor male job). Their lack of local employment permitted them more time at home to notice the increasing stench in the air and the declining quality of water in their creek. As these neighborhood women were connected through strong social roles (generally through their children’s play-dates at other homes and through social events such as church bake sales or Parent-Teacher-Association meetings), they quickly were able to build a network of concerned citizens.

However, as Cable illustrates, this type of structural availability is particular to a specific set of social circumstances. In Yellow Creek, Kentucky communities were small and isolated as “coal companies had destroyed the ‘free spaces’ that many argue are necessary for the growth of democratic movements”—in other words, the historical establishment of mining encampments

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<sup>66</sup> Sherry Cable, 37

<sup>67</sup> Sherry Cable, 37

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 37

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

had led to small communities removed from each other and a lack of venues that encouraged social gatherings. The primary social events of these small communities revolved around women's activities such as attending PTA meetings or organizing church events. This specific situation of structural availability permitted economically and culturally oppressed women to organize and participate in a social movement to improve their surrounding environment. For example, during a phase of the organizing when the Yellow Creek Concerned Citizen's group pursued litigation against the tannery, "women took over the everyday activities of the group primarily because they were available during weekdays when employed men were not."<sup>70</sup> However, when men were available to participate, they tended to dominate group activities and discussions---returning to historical representations of gender discrimination in activist organizing. Ultimately, rural mountain women had the opportunity to participate in subtle tactics of resistance more often than their male counterparts, navigating the unique advantages of cultural norms that prescribed them as homemakers and caretakers in their isolated mountain communities. As Laura Schenone eloquently articulates, "What a consistent paradox this has been. Throughout history, cooking reveals itself as a source of power and magic, and, at the same time, a source of oppression in women's lives."<sup>71</sup> In other words, women's source of potential empowerment and social engagement is simultaneously a site of oppression and structural disadvantage.

The intersectionality of oppression that many rural mountain women face—of being female, from various ethnic backgrounds, from exploited mountain areas, and often poor—ironically engenders their ability to work at the frontlines of food resistance. Thus, while female

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<sup>70</sup> Sherry Cable "From Fussin' to Organizing: Individual and Collective Resistance at Yellow Creek," in *Fighting Back in Appalachia: Traditions of Resistance and Change*, ed Stephen Fisher, (Temple University Press: Philadelphia, 1993), 79.

<sup>71</sup> Schenone, xv

poverty and dependency is often perpetuated, along with traditional domestic roles centered on familial caretaking, these women are often also distinctively situated to cultivate power through their direct relationships with food.

### *Food as Power?*

As evidenced, women are often closely connected to food work and food systems. But why is food so important? Clearly people must eat to survive, but what power does food have beyond the necessity of its consumption? Elspeth Probyn contends that

In eating, we grapple with concerns about the animate and the inanimate, about authenticity and sincerity, about changing familial patterns, about the local rendered global, about whether sexual and alimentary predilections tell us anything about ourselves, about colonial legacies of the past for those of us who eat in stolen lands, about whether we are eating or being eaten.<sup>72</sup>

Thus, as Probyn implies, food has power over culture, over legitimacy, over global patterns of sustainability, over local cultural protection, over sexuality, over history, and even over personal identity. The availability of food, its location of consumption, ways it is prepared, and intrinsic issues with who is expected to prepare food and how, provide insight into inequalities and expectations regarding culture. In other words, as Roland Barthes argues, “One could say that an entire “world” (social environment) is present in and signified by food.”<sup>73</sup> Thus, food is a signifier---itself an act of communication. What does it mean when an Appalachian woman chooses to cook poke salad and eggs for dinner, instead of taking her family out to an upscale chain restaurant? What does it mean when an Andean Quechua woman makes rice instead of quinoa for her farm-worker family? What histories are connected to food consumption, how does power play out through food choice, and whose culture or identity gets to count with each meal?

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<sup>72</sup>Elspeth Probyn, *Carnal Appetites: Food, Sex, Identities*, (New York, Routledge, 2000), 3

<sup>73</sup>Roland Barthes, “Toward a Psychosociology of Contemporary Food Consumption” in *Food and Culture: A Reader*, eds Carole Counihan and Penny Van Esterik, (New York, Routledge, 1997), 23

In her examination of Andean Quechua women's food work, author Alison Krogel conceptualizes food as a communication of identity through the concept of food landscapes.

Krogel defines food landscapes as

The multitude of nuanced details involved in cultivating, preparing, serving, and consuming different foods. Integral elements of the Quechua food-landscapes also include the cook's construction of a menu for an everyday or holiday meal, her resourceful substitution of ingredients... The term also reinforces food's integral relationship to the land and emphasizes the importance which Quechua verbal and visual artists often place on the particularities of the landscapes which influence the lives and destinies of the human characters within their work. Representations of food-landscapes in Quechua narratives often reveal the complexities of various political, economic, and cultural contexts, while also reflecting particular family dynamics and community established social codes.<sup>74</sup>

Thus, the food landscape incorporates cultural constructions and social identities along with the economic and political forces that shape social order. Food not only connects people to their culture but also constructs their identities and defines their place in the social hierarchies. The connections with food, land, and the people who produce and consume food also shapes the social hierarchy.

However, food has the ability to build or illuminate ideas of community and interconnectivity. Betty Wells explains

Food establishes common ground, connecting producer-grower and consumer-eater, and rural and urban communities. Food issues highlight the irrationalities and inequities of the economic system and problems in relation of capitalism to the natural world. Food grounds globalization. Food knits closer community ties by bringing people into closer relationship with each other and the place where food is grown. Food production also highlights the continuing significance of rural knowledge. Food growing, processing, and preparation are a daily reality in the lives of many people, especially rural women, around the world.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>74</sup>Alison Krogel, 3-4

<sup>75</sup>Betty Wells, "Context, Strategy, Ground: Rural Women Organizing to Confront Local/Global Economic Issues" in Nancy Naples and Manisha Desai (eds) *Women's Activism and Globalization: Linking Local Struggles and Transnational Politics*, (Routledge: New York, 2002), 149-150

Food physically builds interconnection through linking producers, consumers, and communities across geographical spaces. Simultaneously, issues around food production and accessibility illustrate economic inequities; for instance, how much economic support small farmers have or the presence of food deserts<sup>76</sup> in a particular neighborhood exposes sustainable or unsustainable usage of natural resources, while illustrating larger global paradigms of food production and consumption. Food grounds people in places, connecting people to their land, the types of food available, and the cultural conditions in which food arrived or thrives in a given location. Finally, food production emphasizes the fundamental necessity of women's rural knowledge, as it is these women who are most often continually engaged in food work that sustains communities.

Accordingly, food is power. The production, consumption, and accessibility of food weave a story of identity, communication, community, and culture. Food signifies place, social status, and often ethnicity or race. It connects people both to their geographical spaces and across their geographical spaces. It reveals the ways in which people choose to use their land, along with dominant paradigms that will shape future usage of the land; in other words, it unravels how sustainably a particular community or geopolitical entity engages with the world around it. Finally, it highlights issues of inequality; who profits from farming, who has adequate support for farming, who has accessibility to foods produced?

### *Food as Freedom, Food as Space for Resistance*

Nobel Prize winning economist Amartya Sen argues that freedom from hunger and famine is one of the necessities of building true freedom for humanity. He claims that

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<sup>76</sup>A food desert is defined by the USDA as “urban neighborhoods and rural towns without ready access to fresh, healthy, and affordable food. Instead of supermarkets and grocery stores, these communities may have no food access or are served only by fast food restaurants and convenience stores that offer few healthy, affordable food options. The lack of access contributes to a poor diet and can lead to higher levels of obesity and other diet-related diseases, such as diabetes and heart disease.” <http://apps.ams.usda.gov/fooddeserts/foodDeserts.aspx>



Very many people across the world suffer from varieties of unfreedom. Famines continue to occur in particular regions, denying to millions the basic freedom to survive. Even in those countries which are no longer sporadically devastated by famines, undernutrition may affect very large numbers of vulnerable human beings.<sup>77</sup>

Thus, people who are hungry are in a very real way “unfree” (to use Sen’s terminology). But what is freedom? Sen argues that freedom has several basic components: that people are free to live as themselves, with human dignity; that people who are free have opportunities to foster “valuable outcomes” in their own lives and in their communities; and that freedom is “also a principal determinant of individual initiative and social effectiveness,” or rather, that people who are free are capable of undertaking initiative for greater social good.<sup>78</sup> Thus, freedom is a multifaceted component of humanity that enables people to live fully for themselves while also facilitating their ability to improve all life, or the social good. If people are stripped of freedom by hunger, then how can they fulfill their own human dignity or improve their communities?

To take Sen’s articulation a step further, if people are stripped of the power imbued by food, such as self-identity, cultural legitimacy, or historical validation, what chance do they have at improving social good? If they do not have power over their own food practices and the signification of those practices, how can they be free? Thus, hunger is not the only way in which food can be used to strip people of their right to freedom.

In order to understand freedom and to articulate theoretical terms of engagement more fully, a serious conversation with the concept of hegemony must be pursued. Antonio Gramsci posits cultural hegemony as the ability of political and social institutions (such as government) to “extend the world view of the rulers to the ruled, and thereby secure the ‘free’ consent of the

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<sup>77</sup>Amartya Sen, *Development as Freedom*, (New York, Toronto, Anchor Books A Division of Random House Publishing, 2000), 16

<sup>78</sup>Ibid., 18

masses to the law and order of the land.”<sup>79</sup> Cultural hegemony occurs when the rulers’ or elites’ perception of appropriate social and cultural behavior and activities is imposed onto the social life and order of everyone else. The dominant group is rewarded with this power due to historical elements of prestige and access to resources, which permit them to control larger portions of wealth (and thus, power). Gramsci’s work on hegemony is critical in that it gives a name to structures of domination and subordination; in other words, it recognizes that there are oppressors and the oppressed. Power is negotiated between these groups based upon their access to resources, wealth, and prestige. However, the idea of consent by the masses is problematic when examining situations of resistance.

Benjamin T. Smith, an author on Oaxacan forms of resistance, articulates contemporary contextualizations of hegemony that shape understandings of opposition. Smith opens his discussion of hegemony by arguing that although historical literature follows Gramsci in assuming that

Elites prevented class conflict by inflicting a kind of false consciousness on the masses, recent works of neo-Gramscian scholarship have emphasized the role of hegemony in framing boundaries of debate between different social groups...Although resistance is possible, domination channels any opposition to the social or political status quo in directions that make the overthrow of the regime extremely difficult.<sup>80</sup>

However, according to Smith, it is more prudent to characterize hegemony as “a negotiated process rather than an imposed and static outcome.”<sup>81</sup> Thus, hegemony is not only an enactment of false consciousness by the dominant group on the oppressed masses, it is also a social dialogue between varying social groups with varying power. Yet, despite scholars’ best efforts to define fluid conceptualizations of hegemony, Smith points out that hegemony is never quite what

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<sup>79</sup> Thomas R. Bates, “Gramsci and the Theory of Hegemony,” in *Journal of a History of Ideas*, 36 (2), (April-June 1975), 353

<sup>80</sup> Benjamin T. Smith, *Pistoleros and Popular Movements: The Politics of State Formation in Postrevolutionary Oaxaca*. (Lincoln & London: University of Nebraska Press, 2009), 7

<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

it seems. He claims that hegemony is often qualified by “spaces, improvisations, and contradictions;”<sup>82</sup> that there is never a particular, identifiable point in time when “national domination [becomes] irreversible” and “coercive practices used by the state create greater validation for hegemony than may actually be realistic.”<sup>83</sup> Raymond Williams nuances the complexity and fluidity of hegemony, arguing that

we have to give a complex account of hegemony if we are talking about any real social formation...we have to emphasize that hegemony is not singular; indeed its internal structures are highly complex, and have to be continually renewed, recreated, and defended; and by the same token, that they can be continually challenged and in certain aspects modified.<sup>84</sup>

Thus, according to Williams, hegemony is a space for both domination and resistance and inherently necessitates a continual process of negotiation between both power holders and subordinate groups.

Despite the ability for resistance to exist within hegemony, T.J. Jackson Lears argues that “most people find it difficult, if not impossible, to translate the outlook implicit in their experience into a conception of the world that will directly challenge the hegemonic culture.”<sup>85</sup> Consequently, while resistance can actively reframe the discourse within a hegemonic culture and renegotiate the distribution of power, it rarely changes the overarching hegemonic paradigm. However, as Lears suggests, “many cultural forms can also have a vigorous and complex life apart from accommodation or resistance to the dominant social order.”<sup>86</sup> While hegemony often defines the terms of resistance, hegemony and resistance do not define all terms of cultural interaction. Thus, when examining ways in which rural mountain women stage resistance

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<sup>82</sup>Smith, 8

<sup>83</sup>Ibid. 8-9

<sup>84</sup> Raymond Williams, “Base and Superstructure in Marxist Cultural Theory,” in *Raymond Williams: Radical Thinkers in Culture and Materialism*, (1980; repr. Verso: London, 2005), 37-38

<sup>85</sup>Lears, 569

<sup>86</sup>Ibid., 588

through their use of food, it is critical to ask whether they are actually resisting—and if so, what they are resisting; whether their resistance emerges within the context of a greater hegemony; and in what ways their opposition informs cultural interactions outside the scope of hegemony and resistance.

But what constitutes resistance? Superficially, resistance is both a socially and a politically charged term. It conjures up images of confrontation and violence; of right and wrong; of freedom and slavery. In reality, tactics of resistance are rarely direct and rarely occur in such simple dichotomies. Rather, resistance is most often expressed through subtle tactics that enable survival in a world dominated by a powerful other. James C. Scott expresses ideas of resistance through his descriptions of public and hidden transcripts. A public transcript, according to Scott, is “an open interaction between subordinates and those who dominate...It is frequently in the interest of both parties to tacitly conspire in misrepresentation.”<sup>87</sup> Additionally, public transcripts “of the subordinate will, out of prudence, fear, and the desire to curry favor, be shaped to appeal to the expectations of the powerful.”<sup>88</sup> Thus, public transcripts are the socially prescribed actions that social and cultural groups follow in public. The subordinates must bend their actions to meet the expectations of the powerful; however, the powerful must simultaneously represent themselves as legitimate in their authority.<sup>89</sup>

However, as Scott points out, “the dominant never control the stage absolutely, but their wishes normally prevail.”<sup>90</sup> Alternatively, hidden transcripts “characterize discourse that takes place ‘offstage,’ beyond direct observation by powerholders. The hidden transcript is thus derivative in the sense that it consists of those offstage speeches, gestures, and practices that

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<sup>87</sup>Scott, 2

<sup>88</sup>Ibid.

<sup>89</sup>Scott, 10-12

<sup>90</sup>Ibid., 4

confirm, contradict, or inflect what appears in the public transcript.”<sup>91</sup> Hidden transcripts are ways that meaning is negotiated behind public expectations of hierarchy—in other words it is a method of reclaiming or re-envisioning one’s own identity or culture within (or perhaps underneath) the dominant system of expected identity and imposed cultural behavior.

There are multiple conditions that facilitate hidden transcripts, including specificity to “a given social site and to a particular set of actors,” that it “does not contain only speech acts but a whole range of practices,” for example, “clandestine tax evasion” could count as behavior of a hidden transcript, and the “frontier between the public and hidden transcripts is a zone of constant struggle between dominant and subordinate---not a solid wall.”<sup>92</sup> Scott gives an example of the interaction of a black slave woman and her white master in the antebellum south in the United States:

Mary Livermore, a white governess from New England, recounted the reaction of Aggy, a normally taciturn and deferential black cook, to the beating the master had given her daughter. The daughter had been accused, apparently unjustly, of some minor theft and then beaten while Aggy looked on, powerless to intervene. After the master had finally left the kitchen, Aggy turned to Mary, whom she considered her friend and said,

Thar’s a day a-comin! Thar’s a day a-comin!...I hear the rumbling ob de chariots! I see de flashin’ ob de guns! White folks blood is a runnin on the ground like a ribber, an de dead’s heaped up dat high!....Oh Lor!....

Aggy’s hidden transcript is at complete odds with her public transcript of quiet obedience.<sup>93</sup>

Important to this interaction is Aggy’s maintenance of the dominant culture of Christianity, even as she dangerously resists the public transcript of servitude and obedience through her outburst. Ultimately, Aggy’s angry rant does not give her power against her master, but it does give her power over her response to his behavior and thus her own cultural experience.

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<sup>91</sup> Scott 4-5.

<sup>92</sup> Scott, 14

<sup>93</sup> Scott, 6

The concept of hidden transcripts is reminiscent of Michel de Certeau's notion of tactics and strategies. De Certeau contends that

The space of a tactic is the space of the other. Thus it must play on and with a terrain imposed on it and organized by the law of a foreign power.<sup>94</sup> It does not have the means to *keep to itself*, at a distance, in a position of withdrawal, foresight, and self-collection: it is a maneuver 'within the enemy's field of vision,' as von Bulow put it, and within enemy territory. It does not, therefore, have the options of planning general strategy and viewing the adversary as a whole within a district, visible, and objectifiable space. It operates in isolated actions, blow by blow. It takes advantages of 'opportunities' and depends on them, being without any base where it could stockpile its winnings, build up its position, and plan its raids...It must vigilantly make use of the cracks that particular conjunctions open up in the surveillance of the proprietary powers. It poaches them. It creates surprises in them. It can be where it is least expected. It is a guileful ruse. In short, a tactic is the art of the weak...Power is bound by its very visibility. In contrast, trickery is possible for the weak, and often it is his only possibility.<sup>95</sup>

Much like the hidden transcript, a tactic is a subversion of visible, public power. It is a response against a dominant paradigm that is imposed on those without power; in other words, it is the ability for those who are not power holders to use "cracks" in the dominance of power to reclaim spaces of survival and to destabilize the reaches of authority.

In relation to the concept of hidden transcripts and tactics, the idea of creative resistance is a critical theoretical concept for understanding ways in which rural mountain women resist through food work. This term is articulated by author Alison Krogel in her book *Food, Power, and Resistance in the Andes: Exploring Quechua Verbal and Visual Narratives*. Krogel defines it as "cases in which the oppressed need to adapt and accommodate to the demands of their oppressors; this adaptation and accommodation may serve as both a tactic toward the path of

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<sup>94</sup>By foreign power de Certeau does not mean a geographically foreign power, but rather a power outside the control of the individual, in a discussion on uneducated rural workers in the context of elite religious activity, he claims "rural 'believers' thus subvert the fatality of the established order. And they do it by using a frame of reference which also proceeds from an external power (the religion imposed by Christian missions). They re-employ a system that, far from being their own, has been constructed and spread by others," Michel de Certeau, (translated by Steven Randall), *The Practice of Everyday Life*, (University of California Press: Los Angeles, 1984), 17-18

<sup>95</sup>De Certeau, 37

future, active resistance and as a tool for immediate survival.”<sup>96</sup> It is a situation that appears to uphold traditional oppressor-oppressed dynamics, yet subtly works to create subversion and resistance in ways that permit the continued survival of the oppressed while they work to create alternative cultural systems.

Author Elizabeth Engelhardt provides additional insight into what resistance in relation to food work could look like. She claims that

We should dismantle any unquestioning sense of historical convergence (whether progressive or regressive in the southern food story). In other words, all the data never fit into a perfectly straight line, regardless of whether that line pointed up or down... There always were moments of resistance, people and places in alternative relation to the mainstream. History rarely consolidated into such lockstep progression—moments of resistance, alternative practices, and work-around solutions were always simultaneously present and developing.<sup>97</sup>

Consequently, resistance has to do with nonlinearity—seeing and accepting a history that is more than a simple teleological progress toward an end truth. Resistance is providing alternative histories, crooked lines, cyclical stories, and lived human movement of experience. Resistance is creating “work-around solutions” that address problems in unexpected or unforeseen ways. Importantly, resistance is “always simultaneously present and developing.”<sup>98</sup> When the ways in which rural mountain women resist through their work with food are unraveled, it is critical to understand resistance as an often subtle tactic for both survival and for creating or maintaining alternative cultural systems. Simultaneously, resistance must be viewed as a multifaceted process that is in a continual state of development and articulation---it is both nonlinear and fluid.

In their critical analysis of the concept and praxis of food justice, authors Robert Gottlieb and Anupama Joshi inadvertently articulate how forms of resistance in food work could look. In defining food justice they claim that

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<sup>96</sup>Krogel: 10

<sup>97</sup>Engelhardt, 2011, 173

<sup>98</sup>Ibid.

Food justice, like environmental justice, is a powerful idea. It resonates with many groups and can be invoked to expand the support base for bringing about community change and a different kind of food system. It has the potential to link different kinds of advocates, including those concerned with health, the environment, food quality, globalization, workers' rights and working conditions, access to fresh and affordable food, and more sustainable land use.<sup>99</sup>

Thus, work for food justice involves recognizing varying situational contexts that inform diverse frameworks for undertaking social change regarding food. Resistance in this context can take the forms of bridging different types of organizations, cultivating community leaders, building sustainable physical and social environments, improving health, understanding and reworking systems of globalization, recognizing human rights in working conditions, and extending access for healthy, fresh, culturally relative foods. When people work towards any of these goals, they are necessarily challenging mainstream food systems along with paradigms of hegemony and oppression. In the following sections, this thesis will examine specific ways in which this resistance is manifested within mountain communities of the Andes and Appalachian Mountains.

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<sup>99</sup>Robert Gottlieb and Anupama Joshi, *Food Justice*, (Cambridge and London, The MIT Press, 2010), 5



## CHAPTER 3

### LESSONS FROM PERUVIAN ANDEAN WOMEN ON FOOD PRODUCTION AND CULTURAL RESISTANCE

The cold winter sun shines through the open slats of the market roof. I am sitting at a small concrete counter, wedged between a chicken vendor and a baker. Standing on a table behind the counter is a woman stirring an oversized boiling pot of milk. She wears a white apron, a grey t-shirt, and black pants. Her long curly black hair is pulled into a pony tail that trails down her back. Because she is standing on a table, she towers over me by at least three or four feet. She vigorously stirs the pot of boiling milk while yelling orders at her cooks, who are shuffling around at a ground-level stove beneath her. She looks at me and smiles, “¿Podría ayudarte?” or, “can I help you?” I’m not sure whether she is trying to take my order or trying to help me because I appear so out of place in the market. In my uneven Spanish I tell her it’s my first time in the market and I am just looking around. I ask her what she is making. She laughs and answers “*nata*.” She skims the hardened layer off the top of the boiling milk, layers it onto a thick piece of bread, and hands it to me on a small plate. I take the plate. She responds “*dos soles*.” While I hand her the money, she calls out orders to her other cooks, continues to stir the pot of milk, and wipes the counter in front of me. “Would you like a *crema volteada*?” she asks in Spanish. I look at the custard dessert sitting to my right and decide I might as well try one. I pay her one more sol and move to the small wooden table behind me. As I eat my *nata* sandwich and my *crema volteada* I look around the market. Across from me is a chicken vendor who makes fresh chicken meals with rice and potatoes. To my right a woman slices bread to sell to other nearby vendors. I watch her sell another stack of bread to the woman from whom I just bought my *nata* sandwich.

Each section of the market is separated by specialty. The section I am in is the prepared food section—including sandwiches, hot plates, sweets, and other cooked goods. Other sections of the market include clothing, fruit, meat, bread, vegetables, spices, flowers, and healing herbs. Quechua and Spanish fill the air as women shout to each other across stalls, shout to children running down aisles, and shout over the noise to make deals with customers. Some people wear basic outfits, such as what the *vendedora de nata* was wearing. Other women wear traditional indigenous clothing—full woolen skirts and thick shirts, all brightly colored with diverse patterns zigzagging across the heavy material. Most of the customers are similarly dressed, though a few women wear business clothes or nice suits and chat on their cell phones as they browse the market stalls. Food vendors all wear white aprons over their outfits, tucking money and snacks into their large pockets. This is Cusco's largest market, located near the central square, the *Plaza de Armas*. There are several smaller informal markets on the outskirts of town, but this one is by far the most popular. On Sundays the vendors will flow out of the enclosed market space and into the streets—complete with tents, ground tarps, festival games, music, and sugar cane for a special treat. This is the negotiating ground of food politics for Cusco and the surrounding region.

But what does such an informal market mean? Why does it draw so many people? What kinds of foods are offered here? Why are women the majority of the buyers and sellers in this market? What are they buying here that they cannot purchase at a formal grocery store or food mart? What kind of social order is being built or maintained through this market? Whose identity hinges on market food and whose identity is exposed in their secret trips to the market? Whom does the market serve best?

This chapter will explore some of the gastro-politics of this informal market of Cusco in Andean Peru. However, in order to grasp the meanings of the market it is imperative to begin with metaphors and imagery. In other words, how do Peruvian Andean women define food? How do they articulate food within their own culture? How do they share their conceptualizations about food? This chapter will use the international medium of literature to engage food metaphors and meanings as established by Peruvian women themselves. In particular, it will examine short stories by Pilar Dughi, Carmen Luz Gorriti, and Bethzabé Guevara. Attention will be given to the ways in which food conveys meaning in their stories and what kinds of meaning are constructed through their usage of food.

After uncovering images of what food means to Andean women through their literary manifestations, this chapter will then explore the ways in which Andean women work to end hunger. This section will investigate several food security programs that have been created by and are led by rural Andean women. Additionally, it will scrutinize the ways in which they build programs, for whom they build them, what types of foods they use in their work, and why. Once an image emerges of what food means, both figuratively and tangibly, to Andean women, analysis turns to the depths of the Cusco Central Market. There, an examination of market interactions works to uncover how food meanings are built, contested, or maintained on the frontline of the informal market space. Finally, these combined elements will culminate in an analysis that bridges these varying realms of food meanings across literary metaphor, international development, and local hunger.

First, however, the burning question: why Andean Peru? Like many developing nations, Peru suffers incredible poverty and hunger. In Peru, decades of Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs) initiated by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank have been partially

responsible for leaving Peru's economy in shambles and its people in poverty.<sup>1</sup> One of the most devastating consequences of this is that as of 2011 38% of Peru's population does not achieve minimum sufficient calorie intake on a daily basis; in rural areas this number is much higher, with approximately 80% of children in the rural Andean highlands in a state of malnourishment.<sup>2</sup> Additionally, the national average of people living under the poverty line is 36.8%, with 12.6% in extreme poverty; however, in the rural regions of the Andean highlands this number doubles to 25.7% of people living in extreme poverty.<sup>3</sup>

Despite these dire circumstances women have created strategic, creative resistances in order to gain access to food and foster survival for their families. The United Nations claims that in the Andes "indigenous farmers are using their knowledge to work with the Government of Peru in order to reintroduce diverse potato crops as insurance against extreme climate change," and that "given the huge potential contribution of indigenous and local communities to sustainable development worldwide, we need more books to comprehensively explore this topic."<sup>4</sup> As discussed previously, women, due to historic cultural patterns of gendered norms and systemic oppression--from all social, economic, and political levels--often suffer from dire economic circumstances and lack of food more than men.<sup>5</sup> Often because of this they are more

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<sup>1</sup> For more information on SAPs and the IMF's effects on developing economies and on Peru see Edna Acosta-Belen and Christine E. Bose, "Colonialism, Structural Subordination, and Empowerment: Women in the Development Process in Latin America and the Caribbean" 15-36 in *Women in the Latin American Development Process* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1995) edited by Christine E. Bose and Edna Acosta-Belen; Florence E. Babb, *Between Field and Cooking Pot* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1998): 17-42; Linda J. Seligmann, *Peruvian Street Lives: Culture, Power, and Economy Among Market Women of Cuzco* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2004): 1-18

<sup>2</sup> World Food Programme, "Peru: Overview," <http://www.wfp.org/countries/peru>. 2011.

<sup>3</sup> World Food Programme

<sup>4</sup> Ahmed Djoghlaif in *Traditional Knowledge in Policy and Practice: Approaches to Development and Human Well Being*, eds Suneetha M. Subramanian and Balakrishna Pisupati, (United Nations University: 2010), xxi-xxii

<sup>5</sup> For more information on how women are more impacted by food insecurity and poverty see Edna Acosta-Belen and Christine E. Bose, "Colonialism, Structural Subordination, and Empowerment: Women in the Development Process in Latin America and the Caribbean" 15-36 in *Women in the Latin American Development Process* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1995) edited by Christine E. Bose and Edna Acosta-Belen; Harriet Friedmann, "Remaking "Traditions": How We Eat, What We Eat, and the Changing Political Economy of Food"

likely to respond to food insecurity and focus their work on creating food-secure homes. Their work, in turn, often creates alternative systems of economic production and distribution that permit entire communities access to food. These alternative solutions may be partially responsible for why Peru is one of the leading nations in reducing hunger.

According to the Global Hunger Index developed by the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO), Peru has significantly improved food security over the past few decades. Rather than falling into a cycle of improvement and then crisis—such as with the United States—Peru has seen continual improvement since 1990.<sup>6</sup> In fact, according to the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), Peru has seen more than a 50% reduction in hunger since 1990.<sup>7</sup> The Global Hunger Index (GHI)—a statistic calculated from the number of people in poverty, the number of people undernourished, and the number of children under five who are chronically undernourished—changed from 14.5 in 1990, to 9 in 2001, and to 5.9 in 2011.<sup>8</sup> Peru is targeting hunger with great success.

Research illustrates that Peru's success in consistently reducing hunger stems from creative solutions that do not mirror Western models of development. Importantly, international aid agencies such as the World Food Programme (WFP) and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) along with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) such as The Hunger Project (THP) have all assisted in establishing hunger as a systemic (rather than individual) issue in the country. After recognizing the systemic nature of hunger, these organizations have aided the Peruvian government in finding creative ways of eradicating hunger through innovative

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35-60 in *Women Working the NAFTA Food Chain: Women, Food, and Globalization* (Toronto: Sumac Press, 1999); Babb: 43-157; Seligmann: 54-70.

<sup>6</sup> International Food Policy Research Institute, Concern Worldwide, and Welt Hunger Hilife, "2011 Global Hunger Index, The Challenge of Hunger: Taming Price Spikes and Excessive Food Price Volatility," *International Food Policy Research Institute* (2011) <http://www.ifpri.org/sites/default/files/publications/ghi11.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 13

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 17

programs. Examples of these programs include nation-wide education on indigenous cooking methods with indigenous and wildy-occurring foods—for instance, the WFP recently partnered with indigenous mothers and world renowned chefs to publish an anti-anemia cookbook that includes recipes calling for “chicken blood” and other traditional (yet forgotten) ingredients that easily and cheaply increase nutrients for families.<sup>9</sup> The Hunger Project works almost exclusively through Chirapaq, an organization founded by indigenous peoples of the Andean and Amazonian regions of Peru. Through this partnership, The Hunger Project aids those most affected by hunger (rural indigenous women) to study and implement programs directly in the areas where they live.<sup>10</sup> Women leaders are trained as local health officials, nutritionists, and even basic school teachers in order to disseminate knowledge about health, sanitation, and hunger in their areas.

The FAO argues that the international economy, along with neo-liberal development policies, affect food prices and food access for people in developing nations.<sup>11</sup> In response to this perspective, the FAO, in partnership with IFPRI, Concern Worldwide, and Welt Hunger Hilife, argues that a diverse array of solutions are needed. Among these solutions are cultivating agricultural diversification and assistance for small-scale subsistence farmers, establishing strong social protection policies, recognizing climate change as a key element in access to food, and strengthening basic social needs such as healthcare and education.<sup>12</sup> Thus, Peruvian policies on hunger integrate programs that recognize indigenous knowledge, the role that women play in food access, the need for agricultural biodiversity, the effects of climate change, and the need for social protection programs. This vast array of interconnected variables results in a systemic

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<sup>9</sup> World Food Programme

<sup>10</sup> The Hunger Project, “Peru: Overview,” *The Hunger Project* (2011) <http://thp.org/our-work/where-we-work/peru/>

<sup>11</sup> International Food Policy Research Institute

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 43-47

approach that addresses food insecurity at the root of its cause; thus, Peru has had significant success in reducing hunger over the past few decades.

The nation of Peru, especially the Andean region, has much to offer the rest of the world in terms of successful, systemic solutions to hunger. This is especially important for nations such as the United States, which plunged into a hunger crisis as recently as 2009. The New York Times reported that hunger in the United States had reached a fourteen-year high.<sup>13</sup> As The Times observed, “The increase, of 13 million Americans, was much larger than even the most pessimistic observers of hunger trends had expected.”<sup>14</sup> Despite the U.S. government’s best efforts, the number of food stamp participants increased and the percentage of the American population suffering from food insecurity continued to rise. In fact, the number of food stamp participants increased forty percent in 2009 from 2007.<sup>15</sup> Yet, the past several years of governmental efforts to address food insecurity—including food stamp policies, increased support for food pantries, and nationwide anti-hunger drives—have resulted in no change to rates of food insecurity. On the other hand, nations such as Peru have shown how creative programs enacted by those most affected by hunger can create lasting solutions to food insecurity. Thus, it is critical to explore how and why women developed these creative programs and what possibilities of resistance exist within them.

### *Food as Metaphor: Rice, Chickens, and Strength in Andean Women’s Fiction*

Fiction by Peruvian Andean women illuminates the many ways in which food is central to Andean women’s lives. Additionally, their fiction portrays the meanings which Andean women confer on food. This section will examine representations of food in three short fictional

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<sup>13</sup> Jason DeParle, “Hunger in U.S. at a 14-Year High.” *The New York Times* (November 16, 2009) [http://www.nytimes.com/2009/11/17/us/17hunger.html?\\_r=1](http://www.nytimes.com/2009/11/17/us/17hunger.html?_r=1) (accessed April 30, 2012)

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

stories by Peruvian Andean women, “The Days and the Hours,” by Pilar Dughi; “The Legacy (A Story from Huancayo)” by Carmen Luz Gorriti; and “The Senorita Didn’t Teach Me” by Bethzabé Guevara.

Pilar Dughi’s “The Days and the Hours” opens with a young woman waking up to the day ahead of her. This woman is the daughter of a market woman who makes their family’s living selling prepared food in the informal regional market. It is evident that the daughter regards her life with pain and frustration. She perceives the rising sun as “that persistent crushing sun which drains energy and extinguishes the best intentions.”<sup>16</sup> Implied is that with each new day hopes and dreams are crushed as the daughter continues to spiral into the life of her mother, a mere market woman. Immediately food emerges into the story—a hectic, frustrating item that represents many cultural elements at once:

Between the heat and the suffocating fumes from onions, urine, lemons, and trash, food carts are lined up below in the street, one after another, like a disorganized army of roving street vendors on the corner between Jr. Saloom Street and Buenos Aires Avenue. Back-door suppliers of noodles, boiled potatoes, meat stew, and fish offer their wares by shouting in the middle of the confusion of chicken vendors.<sup>17</sup>

Food arises in juxtaposition with the suffocating heat, the smells of trash and urine, and the incredible confusion of life on the streets. Rather than a nurturing, sustaining force, it is a source of confusion and odorous despair. The daughter’s first task is to begin cooking for the day—she must prepare rice and noodles while her mother hurries off to buy chicken before she leaves for work. Dughi intricately depicts the daughter cooking the rice:

She takes out the bag of rice. She opens a small hole in it, letting the rice spill out in a narrow but forceful stream into the metal bowl. Then thousands of grains hit the surface of the bowl, mixing together, like little beings with no destiny, but whose force is so intense and so violent that despite their minute volume, they are

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<sup>16</sup> Pilar Dughi, “The Days and the Hours” in *Fire from the Andes: Short Fiction by Women from Bolivia, Ecuador, and Peru*, eds Susan E. Benner and Kathy S. Leonard, (University of New Mexico Press. 1998), 118

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.



able to bore through the narrow opening in the plastic bag, making it larger, making it grow until it opens completely and the torrent of rice rushes out with incredible speed, covering the entire bowl.<sup>18</sup>

The description of rice continues for several more lines, maintaining the same hopeless imagery. The idea that the daughter, and all people like her, are like hopeless grains of rice with destiny, yet who continue to plunge into life forcefully without stop, resonates throughout the rest of the description.

The young woman's reason for hopelessness is revealed in the next lines: "She sees herself on that bluish night, standing under the faint glow of the public lighting system at Victor's side, crouched down near him, but also distant and remote. "Because we're alone now," he had told her, "because you'll do your thing and I'll do mine."<sup>19</sup> Her sense of fear and hopelessness comes from wanting her destiny to be with this man, Victor. However, she realizes that if she chooses him, she will be without the support network of her family, and would be "shaping a destiny where nothing and no one could accompany her."<sup>20</sup> Thus, food is initially something that represents oppressive family ties and fate---like the rice, the daughter cannot escape her destiny. However, also like the rice, the daughter and her mother are strong and forceful---winnowing through the small hole of survival and turning life into something more.

As the story progresses food increasingly becomes a symbol of comfort, a space for support and understanding. In the next paragraph the rice is a symbol of familial inheritance and sharing,

A little squirt of oil, some garlic. Wait until they're golden brown to add the rice, she thinks, repeating the old recipe that she had always heard from her mother's mouth during her childhood years, when she used to scatter her notebooks on the kitchen table, the one they used for lunch, for dinner, for crying, studying, for

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<sup>18</sup> Dughi, 119

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 120

talking with someone, or for being alone, where they would sit and wait for something that would never arrive.<sup>21</sup>

Here the rice is attached to an old family recipe shared by her mother during a time when she and her mother would share their food and their emotional stresses at the dinner table together. There is also the implication here that the daughter and mother, together, would wait for promises or change that never happened---thus revealing that the daughter's hopelessness and sense of no destiny is shared with her mother, but that she is also given courage and strength through this togetherness and support.

After the daughter finishes the rice, the mother returns with the chicken. Here the audience discovers that this meal is not for the family; rather, it is for workers. The mother is going to take the meal of chicken, rice, and noodles to the construction workers around the house and sell it to them for only two *soles*. The daughter continues to prepare the meal, now making a stew with various vegetables. As she cuts the vegetables she watches a woman through a window across the street. The daughter surmises that this young girl wants to go to college, but thinks to herself that "She'll wander from one place to another and finally that college girl with her degree will figure out that her only hope is to work as a cashier in Monterrey. People are so stupid, she tells herself."<sup>22</sup> Thus, this daughter has given up hope that even a college degree could be useful. To emphasize this fact the mother comes into the room to complain about the girl's father, who left the family for work but never returned and never sends money. The mother says "Oh yeah, that miserable rotten father of yours could have sent me money. But no, he never will. If I hadn't started this little business we would have died of hunger."<sup>23</sup> Thus, this woman is on her own and has had to use her own knowledge of food and business to create the meager earnings that have

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<sup>21</sup> Dughi, 120

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 121

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

kept her family afloat. Once again, the focus here isn't on economic earnings but rather on preventing hunger. However, hidden within the complaints about the father is an implied strength that the mother has cultivated. Her family would have died from hunger without her, yet her knowledge of food and cooking has saved their lives.

As the story progresses the audience learns that Victor, the presumed lover, has been killed in some violent act. Presumably, this was an act of political violence; Dughi has made sure to include references to his uniform. This resonates with the fear that many market women have about the government and serves to consolidate the daughter's hopelessness and nonchalant acceptance of her fate as a market woman. As the daughter replays the scene of Victor's death in her head, it is consistently interrupted by comments on food and work from her mother:

She saw him again, standing, a thousand times, lighting a cigarette, the last one he would smoke in his life.

"Tomorrow we'll make the beans that I bought yesterday."

Dressed in the green uniform that was to be his shroud...and that man didn't know it, or if he did, it was too late because he fell so quickly that he didn't realize he was dead.

"Did you know the workers finish next week?" her mother asks.

And it was only grabbing the weapon and running, running and taking off her sweater, throwing it away, "So they don't recognize us," Victor had said...

"But later I'm going to talk with the woman at the hardware store. She told me that that they want someone to take lunch over there. There's no lack of work, huh?"<sup>24</sup>

Thus, violence and death are juxtaposed against the regularity of food and work, creating an interesting scene that parallels death, instability, and fear with practicality, strength, and continuity. The daughter, while incredibly concerned about Victor, does not react or show any emotion to her mother. Simultaneously, her mother continues to go on about the practical needs of life, illustrating the stability and security of food. The story ends ambiguously with the

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<sup>24</sup> Dughi 123

daughter's leaving; readers are unsure whether she is just going out to the store or has decided to leave for good, taking her chances at being alone without the market life to support her.

This story presents the constant struggle with food that market women face—the creative resistance that market women create, and the extreme practicality with which market women survive. It also emphasizes support networks and familial ties, even as it exposes the political violence of the government. This story, while only a few short pages, manages to express just how clearly the lives of market women are understood by some Andean women in Peru. Their lives are not romanticized in this story but rather presented as realistically as possible, giving the sense of hopelessness and strength, despair, and courage simultaneously. Despite all of the pain that both of these women have felt--the mother at the betrayal of her husband, and the daughter at the death of her lover--they still continue to live in the daily reality of their lives; they evaluate circumstances, do not react emotionally, and maintain an understanding of how to acquire food and work in order to survive.

“The Legacy (A Story from Huancayo)” is a short narrative about the last thoughts of a dying vegetable vendor. The woman is depicted as a strong mother to her many children and to the community around her. However, as she dies, many of her final thoughts are focused on her self-perceived weakness,

That was the last word Felicitas heard while she was entering the black hole. Afraid...afraid...Felicitas had felt afraid when her mother said good-bye out there in Pampas, handing her toasted maize and cheese for the journey, telling her “You’re going to study.” But she didn’t study because she was afraid to say to her godmother, “I want to study,” and later she was afraid to say to Juan, “I don’t want you to touch me like that,” and later she was afraid to tell the others that her belly was growing, and she had preferred to run away with Juan, who was now her husband.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Carmen Luz Gorriti, “The Legacy (A Story from Huancayo),” in *Fire from the Andes: Short Fiction by Women from Bolivia, Ecuador, and Peru*, eds Susan E. Benner and Kathy S. Leonard, (University of New Mexico Press: 1998), 126

Importantly, her first journey away from home is marked with traditional Peruvian food—*maize* (a type of corn) and cheese. Despite this gift of comforting food meant to bestow strength, Felicitas believes she lived her life in fear and weakness. However, as the story progresses, Felicitas's own gifts of food to others illustrate her strength and power in the community.

The first place her soul goes after her death is to the city market where she spent her life selling vegetables. There the women share the news that Felicitas has died:

The word passed from person to person and the hem of many an apron lifted to catch the abundance of tears which were falling. "The dear old woman has died," circulated among the cart drivers and the travelers and the porters and the milkmaids and the food vendors and the abused women who she had nursed and the hungry who had tasted her bread and the rape victims who had confided in her and the drunks who Felicitas would gather from the street and the grieving who had so often opened their hearts to her.<sup>26</sup>

Food imagery abounds in this depiction. For instance, the item of comfort women use is their aprons, which wipes away their tears. The people crying are also associated with food—milkmaids, cart drivers, and food vendors. Additionally, pain is juxtaposed with healing through food; abused women were nursed to health and the hungry were given bread. This simple passage illustrates the profound impact that Felicitas, a vegetable vendor, had on her community, through her acts of providing both food and care (which appear as one and the same).

The story goes on to associate Felicitas's healing through food:

Everyone was talking about the death, though in reality, they were talking about themselves, about the wounds she had helped to heal. "She gave me an herb that helped cure the heaviness in this leg"; "She got rid of the evil darkness that had taken possession of my head"; "She paid me a few extra cents for the food I used to sell her"; "Every day she took soup to the crazy man in the neighborhood."<sup>27</sup>

Thus, the community is devastated not because of her death, but because they had attached their own sense of well-being to Felicitas's knowledge of herbs and food and her willingness to aid

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<sup>26</sup> Luz Gorriti, 127

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

those around her with this knowledge. As the military breaks into Felicitas's house at the end of the story, proclaiming everyone a terrorist (presumably because they were poor persons who lived an alternative communal lifestyle), Felicitas's legacy of healing is breathed into the town.

“There is no more fear, there is no more fear,” said the people in a whisper that grew, while the courage of the commanding officer diminished. He had already begun to consider that, since there were more than two hundred mourners gathered and only twenty soldiers, perhaps it was necessary to realize what he had in front of his eyes was a common, everyday wake, with civilians who possessed civil rights.

When they closed the casket the next day, everyone was able to observe that Dona Felicitas, the old vegetable vendor, was quite beautiful and almost seemed to be smiling inside her coffin.<sup>28</sup>

Thus, even though Felicitas had perceived herself as weak, her actions of healing through food demonstrated her strength to the rest of the community. In the end, after her death the people were able to claim power over the own lives and even convince the military of their civil rights. In this story food is an incredibly powerful tool---it provides healing, strength, and community in the face of military and social repression.

The third story, “The Senorita Didn’t Teach Me,” by Bethzabe Guevara is about the struggle of a young girl to learn to read. She attends a state-funded public school for girls of all ages in Andean Peru. The girl implies that the one teacher of the school is very mean-spirited and only has her job due to government connections. The tensions between the older students and the teacher prevent most of the students from learning. However, the narrator is determined to learn to read in some way or another.

In this story food represents the girls. For instance, the school bully and the leader of the older girls is known as “Julia Prickly Pear.”<sup>29</sup> Additionally, many of the young girls have dolls of themselves, made from food items, as described below:

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<sup>28</sup> Luz Gorriti, 128

Lastenia has brought her blonde doll, the one that has a face made out of porcelain; Priscilla, on the other hand, has brought her doll made of *dulce de leche*, a kind of sweet caramel. The doll is a bread roll with cheeks that shine from egg whites and a mouth of painted pink dough.<sup>30</sup>

Thus, food embodies the girls' perceptions of themselves. Also embedded in this narrative is an implication of class tensions. Lastenia has a blonde doll made of porcelain—a prized material difficult to access. The narrator specifically points out that this doll is blonde—a symbol of whiteness often associated with prestige, wealth, or power. Although Priscilla's doll is only made of food items, the narrator feels the need to describe these intimately, giving them a personal and magical feel. As illustrated, the description of Lastenia's doll only lasts one line, yet the narrator goes on to describe Priscilla's for almost three. It seems critical that the doll is made of caramel, bread, and eggs—all common foods for rural Andean peoples—representing Priscilla's familiarity with these foods, emphasizing her rural status, her cultivated food knowledge, and her creativity.

Later in the story food is used to represent the government as well. When the mayor and a priest come to the school to evaluate the teacher and students, the narrator depicts him as “the pumpkin priest.”<sup>31</sup> She explains that he is

the one from Lajas whom they used to sing this verse to: “The pumpkin priest, when he hears bells, runs like a rooster to a feast.” He has had that nickname since the day on which (because he's a drunk and falls in love with young girls, old ladies, married and single women) the town made him parade naked through the streets, mounted on a burro with a pumpkin filled with lime and a sack of coconuts hanging from his neck, while on his chest hung the distinctive sign: “This is the pumpkin priest.” And that's how the name remained.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Bethzabe Guevara, “The Senorita Didn't Teach Me,” in *Fire from the Andes: Short Fiction by Women from Bolivia, Ecuador, and Peru*, eds Susan E. Benner and Kathy S. Leonard, (University of New Mexico Press: 1998) 130

<sup>30</sup> Ibid. 131

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 134

<sup>32</sup> Guevara, 134

Hence, the townspeople are capable of claiming power over the womanizing priest by embodying him as derogatory foods. Furthermore, this embodiment becomes the symbol of his personality forever more.

In addition to the literal representation of people as food, the narrator also discusses the role of food in her social life. For instance, at school—even if she is not learning how to read—the narrator is learning how to be a caretaker and market woman.

Most of us got together to play house, and for that I bring, hidden in my sleeves, tiny little packets of rice, salt, little tubers, baby potatoes, or whatever I can find; other girls gather little oranges or love apples, as some people call them, and sell them in our “market.”<sup>33</sup>

In this description it is evident that “playing house” is really a microcosm of the realities that these girls face. They bring traditional foods (potatoes and tubers) to school, swiped from their houses, in order to reenact the world around them—which involves using and selling food to survive. The audience later learns more about the narrator’s home life in the following passage:

Time to go home! What waits for me today? What “assignment” will my grandmother have received? It could be two or three large baskets of wool that my aunt always brings for me to spin and that I give back to her in big balls from which she makes saddle blankets that later my uncle sells on the coast...It could also be big kettles of corn to make *chochoca*; if that’s what it is, it will belong to some neighbor who will have peasants working for them and I will have to wake up early and grind corn until I finish. What bothers me about this is that my grandmother has the idea that I can study while I grind. She places the book in front of me, open to any page, and resting it against the wall, she says to me: “Study, you lazy girl.”<sup>34</sup>

From her description, it is evident that the narrator works long, hard hours. Her schooling is not viewed as important as grinding corn or spinning wool. Clearly, her family is trying to survive and even as a young girl, she is expected to participate in their economic activities.

The story ends with the school’s shutting down. When the mayor and priest arrive to evaluate the students and teacher, the bully (Julia Prickly Pear) has forced all of the students to

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 131

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 132-133



say “the senorita didn’t teach me”<sup>35</sup> to all of the mayor’s questions. For instance, if the mayor asks a student to draw an E on the board, the student is forced to reply “but the senorita didn’t teach me” or be pummeled by Julia Prickly Pear. After every student in the class follows Julia’s orders, the mayor leaves and shuts down the school. Since there is no longer a free school for the narrator to attend, her grandmother sends her to live with her aunt, where she continues to grind corn and prepare items for market. However, the narrator ends the story proclaiming, “someday I will learn to read.”<sup>36</sup>

Food in this story is defined in complexity. It is perceived as the embodiment of the people—a tool of self-representation and of the people’s power (such as when they use it to humiliate the priest). However, food is also a hindrance—keeping the narrator from learning to read because she must spend time preparing food for economic gain. Simultaneously, all of the girls in the story are comfortable with the school being shut down because their knowledge of food secures their places as market women earning financial income for their families. Thus, food is power, limitation, bare survival, and independence all at once.

While these three stories are not representative of all Peruvian Andean women’s fictional depiction of food meanings, they do illustrate common themes. For instance, food is clearly a subject of both empowerment and strife. It is both freeing and confining. It can be used as both a tool of resistance and a tool of oppression. It can provide economic gain, survival, and community welfare. However, it can also prevent women from moving beyond their roles as caretakers and market vendors. Yet, despite the many undertones of despair within each of these stories, each one ends with hope. Does this signify that when used toward freedom, these women perceive food as a powerful tool for alternative structures of existence? By using food to survive,

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<sup>35</sup> Guevara, 134-135

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 136

gain independence, and strengthen their communities, each of the women portrayed in these stories maintains an aura of pride and future progress. Even Felicitas, who is dead, leaves this world with a smile---indicating that even in death, she has been empowered. However, even with these hopeful endings, it is critical to maintain that there are still themes of pain, suffering, fear of the government, and uncertainty that run through these stories. While food has the power to free, food is still seen as a contested tool that has the possibility of limitation, ambiguity, and possibly death.

*Making the Abstract Real: Peruvian Andean Women's Work for Food Security and Freedom*

Chirapaq, The Center for Indigenous People's Cultures of Peru, was founded in 1986 by Andean and Amazonian women in the Ayacucho region of the Andes. Their mission statement, as articulated on their website, reads as follows

We are an indigenous association made up of Andeans and Amazonians who work for the affirmation of our people's cultural identity. From this, we develop and implement proposals under the national and international indigenous movement to achieve recognition and full exercise of our rights.<sup>37</sup>

The organization was founded in a time of political violence in Peru, an era when the Maoist organization, The Shining Path, fought against the fascism of the more conservative, military Peruvian government.<sup>38</sup> Poor residents of the rural Andean highlands were the most devastated during this civil war, and indigenous peasant farmers were often specifically targeted by The

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<sup>37</sup> Chirapaq, [www.chirapaq.org.pe](http://www.chirapaq.org.pe), translation by author, "Somos una asociación indígena conformada por andinos y amazónicos que trabajamos por la afirmación de la identidad cultural de nuestros pueblos. A partir de ello, desarrollamos e implementamos propuestas en el marco del movimiento indígena nacional e internacional, para lograr el reconocimiento y el ejercicio pleno de nuestros derechos."

<sup>38</sup> For more information on the Shining Path and its decade-long guerilla warfare, please see David Scott Palmer (ed), *Shining Path of Peru*, (Palgrave Macmillan: 1994); Steve J. Stern (ed), *Shining and Other Paths: War and Society in Peru 1980-1995*, (Duke University Press: 1999); or Lewis Taylor, *Shining Path: Guerilla War in Peru's Northern Highlands, 1980-1997*, (Liverpool University Press: 2006).

Shining Path.<sup>39</sup> Chirapaq developed as a response to the needs of poor rural people who had lost their homes or farms:

In the context of political violence that the country suffered in those years, we saw the need to link the work for culture with defense for life, so we decided to begin working with migrants and the displaced in community kitchens of Ayacucho, Lima, and Huancayo. Those present—mostly children, women, and the elderly—were able to find in this space not only healing food for their bodies, but a way to recover their community livelihoods, something they had painfully lost. In 1990 we decided to concentrate our efforts in Ayacucho (in coordination with the then Association of Disappeared Families of Ayacucho—ANFASEP) producing the proposal “Nutritional Improvement based on Native and Local Products.” About 240 children who were victims of violence and suffered from acute malnutrition were treated daily. In a few months we were able to see marked improvement in their nutritional states; we saw then the necessity to complement physical recovery with emotional recovery, organizing workshops for artistic expression.<sup>40</sup>

From their foundation, Chirapaq has expanded to include artistic, cultural, and physical programs to improve the lives of indigenous communities throughout the Andes. Importantly, their work focuses on sustainability and cultural identity through food sovereignty. The organization focuses on workshops, trainings, artistic expressions (including spoken word, storytelling, and, visual art), and radio shows to perform outreach and advocacy for rural indigenous people—especially women and children. In 2011 the founder and current director of Chirapaq, Tarcila Rivera Zea, won the prestigious international Ford Foundation Visionaries award for her work.

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<sup>39</sup> Stern, 162-163

<sup>40</sup> Chirapaq, translation by author, “En el contexto de violencia política que el país sufría en esos años, vimos la necesidad de vincular el trabajo por la cultura con la defensa de la vida, por lo que decidimos empezar a trabajar con migrantes y desplazados en comedores populares de Ayacucho, Lima y Huancayo. Los concurrentes -principalmente niños, mujeres y personas ancianas- pudieron encontrar en estos espacios, no sólo alimento reparador para sus cuerpos sino una forma de recuperar en algo sus modos de vida comunitarios, dolorosamente perdidos. En 1990 decidimos concentrar nuestros esfuerzos en Ayacucho (en coordinación con la entonces Asociación de Familiares Desaparecidos de Ayacucho- ANFASEP) dando forma a la propuesta “Mejora Nutricional a base de Productos Nativos y Locales”. Cerca de 240 niñas y niños víctimas de la violencia que padecían de desnutrición aguda, eran atendidos diariamente. En pocos meses pudimos ver una notoria mejora en su estado nutricional; vimos entonces la necesidad de complementar esta recuperación física con la recuperación emocional, organizando talleres de expresión artística.”

In an interview done with Rivera Zea for her award, she articulates that forty-two percent of Peruvians are indigenous.<sup>41</sup> She goes on to detail the racism and discrimination faced by the indigenous population of Peru but quickly asserts that she is “a medium to strengthen others”<sup>42</sup> by using her Quechua identity and voice openly and proudly. She goes on to claim that she “never wanted to be a representative” and “was never aware that [she] was leading.”<sup>43</sup> Importantly, she clarifies that she just develops “initiatives that occur to [her] because they emerge from a place of need.”<sup>44</sup> When she started Chirapaq twenty-five years ago, she argues that all of the indigenous justice movement leaders were men, which led her to question “who are we as women and who do we want to be?”<sup>45</sup> Her solution was to create an organization that enabled the capacities of women and empowered indigenous culture---especially through food and nutrition, as well as in areas of education, language, art, and music.

The international non-profit, The Hunger Project, works directly with Rivera Zea and Chirapaq to address hunger and food insecurity in Peru. Their most recent report, from October of 2012, details that they have “worked with 1,350 Quechua women to improve living conditions for themselves and their families through the development of entrepreneurial skills and civic participation.”<sup>46</sup> The most recent program implement is entitled “Warmikuna tarpurisun: Women Planting the Seeds of Change against Hunger and Poverty,” which works directly with ninety Quechua women to teach them development and agricultural planning skills so that they may produce food for local markets----thus increasing access to cheap, culturally available foods

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<sup>41</sup> Tarcila Rivera Zea, “CHIRAPAQ Director Honored with Ford Foundation Visionaries Award,” The Hunger Project, [www.thp.org](http://www.thp.org), (accessed October 15, 2012).

<sup>42</sup> Ibid. 0:52

<sup>43</sup> Ibid. 1:19

<sup>44</sup> Rivera Zea, 1:24-1:26

<sup>45</sup> Ibid. 2:12-2:13

<sup>46</sup> The Hunger Project, “Awareness of Rights as a Path to Empowerment for Women with Chirapaq in Peru, 2012.” [www.thp.org](http://www.thp.org), (accessed October 2012)

while also gaining economic independence.<sup>47</sup> As part of these trainings, Quechua women are learning their governmental rights and are encouraged and supported as they increase their participation in local governments. Thus, Chirapaq is an internationally renowned woman-led organization that combats racism, sexism, and hunger simultaneously through workshops, trainings, and artistic endeavors.

The World Food Programme (WFP), a United Nations initiative, has partnered directly with Peruvian women in order to address incredibly high rates of malnutrition in Peru. In 2004, during an anti-anemia drive, the WFP partnered with over 1000 Peruvian women to create a culturally relative cookbook with simple, accessible recipes. The main theme of the cookbook is a traditional Peruvian food, *sangrecita*—chicken blood. According to the WFP, when they first began the project, “in just three years, rates of iron deficiency among the town’s children plummeted from 70 percent to 18 percent.”<sup>48</sup> After this initial success, the WFP realized they needed to work directly with local women to implement *sangrecita*-based meals into households across the nation. The World Food Programme illustrates that “the collaborative effort produced over 40 recipes, all of them containing *sangrecita*, that were published [in July 2010] in a sleek, new cookbook which WFP is working to distribute in some of the poorest areas in the country.”<sup>49</sup> Importantly, WFP representative, Beatriz Yermenos, articulates that “these recipes reflect the tremendous creativity of Peruvian mothers.”<sup>50</sup> In addition, the women who contributed to the cookbook and who are assisting their communities in learning the recipes have become leaders. Liz Lunto, one of the participating mothers, claims “it’s almost like a local specialty now. We’ve put a lot of effort into learning how to prepare and we’re very proud of how skilled

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> The World Food Programme, “Peru: Chicken-Blood Cookbook Stamps Out Anaemia,” [www.wfp.org](http://www.wfp.org), (accessed September 2012)

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

we've become.”<sup>51</sup> Hence, the WFP has shown that partnerships with local women can be the most successful tools for combatting hunger and malnutrition; notably, the local women themselves have illustrated how their determination, dedication, and traditional knowledge are pathways to food security and health.

The International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), another agency of the United Nations, works on issues of gender and development in Peru. In a program survey, they worked directly with rural women in Peru to assess their levels of participation in leadership and anti-hunger programs. During their research they found that most women identified their problems as

- Low income
- No chance to take part in Assemblies, except for widows or the directors of the *Clubes de Madres* (mothers' clubs). When women did attend the Assemblies, they voted but were afraid to voice their opinions because men criticized them (said they do not speak well).
- Lack of understanding by their husbands, who do not like their holding office.
- Excessive domestic work; family members do not help.
- Males do not support their wives who are leaders.
- As illiterates, they are often cheated by others.<sup>52</sup>

However, despite these limitations many women described success stories of community leadership and engagement.

One prominent story was documented in Puno and focused on a *Club de Madres* entitled “*Maria Parada Bellido*.” The name refers to Maria Parada de Bellido, a Peruvian heroine who assisted in the war for Peru's independence in 1820.<sup>53</sup> This *Club de Madres* focused on bread baking and traditional crafts to assist rural women in gaining economic capacities. Importantly,

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<sup>51</sup> The World Food Programme.

<sup>52</sup> International Fund for Agricultural Development, “Peru: A Successful Women's Group Initiative,” <http://www.ifad.org>, (accessed November 2012)

<sup>53</sup> Biografías y Vidas, “Maria Parada de Bellido,” [www.biografiasyvidas.com](http://www.biografiasyvidas.com), accessed November 2012

the organization adapted its strategies to include both married and unmarried women. According to IFAD, “to help married women members participate, the club started up a dining room where the husbands and family could eat lunch, so the women did not have to go home to cook. Others could also dine there, but had to pay double what members and their families paid.”<sup>54</sup> In addition, the organization houses a nursery with childcare staff. The most notable impact of the club is that it has helped women integrate financially into their communities as leaders. They now have constructed a new building for themselves and are able to support their husbands in creating new businesses outside of agriculture.<sup>55</sup> Importantly, this type of financial empowerment leads to validation, respect, independence, and community engagement. As IFAD notes,

Initially, it was difficult to convince husbands to eat outside their homes. However, in time, they all accepted it, mainly because they became aware of the benefits of women bringing money home. According to the members, their husbands appreciate them more now that they are making a financial contribution. In fact, some husbands help with child care.<sup>56</sup>

Consequently, it appears that women’s increased economic independence fosters changing gender roles. In addition, as with the other initiatives discussed, this club has also increased access to culturally relevant foods through rekindling women’s traditional knowledge.

#### *At the Frontlines: Market Women and Food Justice*

On the ground in everyday Peru the people navigating the complex realities of food are market women. They exist on the frontlines between food metaphor and meaning and political realities that demand economic participation. In fact, the majority of the women featured in the fictional accounts presented in this thesis were market women. Additionally, the majority of the

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<sup>54</sup> IFAD

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

women reached through the organizations discussed here were also market women, or women who are being trained as market women. The complex system of which food is accessible, what counts as culturally relative, who controls food systems, and in many cases, who gets to eat, often plays out in the informal markets of the Andean region. This section will explore the internal politics of Cusco's informal markets and how the women who work there negotiate gender, identity, and hunger.

The contemporary cultural role of market women in Peru arguably begins with the Spanish conquest. Immediately after the conquest of the Incas by the Spanish, the Spaniards had numerous Quechua women captured and ceremonially killed in order to demonstrate the Spanish's new domination over food. Alison Krogel points out that the Spanish realized that it was these women who had aided the Incan armies by obtaining, preparing, and delivering food to them while they fought the Spanish.<sup>57</sup> After this instance women realized they had to resist in subtle, creative ways in order to survive and maintain their traditional cultural food-landscapes. Thus, they integrated into the Spanish market—selling European foods along with some native Andean foods. Eventually, they began to control entire markets and ousted Spanish competitors (as they were able to sell to both locals and Spanish invaders). Today, this tradition continues, as women are the primary central market sellers throughout the Andes. This is because these women have long histories of being market sellers, they have created extended networks of loyal customers, and through collective farming practices, they are able to secure lower prices for their goods.<sup>58</sup>

Today, the tasks carried out by market women include “processing and preparing vegetables, grains and fruits, which facilitates rapid cooking within home or commercial

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<sup>57</sup> Krogel, 75

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.



kitchens.”<sup>59</sup> Importantly, market women also “organize, regulate, and stabilize the food supply for a large percentage of Cusco’s population.”<sup>60</sup> Critically, while many authors and scholars have portrayed this work as a simple extension of women’s domestic or housewifely duties, Krogel argues that

Scholars who describe market women’s work as simply an extension of their domestic duties present a picture of their labor which is both reductive and inaccurate. Similarly, to characterize cooking with the market as a sort of “housewifely work that market women do” is also problematic. To suggest that a market cook’s profession is synonymous with the housewife’s preparation of family meals fails to credit the professional cook with the independence and agency she has gained through her decision to work outside (and in addition to) a domestic sphere. While the same woman may prepare meals both within her family home and in the market, these processes are not one and the same.<sup>61</sup>

Thus, according to Krogel, the act of being a market woman is in itself a form of resistance; it lends itself to validation, professionalization, and economic independence. It allows women public control and choice over food as opposed to largely invisible private manifestations of reproductive labor. Krogel goes on to articulate

The productivity of ambulatory and market vendors and cooks involves the transformation of food into situation. In the moment that they sell food to a client, these women carry out an economic exchange which in turn performs a “social function” in that they supply the city’s residents with food and also increase their own (and their family’s) financial stability.<sup>62</sup>

In other words, market women are professional women who manipulate the informal market sphere through sophisticated networking mechanisms in order to garner loyal customers who pay them for their well-prepared, nutritious meals. This differs from women who cook because it is required in order to sustain their families. While both work is similar, it requires different perceptions, different actions, and creates different opportunities for these women. Importantly,

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<sup>59</sup> Krogel, 78

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> Krogel 80-81

market women become involved in social functions—acts that shape social systems, communities, and, in this case, accessibility of food.

Scholar Florence Babb nuances Krogel's arguments. She claims that beginning marketing, for instance, has various socioeconomic or cultural implications. For women who come from generations of marketing, it is quite easy to create a new marketing business. They have respectable names, a long history of loyal family customers, access to market space, and are more easily able to access credit. However, women who do not come from marketing families have to spend many years establishing social networks in order to get space, and then they have to work to establish a good financial reputation in order to buy goods on credit. Buying goods on credit entails learning who to buy from, how much to purchase, and actually creating enough customer loyalty and market respect in order to receive credit. Poor women who have never been market sellers most often end up having to become street sellers since they have little to no access to any of the means to become a market seller with a stall. However, these street sellers do sometimes have access to short-term 1 to 3 hour loans, which they must pay back in intervals throughout the day. It is possible for poorer women to build up credit this way; however, it is still very difficult for them to achieve a market stall.<sup>63</sup>

In addition to the stresses of acquiring market space, authorities maintain oversight and strict regulations of market interactions. All marketers must have identification cards that show that they have passed personal medical tests, there are annual registration fees for market sellers with stalls, there are daily fees depending on amount and product sold per day, there are fees to use bathrooms inside of markets, and there are special fees depending upon product (meat, for instance). Authorities are constantly patrolling markets to make sure market sellers have paid all

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<sup>63</sup> Florence E. Babb, *Between Field and Cooking Pot: The Political Economy of Marketwomen in Peru*, (1989; repr. University of Texas Press: 1998), 100-104

of their fees and are maintaining their medical exam cards. Furthermore, price lists are distributed to wholesalers and market sellers to give official prices for products sold. Legally, markets are not allowed to sell for any other price other than the official price. However, local authorities tend to try to work with market sellers on these regulations and often overlook minor infractions. Higher governmental authorities, however, are much stricter and allow little to no room for negotiation.<sup>64</sup>

The hardships and the fees leave little room to create profit or financial wealth. As far as livelihoods go, Babb states that “The goal of most of these small marketers is to maintain trade at its present level and to bring home a modest, but steady income.”<sup>65</sup> These women are mostly concerned about providing food security to their families. For example, in Florence Babb’s ethnographic study, she found that women often measure their success not by profit but by “the food they can afford to take home from their stands.”<sup>66</sup> However, despite their basic concerns and lack of income generation, these women are incredibly business savvy. Babb states that “Petty marketers...reveal a good deal of business sense and an ability to make a living creatively in the markets, often under difficult conditions.”<sup>67</sup> They illustrate their business savvy by the incredible strategies they come up with in order to make the most money out of their marketing. Babb observes that

While petty traders often have no alternative but to sell as retailers, since they lack capital, they point to the advantages of selling this way. In comparison with selling at wholesale prices, selling retail allows them to charge a little more on the small quantity they sell. They show an awareness that they are substituting labor for capital, spending long hours selling as a strategy for earning the most on their stock. They also recognize the importance of carrying a variety of goods, since as

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<sup>64</sup> Babb, 105-109

<sup>65</sup> Babb 109

<sup>66</sup> Babb, 110

<sup>67</sup> Babb, 113

small marketers they depend on a steady clientele of a few shoppers who look for an assortment of products.<sup>68</sup>

Clearly the market women are aware of underlying economic strategies and work within their means to create the best businesses that they are able to. However, this leaves little room for upward mobility or socioeconomic improvement. Babb points out an interesting gendered ideology of upward mobility in Peru, however: “The dominant middle-class preference in Peru for women to stay at home defines such a move out of the marketplace and into the home as a move upward. This implies women’s dependence on men, however, and assumes that women may be defined by the income-earning potential of the men in their families.”<sup>69</sup> While upward mobility may be the ideal goal for people, women have a sense that their lives are freer when they can work through poverty to assist their families. This in no way implies that poverty is the ideal work environment for any woman; however, many women—especially independent market women---have some qualms about the cultural norm for women’s upward mobility.

Babb goes on to clarify the importance of market women’s work as productive work. Similar to Krogel’s arguments, she claims that their work is “transforming”, or rather “value-creating.”<sup>70</sup> Babb states that “all these activities are part of the total production process that goods undergo as the cycle of production, distribution, and consumption is completed,”<sup>71</sup> transforming goods in ways that get them from farmers and wholesalers to consumers. Thus, they are central to both economic production and social/cultural reproduction through their work as marketers. They transfer cultural values and cultural norms as they enter their business enterprises and engage in social networking; for instance, by explicitly choosing particular foods to sell for consumption and establishing informal rules of how and to whom food is sold. Yet

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<sup>68</sup> Babb, 112

<sup>69</sup> Babb 119

<sup>70</sup> Babb 120

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

they are also instrumental in getting foodstuffs to the larger population through their difficult and often complicated work of market selling.

One significant profession of market women is the “chichera.” Chicha is an alcohol that can be made from several Andean staples (e.g., quinoa or potatoes); however, it is most often made from maize, as maize is considered the holiest of Andean foods.<sup>72</sup> Women came to dominate the chichera market after the Spanish conquest of the Incas as women knew the traditional recipes and had access to both local and Spanish customers in the local markets. As chicha became a central drink for social interaction, *chicherias*<sup>73</sup> became central areas for gossip, local news, and business networking. Chicherias are almost solely owned and managed by women, who have been the traditional makers of chicha throughout Andean history. Furthermore, as chicherias gained social power, chicheras were able to include indigenous cuisine and recipes as part of their business model, creating a sort of indigenous-pride amongst the chicherias. Krogel articulates this while describing chicherias as the symbol for indigenous social movements throughout Peru (and other Andean South American countries). She states that “Chicha also served as an important symbol for the Andean indigenismo movement in the first decades of the twentieth century and it continues to be enjoyed throughout the Andes at family, community, and national celebrations.”<sup>74</sup> Thus, chicherias serve as cultural symbols of indigenous pride and solidarity while simultaneously upholding women’s power and creating independence and freedom for the women who work in them.

Krogel details a *testimonio*<sup>75</sup> narrated by an Andean woman named Asunta Quispe Huaman, who becomes a market cook when her husband loses his job. Her husband becomes

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<sup>72</sup> Krogel 90

<sup>73</sup> A shop where chicha is sold

<sup>74</sup> Krogel 92

<sup>75</sup> Testimony/interview

incredibly abusive to her and her children, but her job as a market cook allows her to escape him and free herself from his abuse. In the passage where she realizes that she can leave, Asunta states “What sort of life is this, if I am unable to separate myself from the man’s side, if I have hands, feet, my mouth to speak with, my eyes to see with? What am I, a cripple? These hands also make meals!”<sup>76</sup> Asunta’s freedom apparently comes from her realization that her hands make meals, or that she is a professional cook who can provide for herself.

Krogel also details a fictional account that mirrors the power and resistance inherent in the chichera profession. In the Andean novel *Deep Rivers*, which details a revolt of poor tenant farmers against oppressive large landowners, Dona Felipa is the main chichera of the town. She uses her influence to encourage other chicheras to revolt against the landowners, who are stealing salt from the collective of salt “farmers” and using it to feed their cows. The tensions expressed here are the social, economic, and political transitions that are separating traditionally collective communities for the sake of wealthy landowners who wish to use the labor of these collective communities for their own large farms. Krogel states, “In this chapter of the novel, the struggle to control a communal food supply (in this case salt) reflects the larger political, economic, and cultural clashes between wealthy landowners, lower-middle-class mestizo workers, and impoverished runa farm workers and indentured servants.”<sup>77</sup> The *runa*<sup>78</sup> still live in communal structures, with a vertical farm strategy, where farmers from their communities occupy each different ecological zone in the Andes, so that the community may—as a whole—have access to all the different varieties of necessary food (maize, quinoa, potatoes, etc.).

When the wealthy landowners abscond with the salt, the chicheras, who are the connecting force for all of the different classes involved, stage a revolt. Dona Felipa initiates this

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<sup>76</sup> Huaman in Krogel, 96

<sup>77</sup> Krogel 108

<sup>78</sup> Quechua agropastoralist; literally “human” or “person” in the Quechua language

revolt by publicly denouncing the local priest for his approval of the wealthy class's actions.

Krogel emphasizes this, claiming that “In this first uprising of the novel, the chicheras challenge the leader of the town's religious institution; a verbal rebellion which immediately precedes their physical confrontation with the representatives of a despotic provincial government.”<sup>79</sup>

Afterwards, the women march to where their salt has been hidden and reclaim it. The women are insulted by the mestizos, who are offended by their brash actions, yet they are able to overcome these insults by singing a traditional cultural song that depicts the beauty of Andean nature. This song, according to Krogel, is a reminder to the town leaders how strong and powerful the Andes are—and thus, how strong and powerful the women who cultivate these mountains are too. The chicheras reclaim the salt and immediately return it to their runa village, where it is distributed evenly amongst the farmers and their families. The capabilities for empowerment and resistance for market women are evident through these examples of the chicheras. Women can gain economic independence, also freeing themselves from violence and servitude, while culturally mediating accessible foodstuffs for the wider population.

In metaphor, market women are deeply symbolic of racial tensions and popular conflicts. Market women---especially chicheras—embody a sort of revolutionary image that depicts strength, solidarity, and community livelihood. Taken with the current work of local grassroots non-profits and international NGOs, the market woman is at the front line of food security. As evidenced through the work they perform, training programs that focus on enabling women to enter the market and food policies that center around market women's traditional knowledge, market women are clearly an important force for both resistance and survival in Andean Peru.

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<sup>79</sup> Krogel 110

## CHAPTER 4

### FINDING SHACONAGE<sup>1</sup>: WOMEN, DIVERSITY, AND FOOD SOVEREIGNTY IN SOUTHERN APPALACHIA

It is a soft, rainy afternoon. The sun peaks through the clouds as a light drizzle envelops the air. Despite the rain, the temperature remains sweltering---somewhere in the upper nineties degrees Fahrenheit. However, neither the rain nor the heat keeps people away from the town of Erwin's annual apple festival. Located just across the border from North Carolina, Erwin is settled in a small valley in Unicoi County, Tennessee. Every year their annual apple harvest and celebration attracts over one hundred thousand attendees from across the nation.<sup>2</sup> This year I am one of these tourists, walking the teeming streets, shouting over the music and chatter to make deals with a vendor, while simply enjoying the community affair. Smells of barbeque, fried chicken, apple pie, kettle corn, and boiled peanuts fill the air. Food carts ranging from funnel cakes, to soul food, to Mexican cantinas line the tightly packed streets. Artisans and crafters fill the rest of the space---offering homemade baskets, quilts, apple cider, canned goods, baked goods, and farm-fresh produce. Bluegrass and folk music fills the air from the main stage, somewhere off in the murky distance. Farmers cart hundreds of pounds of apples off of their trucks as apple-filled boxes quickly empty into the hands of hungry consumers. However, despite the rural farm-town atmosphere induced by this quaint festival, the fact is that farming and agriculture are disappearing across Appalachia, including the agriculturally focused Unicoi County.

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<sup>1</sup> Cherokee name for the Great Smoky Mountains comprising southern Appalachia; literally "place of blue smoke."

<sup>2</sup> Unicoi Chamber of Commerce, "35th Annual Unicoi County Apple Festival," <http://www.unicoicounty.org>, (accessed November 2012)



In 1940, Unicoi boasted 1,100 separate farms; by 2007 Unicoi could only claim 85 farms.<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, the diversity of agricultural products decreased along with the number of farms. For instance, in 1940 Unicoi farmers reported having a total of 1,363 cattle, over 22,000 apple trees, 2,490 grape vines, 345 acres of soybeans, almost 4,000 acres of corn, 28 acres of beans, and more.<sup>4</sup> However, in 2007 Unicoi farmers reported having 547 cattle, no reports for acres of corn, only 35 acres of land for orchards, and only 12 acres of land for commercial vegetables.<sup>5</sup> Simultaneously, food insecurity in Unicoi is at 15.1%, while 61% of people in Unicoi seeking food aid rank below 130% of the SNAP threshold for poverty.<sup>6</sup> Women comprise 60.8% of all clients at adult hunger program sites.<sup>7</sup> Much of this poverty and hunger arguably has roots in the historical development of the Appalachian region.

Appalachia emerged as concept following the Civil War when “popular writers such as Will Wallace Harney began to describe ‘the strange land and peculiar people’ of the southern Appalachian mountains in the pages of popular periodicals such as Lippincott’s Magazine, Harper’s, and the Atlantic Monthly.”<sup>8</sup> However, the first delineation of the land began with the British Proclamation Line in 1763 as part of the process of North American colonization. Indigenous peoples were forced to move beyond the line or risk British persecution. To ensure indigenous removal, land companies owned by colonizers “organized their own treaty meetings

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<sup>3</sup> United States Department of Agriculture, “Sixteenth Census of the United States: 1940; Agriculture: Volume I First and Second Series State Reports, Part 4: Statistics for Counties,” <http://www.agcensus.usda.gov>, 1940 [online edition 2012], and United States Department of Agriculture, “Tennessee State and County Data Volume 1 Geographic Area Series Part 42,” <http://www.agcensus.usda.gov>, 2007, 249

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Feeding America, “Map the Meal Gap,” <http://feedingamerica.org/hunger-in-america/hunger-studies/map-the-meal-gap.aspx>

<sup>7</sup> James Mabli, Rhoda Cohen, Frank Potter, Zhanyun Zhao, “Hunger in America 2010: National Report Prepared for Feeding America,” (Mathematica Policy Research, 2010), 69

<sup>8</sup> Dwight B. Billings, “Taking Exception with Exceptionalism: The Emergence and Transformation of Historical Studies in Appalachia,” in *Appalachia in the Making: The Mountain South in the Nineteenth Century*, edited by Mary Beth Pudur, Dwight B. Billings, and Altina L. Waller, (The University of North Carolina Press: Chapel Hill, 1995), 1

in order to secure illegal acquisitions. In the face of royal edicts against private claims on Indian lands, the Transylvania Company arranged the lease-purchase of 20 million acres of Cherokee lands located in present-day Kentucky, Tennessee, and North Carolina.”<sup>9</sup> Other land companies followed suit, and bloody land disputes eventually marked the territory that stretched across the southern Appalachian Mountains until after the Revolutionary War. Prior to the war, “between 1763-1773 settlers engrossed 4, 545, 903 acres from the indigenous peoples.”<sup>10</sup>

Following the Revolutionary War, emigrants settled into the southern highlands through private acquisition and before federal land policy could “benefit Appalachia’s poorer landless emigrants.”<sup>11</sup> After the turn of the nineteenth century, merchant capitalists from the northeast took interest in the resource-laden Appalachian Mountains. Absentee land ownership comprised ninety percent of all land owned in the Appalachian mountains by 1790; by 1793 “the Virginia treasurer was peddling Appalachian lands for an average of two cents per acre.”<sup>12</sup> While land companies were busy speculating across the entire Appalachian region, they were particularly focused in Virginia, West Virginia, and Tennessee, where seventy-five percent of all absentee owned lands were owned by northeastern land companies.<sup>13</sup>

Remaining indigenous land was taken over between 1815 through 1835 as North Carolina, Tennessee, Georgia, and Alabama all passed legislation that prevented indigenous peoples from owning land in these states. The newly available lands were sold at extremely low prices to encourage land companies and speculators to take interest. In 1810 seventy-five percent of Appalachia’s lands remained absentee owned; simultaneously by 1860 almost half of “the

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<sup>9</sup> Wilma A. Dunaway, “Speculators and Settler Capitalists: Unthinking the Mythology About Appalachian Landholding, 1790-1860, in *Appalachia in the Making: The Mountain South in the Nineteenth Century*, eds Mary Beth Pudur, Dwight B. Billings, and Altina L. Waller, (The University of North Carolina Press: Chapel Hill, 1995), 51

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid, 52

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid

region's households remained landless.”<sup>14</sup> This early system of complex, bloody, and absentee land ownership would set the foundation for future development across Appalachia.

Fast forward to the turn of the twentieth century when the Industrial Revolution began to define progress with “measures of industrial production, urbanization, consumption, technology, and the adoption of modern education and cultural values.”<sup>15</sup> Critically, the Appalachian region began to be perceived as backwards and undeveloped due to its lack of industrialization, urbanization, and technological advancements. This was in part due to its history of a landless, impoverished population and absentee landowners who were unconcerned with modern development. Policies favorable to rapid industrialization “allowed entrepreneurs a free hand to tap the region's natural resources in the name of development, but by midcentury the dream of industrial prosperity had produced the opposite in the mountains. Persistent unemployment and poverty set Appalachia off as a social and economic problem area.”<sup>16</sup> It was during this turn of the century that mining companies, logging companies, and other extractive industries moved in-- the emerging industries around the nation needed energy, and Appalachians needed jobs and “progress.”

Records indicate that “the first load of coal was shipped from southwest Virginia in 1892 and from Harlan County, Kentucky in 1911.”<sup>17</sup> By 1920 the population of Wise County, Virginia was five times greater than in 1890. Low quality housing was built for workers in coal encampments, and miners began to rely on credit at company stores. Ultimately, “until World War II three different social systems existed side by side in the coal fields of the Southern Appalachians: (1) the original rural mountain settlements, characterized by a pattern of isolated

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<sup>14</sup> Dunaway 67

<sup>15</sup> Ronald D. Eller, *Uneven Ground: Appalachia Since 1945*, (Lexington, KY: University of Kentucky Press, 2008), 1

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 2

<sup>17</sup> Helen Matthews Lewis, Linda Johnson, and Donald Askins, *Colonialism in Modern America: The Appalachian Case*, (Boone, North Carolina: Appalachian Consortium Press, 1978), 10

residence and subsistence farming; (2) the coal camps, primarily composed of homogeneous work groups that were socially segregated and economically dependent upon a single extractive industry; (3) the middle class towns that were socially and economically tied to eastern urban centers.”<sup>18</sup> The postwar United States fueled rapid development and change as new technologies and jobs emerged.

Mechanization changed the structure of employment in Appalachia---eradicating many coal and factory jobs of the pre-war period. However, these new developments encouraged expansion of existing companies and simultaneously further consumed land and resources in the region.<sup>19</sup> Ultimately, more Appalachians lost land and jobs and either emigrated to urban centers or remained in poverty in the region. Since this time, initiatives such as the War on Poverty in the 1960s and the Appalachian Regional Commission were created to continue modernizing Appalachia and reduce the dramatic inequalities that continually plague the region. Ronald Eller argues,

Appalachia endures a paradox in American society in part because it plays a critical role in the discourse of national identity but also because the region’s struggle with modernity reflects a deeper American failure to define progress in the first place. For more than a century, Appalachia has provided a challenge to modern conceptions of the American dream. It has appeared as a place of cultural backwardness in a nation of progressive values, a region of poverty in an affluent society, and a rural landscape in an increasingly urban nation...It is also a real place where public policies designed to achieve a healthy society, the objective of development itself, have played out with mixed results.<sup>20</sup>

Since the inception of the concept of Appalachia, the region has existed in tension with many ideals and goals of development in the United States. Its complicated history of land use and

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 11

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Eller, 4

resource extraction has had deep impacts on its ability to thrive as a region, creating complex social and political realities that still play out today.

The statistics illustrating Unicoi County are not a rare exception for the area. Southern Appalachia is the most food insecure region in the nation, with all but one of the southern Appalachian states falling in the top 20 of the highest food insecure states in the United States as of 2009.<sup>21</sup> Similarly, southern Appalachians remain among the most poor in the nation—15.4% of Appalachians live in poverty as compared to the national average of 13.5%.<sup>22</sup> However, southern Appalachians have resisted these threats to their culture and humanity and have a long history of movement building and defiance. For instance, the often dangerous coal miner and textile workers' strikes in order to gain union rights defined much of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries of southern Appalachia.<sup>23</sup> Yet, as poverty remains a factor in many southern Appalachians' lives today and as food insecurity rates seem to rise steadily in the region, communities of southern Appalachians continue fighting back.

Specifically, southern Appalachian women are at the forefront of this movement to create alternative, local food security systems in the region. Due to gendered social constructions, women are often the most affected and most confronted with the issue of food insecurity in southern Appalachia. Their experiences both as women in a gendered society and as the people

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<sup>21</sup> Mark Nord, Alisha Coleman-Jensen, Margaret Andrews, and Steven Carlson. "Household Food Security in the United States, 2009." (United States Department of Agriculture: Economic Research Service, November 2010), 20

<sup>22</sup> Appalachian Regional Commission, "Poverty Rates 2005-2009," Appalachian Regional Commission Website, 2010, [www.arc.gov](http://www.arc.gov) [accessed May 1, 2011]

<sup>23</sup> For further information on Appalachian workers' strikes see Richard A. Couto, "The Memory of Miners and Conscience of Capital: Coal Miner's Strikes as Free Spaces," 165-194 and Jim Sessions and Fran Ansley "Singing Across Dark Spaces: The Union/Community Takeover of Pittston's Moss 3 Plant," 195-223 both in *Fighting Back in Appalachia: Traditions of Resistance and Change* ed Stephen L. Fisher (Philadelphia: Temple University Press) 2001; also see Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, "Disorderly Women: Gender and Labor Militancy in the Appalachian South," *The Journal of American History*, 73 no 2 (September 1986) 354-382

most affected by hunger and food insecurity, often encourage them to perform revolutionary work to create alternative, localized food-secure systems in the region.

In the context of southern Appalachia, women often have historically been prevented from entering formal economic sectors due to exploitative and gendered hiring practices of absentee corporations. This has left numerous women in the private, domestic sphere of the home, giving them little choice other than to prepare meals, often under conditions of poverty, for husbands who often face economic oppression due to the construction of economics in Appalachia. As editors John Gaventa, Barbara Ellen Smith, and Alex Willingham note in their anthology on the economic situation of Appalachian communities,

for women, the singular domination of extractive industries with male work forces traditionally meant virtual exclusion from the formal economy. ...Other organizations have celebrated and built on women's traditional activities in the informal economy (home-based production of food and clothing, for example), and their successes have often been critical to the economic survival in the fickle, boom-and-bust economy of the coalfields.<sup>24</sup>

Consequently, not only have women in Appalachia historically been obligated to maintain traditional domestic roles, but their role as food providers has also been critical to the survival of their communities in times of need.

Many women in Appalachia have been prevented from acquiring or maintaining formal sector jobs; to conceptualize the intersectionality of oppression that led to this, it is important to examine how job creation in Appalachia has historically functioned. State governments have been in charge of developing plans for job creation in the region.<sup>25</sup> The focus has often been to recruit manufacturing or resource extraction jobs, which, according to author Chris Weiss, “were

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<sup>24</sup> John Gaventa (ed), Barbara Ellen Smith (ed), and Alex Willingham (ed), “Case Studies from Central Appalachia,” In *Communities in Economic Crisis: Appalachia and the South* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1990), 17

<sup>25</sup> Weiss: 64

primarily developed for a white male constituency.”<sup>26</sup> Furthermore, Weiss claims, the job availability and skills for “women, minorities, and the rural poor”<sup>27</sup> were ignored. These jobs link whiteness and maleness with the exploitation of the environment—as able bodied white males are perceived to be the most capable of extracting resources from the natural environment. As scholar Rebecca R. Scott points out,

Historically, mining town economies were very homogeneous, with most of the men working either as miners or managers... The gendered structure of work, class, and race divisions in neighborhoods, types of housing construction, and community planning in general—all bear the stamp of the coal industry.<sup>28</sup>

Thus, as traditionally female and minority jobs such as work in textile and sewing factories relocated, there were no plans to create jobs that would fill the need for women and minorities to find work. Rather, jobs that filled the needs of white males in the region were created, leaving women and minorities unemployed and with few avenues out of poverty.<sup>29</sup> When people began to settle cities and urban areas in southern Appalachia, this further complicated women’s economic situation; as Celia Williamson, an author on Appalachian women and their links to poverty, writes,

Women in particular faced difficult barriers. Even though they reported working hard all of their lives... the skills they possessed did not provide a match for any substantial demand in cities, and they could not successfully compete in markets that were becoming highly technological.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 64

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 64

<sup>28</sup> Rebecca R. Scott, “Dependent Masculinity and Political Culture in Pro-Mountaintop Removal Discourse: Or, How I learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Dragline,” *Feminist Studies* 33, no 3 (Fall 2007), 489

<sup>29</sup> Weiss, 63-66; Mary K. Anglin discusses the issue of capital flight from Western North Carolina in her book *Women, Power, and Dissent in the Hills of Carolina*. (University of Illinois, 2002), 19, she also discusses the historical makeup of women’s economic situations, 16-22

<sup>30</sup> Celia Williamson “Appalachian Women and Poverty: Work in the Underground Economy.” In *Beyond Hill and Hollow: Original Readings in Appalachian Women’s Studies*, edited by Elizabeth D. Engelhardt (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2005), 139

Despite the fact that women and minorities experienced hard work their entire lives, their work was not perceived as an economically viable or culturally appropriate avenue for success. This intrinsic barrier to financial wealth left many women and minorities in severe poverty.

Author Joyce Barry clarifies the impact that this has had on many women, stating

Economic insecurity is particularly devastating to rural women, many of whom head families living in poverty. It is these women who have the primary responsibility of maintaining the domestic sphere in incredibly trying circumstances. Ultimately, women, with their productive or social reproductive work, suffer the harshest effects of all social ills, whether those ills are poverty, unemployment, or environmental destruction<sup>31</sup>

The intersectionality of oppression that many Appalachian women face—of being female, from various ethnic backgrounds, from exploited mountain areas, and often poor—creates an intricate system of economic inability that prevents them from having access to formal sector jobs.

Female poverty and dependency is often perpetuated, enforcing traditional domestic roles centered on familial caretaking. From this evidence it is apparent that the feminization of poverty exists within Appalachia, while gendered social norms have established the role of many women as food providers. However, these developments uniquely situate many Appalachian women to become involved in activist work on food security.

*Cookbooks, Histories, and Countermemory: Southern Appalachian Women Claiming Voice Through Recipes*

As noted by the organization RAFT (Renewing America's Food Traditions), southern Appalachia comprises the “most diverse foodshed in U.S., Mexico, or Canada.”<sup>32</sup> In fact,

The deep mountain backcountry areas of North Carolina, East Tennessee, southwest Virginia, Kentucky and West Virginia are pockets rich and diverse in

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<sup>31</sup> Joyce Barry, “Mountaineers Are Always Free? An Examination of the Effects of Mountaintop Removal in West Virginia,” *Women's Studies Quarterly*, 1 & 2, (2001), 119.

<sup>32</sup> Renewing America's Food Traditions, “Place Based Foods of Appalachia: From Rarity to Community Restoration and Market Recovery.” (2011), 3, [http://garynabhan.com/pbf-pdf/AA%20APPALACHIA%27S%20PLACE-BASED\\_FOODS.pdf](http://garynabhan.com/pbf-pdf/AA%20APPALACHIA%27S%20PLACE-BASED_FOODS.pdf)



food crops within the central/southern Appalachian foodshed. This should come as no surprise: Appalachian people live in one of the world's most bio-diverse temperate zones. Global areas of high agrobiodiversity correlate with high degrees of economic, cultural and geographic marginality—conditions that are no stranger to the highlands of Appalachia. Additionally, most of the world centers of agrobiodiversity are in mountainous areas. Given these factors, southern and central Appalachia has the highest documented levels of agrobiodiversity in the U.S., Canada and northern Mexico. Appalachia is the longest continuously inhabited mountain range in the United States, and it has an extensive history of indigenous agriculture by the Cherokee and other American Indian peoples.<sup>33</sup>

The continual settlement, incredible biodiversity, and consistent marginalization of the region have led to diverse formations of communities and identities centered around food, food knowledge, and resistance. Recipe sharing has been an intrinsic part of women's food culture and food knowledge for most of history. Beginning with Cherokee women farmers, gathering and recipe sharing became essential for southern Appalachian communities. Kevin Welch of RAFT notes that

In the spring, the women of my [Cherokee] family enjoy “going to get greens.” This is a social event where the women spend as much time conversing as picking the various wild greens. The Cherokee have always practiced sustainable harvesting—taking only what is needed—long before sustainability became politically correct. Plant locations are common knowledge to Cherokee families, who have regularly harvested from these sites over time. It's not uncommon to see mothers with daughters and sometimes grandchildren in an area collecting greens.<sup>34</sup>

As indicated by Welch, knowledge of sustainable harvesting practices, as well as which greens are collected and used, are handed down through generations of women. In this way, recipe sharing in southern Appalachia became an oral tradition handed down by Cherokee women of Shaconage long before settlers, freed slaves, immigrants, and other newcomers to the region would begin sharing their recipes and writing their own cookbooks.

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Kevin Welch in RAFT, “Wild Spring Greens Keep the Cherokee Connected to the Earth,” (2011), 19.

Intrinsic to the generational sharing of recipes between women is the reality that women were (and are) responsible for acquiring and preparing food for families. Laura Schenone claims that “cooking helps us find a secret language of women.”<sup>35</sup> Janet Theophano states that “despite or perhaps because of their ordinariness, because cooking is so basic to and so entangled in daily life, cookbooks have thus served women as meditations, memoirs, diaries, journals, scrapbooks, and guides.”<sup>36</sup> She goes on to clarify that “women’s stories are embedded in the recipes.”<sup>37</sup> In addition to Theophano’s illustration of the centrality and importance of cookbooks to women, author Elizabeth Fleitz indicates that “as scholars attest, women have never had full access to the modes of communication.”<sup>38</sup> Thus, women’s writing and history can be found in everyday objects such as cookbooks rather than in published texts and official historical documents. The themes, concepts, and arguments found within women’s personal effects and stories thus become crucial methods into inquiring into the value of women’s work and lives.

Each meal has an audience; every recipe has an expectation of social class, race, and geographic location instilled within it. Food not only contributes to community identity, but it also defines the Other; it places insiders and outsiders. Inness discusses these ideas while examining the “cult of daintiness”<sup>39</sup> that pervaded late nineteenth century and early twentieth century women’s cookbooks. The cult of daintiness refers to the idea that “women’s food should be feminine and delicate.”<sup>40</sup> However, as Inness illustrates, “the ability to provide a wide selection of dainty and delectable dishes also served as a marker of family’s class background...only well-off people could afford to think about the taste and appearance of

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<sup>35</sup> Schenone, xv

<sup>36</sup> Janet Theophano *Eat my words: Reading women's lives through the cookbooks they wrote*. (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2002), 7

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 30

<sup>38</sup> Elizabeth Fleitz, Cooking codes: Cookbook discourses as women’s rhetorical practices. *Present Tense: A Journal of Rhetoric in Society*, 1(1),( 2010), 4

<sup>39</sup> Inness (2001), 56

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 55

foods.”<sup>41</sup> Thus, many cookbooks during this time period presupposed high socioeconomic class while imposing ideals of daintiness upon women and food.

Poor white women and many women of color were rendered invisible by such cultural expectations. In another of her works, *Secret Ingredients: Race, Class, and Gender at the Dinner Table*, Inness articulates the imposition of stereotypes surrounding people of color and people of lower socioeconomic classes. She summons the image of the southern black “mammy” to illustrate how women of color are related to food through their Otherness and service to whites.<sup>42</sup> The mammy is a black woman, rooted in the history of slavery, who exists happily to prepare and serve foods to elite whites. Illustrations in many elite white cookbooks, on food products, and in literature created and reinforced the image of the mammy. Inness points to one of the most famous examples of the mammy: Aunt Jemima. She explicates that Aunt Jemima first appeared in 1893 at the Columbia Exposition when black cook, Nancy Green, released her new boxed pancake mix.<sup>43</sup> The significance of Aunt Jemima cannot be overstated. That a black cook was represented in this way at a white cooking exposition indicates at least two meanings: first, white people’s need to see blacks as domesticated and thus safe; second, black people’s access to white public space only existed insofar as they met white people’s needs. Elizabeth Engelhardt adds to this notion of food as Othering, illustrating the difference between biscuits and cornbread in the Appalachian south,

Biscuit baking demonstrated class consciousness, leisure time for women, consumer-marketed equipment, and nationally standardized consumption. Cornbread, on the other hand, symbolized ignorance, disease, and poverty. It could be made with locally produced ingredients, equipment made at home, and

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 59

<sup>42</sup> Sherrie Inness, *Secret Ingredients: Race, Gender, and Class at the Dinner Table*. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006) 106-107

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 109

brief moments of time seized between other work...A social history of class, race, and gender hides in the different recipes and uses of cornbread and biscuits.<sup>44</sup>

Thus, the preparation, methodology, and location of food worked not only to create identity but to create distinction, to mark Otherness and to separate desirables from undesirables.

However, as Theophano illuminates, cooking does not just Other but often works actively to erase difference and homogenize culture. She states that “Cooking was more than a metaphor for cultural difference. It was custom to be changed...the homogenization of American life would occur through the standardization of domestic principles.”<sup>45</sup> White upper-and-middle class reformers throughout the nineteenth century focused on the Otherness of people of color, people of low socioeconomic class, and immigrants while creating ways to “reform” them to meet American ideals. Progressive women such as Harriet Beecher Stowe and Catharine Beecher created schools for immigrants that taught them how to be appropriately domestic in the American way. As both Theophano and Schenone point out, other schools worked to eradicate native culture by teaching young native girls how to cook “American.” Additionally, many cookbooks worked to “tame” ethnic cuisine, especially Asian and Hispanic, as it was deemed too exotic, sensual, or “hot.”<sup>46</sup>

Many women of color and lower-class white women worked as domestic servants and cooks for women of higher socioeconomic status. In this way white upper-class women were exposed to the communities, cultures, and meals of women of color and lower class white women. In some ways food and cooking began to serve as a mediator or bridge between cultures. Cookbooks written and shared by women of color and immigrants contested the stereotypes enforced by dominant white culture. As Theophano states, “a few non-native-born women found

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<sup>44</sup> Engelhardt (2005), 33

<sup>45</sup> Theophano: 243

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 243-268; Schenone 37-98; 135-168

the cookbook a handy genre for crossing the very cultural, linguistic, and social boundaries established in household advice literature by women.”<sup>47</sup> Theophano goes on to conclude that “the very act of inscribing cultural differences in food preparation may link author and reader or create a wedge in the form of an ‘us’ and a ‘them’ or a ‘we’ and a ‘you’.”<sup>48</sup> Cooking did not reflect any single ideal of identity or community. Rather, cooking became a place to negotiate the borders of identity, communities, and cultures. It created ideals of domesticity and contested those ideals; it created ideals of whiteness and class and contested those ideals. Cooking, then, became more than a space to construct and enforce identities and communities—it became a space to negotiate power and resistance. As a source of women’s history and lives as well as embodiments of cultural identity, cooking is exposed as a conflicting source of power and resistance. On one level it defines and enforces cultural expectations regarding women and food; however, it also creates space for women to contest and redefine those expectations.

According to authors such as Elizabeth Fleitz, the existence of cookbooks indicates women’s resistance. As Fleitz states,

Dissatisfied with their low status in society, women have used language in creative ways in order to have control over their reality and free themselves from oppression. Women have succeeded at this resistance through coding... When the women’s language is coded, they are free to communicate with each other without fearing consequences from those outside the community.<sup>49</sup>

Hence, cookbooks represent a space where women have been able to create resistance through language, through the operation of their own codes and discourse. As women gained increasing power over time, they began openly to disparage traditional gender codes through cooking. For example, Inness examines the *“I Hate to Cook Book”* published by Peg Bracken in 1966.

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<sup>47</sup> Theophano: 255

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 268

<sup>49</sup> Fleitz: 4

Bracken states, “Cooking in real life is much different than cooking in literature”<sup>50</sup> Bracken argues that instead of a dainty display of femininity and family togetherness, cooking is often a source of strife, suffering, and fatigue for women. Bracken claims that cooking in the proper feminine way (spending all day in the kitchen making elaborate meals and desserts that take hours) takes up time, energy, and effort that could be spent doing more self-fulfilling and leisurely activities. From Bracken’s perspective, the traditional notion that women should be happy cooking in a prescribed method and manner is simply untrue.

Harriet Friedmann nuances this idea, pointing out that such traditional perspectives are social constructions. She states that

People use the word “traditional” to name what they are used to. This word allows us to avoid thinking about how, when and why our patterns of work, trade and family life came to be...Every “tradition” was once constructed...Many practices and relations are being (re)constructed, and they will eventually seem “traditional.” That will give us a historical perspective for understanding the present construction of new practices and relations.<sup>51</sup>

Thus, women’s “traditional” role inside the home is exposed as a social construction that can be altered with recognition. Much like Peg Bracken’s critiques, when women recognize such traditional constructions of cooking they are then able to contest histories of tradition that place them in positions of subservience and invisibility.

Engelhardt also argues that cookbooks and cooking created tangible, physical resistance. In her article examining women’s tomato canning clubs of the south, Engelhardt discusses how this endeavor promoted financial empowerment, education, and technological advancement for women. The mission of these tomato clubs, according to Engelhardt, was to use “southern food to transform southern society—but not from the top down. Rather, by targeting girls, arguably

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<sup>50</sup> Inness (2006), 61

<sup>51</sup> Harriet Friedmann Remaking “traditions”: How we eat, what we eat, and the changing political economy of food. In D. Barndt (Ed.), *Women Working the NAFTA Food Chain: Women, Food, and Globalization* (1997; repr. Toronto: Sumach Press, 2007), 36-37

the most disenfranchised family members, the tomato club movement worked explicitly from the grass—or garden—roots up.”<sup>52</sup> In documents written by girls who attended these clubs one of the most prevalent reasons for participating was because it permitted them to earn money. In their first year tomato clubs earned girls an average of \$14.47 per girl (equivalent to \$330 in today’s currency).<sup>53</sup> With this money many girls could afford to attend schools and acquire educational training. Additionally, by learning how to use canning machinery and scientific tools for testing the quality for food, many girls learned higher technical skills regarding science and technology. With money and technical skills, formerly disenfranchised girls became valuable to their households and accordingly were afforded more freedom and social mobility.

Theophano views cooking and cookbooks as crucial to early women’s literacy. She illustrates that women were historically refused access to education and literacy. Theophano explains that “in spite of this limitation, women, by their own ingenuity, may have achieved what they were denied formally and publically.”<sup>54</sup> She goes on to detail how women were able to learn to read through the communities that they formed around cookbooks. Often, one woman would know how to read and write thanks to her elite status or her kind husband. This woman would then help other women write and read their cookbooks. Cooking offered a space where women could collaborate to learn and practice reading and writing. With literacy, women greatly increased their opportunities. They could write and publish cookbooks, earning money and increasing their social value. Importantly, they were no longer passive receivers of words; their history was no longer relegated to the invisible. With literacy, women could write themselves into existence and actively participate in social constructions of societal norms.

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<sup>52</sup> Elizabeth Engelhardt. “Canning tomatoes, growing “better and more perfect women”: The girls’ tomato club movement.” *Southern Cultures*, (Winter 2009),79

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 82

<sup>54</sup> Theophano: 156

Women of color also employed tactics for resistance through food and cooking. According to Theophano, Inness, and Schenone, women of color often wrote cookbooks that offered “countermemories,”<sup>55</sup> or alternative histories that dispelled stereotypes and misinformation. Cookbooks cited in Theophano and Inness’s works, such as Freda De Knight’s *Date With a Dish*, *The Historical Cookbook of the American Negro*, *Mother Africa’s Table*,<sup>56</sup> and others constructed new ways of looking at the history of black women in America during earlier time periods. These cookbooks represented black cooking as diverse, multicultural, and steeped in black cultural achievements. Another cookbook, *In Memory’s Kitchen*,<sup>57</sup> details the resistance of Jewish women during the Holocaust. This cookbook, written by women in the Terezin ghetto, is a collection of recipes meant to protect and save the last vestiges of Jewish heritage before the people themselves were exterminated. In the midst of brutality, invisibility, suffering, and misery, slaves and women of color in early America and even Europe were able to use food to survive and resist complete colonization and eradication of their cultural histories

As illustrated above, cookbooks do not exist in a vacuum of independent, individual space. Rather, cookbooks are often collective histories. They accomplish this in several ways. First, they transcend time. Cookbooks are often written by generations of women over time and passed from one woman to the next, with each woman adding to and adapting recipes as the world around her evolves. Second, cookbooks both represent and transcend place. Many cookbooks are the collaborative efforts of geographic communities. Charity and fundraiser cookbooks especially represent the collaboration of local groups of women. However, many cookbooks transcend local or regional places and bring together communities of women based upon race or class. Women of color, immigrants, and Jewish women particularly have histories

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<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 83

<sup>56</sup> Theophano, 52-68; Inness (2006) 105-126

<sup>57</sup> Theophano, 78-84



of creating cookbooks that cross national, state, and local borders in order to bring traditional recipes from across the world together into single collections.

Janet Theophano states that “women’s cookbooks can be maps of the social and cultural worlds they inhabit.”<sup>58</sup> She illustrates that

contributions may come from past generations and from individuals living side by side in small communities, connected to larger social circles, sometimes from one or more cultures, and they also can come to the cookbook from an array of print media. And while we tend to think of cooking as a delight to our senses, the relationships formed through the creation of these culinary compositions are social, cultural, and economic.<sup>59</sup>

Thus, cookbooks are created and arrived at in many ways, but what they all have in common is that they negotiate social, cultural, and economic boundaries. Author Sydney Mintz clarifies that “eating is never a “purely biological” activity...The foods eaten have histories associated with the pasts of those who eat them...its consumption is always conditioned by meaning.”<sup>60</sup> The types of food people consume, how it is prepared, and the ways in which its recipes are represented all contribute to the identity of women and larger communities. Every meal is imbued with history and meaning.

Historically, different types of food have represented the peoples who eat them. Schenone points out that wild rice was historically a source of identity for native peoples living near the Great Lakes,<sup>61</sup> corn has been a source of identity for peoples of the southwest United States,<sup>62</sup> and piki bread (made of blue cornmeal, ash, and water) was essential in defining the Hopi.<sup>63</sup> Engelhardt explicates that food places people in geographic spaces, cultures, and communities. She states:

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<sup>58</sup> Theophano, 13

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 12

<sup>60</sup> Mintz: 7

<sup>61</sup> Schenone, 19

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., 22

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 25-26

“Talking about the food we prepare and eat to celebrate our chosen holidays can help women understand the differences and similarities between us. Having told you about cornbread, collards, apples, black-eyed peas, and biscuits, you might place me—correctly—as from the southern United States. Depending on what you know about local crops, the combination of apples and cornbread might even help you deduce that I am specifically from the southern Appalachian mountains.”<sup>64</sup>

Food places people in cultures. Appalachian is not meant to signify only a geographic place in the southern United States; rather, as Engelhardt describes it, it is also infused with historical and cultural meaning.

Ultimately, cookbooks, food, and cooking all offered ways in which disempowered women could resist dominant social forces while navigating the meaning of their food landscapes and geographical locations. Through their language and literacy they could foster access to financial resources, education, and skills while also preserving their cultural heritages. Food, in this way, came to represent dialectical tensions between power, domination, and resistance. Women’s empowerment and cultures depended in many ways on these innovative and creative tactics for survival.

*Edna Lewis to Foxfire to Joan Aller: Women’s Cookbooks, Women’s Voices, Women’s Knowledge*

Don Yoder argues that “folk cookery can be readily defined as traditional domestic cookery marked by regional variation. As every day, domestic, family cookery based on regional tradition, it is obviously the opposite of the commercial, institutional, and scientific-nutritional versions of cookery.”<sup>65</sup> The examination of folk cookery through women’s regionally-based cookbooks becomes a lens to analyze the culmination of history, mythology, tradition, and image

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<sup>64</sup> Elizabeth Engelhardt, “Beating the Biscuits in Appalachia: Race, Class, and Gender Politics of Women Baking Bread,” In R. Lundy (Ed.), *Cornbread Nation 3: Foods of the Mountain South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005), 32

<sup>65</sup> Don Yoder, “Folk Cookery,” in *Folklife and Folklore: An Introduction*, edited by Richard M. Dorson, 325

that Appalachian meals were crafted to represent. As Yoder goes on to explain, “Folk cookery of course represents more than a mere primitive satisfying of elemental needs. Like all aspects of folk culture it was related, integrally and functionally, to all other phases of the culture, and in its elaboration, like dress and architecture, a work of art.”<sup>66</sup> The language and usage of food in women’s cookbooks are carefully chosen and crafted images—ideas, hopes, dreams, and acts of representation that the author wishes to present.

The act of this art—of personal representation and sharing of a particular image of experience or idea---often functions as resistance to popular discourses that would otherwise render Appalachian foodways ignored, backwards, or unhealthy. As Yoder illustrates, the act of defining food as personal art against the commercialized and industrialized image of food as solely a mechanism of nutrition cultivates its own form of resistance. However, as will be explored in the works below, it becomes clear that women’s cookbooks were more often spaces of dialectical tension: on one hand, they resisted social constructions that would define Appalachia as poverty ridden, ignorant, isolated, and undeveloped, but on the other hand, they often became tropes of a romanticized, idealistic Appalachia that never quite existed---playing into the image of a nostalgic and perfect past. This follows the ideology of public and hidden transcripts, or the behaviors of tactics and strategies, in that the dominant system of perception imposed on Appalachia is never radically deconstructed; however, subversive recollections of particular stories, the emphasis on particular narratives, and the implicit passing down of a specific set of knowledge aids to create a nonlinear form of resistance. Resistance becomes a secret language of an alternative visioning of possibility in Appalachia even as the public discourse around the national imagination of Appalachia streams in and out of these narratives.

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<sup>66</sup> Ibid., 338

Edna Lewis did not exclusively write cookbooks from the southern Appalachian region. However, the legacy and impact of her writing on southern food is well known and serves as a foundation on which many southern Appalachian cookbooks were based. When she passed away in 2006, the New York Times claimed that her cookbook, The Taste of Country Cooking, is “considered a classic study of Southern cooking and one that sits on the shelves of America’s best chefs, helped put an end to the knee-slapping, cornpone image of Southern food among many American cooks.”<sup>67</sup> While this assertion is problematic in that it assumes that southern food was previously viewed unanimously through a stereotypical and disgraceful image, it attests to Edna Lewis’s unique ability to cultivate dignity and life through her recipes. The style in which she wrote The Taste of Country Cooking invokes not only the importance of food quality and seasonal recipes but also the significance of place. Lewis presents the cookbook as an examination of the foods and recipes that she grew up with as the granddaughter of a freed slave living in a small town of former slaves in Virginia. Importantly, the writing style of the cookbook frames all of its recipes in the context of seasonal availability, the accessibility of food, and each recipe’s overall place in its cultural context. As internationally recognized chef and self-defined activist Alice Waters writes,

Edna Lewis had an irresistible generosity and honesty of spirit. She was far more than the doyenne of Southern cooking. She was, and remains, an inspiration to all of us who are striving to protect both biodiversity and cultural diversity by cooking real food in season and honoring our heritage through the ritual of the table.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> Eric Asimov and Kim Severson, “Edna Lewis, 89, Dies: Wrote Cookbooks that Revived Refined Southern Cuisine,” The New York Times, February 14, 2006.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2006/02/14/national/14lewis.html?pagewanted=all&r=0>

<sup>68</sup> Alice Waters, “Forward,” in Edna Lewis, *The Taste of Country Cooking*, (1976; repr. Knopf: New York, 2012) Xii-xiii

Lewis begins the cookbook with a thorough introduction of herself. She explains that she grew up in a community of farming people in Freetown, Virginia. She immediately illustrates that the name “was adopted because the first residents had been all freed from chattel slavery and they wanted to be known as a town of Free People.”<sup>69</sup> Lewis then goes on to detail how the town was settled—her grandfather had been the first citizen, followed by three additional families, who all built their houses in a circle around her grandfather’s. The freed slaves used the skills they developed in their lives to construct Freetown; for instance, Lewis’s grandmother had been the slave of a brick mason and knew how to mold and lay bricks. This practice of community and skill-sharing continued as more freed slaves arrived in Freetown, eventually leading Freetown to become a “lively place, with poetry readings, singing quartets, and productions of plays.”<sup>70</sup> Lewis concludes her introduction by emphasizing the particularly important roles of food in the Freetown community, articulating that “the spirit of pride in community and of cooperation in the work of farming is what made Freetown a very wonderful place to grow up in.”<sup>71</sup> Importantly, in Lewis’s narrative everyone participated in farming, hunting, gathering, and preparing meals to ensure that the passing of seasons, holidays, and important events were all marked with community festivity through food. She ruminates that “when we share again in gathering wild strawberries, canning, rendering lard, finding walnuts, picking persimmons, making fruitcake, I realize how much the bond that held us had to do with food.”<sup>72</sup>

Evident in her overwhelming agrarian aesthetic is the myth of Freetown as a place of complete harmony and peace. It is possible that Lewis did not want to depict a town of freed slaves as containing conflicts, tensions, or poverty because she wanted to avoid the image of

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<sup>69</sup> Edna Lewis, *The Taste of Country Cooking*, (1976; repr. Knopf: New York, 2012) xix

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, xx

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>72</sup> Lewis, xxi

people of color acting unfavorably or incompetently toward public affairs. The political atmosphere in 1976 when Lewis published her cookbook was one of civil unrest, where black citizens of the United States were fighting for their right to social and cultural legitimacy.<sup>73</sup> A contemporary reflection on Freetown, Virginia shows that during Lewis's time there, "seven or eight people were living in the two-bedroom houses," and "for [the residents'] livelihoods most worked for private families on the big farms and estates in Greenwood."<sup>74</sup> Poverty remains widespread today in Freetown, and opportunities to work for wages continue to lay outside of the area under the jurisdiction of larger, white-owned companies in surrounding cities. However, Lewis's unwillingness to deviate from a notion of togetherness, self-sufficiency, and pride simultaneously speak to her careful crafting of an image that celebrated blackness and the ability of black southerners to organize their own lives successfully. Even if it was factually untrue that the residents of Freetown were self-sufficient or financially independent, the idea that southern blacks could live in such a way may have been meant to inspire other people of color to feel empowered, confident, or capable of independence.

Lewis chooses to represent Freetown as a static place---a space in time that remains thematically unaltered. This is contrary to arguments of space presented by theorist Doreen Massey, who claims that space must be thought of "not as some absolute independent dimension, but as constructed out of social relations: that what is at issue is not social phenomena in space but both social phenomena and space as constituted out of social relations, that the spatial is social relations 'stretched out'. The fact is, however, that social relations are never still; they are

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<sup>73</sup> For more information see Manning Marable and Leith Mullings, eds, *Let Nobody Turn Us Around: An African American Anthology*, sections 4-5, 341-518

<sup>74</sup> Mike Marshall, "Close-Knit Freetown is Feeling Squeezed," *The Crozet Gazette*, (January 7, 2010), <http://www.crozetgazette.com/2010/01/close-knit-freetown-community-is-feeling-squeezed/>

inherently dynamic.”<sup>75</sup> In other words, space is directly correlated to time and context---the idea of place emerges out of social relationships and their existence in a particular time. Lewis’s—and other similar authors’—decision to choose a fixed image of their particular concept of place indicates a removal of the narrative from a larger social dynamic. Instead of an Appalachia defined by the tensions of its social and political relationships, the Appalachia of many women’s cookbooks becomes a place defined by their hopes, dreams, and ideals. In many ways this radically ignores fundamental realities of the region, but simultaneously it potentially reclaims women’s voices by envisioning an Appalachia that could be or could have been.

That Lewis chooses to begin her cookbook with a revolutionary black history allows readers to envision a particular conception of place in Appalachia--- not only to learn recipes, but fully to understand the power, history, and culture that these recipes are imbued with. By bringing to the forefront the history of slavery in her family, their almost communal way of living, and the pride built over decades of cultural sharing, she uses her narrative to reclaim a space of black history, often lost in the education offered by white teachers in white Southern schools. She makes visible the transition from slave-to-citizen and the complexity of tension and pride built within that cultural and historical moment. The last lines of her introduction illuminates these sentiments:

Since we are the last of the original families, with no children to remember and carry on, I decided that I wanted to write down just exactly how we did things when I was growing up in Freetown that seemed to make life so rewarding. Although the founders of Freetown have passed away, I am convinced that their ideas live on for us to learn from, to enlarge upon, and pass on to the following generations. I am happy to see how many young people are going back to the land and to the South. They are interested in natural farming and they seem to want to know how we did things in the past, to learn firsthand from those who worked hard, loved the land, and relished the fruits of their labor. I hope that this book

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<sup>75</sup> Doreen Massey, *Space, Place, and Gender*, (University of Minnesota Press: Minneapolis, 1994), 2

will be helpful to them. But above all, I want to share with everyone who may read this a time and a place that is so very dear to my heart.<sup>76</sup>

Her pointed remark regarding the importance of her community working hard, loving the land, and enjoying the fruits of their own labor speaks directly to the contested history of being a freed slave remaining in the south. Her particularly cultivated representation of this history speaks to strength and reclamation of hope; even though many of the freed slaves in her community continued to use the skills and perform the work of their previous lives as slaves, she represents this as a choice imbued with continued love for land and with pride in finally reaping what they worked so hard to sow. Historical evidence indicates that most of these families were working for white plantation-style farmers outside of Freetown; however, Lewis refuses to include this in her presentation of the daily experience of living in the community. Critically, this type of personal, deeply resistant context for recipes became popular for Appalachian cookbooks. For instance, a particularly well-known southern Appalachian cookbook, The Foxfire Book of Appalachian Cookery, follows a similar pattern of introduction by interviewing a woman who spent her life in Appalachia (Ada Kelly) and exploring her and her community's relationship with food.<sup>77</sup>

Lewis not only follows and influences a particular style of introducing recipes but also a particular method for organizing them. Lewis's recipes proceed by season, indicating the significance of both place and land---in other words, land-use practices based upon specific geographical seasonal conditions that dictate food availability, as well as communal events (such as planting, harvesting, and canning), and types of practical recipes based upon this seasonal accessibility. She presents recipes in order of spring, summer, fall, winter. Each season begins

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<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

<sup>77</sup> Linda Garland Page and Eliot Wigginton, *The Foxfire Book of Appalachian Cookery*, (1984; repr. University of North Carolina Press, 1992), xvii-xx



with its own introduction of the condition of the land, the types of wild foods available, and the types of community events celebrated in that season. First, Lewis goes into detail about how the community recognized the changing of the seasons. For instance, in spring “the quiet routine of the kitchen would give way to the sounds of chirping, pip pip, and baa baa,” indicating that baby animals were beginning to enter the world, while “further evidence of spring would be the arrival of the noisy killdeer.”<sup>78</sup> She paints an image of a typical spring morning with her family, centered around the changing land and food:

Breakfast was the best part of the day. There was an almost mysterious feeling about passing through the night and awakening to a new day. Everyone greeted each other in the morning with gladness and a real sense of gratefulness to see a new day. If it was a particularly beautiful morning it was expressed in the grace. Spring would bring our first and just about only fish—shad. It would always be served for breakfast, soaked in salt water for an hour or so, rolled in seasoned cornmeal, and fried carefully in home-rendered lard with a slice of smoked shulder for added flavor. There were crispy fried white potatoes, fried onions, batter bread, any food left over from supper, blackberry jelly, delicious hot coffee, and cocoa for the children.<sup>79</sup>

Lewis especially emphasizes the coming to life of spring, and the gratefulness that came with each new day; this can be seen as a continuation of her introduction, bringing into her imagery and history a sense of resistance—the image that each day a freed slave woke to a new, bright day brimming with food and possibility was another day to be thankful and to relish the grace of life. Additionally, the emphasis on types of food locates Lewis in a particular place at a particular time. For instance, she clarifies that in spring “meals would always be made of many uncultivated plants. We would relish a dish of mixed greens—poke leaves before they unfurled, lamb’s quarters, and wild mustard.”<sup>80</sup> Because the planting season had just begun, there was not a great availability of produce and fresh food. Instead, community members would have to wild

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<sup>78</sup> Lewis, 2

<sup>79</sup> Ibid., 4-5

<sup>80</sup> Ibid., 4

forage greens and supplement this with the seasonal fish along with milk and meat from farm animals. Recipes in the spring section include Braised Forequarter of Mutton, Thin-Sliced Skillet-Fried White Potatoes, Skillet Wild Asparagus, Honey from Woodland Bees, Pan-Fried Shad with Roe, and similar items.<sup>81</sup> Each recipe is accompanied by detailed instructions on how to acquire, prepare, and serve each menu item. The recipe for gathering honey includes a folk rhyme sung by members of Freetown: “A swarm of bees in May is worth a load of hay. A swarm of bees in June is worth a silver spoon. A swarm of bees in July is not worth a fly.”<sup>82</sup> This simple rhyme indicates knowledge handed down through generations, illustrating the importance of both food-and-place knowledge, along with strong community values.

Summer follows a similar pattern; importantly, Lewis notes “the first hams of the season would be cooked about July and August in case an unexpected summer guest dropped in. Ham held the same rating as the basic black dress. If you had a ham in the meat house any situation could be faced.”<sup>83</sup> Ice cream, melons, and summer produce harvests also indicated the seasonal transition. Recipes in the summer section include Ham in Heavy Cream Sauce, Green Tomato Preserves, Potted Stuffed Squab,<sup>84</sup> Brandied Peaches, and Thin-Sliced Cucumbers Marinated in Sugar and White Vinegar.<sup>85</sup> The summer section also adds methods for preserving foods in preparation for winter, such as making jams, jellies, and preserves, canning, pickling, threshing wheat, and making wine.

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<sup>81</sup> Lewis, 8.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid., 23

<sup>83</sup> Lewis, 52

<sup>84</sup> A squab is a colloquial name for a domesticated young pigeon. Lewis notes “squab was considered a rare delicacy. Mother somehow managed to find them when someone she thought special was coming to visit, particularly if the guest was an older person.” ( 57)

<sup>85</sup> Lewis, 52-70

Fall follows summer, opened by Lewis's statement "unlike other seasons of the year, the coming of fall was looked upon with mixed feelings."<sup>86</sup> Summer visitors left for their own homes and leaves began to die and fall as the days became darker and colder, the cows were brought home from the fields they'd been grazing in all summer, school was starting, hunting season began, and community events also marked the dying season. The introduction to fall is also the shortest for all the seasons—barely a single page. Yet Race Day, "the annual horse race at Mrs. DuPont's Scott's estate, Montpelier," held on the "first Saturday in November," was the "main event of the autumn season."<sup>87</sup> Lewis describes it as a time when all types of people from the region found themselves in the same place—"one of the few occasions during the year when farmers, tradespeople, estate owners, and workers mingle together."<sup>88</sup> Race day picnic was a momentous event for fall, where everyone dressed up and found their favorite picnic spot in the Shenandoah Valley.

What Lewis neglects to include is commentary on race-relations between the middle-to-upper class white landowners outside of Freetown and the black laborers who came from her community. It is most likely that racial tensions marked these events, and that black and white attendees were not treated equally at the race-day picnic. It is also likely that many black attendees were there as workers-- to cater, prepare, and clean for the event. Her focus is instead on the lavish meal, which included A Thermos of Hot Virginia Country-Style Beef Consomme, Cold Roast Pheasant, Salad of Lentils and Scallions, Ham Biscuits, White Pound Cake, Ginger Cookies, Stayman Winesap Apples, Dessert Grapes, Kieffer Pears, and a Thermos of Hot Coffee.<sup>89</sup> Important to note is Lewis's usage of specific types of food—for instance Stayman

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<sup>86</sup> Ibid., 144

<sup>87</sup> Lewis, 146

<sup>88</sup> Ibid., 146

<sup>89</sup> Lewis, 148

Winesap apples and Kieffer pears---lineages of fruit particular to the region in which she lived. Another important fall event was Emancipation Day. Interestingly, Lewis leaves the holiday without explanation and proceeds directly into the dinner appropriate for this holiday. Clearly, this is such a renowned, important event that it warrants no extra revelation—Lewis expects her audience to know precisely what she is referring to. Emancipation Day dinner includes: Guinea Fowl in Casserole Garnished with Watercress, Steamed Wild Rice, Green Bean Salad with Sliced Tomatoes, Grape Jelly, Parker House Rolls, Butter, Purple Plum Tart or Stewed Quince and Special Cookies, with Coffee.<sup>90</sup> The menu shows a progression into fall---Lewis and her family are using some of their summer preserves (canned green beans, butter, grape jelly) along with foraging wild food available in the fall (rice). Besides these two primary events, fall is mostly comprised of hunting season, and the inclusion of meat in the recipes and canned vegetables from summer increases as fall carries on.

Winter is primarily concerned with Christmastime, including Freetown traditions, community gatherings, and holiday meals. Decorations are collected from the wild, such as a “green lacy vine called running cedar,”<sup>91</sup> juniper, and wild holly from the forest. Christmas was separated into three meals: Christmas Eve Supper, Christmas Breakfast, and Christmas Dinner. Each meal is a lavish, multi-course meal with meats, pickles, preserves, desserts, and wines. Christmas dinner was especially extravagant, including nineteen menu items. The usage of meat within Christmas dinners is also of note. Lewis clarifies that “nothing pleased us more than to have a big, fat hen for a holiday meal. Turkeys were raised for the city holiday market as a late cash crop.”<sup>92</sup> Consequently, Lewis’s family learned to raise large hens (sometimes as big as ten pounds) and cook them in similar ways to stuffed turkeys that cosmopolitan families enjoyed for

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<sup>90</sup> Ibid., 158

<sup>91</sup> Lewis, 196

<sup>92</sup> Lewis, 211

their holiday dinners. Turkeys were well cultivated and protected in order to ensure money to make it through the holiday season, but chickens became the main prize for families in Freetown.

Late winter was for restocking the ice house (as ponds froze) to make ice creams and lemonade in the summer. Other than this activity, people found little to do other than chop wood and tend to the farm animals. This allowed the community to spend their evenings sitting together by each other's fireplaces conversing and enjoying each other's company. Visitors began to arrive again and lively discussion began to fill the homes of Freetown. Prominently, discussions between older citizens would often focus on their new lives as shockingly free people. Lewis articulates that

There would be lively conversations, with the aged men doing most of the talking and the young adults of my father's age group listening. I would be listening, too, hanging between my father's knees and watching the logs burning in the fireplace with the bugs desperately trying to escape from the burning logs with only me being aware of their desperate plight. I was too young then to understand why so much time was spent in discussion. It was only afterward that I realized they were still awed by the experience of chattel slavery fifty years ago, and of having become freedmen. It was something they never tired of talking about. It gave birth to a song I often heard them sing, "My Soul Look Back and Wonder How I Got Over."<sup>93</sup>

Continuing her underlying theme of history and resistance throughout the cookbook, Lewis persistently associates slave history and freedom with food and place. Each season celebrated a certain theme of resistance: spring with its rebirth, rebuilding, and food foraging knowledge; summer with its farm labor, hard work, and food preservation knowledge; fall with its comingling of separate classes and communities, hunting, and references to perseverance throughout darkening times; and finally, winter, with its extravagantly celebrated relationships during holidays, burning fires, and continual remembrance of times past and futures ahead. The Taste of Country Cooking is an exemplar of place-based resistance writing through the medium

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<sup>93</sup> Ibid.

of food-sharing and recipes. Its foundation of Southern cooking has made it a primary influence in more contemporary cookbooks of Appalachia, while Edna Lewis's primary messages of hope, community, and food also find themselves in a variety of southern Appalachian cookbooks. Simultaneously, her narrative reflects the tension to represent an idealized, romantic life against the reality of harsh poverty, racial tension, and inadequate resources.

The Foxfire Book of Appalachian Cookery edited and compiled by Linda Garland Page and Eliot Wigginton, illustrates another popular example of southern Appalachian cookbooks. It is published by The Foxfire Fund, a nonprofit organization that began in 1966 when high school instructor Eliot Wigginton worked with local high school students in the Appalachian mountains of Georgia to produce a magazine about Appalachian life. The Foxfire magazine (named after the bioluminescence created by a species of local fungi) began publication, and in 1972 anthologies of articles were published, known as "The Foxfire Books."<sup>94</sup> Eventually The Foxfire Fund created a museum and heritage center to celebrate Appalachian culture. The mission statement of The Foxfire Fund declares that

Foxfire (*The Foxfire Fund, Inc.*) is a not-for-profit, educational and literary organization based in Rabun County, Georgia. Founded in 1966, Foxfire's learner-centered, community-based educational approach is advocated through both a regional demonstration site (*The Foxfire Museum & Heritage Center*) grounded in the Southern Appalachian culture that gave rise to Foxfire, and a national program of teacher training and support (*the Foxfire Approach to Teaching and Learning*) that promotes a sense of place and appreciation of local people, community, and culture as essential educational tools.<sup>95</sup>

The magazine and book series of Foxfire specifically declare that

*The Foxfire Book* and its eleven companion volumes stand memorial to the people and the vanishing culture of the Southern Appalachian Mountains, brought to life for readers through the words of those who were born, lived their lives, and

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<sup>94</sup> Foxfire Fund, Inc. "Foxfire: The History of Foxfire," Foxfire Publishing: Mountain City Georgia, 2013. <https://www.foxfire.org/articles/FoxfireFundInc.pdf>

<sup>95</sup> Ibid. <http://www.foxfire.org>

passed away there—words collected by high school students who wanted to be a part of their community and preserve their heritage.<sup>96</sup>

Subsequently, publications such as The Foxfire Book of Appalachian Cookery were born of a unique history, imbued with strains of cultural resistance and a resilient place-based emphasis. It is important to point out that Foxfire views the culture of the Southern Appalachian Mountains as “vanishing”---indicating an attachment to a specific idea of what that culture is, and that it remains stagnant in a distant, nostalgic past. Instead of viewing Appalachian culture as a dynamic process, evolving with time, Foxfire seems to view this culture as a particular mythology, circumscribed by conventional representations and images of Appalachia. However, at the same time, Foxfire is also helping to preserve particular types of traditional knowledge and activities that have existed throughout Appalachia’s history. Once again, this reflects the tension to prove the legitimacy of a quaint Appalachia against the larger, more complex reality of a multivocal and diverse cultural region.

The cookbook itself begins by clarifying that “the most appropriate way to set these recipes, instructions, and stories in their proper context is to begin with part of an interview we conducted with Ada Kelly, who died at the age of ninety-five, two weeks before the manuscript for this book was delivered to the publisher.”<sup>97</sup> In other words, the cookbook is framed within the history and context of a rural southern Appalachian woman’s life and wisdom. Ada Kelly was a teacher in Rabun County, Georgia who had retired by the time Foxfire began in 1966; however, high school students continually

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<sup>96</sup> Ibid. <http://www.foxfire.org/thefoxfirebooks.aspx>

<sup>97</sup> Gardner-Page and Wigginton, xvii

sought her out to have her teach them how to make cornshuck bonnets and share her stories with them for the Foxfire magazines.<sup>98</sup>

The interview conducted with Kelly for the cookbook establishes a tone similar to Lewis's introduction in The Taste of Country Cooking. Kelly's interview begins by placing herself in a specific cultural context accompanied with her lived history. She states,

The year before I was born, my father built a four-room log cabin with two rooms downstairs and two up. We moved into the building just before I was born, and I lived there until I was eighteen. We had a very comfortable house and a large fireplace with a hearth that came out [into the room]. There was eight children in our family, and we all pitched in and helped with the work on the farm and was a really close-knit family... We kept a lot of cattle and some horses and some hogs and raised practically everything we used. We had sheep, and my mother and father would shear the wool. We washed, carded, and spun the wool, and my mother wove it into material. She made practically all our clothing by hand. It was customary for the children to work with the parents in most everything they did, and it was a matter of survival for everyone to do their part.<sup>99</sup>

The emphasis on self-sufficiency and cohesive familial participation indicate Kelly's pride in her knowledge and difficult labor. Instead of perceiving her childhood as harsh, dirty, or poor, she instead claims it as a time of learning, close-knit family, and productive work. She elucidates that everything she and her family did was for their own survival, and survival was an interconnected, multi-generational activity requiring the participation of everyone. Interestingly, Kelly also summons the example of a large fireplace and hearth as central to their family's home, similar to Lewis's depiction of the winter hearth in her and her neighbors homes, where counter-memories—or alternative histories---and stories of resistance were shared as elders gathered in the cold winter months. In a similar way, Kelly's emphasis on interconnection along with the family fireplace and hearth induces an image of sharing and warmth.

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<sup>98</sup> Ibid.,

<sup>99</sup> Ibid., xviii



Returning to the concept of folk cookery as a form of representative art, it is important to note that Kelly implies a history of poverty but instead of explicitly focusing on what the realities of that poverty might have meant, she instead frames this condition as an opportunity for self-sufficiency. Is it actually true that she and her family enjoyed the hard labor required to survive day-to-day? How close was their community in reality? Ultimately the factual answers to these questions are not important---Kelly has chosen to represent her life as one of pride. She cultivates a mythology of strength in her depiction of her life, which falls into the category of romanticizing poverty in the Appalachian region and plays into the cultural myth of self-sufficiency and rugged individualism. Simultaneously, however, this is Kelly's own voice---she herself is given the opportunity to represent her own perception of life in Appalachia, based on her own images and ideas. The power in self-representation and the focus on strength in her narrative appears as a form of resistance--personal empowerment to legitimize her own desires and goals for her life in Appalachia even as her narrative reinforces a nostalgic and unrealistic image of Appalachia.

Following her introduction Kelly begins to describe her work through the lens of seasonal chores. She particularly focuses on summer---the time when everyone had to plant, harvest, process, and preserve food, as well as repair or build new edifices for the farm or family and make clothing for the upcoming year. She recalls a particularly poignant summer memory of her mother cooking in the fireplace and gathering with community women to quilt:

And that's the best food you've ever eat---cakes, egg custards, chicken pies, and boiled vegetables. When they'd have quiltings, they'd cook all kinds of things for a day or two on the fireplace. The women'd gather and bring their little children. The children would play outside, and everybody'd have the best time in the world. We always had a good dinner on Sundays, too. We had lots of wild strawberries, and we'd have strawberry pies, and we'd have cabbage and turnips and pork and homemade sausage and rye bread.<sup>100</sup>

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<sup>100</sup> Ibid., xix

Once again, she highlights interconnection as the central focus of her way of life, along with her family's food knowledge (picking wild strawberries and processing them into pies or making homemade sausage) and the community's intrinsic ability to survive.

Kelly goes on to describe the methods her family used to raise animals, grow food, and preserve everything for non-productive months. This includes raising cattle and learning how to "dress" it and sell or trade it to neighbors, growing vegetables and preserving them, making sauerkraut, storing root vegetables in the ground, or salting fat back for bacon and lard.<sup>101</sup> She concludes her interview by stating, "So we didn't suffer for something to eat. Very few people did unless they was somebody that was sick, and then the neighbors would take care of them. So it was a good life after all."<sup>102</sup> This closing sentence reiterates her emphasis on self-sufficiency, community, and pride. Despite the fact that she and her family had to work hard and that many people would perceive them as poor rural farmers, she makes it clear that "it was a good life after all."<sup>103</sup> Could this reflection be one of imposed strength? Perhaps it was a hard, unpleasant life, but by reflection she can now claim through her knowledge, strength, and longevity that she did in fact make it through hard times, and perhaps this means more in her final analysis than the actual lived experience itself. Importantly, in her narrative the only people who could not provide for themselves were the sick, but it became the community's duty to care for them. Hence, her recollections are framed in terms of strength, labor, knowledge, and interconnectivity—despite the possible realities and in light of the romantic image she depicts.

The first chapter of the cookbook further interrogates the idea of the fireplace. It begins "Today most people have fireplaces in their homes as an amenity rather than a necessity. Once,

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<sup>101</sup> Ada Kelly in Gardner Page and Wigginson xviii-xx

<sup>102</sup> Ibid., xx

<sup>103</sup> Ibid.

however, the fireplace was at the very center of home life, used not only for warmth but also for cooking.”<sup>104</sup> This furthers Ada Kelly’s interpretation of the fireplace in her home as a central location for both family gatherings and where fundamental acts of cooking and food preparation took place. The cookbook goes on to explore the depth of labor that using a fireplace instead of a wood stove or other cooking mechanism entailed: “Nora Garland told us, ‘cooking over a fireplace was hotter than cooking over a wood stove. After all, you were right down over the fire. And there was a lot of extra bending and stretching, but people didn’t think nothing about it then. They was used to it.’”<sup>105</sup> Additionally, preparing the fire place required extensive labor, including preparing and heating coals (which took several hours) along with chopping, gathering, and maintaining wood (which had to be thick, dry, and always readily available). Dutch ovens<sup>106</sup> became a staple of Appalachian cooking, with everything from cornbreads to stews to cakes baked in them over a fireplace. The first recipe offered in the cookbook comes by way of narrative, explaining the Dutch oven and how to bake cornbread in over the fireplace:

Carefully grease the whole inside of the oven with a piece of pork rind. Then preheat the oven and the lid on the coals. Mix up the batter by combining 2 cups of cornmeal, 1 cup of flour, 1 cup of buttermilk, and a spoonful each of salt and soda. Sprinkle a handful of cornmeal on the sides and bottom inside the oven so the bread won’t stick, and then pour the batter in, making sure the oven is level so the bread will be the same thickness all the way around. Using some tongs, place the lid on the oven and cover it with hot coals. The bread will be ready in 15 to 20 minutes, depending on how hot the coals are. It can be cut right in the oven and taken out with a fork or large spoon.<sup>107</sup>

The instructions and ingredients for preparation assume a particular location and understanding of cooking. For instance, having cornmeal, buttermilk, and pork rind on hand signifies a

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<sup>104</sup> Garland Page and Wigginton, 1

<sup>105</sup> Ibid.

<sup>106</sup> Dutch ovens are large, thick-bottomed pots with heavy lids that often contain a mechanism by which a cook can hang them over a large fire.

<sup>107</sup> Garland Page and Wigginton, 4

summer's worth of work growing and grinding corn, milking animals, preparing buttermilk, and salting and drying pork fat for pork rind. The supposition that anyone would readily have these items attests to their widespread usage and centrality in Appalachian cooking. Furthermore, the recipe depends on a basic knowledge of cooking. Instead of temperatures, the recipe simply states that the cooking time will vary depending on how hot the cook has her coals. This implies that the cook is capable of using her discretion to know when the cornbread is finished, based on its appearance. She should also know how hot her coals are, depending on when she put them in the fireplace and how long they've maintained fire.

The prominence of fireplace cooking is reiterated in the cookbook by interviews with several women, who each describe their own histories learning from their mothers how to prepare basic staple foods (such as cornbreads and stews) in Dutch ovens over the fireplace. Once again, these interviews demonstrate community sharing and intergenerational knowledge as they were handed down in front of the idealized Appalachian fireplace.

Following the section on the fundamental usage of the fireplace in southern Appalachian cooking, the editors explore the progression to use of the wood stove, stating that “for most of the people that [Garland-Page and Wigginson] interviewed, cooking on a fireplace was a memory from childhood, soon superseded by a series of woodstoves.”<sup>108</sup> The woodstove became a symbol of advancement and change in many households, and the women interviewed tell the stories of the first woodstoves their families were able to acquire. Interviewee Addie Norton explains, “I can remember the first wood stove that we ever had. Daddy took off some stuff to market. You know, we used to take things off of the farm and journey into Georgia to swap it for things we needed at home. I think now, honey, I believe that he paid for it with potatoes or

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<sup>108</sup> Garland Page and Wigginson, 18

turnips or corn or something or other he had raised on the farm.”<sup>109</sup> At first, her mother was afraid of the woodstove---claiming it would be difficult to use and risked burning down their house. However, using wood and coal in the woodstove was a skill that southern Appalachian women already had, so the transition became natural for most cooks. Norton claims, “I had never cooked with electricity or anything, I had always used wood or coal, and I’m not afraid of it, honey, and I *am* afraid of gas and electricity at my age.”<sup>110</sup> The easy transition from fireplace to woodstove insinuates deep traditions that honored and cultivated skills for cooking and preparing food. Many women interviewed argued that gas or electric stoves were too “cold.”<sup>111</sup> In many ways this can be interpreted to mean that newer styles of ovens did not celebrate skills that had been handed down between women for generations. Additionally, electric stoves lost their place as central in the home---both fireplaces and woodstoves emanated warmth that drew people to them, creating an area of togetherness that cultivated community and sharing. Recalling the usage of fireplaces and woodstoves becomes not simply a yearning nostalgia for the past but reclamation of a history that celebrates women’s cooking skills and community interconnectedness.

Chapter three of The Foxfire Book of Appalachian Cookery examines traditional Appalachian menus. The term “menu” is used loosely—simply meaning a common meal often prepared often by Appalachian women. The quote from an interviewee that opens up the chapter states, “I don’t never make a menu.”<sup>112</sup> However, a traditional summer menu follows this statement, including Leather breeches with a streak of lean Ham hocks with Irish potatoes, Baked yams, Crowder peas cooked with pickled corn, Cracklin’ cornbread with sweet butter,

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<sup>109</sup> Ibid.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid., 19

<sup>111</sup> Ibid., 19-40

<sup>112</sup> Garland Page and Wigginson, 43

Poke salad and pepper grass stewed together flavored with streak of lean, Pickled poke salad stalks, Spring onions, tomatoes, relishes, Buttermilk, and Dried apple stack cake.<sup>113</sup> Much like the menus Lewis features in her cookbook, this menu requires knowledge of local heirloom varieties of food as well as their colloquial names. Garland-Page and Wigginson go on to clarify that “Seldom do we see this type of menu used today, but each of the foods listed in this menu is still prepared by people here.”<sup>114</sup> Breakfast menus generally remained similar throughout the year for southern Appalachians, including items such as eggs, sausage, chicken livers, gravy, cornbread, grits, and/or biscuits.<sup>115</sup> Sunday and holiday dinners were marked as exceptional occasions and specialty foods were often prepared instead of regular day-to-day foods. These include fried chicken and gravy, ham, turkey, pies, and cobblers or special layer cakes, along with numerous vegetables freshly picked or preserved, depending on the season.<sup>116</sup>

Comparable to Lewis’s observations about her own food traditions, many interviewees identify southern Appalachian food as generally accompanied by fresh-roasted coffee (often roasted over coals in the fireplace or woodstove as early as 4 am), milk, or homemade wine. In addition to these staple beverages, many Appalachians also foraged sassafras, yellowroot, mint, or other locally available herbs and roots with which to concoct teas. Featured in this section of Garland-Page and Wigginson’s compilation are several wine recipes. More than with food items, it seems that beverage items (other than milk and coffee) required generationally shared knowledge of what to forage and when to forage it to formulate typical recipes for teas, beers, and wines that were enjoyed throughout the year.

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<sup>113</sup> Ibid.

<sup>114</sup> Garland Page and Wigginson, 44

<sup>115</sup> Ibid. 44

<sup>116</sup> Ibid. 47

Milk and cheese are also featured as a staple in the southern Appalachian diet. Many of the women interviewed in the cookbook talk about their histories of milking cows and churning butter or making fresh, homemade cheese. As the women share their recipes for churning the best butter or making high-quality cheese, they divulge ways in which their knowledge was instrumental in the survival of their families. For instance, Inez Taylor explains that “You see, mama had four girls and five boys. None of the boys learned to milk...I churn about once or twice a week, and I enjoy it. I have two cows, but I just milk one because one is dry. I get a gallon of a morning and half at night.”<sup>117</sup> Tammy Ledford recalls, “My mother taught me how to churn. It really wasn’t hard when I was learning, but churning is never *easy*. Some milk is harder to churn than others...My mother churned a lot—about every other day. I churn about three times a week.”<sup>118</sup> Each woman clarifies the gendered sharing of this skill set as well as how frequently it was required of them or their mothers in order to sustain their families. Following the women’s discussions on milking, churning, and cheese-making, they provide several traditional recipes, including cheese soufflé, macaroni and cheese, and various ways of preparing eggs.

The Foxfire Book of Appalachian Cookery continues in this way---sharing stories of local Appalachian women along with their knowledge and skills for acquiring, preparing, or preserving foods, and the recipes that accompany each type of food. The section following milk and cheese examines the use of soups and stews, including how to can vegetable soup to one’s taste at the end of the summer harvest, along with individual recipes for particular soups. Salads also feature in the interviewees’ recipe repertoires, generally focusing on either fresh-grown greens (such as leaf lettuce) or wild-harvested greens. However, many recipes for salad also

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<sup>117</sup> Inez Taylor in Garland Page and Wigginson, . 65

<sup>118</sup> Tammy Ledford in Garland Page and Wigginson, 65

include cole slaw made of shredded cabbage and other salads made with a homemade mayonnaise-based dressing (such as potato salad). Garland Page and Wigginson clarify that

The old way of preparing the salad makings—lettuce, tomatoes, cucumbers, onions, peppers, and so on—was to slice and arrange a portion of each around a plate, not mixing them together. They were usually eaten as separate vegetables, but mayonnaise or oil was set on the table for those who wanted the extra taste or wanted to mix the vegetables into a salad.<sup>119</sup>

Thus, salad preparation lent itself to individual choice and taste, preserving the integrity of freshly harvested vegetables, while also offering the staple of homemade mayonnaise as an option to create a mixed salad bowl.

The following five sections of the cookbook focus on meats and meat preparation, including fish, poultry and wild game, pork, and beef. The extensive inclusion of meat, including how to acquire it, raise it, prepare it, and/or preserve it speaks to its importance in the Appalachian diet. While the summer months brought great harvests and plentiful vegetables, it was the basic staples of meat and dairy that sustained many families throughout other months. As evidenced strongly in the pork section, almost every part of an animal was used in some way. Everything from pork jowls, snout, brain, heart, liver, feet, and more were used in some way to prepare or preserve pork for meals.<sup>120</sup> As the authors state, “Use of the entire hog is clearly reminiscent of the pioneer traditions of conservation and utility as every part found a creative and practical use.”<sup>121</sup>

The final chapter of the book concludes with tips on how to cook for “a crowd.”<sup>122</sup> The chapter begins by detailing the importance of large meals in Appalachian homes,

In the mountains, cooking for large numbers of people was once an accepted part of the daily regimen. Family members often numbered in the teens, either from

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<sup>119</sup> Garland Page and Wigginson, 91

<sup>120</sup> Ibid., 123-132

<sup>121</sup> Ibid., 123

<sup>122</sup> Garland Page and Wigginson, 127



the nucleus of parents and children or because other relatives had been taken in. During the Depression, it was not unusual for families to harbor Eastern European or other immigrants as well. In addition, it was customary to invite relatives, friends, and hometown or visiting revival preachers for Sunday dinner.<sup>123</sup>

As in Lewis's narrative, it is clear that community is an important and vital tradition in many Appalachian homes. The family is extended to become more than its biological components---visitors, friends, neighbors, and people in need all become members of a family as shared through large dinners and family meals. Interviewee Mary Pitts clarifies that "we had big crocks, honey, and big pots and b-i-i-ig dishpans."<sup>124</sup>

Many of the skills developed for cooking for large gatherings of people were easily transitioned into skills used for operating a business. Effie Lord details her expansion into the restaurant business, "My husband and I used to own a restaurant up in Clayton on the corner. I cooked on a regular big café wood stove with a reservoir...I didn't know anything but a woodstove."<sup>125</sup> Intriguingly, instead of operating a café that featured menus and servers, "you go back into the kitchen, get a plate, and serve yourself with whatever you want from the pots and pans of food on the big stoves."<sup>126</sup> In this way, meal traditions were preserved even while Appalachian women were using their skills for profit, rather than only sustenance and survival.

The Foxfire Book of Appalachian Cookery explores how women choose to represent their work in traditionally constructed Appalachian foodways. It not only features the lives and experiences of many Appalachian women but also shares their skills and knowledge for acquiring, preparing, and preserving food. The cookbook details the gritty day-to-day life of Appalachian women in a way that illuminates their histories and cultivates a new way of intergenerational sharing for future residents and cooks in the Appalachian Mountains;

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<sup>123</sup> Ibid., 305

<sup>124</sup> Mary Pitts in Garland Page and Wigginson, 309

<sup>125</sup> Effie Lord in Garland Page and Wigginson, 312

<sup>126</sup> Ibid.

simultaneously it also acts as a romantic remembrance of times past or a nostalgic glimpse into glamorized days of yesteryear. It views Appalachian cultural tradition within a particular set of parameters, refusing to engage fully the dynamic process of change, diversity, and complexity evident in the region. For example, the majority of women interviewed are white and represent a specific ideal of an Appalachian woman. However, quite similar to Edna Lewis's work, primary themes represented include those of sharing, community, pride, and love of land and food. Ultimately, it forms a dialectical tension between representation, reality, and myth—empowering its speakers in ways that allow them to frame their own mythologies while attempting to legitimize stereotypical images of Appalachian tradition.

In 2010 Joan Aller, a resident of southern Appalachia, published a contemporary cookbook entitled Cider Beans, Wild Greens, and Dandelion Jelly: Recipes from Southern Appalachia. This cookbook seeks to explore recipes from various locales throughout southern Appalachia, through the lens of reclaiming and protecting traditional Appalachian foodways. Nevertheless, it also borders the line of culinary voyeurism and like many other Appalachian cookbooks, threatens to succumb to a sentimentalized Appalachian history. Aller introduces her book by romantically describing the setting of the Appalachian Mountains,

The Appalachian Mountain ranges were the first to be formed on the American continent, and after eons, they are still magnificent. Crystal cool water rushes over ancient river rocks; little paths wind through native forests of hardwood, evergreen, and pine; endless ridgelines tower over valleys covered in mist; rhododendrons bloom full and large; and the soft fragrance of the mountain laurel gives this old, isolated world its special magic. The beauty of this place defies description. Flowers bloom and eagles soar over a lush green landscape that engulfs and welcomes you. There is an ancient soul to this place that says, 'Come, sit and renew your spirit. Time will wait.'<sup>127</sup>

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<sup>127</sup> Joan Aller, *Cider Beans, Wild Greens, and Dandelion Jelly: Recipes from Southern Appalachia*, (Andrews McMeel Publishing LLC: Kansas City, 2010), ix

Despite her poetic depiction of Appalachia as a place of renewal, isolation, and eternity, she goes on to argue that “the modern world is coming in full force, and the place I’ve come to love is steadily changing. Some folks here call it an invasion; some call it progress. Either way, the transformation is well under way and there’s no stopping it.”<sup>128</sup> From the beginning, Aller contextualizes recipes and remembrances in the context of an evolving, dynamic culture under pressure to both remain unchanged and to herald the oncoming of “progress.” Simultaneously she juxtaposes “the modern world” against the Appalachian world—implying that Appalachia is not modern, and that modernity must necessarily be a threat to the idealized culture of the region. Yet, she is one of the few authors on Appalachian cooking that make a focused attempt to include ethnic and racial diversity in the presentation of their recipes.

Chapter one is a detailed description of the place and history of southern Appalachia. Aller begins with the geographical formation of the Appalachian Mountains and portrays their initial settlement 14,000 years ago with native peoples. Aller critically points out that

Long before the Europeans crossed over into the area, three main groups called the mountains their home. The Cherokee, the Melungeons, and the black Africans were living in peace and relative prosperity when the Europeans arrived. Their cultures, though independent of each other, traded with and assisted each other when needed. In the 1700s the first European settlers to the region emigrated from previously settled areas in American colonies: Germans and Scotch-Irish from Pennsylvania, English from the eastern sections of Virginia and the Carolinas, and Scandinavians from the Delaware Valley. This wonderful blending of cultures, traditions, and foods is what gives southern Appalachia its unique flavor.<sup>129</sup>

Aller intentionally contextualizes her recipes in the framework of the complex diversity and history of the Appalachian Mountains. Instead of singular traditions or stereotypical images of mountain culture, Aller refocuses the audience’s lens toward a multifaceted culture comprised through a variety of cultural and historical interactions with place. She follows the remainder of

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<sup>128</sup> Ibid., x

<sup>129</sup> Ibid., 2

the first chapter by introducing each group and providing an overview of their history in the Appalachian Mountains.

Even as Aller attempts to conceptualize a diverse, multicultural Appalachia, however, her depictions are reminiscent of historical Appalachian travel writing. Horace Kephart wrote in his romantic depiction of Appalachia in 1922 that “the real mountaineers are the multitude of little farmers living up branches and on the steep hillsides, away from the main traveled roads, who have been shaped by their environment. They are the ones who interest the reading public; and this is as it should be; for they are original, they are ‘characters’.”<sup>130</sup> Aller presents the various ethnic groups and histories of Appalachia in a similar way---as the “real characters”—the people the “reading public” will be interested in—the hidden, nostalgic Appalachia. Even as she spotlights the often hidden diversity of the region, she also writes as an outsider looking in.

Recipes begin when Aller opens up chapter two with the simple title, “Breakfast.” Unlike the previous two cookbooks examined in this thesis, Aller does not provide lengthy context and narrative for each recipe. Instead, she locates each recipe in a particular place or culture and often at a particular time. Cultural information dots the pages, including information such as “Appalachian phrases”<sup>131</sup> or “Southern Appalachian Quilting.”<sup>132</sup> Occasionally, Aller delves into personal narrative, with a short story on her experiences with some foods such as okra.<sup>133</sup> However, throughout the cookbook she instills bits of history and information about Appalachia, including educational practices and history<sup>134</sup> and “music in the mountains”<sup>135</sup>.

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<sup>130</sup> Horace Kephart, *Our Southern Highlanders: A Narrative of Adventure in the Southern Appalachians and a Study of Life Among Mountaineers*, (The MacMillan Company: New York, 1922), 2

<sup>131</sup> Ibid., 18

<sup>132</sup> Aller, 66

<sup>133</sup> Ibid., 55

<sup>134</sup> Ibid., 50

<sup>135</sup> Aller, 132

Examples of recipes include German Bierocks, Irish Soda Bread, Hot Artichoke Dip, and Mammy William's Dandelion Wine. Aller opens the German Bierocks recipe by stating, "Early German settlers came into the southern Appalachian Mountains from Pennsylvania, and their influence on Appalachian culture can be seen throughout the region."<sup>136</sup> While the recipe for Irish Soda Bread is introduced with "When you arrive at Fox Manor in Kingsport, Tennessee, you are likely to notice the original carriage steps used by passengers to disembark in the days of horse-drawn carriages. This is your first clue that you're at a unique and historic inn. Built in the late 1800s, Fox Manor is one of Kingsport's oldest homes. This recipe for Irish soda bread won the Annual Baking Contest at Jonesborough Days in 2006."<sup>137</sup> However, the recipe for Mammy William's Dandelion Wine begins, "This recipe is from the Home Place Bed and Breakfast Inn in Mooresburg, Tennessee. Built in the early 1800s as a log cabin, the Home Place has been owned by Priscilla Rogers's family since then...Mammy was Carrie Moore Williams, the granddaughter of Hugh Moore, who founded Mooresburg."<sup>138</sup> Evident in each introduction is Aller's intentional framing of history and place. While some introductions to recipes include attention to cultural foundations, others include individual connections (such as Mammy Williams), while others include historical events.

Aller also emphasizes the importance of diverse cultures in particular food lineages. For instance, she features Se-lu I-sa U-ga-na-s-da cornmeal cookies, explaining that "This Cherokee recipe makes lumpy, round cookies that are really good, and by the 1820s it found its way into a cookbook. The Cherokee were farmers and cattle ranchers here in the mountains, and by 1835 they were outproducing their European counterparts in the region. Milk and milk products entered the culture and as a result many Cherokee recipes seem similar to European recipes,

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<sup>136</sup> Ibid., 110

<sup>137</sup> Aller, 90

<sup>138</sup> Ibid., 181

although it's hard to decipher which came first."<sup>139</sup> Another recipe, cranberry cream pie, is exemplified as "a Melungeon recipe that dates back to at least the mid 1800s."<sup>140</sup> Whereas she traces the lineage of okra from its African heritage, "Okra, sometimes also called *gumbo*, is of African origin. Gumbo is believed to be a corruption of the word *quillobo*, which is the native name for the okra plant in the Congo and Angola area of Africa. It found its way to America by way of slave ships and eventually took its place in southern agriculture."<sup>141</sup> Aller not only emphasizes time and history in connection to recipes but also multi-racial and multi-ethnic participation in creating southern Appalachian cuisine.

The concluding chapter of the cookbook is entitled "Country Store"<sup>142</sup> and shares items that invoke an image of handcrafted goods sold at a local artisan market. Items include pickles, jams, jellies, and syrups—all of which can be easily used at home, but for which there also seems to exist market demand. Similar to the example of Effie Lord in The Foxfire Book of Appalachian Cookery, this appeals to idea that skills developed in the home can sometimes be translated into financial gain. The fact that Aller chooses to title the chapter "Country Store" as opposed to "preserves" or "pickles, jams, and jellies" indicates that she perceives these recipes as marketable, shareable items to be sold, rather than used only in personal cooking.

Cider Beans, Wild Greens, and Dandelion Jelly: Recipes from Southern Appalachia diverges from some other styles southern Appalachian cookbooks. The framework is one of reclaiming seemingly invisible, diverse foodways in southern Appalachia through the lens of examining the region's history and multifaceted culture. Instead of deeply personalized recipes that speak to an audience already familiar with Appalachian culture, Aller presents a cookbook

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<sup>139</sup> Aller, 162

<sup>140</sup> Ibid., 153

<sup>141</sup> Ibid., 55

<sup>142</sup> Aller, 189

meant for an outside audience to engage with the history, culture, and food of the region. Much like Kephart's examination of Appalachia as a curiosity with interesting characters for outsiders to indulge in, Aller's attempts to preserve and celebrate Appalachian foodways in the face of transitional economic and social times speak to her idealized image of a particular Appalachia---even among her emphasis on cultural diversity---and problematically engage Appalachian cultural perceptions among geographic outsiders. While there are numerous accounts of history and stereotypical cultural activities, there are few mentions of contemporary events or activities in the region. This ultimately leaves an antiquated image of Appalachia, even as Aller celebrates Appalachia's culinary and ethnic diversity.

Each of the three cookbooks featured here explores particular narratives and frameworks of resistance as voiced through rural and/or southern Appalachian women. The medium of recipe sharing becomes a space for lived experience, personal history, and sharing of knowledge. It also becomes a space to flesh out dialectical tensions between strength and ideal, reality and myth. Ideas and hopes for community are emboldened, while women's work is heralded as essential to building and sustaining rural communities and cultures. Stereotypes are both dispelled and encouraged. Through their knowledge of wildcrafting, using what's available, and making do regardless of the situation, these women present a proud and skilled way of life. However, unpleasant realities and images that conflict with the nostalgic image of Appalachia are often left unexplored, although the diversity of Appalachia becomes apparent through the sharing of recipes; names, cultures, and histories associated with particular foods are readily discussed and appreciated. Resilience, survival, interconnectedness, and a strong concept of place are artfully crafted through these women's voices, cultivating an image of strength as they share their food knowledge with their audiences. Yet, this potential resistance remains situated in a context of a

conventional nostalgia and deliberate imagery that plays to the national consciousness about Appalachia. Somewhere within these representations lies a dialogue between radical narrative and social expectation; between personal empowerment and nostalgic myth.

*Putting it Together: Women Improving Foodways and Alleviating Hunger in Southern Appalachia*

Cookbooks and recipe-sharing provide insight into representations of resistance and knowledge of foodways in Appalachia. However, many women are also combatting the very real threat of hunger and food insecurity in the region through grassroots level work in non-profits. There are multiple types of activist organizations that undertake food work in the Appalachian mountain region, based around many of the same themes of community building, empowerment, and preserving a sense of place. These organizations generally consist of some combination of the following: community-based grassroots campaigns created out of necessity; local charities based on civic or religious groups; local nonprofits organized around larger multi-focused campaigns; and outsider-based organizations pursuing charity campaigns. On the spectrum of activist organization, communities tend to be more passionately involved in grassroots organizing; however, this type of organization tends to be the shortest-lived, as it is generally focused around a single issue. On the other end of the organizational continuum, outsider-based charity organizations tend to be distrusted and often face challenges to their success in the region due to their lack of investment in and knowledge of local communities; simultaneously, however, outsider organizations tend to have more money and resources to accomplish goals than grassroots-level groups do. Ultimately, there are few organizations that purely fit any of the above categories—most are a combination of partnerships and resources among multiple



organizations. Below are examples of women's activist organizations that span the spectrum of organizational structure and location along with the successes and challenges they each face.

Greenhouse17, formerly known as the Bluegrass Domestic Violence Program, is a unique advocacy agency that combats domestic abuse through an innovative gardening program located in Fayette County, Kentucky. The farm is "situated on the 40-acre rural property surrounding our emergency shelter" which "offers the opportunity for survivors to heal in the fresh air while growing strong in body and mind. Eating food fresh from the garden models good nutrition and healthy eating habits for parents and kids. Adult survivors may choose to work on the farm in exchange for a stipend and horticultural job training."<sup>143</sup> The program is "supported by research related to trauma-informed care for women veterans, studies exploring the restorative and healing outcomes of therapeutic gardens, and examinations of "social farming" as a means to promote healing, social inclusion, education, and social services in rural areas."<sup>144</sup> The organization falls on the organizational spectrum between community-based and non-profit structure.

Greenhouse17 was founded in 2005 in a local Salvation Army in Fayette County, Kentucky. Since 2005 the organization has served over 40,000 families and has operated the farm program since 2008. The primary goals of the farm program include:

- 1.) Provide victims of domestic violence with nature-based option to heal from the physical and emotional trauma of intimate partner abuse. Studies of such models in the health care setting have demonstrated significant positive effects of gardening on an individual's well-being, stress levels, and general health. When the adverse health effects related to intimate partner abuse are considered-- physical injuries, arthritis, chronic pain, and digestive issues to name a few--the importance of this goal is underscored.
- 2.) Provide victims of domestic violence with a sustainable source of field-to-

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<sup>143</sup> Greenhouse17, "Our Farm," <http://greenhouse17.org/our-farm/> (Accessed March 2014)

<sup>144</sup> Ibid.

table fruits, vegetables, legumes, herbs, and berries for meal preparation in the emergency shelter.

3.) Empower survivors with information, resources, and access to self-sufficiency options, including micro-enterprise opportunities. Clients who choose to participate in the farm stipend project develop agriculture production skills related to seeding, harvest, and processing of produce.

4.) Generate revenue from the sales of produce, flowers, and products from the farm to support our core services. Our vision is for the farm to become a self-sustaining enterprise that generates profits to sustain our organization's operation expenses.<sup>145</sup>

Twenty-five women coordinate the organization, and the program has been the recipient of several awards, including the 2013 Innovative Non-Profit Award from the Kentucky Non-Profit network and the 2013 Pyramid Award for Social Innovation from the Center for Non-Profit Excellence.<sup>146</sup> The organization has clearly been successful in reaching its community, and it maintains enough funding to continue and expand operations, as well as full-time staff. Its wide reach of clients across Appalachian Kentucky speaks to its community investment, and its hands-on farm program focuses healing around self-empowerment through agriculture and nutrition.

In the High Country of Boone, North Carolina, Blue Ridge Women in Agriculture “was started as grassroots project in 2003 by a group of women farmers, gardeners, and agricultural supporters” and “obtained [their] 501 (c) 3 non profit status in 2004 in order to advance [the] organization’s mission and work to create positive change in [their] community surrounding sustainable agriculture.”<sup>147</sup> The mission statement of the organization is “strengthening the High Country’s<sup>148</sup> local food system by supporting women and their families with resources,

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<sup>145</sup> Greenhouse17, “Annual Report,” Goodgiving.net,

<sup>146</sup> Greenhouse17, “About us,” Grow Appalachia, <http://www.berea.edu/grow-appalachia/partner-sites/greenhouse17/> (Accessed March 2014)

<sup>147</sup> Blue Ridge Women in Agriculture, “Who We Are,” 2013, <http://www.brwia.org/who-we-are.html>

<sup>148</sup> The High Country refers to northwestern counties in North Carolina around the city of Boone that border northeastern Tennessee.

education, and skills related to sustainable food and agriculture.”<sup>149</sup> Current programs offered by BRWiA include sponsoring talks by local women involved in sustainable agriculture, hosting workshops related to skills-building for sustainable agriculture, offering farm tours, hosting farm workdays, offering “Agripreneur” series for women seeking to become involved in local sustainable agriculture, providing grants and resources for women already involved in sustainable agricultural programs, and participating in Blue Ridge Seeds of Change which seeks to empower local communities and alleviate hunger.<sup>150</sup>

A brief glimpse of the resources page on their website provides a sense of the ways in which BRWiA participates in empowering women and improving sustainable agriculture in the High Country region of southern Appalachia. The first resource offered, posted in December of 2012, is a guide to filing discrimination suits against the USDA, with the tagline questioning “Did you face discrimination by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) based on being female, or based on being Hispanic, in making or servicing farm loans during the periods between 1981 and 2000?”<sup>151</sup> The link provides an in-depth guide for dealing with discrimination and partnering with other women or Hispanic farmers who have also experienced discrimination by the USDA. The next resource, posted in January 2013, is an information powerpoint lecture provided by Holly Whitesides of the local farm Against the Grain in Zionville, North Carolina. The lecture is entitled “Growing Seed as a Farm Enterprise” and provides information on why and how to grow seed for revenue.<sup>152</sup> Spring of 2013 finds several pamphlets posted to the website regarding barriers and advocacy for sustainable agriculture. Posted for May 2013 is a

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<sup>149</sup> Ibid.

<sup>150</sup> BRWiA, “What We Do,” 2014, <http://www.brwia.org/what-we-do.html>

<sup>151</sup> BRWiA, “Resources,” 2014, <http://www.brwia.org/resources.html>

<sup>152</sup> Ibid.

report concerning “Characteristics of Women Farm Operators and Their Farms.”<sup>153</sup> This report, published by the USDA’s Economic Research Service (ERS), explores the substantial increase of women farmers over the previous three decades and details the agricultural market sectors that women have entered, along with how financially successful they have been over time.<sup>154</sup>

The theme of summer resources for 2013 seems to be developing sustainable food systems in local North Carolina communities, and two pamphlets are offered to help women farmers navigate local food economies in the area. The most recent resource, posted in December 2013, is a study entitled “Innovations in Local Food Enterprise: Fresh Ideas for a Just and Profitable Food System.”<sup>155</sup> Additionally, by following the drop-down menu under the resources tab, visitors to the website can find information from previous workshops. These include grant-writing and seed saving. The accessibility of these resources allows farmers who may not be able to physically attend events or workshops to learn information helpful for improving their farm operations.

Another important feature is the BRWiA’s “profile project,” which profiles a woman involved in local sustainable agriculture each month. According to the website, “Each month we do our best to profile a Woman in Agriculture in our region. These women are diverse – they have come from a variety of backgrounds and include farmers, homesteaders, and activists. They exemplify the multitude of ways women are working to connect with and change our food system.”<sup>156</sup> The woman featured for January 2014 is Amy Galloway who “is an associate

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<sup>153</sup> Ibid.

<sup>154</sup> Hoppe, Robert A., and Penni Korb. “Characteristics of Women Farm Operators and Their Farms,” EIB-111, (U.S. Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service, April 2013), <http://www.ers.usda.gov/media/1093194/eib111.pdf>

<sup>155</sup> BRWiA, “Resources.”

<sup>156</sup> BRWiA, “Profile Project,” 2014 <http://www.brwia.org/brwia-profile-project.html>

professor of Developmental Psychology at Appalachian State University.”<sup>157</sup> Galloway has acted as board president of BRWiA since 2007 and lives on a small farm with her family. When asked what service BRWiA offers that she sees as most beneficial, Galloway responds,

It would have to be the Farm Tour. I started volunteering with the tour before BRWiA began hosting it. It was originally hosted by the Carolina Farm Stewardship Association and I loved volunteering with them, spending all day on the farm and learning what the farmers had to do on a daily basis. We host the farm tour because we think it has the capacity to be a powerful community builder. We hope that both the farmer and consumer are learning valuable information from one another.<sup>158</sup>

The Farm Tour is another critical program offered through BRWiA since 2014 that “aims to support the development of an equitable local food system that protects the environment, builds the local economy, alleviates hunger and poverty and, improves community health.”<sup>159</sup> Each year the organization works with numerous farmers, vendors, volunteers, and tourists to host a farm tour that visits several farms across the High Country. At each farm there are samples of farm products, workshops, and information about farm practices and farm life. Importantly, consumers are directly connected to producers, building community alliances and networks that improve local agricultural markets and accessibility to fresh, local foods.

Finally, the “Agripreneur” series or the “Agriculture-Entrepreneurship Series provides education to entrepreneurs who want to begin a farming business and to farmers wanting to transform their farm into a thriving business. The 4-part series includes real-world scenarios and hands-on activities. Each session features an education session, facilitated by Arlene Childers, along with a local agriculture expert guest speaker.”<sup>160</sup> There is no cost for farmers to attend the

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<sup>157</sup> BRWiA, “Amy Galloway, January 2014,” <http://www.brwia.org/7/post/2014/01/amy-galloway-january-2014.html>

<sup>158</sup> Amy Galloway in BRWiA, “Amy Galloway”

<sup>159</sup> BRWiA, “Farm Tour,” 2014, <http://farmtour.brwia.org/about.html>

<sup>160</sup> BRWiA, “2014 Agripreneur Series Begins in January,” 2014, <http://www.brwia.org/4/post/2013/11/2014-agripreneur-series-begins-in-january.html>

series; however, space is limited. This creates an accessible venue for women farmers to learn fundamental methods for building and maintaining an agricultural enterprise while also finding support and network opportunities with other women farmers.

The initiatives in which Blue Ridge Women in Agriculture engages are critically important to promoting women's involvement in local foodways, improving local food systems, and building better access to local, healthy foods. Their work is hands-on and grassroots; they find themselves involved at the most fundamental level of food production by empowering and supporting women farmers and activists.

Rockin' Appalachian Mom Project (RAMP) was founded in 2009 by Amy Guerrieri and falls on the organizational spectrum as an outsider-charity based model, combined with a local grassroots initiative. The inspiration for RAMP came when Guerrieri

Watched Diane Sawyer's ABC News report "*Hidden America: Children of the Mountains*" from Old Greenwich, Connecticut. Shocked to discover how deeply impoverished Americans were suffering in the Appalachia region of Martin County, Kentucky, Amy realized she had to do something to help. As CEO of beverage company Rockin' Water™ (a children's fortified water), she immediately organized a mom-to-mom, kid-to-kid, and community-to-community outreach campaign from her offices in Connecticut.

RAMP (originally The Rockin' Appalachian Mom Project) was born out of this impulse with an original mission to teach, feed and sustain the children and families of the community. RAMP's response has since evolved from a short-term effort to deliver emergency food and basic supplies to a long-term community-driven, results-oriented commitment to connect resources and facilitate action to build nutritionally secure and economically robust communities in rural Appalachia.<sup>161</sup>

RAMP's vision is to "significantly improve the well-being of children and families across rural Appalachia," while its mission is to "connect resources, invest in communities, and empower children and families to lift themselves out of poverty, beginning in Martin County,

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<sup>161</sup> Rockin' Appalachian Mom Project, "History," 2012, <http://www.rampamerica.org/index.php/about/history>

Kentucky.”<sup>162</sup> Importantly, because RAMP was originally an outside organization, it has adapted its values in conjunction with the needs and demands of the communities in which it works. Necessarily, “RAMP *believes* in a ‘hand up, not hand out’ operating model that invests in the community from the ground up,” and “RAMP *empowers* the families, schools, and organizations of Martin County to take ownership of the programs, get involved, and volunteer to help bring about positive change.”<sup>163</sup>

The organization buys into the nostalgic image of Appalachia, claiming that visiting their headquarters is “little like stepping back in time.”<sup>164</sup> However, despite its outsider status it focuses on three primary areas of community involvement: improved nutritional quality for youth, economic development for Martin County communities, and emergency recovery in times of crisis.<sup>165</sup> The nutritional program includes the Backpack Snack Program, which “serves 260+ students in six Martin County public schools by providing nutritious, easy to prepare food and produce to those children who have little or no access to food on weekends. The children finish the school week two Fridays of each month with a backpack of food to bring home.”<sup>166</sup> Another program hosted under the nutritional campaign is building and sustaining school community gardens, which teach students how to plant, grow, harvest, and prepare food. Additionally, RAMP maintains large community garden in conjunction with the Homecoming Food Pantry, which yields “approximately 8,000 pounds of fresh produce each growing season.”<sup>167</sup> In addition to these nutritional programs, RAMP also hosts nutritional workshops series for students and

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<sup>162</sup> RAMP, “Vision and Mission,” 2012, <http://www.rampamerica.org/index.php/about/vision-and-mission>

<sup>163</sup> Ibid.

<sup>164</sup> Amy Guerrieri, “Help Thy Neighbor,” *Huffington Post*, August 2011, [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/amy-guerrieri/help-thy-neighbor\\_b\\_874758.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/amy-guerrieri/help-thy-neighbor_b_874758.html)

<sup>165</sup> RAMP, “Programs,” 2012, <http://www.rampamerica.org/index.php/ramp-s-programs>

<sup>166</sup> Ibid.

<sup>167</sup> Ibid.

parents and supports public school salad bars that maintain fresh vegetables as a nutritional supplement to school lunches.

In regard to economic development, RAMP invests in local businesses, including the successful Calf Creek Creations, owned and operated by Betty Harris. However, the primary mechanism through which RAMP works to promote economic development in Martin County, Kentucky is through the Youth in Microenterprise initiative that “invests in high school seniors to address chronic poverty and lack of opportunity in Martin County, Kentucky. The program provides start-up capital, mentorship, and sustained support needed for seniors to design a solid business plan and effectively launch their business upon graduation.”<sup>168</sup> Thus, economic development begins with youth—empowering them through hands-on skills based learning, while supporting and enabling high school students to leave the public school system with an effective business.

Finally, RAMP engages in emergency relief and crisis assistance. According to the RAMP website, “Martin County, Kentucky, has as many natural disasters as the coast of Florida.”<sup>169</sup> While emergency assistance is not the primary goal of RAMP, the organization recognizes that “with an active presence in the community, RAMP is able to provide basic needs (food, shelter, water, electricity) to those that need it most in the wake of natural and economic emergencies.”<sup>170</sup> RAMP’s mission of economic development is supplemented by this emergency assistance, illustrating that RAMP understands that long-term development solutions are not possible without short-term assistance—especially during times of catastrophe.

By promoting entrepreneurship skills, supporting local small businesses, and encouraging community gardens, RAMP is engaged in a variety of activities that resist historical models of

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<sup>168</sup> Ibid.

<sup>169</sup> Ibid.

<sup>170</sup> RAMP, “Programs,” 2012, <http://www.rampamerica.org/index.php/ramp-s-programs>



development while also improving access to food and nutrition, especially for future generations. However, its role as an outsider-organization seems to perpetuate stereotypes about central Appalachia, and interestingly its outside-funder base seems to perpetuate historically dominant models of resource access for social change efforts in Appalachia. Yet, members of the organization and local residents seem to support RAMP's work and continue to involve RAMP in community activities.

All three organizations—Greenhouse<sup>17</sup>, Blue Ridge Women in Agriculture, and RAMP—represent combined structures of organizations in Appalachia. What is crucial to their success seems to be their ability to work with grassroots-level communities or at least to engage residents in their service areas in a direct way. Importantly, each organization has demonstrated empirical evidence of success in alleviating hunger and food insecurity through innovative programs in Appalachia that are women-led and women-centered.

While each of the above organizations exhibits varying levels of success, all of them have in common the following problematic issues: the majority of recipients and participants are white, and the majority of organizational structure comes from administrators or other organizers who are most often middle class and highly educated. As Julie Guthman points out, most activist groups working on issues of food security are “operating under the assumption that knowledge, access, and cost are the primary barriers to more healthful eating, much of the on-the-ground work is focused on donating, selling (at below market prices), or growing fresh fruits and vegetables in so-called food deserts and educating residents to the quality of locally grown, seasonal, and organic food.”<sup>171</sup> Each of the three above organizations does this to some extent through various mechanisms. However, Guthman goes on to argue that “the intention to do good

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<sup>171</sup> Julie Guthman, “Bringing Good Food to Others: Investigating the Subjects of Alternative Food Practice,” in *Cultural Geographies*, 15(4), 2008, 431-447, 432

on behalf of those deemed other has the markings of colonial projects, in that it seeks to improve the other while eliding the historical developments that produced these material and cultural distinctions in the first place.”<sup>172</sup> Effectively, top-down food organizing based on assumptions of need without clear community organizing or input reflects a history of colonized thinking and mirrors forced development in much the same way Appalachia has been historically exploited.

Clearly each of the above organizations has meaningful value to communities; each of them invests in urgent community needs and is based out of some form of grassroots initiative. However, it is critical to look at which communities participate, which communities are assisted, and how aid is distributed. Build It Up East Tennessee is another activist organization created in Johnson City, Tennessee in 2011 by three women, including the author of this thesis. Build It Up was founded out of repeated requests by the community for a food-access resource in the area. The organization is structured around community involvement and has no paid staff. Instead, community volunteers—including low-income residents, single mothers, students, and other economically disadvantaged citizens—facilitate the programs of the organization. Farmers, SNAP benefit recipients, and other directly-impacted community members organize workshops and teach classes based on successes out of their own lived experiences. Currently Build It Up maintains two food forests within Johnson City and a community garden in a rural low-income housing development. Additionally, the organization offers classes on how to grow food, purchase local food on a budget, and use fresh, local ingredients for healthy eating.<sup>173</sup> Yet, despite Build It Up’s direct grassroots engagement, the majority of participants are white. While

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<sup>172</sup> Ibid., 436

<sup>173</sup> [www.builditupetn.org](http://www.builditupetn.org), the author of this thesis is a co-founder of Build It Up East TN and has direct access to all demographic and volunteer information, along with annual reports

its organizational structure has been effective at reaching low-income residents, there still remains a racial barrier to organizing.

Thus, while many women's activist organizations are forming in the region---effectively celebrating women's agricultural knowledge and empowering women to gain skills to end hunger---there still remain many barriers to fully integrated social organizing. Much like women's cookbooks in Appalachia, the majority of work is focused around particular narratives of need while a radical deconstruction of the social system itself often remains unexamined.

### *Recipes and Resistance into the Future*

It is evident that food insecurity is a very real threat to the peoples of Appalachia, while gendered social constructions of poverty and women's work have often distinctively situated women to be the most vulnerable population affected by food insecurity. Out of this vulnerability, however, women have emerged as leaders to create alternative, local, and sustainable food secure communities. Despite their multiply oppressed positions, they have surfaced as strong, courageous workers---building on the history and cultural traditions of Appalachia while simultaneously creating new networks, new communities, and new traditions. Building upon histories of resistance, women have used the medium of food knowledge and recipe sharing to illuminate lived experiences and histories counter to dominant thought. Through their cookbooks, Appalachian women have shared their personal stories and the stories of generations of women before them while also celebrating the local biodiversity present in the southern Appalachian region. Women's organizations in Appalachia have also used women's food knowledge to build and promote access to healthier food and sustainable economic development. The future of Appalachian food security is still uncertain; however, the goal of this thesis is in part to open up critical dialogue on women's roles in creating food secure

communities in the region. The implication is that food-secure systems cannot be created without the valued work of women. Future research must take this into consideration in order to successfully achieve localized, sustainable food-secure systems that alleviate hunger and empower communities.

## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSIONS

The United States plunged into a hunger crisis in 2009. The Department of Agriculture urgently worked to discover the roots of this new hunger problem: was it the recession, rising food costs, or increasing unemployment? Why were single mothers and people of color most affected? Despite national efforts, the number of citizens relying on food stamps increased while the fraction of the American population suffering from hunger continued to rise. The number of food stamp participants increased forty percent in 2009 from 2007,<sup>1</sup> and from 2009 to 2012 food stamp participants increased by forty-nine percent<sup>2</sup>, yet official national policies in the United States seem to have done little to address the rising rates of hunger and the continual increase of food security over time.

In the United States perceived causes of hunger are seen as temporal and economic—due to the recession and temporary unemployment spikes. Lower hunger rates (such as those in the late 1990s) were viewed as unproblematic—it is expected that there will be at least some people living in poverty and they will be hungry. As recently as the Reagan administration in the 1980s, the United States government went so far as to deny that chronic hunger existed in the United States.<sup>3</sup> It was not until an advocacy group, the Food Research and Action Center, began collecting hunger statistics in the early 1990s that the national government was forced to admit that the United States did have a hunger situation. However, many policy-influencing groups still deny that hunger exists. Robert Rector of the conservative Heritage Foundation argued that “Very few of these people are hungry... When they lose jobs, they constrain the kind of food they

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<sup>1</sup> Jason DeParle, "Hunger in U.S. at a 14-Year High." *The New York Times* (November 16, 2009) [http://www.nytimes.com/2009/11/17/us/17hunger.html?\\_r=1](http://www.nytimes.com/2009/11/17/us/17hunger.html?_r=1) (accessed April 30, 2012)

<sup>2</sup> United States Department of Agriculture, "Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program," *USDA* (November 7, 2014) <http://www.fns.usda.gov/pd/supplemental-nutrition-assistance-program-snap> (accessed November 11, 2014)

<sup>3</sup> DeParle

buy. That is regrettable, but it's a far cry from a hunger crisis.”<sup>4</sup> Thus, policy-makers in the U.S. are divided as to whether they accept hunger as a national issue or not. When society or the political system does accept that hunger is an issue, jobs and wages are perceived to be at the core of food insecurity.<sup>5</sup> A hunger crisis is determined largely by how many people have recently lost their jobs. Thus, hunger—when it is even considered—is perceived as an issue of employment and economic pressure at the individual level.

However, as evidenced earlier, the nation of Peru is effectively and creatively addressing issues of hunger by working directly with rural and indigenous women to create sustainable, localized solutions to hunger and poverty. Can the United States, using the model of Peru, improve its food security? How can the U.S. implement systemic and creative strategies that address not only unemployment but structural issues of gender, race, and class that lead to disparate levels of food access? As this thesis has argued, rural mountain women have been at the forefront of resistance and anti-hunger work through their historical knowledge of food and sustainable use of natural resources.

Arguably by using Peru's model of grassroots organizing with those most impacted by hunger the United States can tap into the incredible wealth of knowledge that Appalachian women have in order to address systemic issues of hunger and poverty. If models present in Peru were used in the United States, legal policies would be intimately personal. As in the case of Peru, policies would be created by and then supported by local peoples. Resources would be directed based upon specific need of specific communities. Policies would be local in nature yet nationally supported. Importantly, hunger would be acknowledged as a chronic issue and all people would be seen as deserving to be free from hunger. Instead of viewed pessimistically as

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<sup>4</sup> Rector in DeParle

<sup>5</sup> DeParle

draining resources from the national government, hunger programs would be willingly financially supported. Perhaps most critically, people most affected by hunger—single mothers and people of color<sup>6</sup>—would lead policy discussion and implementation. That is, gender, race, and class would be acknowledged as part of the systemic basis of hunger. Even more radically, poor women and people of color would be nationally and financially supported as fundamental leaders in eradicating hunger.

In the United States such legislative policies as the food stamp program only recognize limited individual need for hunger assistance. This program ignores the physical outlook of the land that may limit people's access to food production. Simultaneously, it ignores the various racialized or classed or communities that have been constrained by other people's property rights---inner city housing projects or isolated low-income pockets in rural areas. People who live in these places have been pushed out by the needs of other landowners with better access to financial resources. As author Debbie Field eloquently articulates, "When food exists primarily within the marketplace, food insecurity is directly related to lack of income. In an urbanized environment in which people do not garden or farm, food access is maintained by cash purchases at retail outlets. No money, no food."<sup>7</sup> Thus, when people are forced to purchase food because they have no access to land to grow their own food, they are constrained by access to financial resources. The food stamp program perpetuates the cycle of landless poverty by ignoring the connection between hunger and inaccessible environments; the food stamp program instead emphasizes the market by giving people a type of currency that can be exchanged for food in the

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<sup>6</sup> DeParle; for more information regarding demographics of hunger in the United States see Feeding America, "Hunger in America 2010: National Report Prepared for Feeding America," *Mathematica Policy Research*, (2010), [http://feedingamerica.issuelab.org/research/listing/hunger\\_in\\_america\\_2010\\_national\\_report](http://feedingamerica.issuelab.org/research/listing/hunger_in_america_2010_national_report)

<sup>7</sup> Debbie Field, "Putting Food First: Women's Role in Creating a Grassroots Food System Outside the Marketplace," in *Women Working the NAFTA Food Chain: Women, Food, and Globalization*, edited by Deborah Barndt (1999; repr. Toronto: Sumach Press, 2007), 196

grocery store. This band-aid solution is a far cry from giving people actual tools to gain access to a healthy, sustainable food system.

In Peru, programs that teach those most affected by hunger to farm sustainably, cook with traditional easily accessible ingredients, and use agricultural biodiversity are addressing the larger needs of a cosmic community. These programs recognize the roles of the environment and of connected human communities in eradicating hunger. They do not only offer financial assistance to purchase food but also assistance to train community leaders, to enhance resources for sustainable farming, and to improve food education. This is a holistic solution that not only addresses the complex variables of hunger but also empowers the people most directly affected by hunger to claim food security—not just by way of purchasing power but by way of knowledge and ability. Even without money the peoples of Peru can access food. The capitalist drive of the unrestrained marketplace is not being perpetuated; instead, new systems of sustainable food production and community leadership against hunger are emerging.

Through their countermemories, alternative histories, and lived experiences rural mountain women have illustrated their ability to combat hunger at the frontlines. Their multigenerational sharing of knowledge and ability has lent itself to continued strains of resistance against dominant paradigms that perpetuate hunger and poverty. In many cases the knowledge of rural mountain women has been the deciding factor for the survival of some communities. Valuing their work and bringing visibility to their histories would allow for both a reexamination of current food policy as well as empowering those most affected by hunger to maintain the support necessary to build localized, sustainable, and just food systems.



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