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# Everyone Speaks Food: An Exploration of the Universality of Diana Abu-Jaber's *The Language of Baklava* and Annia Ciezadlo's *Day of Honey: A Memoir of Food, Love, and War*

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EVERYONE SPEAKS FOOD: AN EXPLORATION OF THE UNIVERSALITY OF DIANA  
ABU-JABER'S THE LANGUAGE OF BAKLAVA AND ANNIA CIEZADLO'S DAY OF  
HONEY: A MEMOIR OF FOOD, LOVE, AND WAR

by

Adria Britton

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for graduation with Honors in the English

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Doris Witt  
Thesis Mentor

Fall 2016

All requirements for graduation with Honors in the  
English have been completed.

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Marie Kruger  
English Honors Advisor

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## Overview

Dad looked down at me kindly and asked if I had taken chocolate from the pantry.

“No,” I said. I figured I could blink my blue eyes and convince him of my innocence.

Unbeknownst to me was the existence of the incriminating evidence of a goopy chocolate ring around my little mouth. His question had been a gesture of kindness, giving me a chance to confess my sweet thievery. There I was, five years old and already subconsciously learning food’s importance. It tastes good; it can make you happy; though you try to put it into your mouth, it can still manage to get on the outside of your body; it can get you in trouble, because some foods (like chocolate) might require parental permission.

Flash forward a few years: I have this rich, lively, seemingly eternal memory of my family eating dinner with the Achondos. We were living in Chile for half a year, and had been invited to spend some time with the Achondo family at their cabin by lake Puyehue. There are six people in my family and eleven in the Achondo’s. Though not all of the Achondo children were present, the company was bolstered with cousins, aunts, uncles, family friends, boyfriends, and girlfriends—a crowded table, energetic with warm lighting, laughter, and the smell of dinner. Meche, the mother, sat at the head of the table and ladled out bowls of lentil soup. We passed each bowl down until everyone had been served. Someone began singing, loudly, and the other voices stopped their conversing to join the sung blessing. We waited for Meche to take the first bite. Then we ate.

These memories are two of my many food-centered memories. When I close my eyes I can almost simulate the smells and the flavors of the foods, reconstructing elements that have worked together so tastefully to nourish my body. I appreciate food and the memories associated with it, and that appreciation has motivated my thesis.

In addition to being motivated by appreciation for food, my thesis is inspired by another essential part of my life: writing. I have a travel journal, a journal for my morning reading thoughts, a journal for short stories and poetry, and a journal to collect quotes from other people; and I always carry a small thought journal with me. If you see me texting, chances are I am in the “Notes” portion of my phone, capturing some observation or poem fragment. I also have files on my computer for completed works, stories in the making, creative non-fiction essays, poetry, things I wrote as a child, dreams other people have told me. And then I have a poetry blog that holds me accountable to an audience outside of myself. I am telling you all of this because I want to show how my appreciation for writing comes down to a deep desire to document life, to communicate one person’s life to another person.

Beneath my proclivity for writing is an affinity for languages, for their grammars and sounds, and for the ways they can capture peculiarities of a culture. Outside of an introductory class, I have not studied linguistics formally. However, growing up in a household that jumped between English and Spanish, taking two years of Latin in high school, traveling abroad, a love for learning and communicating, fascination with etymology, and having beautiful friendships with people whose tongues move under the elegant weight of non-Western accents—all this has instilled in me a fascination with words and the assembly of words.

Place food, writing, and language into a food writing class and stir on and off for four months, or until smooth. That is to say, I enrolled in a food writing class in the spring semester of 2016, and within a few months I was excited about all the ways food helps us communicate, and writing about food allows us to share those communications without having access to the food itself. When the class began reading Diana Abu-Jaber’s *The Language of Baklava*, one of the two books I will be using in my thesis, my friends and family suddenly met with an Adria who

was convinced everyone who can write should write a food writing memoir. I was delighted with the way I could connect to the stories Abu-Jaber presented. Because my parents prioritized traveling as a family, and because I have since prioritized traveling on my own, I felt I could understand Abu-Jaber's descriptions of never feeling at home in a single place. I also learned new-to-me aspects of identity-related experience, since she had the family dynamic of a mother who was born and raised in the United States and a father who was born and raised in Jordan. Both my parents are born-and-raised Americans, so I found the way Abu-Jaber grappled with cultural roots and traditions on such a personal level enlightening and delightful. Of course, her memoir is also delightful because of the engaging writing voice and careful organization; and the decision to share a meal with someone by sharing the memory of that meal enchanted me.

Up until that class I had been imagining I would write a thesis that somehow pertained to linguistic theory. When I began wondering what I would research in relation to linguistic theory, I could not get my mind off *The Language of Baklava*. I would face the challenge of having to full-heartedly enter a genre that was new to me, but the idea was attractive enough to pursue. I looked at the way food functions like a language, and then began looking at how the inclusion of recipes in food writing memoirs had a grammar of sorts, adding layers of meaning to the narrative. The more I read and wrote, the more those three passions—food, writing, and language—proved to challenge and inform one another. I hope this thesis enlightens readers and inspires them to explore food's role in their lives, and to embrace the creative genre of food writing memoir with recipes, and that this helps minimize the gap we face in learning each other's personal life experiences.

## Introduction

As Emile closes his eyes and takes a bite, the screen behind him goes black, showing only the rat slowly chewing cheese. This is the beginning to a delightful, revelatory moment in Pixar's animated film *Ratatouille* where the rat Remy is teaching his brother, Emile, about food flavor combinations. Emile chews as the soft, low, musical rhythm of a double bass starts to play, and a light orange color pulses in the black screen. Then Remy gives Emile a grape. He slurps in the sweet juice while purples and pinks poof and dance around him and descending and ascending vibraphones play melodically. "Now, try them *together*," Remy says, as he gives his brother another grape and more cheese. The music livens, some saxophone comes in, and the colors interact in fireworks and spurts of brightness. The food's flavor is alive with energy and interest and unanticipated pleasure. Food takes center stage in this scene, as it does in most of the film, translating the potential for dynamic flavor interactions into images and words.

The food-focused story of *Ratatouille* exemplifies food writing in the film world. The plot of a rat's ascension to the status of one of Paris's finest chefs is driven forward with elucidating lines about eating such as Remy's trite, "If you are what you eat, then I only want to eat the good stuff." Food, of course, can be found in any genre. There are categories we can use within the category "food writing," like food writing journalism, food-related poetry, cookbooks, singled-out recipes (like those found in blogs), food writing memoirs, and food writing memoirs that incorporate recipes as part of their narratives.

Food writing often frees writers by limiting them. When confined to topics relating to food, writers—and therefore readers—discover unexpected stories, passions, and symbolisms brought forward by food. This limitation becomes further restricted when the writer is giving an account from her own life experience and when she chooses to shape her narrative with recipes.

And yet this furthered formal restriction creates a space for intricate, often revelatory thinking and emotional freedom. Ultimately, my thesis will show that the food writing memoir with recipes genre, due to its connection to all aspects of life, can be used outside of the purely "food writing" context. These books explore and explain human interactions (useful in anthropology and international studies, for example) and document the underlying motives of human experiences in regards to world systems and events (wars, natural disasters, international relations, commerce, etc).

This thesis is separated into two main parts. The first part will make clear food's inevitable prominence in our lives and its resultant prominence in writing. It will then look at some writing often distinguished as "food writing," struggle with defining food writing, look at some literary criticism regarding food writing, then begin discussion of the relatively new but extraordinarily powerful genre food writing memoir with recipes. The second part will describe and analyze two of these memoirs: Annia Ciezadlo's *Day of Honey: A Memoir of Food, Love, and War*, and Diana Abu-Jaber's *The Language of Baklava*. Each text will be discussed in its own sub-section, and each will draw from context and concepts provided in the Part I.

## Part I: A Food's-Eye View

### Introduction to Part I

Food itself does not have a view, per se, as far as the act of seeing goes. But humans do have a food lens through which we can look at life, framing our perspective through what we eat, when we eat, how we eat, with whom we eat, and who eats what. Think of the way people often schedule their days around meal times. Planning to make veggie burritos for dinner? Then you will have to take inventory of what ingredients you have, and which ones you will need to buy on your way home from work. Or perhaps you will ask your spouse or sibling or friend to pick up black beans, red bell pepper, or salsa on his or her way back from work, school, or travel. Your schedule and what you need to communicate to others is affected by what you eat. In a similar line of thought, what you eat affects who you are, and who you are and where you are affect what you eat.

So, our lives are affected by food. I do not mean to claim this observation as original or difficult to grasp. In fact, I mean to highlight how simple it is for us to grasp the importance of food in our lives, and thus point to how discussing food has great potential to uncover parts of culture and habits that people take for granted. Writers have long found the food lens to be useful when communicating simple and complex aspects of life, as well as facts and thoughts about the actual foods. The genre I have chosen to focus on, food writing memoir with recipes, uses this food lens in both those ways: to discuss larger aspects of life and to discuss the foods themselves. To contextualize these claims, I will now turn to providing a brief historical survey that has a broad understanding of and appreciation for food writing as a whole. The purpose lies in setting a foundation that will support and add depth to our discussion of the food writing memoir with recipes we will look at in Part Two. Once we are established in a larger context, I will discuss

some of the important food writers, important moments in cookbook history, and important critical theories relevant to food writing, and then I will begin parsing through our specific genre with some terms, names, and ideas that we can reference in the second section.

### Food Writing Through the Ages: A Brief Narrative

Because the existence of physical life relies on eating, food's presence spans the entire course of human history. People, therefore, have had plenty of time to think about food and incorporate it into writing. The further back in history you look, the less food writing has to do with the modern fascinations of "travel here and eat this exciting food!" and more to do with straightforward survival motives, religious symbolisms, and traditions tied to festivals, feasts, and family gatherings.<sup>1</sup> There are many changes in context, language, writing technology, and writing style that occur over the years, and those variances affect how food is written about. Since there are innumerable differences and interconnections between food-focused texts, the historical narrative that follows is not meant to be comprehensive but rather a relatively small collection of writings about food presented in chronological order. While food shows up in writings from every nation and culture, I will use Western literary categories to structure my narrative both as an organizational tool and to show how food themes imbue writing through all time periods. This historical narrative demonstrates how writers from the Western world use writing about food as a means to reach towards a complex understanding of minds, bodies, individuals, and communities.

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<sup>1</sup> This is a generality, as there are some ancient texts that mention traveling to new lands to taste food.

Food writing began when writing began, in the prehistoric era. There were markings made in nature to indicate where food was stored and cave drawings that would document the killing of antelope or the spearing of fish. Those were pictorial texts, and when more intricate writing systems developed, so did the details describing food. In the Early Classical period, we find food writing integrated into texts like the Old Testament. Many biblical passages reference food, using food symbolically, sacrificially, as a means to survive, and often as a means to distinguish Jews from surrounding peoples. Think of Adam and Eve eating the forbidden fruit in the garden of Eden (Gen 3:1-6), where food becomes a symbol of disobedience; the sacrifices of fruits and of meats in the story of Cain and Abel (4:3-4), which shows food as a way of honoring and revering someone (in this case, God); Noah and his family packing the ark with food (6:21), which brings forward the preparation and forethought required for eating; and Lot's (unnamed) wife turning into a pillar of salt (19:26), where this extremely valuable commodity ends up trapping Lot's wife, symbolizing how too much of what is treasured and good (salt) can be harmful (i.e. when you turn into it). This list displays a small portion of the many food-related passages within Genesis, which is in turn just one of thirty-nine books in the Old Testament.

Along with biblical texts, Greco-Roman plays, stories, and epic poetry contain scenes with food. For example, in a crucial moment in Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex*, written around 430 B.C., Oedipus is revealing the cause of his sorrows to his wife Jocasta who, we learn, is also his mother. In this account, Oedipus sits down for dinner and is deeply insulted by a drunken man. Two aspects of food writing come forward in this passage. First, the dinner table becomes a setting for one-on-one or small group conversations, allowing for an intake of words along with an intake of food. Second, wine plays an important role of opening up a man's mouth in a way he might have resisted had he been sober.

Moving forward to the New Testament texts of the Bible in the first century A.D, food again surfaces as prominent symbolic matter and as a means to show Jesus's miracles. In one story, Jesus feeds five thousand people who had come to listen to him teach (John 6). Later, Jesus uses breaking and eating bread and drinking wine as an analogy for his relationship to his followers. Just as Jesus gives them bread and wine to fill and satisfy them, Jesus also gives himself to them to spiritually fill and satisfy them (Matthew 26:26-29). Here we note a clear and striking connection between physical hunger and spiritual hunger, an exploration of what it means to be full. A difference is implicitly drawn between the way bread affects the body and how wine affects it. If Jesus just wanted to imply a basic spiritual sustenance, he might have only shared bread. But wine alludes to washing the bread down, additional richness of flavor, and relaxation of the mind. So Jesus was qualifying himself not only as the way to feel full, but also to be washed, rich in spirit, and relaxed, or at peace.

Food does not always show up in older texts at such an intimate, symbolic level. As we move into medieval literature, we find more colorful and lively portrayals of people interacting through grand feasts with breads, meats, and wine. These feasts and wine nearly always signify power and wealth, contributing to class separations. Because many texts in the medieval era had religious messages or themes, there are moments where writers mention characters who willingly abstain from food, in fasting, as a way to deny the body and therefore be more in touch with the spirit. But when this abstinence is not voluntary, it can be a means of subjugation. Persons of power can withhold food from others to assert, or create, their control. For example, in Cynewulf's pome *Elene*, Constantine's mother requires that Judas, a Jewish man, be starved until he consents to reveal the location of the cross on which Jesus was crucified. After a week, Judas's hunger becomes so great that he gives into Elene's request (691-703). This is food

writing that demonstrates the pain of starvation. In another oft-referenced medieval poem, *The Song of Roland*, Baligant claims he will have such power over King Charles that “the Emperour of the Franks, / shall not eat bread, save when I command” (CXCII, 13-14). This text also demonstrates how deciding when someone eats or does not eat can be a means of control and power. This in turn points to the fact that some people do desire and fight for control over others, and since eating is crucial to survival, food becomes an effective means to assert authority. In this sense, food has strong practical and symbolic use, a use that carries into Early Modern texts.

When we think of William Shakespeare, a prolific contributor to the late 15<sup>th</sup>- and 16<sup>th</sup>-century British literature, I doubt the first thought is, “Ah, what a marvelous food writer.” Yet many of his plays make reference to, or use of, food and food as metaphor. In the whimsical *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, for example, Titiana asks Bottom, whose head has by this point been turned into a donkey’s head, if he would like anything to eat. He answers, “Truly, a peck of provender: I could munch your good / dry oats. Methinks I have a great desire to a bottle / of hay” (4.2.1576-8). The foods mentioned humorously confirm the transformation of human to donkey. Later on, when reverted to his human form and talking to his comrade Quince about their acting troupe, Bottom says, “And, most dear actors, eat no onions / nor garlic, for we are to utter sweet breath; and I / do not doubt but to hear them say, it is a sweet / comedy” (4.2.1823-6). Here, food is a metaphor for speech. The desired “sweet breath” is literally breath that does not reek from onion or garlic. It is tied to a figurative interpretation, though, through the word “utter”—this “sweet breath” is no longer just a scent, but also enjoyable speech. Though the “sweet breath” has a double meaning, the onions and garlic retain their literal meaning, making these lines humorous because of the movement from literal bad-breath foods to sweet-sounding speech.

In the late 1600s, John Milton wrote and published *Paradise Lost*, a retelling of and an elaboration on the story of the Fall of Man. So, as was the case with the book of Genesis, food—namely, the forbidden fruit—becomes a central symbolic feature. Though Eve has access to the entirety of the Garden of Eden, her curiosity is piqued regarding the one food God has told her not to eat. Satan, disguised as a serpent, pursues Eve's curiosity, coaxing it into desire to eat the fruit. Obedience, desire, and disobedience all become physically manifest in this fruit, making complex concepts tangible. When faced with her desire in the form of food with color, smell, texture, and dimension, Eve can clearly see the boundary God has set and how she can cross that boundary. Eating allows for moving something outside of your body to inside it.

In the decade following the publication of *Paradise Lost*, the U.S. was established and quickly growing, geographically splitting the increasing body of Western literature. This led to writers in the U.S. forging a different literary direction from that of Great Britain. The Romantic movement of the early 1800s in Britain, largely a rebellion against what many artists found to be confining aspects of the Enlightenment, opened into emotive and explorative literature. Poetry and art reflected on love, honor, and mystery; and, of course, food is also tucked away in these works. Think of the monster foraging for berries in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, or Thomas De Quincey's difficulty in eating the large breakfast provided for him by an earl in Eton in *Confessions of an English Opium-Eater*. Food is not central to these stories but helps portray the lives of the characters in a relatable way.

Soon after, the literary culture in the U.S. experienced a similar wave of Romanticism. In Edgar Allan Poe's unsettling short story "The Cask of Amontillado," the narrator uses wine as a topic of conversation and as a means to allure Fortunato to his unfortunate fate. So the something consumed, wine, stands as the object of temptation and therefore as the vessel that enables one

character to treat another character maliciously. The power of the wine, it turns out, was in the idea of it, and Fortunato never gets to see or taste this wine. Similar to intentionally starving people or choosing to fast, as discussed in the context of medieval literature, we see in Poe's story an absence of sustenance. This time the absence is not through withholding food or drink, a control that establishes power, but promising a drink that was never to be delivered in the first place, a less permanent control because dependent on deception. And in this story, only a temporary control was needed anyway, since it was to end in murder.

As some authors made a slight shift from Romanticism to Transcendentalism, there was increasing emphasis placed on nature and the enjoyment of it. Food references made by Henry David Thoreau and Ralph Waldo Emerson were often to raw vegetation, catching fish, and sometimes hunting. This emphasis on a human's connection to nature soon shifted into an emphasis on a human's connection to other humans, as portrayed by Victorian novelists. So we sit down to a meager, bland meal with Jane and the other girls at Lowood Institution in Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*, and we watch Pip escort the fragile Miss Havisham around the table of moldy food in Charles Dickens's *Great Expectations*. In the first of those two examples, having food provides a space to converse with and learn about other people. In the case of Miss Havisham, the decaying food works as self-made symbol to represent her decaying life.

Food retained its symbolic and metaphorical value during the subsequent period associated with literary realism, but it was also used to show readers the real, often poor living conditions of characters, and to show the health and sometimes wealth of middle and upper classes. In Rebecca Harding Davis's short story "Life in the Iron Mills," the hard-working Deborah is about to sit down to her dinner of potatoes when she realizes Hugh is still at work. Deborah cares dearly for Hugh, and so makes the late-night journey to his place in the iron mills,

carrying bread, salted pork, and ale. Food provides readers with insight into Deborah and Hughes's economic standing. The type of food is simple and cheap; the quantity is small and almost not enough (Deborah gives her share of ale to Hugh, for instance). Food also allows readers to see a specific instance of how Deborah cares for Hugh, how she wants to emotionally uplift him through nourishing him. Furthermore, bringing Hugh food gives Deborah an excuse to see Hugh, again working as a vessel for more complex motives, as we saw in "The Cask of Amontillado."

When Naturalism extended the projection of Realism, emphasizing the scientific method and the way our environments and biology determine the outcome of life, writers, as you can imagine, did not abandon food. Food is necessary to human survival, an attractive concept to the naturalists, and food's role in society gave authors like John Steinbeck ways to explore human nature. In Steinbeck's *Grapes of Wrath*, for example, the Joads lose their farm to the Bank—capitalist corruption in light of the Dust Bowl leading the family to moving and constantly struggling to get food. Notice the way the family's personal narrative becomes part of a larger narrative. There is large-scale financial crisis in the United States, devastating natural disasters of draught and famine, and big business overtaking small farms. The need for food and shelter becomes the Joad family's (and many other families') motivation to move and work. Those larger schemata are filled with relationships between family members, friends and enemies made on the road, and altercations with the law. We also see the characters making jokes, struggling to fall asleep, getting flat tires, disciplining children, suffering loss, and helping one another. At the end of the novel, there is the poignant moment where the daughter, Rose of Sharon, attempts to save a starving man by offering him her breast milk. The desperation of the situation is brought forward, and even in a cold barn without any food or hope of long-term survival, we see a human

wanting to care for another human through nourishing him, fulfilling his hunger, sustaining his life as long as possible.

The through line of food in literature continues into Modernism. The typist in T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* "clears her breakfast, lights / Her stove, and lays out food in tins" (222-3). She proceeds to her room where she awaits her guest, "the young man carbuncular" (231). And here another connection between food and other parts of life is made—since the woman has had her hunger for food met, this next scene has to do with sexual hunger being satisfied. Interestingly, the woman shows indifference towards the man who comes. It is the man who is "Flushed and decided" (239) and goes ahead with engaging the complacent woman. While he leaves satisfied, the woman "allows one half-formed thought to pass: / 'Well now that's done: and I'm glad it's over'" (251-2). This reveals the possibility of a dull, persistent hunger that cannot be met simply. As it is with sex in this scene, so it can be with food: a meal is not always satisfying.

In this cursory look at food's role in literature, some key themes have been obedience and disobedience enacted through eating, how physical fulfillment can help describe spiritual fulfillment, emotional bonding over food, control of food empowering people, and food as metaphor. These examples of food appearing in literature came from texts where the primary focus was not on food. There were, and are, however, writers who choose to explicitly write about food. There are several books on food writing history, many of them written or edited by food writers; and though it is not my intention to reiterate those histories here, I will bring forward a few food writers who might be perceived as the classics, the greats—those who have had an undeniable impact in the realm of food writing, and therefore in the memoirs discussed later in Part II.

### Precursors to Food Writing Memoir with Recipes

One of those nice food writing histories can be found in Mark Kurlansky's *Choice Cuts: A Savory Selection of Food Writing from Around the World and Throughout History*. Kurlansky, himself a food writer, organizes his history in narrative strands that concentrate on specific aspects of food writing, including medical and agricultural food writing, the cookbook's history, and how traveling and eating in the 20<sup>th</sup> century led to food journalism. His introduction highlights authors such as Jean Anthelme Brillat-Savarin, a French food writer in the 19<sup>th</sup> century; Karl Friedrich von Rumohr, a German writer who wrote "a nonfiction masterpiece on cuisine" (8) titled *The Essence of Cookery*; and M.F.K. Fisher, a well-loved American food writer. Of these three writers, the one who is most obviously a precursor to the food writing memoir with recipes, and indeed fits into that genre in some cases, is M.F.K. Fisher.

Fisher (1908-92) contributed greatly to the growing body of 20<sup>th</sup>-century food writing. She wrote prolifically and explored various themes. Her life stories in *The Gastronomical Me*, for example, masterfully tie together issues of cooking and eating with traveling, loving, and longing (for both people and places). She did not feign a separation of personal life from her food-writer life. Her work gives readers the impression they know Fisher personally, that they have special information about her; that they have dined with her; even, perhaps, that they are her friends with whom she shares humorous, touching, and sometimes baffling accounts.

*The Gastronomical Me* is composed of many mini food-related stories. Some of them have unique titles, such as "Define This Word," while others fall under the repeated headings "The Measure of My Powers" or "Sea Change." The stories are colorful, made dynamic with dialogue, unexpected descriptions, and character sketches that highlight peoples' quirky, appalling, or endearing features. There are lighthearted adjective pairs like, "a cheerful ugly

room” (139), as well as more haunting descriptions like the dishes that “lay steaming up at me, darkly and infinitely appetizing” (142). Fisher convincingly presents food writing as worth writing and reading by exploring the foods themselves and the relationships that can be observed when people cook for each other and eat together. And, I should add, she presents an example of the attractive and playful side of the food writing memoir.

Fisher provides a lovely starting point for discussing the narrative-filled aspect of food writing memoir with recipes. However, though she includes some prose-styled recipes in her writing, Fisher does not include the recipes themselves. It will be useful for our understanding of the food writing memoir with recipes, then, for us to pair Fisher’s style in *The Gastronomical Me* with some cookbook history.

#### The Cookbook: Evolution of the Recipe

Today many people look to the Internet to find recipes for quick and simple or long and elaborate meals. This single-recipe format is relatively new, however, as published recipes used to come only in larger collections, forming a cookbook. According to Kurlansky, the earliest cookbook we know about is from the first century in Rome and was probably written by M. Gabius Apicius (4). That cookbook was short and documented fine delicacies such as stuffed dormice (4). From the medieval times, we begin seeing cookbooks in the 13<sup>th</sup> century (5), the first of those being written in German. That cookbook and others going into the 14<sup>th</sup> century were typically rolled manuscripts written by chefs cataloguing meals they prepare for the households in which they cook.

One of these compilations, the earliest version coming from the 13<sup>th</sup> century, was *Le Viendier*. King Charles the V of France purportedly requested this compilation of recipes from

his head chef, Guillaume Tirel (6). *Le Viandier* served as a template for fellow cookbook-writing chefs in France in the medieval times, most notably influencing *Le Mésnagier*. As Kurlansky explains, this text was a hybrid of instructions for housekeeping, house staff management, gardening, morality, and cooking. Its bourgeois Parisian author wrote this book for his young wife, beginning a tradition of cookbooks for housewives that would remain popular well into the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

These cookbooks detailed meal preparations in prose form, describing the steps to making and tips for improving a meal. And though these housewife manuals began almost as social tracts written by men for women, the women soon took up an effort to write this genre of cookbook for each other. For example, in 1861 Isabella Beeton wrote *Mrs. Beeton's Book of Household Management*. Beeton wrote about household roles, home economy, and chapter after chapter of recipes. More than describing how to cook something, Beeton writes histories and facts about the foods used in her recipes. After the recipe for "Turtle Soup," she gives a little turtle biography, a portion of which reads: "As turtles find a constant supply of food on the coasts which they frequent, they are not of a quarrelsome disposition, as the submarine meadows in which they pasture, yield plenty for them all" (179). Sharing recipes gave Beeton a means to develop a friendly writing voice and use that to share her knowledge and view of the way the world works.

At this point, the recipe followed a general format of a series of paragraphs that sometimes give an overview of the ingredients and then into how to cook the recipe, and sometimes blend those, giving ingredients as they go through the cooking process. In the early 1900s, this recipe format transitioned into what we usually see today: a list of ingredients and measurements, a description of how to prepare the food, and other details like how long the

process takes and how many people it serves. The woman who began this formatting was Fannie Merritt Farmer, famous for her *The Boston Cooking-School Cook Book*. Farmer wrote within the context of the Progressive Era, and her work reflected the period's dominant concerns with the impact of industrialization on "traditional" familial, cultural, and social mores. She drew her readers into a cookbook format that promised a clear, documentable way for every woman to manage her house, all by affirming the importance of the scientific aspects of food studies. She says she hopes the cookbook "may not only be looked upon as a compilation of tried and tested recipes, but that it may awaken an interest through its condensed scientific knowledge which will lead to deeper thought and broader study of what we eat" (n.p.). Her attention to precise measurements and her decision to make a distinct list of ingredients contributed to the ease of reading the recipe and to the readers' confidence that they could get consistent results in their cooking. So Farmer's cookbook became the go-to for meal planning.

Before presenting recipes, Farmer organized paragraphs of texts under headings like "Carbohydrates," "Fats and Oils," and "Vitamins." She educates the reader on the components of the food, and then she delves into the recipes themselves, giving equal value to flavor and nutritional value. This is the recipe format that has survived over the years and it is the recipe format we will see in the food writing memoir with recipes.

### Defining and Theorizing Food Writing

Before I officially nestle us into the delightful realm of food writing memoir with recipes, I'd like to address the issue of defining food writing. Up until now I have discussed both texts that mention food and texts specifically about food, but the question lies in whether or not both

should be considered food writing. Where exactly is the most useful place to draw the line? Or rather, can we (should we?) draw a line?

In her book *Will Write for Food* Dianne Jacob explores various manifestations of food writing, generating discourse on how we might define it. In chapter one, “What, Exactly, Is Food Writing?” Jacob asks a few food writers what constitutes *good* food writing. Well, “what is good food writing” is quite a different question from “what is food writing,” but it does lead us towards an answer to both questions. Many of the writers she questioned, such as American food writers Colman Andrews and Calvin Trillin, insisted that good food writing is simply good writing (3). These writers did not wish the topic of food to somehow hold expectations outside of the requirements for any other form of “good writing.” This reminds us that what constitutes the genre of “food writing” does not imply a specific style of writing, which in turn implies our definition will pertain to content rather than form.

Jacob moves on to look at what, in her view, “all food writing has in common” (4). Essentially, the commonality is recognition of, if not a primary focus on, the senses. The cool, juicy resistance of a fresh pear; the dynamic play of shapes and textures of a pasta salad; the warm, creamy sweetness of tapioca pudding—readers should know the food and like it, or dislike it. Though Jacob’s definition<sup>2</sup> of food writing approximates a useful definition of food writing, it might unnecessarily exclude some texts. For example, if food writing does need to make the reader feel, smell, taste, hear, or see the food, what of those biblical passages? Or what of scientific writings about food that focus on food composition and its roles in the environment and within our bodies? That being said, it might not be useful to say every text that mentions a

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<sup>2</sup> Dianne Jacob never confidently embraces the definitions she puts forth. She more or less construes her thoughts through a web of others’ thoughts, and leaves the reader with: “here’s what you’ve got, make of it what you will.”

piece of food is food writing—for then why have the term at all? So I further Jacob’s definition by emphasizing this: food writing presents food in a way that suggests (or insists) that the reader develop a relationship with the food written about. That way, if food passes as an unnoticed detail we do not force the text into a discussion of “food writing” simply due to its mention of food. But when the food grabs the reader’s attention, holds some important symbolism, or proves pertinent to the text’s development, then regarding it as food writing will recognize the importance of food within the text and therefore encourage exploration of the food’s role. Again, making the indicator a connection between the food described and the reader means the food does not necessarily play the central role, but has enough textual presence to draw the reader’s attention and interest. It is a subjective definition, but preference for food and how much one enjoys food is subjective; so I argue a subjective definition, in this case, is most accurate.

Such a definition has a multiple purposes. One is that it helps determine whether or not less-obvious food writing texts ought to be treated as food writing, which can in turn direct the focus of a discussion of the text. Another use of this definition, the one pertinent to my paper, is it shows the important focus on the text’s reception. Food writing elicits reaction. It calls to be thought about, tasted, so to speak. Some writings are like paintings, where the reader is meant to closely observe but (usually) not touch; some writings are more like board games, where readers are meant to interact. Food writing is more like a meal, where readers are meant to taste and eat the text, processing the words to draw out deeper implications, digesting what’s been read.

Food writing texts are not always pleasant meals for readers to eat. Take, for instance, the unsettling truth found in the food industry in early 1900s North America that Upton Sinclair wove into his novel *The Jungle*. He revealed gruesome images of slaughterhouses and the miserable lifestyles many workers were forced into. When his main character Jurgis tours the

slaughterhouse for the first time, Sinclair describes the factory workers' attitudes: "Neither squeals of hogs nor tears of visitors made any difference to them; one by one they hooked up the hogs, and one by one with a swift stroke they slit their throats. There was a long line of hogs, with squeals and lifeblood ebbing away together."<sup>3</sup> In this case, Sinclair has dedicated his creative energies to feeding readers nasty truths rather than delightful descriptions. However, many, or most, of the food writing texts we consume emphasize the wholesomeness and beauty of food and eating food.

Whether they communicate more of the lovely aspects of food or the horrifying ones, food writing demonstrates that food has meaning beyond physically filling our bodies. The twentieth-century French literary theorist and semiotician Roland Barthes wrote an essay exploring food as a language, called "Toward a Psychosociology of Contemporary Food Consumption." When describing what food is, its purposes and roles in society, Barthes says, "It is not only a collection of products that can be used for statistical or nutritional studies. It is also, and at the same time, a system of communication, a body of images, a protocol of usages, situations, and behavior" (24). As an example, he describes sugar as an attitude and as an institution. The meaning sugar delivers is not entirely described through its flavor—it carries emotional, social, and even economic meaning. This language is "spoken" both in selling the food—where food is a commodity—and in preparing and eating food.

In her article "Consuming Prose: The Delectable Rhetoric of Food Writing," Lynn Z. Bloom describes the language of food in a way that nicely echoes Barthes's findings. She writes, "Native eaters, like native speakers, learn from birth the cultural grammar of the language and

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<sup>3</sup>Taken from *Literature Project's* pdf version of *The Jungle*, Chapter 3:  
[http://literatureproject.com/jungle/jungle\\_3.htm](http://literatureproject.com/jungle/jungle_3.htm)

employ it automatically in a host of contexts” (346). She describes how context shapes people’s understanding of food’s language, how their knowledge is “determined, in part, by when they live (Jell-o salad vs. tabbouleh), where they live (grits vs. baked beans), how much they can spend (fresh, heritage tomatoes vs. canned generics), what is appropriate to the occasion (a beer bash vs. a society wedding)” (346). Bloom assigns specific linguistic elements to the food world. She explains food items as the food language’s lexicon, the preparation of food as the morphology (smallest units of meaning), the method and order food is cooked and eaten as the syntax (word order), and condiments and sauces as adjectives and adverbs (347).

She draws from the food historian Massimo Mantanari to come to the focus of her article: how writers manipulate and arrange the language of food, a process she refers to as the rhetoric of food writing. Here we come to food as a language being presented in food writing. Bloom says that “food writing makes explicit what native eaters know in their hearts, minds, palates” and establishes her intention to look at the “elements of the rhetoric of food writing that make it such a joy to read and to write” (347). This adds to our earlier discussion of what constitutes food writing, emphasizing the importance of how we arrange food scenes.

### Purposes of Food Writing Memoir

Some food writers focus on the harsh aspects of food or food industry, as did Upton Sinclair, while others try to distill food writing to its happier, lighthearted themes, like many modern food writing bloggers. Still other food writing texts we consume—and this is where the rhetoric Bloom writes about becomes more intricate—emphasize the wholesomeness and beauty of food and eating food entwined with the complicated tangle of relational and geographical tensions. Here we find the food writing memoir with recipes. These memoirs organize their

stories and ideas only to point to the fact that a person's life has no clear organization, and that one way we can help each other learn about and disentangle various aspects of life is by creating shared experience through sharing meals, sharing stories, and realizing that those two actions are much the same thing.

The name I have given this genre, food writing memoir with recipes, incorporates what we have discussed up to this point: food writing broadly, food writing memoir, cookbooks, and recipes. When tied together they present an account of a person's life told through a food writing lens with the added framework of the inclusion of recipes. This genre is also called "cookbook-memoir," but throughout my work I will use the name "food writing memoir with recipes." This is because, though it is regrettably long and somewhat tedious, it includes the special feature of having recipes while maintaining that "memoir" is the main genre descriptor. A cookbook-memoir, on the other hand, could be seen as a cookbook sprinkled with excerpts of memoir or a memoir that also functions as a cookbook. Furthermore, the word "cookbook" suggests congruency, or completeness, of a set of recipes; whereas just "recipes" does not lead readers to expect a wholeness or togetherness brought about by the recipes. Treating recipes as individual entities and not as belonging to larger categories of food types (e.g. soups, breads, or cakes) is important to the memoirs I am analyzing since it shows how a single recipe can tie together, or make sense of, disparate parts of the writer's life; whereas a traditional cookbook with memoir added would place focus on how the writer's life adds color and excitement to the recipes.<sup>4</sup>

The recipes included in the memoirs function, in many ways, as a code-switching mechanism. When writers code switch, playing between multiple languages within a text, they

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<sup>4</sup> The writers' lives often add excitement to the recipes, but my point is that the focus in these memoirs is on the ways the recipes help explain the people. It's a matter of emphasis.

draw attention to areas where language might not easily translate, or might not carry the same emotional weight. Recipes placed in their formal format do just that—they break out of the flow of narrative and in so doing add physical and emotional meaning that perhaps would not translate effectively into the paragraph-form, story-telling narrative that surrounds it. Using recipes makes sense alongside Barthes's approach to food as language and Bloom's approach to food writing as language. Just as spoken language varies from country to country, the language of food varies from place to place. Likewise, the language of food writing changes from book to book (or whatever the medium is). Some units of meaning might remain the same, but overall the system changes. In this sense, each memoir is like the country with a unique food language created within its pages, the geographical boundaries. Reading a food writing memoir with recipes means learning its language, each recipe providing insight into the lexicon and grammar.

If each food writing memoir with recipes develops an individual language, we might question how a memoir functions as a location for a language. To begin, how true-to-fact can a personal narrative be? The level of accuracy relies on the writer's memory, so there is a possibility of not remembering something, or intentionally leaving out part of a story. Then there is the inclusion of dialogue—is it word for word what was said? And if these are not the precise words (as many writers openly state is the case), can we trust the story they communicate to be true to what happened? In short, memoir implicitly (and sometimes explicitly, when the author chooses to address the issue) questions whether or not a person's life can be accurately communicated. Here is where recipes prove especially useful. Where the author's choices in how to frame a scene or describe a person must be subjective, a recipe adds tangible foods and meals—so any meanings readers derive from the content of the text have specific, anchoring points of reference. The recipes connect the pieces of narrative together with reliable food

experiences; they are definite shapes that contain indefinite memories, therefore communicating graspable units of meaning.

### Word of Caution Regarding Food Exploration

There is at least one significant risk for authors who use food as the connection between people, places, and worldviews. In her book *Exotic Appetites: Ruminations of a Food Adventurer*, Lisa Heldke highlights an important negative motive and effect that can occur when people cross cultures in cuisine. Heldke dedicates her first chapter to “The Quest for Novelty,” where she contemplates what it is that attracts people to trying new foods. Like Abu-Jaber, Ciezadlo, and myself, Heldke addresses a Northern American audience. She observes that “differentness is something we have come to value and even demand” (13). She wonders if the attraction to novelty is “equivalent to an interest in cultures,” as the results of the National Restaurant Association study on ethnic cuisines suggested. She remarks that the novel “cannot remain novel” (13), that once a new food is learned, the food explorers lose interest. Does this mean they have also lost interest in the culture they were purportedly learning? Heldke relates the food explorers’ quest to the “colonialist project to exploit other cultures’ cuisines” (14).

Such a result from this quest for novelty would be harmful to the cultures exploited as well as the culture the consumers come from: it places American food traditions and no-longer-novel foods to the back of our interest, as something we have experienced and therefore no longer learn from, keeping them as memories to add to our “cultural capital.”<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, experiencing a different cuisine while in the United States means we have a sense of control over our environment. If we were to eat the new-to-us food in its regular environment, we might not

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<sup>5</sup> Heldke borrows this social-theory term from Pierre Bourdieu.

have that control; we would experience the other aspects of the culture that accompany the particular meal.

Another danger that may arise while reading a food writing memoir with recipes is mentally framing non-native foods to be exotic, and viewing this exoticism as a means not of appreciation for the culture of origin, but as entertainment. This approach situates the person being entertained in the mindset of taking his or her own perspective as the “normal” and treating others as, well, *other*. Heldke emphasizes that this rigid perspective “is left unstated” and specifies that “whites are the universal standard(s) against which difference is revealed” (19). She warns us, again, how eating food can discreetly exploit various cultures. Is this same danger present in consuming food writing memoirs with recipes?

The main question Heldke raises—What motivates people to try new foods?—is relevant to the food writing memoir with recipes on two levels: one, how do these authors approach foods from cultures not their own? And does the food become (or not become) their own through traveling, living in different cities and countries? Secondly, how do we as readers digest the material? Do we read these books because of the shock value, the novelty? Is this a means for personal gain that will create an illusion of elevated intellectual or social standings?

At the end of the chapter “The Quest for Novelty,” Heldke draws from the historian and sociologist Tzvetan Todorov, namely, his commentary on exoticism being “praise without knowledge” (22). Heldke says “the phrase aptly describes the enchantment with which food adventures greet a new dish, a new style of cooking, a new cuisine—and then lose interest in it when it becomes too well known to us.” Yet she does not sever us completely from the possibility of having a positive approach to trying new cuisine. She reminds us that wanting to taste new cultures helps draw people away from the dangerous mindset of belief that one’s own

culture is superior. And it is there I see Abu-Jaber and Ciezadlo working. Their memoirs, I argue, do not pull us as readers into ourselves and simply fund our cultural capital, but they aid us in reaching out to others—learning so we can teach, gaining so we can give.

These texts explore the idea of “we are what we eat,” and then open up ways for readers to consider how we eat what we are. Our consumption of both these food writing memoirs with recipes and the foods themselves shows something about the reader’s curiosity and openness towards, and acceptance and celebration of, the multi-cultural and diverse foods and people described in these memoirs. This is the readers’ connection to the text—the element of reception, the place where food writing memoirs with recipes have proven to communicate effectively.

Each of these memoirs explores what it means to leave and enter a country. They look for ways to find and define a personal identity, learning whether or not there are others who have similar identities. They are about loneliness and community, cooking for oneself, for family, for friends. This genre is a way for writers to contribute to the country they leave or enter. In her book about immigrants’ experiences with food, *The Immigrants Kitchen: Food, Ethnicity, and Diaspora*, Vivian Nun Halloran writes about cultural insights shown in food writing memoirs with recipes. She says, “The texts’ celebration of homemade food facilitates a frank and open public discussion of the sacrifices people find worth making in order to reap the rewards of American citizenship” (10). The writers, when entering a new country (in this example, America), feel they have been rewarded somehow, that they have gained something, become part of something. Sharing food for them is a way of giving back.

Often in familial, social, or political groups, people become fully integrated once they enter into dialogue with native speakers with verbal dialogue or body language; when they are not only listening, but also contributing to the conversation. When that new language is difficult,

when fluency has yet to be achieved, people can converse through food. A person from one culture can speak to another by sharing recipes and eating together. Food writing memoirs with recipes, when they include moving into new cultures, function as this type of response and a contribution. Their food answers a general curiosity as to where they came from, and the recipes included are contributions to the conversation. Recipes disclose what is sometimes guarded as a personal tie to the country of origin.

With recipes alone readers could potentially read as a means of personal, cultural exploitation as Heldke warns. But because they come along side personal stories, character sketches, dynamic scenes, and complicated identities, we as readers are compelled to connect with not only the foods and colorful aspects of different-to-us cultures, but to explore and learn the tensions and deeply personal connections these authors have to people and places shown through food.

In “Recipes for Reading: Summer Pasta, Lobster à la Riseholme, and Key Lime Pie,” an article about cookbooks and the stories they tell, Susan J. Leonardi writes, “Like a story, a recipe needs a recommendation, a context, a point, a reason to be” (340). Both authors of the memoirs I will be exploring compare story and recipe and feed them into each other, using one to justify the other in a series of complex scenes from their lives. While a recipe’s “reason to be” is made known through a personal story, the personal story’s “reason to be,” in great part, is to provide context for the recipe.

## Part II: The Memoirs: Coherence in Life Through Food

### Introduction to Part II

I mentioned Vivian Nun Halloran's *The Immigrant Kitchen* in my last section, and will again draw from her work as it places the two memoirs I will discuss among similar memoirs. She says, "What distinguishes the memoir with recipes as a genre from other forms of life writing is its capacity for mimicry and dynamism in the opportunity the texts offer for readers to test their own palates against those of the writers" (12). In short, readers can mimic and, to an extent, live out the writers' experiences by following the recipes.

Halloran discusses the importance of several food writing memoirs with recipes. She begins with Austin Clarke's *Pig Tails 'n Breadfruit*, a memoir that shares the colorful, spicy, lively cooking Clarke learned from listening to his mother and aunts cook in Barbados, and how he kept those memories with him when he studied in Canada and moved around North America. Similarly, Madhur Jaffrey brings tales of cooking from her childhood to her education and work in the United States, and her subsequent traveling in the memoir *Climbing the Mango Trees: A Memoir of a Childhood in India*. "Through her knowledge of regional specialties and spicy dishes," Halloran says, "Jaffrey set out to conquer (and educate) her readers' democratic and multicultural palates with piquant tales of coming of age in the kitchen done the American way [...] through trial and error" (37).

There are many more memoirs mentioned, including Cheryl Lu-Lien Tan's *A Tiger in the Kitchen*, which follows Tan's "returning to Singapore to reclaim [...] gastronomic heritage" (37), and memoirs where the authors struggle specifically with experiencing a "double consciousness [...] as outsiders like their families and [...] as Americans" (51), such as Linda Furiya's *Bento*

*Box in the Heartland: My Japanese Girlhood in Whitebread America* and Leslie Li's *Daughter of Heaven: A Memoir with Earthly Recipes*. Edward Lee's *Smoke and Pickles: Recipes and Stories from a New Southern Kitchen* provides a different angle on the immigrant's experience by bringing to light the way the "New South" culture in the United States can welcome in people from diverse backgrounds with its "almost mythic geographic region with distinct cultural and culinary identities" (65).

The two texts I will be analyzing are Diana Abu-Jaber's *The Language of Baklava* and Annia Ciezadlo's *Day of Honey*. Both of these touch on issues Halloran explores regarding what constitutes home and identity, and how we can share these identities with each other. In her memoir, Abu-Jaber describes scenes from growing up both in the U.S. and in Jordan in colorful ways that focus readers on recipes that pertain to the memories described. Her writing style incorporates a heightened attention to mood and sensory detail. Her focus on food welcomes readers to experience what she experienced, feel what she felt, learn what she learned—both about those around her and about herself.

In *Day of Honey*, Ciezadlo constellates cultures, geographies, restaurants, people, worldviews, and political views all with a background of Middle Eastern and Western tensions, and misunderstandings foregrounded with her appreciation for a tasty meal. While Abu-Jaber intersperses the recipes throughout her memoir, Ciezadlo stockpiles the formal recipes at the end of her book while describing the meals (and their ingredients and cooking processes) within her narrative in an informal way.

Both of these memoirs draw attention to how the linguistic approach to food is not merely one of many ways to understand food, but is integral to understanding food. Connections are drawn between the history behind a meal and family memories; cooking for someone as

creating a text for someone; language seeping through meats and breads and pies, subtly or overtly causing consumers to contemplate relationships between people and people, or people and locations.

These memoirists translate the experience of cooking and eating food into the reader's experience of consuming the text. And because these "translations" sway between, dip into, and taste from different cultures, distinguishing and mixing them, they are actually feeding readers these complex understandings of (or desire to understand) differences and similarities among people coming from extremely different backgrounds. They find boundaries and, be they boundaries between family members, friends, strangers, or people at war, these writers learn to cross the boundaries through sharing meals or learning about food, and they invite readers to participate.

In each of the following sections, I will begin with a brief author biography to contextualize the memoir, then move into discussing specific themes. Discussing the themes and how the recipes interact with those themes will demonstrate the concepts we have discussed about food working as a language, recipes anchoring readers to specific images and flavors, what sharing a meal can signify, and how cultural differences can be explored through food.

### *Day of Honey*

Annia Ciezadlo's strong, exciting writing voice draws from her extensive experience as a newsmagazine editor in New York and from her years as a journalist both in the United States and, for about a decade, in the Middle East. She was born in Illinois but, as her memoir describes, she and her mother moved around the United States frequently in her adolescence.

During all the moving around, Ciezadlo had the constant of her mother's intricate and delicious cooking—a theme of cooking and traveling that was to persist throughout her life.

*Day of Honey: A Memoir on Food, Love, and War*, was published in 2011 and had been in the making since 2005. Ciezadlo was living in the Middle East at the time, moving between Baghdad and Beirut. Initially, Ciezadlo had set out to describe the everyday farmers markets and dinner table experiences of the people around her to give Westerners insight that would draw readers' focus away from the war-torn image of the Middle East portrayed in the media to an image of families and friends caring for each other, eating together. However, as the Israeli and Hezbollah conflict escalated and sectarian tensions increased, Ciezadlo decided her book would better represent the people she met and observed if everyday food escapades were shown in light of the oppression and uncertainties that arise when sharing a living space with war.<sup>6</sup>

This brief description draws out the focuses of food and war, both words found in the memoir's subtitle. The other over-arching focus mentioned in the title is "love." Each of these themes has to do with crossing boundaries. Food crosses physical boundaries on the level of growth and production, like a seed breaking through soil, or food being transported from a field or farm to a house or factory. Food crosses boundaries from outside a human to inside through the act of eating. Also, food crosses conceptual boundaries, breaking what a person might think is normal, safe, or enjoyable to eat. Similarly, love crosses physical boundaries. For example, many people will travel any distance to be with someone they love, whether family or friends; and physical boundaries are further crossed through sex, in the case of romantic love. Love also crosses conceptual boundaries, when people who come from different backgrounds choose to

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<sup>6</sup> The biographical information I provide on Ciezadlo is taken partly from *Day of Honey*, and largely from her website: <http://anniaciezadlo.com/biography>.

love each other; and, in many ways, loving someone else draws the person out of him or herself in order to care for the other. War crosses physical boundaries when one group assembles against another, marching into their land, breaking into their houses. War often crosses the physical boundaries of a human when weapons cross the boundary of skin and bone. War can cross conceptual boundaries, too, a battle of ideas and goals, a work to frame the “good” against the “bad”—a false dichotomy that pits people against each other through crossing boundaries of logic and any altruistic structures that may have been keeping peace.

In *Purity and Danger*, Mary Douglas’s fascinating exploration of boundary-crossing and determining what constitutes dirt and impurity, Douglas explains how people organize life by adhering to boundaries. She explains that “dirt is essentially disorder” (2) and, sensibly, if we want to maintain pattern and order, we cannot include dirt (40). In *Day of Honey*, the disorder war brings to places and relationships can be seen as dirt. The way Ciezadlo noticed people in the Middle East combatting war, and how she herself fought against the dirt of war, was through cooking. Making a meal out of various parts, the act of organizing, temporarily fulfilled that desire for order in a time of chaos. Of course, I have mentioned that cooking and eating are also boundary-crossing activities, as are traveling and making love. So we see how crossing boundaries does not necessarily end in dirt, in disorder; crossing boundaries can be the beginning to reorganization.

Although we can discuss each of these topics—food, love, and war—separately, Ciezadlo crafted her memoir in such a way as to draw attention to the underlying sameness in these three things. How we share food can reflect the status of love or war; a war can manifest its motives through food (artificial famines, victory feasts, feeding or not feeding hostages); love can express itself in tensions similar to warring peoples or be shared as a warm meal. Branching from those

three themes are many smaller themes, such as missing people, finding a home, the role of the kitchen, broad and narrow histories, globalization, human rights, learning a place through food, rationing food, and many others. In the complexity of her content Ciezadlo demonstrates respect for and extensive knowledge of the Middle East, and draws attention to how she uses food as a common language between the Middle East and her primarily American audience.

In this section I will discuss passages from Ciezadlo's memoir where food is used as a metaphor for love and war, as language, and as written material. There are areas where those three aspects would be difficult to separate, so we will see how food as a metaphor becomes so close to actually embodying the item or concept it is compared to that the food is more like a synonym, making it part of the communication, part of the language. And the physicality of the food itself as well as its presence in recipes shows how food as metaphor and language becomes a written text that eaters can read and readers can eat.

After the table of contents, there is an Arabic proverb written both in Arabic and English, the English translation being: "Day of honey, day of onions." The reader is dropped into food imagery that already hints at a deeper meaning than the physical food items "honey" and "onions." Where honey evokes thoughts of a sweet flavor, sticky texture, and bright amber tones; onions recall potent smell, savory flavor, and tear-inducing fumes. This quotation shows sweetness, stickiness, beauty, potency, and tears as metaphors for the sweetness and tearfulness of love, or the stickiness and potency of war. Additionally, onions have the metaphorical connection to things that are layered, which also describes the ways relationships between friends and family, and between people fighting, function: there are layers.

The reader also, just from this opening quote, glimpses the focus Ciezadlo carries throughout her memoir on different languages. As mentioned, she includes the Arabic and the

English translation; and the metaphorical meanings could be seen as a third language, the food language.

There is no text on the back of this first page, giving the eyes plenty of time to notice the words on the front. Although the blank space may seem, well, void of information, it is important since absence of communication is what, in many ways, shapes the substance that is communicated. This pertains to this first page and Ciezadlo's text in general, since food can also have this blank-space significance—an empty plate holds meaning as well as does a full plate.

Honey and onions are foods, and here their qualities function as metaphors for love and war. Because this memoir works to communicate the sweet and the bitter, or strong, aspects of love and war Ciezadlo has lived through, the opening quote seems to introduce the language Ciezadlo plans to speak in: food. Food not only represents, but stands as a simile for what she aims to say; and so she has written it down, presented it to the audience as her text. Throughout the memoir, Ciezadlo builds an intricate interlacing of ingredients and dynamics of meals, translating her surroundings into food, and vice versa. There is fluidity between the metaphorical, linguistic, and textual roles of food. This fluidity can also be seen in the following examples, sometimes delineating difference and usually showing the connections.

The poetic language used in the opening quote flavors much of the memoir. As Ciezadlo describes how she grew up eating many Greek-cuisine meals, she says, “some recipes are poems” (15). Recipes and poems both have formal features that carry an emotional weight of meaning behind them. She continues exploring how recipes are like other forms of literature, how “stuffed grape leaves are short stories—tiny fables of transformation” (15). This recalls Barthes's view of food as language. In this place in the text, the short-story stuffed grape leaves are being rolled by Annia's grandmother. They are called *yapraki*, which means “leaf” in

Turkish, but also, Ciezadlo notes, can mean “layer” or “page.” How appropriate, then, that the leaf is the “page” in which the story is contained. Here the word to name the food has been translated into the food; not so much as an ambiguous connection as a fluid connection between finding meaning in the word *yapraki* and finding the meaning in the food that word refers to. Another feature of this food item is how using a grape leaf is using a part of the plant that often goes to waste. This is similar to salvaging words that are used infrequently.

There are, however, times of ambiguity in language—both in etymologies and in the precise definition of a word. This ambiguity can lead to frustration, but it can also lead people to move their focus from where the word came from to where it is going, determining how the word is being applied here and now and what meaning it should convey. There is a passage in chapter ten where Ciezadlo explores this type of ambiguity through the food *masquf*. *Masquf* is a fish dish that, in this scene, is important in Iraq as an embodiment of “the flavor of freedom” (93). Its preparation process was often considered to be just as important as the end flavor. The person eating chooses the fish, the cook slits the fish from the head down the spine, and then the chef unfolds the fish, leaving it inside out. The fish is then opened flat and cooked “over a large open vat of smoldering wood” (92). The ambiguity lies in where the dish came from. Ciezadlo shares some of her findings regarding the meal’s history. It may have been imported from the Ottomans, or perhaps passed down from Babylonian tradition. She humorously points out that “Muslims claimed it was a Christian dish [...]. Christians whispered that it was a specialty from the old Jewish quarter along the river [...]. Some believed it had come from the Mandaeans” (93). But she ultimately concludes: “the more I read, the more people I asked, the more *masquf* and its origins receded into mystery” (94). So *masquf* simultaneously held a distinguished place in the Iraqi culture and an undistinguished (and indistinguishable) history. This is reminiscent of an

Arabic phrase Ciezadlo discusses: *ya ma kan*, which means “it was and it was not,” the Arabic version of “once upon a time” (96). *Masquf* has and does not have a distinct story.

Later in the memoir, Annia and her husband Mohamad are invited to have a meal with two sheikhs, Dr. Salama and Sheikh Fatih Kashif al-Ghitta. Dr. Salama was a well-known and widely respected (and also disrespected) female politician who “was mediating between them [Sadr’s followers] and the U.S. military” (133). Sheikh Fath was a Shiite cleric. In this scene, *masquf* is served, presented as a food to be physically eaten, yet also, as readers learned earlier, as a word or ideology. Ciezadlo takes notes during the conversation, trying to “pick tiny bones out of the smoky fish” while writing. The *masquf* is accompanied by political conversations regarding living conditions and the shaky state of the Iraqi government. The food has a purpose of giving these people an event or occasion that they can use to provide a space to discuss difficult topics. The *masquf* also gives the readers something to recall from earlier in the book—a nod to their acquired knowledge as well as being a familiar topic that might make the more difficult political topics more palatable.

This relation between food and politics is further explored through the analogy of food and language. Ciezadlo points to the French word *régime*, from which we derived both “regime” and “diet” (140). Her discussion of the word along with sharing details of the *masquf* brings us into that “regime,” into Ciezadlo’s treatment of war as a regime and a diet.

One of the many descriptions of war comes in chapter twenty-four, when unexploded bombs Israelis had left in Lebanon began going off, wounding and killing civilians. At the same time, Israel was suffering under heavy losses from Hezbollah’s rockets and on-ground fighting. Annia went with her husband Mohamad to see their friend Batoul, with whom they had lived for a time, and surveyed the house’s destruction. The destruction is described through the way food

things were ruined. The bomb's blast had hurled a jar of tomatoes at the old kitchen wall, "leaving a bloodstained Rorschach splattered on the wall" (272). The tomato sauce is likened to blood, a comparison made in light of knowledge that there also has been human blood shed from this explosion.

The first thing the distraught Batoul said to Annia was, "You've lost weight" (272). Yes, while these people are amidst the rubble of their destroyed house the topic of conversation turns to not eating enough. This snapshot demonstrates how Batoul cares for Annia, how the war caused destruction, and how the absence of food plays a role. Immediately after this comment, Ciezadlo describes the impromptu picnic they had on the floor, on a plastic mat laid over the "chunks of plaster, concrete, and broken glass." The food eaten is tuna, canned hummus, bread, and water. These were rations passed out from international aid groups, and the simplicity of it made the disaster seem especially painful to Batoul, for she had to eat "hummus without olive oil!" (272). Having to eat regular food (hummus) in an irregular way (without olive oil) makes a connection between the loss of the house and the loss of food. Yet the act of sharing what food they do have suggests a continued effort to stay both physically and emotionally strong.

The meal of basic rations is not included in the compilation of recipes at the end of the memoir, since there is not much more than opening the cans and scooping it out with the bread. However, many of the meals that are woven into the narrative have a place at the back of the book. These recipes, then, have two formats: the ingredients and cooking process as described in conjunction with characters and specific circumstances, then the traditional recipe format of ingredient list, equipment needed, and the directions. The double inclusion allows Ciezadlo to fit meals into her story seamlessly as prose-recipes—my term for recipes that do not follow the traditional format but still explain how a meal is made.

One of these prose-recipes is the *batata wa bayd* that Ciezadlo's demanding, difficult, yet endearing mother-in-law Umm Hassane teaches her how to make. This dish is what Ciezadlo refers to as "Lebanon's moral equivalent of macaroni and cheese" (266). Umm Hassane had been in the hospital for a fever, and now that she was out she had resumed her place living with her son and daughter-in-law. In about three pages, Ciezadlo writes the account of Umm Hassane fastidiously teaching the best way to make *batata wa bayd*. They begin with selecting and dicing onions, move into choosing a pot to use (a humorous exchange due to Umm Hassane's being very particular), then into putting the onions into the pot with corn oil. They "covered the pot, and turned down the flame" (267). Interestingly, Ciezadlo includes the fact that during this cooking process, she was trying to record the cooking times, and the weights and measurements of the foods, which would allow her to format the recipe in the accuracy-favoring Fannie Farmer tradition. Umm Hassane would give unconventional answers, however, like as she responds to "How long does it need to be cooked?" with, "Until it's ready!" (267).

The next ingredient is chopped potato. While Ciezadlo could observe that the chopped potatoes were "half-inch squares," she could not measure by sight how many cups of these half-inch squares were being prepared. So she put them into a measuring cup, to Umm-Hassane's dismay. Why would someone measure the ingredients? The interactions and reactions readers receive from seeing the meal-making process thus written out connects the food to the relationship between Ciezadlo and her mother-in-law. Furthermore, this shows two people from very different cultures finding the kitchen as a place of connection, but not necessarily an easy or natural connection. Ciezadlo is accustomed to measurements, precise timing; Umm Hassane focuses on the feeling of the food, the integrity of the flavor each ingredient contributes to the meal, the culinary instinct. The two women have difficulty understanding how the other operates,

yet here they are, cooperating. Though the spoken language proves tense, especially when Umm Hassane learns that Ciezadlo has made this dish before (albeit poorly), the food language goes smoothly, resulting in a tasty, satisfying “text”—the meal.

As mentioned before, this recipe is also included in the back of the book. It is called “*Batata wa Bayd Mfarakeh*: Crumbled Potatoes and Eggs.” There is a paragraph that tells us the main trick to this dish, “[s]low cooking,” the trick learned from Umm Hassane, as well as some suggestions for flavor variations (such as adding salmon or cheese). Next there is the ingredient list, the equipment, then the directions. Where the dialogue in the narrative prose-recipe was between Annia and Umm Hassane, the dialogue here is Annia speaking to her readers. It is as though we are at a dinner table and Annia has taken the dish from her mother-in-law on her right and passed it over to us, sitting on her left. The directions tell “you” what to do next, anticipating your preference, giving “you” helpful tips. For example, in step four she explains the process of softening the potatoes saying, “If you like them crispy...” and says they are done when “you can pierce them easily with a fork” (332). She ends the directions by bringing Umm Hassane back into the dialogue: “Umm Hassane strongly recommends that you serve *batata wa bayd* with salad,” then adds her own thought: “It also goes remarkably well with salted sliced tomatoes drizzled with olive oil.” Again, Annia plays the part of passing a dish onto us, communicating food from one context into another. She hears Umm Hassane suggest salad and so passes on the suggestion to us, with a personal touch of her own favorite side dish. Our next food writing memoir with recipes, *The Language of Baklava*, has similar exploration of sharing food with people and then sharing recipes with readers.

*The Language of Baklava*

Having grown up with an American mother and a Jordanian father, Diana Abu-Jaber was acquainted with ideas of cultural differences from an early age; the ways people distinguished themselves from other people, and the ways a person's background affected life habits, traditions, and interactions. *The Language of Baklava* is one of many books Abu-Jaber has written with food as a central theme, and one of two memoirs that focus on food.

Published in 2005, *The Language of Baklava* was warmly welcomed among readers who appreciate food, enjoy learning about how cultures work, like to travel, or simply want soothing yet vibrant prose to read. Her writing style incorporates a heightened attention to mood and sensory details. For example, she describes her memory that sometimes goes “soft and silvery as a piece of driftwood” (234) and a cool beverage she sips while in Jordan, the “lovely, golden iced tea, delicately brewed with cardamom and brightened with sugar and lemon and a whole sprig of mint” (284). The writing welcomes you to join her exploration of driftwood memories and sip the light ice tea. Abu-Jaber prompts us to experience what she experienced, feel what she felt, and learn what she learned, both about those around her and about herself. She documents where food succeeds and does not succeed in translating subtle details of ideas or the subtleties in a relationship (feelings, opinions, hierarchy, good or bad will towards the other).

The Forward to this memoir immediately and explicitly focuses the readers on the importance of story, the “memories and recollections of my father's history and the storybook myths and legends that my mother brought me to read” (n.p.). As soon as the importance of story sharing has been named, the importance of food is brought forward. A story is often about food, and food often points to something larger, Abu-Jaber says—to “grace, difference, faith, love.” In this sense, food is a story that shares these larger messages. Food is again used as language, as

text. Just as language often elicits response, Abu-Jaber hopes her memories prompt others to share and describe experiences they have had. She says, “Memories give our lives their fullest shape, and eating together helps us to remember.”

The main themes of this memoir are similar to those of Ciezadlo’s memoir; however, there is a slight shift in focus worth mentioning. Where I mainly looked at food’s role in relation to love and war in *Day of Honey*, I will frame this discussion around food in relation to family and traveling.

The first chapter is humorously grim. It is a memory of Diana with her extended Jordanian family gathering to have dinner, the main course being chicken and stuffed squash. There is an intricate tale of young Diana and her cousins petting and talking to a lamb the uncles had recently bought. We learn through various hints that the uncles intended to slaughter the lamb for dinner, an intention unknown to the playful, lamb-loving children. This plan for meat arose from the desire of Bud, Diana’s father, and his brothers to live as they had in Jordan. They feel nostalgic for the past, romanticizing a roaming childhood filled with family and food. As Abu-Jaber describes, “When they were children [...] [t]hey drew their silvery drinking water from a well, baked bread in a stone oven, and in the desert nights my father and his eight brothers had liked to sleep under a sky scrawled with stars or inside the billowing goat-hair tents that the Bedouins used” (17). This romanticizing led to the slaughtering of Lambie (the creative name the children had given the lamb,) while the mothers took the children out for ice cream. The process of killing the lamb ended up being far more gruesome than intended, and the adults felt uncomfortable over the ordeal. They did not tell the kids what the stuffed squash was stuffed with (ground lamb).

The relationships in this vignette are multiple and difficult to track. There are the relationships between the cousins, between the aunts, the uncles, between each husband and wife, between children and their parents. Added to that, there is the fact that much of this story is being related to Diana post-event—Bud tells Diana the full story of the lamb some twenty years after that meal. Finally, there is Diana’s act of writing the memory down along with the recipe, which pulls readers into the web of relationships. The recipe she shares at the end of the chapter is not that of stuffed squash, but a recipe that responds to the discomfort of the memory of an animal’s cruel death: Peaceful Vegetarian Lentil Soup.

The scene of killing Lambie was an instance of an inability to translate one cultural experience into a new location. In Jordan butchering a lamb was a frequent occurrence for the Abu-Jaber family. Once in America, however, meat became “bloodless, gleaming with cellophane, stacked in cold rows” (17); the men wanted to relive the old experience of meat. As we saw, the unpleasant food preparation of butchering ended messily, which showed the immigrated Jordanian family “[t]hey were no longer who they thought they were” (19). The ways we change in our approach to food, in this case lamb, can represent greater, personal change.

As a teenager, Diana grasps onto food’s power to represent change in a person. She wants to establish herself and select friends as appreciators of art, of feeling and philosophy. So she organizes a French-inspired picnic. The recipe in this section is titled “Improvisation Sandwiches: For when you want them to keep their minds on the art” (206). She describes the way that reading M.F.K. Fisher inspired her to couple food with art, to create pleasant dinner parties for friends where art can be discussed.

This meal Diana serves her friends and the story of how she acquired the ingredients do not match the recipe she provides at the end of the chapter. Within the memory, for example, the “baguettes” called for in the recipe are replaced by soft Italian rolls bought at the Super Duper, and the “prosciutto” is left out entirely. Comparing the meal described in the story to the recipe at the end of the section highlights Diana’s makeshift cooking. The Super Duper’s stock limits Diana’s cooking; the Italian roll being only unsliced bread available. The money Diana is able to spend limits her cooking as well, as prosciutto is fairly expensive. Diana is still a high school student at this point in the memoir, so it makes sense for her to seek cheaper options—especially since the food is meant not as the main event, but as a setting for music and poetry.

Another food that surfaces in this section is hummus. Though hummus is now widely known and appreciated in the United States, it was a rare to meet someone familiar with hummus in the 1970s in Syracuse. Bud walks into the backyard during Diana’s arty picnic and glares at the scene. But Jay Franklin, one of the boys, says, “Diana told us you make your own hummus” Bud suddenly softens and asks, “You know hummus?” (208). Any animosity that had been brewing in Bud leaves him, and he and Jay “form an instant food connection” (208). Earlier food was a mediator between people sharing a meal and sharing art; now it is a generational mediator, shared through knowledge of uncommon food. Because of this food connection, Diana and her friends are released from the emotional tension Bud had initially created.

A few years earlier, before Diana began taking initiative to cook meals for her friends, she and her family went to Uncle Hal’s house for a picnic in the winter for New Year’s Eve. Diana is eleven years old in this vignette, and she anticipates the winter picnic with jittery excitement. She says, “I wake from dreams of long picnic tables set with plates full of snow and

sunlight, my jaw moving and my tongue curled up with pleasure” (111). When the day finally arrives, Diana and her two younger sisters pile into the back of the car and their parents drive slowly in an unexpectedly fierce blizzard. The weather makes them later than anticipated, but they have a friendly, smiling Uncle Hal by the barbeque outside, welcoming them with a smoky meat scent that foreshadows a tasty dinner. Cooking outside in the winter is understood as odd and therefore exciting to Diana. This brings to light the assumption that food is typically prepared in a kitchen; or in the case of a barbeque, usually when the weather is warmer. Because there is an expectation for cooking in a kitchen, a cook can break away from that expectation (for variance of by necessity), which makes the food feel special to the consumers.

Once the food is ready, the children eat in the kitchen and the adults eat in the dining room. This allows the children to indulge in messy eating; they let “the juices stain [their] lips” and they “slump and make loud cavemen groans as [they] chew” (113). It is an irresistible call of the wild, to primitive food-eating ways, celebrating freedom in self-nourishment. How the food is eaten distinguishes the kids from the adults. While the adults construct and conform to rules of proper eating, the children dismiss these rules and relish in their ability to break boundaries of the proper. While the adults might view this sloppiness as being dirty, in the way Douglas says “dirt is essentially disorder” (4), the children experience the sloppiness as the natural order of things, and are not deterred by the idea they might be dirty.

The warm, colorful environment of this dinner inspires Diana’s imagination. The seclusion of so many young ears, so susceptible to far-reached tales overcomes her, and she “lean[s] forward and mutter[s], ‘Well, I sure hope you appreciate that we’re here tonight’” (113). This intrigues her siblings and cousins and they give her their undivided attention. Diana proceeds to explain that a serial murderer who hacks people into small pieces has escaped from

prison and was running loose on the very highway Diana's family had traveled by. Her story is taken in greedily along with the shish kebobs and roasted zucchini. Like the semi-barbaric manner of eating dinner, the messy, juicy story has a special effect on the children. It crosses the line usually set for believable stories and gives the children easy access into the absurd.

The recipe following the story is "Barbaric Lamb *Kofta*," described to be "most wonderful when barbecued over an outdoor grill. Not necessarily at the stroke of midnight, but it adds a certain something" (114). The title of the recipe alludes to the primitive way the children gobbled down the meal, and for readers recalls the barbaric story told with it. Now the readers are able to join the barbarism, to read about, if not actually cook and eat, the juicy kebabs.

While the New Year's meal was exciting and eventful, food has moments of cool and quiet in *The Language of Baklava*. When Diana visits home during her undergraduate years, she experiences an inability to keep food down. She eats with her family but, she explains, she subsequently feels sharp stomach pains in the middle of the night. Diana rushes out of bed to throw up whatever she had tried eating for dinner. She muses as to the cause: Is her body rejecting her family's Jordanian food? Is this a form of rebellion against her family? She never definitively answers this, namely because she says she never lands on an answer. She does feel strained around her family, "fed up and misunderstood, aching to be back at school" (228), and perhaps that causes the unease in her stomach. But what these issues point to is an eventual release from pain. Diana wakes up one morning "clenched, [her] mouth clamped shut, anticipating the nausea that usually wakes [her] at such an hour" (228). Instead she looks out the window and watches "the immense country night" where "[t]he light makes a photographic negative of the world—blackening the snowfields and rinsing open the night so it looks pure and violet, like moonlit sand" (228). She feels a deep sense of joy and connection with the world, and

perhaps more importantly, connection “to the people who lie asleep in the purple lights and in all the sleepy, snowbound houses around us” (229). As she undergoes this emotional change, Diana realizes she is hungry. She quietly goes to the kitchen, opens the fridge, and pulls out the food she was particularly craving: yogurt *lebneh*. This dish is simple, the yogurt with some salt and olive oil, dipped into with bread. She describes it as “the purest food in the world” and as “[m]other’s milk” (229).

After that night watching winter outside and then eating yogurt *lebneh*, Diana’s nausea goes away. Earlier we saw how food helped people connect to places, to art, and to other people. Here we see how food allows us to connect to ourselves, reconciling our emotions to our physical bodies. When Diana felt the stress and dissatisfaction of her family, food responded by upsetting her stomach, rebelling against her body. When she felt connected to her surroundings and love for people, food settled simply and pleasantly inside Diana, matching her body to her emotions.

## Epilogue

Now, tell me, what are *Day of Honey* and *The Language of Baklava* about? It seems impossible to provide a satisfactory or accurate answer. They both relate to food, certainly; but neither of them is exclusively about food. They both show the importance of building, mending, and maintaining relationships; but they are about more than love and friendship. *Day of Honey* enlightens readers on many lesser-known aspects of the wars in the Middle East, but war is by no means the main character. It is as Neil Gaiman says in his introduction to Ray Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451*, "If someone tells you what a story is about, they are probably right. If they tell you that that is all the story is about, they are very definitely wrong" (xii). Ciezadlo and Abu-Jaber resist the creation of a text that allows for a "this is all about" answer. We think we are reading one thing, then realize there is a deeper layer, and many layers.

It's like the moment in *Ratatouille* we looked at earlier, when Remy gives Emile the cheese and Emile enjoys it. Then Remy gives him a grape, which he also enjoys. Then Emile eats the foods together, and it is no longer "grape" and "cheese," but a new, unexpected flavor. The food writing memoirs with recipes present many individual elements, but each memoir as a whole is greater than, or different from, its parts.

In Part I we saw how food writing spans time, how food writing elicits a response from readers, how food can operate as a universal language, and how there is a risk of cultural appropriation, but how the food writing memoir with recipes answers that warning by providing more cultural background than just the "exotic food." In Part II we saw food in action—how it subtly and overtly connects people to their environment, to each other, and to themselves.

I like to think of these memoirs as blueberry smoothies. It's as though Ciezadlo and Abu-Jaber both hand us a smoothie and give us time to drink the entire thing at our own pace. While

we drink the smoothie, Ciezadlo and Abu-Jaber begin telling us things like, “By the way there is spinach in the smoothie,” and, “Oh, I also added chia seeds and kale.” Even if we do not hear all the healthy ingredients added, and even if we do not know what they all are, the fact remains that we are eating them. Whether or not we understand the nutritional value of the smoothie and how our bodies break down the sugars and proteins, our bodies will do so. We have consumed the smoothie and it is now part of us. In the same way, we may not notice all the observations and details included in *Day of Honey* and *The Language of Baklava*, and we may not understand everything we do notice. The fact remains, if we read them, then they are inside us. We consume the stories and discussions of food and people and events, and they become part of us. We join a shared corpus of memories tied to foods, weaving ourselves into a web of cultures, ideas, people, and their passions.

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