Anthony Bourdain: Parts Unknown in Africa:
Cultural Brokerage, "Going Native," and Colonial Nostalgia

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CNN's award-winning *Anthony Bourdain: Parts Unknown* has captured the interest of American and global audiences, and Bourdain has been praised for his humanizing storytelling and diverse culinary itinerary. This study draws on postcolonial theory to question whether celebrations of Bourdain's representations of sub-Saharan Africa are warranted. Specifically, we explore cultural brokerage as an instrument of African agency, assess Bourdain's "going-native" approach against evidence of self-reflexivity, and probe traces of colonial nostalgia in the episodes. We propose a three-category conceptualization of cultural brokers: immersed, hybrid, and inherent brokers. We commend Bourdain's deployment of hybrid and inherent cultural brokers, his actively self-reflexive going-native style, and his efforts to historicize and contextualize African locations. However, we argue that some of Bourdain's narrative choices—uses of immersed brokers, reduced self-reflexivity in challenging sites, and evidence of colonial nostalgia—trap the show in clichéd representations of Africa reminiscent of a colonial gaze.

Keywords: alterity, Africa, Anthony Bourdain, food studies, postcolonial theory, reality television

Beyond its centrality to survival, food is a cultural corpus that embodies some of the core elements of human expression. From cultivation to harvesting and preparation to consumption, the process by which societies collectivize around food makes it more than mere materiality. It defines and is defined by cultural groups and their expressive forms such as gender, ethnicity, religion, and, pivotal to this study, mediated communication. The centrality of food in culture and communication is especially evident in culinary adventure programs (CAPs), a genre of reality television that features a celebrity chef or food critic who travels to different locales to experience culinary cultures that are often divergent from the presumed audience taste. Generally, CAPs incorporate elements of travel, suspense, and adventure. Although some recent studies have shed light on the cultural significance of CAPs (e.g., Henry, 2017; Kelly, 2017; Lee & Nelson, 2018; Workneh, 2019), the limited critical inquiries on food and reality television warrant further scholarly investigation.

Among the most popular CAPs is CNN's *Anthony Bourdain: Parts Unknown*, which debuted on April 14, 2013. The show involves acclaimed chef Anthony Bourdain experiencing and representing global culinary cultures. *Parts Unknown* accumulated 103 sixty-minute episodes across 12 seasons. Primarily produced for and consumed by American audiences, *Parts Unknown* won five Emmy Awards. According to Nielsen, the Season 9 premier of *Parts Unknown* was ranked first among key demographics (25–54 age group) with substantial margins over competitors Fox News and MSNBC (CNN, 2017).

We are drawn to Bourdain because of his reputation as an immersive traveler and not a tourism pundit, a reputation only strengthened by his unanticipated death in June 2018. In recognizing his people-centered, altruistic legacy, *People* magazine noted, "Bourdain broke bread with people from all walks of life—from heads of state to Syrian refugees—with meals serving as a grand equalizer" (Calderone, 2018, p. 54). The far-reaching scale of Bourdain's appeal was evident in the overwhelming accolades he received following his death. Whereas one might expect recognition for his culinary distinction, it was rather stories of his antiwar activism, environmental concerns, cross-cultural respect, and compassion for the poor that stood out in his followers' eulogies and tributes (e.g., Krystal, 2018; Nichols, 2018; Rao, 2018). More notably, he was celebrated for his conviction in the power of storytelling to bring about global understanding and human connection.

As longtime followers of Bourdain's shows including *Parts Unknown*, we also celebrate his legacy. However, we believe that the discourse on Bourdain's mediated culinary cultural encounters warrants critical examination as well. It is from this vantage point that we sought to more deeply interrogate how *Parts Unknown* has engaged with Africa, its peoples, and cultural expressions. Specifically, we seek to understand the communicative processes and representational modes that constitute *Parts Unknown*'s depiction of sub-Saharan Africa cultures and foodways, and, more important, probe whether and how the show departs from or perpetuates previous critiques of the Western imagination of Africa through popular media. To do this, we review prior frameworks and studies of Africa's media image followed by a discussion of postcolonial theory and related concepts that anchor our analysis, namely, cultural brokerage, alterity, and colonial nostalgia. By identifying different actors of cultural brokerage, we analyze the eight sub-Saharan Africa episodes of *Parts Unknown* to critically reflect on repertoires of African agency, or lack thereof. Then, we analyze Bourdain's "going-native" brand of culinary adventure and African otherness. Finally, we probe the nature of colonial discourses employed in Africa episodes of *Parts Unknown*, especially as they pertain to the contradiction of colonial rebuke and nostalgia.

Representations of Africa

Our study draws in part on hegemony theory. The notion of hegemony, originally proposed in the Marxian writings of Antonio Gramsci and later developed by Louis Althusser, broadly reflects the cultural domination of a certain social group by the active consent of the dominated (Althusser, 1971; Gramsci, 1971). Whereas Gramsci's (1971) hegemony and Althusser's (1971) dominant ideology ultimately locate power in a Marxian frame of centralized agency, Michel Foucault (1980) and Stuart Hall (1977) argue against structural determining conditions. For Hall, hegemony is the "framing [of] all competing definitions of reality within [the dominant class's] range bringing all alternatives within their horizons of thought" (p. 333). Consequently, the dominant class creates the contours of the choices and actions of the subordinate classes where the latter "'live' and make sense of their subordination in such a way as to sustain the dominance of those ruling over

them" (Hall, 1977, p. 333). Drawing on Hall, Steeves (2008) notes the interdependence of mediated and cultural artifacts. To this effect, "organizations, texts, and audiences are mutually constitutive and historically situated" (p. 419), and should therefore be comprehensively considered in investigating hegemonic processes.

Concepts of hegemony and ideology have been prominent in most studies of Africa's media image in texts, photos, and other media forms. These studies have generally revealed singular, flat, and negative portrayals. Some of the earlier works that exposed these trends were concerned with the "savage," "wild," and exotic images of colonial writers (Achebe, 2010; Hall, 2015). Later research has focused on the absence of Africa or negative news frames such as war, poverty, famine, and disease (Hawk, 1992; Lardner, 1993; Mengara, 2001). Others have written about Africa's image as a combination of these and/or a victim in need of saving (Carruthers, 2004; Cupples & Glynn, 2013). More recently, scholars have illuminated emerging trends of "Africa rising" (Bunce, Franks, & Paterson, 2016).

Drawing on hegemony and postcolonial frameworks, a handful of prior studies have critically examined representations of cross-cultural contact in Africa on reality programs such as the CBS series *Survivor* and *The Amazing Race* (Hubbard & Mathers, 2004; Mathers, 2010; Steeves, 2008) and the Discovery Channel's *Jungle Gold* (Ofori-Parku & Steeves, 2015), concluding that the programs largely erase African specificity and deny voice to Africans. In the context of food reality television, Workneh (2019) examined exoticism of African foodways in *Bizarre Foods with Andrew Zimmern* by invoking the spectacular representational modes of the "crude" native, poverty, and primitivism as evidences of African otherness.

As Bourdain's work in *Parts Unknown* reveals strong journalistic components of information gathering and dissemination, it is also useful to recognize scholarship identifying counterhegemonic global journalism frames. In an analysis of three episodes of *The Amazing Race* set in Ghana, Muspratt and Steeves (2012) argue that the show "constitutes better journalism than most Western journalism" (p. 539). Wasserman (2011) proposes a narrative approach that rejects flat and simplistic representations of Africa as well as romanticized and essentialized notions of "African ethics." Anchored on meaning-making processes and critical dialogue, this process "refuses to reify Africa as a static repository of indigenous knowledge ready to be appropriated in global discourses, but rather as a terrain on which various ethical traditions and discourses continue to play out" (Wasserman, 2011, p. 801). In this sense, African storytelling must be intentional in considering the complexity, heterogeneity, and uniqueness of the African experience while being attentive to global discourses on representation of space, power, and identity. Berglez (2008, 2013) and Reese (2008, 2010) also offer proposals on a distinct epistemology of global journalism, which requires a deterritorialized global perspective in lieu of the traditional domestic–foreign dichotomy. This includes multimodal and multimethod frameworks of interrogating emerging cartographies of journalism practice that involve increased hybridization of formerly distinct formats and intercultural contact. These perspectives are consistent with postcolonial thought, the conceptual foundation for our study.

Examining Mediated Encounters Through a Postcolonial Approach

Postcolonial theory historically has drawn on both Gramsci's hegemony and Foucault's writings on discourse and power. Postcolonial theory rests on the historical context of colonialism with the aim of

producing "critical commentary that serves an act of resistance" to the domination of Euro-American colonial discourse (Nayar, 2015, p. 122). Historically, postcolonial studies have analyzed colonial representations to unravel racial–racism subtexts (Said, 1978), illuminate native literary and cultural heritage (Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, 1986), examine the psychological and cultural impacts of colonialism (Fanon, 1967), and create an intellectual current geared toward emancipation (Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, 1986). At its core, postcolonialism postulates that the Western imagination of non-European groups has been informed by colonial discourses of dominance.

In examining Eurocentric constructions of Africa, several overlapping concepts are useful, including erasure, alterity, agency, and hybridity. *Erasure* generally references absence or Africa's relative neglect in media compared with other locations. Erasure also can be evident in homogenization, or the absence of nuance, diversity, or context (Shome & Hegde, 2002, p. 63). Relatedly, the notion of *alterity* signifies "the sense of a radical racial-cultural otherness and the *process* through which this 'otherness' is constructed" (Nayar, 2015, p. 6, emphasis in original). In tandem with Said's (1978) argument in *Orientalism*, alterity denotes the construction of the European self-image in relation to the African, Arab, or Indian inferior Other "lacking any will or consciousness" (Nayar, 2015, p. 6). In her critique of the Western conceptualization of the Yoruba, Oyěwùmí (1997) invokes the body as a locus of colonialism's marker of alterity through which the superiority of European biology over the colonized Other is established. The body, therefore, is "the bedrock on which the social order is founded" and invites "a *gaze*, a gaze of difference, a gaze of differentiation" (p. 2, emphasis in original). The result is alterity infiltrating into the realm of public imagination through the creation of stereotypes of "the savage, irrational, emotional native versus the calm, rational and systematic white," which, in turn, deploys the institutionalization of racism justifying violent conquests, "civilization" interventions, and cultural obliteration (Nayar, 2015, p. 7). Alterity, then, helps to further conceptualize the notion of erasure via homogenization. For example, Mohanty (1984) notes how Western feminist scholarship has perpetuated a static imagination of "Third World" women. Such feminist analysis, "by homogenizing and systematizing the experiences of different groups of women in these countries, erases all marginal and resistant modes of experiences" (Mohanty, 1984, p. 352). Processes of erasure and alterity are frequently evident because the colonized seldom have the agency to create images of themselves. Agency, therefore, denotes voice. Spivak (1988) was among the first to highlight agency in communication studies, and the concept has since been further developed (e.g., see Kumar & Parameswaran, 2018; Shome, 2016; Shome & Hegde, 2002).

A concept pivotal in much postcolonial scholarship and relevant here is *hybridity*. Although hybridity generally refers to cultural borrowing and mixture as a result of globalization, the term has been used in varied ways, as reviewed by Kraidy (2002, 2005). Kraidy (2005, pp. 58–67) critiques views that overlook or minimize colonial and neocolonial hegemony and related dimensions of power. He advocates a hybridity framework of "critical transculturation," accounting for structural constraints and dialectical interactions among structures, texts, and individuals/groups (Kraidy, 2005, pp. 149–151). Postcolonial scholars seek to reveal how communication produces hybridities, and how the agency of those in power determines outcomes and strengthens their already dominant voices (e.g., Kim, 2017; McFarlane-Alvarez, 2007).

Our investigation of *Parts Unknown* highlights three postcolonial/intercultural phenomena we have observed that are especially relevant in culinary adventure programs, namely, *cultural brokerage*, *going*

native, and *colonial nostalgia*. These analytical frames suggest concepts closely related to those discussed above, and they mutually overlap as well.

Cultural Brokerage

Cultural brokerage involves cultural mediation by individuals who navigate through seemingly incompatible cultures to overcome institutional, political, linguistic, and cultural barriers. The cultural broker is someone who is usually caught between two worlds and negotiates an alternative social space (Hutcheon & Richmond, 1990). Birkle (2009) defines cultural brokers as "people who can move between cultures and/or are themselves cultural hybrids, that is, of mixed heritage" (p. 60). For cultural brokers, borders are "pathways that link peoples rather than barriers that separate them" (Szasz, 2001, p. 3). Generally, cultural brokerage occurs when there is a desire for and background of multicultural experience on the part of the broker who identifies values that need to be mediated (Birkle, 2009; Szasz, 2001). Cultural brokers are not neutral observers but rather are emotionally involved and feel uniquely positioned to celebrate or criticize the cultural group(s) they identify with.

Cultural brokerage has been closely associated with postcolonial notions of hybridity and agency, discussed earlier, especially when new cultural forms emerge as a result of transculturation processes involving dialectical interactions of "cultural intermingling" (Birkle, 2009, p. 61; see also Kraidy, 2005, pp. 149–151). Although research on cultural brokerage has traditionally looked at intercultural and ethnographic contact, we use the term to represent the use of intermediaries in cultural industries. This is relevant when considering reality television shows with intercultural components. The cultural broker becomes the gateway for the host to penetrate the new world. The broker, by virtue of being an "expert" in the two cultures, is deemed to offer legitimacy to the storyline.

Going Native and Othering

In television and popular culture, the "going-native" trope usually involves a character who is disillusioned by modern life and seeks immersion in a new world. Generally, characters who go native initially have prejudices against the native group and aim to impart "civilization" only to integrate with the culture they intended to change. Noble Savage Syndrome is a phrase Ebert (1995) uses to describe movies with a protagonist who, "thrown into the midst of a native tribe, goes native by discovering 'the true meaning of life' and sees through the sham of modern civilization" (p. 78). In contemporary travel writing, the going-native *topos* usually adopts a postmodernist turn in that the author's (or protagonist's) relocation is one of "rebirth" and "renewal," born out of an awakening made possible by the newly discovered and often adopted home. Although the traveler-turned-settler celebrates their newfound identity, their reports of the native culture and people often invoke clichés and stereotypes—thereby reinforcing alterity—typical of most travelogues. In this sense, the traveler is often conflicted about their relationship with the local people and cannot truly immerse. In her analysis of Italian representations by Anglophone travel writers, Ross (2009) captures the conflict between the old and new worlds of the traveler:

On the one hand, they seem to want to maintain their sense of being foreign and thus continually categorise Italians as "others," yet on the other there exists a desire to prove themselves "Italian," as fully acclimatised and integrated into Italian society. (p. 47)

In this sense, the native becomes a shifting construct, an alien whose alterity is communicated, yet one whose lifestyle is avidly espoused.

Colonial Nostalgia

Broadly defined, nostalgia represents a longing for the past. As Boym (2001) notes, nostalgia is "a longing for a home that no longer exists or has never existed"; it is a feeling of "loss and displacement" but also "a romance with one's own fantasy" (p. 123). When nostalgia takes the form of collective experience, it manifests as a social memory in which the present is lamented and the past, through emphasis on "distance and disjuncture," is glorified (Bissell, 2005, p. 216). In the postcolonial context, imperial nostalgia—the evocation of the glamour and grandeur of imperial spaces and moments—gained traction following the conservative wave in the United States and Britain in the 1980s, which, in turn, resulted in the diffusion of imperial-celebratory cultural products in former metropoles. For Bissell (2005), imperial nostalgia represents "a response to a loss of global position or prestige" and "perceived erosion of old geopolitical hierarchies, spatial borders, and lines of identity" (p. 216). Regressive in its framing, imperial nostalgia often evades or obscures the violence of colonization, providing a revisionist historical narrative. In her study on the role of colonial women in creating the tropes and patterns of a colonial lifestyle in Algeria and Kenya, Lorcin (2012) distinguishes colonial nostalgia from imperial nostalgia. The former is associated with the "loss of empire," and the latter with the loss of "socio-cultural standing" (Lorcin, 2012, p. 13). In postcolonial societies, colonial nostalgia involves the longing, by the colonized, for the culture and lifestyle constructions of the colonizer. Narratives of colonial nostalgia are common in Western depictions of postcolonial societies in which colonial temporalities of architecture, décor, cuisine, art, and education are reminisced in a context of political and social angst and disarray (Chaudhuri & Strobel, 1992; Dora, 2006).

Given that the three suggested cultural phenomena (cultural brokerage, going native, and colonial nostalgia) are observed in the data set, we investigate the Africa episodes of *Parts Unknown* seeking to address the following three primary questions:

1. In what ways are cultural brokers featured in Africa episodes of *Parts Unknown*?

2. How does Bourdain's going-native approach play out against evidence of self-reflexivity? What are the contexts under which "otherization" is evident?

3. In what contexts is imperial or colonial nostalgia embedded in Africa episodes of *Parts Unknown*?

Method

Data Set

The sample for this study is a census of sub-Saharan Africa countries featured in Seasons 1–12 (we employ "S" for "Season" and "E" for "Episode" hereafter) of *Anthony Bourdain: Parts Unknown* that were aired through Fall 2018, including an episode broadcast after his death. Altogether there were eight sub-Saharan Africa destinations: Congo (S1, E8), South Africa (S2, E7), Madagascar (S5, E5), Tanzania (S4, E6), Ethiopia (S6, E6), Senegal (S7, E7), Nigeria (S10, E3), and Kenya (S12, E1). The visual and narrative artifacts examined for this research—eight episodes—consisted of 44,901 words of transcripts and 328 minutes of footage.

Africa's numerical share of destinations in *Parts Unknown* ranks fifth of eight regions identified (see Figure 1). When we consider the number of African countries that actually exist and compare it with the show's global distribution, Africa's erasure is evident, as Africa ranks near the bottom, whereas North America represents the most inflated destination ratio (see Figure 2). In this sense, the program's title *Parts Unknown* is misleading. Most of the programs are not about the lesser known regions of the world. Also, we note that previously cited laudatory comments about representations of Africa in *Parts Unknown* ignore Africa's relative absence. (Please note that our use of "Africa" in this study references sub-Saharan Africa episodes of *Parts Unknown.*)
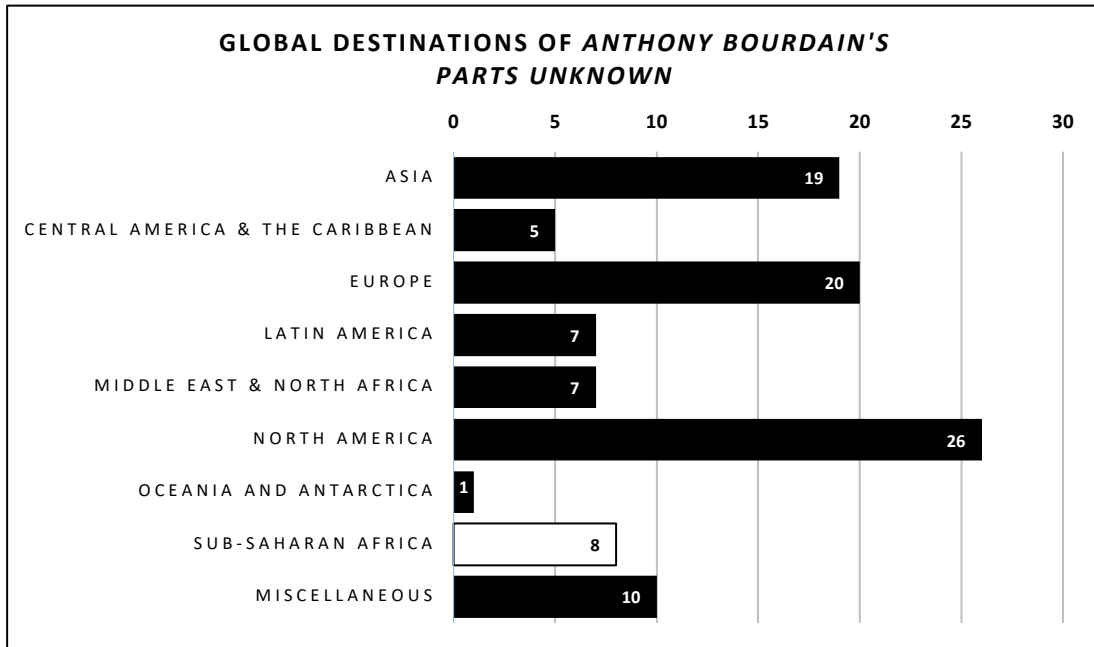

Figure 1. A summary of global destinations of "Anthony Bourdain: Parts Unknown."
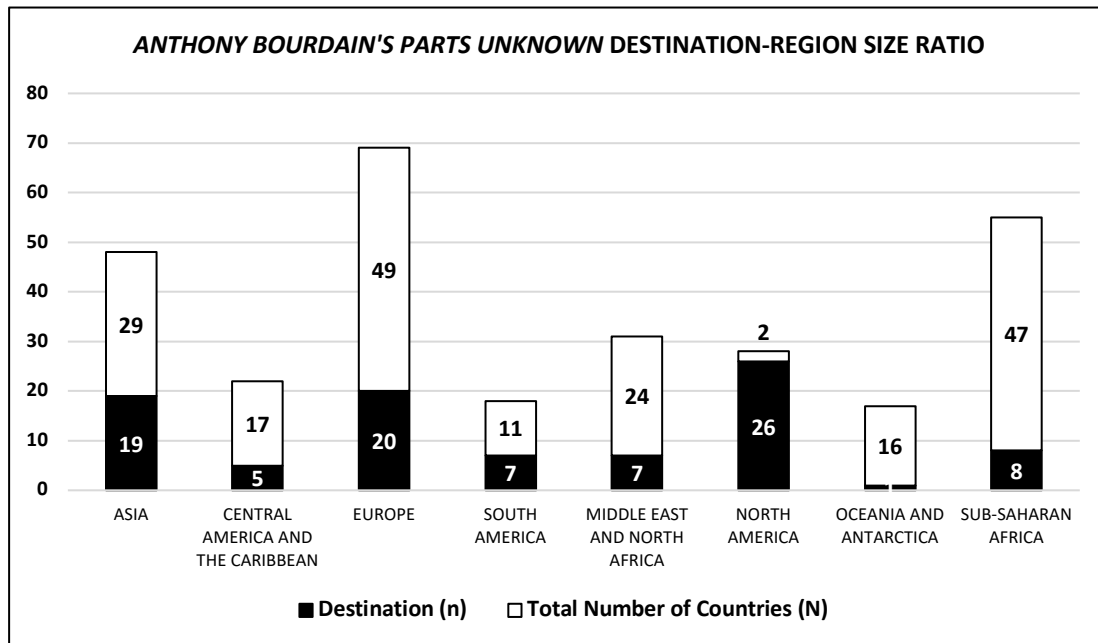
Figure 2. Destination-region size ratio of "Anthony Bourdain: Parts Unknown."

Critical Discourse Analysis

As in all critical scholarship, author positionality is relevant. Both authors have spent many years in east and west Africa. The first author was drawn to culinary adventure programs after encountering episodes filmed in his native Ethiopia, sometimes revealing contradictions between his deep connection to native foodways and the framing on the shows. As noted previously, both authors are longtime followers and fans of Bourdain's narrative style and his self-reflexivity, making a critical exploration particularly intriguing.

Critical postcolonial scholarship argues for fluidity in engaging questions, meaning that no single, universal analytic approach is mandated (Shome & Hedge, 2002, pp. 258–259). Our process is best described as critical discourse analysis (CDA), an increasingly popular framework in critical/cultural popular media scholarship, including in television studies (e.g., Joye, 2009; Wodak, 2010). The Foucauldian tradition of CDA also aligns conceptually with postcolonial theory, given the former's rich history of engaging questions of power and representation. Elaborating Foucault's (e.g., 2010) observation that varied forms of discourse construct shared meaning about ourselves and about the Other, Wodak and Meyer (2016) note that CDA is "fundamentally interested in analyzing opaque as well as transparent structural relationships of dominance, discrimination, power and control as manifested in language"; it investigates "social inequality as it is expressed, constituted, legitimized, and so on, by language use (or in discourse)" (p. 10). Therefore, building on early works that interrogated colonial encounters and the subjugation of the Other in popular culture, CDA seeks to expose power in discourse (Bhabha, 2003; Said, 1978; Spivak, 1998; van Dijk, 1985). Although discourse creates common

understanding about what we "know" or can be "true" about a subject, it can also become a site of oppression by erasing or obscuring counter forms of knowledge and meaning (Hook, 2001; Waitt, 2005). As Foucault (1977) notes, "there are no power relations without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute, at the same time, power relations" (p. 27). The duality of discourse as a site of sustaining/reconstructing dominant power as well as disrupting it makes CDA a useful tool in postcolonial inquiries involving intercultural encounters.

Although there is no universal approach of analytical framework within the CDA tradition, our examination of discourse in *Anthony Bourdain: Parts Unknown* draws on Fairclough's (1992, 1995) three-dimensional model as well as Sabido's (2016) iteration of postcolonial critical discourse analysis. Noting that every discursive event concurrently invokes the elements of text, discursive practice, and social practice, Fairclough (1995) draws on the concepts of intertextuality, interdiscursivity, and hegemony to propose three layers of discourse analysis. These layers—description, interpretation, and explanation—inform the analytical framework of the present study by examining texts (Bourdain's word choices, textual structures, etc.), discursive practices (interpretations of texts beyond linguistic features and structures; emphasis on texts as constitutive of context), and social practices (explanations of discourses of power, ideology, and hegemony embedded in historical and cultural context). In the current critique, the idea is not to conduct an advanced linguistic analysis but to examine the interplay between text and context informed by historical transactions of power in Western image-making of Africa. In deploying Fairclough's analytical framework, we find Sabido's contextual application of CDA along "power imbalances derived from (post)colonial conditions, practices, and structures, which are perpetuated in contemporary societies" (p. 55) to be a useful tool in our analysis of the eight Africa episodes of *Parts Unknown* through a postcolonial approach, and, specifically, by deploying the concepts of cultural brokerage, going native, and colonial nostalgia.

Analysis

Cultural Brokerage: Agency or Muting of the Subaltern?

All eight episodes studied involve cultural brokers who often, because of their multicultural and multilinguistic capital, serve as Bourdain's gateway to accessing, understanding, and engaging with natives. We observed three types of brokers whose injunction in the episodes play out differently: immersed, hybrid, and inherent brokers. Immersed brokers come to Africa from the outside world and are embedded in the social fabric of the host. Usually depicted as philanthropists or researchers, immersed brokers are predominantly White and have acculturated to the host community across a lengthy period. Hybrid brokers, on the other hand, are originally born in or raised by native communities but have eventually entered Western cultural spaces via education, employment, sojourning, or adoption. Hybrid brokers oscillate effortlessly between their native and adopted cultures. Finally, inherent brokers are people native to the culture who have embraced a Western lifestyle of modernity despite their limited or no physical experience of dominant cultural spaces. Inherent brokers commonly have an affinity for a "superculture" that infuses a fashionable, generally Western, cultural environment with local artifacts.

Immersed brokers in the Africa episodes of *Parts Unknown* are depicted as Europeans saving Africans from themselves, especially regarding inhabitants' relationship with nature and the environment.

In Tanzania (S4, E6; Bourdain & Miller, 2014), the audience is introduced to Swedish field biologist Ingela Jansson, who started the *Lion Guardians* project that aims to promote coexistence with endangered lions. The Maasai, described as a tribe of warriors and cattle herders, are at the center of the tension over grazing land where fatal encounters with lions are common. Jansson's role is to turn suspicion to trust in engaging with the Maasai, who now see protecting the lions as in their own interest.

A substantial portion of the Madagascar episode (S5, E5) consists of dramatic narratives and imagery of an island nation drifting from an "exotic unspoiled paradise" to a "microcosm for the end of times" (Bourdain & Vitale, 2015). Bourdain laments the rapid destruction of Madagascar's famous rainforests caused by natives' slash-and-burn agriculture. In contrast to the mostly cinema verité style of other episodes, the Madagascar piece features apocalyptic scenes of technically enhanced charred trees and dark skies accompanied by eerie music reminiscent of suspenseful Hollywood blockbusters. Ironically, in this episode, Bourdain is accompanied by Darren Aronofsky, director of films such as *Requiem for a Dream* (2000), *The Wrestler* (2008), *Black Swan* (2010), and, notably, *Noah* (2014). In the episode, Aronofsky sanctions this narrative of Madagascar by alluding to the dark worldview of his films, especially *Noah*. In one instance, Bourdain characterizes burned areas of Madagascar as "a postapocalyptic wasteland" (Bourdain & Vitale, 2015), and Aronofsky responds by recounting how he tried to create desolate landscapes like these in *Noah*. Toward the end of the episode, in what appears to be a staged sermon, a preacher warns congregants about God's punishment for their sins. Juxtaposed with scenes of powerful waves of the Indian Ocean that arguably symbolize God's flood of destruction in the biblical Noah's times, the preacher cries for Madagascar's deliverance from sins against God, and for Bourdain and Arnofsky, at least metaphorically, against the environment.

It is important to note that, whereas the episode blames local people for their reckless environmental destruction, Bourdain pushes back on this narrative. Bourdain reminds the audience about the forest as a source of food and fuel. He recounts that the vast urbanization in the U.S. West was accompanied by environmental destruction. In the words of local musician and politician Rossi, the environmental protection narrative of Madagascar from the outside world ignores the existential concerns of the Malagasy people:

> They [the international community] don't care. The international community, they've paid
> a lot of money to protect the forest. You protect the monkey. You don't protect the people.
> I eat the monkey. If I'm hungry, I eat them. They don't care about the world is going
> more and more war. (Bourdain & Vitale, 2015)

Bourdain's balancing act falls short because he, perhaps unwittingly, tells Madagascar's story from Aronofsky's lens. In an attempt to gel Aronofsky and his worldview, Bourdain abdicates the agency of local people and becomes trapped by a broker who becomes the story rather than a means to the story. The constant portrayal of Madagascar as "extreme," "chaotic," and "dangerous" inevitably reveals erasure via homogenization and establishes native people's alterity. They are static people, whose faces are shown but whose voices are not heard, limited to scenes such as ceremonial dancing, communal eating, and the poverty-stricken toils of everyday life—cameo stereotypes observed in prior studies of Africa on reality television (e.g., Steeves, 2008). In the end, the local community's relationship with the environment is

defined, problematized, and solved by the European immersed broker. This is yet again demonstrated with the extended appearance of Patricia Wright, an American primatologist who studies and advocates for endangered lemurs. Although the environmental advocacy is laudable, the celebration of the immersed broker, in stark contrast with the marked absence of the agency of everyday Tenalla people of the rainforest, draws on the familiar trope of the White savior, apparent in Wright's assessment of the transformative impact of her project to the people:

> What we've had to do, of course, is make their lives better in exchange. Health projects, education projects, tourism. Many of the people work as tour guides. They work in the hotels. They have work. They didn't have any work when I got here. (Bourdain & Vitale, 2015)

In contrast to immersed brokers, hybrid brokers assume their brokerage not because of their learned expertise but because of their belonging. The hybrid broker in the Africa episodes of *Parts Unknown* is usually someone of African descent who has spent substantial time in the West studying culinary arts, leading to a food-related career. The episode in Ethiopia (S6, E6; Bourdain & Fallon, 2015) features Marcus Samuelson, an Ethiopian-born, Swedish-raised celebrity chef and restaurateur who owns several critically acclaimed restaurants in the United States and Europe. Bourdain's itinerary follows Samuelson and his wife, Maya, who is also Ethiopia-born. Samuelson locates and celebrates his hybrid brokerage through food:

> I always find, I was born into very little food, but yet sort of I made my whole life about food. My sort of structure and pragmatism comes from being raised in Sweden, and my sort of vibrancy and warmth to cooking and feel-based food that I love comes definitely from here [Ethiopia]. (Bourdain & Fallon, 2015)

One of the most notable contributions of hybrid brokers in *Parts Unknown* is that they make the conversation about food, thereby bringing visibility to the richness and complexity of the culinary traditions represented. In this sense, the detailed, vibrant traditions mediated by hybrid brokers stand in stark contrast to those mediated by immersed brokers whose roles often drag the show to clichéd narratives and images. From multiple close-up shots of culinary preparation to extensive critique of various types of cuisine, Africa episodes sanctioned by hybrid brokers offer a well-rounded appreciation of native communities' cultural heritage.

The hybrid broker role is prominent in the Senegal episode (Bourdain & Osterholm, 2016), which probably is also one of the most Africa-centered episodes in terms of the agency it affords Senegalese people from all walks of life. This is particularly apparent in Bourdain's interactions with Pierre Thiam, a prominent Senegalese chef, restaurateur, and author who grew up in Senegal but also worked in New York City. In highlighting the uniqueness of Senegalese food, Bourdain and Thiam address specific ingredients and flavors, but more important, they circle back to its cross-cultural significance:

> THIAM: I think the most interesting part of American food is our, our contribution.
> BOURDAIN: How did you feel when you first turned on TV and you see some, you know, rich White lady and she says, "Well, we're about to do," you know, "my family, this is an

old family recipe." You know? "An American classic, a traditional favorite." Do you say, "Wait a minute that's…."

THIAM: "That's mine!"

BOURDAIN: "That's mine." I mean, happy? Proud? Pissed off? What?

THIAM: Oh yes. Proud, proud. Happy too. No, not pissed off. No, that, I was never pissed off. I thought, you know, yes. I think food is such a great way of uniting people. You know? It's like you're breaking barriers. Food is not only about feeding yourself here in Senegal, it's a whole culture. The most important value is what we call "Teranga." The more you share, the more your bowl will be plentiful. It's not how much you have, it's how much you give. That's what matters in Senegal. So, so Teranga is that culture. (Bourdain & Osterholm, 2016)

The luminosity of Senegalese origins of American food through a hybrid broker posits African salience—and agency—in a television format that is based on intercultural encounters and, inevitably, power relations. Not all forms of hybridity support the empowerment of social groups in meaningful ways, and, as Kraidy (2005) notes in his discussion of critical transculturalism, the merit of a theory of hybridity "resides in the extent to which it emphasizes human agency" (p. 151). Although shades of aloofness are possible, hybrid brokers, by virtue of their "organic" fusion of cultural groups, offer a better case for the agency of otherwise muted groups in cultural productions involving intercultural contact.

Inherent brokers share characteristics of hybrid brokers in terms of their origins. Their rootedness in the African communities they represent in *Parts Unknown* is significantly deeper, because, unlike hybrid brokers, their worldview is largely informed by their immediate environment. Although inherent brokers do not play prominent roles compared to immersed or hybrid brokers in Bourdain's narrative setup, they are present in all of the Africa episodes.

By virtue of their belonging, inherent brokers are best positioned to maximize the agency of the host culture. More important, inherent brokers such as Sanza Sandile (South Africa), Djily Bagdad (Senegal), and Abenezer Temesgen (Ethiopia) offer layers of stories that transcend traditional tropes of Africa in most Western cultural products. However, it should be noted that the choice of inherent brokers generally correlates to social capital such as status, expertise, and linguistic latitude. Most of the inherent brokers in the Africa episodes are well-known public figures such as musicians/artists, activists, politicians, or chefs. (Exceptions are the Ethiopia, Congo, and Kenya episodes in which inherent brokers are ordinary citizens, i.e., skateboard community founder and local tour guides, for example.) Where brokers are public figures, predispositions of elitism are inevitable, limiting the argument of enhanced voice or agency for Africans in the episodes.

Finally, the appearance of American comedian and television host Walter Kamau Bell throughout the Kenya episode (Bourdain & Fallon, 2018) complicates our broker categories. Although immersed, hybrid, and inherent brokers in the context of intercultural encounters largely capture the different dispositions, motivations, and influences of the actors of cultural negotiation, the demonstrated tensions between Bell's lived identity as an African American and his African roots make it difficult for Bell to occupy native space. Even though the significance of his first visit to the "motherland" and his Kenyan name (Kamau) is not lost

to Bell, he is aware that his American identity means he cannot go to Africa and say, "I'm home!" Bell's positionality manifests itself through his deep self-awareness that rejects the subtly assumed brokerage role he is assigned by virtue of his legacy African-ness. Hence, he reveals a mindfulness that refrains from accepting Kenyan agency. As he critically ponders, "I'm still wondering, am I doing right by this culture and does this culture think I'm doing right by them?" (Bourdain & Fallon, 2018).

Going Native: Self-Reflexivity Versus Otherization

In his role as a host of prior culinary adventure programs, as well as of *Parts Unknown*, Anthony Bourdain embraces an ethnographic approach to global food cultures. Bourdain's showmanship treats food as a vehicle to transport his audience through his lens in discovering new cultural spaces. In forging this brand, Bourdain consistently adopts a "going-native" or "when in Rome" aura, where he purports to do what the native does and eat what the native eats. Bourdain usually starts by establishing what we describe as "a humble ignorance," whereby he professes his vulnerability and authentic desire to learn, thus appearing, at least symbolically, to relinquish his privileged status. In introducing his South Africa episode, for example, he describes the country as "a place I came in a state of near total ignorance, loaded with preconceptions" (Bourdain & Freeman, 2013).

In addition to his humble ignorance posture, Bourdain occasionally acknowledges his power to frame a story, hence also manifesting deliberate self-reflexivity: the idea of maintaining a critical self-awareness regarding how the cultural entrant impacts the value of the ethnography produced. By acknowledging his role in the co-construction of narrative and expressing his biases, the storyteller aims to increase the authenticity of his experience. In the Africa episodes, Bourdain frequently recognizes his repertoire of privilege—Whiteness, celebrity status, affluence—and talks about it in a manner that sustains the going-native brand:

> The camera is a liar. It shows everything. It shows nothing. It reveals only what we want.
> Often, what we see is seen only from a window, moving past and then gone. One window.
> My window. If you had been here, chances are you would have seen things differently.
> (Bourdain & Vitale, 2015)

The Kenya episode, the last to be fully completed before Bourdain's death, perhaps most epitomizes his understanding of the power of storytelling. The episode features clichéd African tropes such as a slum community, goat head soup, Maasai blood drinking, and a safari, largely because of Bourdain's "mischievous curiosity" to see how his guest W. Kamau Bell copes. At the same time, Bourdain's disarming vulnerability and self-reflexivity in recognizing how local agency gets compromised offers, in our opinion, a poignant insight into how White, Western, and privileged voyagers can envisage and feel burdened by their storytelling optics in an unfamiliar cultural space:

> Who gets to tell the stories? This is a question asked often. The answer in this case, for
> better or for worse, is I do, at least this time out. I do my best. I look, I listen, but in the
> end, I know it's my story. Not Kamau's, not Kenya's, or Kenyans'. Those stories are yet
> to be heard. (Bourdain & Fallon, 2018)

Bourdain's going-native brand is demonstrated both in emic acts of participating in local culinary traditions and in recognizing the value systems of cultural groups. *Parts Unknown* in Tanzania includes a scene in which Bourdain warns the audience about a Maasai goat-killing practice that he has been asked to perform. We are informed that the Maasai traditionally kill their goats by suffocation to keep the blood, a vital component of their diet, intact in the chest cavity. Bourdain struggles with the idea but overcomes his discomfort to give respect to Maasai customs:

> Ok, this [killing by suffocation] a lot of you are going to find very disturbing. I try and be a good guest. I eat what my host put in front of me. I try to take responsibility if something dies for my dinner. . . . So when the Chief asked if I care to do the honors and tells me how it has to be done, I'm not happy. In fact, as I close off its air passages, I'm struggling to not throw up on myself. (Bourdain & Miller, 2014)

Toward the end of the episode in Madagascar, Bourdain and filmmaker Aronofsky, previously referenced, travel to the coastal village of Manakara where they attend a local cuisine preparation ceremony. In this scene, Aronofsky expresses his discomfort with how he and Bourdain are prioritized for food, while a vast majority of the community, especially women and children, are not served. We then learn that the local community follows a form of a "caste system," which Bourdain does not necessarily support but nonetheless respects:

> BOURDAIN: Who gets to eat and when becomes a pressing concern to the two of us.
> ARONOFSKY: Can we get the kids eating? Can we hand out the food?
> UNIDENTIFIED MALE: In a local culture like this, first ladies serve the men.
> BOURDAIN: Right.
> UNIDENTIFIED MALE: And then we eat. And then the kids eat later.
> BOURDAIN: Right. I got you.
> UNIDENTIFIED MALE: It's like a caste system.
> BOURDAIN: It's not like our system, but it's a system. The kids are getting ready for theirs over there. And it becomes clear that, yes, everybody will eat. (Bourdain & Vitale, 2015)

Although the going-native trope is evident across locations of *Parts Unknown*, the Africa episodes perhaps reveal Bourdain's deepest conflicts between the desire to immerse in the new cultural space and the longing to retreat to the comforts of Americana. This is most exemplified in African destinations that are consistently referred to as "poor," "corrupt," "chaotic," and "dangerous." In episodes such as Madagascar and particularly the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC; referred to as the Congo in the episode; Bourdain & Vitale, 2013), the going-native brand is conveniently set aside. The people—depicted as impoverished, naive, and mute—become objects rather than participants. Contrary to the self-reflexivity mode in which some agency is generally afforded to the culture being explored, in the DRC, Bourdain seeks refuge in his privilege. In this and the Madagascar episode, direct interaction with natives is limited. Entry into local communities' cultural space is negotiated through the White immersed cultural broker. Shown but not heard, the native's otherness is communicated through an absence of agency.

As noted above, in no episode is African otherness more established than in the DRC where culinary culture is a side note. In fact, the combined footage of culinary narrative and image is limited to five minutes. The Congo episode represents old-school tropes including images of skinny, destitute, dust-covered children running around unattended, seemingly fascinated by the presence of the White man and scrambling to get filmed, as well as images of toiling women carrying heavy loads on their heads as a melancholic tune plays in the background. Scenes of Congolese destitution are accompanied by Bourdain's frustration about Congolese incompetence and corruption. Expressions such as "let's get underway before they figure a new tax to levy on us" feed into the familiar us–them narrative. The DRC episode exposes the predicaments of the going-native brand more than any other by showing how, in circumstances of increased cultural disparity, the traveler opts to reoccupy their "superior" space. For Bourdain, the Congo perhaps represented the toughest test of sustaining the going-native brand. As he attests, "The Congo was a place I've dreamed of visiting since before I ever thought I'd get the chance to travel the world. Actually being here, I'm not so sure" (Bourdain & Vitale, 2013).

Colonial Nostalgia

Except for the Ethiopia episode, the narratives, images, and cultural artifacts in *Parts Unknown* episodes in sub-Saharan Africa frequently reference the colonial experience and how it has affected the livelihoods, identities, and cultural expressions of Africans. Bourdain's discourse on colonization is largely framed from a critical posture, one that gives salience to the destructive elements of European imperialism. From the Congolese genocide carried out by Leopold and his mercenary army to South Africa's apartheid that championed minority White rule, Bourdain details the colonial predicament. In South Africa, Bourdain's opening act involves a rebuke of White Afrikaner statues in an unidentified city:

> They [statues] don't look friendly. Who are those anyway? Some ugly Dutch guys it looks like with guns. I'm guessing particularly friendly to the current power. They look like they're going to or coming from oppressing a Black man. First order of business, man. When I take my country back, first order of business is to take that down. Am I right or what? I'm kind of amazed. Tear that shit down. (Bourdain & Freeman, 2013)

Bourdain's narratives on anticolonialism are markedly conspicuous in other episodes as well. In Tanzania, he spends considerable time talking to Abeid Karume, grandson of Zanzibar's first president, about the historical structures that relegated Africans to the bottom of social hierarchies in favor of British and Arab colonizers. Although the anticolonial frame remains ubiquitous, another way colonial narratives appear revolve around new cultural spaces as a result of the colonial experience. In Senegal, the tolerant and peaceful social fabric of the Senegalese is partly attributed to the colonial experience. In a scene filmed in the city of Saint-Louis, Bourdain talks about how the Senegalese, in contrast to many postcolonial cultures, have no divide on Black–White bloodlines. As one inherent broker attests, multiracial children and unions are considered normal in Senegal, whereas they are frowned on elsewhere. These spaces also are often addressed from the standpoint of culinary hybridity in which food is constructed as an outcome of cross-cultural encounters, made possible by the colonial experience.

In addition to the anticolonial and hybridity frames, the colonial experience is discussed through nostalgic narratives—both malignant and benign—in Africa episodes of *Parts Unknown*. Consistent with hegemony theory, these narratives glorify the lifestyles, privileges, and cultural preferences of the European colonizer, and accept the view that "things used to be better in the old good days of European rule." Generally, the person reminiscing about the colonial past is someone who had access to the colonizer, and, who, as a result of this access, enjoyed considerable privilege that has since diminished. In Madagascar, for example, we are introduced to Mariette, who is described as "a frequent colonial ambassador" and "the go-to chef for visiting presidents and royalty," living in "a former neighborhood of choice for aristocrats and colonizers alike" (Bourdain & Vitale, 2015). Marked by a celebratory tone of French influence on Malagasy cuisine, the scene is accompanied by live classical music in what seems to be an attempt to re-create the royal colonial space of Mariette's heyday as a chef.

In another Africa episode, Bourdain's portrayal of the Congo as a destitute, war-torn, corrupt country creates an "it couldn't be worse" sentiment in which the audience is desensitized to the horrors of colonial times. For Bourdain, there is "a lot more hope here [the Congo] than there's any right to expect" (Bourdain & Vitale, 2013), which, in essence, establishes the perennial desperation of the Congo for the viewer, who may begin to entertain the idea that colonialism was not the worst thing that happened to the Congolese. The nostalgia communicated by this language is compounded by the absence of voices reporting the terror of Belgian colonialism. Bourdain makes repeated references to Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* as an inspiration for his lifelong fascination with the Congo and reason for this trip. It is ironic that Bourdain's imagination is shaped by *Heart of Darkness*, which has been a subject of considerable critical scrutiny for its flat and negative characterization of Africa (see Achebe, 2010).

Conclusion

Against a historical backdrop of stereotypical, reductionist, and frequently dehumanizing representations of Africa in Western cultural industries, we investigated how Africa and Africans are depicted in *Anthony Bourdain: Parts Unknown*, a show that developed a reputation for realistic and nontouristic representations.

In the eight Africa episodes, Bourdain routinely makes use of cultural brokers to access, engage with, and talk about native groups. We believe our discussion of cultural brokerage, a notion that is traditionally associated more with intercultural communication than postcolonial approaches, warrants a case for extending the concept to media representations scholarship. Although analyses of agency may employ different ideological artifacts, we argue that an analysis of cultural brokerage in mediated communication offers a sound pathway to address questions of power and agency in intercultural encounters. Notwithstanding existing literature in intercultural communication (Jezewski, 1990; Martin & Nakayama, 2018), this study offers evidence of the need for more theoretical discussion on cultural brokerage within a postcolonial framework.

Three types of cultural brokers are observed in our analysis: immersed, hybrid, and inherent brokers. These brokers, although akin in their multicultural capital, play out differently in how they mediate African agency. Predominantly White, immersed brokers in these episodes generally are researchers,

philanthropists, or educators who are depicted as agents of social change in an otherwise doomed community. This depiction conforms to a tired White-savior narrative in which Africans are voiceless victims. Nevertheless, this trope is increasingly resisted. For instance, in 2018 the head of Comic Relief, a prominent British charity organization, retired its use of celebrities for what is commonly referred to as "poverty tourism" (McVeigh, 2018).

In contrast to immersed brokers, Bourdain's interactions with hybrid brokers offer much more latitude for African agency, emanating from these brokers' cultural identification with communities. Although not all forms of hybridity predicate agency, Bourdain's hybrid brokers represent an organic fusion of worldviews that does not relinquish rootedness in the African home. Inherent brokers infuse African agency by virtue of their immediate membership in local cultural groups. However, inherent brokers tend to embrace elitist views, which in turn calls for a cautious analysis of the shades of agency they mediate. We also acknowledge that our categories cannot easily fit every broker role, as we pointed out regarding W. Kamau Bell's appearance in the Kenya episode.

Bourdain's "going-native" style, including his humble ignorance and deliberate self-reflexivity, has been lauded in popular culture and by Henry (2017, 2018). We likewise observed considerable evidence of Bourdain's self-reflexivity characterized by open confessions of his ongoing struggle with his personal flaws, privilege, difference, and choices. In Kenya in particular, Bourdain's profound self-awareness afforded him the opportunity to talk about Kenya from various points of views by deploying an exceptionally wide range of inherent brokers: artists and comedians in Nairobi's slum community Kibera, LGBT activists, female boxers, Safari guides, conservationists, and Maasai chiefs. However, his self-reflexive stance was less evident in more challenging locations. In the DRC, lacking the ability to find easy refuge in Western comforts and familiar cultural brokers, he abandoned his trademark self-reflexivity and reverted to an Africa-as-victim trope and a negative critique of his experience, even referencing Conrad's much-maligned *Heart of Darkness* as his inspiration for the trip.

Finally, we examined Bourdain's references to the colonial past, and whether his narrative reveals colonial or imperial nostalgia. Nearly all of the Africa episodes laudably provide historic and usually critical context about colonialism. Nonetheless, colonial and imperial nostalgia are also frequently evident, most blatantly in the DRC, where Bourdain and cultural brokers openly lament the poverty and desperation of the Congolese people and reminisce about colonial infrastructure and material legacies. The danger here, in our view, is the possible trivialization of Belgian colonial terror, which in fact is the origin story of the contemporary Congolese political and social predicament that Bourdain laments.

Bourdain's unique uses of hybrid and inherent cultural brokers, his self-reflexive style, and his efforts to historicize and contextualize Africa locations indeed separate *Parts Unknown* from other CAPs and from most other reality programs in Africa. Bourdain offers a fresh and highly likeable and engaging style. Nonetheless, we disagree with others, such as Henry (2017), who concludes that *Parts Unknown* provides "a counter-hegemonic narrative of Africa and should stand as a model for the rest of the travel show genre" (p. 517). As Bourdain painfully confesses in the Kenya episode, the *Parts Unknown* stories in the end are his, those of a privileged, White Western chef and reality television host, not those of people living in his various destinations. No narrative adjustment can erase that reality. Still, some of

Bourdain's choices—uses of immersed brokers, reduced self-reflexivity in challenging locations, and evidence of colonial nostalgia in some episodes—support oppressive colonial tropes by denying local agency and highlighting otherness. Hence, we believe our analysis offers lessons for CAPs and other Western reality shows, as well as for journalism.

We recommend further critical studies on culinary adventure programs and other representations of intercultural encounters to extend and further synthesize concepts and observations of cultural brokerage, "going native," colonial nostalgia, and related postcolonial concepts, particularly agency, alterity, and hybridity. Studies drawing on and extending global journalism critiques and concepts (e.g., Wasserman, 2011) also are needed. Empirical work will be important to compare Africa culinary narratives and images with those set elsewhere by interviewing participants in media productions (production staff, cultural brokers, etc.) as well as engaging with audiences in the United States and globally.

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