

The Corrective Recipe: Imperialism, Negation and Control in *The Complete Indian Housekeeper and Cook*

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Abstract

This thesis explores the construction and use of the recipe in one of the most important cookbooks of late Victorian culture, *The complete Indian housekeeper & cook: giving the duties of mistress and servants, the general management of the house and practical recipes for cooking in all its branches* (1888) by Grace Gardiner and Flora Annie Steel. The recipe in its bare, unaestheticised form, is used by Gardiner and Steel within the text to construct for their readers a fantasy of Imperial control over Indian people and culture. However, the household constructed within *Indian Housekeeper* – the “Anglo-Indian” ideal of white authority and Indian labour—did far more than just reflect or represent the existing views and values of its readers. Indeed, it was often at odds with them. This thesis will argue that the authors deploy the recipe as a corrective tool in order to discipline what they perceive as weaknesses and failings in their readers. This analysis of the use and construction of the recipe in Gardiner and Steel’s text highlights the nuances of the recipe as a communicative tool.

This thesis will firstly look at the recipe selection process in *Indian Housekeeper*. It will argue that recipes were chosen and written by Gardiner and Steel in an attempt to control and correct the desires of their readers. Secondly, this thesis will look at how the written recipe was used - openly by readers, and somewhat covertly by Gardiner and Steel – instead of dialogue and direct instruction to preserve social distance between a *memsahib* and her servants and avoid interaction.

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Introduction

Jean-François Revel's *Culture and Cuisine* lauds the recipe for being an “unconscious reflection of everyday life.”¹ The anthropologist Jack Goody, similarly, praises the recipe for being “‘objective’, ‘neutral’ and ‘impersonal.’”² Both Goody and Revel see the recipe as a purely functional text. When scholars do accord the recipe literary value they do so conditionally, e.g. on the basis of its descriptive complexity. The recipes of M.F.K. Fisher and Edna Lewis, for example, have been rightly highlighted as worthy of literary merit. In contrast, this thesis will argue that even the bare, unaestheticised recipe, is not a passive or neutral “unconscious reflection” of a culture. Instead, it will argue that the act of writing and using a recipe is an intervention in a culture. As such, it will treat the creation of the recipe as an inherently active and literary act. This thesis will focus on the construction and use of the recipe in *The complete Indian housekeeper & cook: giving the duties of mistress and servants, the general management of the house and practical recipes for cooking in all its branches* (1888) by Grace Gardiner and Flora Annie Steel. This cookbook is one of the most important cookbooks of late Victorian culture. Within *Indian Housekeeper*, the recipe is used by Gardiner and Steel to construct a fantasy of Imperial control. However, the household constructed within *Indian Housekeeper* – the “Anglo-Indian” ideal of white authority and Indian labour—did far more than just reflect or represent the existing views and values of its readers. Indeed, it was often at odds with them and sought to intervene in them. In order to combat contrasting views of the Anglo-Indian ideal, the authors deploy the recipe as a corrective tool. The recipe is used to discipline what Gardiner and Steel perceive as weaknesses and failings in their readers. This analysis of the use and construction of the recipe in Gardiner and Steel's text highlights the nuances of the recipe as a communicative tool.

One aspect of the recipe in *Indian Housekeeper* which emphasises its correctional nature is its frequent negativity. Both in terms of construction and language the focus of the recipe in *Indian*

¹ Jean-François Revel, *Culture and Cuisine* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1982), 3. cited in Mary A. Procida, ‘Feeding the Imperial Appetite: Imperial Knowledge and Anglo-Indian Discourse’, *Journal of Women's History*, 15.2 (2003), 123–49 <<https://doi.org/10.1353/jowh.2003.0054>>, p.138.

² Jack Goody, *The Domestication of the Savage Mind*, Themes in the Social Sciences, Reprinted, transferred to digital printing (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2000), p.142.

Housekeeper is frequently on negation. That is, what readers should not eat and what cooks should not do. The authors themselves note that their recipes are designed to undo “the many evil habits in which Indian cooks have been grounded and taught.”³ The focus of the recipe is thus on “things not to be done” (70) rather than food to be enjoyed. The recipes in *Indian Housekeeper* are “based on exclusion” and “articulated by negation” rather than pleasure.⁴ Another form of “negation” in the recipes of *Indian Housekeeper* is the recipe selection process. In its original form the text focussed on European dishes. It did include some recipes for Anglo-Indian dishes, such as “Curry, Fish” and “Carrots, Curried”. It also included several Anglo-Indian recipes which used curry powder, as well as some chutneys. However, these recipes were greatly outnumbered by those for European dishes. Yet Indian food was eaten daily by Anglo-Indians at the time of *Indian Housekeeper*’s publication and was very popular.⁵ The dishes the authors chose to include do not correspond to what Indian cooks were typically preparing for their British employers. Instead, the recipes included in the text, this thesis will argue, present an idealised version of the Anglo-Indian diet. In this idealised world, rather than being desired Indian food is side-lined. The recipes chosen and written by Gardiner and Steel were also phrased to correct the desires of their readers for Indian food. For example, before giving a recipe for stew they negatively contrast British and Indian stews, describing Indian preparations as “simply appalling”. (236) Gardiner and Steel’s omission of Indian recipes shows that *Indian Housekeeper* was not an “unconscious reflection of everyday life.”⁶ Instead, its selection of recipes mostly avoided the food that had by then become an established and familiar part of the Anglo-Indian diet.

³ Flora Annie Webster Steel and G. Gardiner, *The Complete Indian Housekeeper & Cook: Giving the Duties of Mistress and Servants, the General Management of the House and Practical Recipes for Cooking in All Its Branches*, p.70, 5th edn (London: W. Heinemann, 1902) </catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/012406745>. (All subsequent references to this edition are included in the body of the writing.)

⁴ Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*, European Perspectives (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), p.3.

⁵ John Cameron, *Our Tropical Possessions in Malayan India: Being a Descriptive Account of Singapore, Penang, Province Wellesley, and Malacca; their Peoples, Products, Commerce, and Government*, London: Smith, Elder and Co., 1865, 295-301, cited in Cecilia Leong-Salobir, ‘Spreading the Word: Using Cookbooks and Colonial Memoirs to Examine the Foodways of British Colonials in Asia, 1850–1900’, in *The Routledge History of Food*, ed. by Carol Helstosky, The Routledge Histories (London ; New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2015), pp. 131–55, p.131.

⁶ Jean-François Revel, *Culture and Cuisine* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1982), p.3, cited in Procida, p.138.

It is perhaps not surprising then that many readers of *Indian Housekeeper* challenged Gardiner and Steel's original vision of the ideal Anglo-Indian home. As with modern cookbooks, what a recipe says is quite distinct from what a reader does and both servants and *memsahib* did not necessarily cook or live 'by the book'. Following the publication of the first edition, the authors received a "seemingly constant stream of correspondence from readers"⁷ and had to make revisions to *Indian Housekeeper* in accordance with readers' requests. As such, there are several different editions available of *Indian Housekeeper*. The most easily accessible form of the text is perhaps the Oxford World Classic's re-print of the fourth edition published in 1898.⁸ However, this edition is abridged, and contains only a third of the text's original recipes. As such, I have referred to a 1902 edition of the text. It is a re-print of the fifth edition originally released in 1901, which is available on HathiTrust.⁹

One of the most contested aspects of the original text among readers was the authors' omission of Indian recipes. This led to the eventual inclusion in the 1893 third edition¹⁰ of the text of eight "Native Dishes" which the authors note were included "by request." (356) The authors make clear that they do not approve of the new addition, noting in a preface to the chapter that "most native recipes are inordinately greasy and sweet" (356). The variability in views on the role of "native dishes" in Anglo-Indian households reveals the complexity of food's place in Anglo-Indian society. Although food was used by Anglo-Indians to mark the "correct path through colonial environments"¹¹ there was not a common consensus amongst Anglo-Indians about what such a "correct path" was.

Gardiner and Steel also police the use of the written recipe among their readers. Despite writing hundreds of recipes and supplying a pamphlet of their recipes translated into local languages to

⁷ Ralph J. Crane and Anna Johnston, 'Note on the Text', in *The Complete Indian Housekeeper and Cook* (Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), pp. xxviii–xxix, xxviii.

⁸ Flora Annie Webster Steel and G. Gardiner, *The Complete Indian Housekeeper and Cook*, ed. by Ralph J. Crane and Anna Johnston, 4th edn (Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2010).

⁹ Steel and Gardiner, *Indian Housekeeper 5th Edition*.

¹⁰ Flora Annie Webster Steel and G. Gardiner, *The Complete Indian Housekeeper and Cook: Giving the Duties of Mistress and Servants, the General Management of the House and Practical Recipes for Cooking in All Its Branches*, 3rd edn (Edinburgh: Edinburgh Press, 1893) <<https://archive.org/details/b28081663/page/n414/mode/2up>>.

¹¹ Ralph J. Crane and Anna Johnston, 'How to Dine in India: Flora Annie Steel's "The Complete Indian Housekeeper and Cook" and the Anglo-Indian Imagination.', in *Flora Annie Steel: A Critical Study of an Unconventional Mem Sahib* (Edmonton: The University of Alberta Press, 2017), pp. 161–82, p.172.

accompany *Indian Housekeeper*, the authors discourage their readers from using the written recipe to correct servants. Instead, Gardiner and Steel encourage their readers to learn the local language (2) and to only communicate with servants verbally. Gardiner and Steel emphasise that such use of dialogue with servants is key to the maintenance of authority within an Anglo-Indian household. For example, after referencing the availability of their recipes in translation they caution readers against their use. The authors caution that the written word is “never so efficacious as verbal order, quiet, authoritative, unyielding, yet kindly.” (56) Following the anthropologist Jack Goody, I argue that this favouring of dialogue stems from a belief that the written recipe is a less authoritative means of communicating than the spoken word. Goody observed that in terms of cookery, direct instruction forces the student to adopt a “subordinate position” to the teacher. The written recipe, Goody argues, “avoids all that”.¹² Gardiner and Steel’s emphasis on dialogue overtly emphasises the importance of Anglo-Indians having control over their servants.

The elision of Indian food, and emphasis on dialogue, do not reflect the typical preferences of a *memsahib*, or white female householder. Gardiner and Steel’s critical and correctional tone is thus directed at those *memsahibs* who do not conform to the authors’ standards of behaviour. This focus is noted in the title: *Indian Housekeeper* is a text which explains the “duties of [the] mistress” as much as those of the “servants”. As I will show the authors’ use of the recipe reflects such a desire to manage and control their readers as well as their readers’ servants. Indeed, I will argue that *Indian Housekeeper* is critiquing its readers as much as it is teaching them to be critical.

The Anglo-Indian Home

Indian Housekeeper was originally published in 1888 and stayed in print until 1921.¹³ In each of the editions, the authors implemented changes to their original vision of the imperial Anglo-Indian household—but often only grudgingly. Each successive edition contains responses to the objections of

¹² Goody, *The Domestication of the Savage Mind*, p.142.

¹³ Ralph J. Crane and Anna Johnston, ‘Introduction’, in *The Complete Indian Housekeeper and Cook* (Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), pp. ix–xxvii, xxviii.

readers, on topics such as vegetarian cookery and Indian wetnurses. The authors both accommodate these requests and also attempt to critique them. These correctional moments reveal the disciplinary aspect of their text, showing that the authors are not just seeking to inform their readers but wish to manage and subdue their desires.

Indian Housekeeper belongs to a wider genre of books of household management designed to help British subjects who were running households in the Indian subcontinent. This “Anglo-Indian” audience, a self-styled hyphenated identity, was a deeply unstable one. Anglicising the home became important to upper class *memsahibs* as a way of performing their British identity, and keeping “native India at bay.”¹⁴ This desire to perform British domesticity in order to insulate it against the infringements of Indian culture is seen throughout *Indian Housekeeper*. As Chattopadhyay stated “the new vision of colonial domesticity formulated in the last decades of the nineteenth century” was “most clearly articulated in the work of Flora Annie Steel and Grace Gardiner.”¹⁵ The negation noted above conveys the constant duality of “colonial domesticity”. The text’s idealised Englishness is a product of the underlying anxiety which proximity to Indian servants induced in its authors.

Culturally speaking there were both costs and benefits associated with being overseas for *memsahib*. As Chattopadhyay noted, Anglo-Indian identity was compounded of “the anxieties of loss, as well as the liberation of being separated from England.”¹⁶ One example of “the anxieties of loss” can be seen in the fear of the encroachment of Indian culture, articulated through an overzealous emphasis on British and European food. However, in positioning the creation of an Anglicised domesticity as a pro-Imperialist endeavour, Gardiner and Steel also empowered their reader. The “liberation” from England allowed Anglo-Indian women to gain a certain power and prestige. Their avid efforts to Anglicise the home formed an important part of the “civilising mission” of the British empire. After all, as Chattopadhyay notes, “only in the colonies could British women be reminded that planting a

¹⁴ Swati Chattopadhyay, “‘Goods, Chattels and Sundry Items’: Constructing 19th-Century Anglo-Indian Domestic Life”, *Journal of Material Culture*, 7.3 (2002), 243–71 <<https://doi.org/10.1177/135918350200700301>>, p.245.

¹⁵ Chattopadhyay, p.246.

¹⁶ Chattopadhyay, p.269.

garden was not merely a matter of feminine accomplishment and pleasure, but a ‘duty’ of empire.”¹⁷ Anglicising domestic activities in *Indian Housekeeper* are thus tied to pro-Imperialist ideation as well as anxiety. In dedicating their text “To the English girls to whom fate may assign the task of being house-mothers in our Eastern empire” (v) Gardiner and Steel note the link between domesticity and colonisation. In the fourth edition of the text, Steel also added a preface noting that “housekeeping in India to-day has a political and social as well as a domestic side.” (vii) This was in regards to inflation in India. Steel wrote that “those who, to save themselves trouble, or to avoid the loss of a luxury, consent to give a price which has no real relation to the intrinsic value or cost of the article, are sinning against a society the great mass of which is poor beyond belief.” (vii) *Indian Housekeeper* from its first few pages thus establishes itself as a text which does not shy away from the broader “political and social” implications of being a “house-mothe[r] in our Eastern empire”. It also immediately recognises the ambiguous position of white women “housekeeping” in India. Despite imagining themselves as apart from India, Anglo-Indians’ every action impacted the nation and its people.

Chattopadhyay argues that Anglo-Indian women were “not merely symbols of English domesticity and feminine charm” but instead “their role was one of active management of the house and its compound – the very foundation of empire.”¹⁸ *Indian Housekeeper* thus addresses an audience for whom home-making was a political and tense affair. The tension arose from the paradoxical nature of attempting to Anglicise a home in India through the labour of Indian servants. Despite the fact that “the first principle of the Anglo-Indian home was to keep native India at bay” Anglo-Indian households were run by and populated with Indian people, employed as servants.¹⁹ Households employed more servants in India than in Britain and servants tended to be men.²⁰ Even within *Indian Housekeeper*, the idealised Anglo-Indian household never attained the Victorian ideal of “separate

¹⁷ Chattopadhyay, p.245.

¹⁸ Chattopadhyay, p.258.

¹⁹ Chattopadhyay, p.245.

²⁰ Fae Ceridwen Dussart, ‘The Servant/Employer Relationship in Nineteenth Century England and India’ (unpublished doctoral thesis, University College London, 2005), p.81 and p.108.

spheres”.²¹ The kitchen was a space where traditional Victorian roles were particularly overturned. Rather than being a female, English space, the kitchen in India was a distinctly Indian and male arena. The cook in an Anglo-Indian household was “invariably male, usually older and also usually a Muslim.”²² Letters and documents from the time show that the Anglo-Indian kitchen was an intimidating and foreign place to many *memsahib*. Characterised as “savage” (2) by Gardiner and Steel the kitchen was often “not a part of the main house” and “therefore more indirectly supervised and rarely visited.”²³ Procida noted that many *memsahib* didn’t even know where their kitchen was.²⁴ The physical space of the kitchen tended to take on a distinctly Othered, “native” character in the Anglo-Indian imagination.

The Role of the Recipe in the Anglo-Indian Home

As well as rarely entering the kitchen to supervise their Indian chefs, *memsahibs* also rarely cooked themselves. Mary Procida noted that “virtually no one in the Anglo-Indian community cooked.”²⁵ And yet, despite the disassociation of *memsahibs* from the kitchen, cookbooks had an enduring popularity²⁶ among Anglo-Indian readers.

The popularity of recipes among a demographic who did not cook and rarely entered the kitchen reveals the cookbook’s highly aspirational position among Anglo-Indian middle classes in two particular ways. On one hand, the recipe in general presented for its readers a fantasy of culinary competency and control over a domestic household. On the other, the selection of recipes in *Indian Housekeeper* reflects the authors’ version of an idealised Anglo-Indian home. There is a clear aspirational and corrective element to the selection of recipes in *Indian Housekeeper*. As noted earlier, one clear example of the unrealistic portrayal of life in India within *Indian Housekeeper* is the over-representation of European dishes in its recipe section since Indian food was typically eaten multiple

²¹ Chattopadhyay, p.243.

²² Procida, p.133.

²³ Chattopadhyay, p.256.

²⁴ Procida, p.127.

²⁵ Procida, p.127.

²⁶ Procida, p.126.

times a day by Anglo-Indians.²⁷ Douglas's argument that "what is excluded from the social order is, in fact, constitutive of that order"²⁸ is evident in the authors' choice to mostly omit Indian food (or "native dishes" as they are referred to within the text). The absence of Indian food speaks to Gardiner and Steel's low opinion of it. There is thus a clear tension in the text between the authors' and readers' views of what it is to be Anglo-Indian. This tension is negotiated through the recipe selection process.

Public Domesticity

At once public and private, British and Indian, the Anglo-Indian household was highly composite in nature. Indeed, while Procida notes that "the hybrid Anglo-Indian domestic culture was intended to demonstrate the colonizers' mastery and dominance in the private arena of the empire as in the public sphere," it seems important to note that the Anglo-Indian household was not in fact entirely a "private arena," as is perhaps suggested by its centrality in demonstrating "the colonizers' mastery and dominance."²⁹ Procida appears to share this understanding of the Anglo-Indian space as both public and private in her later statement that "the seemingly private realms of kitchen and dining room were as much arenas for cultural interchange and the construction of imperial knowledge as overtly political public spaces. Supposedly private practices and understandings of food and cooking are thus implicated in the work of imperialism."³⁰ The "colonial domesticity" which Gardiner and Steel encourage was, as such, only "supposedly private". The way a *memsahib* ran her Anglo-Indian household was a somewhat public statement on her imperial views.

The kitchen, characterised by Gardiner and Steel as "savage" (ix) was an area of the Anglo-Indian home that the authors encouraged their readers to exert particular authority over. Throughout Gardiner and Steel's text, their critical attitude towards Indian food and their encouragement of imperious

²⁷ Leong-Salobir, 'Spreading the Word: Using Cookbooks and Colonial Memoirs to Examine the Foodways of British Colonials in Asia, 1850–1900', p.143.

²⁸ Doris Witt, *Black Hunger: Soul Food and America*, 1st University of Minnesota Press ed (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004), p.85.

²⁹ Procida, p.125.

³⁰ Procida, p.125.

attitudes in fellow Anglo-Indians reminds modern readers that “English women in the colonies were active and enthusiastic participants in the Empire.”³¹ Gardiner and Steel’s text constructs the Anglo-Indian household as a model for the British Empire, a place governed through “prestige”. (9) In their article *How to Dine in India*, Crane and Johnston note that “Steel and Gardiner positioned the role of the Anglo-Indian house-keeper as a crucial one within the broader social world of the British Raj.”³² The authors frequently note that running the Anglo-Indian household is analogous to ruling the British Empire. Gardiner and Steel state, for example, “We do not wish to advocate an unholy haughtiness; but an Indian household can no more be governed peacefully, without dignity and prestige, than an Indian Empire.” (9) The recipe, this thesis will argue, played a “crucial” and complex role in constructing the “broader social world of the British Raj.”

Mintz, in *Sweetness and Power*, asked that researchers “decod[e] the process of codification, and not merely the code itself”³³. This has not been entirely fulfilled with the recipe. The text of a recipe is frequently considered uncreative, and neutral. It is not, typically, considered as literature. In contrast, food itself is widely recognised as a system of communication and signification. Yet if food is a code, a language in and of itself, the recipe is surely the process of codification. The recipe’s bareness and seemingly innocuous nature masks its complex role in shaping and reflecting the relationship between author and reader. Indeed, in *Indian Housekeeper* the recipe is written briefly and simply. This thesis will challenge the assumption that the simplicity of a recipe is evidence of its neutrality. In contrast with Goody’s argument that recipes’ neutrality as an interface allows for the complete avoidance of the “subordinate position”³⁴, this thesis will instead argue that recipes can in fact impose, maintain and enforce social hierarchies. The written recipe in *Indian Housekeeper* functions as an expression of the authors’ desire to control and correct their fellow *memsahib* and Indian servants, in almost equal measure.

³¹ Crane and Johnston, ‘How to Dine in India’, p.179.

³² Crane and Johnston, ‘How to Dine in India’, p.172.

³³ Sidney W. Mintz, *Sweetness and Power: The Place of Sugar in Modern History* (New York: Penguin Books, 1986), p.14.

³⁴ Goody, *The Domestication of the Savage Mind*, p.142.

Chapter One: Negation and the Recipe Selection Process

The authors of *Indian Housekeeper*, as referenced above, were Flora Annie Steel and Grace Gardiner. Relatively little is known of Gardiner's life. However, Crane and Johnston note that Gardiner came to India in the 1860s with her husband John William Gardiner, a member of the Indian Civil Service.³⁵ This placed Gardiner in a position of relative prestige – in Anglo-Indian society the Civil Service “were the elite.”³⁶

Although the book was a collaboration, Crane and Johnston hypothesise that it was mostly written by Flora Annie Steel.³⁷ *Indian Housekeeper* was just one of many books Steel wrote and - unlike Gardiner - Steel's life is quite well documented. She has had two biographies published about her and wrote an autobiography titled *The Garden of Fidelity* (1929). Flora Steel moved to India at the age of 20, when she married to Henry Steel, who was also a member of the Indian Civil Service.³⁸

Steel had lived in India for over twenty years at the time of *Indian Housekeeper's* initial publication.³⁹ Crane and Johnston note that Steel “immersed herself in the local culture, learning to speak, read, and write Punjabi and the local language of whatever area her husband was posted to, and committed herself to improving the lives of the local native women.”⁴⁰ Steel established girls' schools,⁴¹ and provided medical support to local women and children,⁴² while continuing to write about India, publishing eighty-five short stories, five historical novels, and her autobiography. Despite her extensive experience in India, she never seemed to imagine the lives of Indian people complexly. A review of her biography noted that she did not “provide her Indian characters with more than one

³⁵ Crane and Johnston, ‘Introduction’. ix.

³⁶ Dussart, p.79.

³⁷ Crane and Johnston, ‘Introduction’, xv.

³⁸ Crane and Johnston, ‘Introduction’, xi.

³⁹ Crane and Johnston, ‘Introduction’, xi.

⁴⁰ Crane and Johnston, ‘Introduction’, xii.

⁴¹ Indrani Sen, *Woman and Empire: Representations in the Writings of British India, 1858-1900*, New Perspectives in South Asian History, 3 (Hyderabad: Orient Longman, 2002), p.133.

⁴² Crane and Johnston, ‘Introduction’, xii.

feature each” and that “her affection for Indians was firmly and often insolently paternalistic.”⁴³ This, unfortunately, is consistent with her attitude towards Indian people and servants in *Indian Housekeeper*.

Crane and Johnston warn against conflating Steel’s time spent in India and documenting India with an understanding of Indian people. They encourage readers not to be “seduced” by what Jonah Raskin, in writing about Kipling’s *Kim*, called the “illusion of intimacy” which her writings on Indian life and culture created.⁴⁴ They note that Steel “remained an ardent supporter of Empire and her knowledge of India was ultimately used to support Britain’s imperial hold on the country”⁴⁵. This claim that she used her “knowledge of India” to support the Empire is corroborated by Steel herself, who said that she learnt about Indian culture in order to learn how to “manage” Indian people.⁴⁶ It is also evidenced within *Indian Housekeeper*. There is no doubt that *Indian Housekeeper* is an imperialist text, and that it views domestic duties as key to the success of the British Empire in India. The text, as mentioned earlier, is dedicated “To the English girls to whom fate may assign the task of being house-mothers in our Eastern empire.” (v) Cecilia Y. Leong-Salobir singles out *Indian Housekeeper* as particularly open about its imperialist ideology. She notes that “nowhere else was the connection made more explicit between linking the household to Empire” than Gardiner and Steel’s “proclamation”⁴⁷ that “We do not wish to advocate an unholy haughtiness; but an Indian household can no more be governed peacefully, without dignity and prestige, than an Indian Empire.” (9) *Indian Housekeeper* constructs an imperial fantasy of the ideal Anglo-Indian household and ideal *memsahib*. Yet its idealism did not lessen its popularity.

⁴³ Benita Parry and Daya Patwardhan, ‘A Star of India: Flora Annie Steel, Her Works and Times’, *The Modern Language Review*, 62.2 (1967), 324 <<https://doi.org/10.2307/3723865>>, p. 325.

⁴⁴ Crane and Johnston, ‘Introduction’, xiii. and Jonah Raskin, *The Mythology of Imperialism* (New York: Random House, 1971), 103, cited in Crane and Johnston, ‘Introduction’, xiii.

⁴⁵ Crane and Johnston, ‘Introduction’, xiii.

⁴⁶ Sen, *Woman and Empire*, p.132.

⁴⁷ Leong-Salobir, ‘Spreading the Word: Using Cookbooks and Colonial Memoirs to Examine the Foodways of British Colonials in Asia, 1850–1900’, p.133.

Mary Procida notes that *Indian Housekeeper*, and other works of household management aimed at *memsahibs*, were immensely popular.

The large size of this body of Anglo-Indian domestic literature, its continued appeal over the course of a century, its relative homogeneity and, most significantly, its importance in the lived experiences of Anglo-Indians indicate that the modes of domesticity advocated in these texts resonated with the realities of imperial life rather than serving merely as the presentation of a chimerical ideal.⁴⁸

Although *Indian Housekeeper* often strays from typical “modes of domesticity” that would be practiced by its readers in India, it was still seen by readers as useful and informative. The impact on readers and the fact that it was very actively used can be seen by the “seemingly constant stream of correspondence from readers”⁴⁹ that Gardiner and Steel received. One reader, Eileen Sanders, in a questionnaire issued by the University of Cambridge on life as a *memsahib* in India noted “[T]hanks to Flora Annie Steel’s *Complete Indian Housekeeper and Cook* [I got on] very well”.⁵⁰ Furthermore, Procida notes that Steel herself said she thought her cookbook had done “more good for her readers than any of her popular novels or short stories.”⁵¹ Steel also wrote in 1927, “I have had letters without end, thanking me for it from would-be housekeepers, gardeners, cow-keepers, and chicken rearers.”⁵² Although its didacticism and ideological nature may make it seem like an almost theoretical text, *Indian Housekeeper*’s advice played a role in shaping the lives of its readers.

Indian Housekeeper contains extensive practical guidance for the mistress of an Indian household on all aspects of running a household. Aside from the recipes and references to food which form the majority of the following analysis, *Indian Housekeeper* also includes chapters titled “Hints on Poultry”, “Dogs”, “Gardening” and “Hints to missionaries and others living in camp and jungles”. In particular, Gardiner and Steel extol the importance of complete control over one’s household, even including instructions for where different servants in the house should sleep.⁵³ At over forty pages in

⁴⁸ Procida, p.123.

⁴⁹ Crane and Johnston, ‘Note on the Text’, xxviii.

⁵⁰ Eileen Sanders, Responses to ‘Memsahibs’ Questionnaire, University of Cambridge, Centre of South Asian Studies, Cambridge, England cited in Procida, p.123.

⁵¹ Procida, p.123.

⁵² Flora Annie Steel, *The Garden of Fidelity* (London: MacMillan and Co., 1929), 187, cited in Procida, p.123.

⁵³ Steel and Gardiner, *Indian Housekeeper 4th Edition*, p.100 and p.224.

length, “Duties of the Servants” is the longest single chapter in the book. Yet it remains, ultimately, a cookbook: recipes cover more than 130 pages overall, and information on food appears throughout the text. Recipes, too, are scattered throughout. For example, under “Cows and Dairy” among other thematic chapters. The use cases for recipes in a household where the *memsahib* did not cook except to occasionally bake⁵⁴ is explored in Procida’s article and later in this thesis.

Of all the many Anglo-Indian books on household management published in the nineteenth century, *Indian Housekeeper* was one of the most popular texts. Crane and Johnston note that the “*Complete Indian Housekeeper and Cook* was probably the most widely used and best-known of the many household guides for Anglo-Indian *memsahibs* published in the late nineteenth century.”⁵⁵ They also note that “between its first publication in 1888 and 1917 it went into more than ten editions.”⁵⁶ Bertelson in her analysis of *Indian Housekeeper* went so far as to describe it as “the bible of existence for many young English women in India.”⁵⁷ Crane and Johnston also cite Indrani Sen’s observation that it quickly “became the staple handbook for young *memsahibs*.”⁵⁸ *Indian Housekeeper*’s status among and influence upon young *memsahibs* moving out to India was so great, it has frequently been compared to one of Britain’s most famous housekeeping books, *Beeton’s Book on Household Management* (1861). Both texts are exhaustive guides on household management and were immensely popular in India and Britain respectively. Oxford University Press in their 2011 re-release of the text claimed *Indian Housekeeper* was the “Mrs Beeton of British India”.⁵⁹ In their analysis of the text Crane and Johnston quoted David Burton as saying *Indian Housekeeper* earned its authors “the reputation of the Mrs. Beeton of British India”.⁶⁰ Although Mrs. Beeton’s works are significantly

⁵⁴ Procida, p.123.

⁵⁵ Crane and Johnston, ‘How to Dine in India’, p.162.

⁵⁶ Crane and Johnston, ‘How to Dine in India’, p.162.

⁵⁷ Cynthia D Bertelson, “‘For English Girls ... in the Eastern Empire’: Housekeeping in British India’, *The Recipes Project*, 2016 <<https://recipes.hypotheses.org/7414>> [accessed 19 September 2021].

⁵⁸ Sen, Indrani. “Gendering (Anglo) India: Rudyard Kipling and the Construction of Women.” *Social Scientist*, vol. 28, no. 9–10, 2000, 16, cited in Crane and Johnston, ‘How to Dine in India’, p.162.

⁵⁹ Oxford University Press, ‘The Complete Indian Housekeeper and Cook’, Oxford University Press, 2011 <<https://global.oup.com/academic/product/the-complete-indian-housekeeper-and-cook-9780199605767?cc=gb&lang=en&#>> [accessed 19 September 2021].

⁶⁰ Burton, David. *The Raj at Table: A Culinary History of the British in India*. Faber, 1993. 11, cited in Crane and Johnston, ‘How to Dine in India’, p.162.

more well-known than *Indian Housekeeper*, both texts were evidently both very popular with their intended readership, and merit comparison on these grounds.

The Anglo-Indian Community

The popularity of the genre likely stemmed in part from the social isolation of many *memsahibs* in India. British women only began to join men in India in the mid-nineteenth century.⁶¹ Leong-Salobir argued that cookbooks were especially useful to and “closely followed” by colonial audiences because “Firstly, colonial readers were too geographically distant from the metropole when trends or practices came into vogue; secondly, they were too isolated from family or friends for domestic advice.”⁶² This social isolation was partly due to the fact that the British in India were generally vastly outnumbered by the Indian population. Dussart notes that the first “comprehensive census of British India” was taken in 1881. It included “with the exception of Kashmir, the entire continent of British India, including under this term the feudatory states in political connection with the Government of India” and the “province of Burmah.” It estimated the “‘purely British population’ as not more than 150,000 out of a total population of 253, 891, 821.”⁶³ Among this supposedly “pure” population, women were vastly outnumbered by men. Dussart notes,

According to the Census, the majority of British-born people were single males (62, 050), of which the largest age group was 20-24 (24,218). Married men numbered 13,948. There were almost twice as many married women as single women (7,943 and 3,972 respectively), and the largest female age group was 30-39.⁶⁴

As such, of the roughly 150,000 British people in India, only perhaps 12,000 were women. However, the British did tend to congregate together and were not spread evenly throughout India. Dussart cites the 1881 census as reporting that “by far the largest portion of the British troops quartered in India”

⁶¹ Indrani Sen, ‘Between Power and “Purdah”’: The White Woman in British India, 1858-1900’, *The Indian Economic & Social History Review*, 34.3 (1997), 355–76 <<https://doi.org/10.1177/001946469703400304>>, p.358.

⁶² Leong-Salobir, ‘Spreading the Word: Using Cookbooks and Colonial Memoirs to Examine the Foodways of British Colonials in Asia, 1850–1900’, p.136.

⁶³ *Report on the Census of British India taken on the 17th February 1881*, Vol 1, (HMSO, 1883) 1; 224; 5, cited in Dussart, p.77.

⁶⁴ *Statistics of the British-Born Subjects recorded at the Census of India, 17th February 1881* (Calcutta, 1883) pp. 1-2, Dussart, p.78.

were in the North-Western Provinces and the Punjab.⁶⁵ But, even in these circumstances, it is not surprising that women such as Eileen Sanders relied on texts like *Indian Housekeeper*, and were relatively isolated.

As a result of this isolation, cookbooks were an important method for attaining an understanding of correct Anglo-Indian household management. As noted earlier, upper class Anglo-Indian households were only semi-private. There was thus a great deal of pressure on young *memsahibs*. They were expected to adjust to India, their large household staff and embody the “chimeric ideal” of a *memsahib* simultaneously.⁶⁶ Gardiner and Steel note in their text that many *memsahibs* were reliant on cookbooks to learn etiquette, and that this could produce problems. For example, the authors attribute mistakes in the serving-style of French food by Anglo-Indians to the fact that they have learnt about French cookery solely from cookbooks and misunderstood the descriptions therein.

Specifically, the authors note that there is a “present habit in India” of serving the “remove” (a dish served in place of one that has just been taken away, typically the fish or soup course) before the entrées (here in the French sense of starter, rather than the American sense of main course) which is “opposed to tradition” (52) “If the fashion is to continue”, the authors joke, “the name of the [remove] will surely need revision.” (52) This misunderstanding, Gardiner and Steel hypothesise, stems from “the fact that in most French cookery books and menus the relevés [removes] are printed first, and the entrées after.” (52) Gardiner and Steel’s references to Anglo-Indians’ misunderstanding of menus in French cookbooks offers further evidence of the relative social isolation of Anglo-Indians. Their description of the widespread misunderstanding of the place of a remove suggests that many living in India were using cookbooks to gain an understanding of French food. This implies that knowledge of French food was desirable, but that many new arrivals in India had little experience of French formal dining before arriving. The frequency of misunderstandings also perhaps stems from the fact that many *memsahibs* did not have a network of more knowledgeable friends who would correct their

⁶⁵ *Report on the Census of British India*, Vol 1, p223. Dussart, p.77.

⁶⁶ Procida, p.123.

mistakes. Or at least, that many *memsahibs* did not feel comfortable asking for or giving advice to those they dined with. The interactions noted in *Indian Housekeeper*, and the population statistics referenced by Dussart, all emphasise the important place of cookbooks and books of household management, such as *Indian Housekeeper* in India under Crown rule.

The Duties of Servants

Even if a *memsahib* came from a servant-keeping class in England, or had access to other experienced British women in India, she would have a great deal to learn about housekeeping in India. Servants' gender roles in an Anglo-Indian household were quite different from in the UK. Dussart notes "There were far more male servants in India than in England. According to a report on Madras there were 'only 445 females to 555 males' in domestic service, while in England there were in every 1000 domestic servants 894 females to 106 males."⁶⁷ This change in gender roles is reflected in *Indian Housekeeper*, where the cook is referred to throughout as "he". The only servant presumed to be female in *Indian Housekeeper* is the ayah, or nurse. Dussart noted that Indian servants' gender, as well as language barriers (explored in this thesis in more detail in chapter two) impacted the authority of *memsahib* in Anglo-Indian households. Edith Dixon noted that the bearer in her house "would have thrown me to the jackals, if it lay between saving [me] and the little Lordship my small brother."⁶⁸ Similarly, another mistress noted that "I have no power over the servants".⁶⁹ But, despite the discomfort that male servants' presence provided, keeping large numbers of servants was seen as necessary by Anglo-Indian families. Dussart notes that even "poor whites" - "at the bottom of the Anglo-Indian social order" - who made up "nearly half the European population living in India by the end of the nineteenth century" employed multiple servants.⁷⁰ In a letter to her mother dated 1857, a British woman in financial difficulties named Minnie Wood living in India asked for money. Despite her straitened circumstances, however, Wood continued to keep multiple servants, noting "I have to

⁶⁷ *Report on the Census of British India taken on the 17th February 1881, Vol I, p39, Dussart, p.87.*

⁶⁸ Edith Dixon MSS/Eur/T26, Oriental and India Office Collections of the British Library (OIOC), Oral Archives, cited in Dussart, p.103.

⁶⁹ March 10 1857, Letters of Maria Lydia Wood, MSS/Eur/B210/A, OIOC; [Maud Diver] 'A Lady Resident' *Englishwoman in India*, 60. cited in Dussart, p.103.

⁷⁰ Dussart, p.80.

have two ayahs, dearest Mama...I enclose a list of the servants we keep, perhaps large to you, but essential out here.”⁷¹ Servants’ presence allowed for the luxurious lifestyle Anglo-Indians desired, and yet also – through their gender and proximity – challenged the *memsahib*’s hegemonic rule. As such, they were both a source of fear and prestige for *memsahibs* in India.

In “Duties of the Servants”, Gardiner and Steel take fifty pages to detail the duties of all of the servants in a middle class household. The section opens with a table of which servants are kept in which areas of India, and how much they are expected to be paid. It highlights how British women both inside and outside of their home were outnumbered by male and Indian bodies, and frequently male, Indian bodies. In the kitchen, this was certainly the case. The kitchen in an Anglo-Indian household, as observed earlier, was often isolated from the main building. Hence its title of a “cook house” or “cook room” rather than a kitchen.⁷²

Unlike in Britain, the kitchen in India was a very foreign place to the mistress of an upper class household. In Britain in the late nineteenth century the kitchen was rarely a place exclusively for servants. Humble notes that Beeton only expects households “at the income level of £500 a year” to be able to afford a cook. Any amount below that and “the mistress would almost certainly be performing some culinary tasks alongside her maid”.⁷³ Mid-nineteenth century household manuals, such as Mrs. Beeton, often framed housework undertaken by the mistress as “assisting” or “taking charge”.⁷⁴ Humble notes Beeton’s declaration that “it is desirable, unless an experienced and confidential housekeeper be kept, that the mistress should herself purchase all provisions and stores needed for the house”.⁷⁵ This language, Humble observes, frames the work “not as labour but as sensible vigilance.”⁷⁶ Furthermore, even in wealthier households mistresses eventually returned to the

⁷¹ 16 September 1857, Letters of Maria Lydia Wood, MSS/Eur/B210, OIOC, cited in Dussart, p.81.

⁷² Procida, p.129.

⁷³ Nicola Humble, *The Literature of Food: An Introduction from 1830 to Present*, 1st edn (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2020), p.72.

⁷⁴ Humble, p.72.

⁷⁵ Isabella Mary Beeton and Nicola Humble, *Mrs Beeton’s Book of Household Management*, Oxford World’s Classics, Abridged ed., reissued [ed.] (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p.13.

⁷⁶ Humble, p.72.

kitchen. What Humble termed the “gradual middle-class reoccupation of the kitchen” was “a feature of the domestic culture” in the early twentieth century in the UK.⁷⁷ However, such “middle-class reoccupation of the kitchen” did not occur in India in Anglo-Indian households. Furthermore, such “taking charge” of cookery is explicitly prohibited by Gardiner and Steel in all editions of *Indian Housekeeper*. They note “let [the mistress] do nothing herself that the servants can do, if only for this reason, that the only way of teaching is to see things done, not to let others see you do them.” (9)

However, very few *memsahibs* in India took any time to teach or “see things done” in the kitchen. Having no say in what went on in the kitchen was common practice for many *memsahibs*. Procida argues that *memsahib* had an almost entirely supervisory role in housework in general. She notes that *memsahib* generally “failed” to “acquire even a passing familiarity with basic cooking skills.”⁷⁸ The exact role of the *memsahib* in the kitchen will be explored in more detail in the second chapter of this thesis. However, it is evident that although few *memsahibs* cooked, the close supervision that Gardiner and Steel encouraged was unusual. Most *memsahibs* rarely entered their own kitchen. Indeed “one cookbook cautioned, “[N]o lady can visit her kitchen, as she would do at home.”⁷⁹ Another noted “The native ways are not as our ways and the less you see of them over their cooking operations the more appetite you will have for the food set before you.”⁸⁰ This fear of entering the kitchen created a reversal of gender roles in the kitchen. Although in Britain mistresses may have, upon occasion, joined servants in the kitchen, the male presence was much more unusual. Humble observed that in Victorian Britain “a pervasive anxiety emerges particularly in a concern to police the presence of men in the kitchen.”⁸¹ Yet in India the kitchen was entirely a male domain. This rendered an interest in cooking, far from feminine, deeply suspect. Procida notes that the “general disdain with which Anglo-Indians regarded all cooking” can be seen in a novel set in Madras.⁸² In the novel, the only Anglo-Indian woman who bakes “is a woman who is “country-bred.” Procida notes that this is “a person of English descent but born and educated in India” and the baker was thus “somewhat suspect

⁷⁷ Humble, p.86.

⁷⁸ Procida, p.128.

⁷⁹ Elizabeth Garrett, *Morning Hours in India* (London: Trubner and Co., 1887), 14, cited in Procida, p.129.

⁸⁰ An Anglo-Indian, *Indian Outfits and Establishments* (London: Upcott Gill, 1882), 68, Procida, p.129.

⁸¹ Humble, p.84.

⁸² Procida, p.130.

in her cultural affinities.”⁸³ Baking was one of the few culinary activities *memsahibs* ever took part in.⁸⁴ But even baking did not require them to enter the kitchen. Procida observes that,

When baking, an Anglo-Indian woman would set up a table on the verandah of the main bungalow, combine the appropriate type and quantity of ingredients and send her creation to the kitchen with strict instructions to remove it from the oven after the requisite interval. Thus, women avoided the noisome precincts of the kitchen.⁸⁵

Far from being a place of female solidarity, the kitchen in India was an entirely male domain. Interactions between Indian women and British women were, in general, unusual in India. Dussart notes that “many Indian women stayed hidden behind the walls of the zenana.”⁸⁶ She cites Anne Wilson as noting “You must understand that some Europeans of the old school would not allow a lady to accept an Indian gentleman’s proffered hospitality.”⁸⁷ This reticence to allow inter-racial interaction, Wilson blames on Indian cultural traditions rather than European prejudices. European men “prefer [their wives] to be as wholly absent from every kind of Indian society as are the inmates of zenanas. Their argument is that until an Indian gentleman will allow them to meet his wife, they will not allow him to meet an English lady.”⁸⁸ However, despite the relative absence of Indian women from a typical Anglo-Indian home, as well as from the text (with the exception of references to the ayah) Flora Annie Steel was very much involved with Indian women. Indrani Sen noted that “Her maternalist interest in local gendered issues [in Lahore] took the form of conducting reading classes, helping to establish girls’ schools in the province, besides giving medical advice to rural women and children.”⁸⁹ Despite life inside the Anglo-Indian home being typically highly male, Flora Annie Steel was unusual in having plenty of outlets to express female solidarity, and support women’s education in India.

Orientalism and White Femininity

⁸³ Mrs. Milne Rae, *A Bottle in the Smoke* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1912[?]), 81, cited in Procida, p.30.

⁸⁴ Procida, p.130.

⁸⁵ Procida, p.130.

⁸⁶ Dussart, p.82.

⁸⁷ Lady Wilson (Anne C. Macleod) *Letters from India* (London, 1911) 33-34, cited in Dussart, p.82.

⁸⁸ Lady Wilson (Anne C. Macleod) *Letters from India*, 33-34, cited in Dussart, p.82.

⁸⁹ Indrani Sen, *Gendered Transactions: The White Woman in Colonial India, c.1820-1930*, 2017 <<https://doi.org/10.7765/9781526106018>> [accessed 19 September 2021], p.54.

However, Steel framed her own interactions with women as pro-imperialist. She noted in her autobiography *Garden of Fidelity* that she “acquir[ed] knowledge of Indian and its people” expressly to “lear[n] more or less how to manage them.”⁹⁰ Steel’s framing of her interactions as practical is contrasted with her later accounts of how close she felt to the women she was learning to “manage”.

Indrani Sen

noted that when Steel left Kasur, the women she knew “gave her a brooch made up of gems taken from their own ornaments – moving Steel to tears by this gesture, ‘so remarkable, so touching, so clearly a token of what their feelings were.’”⁹¹ Steel’s attitudes towards Indian women, and her own “civilising mission” towards them was covered in Sen’s *Woman and Empire* (2002).⁹² However, female interactions between British and Indian women were rare both inside and outside the home. The predominance of male Indian servants, and the scarcity of Indian women at social events, meant that the Anglo-Indian home was not a place that fostered interactions between British and Indian women. Indeed, such interactions are not encouraged or referenced in *Indian Housekeeper*, despite Steel’s clear (if pro-Imperialist) passion for women’s education.

Instead, the kitchen remained a threat to be conquered. Readers’ perceived fear of entering the kitchen is reflected in the dramatic opening of *Indian Housekeeper*. Gardiner and Steel describe the disorderly state of affairs in an Indian household, prior to the intervention of a well-trained *memsahib*.

The kitchen is a black hole, the pantry a sink. The only servant who will condescend to tidy up is a skulking savage with a reed broom; whilst pervading all things broods the stilling, enervating atmosphere of custom, against which energy beats itself unavailingly, as against a feather bed.

The authors themselves know what it is to look round on a large Indian household, seeing that all things are wrong, all things slovenly, yet feeling paralysed by sheer inexperience in the attempt to find a remedy. (ix)

⁹⁰ Sen, *Woman and Empire*, p.132.

⁹¹ Steel, *Garden of Fidelity*, 110, cited in Sen, *Woman and Empire*, p.132.

⁹² Sen *Woman and Empire*, p.132.

This opening is striking on two accounts. Firstly, there is the evocative image of the kitchen as a “black hole”, likely a reference point to the Black Hole of Calcutta. The black hole was a small prison cell, 14 by 18 feet. On June 20th, 1756, a large number of Europeans - twentieth century estimates put it at about 64 - were imprisoned in the cell overnight. In the “black hole” they had very little access to air or water. 43 men died, through suffocation or trampling. The evocative account of John Holwell, one of the survivors, loomed large in the British imagination. The use of “black hole” here acts as a metonymic reminder of the authors’ views not only of an Indian household without a civilising English presence, but also of India more broadly. The depiction of a household where “all things are wrong”, an Indian servant painted as a “skulking savage” and the “enervating atmosphere of custom” capture the fear of the kitchen which Procida and Dussart noted in Anglo-Indian correspondence. However, it also fulfils a fantasy perpetuated by British imperialists that without their efforts India would be in a perpetual state of “savagery”.

Yet here lies the second striking aspect of this passage. Both Dussart and Procida establish through letters and other contemporary evidence that *memsahib* typically adopted a purely supervisory role in the kitchen. They were intimidated by the kitchen, and often lacked authority⁹³ over their servants and had little knowledge of cookery.⁹⁴ This is corroborated in *Indian Housekeeper*’s description of the kitchen. However, rather than establishing the kitchen as a place to give up as lost like most *memsahib* - “the less you see of them over their cooking operations the more appetite you will have for the food set before you”⁹⁵ - Gardiner and Steel frame it as a place to colonise. The promise which Gardiner and Steel are implicitly making, is that through reading *Indian Housekeeper* their audience would be able to “find a remedy”.

Within *Indian Housekeeper*, the intimidating, savage, Indian and male aura of the kitchen is not somewhere to be avoided, but somewhere which needs the order that imperialism can bring. This attitude is unlike the outlook and behaviour of a typical *memsahib*. But in many ways *Indian*

⁹³ Dussart, p.102.

⁹⁴ Procida, pp.127-132.

⁹⁵ An Anglo-Indian, *Indian Outfits and Establishments* (London: Upcott Gill, 1882), 68, cited in Procida, p.129.

Housekeeper begins as it means to go on. That is, in encouraging their readers to take a much more active role in controlling their servants and household menus than was typical. Far from encouraging or endorsing hesitancy in the kitchen, *Indian Housekeeper* adopts a brisk and almost militant tone. “Like many of Steel’s definitive opinions”, Crane and Johnstone note, “domestic information was not given as a suggestion but rather as an edict”.⁹⁶ Thus, the response which *Indian Housekeeper* encourages in a *memsahib* upon “seeing that all things are wrong, all things slovenly” does not match with reality. Instead, it reflects the idealised behaviour of a *memsahib* who wants to fulfil her dual role as both wife and imperialist. *Indian Housekeeper* thus forms not the “unconscious reflection of everyday life”⁹⁷ typically expected of cookbooks, but an active, idealised construction of a *memsahib*’s role in running her household.

The behaviour of the *memsahib* depicted above, “paralysed by sheer inexperience” (ix) and uncertain of how to proceed, is framed as uneducated rather than understandable. Gardiner and Steel write mockingly of how *memsahibs* avoid the kitchen because of fears “their appetite for breakfast might be marred by seeing the *khitmutgâr* using his toes as an efficient toast-rack” (2) Gardiner and Steel also note that “We have all laughed at the young bride who said tentatively, ‘And if you please, cook, you needn’t put the lumps in the butter sauce another time, for your master doesn’t care for them’; but numbers of the laughers would be puzzled to tell how the evil was to be prevented, or how the lumps came....It is this art of just appraisal and dispassionate judgment that the mistress must cultivate, and to aid her in the task we enumerate a few of the most common causes for the most glaring faults.” (223) Most *memsahib* did not have mastery of this “art.” *Indian Housekeeper*, through its correctional tone, forms not a documentation of life in India, but a didactic text.

Managing relations with servants in an Indian household was key to preserving and balancing the precarious position of Anglo-Indians. Anglo-Indians desired to be seen as both British and rulers. Indian servants enabled the upper class lifestyle British colonists desired. The “spectacle” of their

⁹⁶ Crane and Johnston, ‘How to Dine in India’, p.171.

⁹⁷ Jean-François Revel, *Culture and Cuisine* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1982), 3. cited in Procida, p.138.

presence was often enjoyed by Anglo-Indians who “appear to have enjoyed”⁹⁸ having “a turbaned sultan-like creature behind every chair.”⁹⁹ Dussart noted that “In the 1830s Julia Maitland described ‘beautiful barefooted peons, with handsome turbans, strutting’ behind ‘[s]ome old Anglo-Indians’ who ‘think themselves too grand to walk in their gardens without their servants’”¹⁰⁰ Dussart argues that the “Indianness” of servants “contributed to the colonisers’ sense of imperial magnificence and superiority”.¹⁰¹ Yet this form of enjoying “imperial magnificence and superiority” is not condoned by Gardiner and Steel. In contrast, they specifically note in the third edition of the text, which first reluctantly introduced “Native Dishes”, “there is no reason whatever why the ordinary European routine should not be observed; indeed, the more everything is assimilated to English ways, the better and more economical will be the result.”¹⁰² Thus, the authors once again directly contradict what was common practice amongst their readers.

However, the exoticism which Dussart observed, and the “embracing” of Indianness seen in Anglo-Indians, was as much a way for *memsahib* to exert control over their servants as Gardiner and Steel’s love for “ordinary European routine.” Graham Huggan defined exoticism as “a particular mode of aesthetic perception—one which renders people, objects and places strange even as it domesticates them, and which effectively manufactures otherness even as it claims to surrender to immanent mystery.”¹⁰³ This duality of manufactured, controlled otherness – both “domesticated” and a “mystery” – can be seen in the Orientalising treatment of Indian servants by *memsahib*. The Orientalist and exoticising treatment of servants and welcoming of an element of “Indianness” in the Anglo-Indian home was not more humanising or sympathetic than Steel’s rejection of Indian culture. Instead, the intentional displays of exoticism served to both exhibit a conceited mastery over India by Anglo-Indians, and to show off the “spectacle” of “Oriental grandeur.”¹⁰⁴ Gilles Teulié cited Huggan

⁹⁸ Dussart, p.97.

⁹⁹ [Maitland, Julia] *A Lady’s Letters from Madras during the years 1836 - 1839* (London, 1846) 24, cited in Dussart, p.97

¹⁰⁰ ‘A Lady’ [Julia Maitland] *Letters from Madras*, 25. cited in Dussart, p.97.

¹⁰¹ Dussart, p.98.

¹⁰² Steel and Gardiner, *Indian Housekeeper 3rd Edition*, p.5.

¹⁰³ Huggan, Graham. *The Post-colonial Exotic. Marketing the Margins*. (Oxon & New York: Routledge, 2001) 13, cited in Gilles Teulié, ‘Orientalism and the British Picture Postcard Industry: Popularizing the Empire in Victorian and Edwardian Homes’, *Cahiers Victoriens et Édouardiens*, 89 Spring, 2019 <<https://doi.org/10.4000/cve.5178>>, p.7.

¹⁰⁴ Dussart, p.97.

as noting, “Exoticism is ‘a highly effective instrument of imperial power’ as it is the positive side of the coin: ‘the exotic splendour of newly colonised lands may disguise the brutal circumstances of their gain.’”¹⁰⁵ Indianness was only welcome in the Anglo-Indian home conditionally, accepted on British terms. The front of proximity to Indian culture presented by some Anglo-Indians provided the “illusion of intimacy”. It covered up the anxieties which the instability of Anglo-Indian identity provoked through attempts to “domesticate” the Indian Other. Procida too noted that the presence of Indian elements in an Anglo-Indian home were not always received as an encroachment, as they are often presented in *Indian Housekeeper*. She cautions that such apparent welcoming of Indian elements should not be interpreted as evidence of compromise.

The Anglo-Indian bungalow was an important site for cultural appropriation and transformation. But, like the public spectacles of imperialism, such cultural interactions in the private realm did not represent a concession to the demands of the colonized peoples for autonomy and respect. Rather, the hybrid Anglo-Indian domestic culture was intended to demonstrate the colonizers’ mastery and dominance in the private arena of the empire as in the public sphere.¹⁰⁶

Despite the seeming confidence of Gardiner and Steel, and their impatience with nervous *memsahibs*, there is throughout the book an undercurrent of a fear of loss of control. Far from portraying Indian servants as a representation of the successes of Imperialism, Indian people are tied by Gardiner and Steel to Otherness. The “oriental grandeur” that was welcomed by many Anglo-Indians and deployed as a demonstration of “mastery and dominance” is portrayed in *Indian Housekeeper* as a threat to the closely guarded domestic and cultural boundaries of an English household. The “black hole” of the kitchen and “stilling, enervating atmosphere of custom” (6) that it dispels, much like the Black Hole of Calcutta itself, were taken as evidence of Indian “savagery”. A savagery which, Gardiner and Steel insist, must be challenged.

Advice is given on how to punish servants when “cutting their pay is illegal, and few, if any, have any real sense of shame”. (3) The authors advise withholding bonuses and force-feeding servants castor

¹⁰⁵ Huggan, *The Post-colonial Exotic*, 14, cited in Teulié, p.97.

¹⁰⁶ Procida, p.125.

oil as a punishment for their “inability to learn or to remember”. (3) Castor oil was typically given to young children and babies who were constipated. Margaret MacMillan noted that *memsahib* “poured castor oil down their [children’s] throats since it was believed that the Indian climate caused an unhealthy sluggishness in the infant bowels”.¹⁰⁷ Gardiner and Steel too recommend that “should diarrhoea set in [in infants], give a teaspoonful of castor oil in warm dill water to clear out irritating matter, and then give just a little rhubarb and chalk only.” (165) However, it was also given to children as a punishment. The humiliating and degrading nature of using castor oil on adults is drawn attention to by Gardiner and Steel, who note “To show what absolute children Indian servants are, the same author has for years adopted castor oil as an ultimatum in all obstinate cases.” (3) Gardiner and Steel do not see their behaviour as cruel – quite the opposite. They say that to the servants “this is considered a great joke” and describe it as a “kindly and reasonable” (4) punishment. The authors’ supposition that castor oil should be used “on the ground that there must be some physical cause for inability to learn or to remember” highlights the fact that the laxative effects of castor oil were intentionally deployed. The vagueness surrounding what exactly the “physical cause” or “inability to learn” (3) could be lends the punishment sinister and unsettling connotations of detoxifying and purification. Gardiner and Steel are initially sarcastic in their reference to a “physical cause”. But, through earnestly recommending that their readers force servants to take a laxative as a punishment, they imply that the “evil habits” (70) (53) of Indian servants are connected to their bodies. The framing of castor oil as a humorous punishment for children attempts to lessen the gross invasiveness of the practice the authors are advocating. Instead, it reveals the dehumanising and possessive approach Gardiner and Steel support towards servants.

Perhaps because of the delicate position of Anglo-Indians in India, attitudes towards servants and how to deal with them varied widely. Although a fear of entering the kitchen was consistent, other attitudes were not. Dussart noted that “One of the distinctive features of the writings of Anglo-Indians on India is the variability of their responses to their Indian servants, even while references are made to a

¹⁰⁷ MacMillan, Margaret. *Women of the Raj the Mothers, Wives, and Daughters of the British Empire in India*. (New York: Random House Trade Paperbacks, 2007).

homogeneous ‘native character’ in the descriptions of servants.”¹⁰⁸ She also noted that “Anglo-Indians were aware of such variability and new arrivals could be confused by the inconsistency in the advice they received.”¹⁰⁹ Contemporary accounts cited that “Servants differ greatly in different parts of the country, and their employers' opinions of them as a class vary as widely, ranging from enthusiasm to despair.”¹¹⁰ Some comments by Anglo-Indians were aggressive and even violent: “We are now almost crazy about our table attendants. They are so impertinent and give me so much trouble that I declare I feel inclined to kill them all, the beasts!...I think they are a nasty, stinking, dirty race and nothing more can be said of them.”¹¹¹ To others, although they “bemoaned the fact that their Indian servants did not behave like English servants”, they enjoyed being surrounded by a symbol of “the subjugated Orient, disciplined by English authority”.¹¹² In general, “one of the distinctive features of the writings of Anglo-Indians on India is the variability of their responses to their Indian servants, even while references are made to a homogenous ‘native character’ in the descriptions of servants.”¹¹³ Gardiner and Steel’s attitudes towards servants, like their attitudes towards Indian food, should not necessarily be taken as representative of Anglo-Indians as a whole.

Despite this variability Gardiner and Steel present their “descriptions of servants” and views on “native character” as factual and infallible. Some of their views express their wish to protect servants from the cruelties of Anglo-Indians. For example, Gardiner and Steel insist strongly to their readers that a wetnurse “should not be treated as if she were merely an animated bottle.” (163) However, they also do so to standardise and regulate the behaviour of fellow *memsahibs*. Such attempts to codify Anglo-Indian behaviour is in keeping with Said’s descriptions of the construction of the “White Man”.

Being a White Man was therefore an idea and a reality. It involved a reasoned position towards both the white and the nonwhite worlds. It meant—in the colonies—speaking in a certain way, behaving according to a code of regulations, and even feeling certain things and not others. It meant specific judgments, evaluations, gestures. It was a form of authority before which non-whites, and even whites themselves, were expected to bend. In the

¹⁰⁸ Dussart, p.111.

¹⁰⁹ Dussart, p.111.

¹¹⁰ Lady Wilson (Anne C. Macleod) *Letters from India*, 10-11, cited in Dussart, pp.111.

¹¹¹ Letter 19 Dec 1857, Letters of Maria Lydia Wood, MSS/Eur/B210 OIOC. Dussart, p.96.

¹¹² Dussart, p.98.

¹¹³ Dussart, p.111.

institutional forms it took (colonial governments, consular corps, commercial establishments) it was an agency for the expression, diffusion, and implementation of policy towards the world, and within this agency, although a certain personal latitude was allowed, the impersonal communal idea of being a White Man ruled. Being a White Man, in short, was a very concrete manner of being-in-the-world, a way of taking hold of reality, language, and thought. It made a specific style possible.¹¹⁴

Said's characterisation of imperial Whiteness is inherently male. And yet his description of how Whiteness was manufactured – through “speaking in a certain way, behaving according to a code of regulations, and even feeling certain things and not others” are all present in *Indian Housekeeper*. In their attempts to regulate how *memsahibs* treat their Indian servants, Gardiner and Steel are to define White womanhood in a colonial context. Gardiner and Steel's text teaches its readers which “specific judgements, evaluations, gestures” should be used with servants, and articulate a “very concrete manner of being-in-the-world”. Crane and Johnston argue that “explaining and regulating domestic behaviour - from how to organise a laundry to how to prepare dinner - was seen as an urgent necessity in establishing British order from colonial disarray.”¹¹⁵ The White Woman, as well as the White Man, served the imperial project through “regulating domestic behaviour”.

Their term “colonial disarray” captures the particular fear of encroaching Indian disorder that runs throughout *Indian Housekeeper*. The tone of Gardiner and Steel's brief, crisp and confident descriptions of how to handle servants are juxtaposed with frequent racist examples of “colonial disarray.” For example, their references to a “black hole”, or a servant using his toes as a toast rack. These are all presented as situations that would result if a servant, and especially a cook, were not controlled in a way that Gardiner and Steel condoned. This depiction, of course, not reflecting that in most Anglo-Indian households servants – and especially cooks - were left to their own devices. Even taking into account the consistent variability in employers' views of servants, much of what Gardiner and Steel encouraged was still outside the range of typical behaviour for a *memsahib*.

¹¹⁴ Edward W. Said, *Orientalism: Western Conceptions of the Orient*, Penguin History, Reprinted with a new afterword (London: Penguin Books, 1995), p.227.

¹¹⁵ Crane and Johnston, 'How to Dine in India', p.170.

As noted earlier, unlike many Anglo-Indians, Gardiner and Steel do not support *memsahib* allowing even controlled doses of Indianness into the middle or upper class Anglo-Indian home. But, Gardiner and Steel also condemn any inclination of Indian people to follow their own “custom” most strongly. Apart from minor deviations – they note for example that “the native cook generally makes excellent plain pancakes” (308) – they mostly portray Indian ways as senseless. This dislike of “custom” can be seen in the above quotation that without British interference Indian servants are “skulking savage[s]”, at the mercy of “the stilling, enervating atmosphere of custom.” (ix) Throughout the text “custom” is a term invoked to imply irrationality and backwardness. On raising children in India, the authors say that the “whole secret lies in refusing to listen to the word *dustoor*, or custom.” (87) This is particularly drawn attention to in the chapter titled “Advice to the Cook”. In this chapter the authors write as if addressing Indian cooks. Their direct discouragement of following custom went as follows.

All Indian people have a great respect for custom, and like to do as their fathers and grandfathers did. This is right enough, but it does not do to carry it to extremes. For instance, you all use matches. Did your fathers use them? No, because they had never seen them. Did they use kerosene oil? No, because even in England it had not been discovered. Therefore, the first thing a cook should learn is not to be distrustful of new ways. Many of them save an immense deal of trouble. Supposing, therefore, you are really willing to be cleverer than your fathers were, the first thing you have to learn is to be a great deal cleaner than they thought it necessary to be. (227)

This insulting language and tone continue throughout the rest of the “Advice to the Cook” chapter. This is the only section in the book addressed to a servant, rather than to a *memsahib*. In a footnote on the opening page, Gardiner and Steel note that the chapter is available “translated into Roman Urdu in a separate pamphlet.” (227) So, theoretically, this chapter was not meant to inform the mistress of her “duties”. Yet it is as much a construction of “White Woman” as the rest of the text. Through this “Advice to the Cook”, Gardiner and Steel somewhat disguise their attempts to manipulate their readers behind the guise of household management. Yet in modelling “a form of authority before which non-whites, and even whites themselves, were expected to bend” the text continues to teach its readers about the “idea” and “reality” of Whiteness. It is likely that a great many more *memsahibs* would have been informed through “Advice to the Cook” that “All Indian people have a great respect for custom” and that they must not allow them to “carry it to extremes” than cooks. Similarly, the pointed remarks about hygiene – “the first thing you have to learn is to be a great deal cleaner” –

would be intended to advise the *memsahib* as much as the cook. The advice to cooks to be “a great deal cleaner” than their forefathers and warnings that poor hygiene can mean “you may poison your master or your master’s child, as surely as if you had put arsenic in their food” (228) are as much warnings to *memsahibs* as they are to cooks. However, perhaps the most valuable aspect of the chapter is its role in exemplifying the tone a *memsahib* should use when addressing a servant. In reading *Indian Housekeeper* the mistress of an Indian household is first informed by Gardiner and Steel that in not supervising her servants the *memsahib* is putting her life in danger. She is then given examples of the language she should use to address such dangerous behaviour in the form of Gardiner and Steel’s “advice”.

Similarly, reprimands and criticisms directed at servants teach the *memsahib* what good behaviour is meant to be. Many of the orders directed at the servant serve to teach the *memsahib* what her standards should be. “Do not stand mum-chance before your mistress, but suggest what *you* have thought over. If she says leg of mutton, don’t say “*acchhi bāt*” (a good word), when you know it as tough as tough can be, and ought to hang two days longer...” (230) This line, for example, encourages the *memsahib* to engage in dialogue with her servants. Rather than accepting brief interactions as the norm, she is taught to push for more detailed interactions. As was noted earlier, *memsahibs* were just as reluctant to engage in dialogue with their servants as their servants were to speak with them. This instruction, and the whole chapter, thus served a dual purpose in instructing the *memsahib* as well as the servant.

Some of Gardiner and Steel’s passages describing Indian “misbehaviour” are clearly tongue in cheek. This teasing is used to further encourage *memsahibs* to take an active role in running their household. Gardiner and Steel write mockingly of how *memsahibs* avoid the kitchen because of fears “their appetite for breakfast might be marred by seeing the *khitmutgâr* using his toes as an efficient toast-rack” (2) But Gardiner and Steel are frequently quite earnest in their characterisation of Indians as “backwards” and incapable of “modernising” without “help” from the British. For example, when discussing raising dairy cows in India, they complain that “*gow-wâlas* [the servants in charge of the

dairy cows] invariably object to this plan, as they do to everything which savours of novelty” (105) As referenced in the introduction, Steel’s treatment of Indian people in *Indian Housekeeper* is consistent with that of her writing about Indian people in her novels. In *The Potter’s Thumb* (1894) she said that “these people do not change except under pressure from without and then they disintegrate suddenly.”¹¹⁶ This attitude, once again, paints an Imperialist fantasy of India as a place in need of British stewardship in order to attain progress. Gardiner and Steel’s treatment of India as a place incapable of change “except under pressure from without” corresponds to Claude Lévi-Strauss’s twentieth century theories of “hot” and “cold” cultures. Lévi-Strauss, in his work *The Savage Mind* (1962) maintained that certain societies attempted to avoid progressing and changing, and that others desired to do so. Cold societies, he argued, were intentionally static. They sought “to annul the possible effects of historical factors on their equilibrium and continuity in a quasi-automatic fashion”.¹¹⁷ On the other hand, hot societies desired progress. They “resolutely intern[alise] the historical process and mak[e] it the moving power of their development.”¹¹⁸ Lévi-Strauss in *Conversations with Claude Levi-Strauss* (1961) summarised the differences between the two. Cold societies, he noted, “are societies which create the minimum of that disorder which the physicists call “entropy”, and they tend to remain indefinitely in their initial state, and this explains why they appear to us as static societies with no history.”¹¹⁹ Lévi-Strauss’s conceptualisation of certain societies remaining “indefinitely in their initial state” came a hundred years after Steel and Gardiner moved to India. Yet it is clear from the language used in *Indian Housekeeper* that the Orientalist characterisation of India as a static and “cold” society has existed before such an outlook was codified. Said noted that the Orientalist “believes the Orient never changes”¹²⁰ and that “Arab refinement...is associated with Arab perdurability, as if the Arab had not been subject to the ordinary

¹¹⁶ Flora Annie Webster Steel, *Potter’s Thumb* (S.I.: OUTLOOK VERLAG, 2020). 278, cited in Parry and Patwardhan, p. 324.

¹¹⁷ Claude Lévi-Strauss, *The Savage Mind* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966), 233–34. cited in Robert Anderson, ‘Lvi-Strauss, “The Savage Mind” (Book Review)’, *Western Humanities Review*, 22.2 (1968), p. 165.

¹¹⁸ Lévi-Strauss, *The Savage Mind* 34 cited in Anderson, p.180.

¹¹⁹ Charbonnier (ed.), *Entretiens avec Claude Levi-Strauss* (Paris, 1961); translated by John and Doreen Weightman and published as *Conversations with Claude Levi-Strauss* (London, 1969), p. 33 cited in T. O. Beidelman, E. Nelson Hayes, and Tanya Hayes, ‘Levi-Strauss and History’, *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 1.3 (1971), <<https://doi.org/10.2307/202625>>, p.511.

¹²⁰ Said, p.376.

processes of history.”¹²¹ Gardiner and Steel too speak of Indian people as if, without Western intervention, they would never change. They do not see the irony in writing that Indians “object...to everything which savours of novelty” within a text which insists “There is no reason whatever why the ordinary European routine should not be observed.” And indeed, as a modern reader it is hard to find humour in the authors’ dehumanising treatment of Indian people. Their servants are first and foremost “natives”, and individuals second. As Said noted “each particle of the Orient told of its Orientalness, so much so that the attribute of being Oriental overrode any countervailing instance. An Oriental man was first an Oriental and only second a man.”¹²² The constant Othering of servants in *Indian Housekeeper* and attempts to codify their existence by Gardiner and Steel speak to a desire for order and control at any cost. This presentation of the servant as dominated by “the attribute of being Oriental” at times overrides all other sensibilities.

The Anglo-Indian household, in this sense, acts as a model for the British Empire. In *Culture and Imperialism* (1993), Said said of Conrad that “he writes as a man whose *Western* view of the non-Western world is so ingrained as to blind him to other histories, other cultures, other aspirations...What Conrad cannot see is an alternative to this cruel tautology. He could neither understand that India, Africa, and South America also had lives and cultures with integrities not totally controlled by the gringo imperialists of the world, nor allow himself to believe that anti-imperialist independence movements were not all corrupt and in the pay of the puppet-masters in London or Washington”.¹²³ This blindness to the selfhood of Indian servants, and what Said terms the “paternalistic arrogance of imperialism,”¹²⁴ runs throughout *Indian Housekeeper*. The authors make broad, racist generalisations about what Indian people can and cannot do. However their rejection of Indian culture and denigration of Indian servants’ capabilities was no more or less an expression of such “paternalistic arrogance” than that of their fellow colonists who embraced it.

¹²¹ Said, p. 230.

¹²² Said, p. 231.

¹²³ Edward W. Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, 1st ed (New York: Knopf: Distributed by Random House, 1993), p.xxi.

¹²⁴ Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, xx.

The Indian Environment

Despite encouraging intense supervision of servants, Gardiner and Steel rejected the notion that the Indian environment was the root cause of any problems *memsahibs* faced. The authors are quick to dismiss the idea that the “environment” or “climate” is the source of all health problems faced by the British. Indeed, the authors indicate that issues faced by colonialists are frequently caused by their own mistakes or a lack of common sense in dealing with the weather. Their attitude towards the climate contrasts with their attitudes towards other aspects of life in India. Typically Gardiner and Steel blame issues which Anglo-Indians faced on something inherently wrong with India and Indian customs. For example, their consistent denigration of Indian ways of preparing food. The authors point out that many of the problems the British attribute to the Indian climate are actually the result of a lack of common sense, and encourage the reader not to entirely blame the climate for their ill health. They note,

We blame India for all our ailments, forgetting to accommodate our habits to its climate. Instead of taking exercise, we drink hot tea on an empty stomach, and follow this by a hot bath, which relaxes the muscles and enfeebles our nervous system, and then we try to remedy this with beer or wine, which only irritates the nerves more! (192)

Gardiner and Steel also state that “man possesses capacity for living in all climates, and by adapting ourselves to the conditions of the rains we can get accustomed to them.” (192) Throughout the chapter on living in camp there are also some more unusual instructions. The authors quote Dr. Jukes, who wrote for the *Punjab Mission News* as insisting on “living rooms not being less than 16 feet by 18 feet, and, in the plains, not less than 15 feet high.”¹²⁵ They also advise that “mosquitos have a special liking for navy blue, dark red, brown, black; whereas light grey, light blue, pale green, ochre, khaki and white do not attract them.”¹²⁶ Despite this advice perhaps not helping the those living in camps in the long run, it is still evidence that Gardiner and Steel are encouraging even those without many options or flexibility to adapt to India rather than give up. They point out that many of the issues

¹²⁵ Flora Annie Webster Steel and G. Gardiner, *The Complete Indian Housekeeper & Cook : Giving the Duties of Mistress and Servants, the General Management of the House, and Practical Recipes for Cooking in All Its Branches*, 7th edn (London: Heinemann, 1909), p.160.

¹²⁶ Steel and Gardiner, *Indian Housekeeper 7th Edition*, p.161.

associated with living in camps in India arise because of a lack of common sense, or ignorance of basic safety procedures. The authors encourage the reader to focus on what parts of their environment they are in control of and control them.

Although the Indian environment is in general dismissed by the authors as a scapegoat used by *memsahibs* who lack common sense, its insignificance is highlighted more strongly in the chapter on missionaries than other chapters. The authors include a quote in the seventh edition of the text from a reader who they asked for advice on “how to make this chapter [on missionaries] more helpful”.¹²⁷ The reader replied, they say, that “More missionaries break down from want of common sense than from hard work or climate influences.”¹²⁸ A large section of the chapter is dedicated to being careful of the sun but does not treat India’s weather as intrinsically hostile. They instead advise readers to carry an umbrella for shade and always wear a hat. The authors recommend raising houses off the ground “to avoid damp, to prevent snakes from getting in.” (159) To support their argument that the climate is not entirely to blame for missionaries’ ill health, they cite the Ecumenical Conference in the seventh edition. The Conference noted that “We talk about the climate, but if we went about things in America or in Europe, or in any other civilised land, in the way that our missionaries go about them, the very same things would come without any question of climate entering into it at all.”¹²⁹ This quotation is one of several they include which lays the blame for such problems squarely at the feet of missionaries themselves.

Some of Gardiner and Steel’s more relaxed attitude toward missionaries’ interactions with Indian culture came from an understanding of how few options missionaries had. Unlike upper class *memsahibs*, missionaries tended to be fairly poor, and live alongside Indian people rather than apart from them. The authors even note that eating Indian food can be a healthy thing for missionaries.

¹²⁷ Steel and Gardiner, *Indian Housekeeper 7th Edition*, p.154.

¹²⁸ Steel and Gardiner, *Indian Housekeeper 7th Edition*, p.154.

¹²⁹ Steel and Gardiner, *Indian Housekeeper 7th Edition*, p.154.

They describe “ordinary native *chupâtties*” as “very agreeable” (156) and observe that “rice is a pure food when eaten with *dâl*, milk or eggs.” (157) Indrani Sen noted that missionaries had a very low status in the white community. “An enormous gap in the colonial class hierarchy, for instance, divided the *memsahib* from female Christian missionaries who were generally of lower-middle-class origins.”¹³⁰ It is likely due to their “inferior location in Anglo-Indian class hierarchies”¹³¹ that missionaries are permitted by Gardiner and Steel to eat Indian food. However aside from their “class origins”, proximity to Indian communities also lowered the social status of missionaries. This circular logic created a self-fulfilling prophecy. It was both the proximity to Indian culture which lowered female missionaries in *memsahibs*’ estimations, and their lowered status that made such proximity more acceptable.

In the 1890s Christina Bremner noted that missionaries find that their “position in society is often invidious” even though they “develop or acquire a deep sympathy for native life.”¹³² As Indrani Sen argues, in “actuality, it was precisely this easy accessibility to ‘natives’, compounded by their lack of official power or position, that accounted for the missionaries’ inferior social status. By working at such close quarters among the local populace the missionaries, in effect, exhibited a disregard for the proper role-playing, aloofness and social distance from the subject race as well as the *visible* dignity which constituted the imperial code.”¹³³ This code, which involved “speaking in a certain way, behaving according to a code of regulations, and even feeling certain things and not others” as Said observed, was symbolically broken through Gardiner and Steel’s acceptance of their consuming “dal”. The fact that the authors called it a “pure food” speaks to the separation of missionaries from the rest of white Anglo-Indian society. Gardiner and Steel advise their non-missionary readers to “never let a cook run down in his cooking, even when he is in camp.” (72) Although in the missionaries’ situation “native dishes” were acceptable, they were not tolerated for anyone else.

¹³⁰ Sen, *Woman and Empire*, p.11.

¹³¹ Sen, *Woman and Empire*, p.11.

¹³² Christina S. Bremner, *A Month in a Dandi: A Woman’s Wanderings in North India* (London: Simplin, Marshall, Hamilton, Kent & Co., 1891), 25, cited in Sen, *Woman and Empire*, p.12.

¹³³ Sen, *Woman and Empire*, p. 12.

The switch in attitude which Gardiner and Steel undertake with regards to missionaries highlights the upper class connotations of living a life free from Indian elements. For the majority of the text, the authors are targeting an audience who – like themselves, wives of members of the Indian Civil Service – were “elite” Anglo-Indians. Their concessions to the reality of life as a missionary, when no such concessions are made for upper class Anglo-Indians, emphasise the position of missionaries as on the edge of the white community. The tone of much of the chapter’s non-food advice on how to adapt to India as a missionary, unlike other advice in *Indian Housekeeper*, is also not connected to avoiding Indian culture. For example, the authors encourage missionaries to “take some real recreation,” (159) relax and avoid talking about their work in the evening.

This minimal acceptance of Indian culture and emphasis on the importance of adaptation is connected to pro-Imperialist sentiments. Being able to stay in India and adapt to conditions was tied to the success of colonisation. If an Anglo-Indian failed to adapt to the climate, Gardiner and Steel note, eventually “the only alternative is to give up work and go to England”. (159) Their emphasis on compromise thus reflects Procida’s earlier comments that “the hybrid Anglo-Indian domestic culture was intended to demonstrate the colonizers’ mastery and dominance.”¹³⁴

Yet the closing paragraph of the chapter “Hints on Camp Life” somewhat undermines the idea that the English can fully adapt to India. They advise, in closing, that:

The annual vacation to the hills should also be regularly taken; not because we are ill but to keep ourselves well; for though this change may serve to keep off disease, it rarely cures it, and then the only alternative is to give up work and go to England. (159)

This closing paragraph reframes life in India as something whose negative effects can only be mitigated temporarily. The Indian climate is still a source of “disease”. The devotion of a whole chapter to hill stations later in the text, and the existence of hill stations themselves are emblematic of

¹³⁴ Procida, p.125.

Anglo-Indian discomfort in India. Once again, Gardiner and Steel's initial "edicts" are juxtaposed with insights into the reality of what was necessary in India. Gardiner and Steel's comments on hill stations reveal that they do not believe discomfort brought on by the Indian environment could be avoided entirely. Instead, although the authors criticise those who "blame India for all our ailments," the book ultimately treats India's presence as something to be constantly mitigated. India becomes a place to "transform, manage and escape."¹³⁵

To a significant extent, the goal of the text is to help its readers ensure that "everything is assimilated to English ways".¹³⁶ This view that the Indian environment was ultimately damaging to British bodies was termed "environmental degeneration". Claire Echterling defined environmental degeneration as the fear that "unhealthy environments - namely the tropical colonies and industrialised, denatured places at home - were causing the British to 'degenerate.'" Echterling classified degeneration as a process of "bodily and mental deterioration that worsened with each generation"¹³⁷. Echterling argues fears of degenerative environments (e.g. "the savage tropics and the poisonous, denatured landscapes of industrial modernity") motivated efforts to "transform, manage and escape" such places. She gives an example of "the development of hill stations in India" as one such method to "manage" degenerative environments¹³⁸ I would argue much of the concern surrounding the impact of the Indian environment on the British body in *Indian Housekeeper* is reflective of broader nineteenth century anxieties surrounding "environmental degeneration".

Children were, it was believed, particularly vulnerable to the toxic Indian environment."¹³⁹ Sending children to England is encouraged in the *Indian Housekeeper*. Although the authors note that "in these times of depreciated currency many parents cannot afford to send their children home" (199) they

¹³⁵ Clare Echterling, 'Degeneration and the Environment in Victorian and Edwardian Fiction' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Kansas, 2018), p.4.

¹³⁶ Steel and Gardiner, 1893 (3rd edn.), p.5.

¹³⁷ Echterling, p.1.

¹³⁸ Echterling, p.4.

¹³⁹ Echterlingp.22.

encourage the reader to. “The proper course is to send the elder children away under a responsible nurse or governess, or to school.” (199) Thus, Britain is throughout the healthiest and proper environment for the British child. Echterling uses the example of Mary Lennox in *The Secret Garden* to show how the “dreaded degenerate Anglo-Indian child” can become, healed by “the salubrious Yorkshire environment”¹⁴⁰. The general belief among Anglo-Indians was that “white children in India who did not die were physiologically and psychologically unhealthy, weak, and inferior to their peers at home”¹⁴¹ while “adults, they thought, needed time at home to remain British, but children needed to be immersed in the cultural and physical environment of Britain to become British.”¹⁴²

There is also a connection between Darwin’s theories of evolution and fears of environmental degeneration. The proof that the environment could change biology made people fearful that “a white race could eventually become black if they moved out of the temperate north - their “proper place,” as Nancy Stepan calls it - to an equatorial region.”¹⁴³ This fed “the notion that races are fit only for the conditions of their original homes came to preoccupy Victorian and early twentieth-century racial science”.¹⁴⁴ This anxiety surrounding how both climate, food and ‘custom’ could impact English people likely spurred the denigration of “native foods” and the strict policing of boundaries and hierarchies seen in *Indian Housekeeper*. It also likely informed Gardiner and Steel’s views that their readers would need to spend time in hill stations to ward off “disease”.

¹⁴⁰ Echterling, p.102.

¹⁴¹ Echterling, p.105.

¹⁴² Echterling, p.22.

¹⁴³ Echterling, p.5.

¹⁴⁴ Echterling, p.6.

Managing Readers and their Desires: Indian Food

The most obvious and dramatic example of the policing of boundaries present in the idealised household presented by *Indian Housekeeper*, and not reflected in reality, was the omission of a section devoted to Indian dishes from the cookbook. The selection of recipes in *Indian Housekeeper*, as mentioned in the introduction, initially included little Indian food at all. The recipe section of *Indian Housekeeper* was divided into Soups; Fish; Sauces; Plain Entrées; High-Class Entrées and Garnishes; Garnishes; Savouries; Dressed Vegetables; Salads; Game; Hot Puddings; Cold Sweets; Pastes and Pastry; Bread, Cakes, and Biscuits; Confectionary, Jams, Preserves, Pickles, Chutneys, Liqueurs; Eggs; Ices; Sandwiches, Supper Dishes, &c. and Miscellaneous.

These twenty sections totalled 220 pages. In the third edition, a “Native Dishes” section was added before “Miscellaneous”, totalling two pages.¹⁴⁵ Other sections outside of “Native Dishes” also included some Indian food. For example, much of the chapter on preserves features Indian dishes. Recipes like “date pickle”, made with fresh dates and fenugreek is listed amongst the preserves, and undoubtedly Indian. It is listed alongside “mango chutni”, “kasoundé” (the anglicised spelling of kasundi, a Bengali mustard relish with dried mangoes), “sultana chutni” and “lime pickle”. (341) Similarly a recipe for “Curry, Fish” (249) is listed under the “Fish” chapter, and the famous mulligatawny soup is listed under soups as “Mulligatawny (clear)”. (240) It is difficult to say what, exactly, in Gardiner and Steel’s mind constituted “Native Dishes” and what did not. Mulligatawny soup originates from rasam, a slightly sweet, spicy and sour soup seasoned with amchur, kokum or tamarind. The inclusion of Mulligatawny under “Soups” rather than “Native Dishes” in *Indian Housekeeper* could be because it bears no resemblance to rasam, the dish it originated from. The directions for “Mulligatawny (clear)” are simply “Flavoured strongly with curry powder, and served with rice quenelles poached separately. A little lemon juice.” (240) However, this same argument could be made for numerous other “curries” eaten by Anglo-Indians which were not included in the first two editions of *Indian Housekeeper*.

¹⁴⁵ Steel and Gardiner, *Indian Housekeeper 3rd Edition*.

Mulligatawny is one of the dishes most associated with India under the Raj in the twenty-first century. Yet it is just one of many Indian dishes that would have been familiar to Anglo-Indians at the time of *Indian Housekeeper's* publication. Indian food formed a large part of the diets of Anglo-Indians. Leong-Salobir, in her paper on colonial-era cookbooks, cited a bilingual English and Tamil cookbook published in 1860¹⁴⁶ as evidence of this. She remarked that "In the [cookbook's] suggested meals for a month of dinners there was curry listed for every menu except for one day out of the 31 days."¹⁴⁷ Furthermore, Crane and Johnston cite further evidence of the widespread popularity and frequency of Indian cuisine in the Anglo-Indian diet. In 1866, Eliza Fay, a lawyer's wife and dressmaker published a series of letters from Europeans living in India in the 1780s. Fay "notes that curry is commonly eaten by Europeans in Calcutta, and in a letter dated August 29, 1780, she enumerates the bill of fare that might typically be spread before Anglo-Indians dining in the heat of the day at two o'clock: "A soup, a roast fowl, curry and rice, a mutton pie, a fore quarter of lamb, a rice pudding, tarts, very good cheese, fresh churned butter, fine bread, excellent Madeira""¹⁴⁸ By 1888, at the time of *Indian Housekeeper's* initial publication, curry had been a part of the Anglo-Indian diet for over a hundred years. And, Indian food's consumption by the British only grew in frequency over time. Harriet Tytler ("the only Englishwoman to survive the slaughter of Europeans in Delhi on May 11, 1857"¹⁴⁹) "ate curry three times a day" according to her memoirs, "whilst the novelist Mary Sherwood favoured curries at midday".¹⁵⁰ From sources such as these it is clear that Indian food was not just tolerated by the British because of their lack of say on what happened in the kitchen – it was well-liked and popular. And yet the "Native Dishes" chapter was only added "by request" in the third edition of *Indian Housekeeper*, released in 1893.

¹⁴⁶ R. Riddell, *Indian domestic economy and receipt book; comprising numerous directions for plain wholesome cookery, both oriental and English; with much miscellaneous matter answering for all general purposes of reference connected with household affairs, likely to be immediately required by families, messes, and private individuals, residing at the presidencies or outstations*, Madras: Press of the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, Vepery, 1860. 5th edition

¹⁴⁷ Leong-Salobir, 'Spreading the Word: Using Cookbooks and Colonial Memoirs to Examine the Foodways of British Colonials in Asia, 1850–1900', p.143.

¹⁴⁸ Fay, Eliza. *Original Letters from India*, edited by E.M. Forster, 1925. New York 181, cited in Crane and Johnston, 'How to Dine in India', p.164.

¹⁴⁹ Crane and Johnston, 'How to Dine in India', p.166.

¹⁵⁰ Crane and Johnston, 'How to Dine in India', p.167.

This omission was not typical of cookbooks written for *memsahibs*. *Indian cookery "local" for young housekeepers* (1887) contains directions for making egg hoppers, congee, tadka dal and fresh coconut milk, alongside hundreds of other recipes for Indian food that make no substitutions for English palates or ingredients.¹⁵¹ It also explains where to buy a curry stone for grinding pastes, and instructions to clarify jaggery. Similarly, R. Riddell's *Indian domestic economy and receipt book; comprising numerous directions for plain wholesome cookery, both oriental and English* (1860) contained recipes for curries, belachang and seventeen different chutneys.¹⁵² Access to recipes for Indian food was often a selling point for cookbooks, such as Daniel Santiagoe's *The Curry Cook's Assistant* (1889).¹⁵³ In England curry was almost as popular with - if not as frequently eaten by - the British as with Anglo-Indians. Margaret Beetham, in her analysis of *Mrs. Beeton* notes that "By the 1850s curry was a part of English diet" and "safely domesticated...no longer dangerously foreign."¹⁵⁴ Indeed, there are many more recipes explicitly labelled as Indian in *Mrs Beeton* as there are in *Indian Housekeeper*. *Mrs Beeton* had 34 Indian recipes in its section on Indian cookery alone¹⁵⁵ whilst *Indian Housekeeper* only had eight in its "Native Dishes" section. Although both cookbooks also included Indian recipes spread throughout the rest of the book, *Indian Housekeeper* was targeted at an Anglo-Indian reader who ate such food on a daily basis. It is also worth noting that *Mrs. Beeton* had more Indian dishes than Scottish, Irish and Welsh dishes combined, an elision worthy of study in its own right.

¹⁵¹ *Indian Cookery 'Local' for Young Housekeepers*, pp. xi, 129, 14 (Bombay: Printed at the Imperial Press, 1887) </catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/010747481>.

¹⁵² *Indian Domestic Economy and Receipt Book; Comprising Numerous Directions for Plain Wholesome Cookery, Both Oriental and English; with Much Miscellaneous Matter Answering for All General Purposes of Reference Connected with Household Affairs, Likely to Be Immediately Required by Families, Messes, and Privave [Sic] Individuals, Residing at the Presidencies or out-Stations.*, viii, 674 p. incl. tables. (Madras: Christian Knowledge Society's Press, 1853) </catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/100892299>.

¹⁵³ Daniel Santiagoe, *The Curry Cook's Assistant, or, Curries, How to Make Them in England in Their Original Style* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, 1889).

¹⁵⁴ Margaret Beetham, 'GOOD TASTE AND SWEET ORDERING: DINING WITH MRS BEETON', *Victorian Literature and Culture*, 36.2 (2008), 391-406 <https://doi.org/10.1017/S106015030808025X>, p.401.

¹⁵⁵ Isabella Mary Beeton, *Mrs. Beeton's Every-Day Cookery.*, New edition. (London: Ward, Lock & Co., 1907), p.1600.

Procida argued that “the hybrid Anglo-Indian domestic culture was intended to demonstrate the colonizers’ mastery and dominance in the private arena of the empire as in the public sphere”.¹⁵⁶ However, although the eventual hybrid culture may have demonstrated such dominance, it does not seem that British government “intended” to cultivate the “hybrid Anglo-Indian domestic culture” that resulted. The love of Indian food by the British, Leong-Salobir argues, developed through a “negotiation and collaboration between coloniser and colonised”.¹⁵⁷ In her analysis of colonial-era cookbooks, Leong-Salobir describes and traces the history of the British government’s attitudes towards the consumption of Indian food by Anglo-Indians. Initially, the “hybrid British colonial cuisine”¹⁵⁸ which emerged “was not the result of a deliberate act of imposing imperialistic designs but involved a process of consuming local and European foods through the efforts of Asian servants.”¹⁵⁹ That is, the British government did not intentionally create a “hybrid British colonial cuisine”. It evolved because the Indian servants which colonisers employed would serve and cook their native culture’s food. The hybrid cuisine’s evolution was accidental, as was Anglo-Indian enjoyment of Indian food. Initially in India what should and should not be eaten by colonists was not officially controlled. As such, Anglo-Indians were free to enjoy Indian cuisine.

It seems they enjoyed it a great deal. Indian food remained popular with Anglo-Indians and was still widely consumed in domestic settings even after the government began to harden its stance towards its consumption in the latter half of the nineteenth century. Specific lamentations of the eventual erasure of Indian food from the menus of state-sanctioned dinner parties can be seen in cookbooks by A.R. Kenney-Herbert, the Brigadier-General in the British Indian Army. Kenney-Herbert wrote wistfully of the days when Indian food was permissible at formal dinner occasions in his cookbook *Culinary Jottings from Madras* (1885) “The molten curries and florid oriental compositions of the

¹⁵⁶ Procida, p.125.

¹⁵⁷ Leong-Salobir, ‘Spreading the Word: Using Cookbooks and Colonial Memoirs to Examine the Foodways of British Colonials in Asia, 1850–1900’, p.132.

¹⁵⁸ Leong-Salobir, ‘Spreading the Word: Using Cookbooks and Colonial Memoirs to Examine the Foodways of British Colonials in Asia, 1850–1900’, p.131.

¹⁵⁹ Leong-Salobir, ‘Spreading the Word: Using Cookbooks and Colonial Memoirs to Examine the Foodways of British Colonials in Asia, 1850–1900’, p.132.

olden time – so fearfully and wonderfully made – have been gradually banished from our dinner tables”.¹⁶⁰ Kenney-Herbert specifically noted that although the change in government attitudes affected official menus, since Indian food could no longer be found on the “dinner menu of establishments this did not change the wider popularity of Indian food among Anglo-Indians.¹⁶¹ He wrote that Anglo-Indians “continued to consume local dishes on a daily basis” and curry and mulligatawny were “very frequently given at breakfast or luncheon” within Anglo-Indian households.¹⁶²

The popularity of Indian food among the British colonial population is thus thoroughly evidenced in cookbooks and menus published when India was under Crown rule, as cited above. Leong-Salobir theorises that official criticism of the consumption of local dishes, and negative attitudes such as Steel and Gardiner’s towards it, became more common because of and following the Indian Rebellion of 1857. After the Indian Rebellion, she notes, “the British hardened their attitudes towards the Indians and conspicuously started reducing outward consumption of Indian tradition, culture and food.”¹⁶³ *Indian Housekeeper* was published in 1888, after the Indian Rebellion of 1857. So, by 1888 when the book was first published, eating Indian food at official British events in India would have been frowned upon. Salobir hypothesised “One could suggest that the reason why curry and mulligatunny were absent from the more formal venues then was British effort to present a more British or European presence in official settings. This shift in consumption practices was also true for the other colonies as most menus from Government House formal dinners across the colonies did not feature curry and other hybrid dishes popular among the British.”¹⁶⁴ But, as has been established, Anglo-Indian families continued to eat those dishes at home, where this cookbook was intended to be used.

¹⁶⁰ A.R. Kenney-Herbert, *Culinary Jottings for Madras, or a Treatise in Thirty Chapters on Reformed Cookery for Anglo-Indian Exiles*, Totnes: Prospect Books, 1994, facsimile of 5th edition, 1878. 1, cited in Leong-Salobir, ‘Spreading the Word: Using Cookbooks and Colonial Memoirs to Examine the Foodways of British Colonials in Asia, 1850–1900’, p.134.

¹⁶¹ Kenney-Herbert, *Culinary Jottings*. 1-2, cited in Leong-Salobir, ‘Spreading the Word: Using Cookbooks and Colonial Memoirs to Examine the Foodways of British Colonials in Asia, 1850–1900’, p.134.

¹⁶² Kenney-Herbert, *Culinary Jottings*. 1-2, cited in Leong-Salobir, ‘Spreading the Word: Using Cookbooks and Colonial Memoirs to Examine the Foodways of British Colonials in Asia, 1850–1900’, p.134.

¹⁶³ Kenney-Herbert, *Culinary Jottings*. 1-2, cited in Leong-Salobir, ‘Spreading the Word: Using Cookbooks and Colonial Memoirs to Examine the Foodways of British Colonials in Asia, 1850–1900’, p.134.

¹⁶⁴ Kenney-Herbert, *Culinary Jottings*. 1-2, cited in Leong-Salobir, ‘Spreading the Word: Using Cookbooks and Colonial Memoirs to Examine the Foodways of British Colonials in Asia, 1850–1900’, p.134.

It is certainly true that the British government changed its stance towards Indian culture's place in the British Empire after the rebellion. However, the cause and effect relationship between the Rebellion and rejection of Indian food is not so neat. Although the Rebellion is quite understandably framed by Leong-Salobir as the turning point in the British government's attitude towards food, the Rebellion began in many ways because of increasing British dominance in Indian cultural, as well as economic and political, practices.

There were also other cultural reasons that Indian cuisine was denigrated. In her paper, Katarzyna Cwiertka theorised that the widespread popularity of curry in India was in fact part of the reason for its decline in official establishments. "By the mid-nineteenth century, curries and chutneys began to spread down the social ladder, which was a reason for the élite to abandon the Indian fashion."¹⁶⁵ She quotes Kenney-Herbert's *Culinary Jottings* as saying:

[T]here can be no doubt that modern improvements in our cuisine, and modern good taste, have assisted in a measure in elbowing off the once delectable *plats* of Indian origin...Having thus lost 'caste', so to speak, it ought hardly to surprise us that curries have deteriorated in quality.¹⁶⁶

However, although rejection of Indian food by the British government and rejection by the Anglo-Indian elite may seem like two separate categories, in India in the nineteenth century they were closely intertwined. Dussart noted that "Anglo-Indian society was highly stratified" and "social status was defined by a man's occupation and if he was married, his wife shared his status. Members of the Indian Civil Service were the elite."¹⁶⁷ There was a quasi-military element even to socialising - when attending dinner parties, guests requested leave from "the *Burra Memsahib* - wife of the most senior official present rather than the hostess."¹⁶⁸ Thus, in many ways the Anglo-Indian elite and the British

¹⁶⁵ 'Domesticating Western Food in Japan, a Comparative View', in *Food on the Move: Proceedings of the Oxford Symposium on Food and Cookery, 1996*, ed. by Katarzyna Cwiertka (presented at the Oxford Symposium on Food & Cookery, Devon, England: Prospect Books, 1997), pp. 64–75, p.69.

¹⁶⁶ Wyvern (Colonel Arthur Robert Kenney-Herbert), *Culinary Jottings for Madras* (Prospect Books 1994, a facsimile of the 1885 [fifth] edition originally by Higginbotham of Madras), 286-7, cited in Cwiertka, p.69.

¹⁶⁷ Dussart, p.79.

¹⁶⁸ Dussart, p.80.

government were, although not synonymous, closely interrelated and more likely to be united in outlook than in other societies. A story published in 1913 corroborating the interlinked nature of Cwiertka's theories surrounding the decline of Indian food being related to the social ladder, and Leong-Salobir's that it came from the government, was related by Procida.

In a humorous story published in 1913, the competition between an Indian Army regiment permanently stationed in India and the more prestigious British Army regiment temporarily posted to this distant outpost of the empire played itself out in the culinary arena. The snobbish British Army officers and their wives snubbed the Indian Army officers and their spouses (all of whom were also British) by refusing to eat the curry and rice served at their dinners. One day, however, a woman from the Indian army contingent called upon the wife of a British Army officer and discovered her, "squatted on the sofa, demolishing a plate of curry-and-rice! The curry was obviously fiery with chillies . . . Then, realising that she had been properly caught enjoying the very stuff for which she and her set evinced such contempt; stuff that the servants eat and which never appeared on her table the wretched woman uttered a shriek of dismay and fled from the room!" The upshot was that the British Army clique began to mend their manners while the forbidden curry-and-rice gradually reappeared at their tables.¹⁶⁹

Even in this story in which disliking curry is characterised as "snobbery" and the "wretched woman" who disliked it is portrayed as the villain, the author still portrays enjoyment of curry as imbuing the eater with characteristics negatively associated with Indian people. The woman is found "squatted on the sofa" and "shrieks" upon being discovered. The food she is eating is distinguished from anything the Indian army officers ate, classified as "stuff that the servants eat". It also clearly shows that other upper class women, as well as Gardiner and Steel, eschewed "the forbidden curry-and-rice" as a display of social distinction.

Following his lamentation that Indian food has "lost caste", Kenney-Herbert mentions a third, and related point regarding curry's declining popularity on official tables in India - that of the role of texts such as *Indian Housekeeper*. As noted earlier, Indian servants, and the interaction between servants and colonists, were key to the initial evolution of the hybridised Anglo-Indian cuisine. However, as time went on, Indian households began to instruct their servants differently.

¹⁶⁹ H. Hervey, *The European in India* (London: Stanley Paul and Co., 1913), 4-7, cited in Procida, pp.139-140.

The old cooks, who studied the art [of Indian food], and were encouraged in its cultivation, have passed away to their happy hunting grounds; and the sons and grandsons who now reign in their stead have been taught to devote themselves to more fashionable dishes.¹⁷⁰

This mention of the impact of the instructions a *memsahib* gave to her cook shows that the omission of Indian food in *Indian Housekeeper* was not just in keeping with the British government's hardened stance, but also key to its successful implementation. The fact that chefs were no longer "encouraged" to cook Indian food, and their successors were instead "taught to devote themselves to more fashionable dishes" was paramount in "elbowing off the once delectable *plats* of Indian origin". Of course, once Indian dishes were no longer meant to be eaten, something else had to replace it. Thus, books of household management did not just reflect the changes in official attitudes, but also enabled the training of Indian servants in new ways of cooking. As such, the exclusion of Indian food from *Indian Housekeeper* in fact hastened the exclusion of "Native Dishes" from the menus of state-sanctioned dinner parties.

The denigration of Indian food in *Indian Housekeeper* can be seen not only in the paucity of Indian dishes, but through the consistently scathing language used when referencing Indian cuisine. A prime example of such language can be found in the introduction to the "Native Dishes" chapter. The introductory paragraph to "Native Dishes" was brief and curt.

The following native dishes have been added by request. It may be mentioned incidentally that most native recipes are inordinately greasy and sweet, and that your native cooks invariably know how to make them fairly well. (356)

The fact that Gardiner and Steel's book not only elides the role of Indian food in a typical Anglo-Indian household, but also openly denigrates Indian food as if it were universally reviled, is also part of the reason "molten curries... have been gradually banished from our dinner tables." Their derogatory language challenged the respectability of enjoying Indian food, and heightened the respectability of European dishes. Furthermore, Gardiner and Steel challenged Indian food's

¹⁷⁰ Wyvern (Colonel Arthur Robert Kenney-Herbert), *Culinary Jottings for Madras* (Prospect Books 1994, a facsimile of the 1885 [fifth] edition originally by Higginbotham of Madras), p. 287.

respectability without reference to any opposing view. They present the chapter on “Native Dishes” as if it were not the most commonly consumed type of food by Anglo-Indians, but an unappetising oddity. This audacity further conveys their denial that Indian food was both familiar to and well-liked by their audience. Indeed, as a book to guide young *memsahibs* with little experience in India, they seem almost to be attempting to bias inexperienced readers against Indian food before they had the opportunity to taste it.

Arjun Appadurai notes that "The existence of cookbooks presupposes not only some degree of literacy, but often an effort on the part of some variety of specialist to standardise the regime of the kitchen, to transmit culinary lore, and to publicise particular traditions guiding the journey of food from marketplace to kitchen to table."¹⁷¹ In their omission of Indian food, Gardiner and Steel attempted to “standardise the regime of the kitchen” into a form which did not involve Anglo-Indian dishes. The “particular traditions” they wanted to “publicise” were only the European ones. The disparity between what was eaten in India by Anglo-Indians and what was recorded in *Indian Housekeeper* is an extreme example of the disparity present in all cookbooks. That is, a disparity between dishes which the authors consumed on a regular basis, and those which they chose to record. But, in its context as a cookbook dedicated “To the English girls to whom fate may assign the task of being house-mothers in our Eastern empire,” (v) *Indian Housekeeper*’s omission is a decidedly political, and pro-Imperialist one.

Thus, in the context of *Indian Housekeeper* the choice to record or not record a recipe is not a passive, “unconscious reflection of everyday life”.¹⁷² Instead, as a popular and influential text *Indian Housekeeper* potentially played an active role in changing the landscape of India under crown rule. In presenting European food as desirable, “fashionable dishes” and Indian food as “greasy”, the text

¹⁷¹ Arjun Appadurai, ‘How to Make a National Cuisine: Cookbooks in Contemporary India’, *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 30.1 (1988), 3–24 <<https://doi.org/10.1017/S0010417500015024>>, p.3.

¹⁷² Jean-François Revel, p.3, cited in Procida, p.138.

helped to implement the censorship of Indian food from official contexts. It taught *memsahibs* how to retrain their Indian chefs and established why such retraining was important.

Managing Readers and their Desires: French Food

Since Indian food was no longer officially sanctioned by the British government, it had to be replaced with another cuisine at official establishments. Gardiner and Steel's recipes are mostly this "other" cuisine, a combination of various European styles, with French and British dishes featuring most prominently. It is hard to get an exact count of how many French dishes are included in *Indian Housekeeper*. French dishes are mixed in with the more British and generally "European" dishes spread throughout the rest of the recipe sections. Furthermore, there are many recipes in *Indian Housekeeper* which are what might today be thought of as "French inspired", rather than truly French. For example, Beans or Tomatoes "à la Provençale", "Peas à la Parisienne" or "Artichokes à l'Française" (sic). Others are labelled as "French" (French soufflé, French omelette) to distinguish them from alternative (and often explicitly stated as inferior) Indian styles of preparing the same dish. A number of dishes are also easily identifiable to the modern reader as well-known French dishes, and have the same name as is used now. For example, recipes for bavaroise, blancmange and bouillabaisse amongst others are given.

In Britain in 1890 French food was the food of the elites. From the Renaissance to the late 18th century French cooking techniques became increasingly popular among professional chefs in England and around Europe.¹⁷³ Indeed, in the mid-nineteenth century the two most famous male chefs in England cooked in the style of Antonin Carême, the renowned French chef. They were Alexis Soyer (1809-58) and Charles Elmé Francatelli (1805-76). Soyer was in fact French, but spent his whole life in England, and Francatelli, despite his name, was English but trained under Carême in Paris. At the time of *Indian Housekeeper*'s first printing, Escoffier was the head chef at the Savoy, and

¹⁷³ see Stephen Mennell, *All Manners of Food: Eating and Taste in England and France from the Middle Ages to the Present*, 2nd ed., Illini books ed (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1996).

international hotels serving French cuisine were increasingly the leaders on “good taste”.¹⁷⁴ In fact, by the nineteenth century, the influence on French cookery was so strong by that Mennell notes it “had consequences for English cookery beyond the elite” and “much of English professional cookery in the nineteenth century was derivative from French models.”¹⁷⁵ It is no surprise then that so many of Gardiner and Steel’s recipes are French inspired, and that French food is so openly esteemed by them.

The status of French food as the cuisine of both English and international elites likely further fuelled its attractiveness in the eyes of ambitious Anglo-Indians. As Leong-Salobir has documented, the “Anglo-Indians and other colonisers constructed themselves as a separate community, as the ruling elite of colonies”.¹⁷⁶ She noted specifically that “In the colonial era, at the official and ceremonial level, Britons felt the need to exert racial and class superiority by only consuming European type food, and *haute cuisine* no less.”¹⁷⁷ Domestic households in India served French food to perform their “civilised” and superior nature. However, professional cooking in courts and restaurants was (and indeed is) quite separate from domestic fare. Mennell noted that “French professional chefs were at pains to differentiate their work from mere domestic cookery.”¹⁷⁸ English domestic cookbooks for the middle classes did not typically feature French food as prominently as their professional counterparts.¹⁷⁹ And, as noted earlier, Anglo-Indian households typically ate Indian, rather than French cuisine at home.

However, even within the context of French cuisine - which Gardiner and Steel admire to some degree - *Indian Housekeeper* continues to correct and shape its readers. It is clear from the authors’ complaints and financial advice that Anglo-Indians often wanted to serve significantly more

¹⁷⁴ Mennell, p.157-163.

¹⁷⁵ Mennell, p.151.

¹⁷⁶ Cecilia Leong-Salobir, ‘A Taste of Empire: Food, the Colonial Kitchen and the Representation and Role of Servants in India, Malaysia and Singapore, c. 1858-1963’ (The University of Western Australia, 2009) <<https://research-repository.uwa.edu.au/en/publications/a-taste-of-empire-food-the-colonial-kitchen-and-the-representatio>>. p.24

¹⁷⁷ Leong-Salobir, ‘A Taste of Empire: Food, the Colonial Kitchen and the Representation and Role of Servants in India, Malaysia and Singapore, c. 1858-1963’, p.24.

¹⁷⁸ Mennell, p.201.

¹⁷⁹ Mennell, p.201.

extravagant French-style meals than the authors approved of. For example, the authors complain in the fifth chapter that “one is often treated to a badly-cooked dinner in a style of a third-class French restaurant.” (51) Gardiner and Steel also complain that an unnecessarily extravagant French style of serving dessert has become popular in India.

The present fashion of making dessert into a troisième service, with the servants perpetually handing round wines and sweets, is detestable. The dinner ends, as it began, with a bustle and a clatter of spoons and forks, instead of a calm. (53)

Gardiner and Steel chide their readers’ extravagant spending, noting how Anglo-Indians are less sensible than English families when it comes to their food budget. The authors point out that a family “with £1200 a year at home would not dream of giving champagne and *pâte de foie gras*, or spending thirty shillings in preserved fruits, bonbons, &c., for a very *récherché* pudding. Why should it be done out here?” (51) They also show some scepticism towards ostentatious French food, and note that “the present style is not a little pretentious for the salaries and position of many who adopt it.” (51)

However, their disparaging comments regarding “pretentious” serving styles or ostentatious spending make it clear that, as with Indian food, Gardiner and Steel’s text does not reflect the opinion of most Anglo-Indians. Instead, it attempts to overturn it. The admonishments and warnings by Gardiner and Steel show that the particular Anglo-Indian desire to present a front of “dominance” was not just reflected in a hybrid cuisine. The desire to “construc[t] themselves as a separate community, as the ruling elite of colonies”¹⁸⁰ is reflected in the desire for elite French food also.

It would be unwise to portray all Anglo-Indians as united in their tastes and culinary preferences.

Goody noted that “By concentrating upon the behavioural unity of specific groups, tribes or nations at a cultural level, one might neglect those important aspects of that culture which are linked with social or individual differences.”¹⁸¹ Yet analysis of *Indian Housekeeper* reveals that far from attempting to posit either themselves or the reader as members of the mainstream, Gardiner and Steel intentionally

¹⁸⁰ Leong-Salobir, ‘A Taste of Empire: Food, the Colonial Kitchen and the Representation and Role of Servants in India, Malaysia and Singapore, c. 1858-1963’, p.24.

¹⁸¹ Jack Goody, *Cooking, Cuisine, and Class: A Study in Comparative Sociology*, Themes in the Social Sciences (Cambridge [Cambridgeshire]; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1982). 28, cited in Mennell, p.16.

set themselves and the reader against such a group. In referencing the sort of Anglo-Indian who follows “the present fashion[s]” of dining or would serve a “badly-cooked dinner in a style of a third-class French restaurant” (51) Gardiner and Steel imply that their readers are not of that sort. There is an unspoken promise to their continual criticisms of Anglo-Indians: present company is excepted.

Gardiner and Steel do not reject the notion of preparing French food in domestic households in India entirely. Instead, their criticism largely focuses on extravagance. They tell their readers to “cut down Europe stores, extra servants, and swagger generally” (22) but not to cut it out entirely. They acknowledge that it is much cheaper to buy goods from India, and that “the less one has to do with [imported] tinned soups, fish and cooked meat the better. They are at best the means of evading starvation.” (12) But, this is followed in earlier editions by the point that “many groceries, all of the flavouring, and most of the refined niceties of cooking must still come from Europe, or from the *Europe shops*.”¹⁸² Thus, the inclusion of European elements, if not too expensive, is strongly encouraged. Furthermore, the authors underline that Europe, not India, is the source of “refined niceties”. This emphasises the idea that high-class cooking is not Indian cooking.

The authors then disparage the serving of French food in India in a manner that is insufficiently “authentic” and proper. For example, they note that “Indian soufflées are really only omelette soufflées, while a French soufflée is an extremely light pudding” (307) and “this recipe is for real French omelet, not for the greasy leather which goes by that name in India.” (347) They also note that their bouillabaisse recipe is an “original Provençal recipe” (244) and complain that “Breakfasts in India are for the most part horrible meals, being hybrids between the English and the French fashions”. (45) These comments do not acknowledge the fact that many of their own recipes are such “hybrids” between “the English and the French fashions”. The recipe preceding bouillabaisse, for example, is titled “Bisque au jardinière”. (244) This dish, as well as being grammatically incorrect, is one of many that does not appear to exist in French cuisine. I could only find reference to a dish so-

¹⁸² Steel and Gardiner, *Indian Housekeeper 3rd Edition* (1893), p.13.

named in *Indian Housekeeper*. Furthermore, despite decrying inauthenticity, the authors are quite in favour of treating “French” cooking as a linguistic, as well as a culinary, exercise. They write that “a little ingenuity and a French dictionary will supply an intelligent cook with many new dishes” and “In no other branch of cookery is a French dictionary and a vivid imagination more necessary than in the preparation of what are called high-class entrées.” (268) In the introduction to the chapter on “High Class Entrées” they conclude “but when all is said and done, a cook who can make a Turban à la something can put the same mixture into a different shape, and call it Little Chickens à la something else.” (268) In other recipes, there is also a purely nominal tie to a nation’s cuisine, such as “Spanish salad” (291) or “Italian pancakes”. (308) Thus, although the authors esteem “real” and authentic preparations of dishes within domestic households their understanding of “authenticity” is somewhat different from that of modern readers. A chef who simply used a dictionary to invent their own French terms for their cooking would, in the twenty-first century, be criticised for “inauthentic” cooking. Yet such behaviour is in fact encouraged within *Indian Housekeeper*. At the same time, as noted above, preparations of omelettes and soufflés in India which are perceived as authentically French, are valued above those which are not perceived as authentically French.

Authenticity is an inherently complex and internally contradictory system of status seeking behaviour. This is partly because there are many different and often overlapping types of “authenticity”. In his work on the language used in crisp packaging, Josée Johnston and Shyon Baumann identified multiple different types of authenticity, such as “distance from institutionalised power” or “creation by hand rather than by industrial processes”.¹⁸³ Some categories of authenticity, such as “distance from institutionalised power”, seem distinctly modern, while others more closely fit with Gardiner and Steel’s use of the term. The authors’ desire for “authenticity” in French food is exemplary of the place of French culinary traditions in nineteenth century British society. Knowledge of French food conferred significant cultural capital to their readers. Bourdieu defined cultural capital as “instruments for the appropriation of symbolic wealth socially designated as worthy of being sought and

¹⁸³ Johnston, Josée, and Shyon Baumann, ‘Democracy versus Distinction: A Study of Omnivorousness in Gourmet Food Writing’, *American Journal of Sociology*, 113.1 (2007), 165–204 <<https://doi.org/10.1086/518923>>, p.179.

possessed”.¹⁸⁴ This definition fits well with Gardiner and Steel’s treatment of knowledge of authentic French cooking. Understanding what was and was not “authentic” French food was a form of “symbolic wealth” for Anglo-Indians. Unlike authentic Indian food, authentic French food was “socially designated as worthy of being sought and possessed”.

The initial complete omission and latter hybridised form of the small “Native Dishes” section underlines the fact that Gardiner and Steel did not value authenticity in Indian food. In contrast to the authors’ praise for authentic French cooking, authentic preparations of Indian food are not lauded. In the introduction to the “Native Dishes” section, Gardiner and Steel note that “native cooks” know how to prepare the dishes “fairly well”. (356) If “authentic” preparations of Indian food were valued, this access to experts in the preparation of Indian food would have been celebrated. Instead, there is only a terse comment that “It may be mentioned incidentally that most native recipes are inordinately greasy and sweet”. (356) No attempt is made to correct Anglo-Indians’ technique in preparing pilau or dal, as it is for their preparations of omelettes and souffles.

“Authenticity” was, in 1890, a concept which had connotations of prestige. As Andrew Potter noted, of modern society, “when we take a closer look at many supposedly ‘authentic’ activities, such as loft-living, ecotourism, or the slow-food movement, we find a disguised form of status-seeking.”¹⁸⁵ Potter’s examples of “loft-living, ecotourism, or the slow-food movement” are clearly not nineteenth century activities. Yet, equivalent ‘authentic’ activities in nineteenth century India – serving omelettes, souffles and “removes” – were performed for the same, status-seeking, reasons. Curiously, in the twenty-first century the pursuit of refined, authentic French food has almost become *unfashionable*. French food became such an archetypal activity of the elite, that in our modern culture

¹⁸⁴ Pierre Bourdieu and Jean Claude Passeron, *Reproduction in Education, Society, and Culture*, Theory, Culture & Society, 1990 ed (London ; Newbury Park, Calif: Sage in association with Theory, Culture & Society, Dept. of Administrative and Social Studies, Teesside Polytechnic, 1990). cited in Dan Jurafsky and Yoshiko Matsumoto, ‘Think 53: Food Talks’ (unpublished PowerPoint, Stanford, 2017) <<http://web.stanford.edu/class/think53/bourdieu17.pdf>> [accessed 29 September 2021].

¹⁸⁵ Andrew Potter, *The Authenticity Hoax: Why the ‘Real’ Things We Seek Don’t Make Us Happy*, 1st ed (New York: Harper Perennial, 2011). 15, cited in Joshua Freedman and Dan Jurafsky, ‘Authenticity in America: Class Distinctions in Potato Chip Advertising’, *Gastronomica*, 11.4 (2011), 46–54 <<https://doi.org/10.1525/gfc.2012.11.4.46>>, p.51.

which values cultural omnivorousness (the consumption of both high and low status cultural objects and foods), open dedication to “elitist” activity is less longer acceptable¹⁸⁶.

Thus, in analysing the selection of recipes in *Indian Housekeeper*, there is a clear tension between what Gardiner and Steel are encouraging readers to do and what readers actually wanted to do. This is most clearly articulated in the comments surrounding Indian food and extravagant French food.

Another recipe chapter reluctantly added by request was the “Vegetarian Cookery” section. This was added in the 7th edition of *Indian Housekeeper*, released in 1909. The “Vegetarian Cookery” chapter, much like the “Native Dishes” chapter, opens with the authors noting that it had been added “by special request”, and making it clear they object to its inclusion.

The writer, though practically a vegetarian, fails to see any difference between killing a cabbage and killing a chicken. The law of sacrifice is the law of life in the highest and in the lowest. We cannot escape from it. To say of this marvellous manifestation of mysterious force which we call “our” world that here is life and here is not life, is as foolish as it is arbitrary. All we can grasp is that the sacrament of pure sacrifice of life is as much in the germ of wheat which we turn to our individual use, as it is in the tons of beef on which we gluttonise at Christmastide. And all we can do is, so far as in us lies to sacrifice as *little* as we can, and by our lives to make such sacrifices worthy, thus - in all reverence be it said - preserving the body and soul that is truly given for our sustenance, into the higher eternal life, instead of letting it be sacrificed needlessly.¹⁸⁷

This treatise on the pointlessness of vegetarianism, preceding the chapter on vegetarian cookery, is one example of many of the corrective tone of *Indian Housekeeper*. Concessions to readers which impact Gardiner and Steel’s consummate vision of the “chimeric ideal” of an Anglo-Indian household are made reluctantly.¹⁸⁸

In summary, the recipe selection process reveals a great deal about Gardiner and Steel’s opinions of and enthusiasm for different cuisines. Their inclusion of simple French cuisine in order to “correct” the extravagant spending of their reader, and the omission of Indian food as a means to discourage its

¹⁸⁶ See Paul Freedman, *Ten Restaurants That Changed America*, First edition (New York: Liveright Publishing Corporation, a division of W.W. Norton & Company, 2016). and Shyon Baumann and Josée Johnston, ‘Democracy vs. Distinction in Omnivorous Food Culture. Clarifications, Elaborations, and a Response to Therese Andrews’, *Sociologica*, 2, 2012, 0–0 <<https://doi.org/10.2383/38264>>.

¹⁸⁷ Steel and Gardiner, *Indian Housekeeper 7th Edition*, p.370-371.

¹⁸⁸ Procida, p.123.

consumption, are revelatory of the prejudices of the authors. The *Indian Housekeeper*'s recipe selection process allowed new *memsahibs* to teach their cooks to "devote themselves to more fashionable dishes."¹⁸⁹ As such, it upheld the British governments' attempts to de-hybridise colonial cuisine. Furthermore, in their valuation of French authenticity and frequent criticism of Indian culture the authors attempt to "civilise" their readers and encourage them to colonise their Indian environment.

Thus, through the recipe selection process there evolves a very clear and - at times - openly acknowledged gap between the values of the authors of *Indian Housekeeper*, and that of their readers. *Indian Housekeeper*, however, is a rather dramatic example of a conflict that exists to some degree in all cookbooks. That is, the gap and occasionally conflict between the "tastes" of the authors, and the tastes of the reader. This tension - particularly between the constant denigration of Indian food and the popularity of such food among Anglo-Indians - is one of the fascinating aspects of *Indian Housekeeper* as an object of study.

Proximity to and Infantilisation of the Indian Servant

The feasibility of the desire for Englishness in *Indian Housekeeper* is predicated upon the labour of Indian servants. Anglo-Indian households employed large numbers of Indian servants, and the tastes of Anglo-Indians were only capable of being satisfied due to their endless labour. Gardiner and Steel's vision of an Anglo-Indian household without the elements of Indian culture that they found "savage" and "disgusting" was thus enabled through the labour of Indian people. The "chimeric ideal"¹⁹⁰ presented within *Indian Housekeeper*, in which the racial prestige of the British was exhibited through exacting control over the contents of the Anglo-Indian dining table, was produced as a result of the intermingling of British and Indians together.

¹⁸⁹ Wyvern, p. 287.

¹⁹⁰ Procida, p.123.

The opening of the text, with its description of the Indian kitchen servant as a “skulking savage with a broom” and the kitchen as a “black hole,” immediately acknowledges the fear that such proximity to the Other invoked in young *memsahibs*. Gardiner and Steel’s reference to the “stilling, enervating atmosphere of custom” which “pervad[es] all things” also acknowledges the underlying fear of the Other which “pervades” *Indian Housekeeper*.

One way in which Gardiner and Steel attempt to mitigate the unsettling porosity of the imaginary boundaries against the colonised peoples which surrounds the Anglo-Indian home is through the patronising language used when referring to servants. Gardiner and Steel describe servants as “absolutely children” and note “Indian servants are like children, gaining a certain satisfaction in the idea that at any rate they have been troublesome.” They explicitly characterise the Indian servant as simple, and childlike; incapable of the simplest tasks. The authors describe Indian people as if they were helpless without the guidance and advice of the *memsahib*. And to an extent, Indian servants within an Anglo-Indian household truly were vulnerable. Gardiner and Steel’s comments that a *memsahib* is “primarily responsible for the decency and health of all persons living in her service or compound” (4) and that it is “the mistress’ duty to see that [servants] are decently housed and have proper sanitary conveniences” (4) are somewhat understandable. Highlighting the enormous responsibility a mistress has for taking care of her servants is certainly justified.

Yet as Dussart noted, although “styled as children” by *memsahib*, servants in India “were not dependent within the household in the same way as English servants were”.¹⁹¹ They were mostly male and frequently had families of their own who lived in the compound.¹⁹² Dussart cites the following letter from Minnie Wood to her mother written in 1857.

Your servants with their families live in your compound in mud houses & pens, but that is all, you do not feed them or have anything to do with them, only allow 1 hour & a half each day for their Khana or dinner which is the only meal of which they ever partake...¹⁹³

¹⁹¹ Dussart, p.105.

¹⁹² Dussart, p.105.

¹⁹³ Letter to her mother March 27th, 1857, Letters of Maria Lydia Wood, MSS/Eur/B210/A, OIOC, Dussart, p.105.

In this context, comments by Gardiner and Steel such as “The Indian servant is a child in everything save age, and should be treated as a child; that is to say, kindly, but with the greatest firmness...first faults should never go unpunished.” (3) or “for here again Indian servants are like children, in that they have an acute sense of justice” (4) seem even more ridiculous. I support Dussart’s conclusion that “Such a construction provided a way in which mistresses could reassure themselves that they were not only superior to, but also authoritative over their servants, a way of denying their dependence on the servants.”¹⁹⁴ The need for servants in an Anglo-Indian household, exacerbated through attempts to Anglicise the home, tied the *memsahib* to India. This tie to India was to some degree unavoidable and yet highly uncomfortable. It rendered the *memsahib* dependent upon those which she had been taught to denigrate.

I would add that Gardiner and Steel instil in the reader a sense that without colonisers, Indian people would never be able to “advance”. Through their infantilizing of Indian people and their denigration of Indian food and culture they paint the kitchen as somewhere which requires the *memsahib*’s presence in order to run properly. However as noted earlier this was not the case. Indian kitchens were generally rarely visited by *memsahib*, and certainly did not require their assistance. Gardiner and Steel’s infantilising of Indians in the kitchen forms part of the “paternalistic arrogance of imperialism” exhibited by the British in India more broadly. The infantilisation of Indian servants attempts to reimagine India as a place where the British are required to be.

Although at times they treat Indian servants as children, Gardiner and Steel in fact vacillate between infantilisation and frustration with or even anger at Indian servants. They warn that “Mahomedans of the lower classes” are “apparently blind to dirt.” (73) They also lament “It would take page on page, chapter on chapter, to tell the many evil habits in which Indian cooks have been grounded and

¹⁹⁴ Dussart, p.105.

taught”. (70) Yet despite their own constant criticisms, Gardiner and Steel warn against being overly critical to servants, and cooks in particular.

As half the comfort of life depends on the actual cooker of food, it is as well to keep him pleased with himself and with his service. Yet for one mistress who makes a point of commending a well-cooked dish, how many are there who never dream of praise, and whose only criticism is unmeasured and often unreasonable blame? (70)

They do not present much evidence in the text that they followed their own advice. The recipe sections and “Advice to the Cook” chapter are just as critical of Indian servants as the rest of the text. For example, under “On Stewing” they complain that Indian stews are “lumps of hard meat floating in a greasy, dark gravy, with a few underdone onions and potatoes swimming round!” (236) In a recipe for pasta the authors also complain that “macaroni is almost invariably ruined in India by being dressed with eggs.” (280) The authors’ own directions for cooking macaroni might to a modern day reader be categorised as having been “ruined”. It involves cooking the pasta for “three quarters of an hour” with “a clove of garlic stuck with two cloves.” (280)

Negation and Disgust

As with Gardiner and Steel’s comments about macaroni and stews, many of the descriptions of food and cooking in *Indian Housekeeper* are focussed on disgust and disorder. Firstly, they denigrate Indian ways of preparing food, as noted above. Secondly the authors exhibit disgust at Indian influences upon non-Indian dishes, such as with their descriptions of Anglo-Indian breakfasts and omelettes. They detail why Indian food is inferior, why inauthentic omelettes are inedible and why a remove should not be served before an entree. However, such negativity is not balanced with enthusiastic praise for the “European routine” they insist upon being followed. The authors do not devote time to celebrating French food, or explaining why it is French dishes are so delicious. Instead, the language is consistently focussed on the negative.

Kristeva, in *Powers of Horror* (1980), argued:

It is thus not lack of cleanliness or health that causes abjection but what disturbs identity, system, order. What does not respect borders, positions, rules. The in-between, the ambiguous, the composite.¹⁹⁵

Julia Kristeva, a Bulgarian-French psychoanalytic philosopher, wrote in *Powers of Horror* about human disgust with objects and people which occupy liminal spaces. Kristeva “proposes that we are especially disgusted by anything that is ambiguously located at the physical boundaries of the self, neither clearly inside nor outside us”.¹⁹⁶ In the Anglo-Indian household, Indian servants are “ambiguously located”. Gardiner and Steel respond to such ambiguity by attempting to reject the presence of Indian culture within the Anglo-Indian household. This follows Kristeva’s theory of the abject, which argued that “we attempt to maintain our stable sense of self” by “expelling” the “unsettling items” which we deem abject¹⁹⁷. The Indian servants, however, are not the only ones in the Anglo-Indian household who are “ambiguously located”. Anglo-Indians themselves are in many ways a “composite” figure. I would theorise that the text emphasises order and boundaries so as to counteract the instability of the cultural boundaries within the Anglo-Indian household. As outsiders in India, Anglo-Indians occupy a liminal space between pure and impure, the “in-between”. Their situation corresponds to that which Julia Kristeva theorised as a state of abjection, e.g. “the in-between, the ambiguous, the composite”. It is a fear of their own unstable position as well as that of their servants which drives Gardiner and Steel – and colonial forces more generally - to impose such strict boundaries on servants. Strict boundaries are an attempt to counteract the fact that the very presence of Indian servants “disturbs identity, system, order” in the Anglo-Indian home.

This desire for order and control over the Other is related to the tone of disgust used by Gardiner and Steel when describing Indian food. The repudiation of the desirability of Indian food in the eyes of Anglo-Indians is an attempt to purify the Anglo-Indian home of the Indian body. Indian food transgresses the boundary of the Anglo-Indian body. In response to this transgression, Gardiner and

¹⁹⁵ Kristeva, p.4.

¹⁹⁶ Chris Baldick, *The Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms*, Oxford Quick Reference, Fourth edition (Oxford, United Kingdom ; New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2015), p.1.

¹⁹⁷ Baldick, p.1.

Steel seek to control the tastes of Anglo-Indians in order to expel any uncertainty about the racial prestige of the British.

The work of Mary Douglas, a British anthropologist, informed Kristeva's writings on the abject. In her work *Purity and Danger* (1966), Douglas focusses on the distinctions between ritual and pathogenic notions of purity and dirt. Douglas argued that "some pollutions are used as analogies for expressing a general view of the social order".¹⁹⁸ That is, that notions of dirt are strongly tied to human understanding of boundaries, order and categorisation. Douglas also notes that "reflection on dirt involves reflection on the relation of order to disorder, being to non-being, form to formlessness, life to death".¹⁹⁹ As such, that which is formless and disordered is often treated as impure. This linking of disorder and impurity can be seen in the language of the recipes of *Indian Housekeeper*. In so strongly and clearly condemning the consumption of Indian food, Gardiner and Steel are attempting to cleanse the "composite" nature of the Anglo-Indian household. The Othering and denigration of Indian people and Indian food allows them to "purify" the Anglo-Indian household and reinstate boundaries between British and Indian.

Kristeva describes "food loathing" as "perhaps the most elementary and most archaic form of abjection" and argues that fear and notions of the abject – both of food and more generally – are tied to exclusion and negation.

[Fear] means that there are lives not sustained by *desire*, as *desire* is always for objects. Such lives are based on *exclusion*. They are clearly distinguishable from those understood as neurotic or psychotic, articulated by *negation* and its modalities, *transgression*, *denial* and *repudiation*.²⁰⁰

Indian Housekeeper, in this sense, is a text ruled by the abject. As noted earlier, it does not portray "lives sustained by *desire*" at all. Its recipes are "articulated by *negation*". The recipes teach the reader what food should not taste like or look like. "Lumps in sauces come from laziness in stirring in the

¹⁹⁸ Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of the Concepts of Pollution and Taboo*, Repr (London: Routledge, 2002), p.3.

¹⁹⁹ Douglas, p.7.

²⁰⁰ Kristeva, p.6.

flour”; “Curdled sauces will constantly occur unless a bain-marie is used”. (224) In this sense, Gardiner and Steel’s recipes articulate the notion that the life of the ideal Anglo-Indian is “based on *exclusion*” rather than “desire”. In some ways, such exclusionary thinking is inherent to any attempt to portray upper class sensibilities. Bourdieu stated that “In matters of taste, more than anywhere else, all determination is negation; and tastes are perhaps first and foremost distastes, disgust provoked by horror or visceral intolerance (‘sick-making’) of the tastes of others”²⁰¹ Thus, disgust at the “tastes of others” is an inherent element of the stratification of tastes. Or, as Dan Jurafsky summarised “what it is to be upper class is to be not lower class”.²⁰² In attempting to more easily distinguish tasteful culture from distasteful culture, Gardiner and Steel mark that which occupies a liminal space between cultures – such as Anglo-Indian food – as abject.

Gardiner and Steel’s belief that the “composite” is distasteful, and that distinction should be articulated by negation, is consistent throughout the text. Little time is spent celebrating well-prepared French or British food. Instead, the authors rely on negation to “enshrine differentiation” between India and Britain. Gardiner and Steel themselves draw attention to their use of “negation” and “exclusion,” admitting that they have written their recipes specifically to explain to readers what is “not to be done”.

It would take page on page, chapter on chapter, to tell the many evil habits in which Indian cooks have been grounded and taught; but in the Cookery Book published as a companion to this volume, most of them are mentioned in the various recipes as things not to be done. There is therefore no need to detail them here. (70)

Recipes in *Indian Housekeeper*, then, are explicitly connected to the abject, disgust and horror. They are a tool deployed by Gardiner and Steel, both through the recipe selection process and the language of disgust and abjection, in order to control and regulate the highly porous boundaries which surround the Anglo-Indian home.

²⁰¹ Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, 11. print (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard Univ. Press, 2002), p.56.

²⁰² Freedman and Jurafsky, p.50.

Despite their seemingly unabashed denigration of Indian people and culture, Gardiner and Steel explicitly condemn “race prejudice” within *Indian Housekeeper*. In an addendum to a chapter titled “Hints on the Management of Young Children”, added between the fifth and seventh editions, the authors note the following.

The horror of native wet-nurses universally expressed, even by missionary ladies, in the answers received from their correspondents have impressed the authors so deeply that they feel bound to call special attention to it. No good purpose would be served by quoting the actual expressions used, but it must surely rouse surprise and regret that even those who profess to love the souls of men and women should find the bodies in which those souls are housed more repulsive than those of a cow or donkey or a goat? The milk of all these, it is true - to the shame of humanity be it said - is free from a certain specific contagion; but it is a contagion from which, alas! the West is no more immune than the East. Therefore the objection cannot be on this ground. What remains, therefore, but race prejudice to account for the fatuity of fearing lest the milk of a native woman should contaminate an English child's character, when that of the beasts which perish is held to have no such power? The position is frankly untenable. Therefore if the Western woman is unable to fulfil her first duty to her child, let her thank Heaven for the fit of any one able to do that duty for her.²⁰³

This passage is striking in that it offers a rare insight into Gardiner and Steel's own views of “racial prejudice”. By their condemnation of “race prejudice”, Gardiner and Steel make it clear that they do not see their own text as containing such prejudice. As noted earlier, Gardiner and Steel's text can be quite overtly hypocritical. For example, in their condemnation of mistresses who “never dream of praise, and whose only criticism is unmeasured and often unreasonable blame” (70) or their denigration of “hybrid” French dishes. Steel and Gardiner clearly associate the superiority of their own culture with the superiority of its food. However, they deem “food loathing”, to borrow Kristeva's term, to be quite distinct from “breast milk loathing”. Breast milk, Kristeva notes, is “A medium that is common to mother and child, a food that does not separate but binds.”²⁰⁴ Just as exercising notions of taste is fundamentally tied to exclusion and negation, breast milk and wetnurses are inherently tied to notions of bonding and fusing. The fear of “contamination” expressed by *Indian Housekeeper*'s readers might be expected to be shared by its authors. Yet Gardiner and Steel reject the explicit suggestion that an Indian body is any different to a white body. Despite having no qualms

²⁰³ Steel and Gardiner, *Indian Housekeeper 7th Edition*, p.176.

²⁰⁴ Kristeva, p.105.

about denigrating Indian culture and cuisine as less than English culture and cuisine, classifying Indian people as inhuman is intolerable to them.

This passage once again shows the variability of attitudes towards Indian servants by *memsahib*. Far from being united, the “composite” identity of Anglo-Indians produced a range of responses to the fear of “contamination” of Indian bodies. Gardiner and Steel, despite their unabashed rejection of Indian food, deride the “fatuity” of rejecting wetnurses on the basis of their race. This variability in attitudes towards interacting with Indian servants among the British will be explored in the following chapter.

Chapter Two: The Written Recipe versus Direct Instruction

Nothing the newborn infant does establishes so swiftly its social connection with the world as the expression and satisfaction of its hunger. Hunger epitomises the relation between its dependence and the social universe of which it must become a part.

Sidney Mintz, *Sweetness and Power* (1985)²⁰⁵

Gardiner and Steel, in eliding Indian food from the first and second editions of *Indian Housekeeper*, initially presented a corrective fantasy of imperial control over Anglo-Indian desires and Indian bodies. Their text constructs such an imperialist fantasy in several different ways. Firstly, it establishes Indian food as abject, and undesirable. Secondly, it presents India as inherently weak and chaotic. Gardiner and Steel present Indian servants as feeble and “a child in everything save age”, and thus in need of management. They reassure their readers that without colonialists’ interventions then the kitchen would remain a “black hole”, and Indian people “skulking savage[s] with a reed broom”.
(ix)

Within this fantastical version of life in India, they also manipulate their reader. As established in the previous chapter, Indian food was very popular among Gardiner and Steel’s imagined Anglo-Indian audience - it was eaten regularly at home and appears on thirty out of thirty-one menus given in contemporary cookbooks.²⁰⁶ Yet Gardiner and Steel never acknowledge the popularity of Indian food among their Anglo-Indian readers. Instead, Gardiner and Steel repudiate the delights of Indian food. They supplant their readers’ desires with their own model of the reception of Indian food in India as “greasy” and undesirable. This portrayal obfuscated the more widely held view that Anglo-Indian food was enjoyable with their own portrayal of it as abject.

They construct within their text a vision of an Indian household ruled by the firm hand of a capable *memsahib*, who is in complete control of what enters and leaves her kitchen. This alleged balance of

²⁰⁵ Mintz, p.4.

²⁰⁶ Leong-Salobir, ‘Spreading the Word: Using Cookbooks and Colonial Memoirs to Examine the Foodways of British Colonials in Asia, 1850–1900’, p.143.

power - entirely in the *memsahib*'s favour - is one that was challenged in the first chapter of my thesis. The desire to control the servant, this thesis argues, is an expression of discomfort with the composite, chimeric nature of an Anglo-Indian household. This second chapter will continue to explore the extent to which an imperial household kitchen was truly within a *memsahib*'s control.

The tone of *Indian Housekeeper* upon first reading appears didactic and unyielding. As Crane and Johnston noted, "Like many of Steel's definitive opinions...domestic information was not given as a suggestion but rather as an edict".²⁰⁷ Yet upon closer analysis and following comparisons of the revised editions of Gardiner and Steel's text, it becomes apparent that the authors had to make concessions to their audiences' desires. Many of the readers they were attempting to mould did not entirely submit to or support their interventions. These readers' voices can be heard within alterations to the text. The addition of recipes for vegetarian cookery and Indian dishes in revised editions, as well as Gardiner and Steel's need to add a "Note" in order to openly address their horror at their reader's virulent response to the authors' encouragement to hire Indian wetnurses, all reveal conflicts between the readers and authors.

The second chapter of this thesis will build on the previous consideration of Gardiner and Steel's recipe selection process in order to analyse the deployment and sourcing of recipes by readers and Gardiner and Steel themselves. It will analyse how the written recipe was used - openly by readers, and somewhat covertly by Gardiner and Steel - to preserve social distance between a *memsahib* and her servants and avoid interaction. Readers of *Indian Housekeeper* often felt uncomfortable issuing detailed orders to servants. *Memsahib* tended to only speak enough of any local language to "to avoid being cheated by the servants or to bark out commands to them."²⁰⁸ As noted in the previous chapter, many *memsahibs* were also nervous around their servants. They rarely entered their kitchens and knew little of cooking. It is understandable then that many preferred to use translated, written recipes to instruct servants in person rather than dialogue. However Gardiner and Steel did not support the use

²⁰⁷ Crane and Johnston, 'How to Dine in India', p.171.

²⁰⁸ Cecilia Leong-Salobir, *Food Culture in Colonial Asia: A Taste of Empire*, 2014, p.82.

of translated recipes. Despite publishing translated recipes to be bought separately, and writing a whole chapter on “Advice to the Cook” which was available “translated into Roman Urdu” (223) the authors firmly discourage their readers from using such written texts. Instead, they note that the written recipe is “never so efficacious as verbal order.” (56) They call learning the local language and being able to give “intelligible orders” the “first duty” of a *memsahib*. (2) *Indian Housekeeper* thus recognises an important distinction between the authoritativeness and effectiveness of communicating through the written recipe versus through dialogue and direct instruction.

Goody and Dialogue

One scholar who studied the impact of the written recipe on social interaction is Jack Goody. Goody’s book *Domestication of the Savage Mind* discusses the anthropology of literacy, or the impact of literacy on human culture more broadly. Jack Goody was a highly influential British anthropologist, and his text focuses on lists, tables and prescriptions as well as recipes.

In a chapter titled “The recipe, the prescription and the experiment” Goody contrasts the orally transmitted recipe with the written one. Written recipes are, he suggests, “‘objective’, ‘neutral’ and ‘impersonal’,”²⁰⁹ while their oral equivalents necessitate “plac[ing] oneself in a subordinate position to another” and require “seeking the direct advice of others”.²¹⁰ Goody’s supposition that the recipe is “‘objective’, ‘neutral’ and ‘impersonal’,” is one that was challenged by the previous chapter of this thesis. The recipes in *Indian Housekeeper* through both their tone and the authors’ selection process clearly underline their view that Indian culture and the Indian servant should be seen as “subordinate” to anything British. However, as can be seen by Gardiner and Steel’s different attitudes towards using the written recipe and using dialogue the authors certainly perceived - as Goody did - that the two forms of instruction were not interchangeable.

²⁰⁹ Goody, *The Domestication of the Savage Mind*, p.142.

²¹⁰ Goody, *The Domestication of the Savage Mind*, p.142.

Goody's arguments relating to how using the written recipe instead of direct interaction changes social interaction will be examined in this chapter in order to explore the role of the recipe in maintaining social distance and an imperial hierarchy in an Anglo-Indian household. Goody's argument relating to the difference between the written recipe and direct instruction was as follows:

But in any oral culture new recipes have to be learnt by one individual from another in a face-to-face situation. The concrete context would stress the relation of teacher to pupil, e.g. of mother to daughter. For oral learning tends to reduplicate the 'initial situation', the process of socialisation. With the cooks of courts, once again, to learn is often to place oneself in a subordinate position towards another. But all this is avoided if one can use a written source, which is 'objective', 'neutral', 'impersonal', as far as human relations themselves are concerned.²¹¹

Goody thus observed that in learning to cook through direct instruction, there is a particular power balance between teacher and student which changes when a written recipe is used. Goody noted that, during direct cookery instruction, the student must adopt a "subordinate position" to their teacher.²¹² Learning to cook through in-person interaction creates a "process of socialisation" which is repeated with each interaction.²¹³ He gives examples of how classic moments of direct culinary instruction – between family members at home, neighbours, a mother and child – reinforce certain hierarchical relationships.

Goody proposed that such socialisation and emphasis on hierarchy is absent when learning from recipes. He suggests that reading recipes does not require the reader to adopt a "subordinate position" to the author. Instead, recipes shift the balance of power so that it is spread equally between teacher and student. Learning through a written recipe thus does not engender the feeling of being subordinated to a teacher. Instead, Goody theorises the written recipe allows readers to "avoid all that [subordination and interaction]."²¹⁴ Through using written recipes, readers no longer adopt a "subordinate position" to those teaching them to cook. Goody pointed to household manuals in the twentieth century as an example of this.

²¹¹ Goody, *The Domestication of the Savage Mind*, p.142.

²¹² Goody, *The Domestication of the Savage Mind*, p.142.

²¹³ Goody, *The Domestication of the Savage Mind*, p.142.

²¹⁴ Goody, *The Domestication of the Savage Mind*, p.142.

Unlike *Indian Housekeeper*, these household manuals were designed to help the British middle class emulate more upper class behaviour. Goody noted that since those manuals were printed they were able to circulate widely and quickly. Printed, written works enabled the rapid transmission of information. Furthermore, such transmission would happen without direct interaction. This meant that information could move between social classes, without one social class needing to “subordinate” themselves to the other. Goody observed that the “widespread circulation of printed works on cooking, etiquette and household management” allowed the “rapid assimilation of social climbers”, since in the twentieth century the recipe was a widely accessible way to attain an education in British upper class cookery.²¹⁵ In summary, Goody argued that the written recipe allowed readers to increase their cultural capital and social standing, without needing to subordinate themselves to another teacher. Thus, the use of the recipe could, in Goody’s words, “emphasise and enshrine differentiation of a hierarchical kind” without the reader being subordinated.²¹⁶ Furthermore, Goody theorised that the availability of the recipe “contributed, in a wider sense, to the weakening of subcultures in the society, since the ‘secrets’ of one group were being made public to all others.”²¹⁷

My analysis of *Indian Housekeeper* in the previous chapter challenges some of these suppositions. The language and selection process of the recipe mean it is not an “‘objective’, ‘neutral’, ‘impersonal’” text. *Indian Housekeeper*’s recipes clearly reflect the authors’ views that Indian servants are “subordinate” through negation and denigration. However, there is another aspect of Goody’s argument that this thesis will also challenge. Goody theorised that the accessibility of the written recipe can be used to “weake[n]” differences between social groups.²¹⁸ That is, he observed that written recipes made it much easier to gain access through cookbooks to information that was previously only knowable by a privileged few. This, he argued, meant that recipes fundamentally

²¹⁵ Goody, *The Domestication of the Savage Mind*, p.142.

²¹⁶ Goody, *The Domestication of the Savage Mind*, p.143.

²¹⁷ Goody, *The Domestication of the Savage Mind*, p.142.

²¹⁸ Goody, *The Domestication of the Savage Mind*, p.142.

worked in favour of “weakening...subcultures”.²¹⁹ Such a conclusion was drawn based on the use of the recipe by middle class readers British readers. These readers successfully used books on household management in order to learn about upper class ways of running a household, and attain upward social mobility. However, when the use of the recipe is analysed in other contexts, it becomes clear that the recipe is not inherently a tool of social mobility. For example, Goody did not look at the use of the recipe by upper class readers in order to correct their servants. Furthermore, he did not consider the use of the recipe in colonial households. In these contexts, I will argue, the recipe can become a tool for preserving class hierarchies as well as for collapsing them.

The Construction of the “Native Dishes” Chapter

As noted above, Gardiner and Steel strongly advocated direct interaction between servant and *memsahib* over relying on the written recipe. This is likely because they observed the same ability for direct interaction to emphasise the “subordinate position” of the servant as Goody did. They detailed exactly how to use dialogue to correct the mistakes of servants in cookery. Much of *Indian Housekeeper*’s pattern of recipe usage supports Goody’s theory that the written recipe is less authoritative than the spoken word. However, the fact that the written recipe enables students to avoid adopting a subordinate position to their teachers does not necessarily mean that it is a tool of social mobility. The printed written recipe’s ability to create new pathways for the transmission of knowledge can be leveraged to maintain social distance between two parties. This chapter will first look at an area of recipe usage in *Indian Housekeeper* which shows how Gardiner and Steel leveraged the written recipe to maintain the imperial hierarchy and preserve social distance between themselves and their servants. This was when researching their “Native Dishes” section. The “Native Dishes” section, it seems, is one instance when Gardiner and Steel did not favour dialogue with their servants.

As noted in the previous chapter, Indian food was widely consumed in India by Anglo-Indians. In the suggested menus of a contemporary cookbook, *What to Cook*, curry was served in 30 recommended

²¹⁹ Goody, *The Domestication of the Savage Mind*, p.142.

family meal plans out of 31.²²⁰ *The Indian Cookery Book: A Practical Handbook to the Kitchen in India Adapted to the Three Presidencies* also noted as follows.

Rice is consumed by most European families at breakfast, tiffin, and dinner. It is eaten at breakfast with fried meat, fish, omelet, country captain, or some other curried dish, and, being invariably followed by toast and eggs, jams, fruit, &c., ... The rice at dinner is usually preceded by soup, fish, roast, and made dishes.... Kitcherees are occasionally substituted for boiled rice at breakfast, and are eaten with fried fish, omelets, croquets, jhal freeze, &c.²²¹

It seems likely that Gardiner and Steel would have eaten a range of “native dishes” while living in India. The eight recipes included in *Indian Housekeeper* from the third edition onwards are far from representative of the range of Indian foods eaten in Anglo-Indian households at that time. The previous chapter of this thesis noted that the brevity of the “Native Dishes” chapter spoke to the reluctance of Gardiner and Steel to encourage Anglo-Indians to eat Indian food. This chapter also shows how the written recipe can be leveraged to maintain social distance between two parties. Analysis of the recipes from the “Native Dishes” section suggests that although Gardiner and Steel may have contributed points and suggestions from their own experience living in India, the recipes were far from original. In other words, they relied heavily on recipes written by British authors in order to construct the “Native Dishes” section. As such, they do not seem to have procured the recipes through asking their servants to teach them recipes. By using written recipes by British authors, Gardiner and Steel were able to avoid adopting a “subordinate position” to their servants. The written recipe in this context allowed for the preservation of an imperial hierarchy within the home. Gardiner and Steel could thus take advantage of the mobility and transmissibility of the written recipe in order to avoid acknowledging that their servants possessed knowledge which was desirable.

Goody’s analysis did not look at how written recipes could be used by upper class students in order to avoid adopting a “subordinate position” through taking a servant or lower class acquaintance as a

²²⁰ Leong-Salobir, ‘Spreading the Word: Using Cookbooks and Colonial Memoirs to Examine the Foodways of British Colonials in Asia, 1850–1900’, p.143.

²²¹ John Cameron, *Our Tropical Possessions in Malayan India: Being a Descriptive Account of Singapore, Penang, Province Wellesley, and Malacca; their Peoples, Products, Commerce, and Government*, London: Smith, Elder and Co., 1865, 295-301. cited in Leong-Salobir, ‘Spreading the Word: Using Cookbooks and Colonial Memoirs to Examine the Foodways of British Colonials in Asia, 1850–1900’, p.131.

teacher. This appears to be how written recipes were used by Gardiner and Steel. Far from the written recipe “weakening...subcultures” it has here enabled Gardiner and Steel to preserve social distance. Through turning to British authors as authorities on Indian food, Gardiner and Steel are able to avoid acknowledging the value of their Indian servants’ knowledge. Gardiner and Steel’s strong emphasis on verbal interaction with servants instead of the use of written recipes, this thesis will argue, stems in part from their belief that dialogue was more subordinating than written recipes. This follows Goody’s argument regarding the way in which the written recipe is less authoritative than the spoken word. However, Gardiner and Steel’s selective avoidance of dialogue with servants when sourcing recipes for their “Native Dishes” section shows that the written recipe is just as much a tool for the preservation of social distance as it is for the “weakening of subcultures”.²²² The written recipe produces a change in social interaction. However, this change can work both for and against social mobility.

The selection of dishes in “Native Dishes” are Burtas, Chitchkee Curry, Dâl, Dâl Pooree, Dumpoke, Kulleah Yekhane, Kidgere and Pilau. These are a combination of Anglo-Indian and Indian foods. Some, like kedgere and dal, are popular in Britain today. Others are less well known, such as chitchkee curry and kulleah yekhane. While it is impossible to prove demonstrably, Gardiner and Steel’s recipes all bear a strong resemblance to the recipes of *A Guide to Indian Household Management* (1880). Indeed, the only other examples of recipes for Kulleah Yekhane and Chitchkee Curry recorded prior to *Indian Housekeeper* are in Mrs. Eliot James’ *A Guide to Indian Household Management*. The recipes in “Native Dishes” also resemble some recipes from several editions of *Mrs. Beeton*, published from 1891 forward. However, *Mrs. Beeton*’s recipes also bear a strong resemblance to Mrs. James’ earlier recipes. It seems likely that James’ cookbook was the original source for both cookbooks. Although no reference is made to *A Guide to Indian Household Management* by Gardiner and Steel within the text, they do reference *Mrs. Beeton*. Their recipe for plum pudding opens “Mrs. Beeton’s recipe is by far the best if modified a little.” (302)

²²² Goody, *The Domestication of the Savage Mind*, p.142.

An example of the close similarities of the Indian recipes in these different cookbooks can be seen in the ingredients given by Gardiner and Steel for “pilaw”. Although all three recipes differ in their methods, they closely resemble each other in the specificity of their ingredients. Every recipe calls for exactly six large onions and two mangoes. This similarity in phrasing and quantity makes it likely Gardiner and Steel used either *Household Management* or *Mrs. Beeton* in order to source their pilau recipe.

A Guide to Indian Household Management (1880)²²³

Pilaw. — Peel and chop six large onions, and cut two ripe mangoes into thin slices, put them in a stewpan with four ounces of butter; have ready some joints of chicken just slightly fried in butter, place them in the stewpan on the top of the other ingredients, and let the whole stew very gently for about an hour. Place some well-boiled rice in a hot-water dish, arrange the chicken joints on it, pour the sauce over, and serve at once.

Beeton's every-day cookery and housekeeping book: a practical and useful guide for all mistresses and servants (1891)²²⁴

Pilau – Ingredients for dish for 4 persons. – A chicken or a few cutlets from the neck of mutton, 6 onions, 2 mangoes, if procurable, rice, 6 oz. of butter, seasoning.

AVERAGE COST, 2s. 3d.

Slice the mangoes and peel and mince the onions, and put them in a stewpan with 2/4 lb. of butter and a good seasoning of pepper and salt. Cut the chicken into joints, or shape the cutlets neatly and fry in the rest of the butter; then add to the onions and mangoes in the stewpan and stew for an hour. Boil some rice (about ½ lb.) as for curry, spread it on a hot water dish, on this place the joints of fowl, or the cutlets, and pour over them the sauce.

The Complete Indian Housekeeper and Cook (1893)²²⁵

Pilau. – Slice six large onions, and two green mangoes and fry in one *chittack* butter and set aside. Truss a chicken as for boiling. Fry it in one *chittack* butter and put into the stewpan. Cover with water and stew gently. When half done, remove and finish the cooking in a *degchi* as for a roast chicken. Wash two *chittacks* rice and boil in the chicken stock. When done, drain away the surplus stock, add a little butter, some raisins and almonds, cloves, etc., and let it dry. Serve round and over the chicken with the stock reduced as a gravy and a decoration of hard-boiled eggs.

²²³ James Eliot, *A guide to Indian household management* (London: Ward, Lock, 1880), p.89.

²²⁴ Isabella Mary Beeton, *Beeton's Every-Day Cookery and Housekeeping Book: A Practical and Useful Guide for All Mistresses and Servants* (London, 1891) <<https://archive.org/details/b2152841x/page/374/mode/2up>>, p.374.

²²⁵ Steel and Gardiner, *Indian Housekeeper 3rd Edition*, p.396.

There are obvious differences in method and seasoning between the different preparations. Gardiner and Steel add almonds, raisins and cloves and don't joint the chicken. They also add boiled eggs and cook the rice in the stock. However, the recipes are similar enough – particularly in their main ingredients of butter, onions, mango and chicken – that it seems likely that Gardiner and Steel used British cookbooks in constructing their “Native Dishes” section. It also seems that the authors of *Mrs Beeton* in turn referred back to *Indian Housekeeper* when revising their cookbook in the twentieth century. The recipe for pilau included in *Mrs. Beeton's Book of Household Management* (1907) bears a strong semblance to Gardiner and Steel's 1893 interpretation of the dish.

Mrs. Beeton's Book of Household Management (1907)²²⁶

3866.—PILAU or PILLOFF.

Ingredients.—1 chicken, 4 ozs. of butter or ghee, 4 ozs. of rice, 2 green mangoes sliced, 4 or 5 onions sliced, 2 doz. stoned raisins, 1 doz. almonds coarsely shredded, 3 hard-boiled eggs, salt, cloves.

Method.—Truss the chicken as for boiling, fry it in 3 ozs. of butter or ghee until the whole surface is lightly browned, then add the mangoes and onions. Fry gently for 10 or 15 minutes longer, barely cover with white stock or water, add 6 cloves and salt to taste. Simmer gently for $\frac{3}{4}$ of an hour, then transfer to a baking vessel, baste with hot ghee, and roast gently for nearly an hour. Meanwhile boil the rice in the stock until tender, then strain and reduce the stock by rapid boiling. Place the rice in a small pan, add 1 oz. of butter, the raisins and almonds, and make thoroughly hot. Serve the rice round the chicken, garnish with sections of egg, and serve some of the well reduced sauce separately.

Time.—2 hours. Sufficient for 4 or 5 persons. Cost, 3s. 6d.

As noted above, pilau was not the only recipe in *Indian Housekeeper* that can be traced back to British cookbooks. Their recipes for “dumpoke”, “chitchkee curry” and “kulleah yekhanee” also likely originated with Mrs. Eliot James. Mrs. James, like Gardiner and Steel, describes chitchkee as a dish of onions fried in butter with curry powder and gravy, to which you add vegetables and serve with rice.²²⁷ Both authors also recommend that you use as many vegetables as possible. Mrs. James noted

²²⁶ Beeton, *Mrs. Beeton's Every-Day Cookery*, p.556.

²²⁷ Eliot, p.88.

that “The greater the mixture the better the dish”²²⁸ and Gardiner and Steel note “the greater the variety the better.” (356)

Gardiner and Steel had plenty of connections to Indian cooks. In turning to another cookbook for their recipes in the “Native Dishes” chapter rather than asking their Indian cooks, Gardiner and Steel were able to avoid adopting a subordinate position in an interaction with their servants. This underscores the ability for spoken directions to maximise a sense of authority of the instructor over the student as identified by Goody. However, as noted earlier, it also shows that the written recipe is not necessarily a tool of social mobility. In this instance, the transmissibility of the written recipe was used to preserve social distance between two parties instead. The written recipes in “Native Dishes” also allow readers of *Indian Housekeeper* to avoid interacting with their servants. The intended audience of *Indian Housekeeper* would, like its authors, have Indian chefs who had a great deal of expertise. In requesting written recipes from Gardiner and Steel, rather than attempting to interact with and learn from their Indian chefs, the readers of *Indian Housekeeper* were also able to avoid adopting a “subordinate position” to their Indian servants. As such, both the construction of and desire for *Indian Housekeeper*’s “Native Dishes” section shows how the written recipe can be a tool to preserve social hierarchies, as much as a tool to “weake[n]”²²⁹ them.

The Recipe and Neutrality

Furthermore, I do not support Goody’s theory that, in contrast to direct interaction, the recipe was a “neutral” mode of interaction.²³⁰ As noted in the previous chapter, it is an active rather than passive choice to write down the method for creating a dish. The choice to include a recipe in a cookbook is shaped by the authors’ beliefs. In analysing which dishes are recorded in *Indian Housekeeper* and which are not, the biases of the authors (in this case, against Indian food) are clear. The simplicity of the language in the recipes in *Indian Housekeeper* belies the complexity of their construction.

²²⁸ Eliot, p.88.

²²⁹ Goody, *The Domestication of the Savage Mind*, p.142.

²³⁰ Goody, *The Domestication of the Savage Mind*, p.142.

The impossibility of making “neutral” choices or achieving true “neutrality” is analysed in Roland Barthes’ essay titled “The Iconography of Abbé Pierre”. (1957) Roland Barthes described how the Abbé’s haircut, which was intended to be “neutral” instead became a signifier of sainthood. The Abbé Pierre’s haircut was “devised so as to reach a neutral equilibrium between short hair (an indispensable convention if one does not want to be noticed) and unkempt hair.”²³¹ It was, in and of itself, a seemingly unremarkable haircut. Much like the recipes of Gardiner and Steel, it was “conceived negatively.”²³² That is, the Abbé chose his haircut on the basis of what it was not. Similarly, the recipes included in *Indian Housekeeper* are chosen on the basis of what they are not – namely, influenced by Indian culture. As with the Abbé’s haircut, *Indian Housekeeper*’s recipes were not selected because the authors were particularly drawn to these dishes. Barthes notes that the haircut was “devoid of affectation and above all of definite shape, is without doubt trying to achieve a style completely outside the bounds of art and even of technique.”²³³ Similarly, Gardiner and Steel’s recipes are designed “to achieve a style completely outside the bounds” of Indian culture. The language of the recipe, selection process and instructions are all designed to counteract the Indian environment. Thus, both Gardiner and Steel and Abbé Pierre were attempting to construct something “negatively”. As a result, although both the haircut and the recipes of *Indian Housekeeper* initially seem to be constructed in order not to signify, they inevitably become objects of signification. Barthes notes,

Here as everywhere else, neutrality ends up by functioning as the sign of neutrality, and if you really wished to go unnoticed, you would be back where you started.²³⁴

Just as “neutrality ends up functioning as the sign of neutrality”, Gardiner and Steel’s attempts to distance themselves from Indian culture merely reflect their constant proximity to it. The lack of Indian dishes in the book does not reflect a disinterest in Indian cookery. Instead, as with the Abbé’s

²³¹ Roland Barthes and Annette Lavers, *Mythologies*, Vintage Classics, 14th print (London: Vintage, Random House, 2000), p.47.

²³² Barthes and Lavers, p.47.

²³³ Barthes and Lavers, p.47.

²³⁴ Barthes and Lavers, p.47.

haircut, it reflects a choice to perform disinterest. The recipe, much like the Abbé Pierre's haircut, cannot escape the "bounds of art and even of technique".

Barthes then outlines how despite the Abbé's intention that his haircut be "neutral", it too became a signifier. The Abbé's haircut attracted connotations of saintliness and comparisons to Saint Francis inevitably began. Barthes notes that the haircut "quickly becomes a superlative mode of signification, it dresses up the Abbé as Saint Francis. Hence the tremendous iconographic popularity of this haircut in illustrated magazines and in films."²³⁵ In part because "the idea of fashion is antipathetic to the idea of sainthood," his haircut and beard underwent a "mythological routine."²³⁶ Barthes noted that beards "withdraw their bearers a little from the secular clergy."²³⁷ In attempting to reach "neutrality" the Abbé inadvertently distinguished himself. Similarly, Gardiner and Steel's attempts to construct a cookbook which does not signify as Indian, instead "ends up functioning as a sign" of their proximity to and distaste for India.

The written recipe in *Indian Housekeeper* is thus imbued with the pro-Imperialist beliefs of its authors. The use of prohibition throughout the recipe, as highlighted in the previous chapter, reinforces the racial prestige of the British authors. Gardiner and Steel use the recipe to remind their reader of the ineptitude of the Indian servant. The language of the recipe in *Indian Housekeeper* encourages the reader to monitor their servants closely, and not to trust them.

Gardiner and Steel's advocacy of dialogue likely stemmed from such distrust of the Indian servant, fuelled by the anxiety of their own precarious position as Anglo-Indians. As noted earlier, Anglo-Indians occupied a liminal space between British and Indian. They lived on Indian soil, among Indian people, consuming Indian ingredients. The British who lived in India for extended periods of time were even sometimes described as "Indian" themselves. The OED, among the definitions of Indian,

²³⁵ Barthes and Lavers, p.47.

²³⁶ Barthes and Lavers, p.48.

²³⁷ Barthes and Lavers, p.48.

gives “Designating a British person living, or returned from living, in India under British rule. Now *historical*.”²³⁸ Thus, despite pretences towards distinction, Anglo-Indian and Indian identities were closely linked. This uncomfortable tie meant that Anglo-Indian identity was highly unstable. The unsettling nature of this relationship led Gardiner and Steel, as was noted earlier, to attempts to stabilise the sense of self by expelling Indian elements from the Anglo-Indian home.

Attempting to separate the two identities and reiterate the dominance of the British is a focal point of *Indian Housekeeper*. India was a constant presence to be mitigated and overcome within the Anglo-Indian household as much as in the British government. Dussart cites Chattopadhyay as noting that the household “was merely an extension of the public world of administration where all the rules and ceremonies of the latter applied”²³⁹ This was in reference to the “the use of an administrative hierarchy to structure social relations in India” which “resulted in the blurring of the distinction between public and private”²⁴⁰ As noted earlier, administrative, governmental hierarchies bled into social hierarchies in the white community in India. Yet the household was “an extension of the public world” in another sense too. “Managing” India was just as much a consideration for *memsahib* as for officials. Said’s famous epigram in *Orientalism* - “The East is a career.”²⁴¹ - was likely referring mainly to the attitudes and ambitions of the husbands of *memsahib*. But for the *memsahib* themselves the East became a career in another sense - or at least, its containment did. Some Indian elements, such as food or dress, were welcomed by the British at the time of *Indian Housekeeper*’s publication. But as Leong-Salobir noted, European spaces in India revolved around “the need to isolate themselves from the colonised”.²⁴² The “colonial home” was “carefully guarded” by the *memsahib* “against the encroachment of the colonised environment and its people”.²⁴³ The *memsahib*, Leong-Salobir notes, were “gatekeepers of empire... responsible for creating a pure and pristine imperial household, both

²³⁸ ‘Indian, Adj. and n.’, *OED Online* (Oxford University Press, 2021) <<https://www.oed.com/view/Entry/94389?redirectedFrom=indian>> [accessed 23 September 2021].

²³⁹ Chattopadhyay, p.265.

²⁴⁰ Dussart, p.80.

²⁴¹ Benjamin Disraeli, *Tancred - or, The New Crusade* (Read Books Ltd., 2015) <<http://www.myilibrary.com?id=845714>> [accessed 23 September 2021]. xiv cited in Said, *Orientalism*.

²⁴² Leong-Salobir, *Food Culture in Colonial Asia*, p.10.

²⁴³ Leong-Salobir, *Food Culture in Colonial Asia*, p.10.

for display and as a barrier against the colonized environment and its inhabitants.”²⁴⁴ Although in some sense the *memsahib* was “responsible” for creating a “barrier against the colonised environment and its inhabitants”, it was in fact the “inhabitants” themselves who laboured to Anglicise the Anglo-Indian food.

As such, this aspirational isolation rested upon a paradox. On the one hand, the constant presence of Indian bodies labouring was required to produce the Anglicised, “pure and pristine”²⁴⁵ environment of an imperial household. On the other hand, Indian servants were perceived as inherently desecrating to such an environment. As a result, the same people who purified the Anglo-Indian household against Indian contaminants were themselves considered polluting elements. Such a paradox heightened tensions between the *memsahib* and her servant even further. It likely increased desires to maintain the illusion of social distance, and also fear of the Indian servant’s presence.

These tensions between *memsahib* and their servants, as well as language and cultural barriers, bred distrust between the *memsahib* and her servants. Indeed Leong-Salobir describes “the dishonesty of servants” as a “recurring theme” in colonial guides to household management. She cites *Gems from the Culinary Arts*²⁴⁶, ‘*What’ and ‘How’ or What Shall We Have? And How Shall We Have It?*’²⁴⁷ and *Memsahib’s Guide to Cookery in India*²⁴⁸ as all containing extensive treatises on the dishonesty of servants. E.S.P., author of ‘*What’ and ‘How’ or What Shall We Have? And How Shall We Have It?*’ offered the following advice.

[I]f the housekeeper will take the trouble to keep all the stores, and give everything out daily, even to spices, and the smallest detail, including eggs, potatoes, and onions, she will find her bills considerably reduced, the things will be fresh and good, and she will be spared the

²⁴⁴ Leong-Salobir, *Food Culture in Colonial Asia*, p.10.

²⁴⁵ Leong-Salobir, *Food Culture in Colonial Asia*, p.10.

²⁴⁶ Eleanor, *Gems from the Culinary Art and a Ready Help to Every Wife in India*, Madras, Printed by Hoe and Co. at the ‘Premier Press’, 1916, cited in Leong-Salobir, *Food Culture in Colonial Asia*, p.75.

²⁴⁷ E.S.P., ‘*What’ and ‘How’ or What Shall We Have? And How Shall We Have It?*’, Calcutta and Simla, Thacker, Spink & Co., 1904, vii, cited in Leong-Salobir, *Food Culture in Colonial Asia*, p.75.

²⁴⁸ (Mrs) John Gilpin, *Memsahib’s Guide to Cookery in India*, Bombay, A.J. Combridge & Co., 1914, 3, cited in Leong-Salobir, *Food Culture in Colonial Asia*, p.75.

constant differences with the cook over the accounts as to amounts used (E. S. P., 1904, vii).²⁴⁹

Reminders not to trust servants are commonplace in Anglo-Indian guides to household management. This distrust of Indian servants likely further exacerbated communication difficulties between the two parties and made communication through direct instruction even more strained and an even greater source of environment. However, also spurred desires for strict supervision and correction.

Negation

As has been noted above, the desire for British conventions and separation of Indian and British culture advocated by Gardiner and Steel is motivated by a need for distance from the Indian Other. The strict and paradoxical adherence to British convention that Gardiner and Steel argue for throughout *Indian Housekeeper* is rarely justified on the basis of the benefits it will bring. It is instead presented as the alternative to what is forbidden. The British way of doing things is only occasionally enthused about as enjoyable or superior. Mostly, it is presented as a means of purging the inherently chaotic and “savage” Indian way of doing things, an almost superstitious warding off of threats of the “black hole”. (ix)

Gardiner and Steel are particularly insistent on servants following British cookery practices. They insist that recipes and formalities be followed no matter the time or place. In a chapter titled “Duties of the Servants” Gardiner and Steel note the following.

Never let a cook run down in his cooking, even when he is in camp; for it is a dead certainty that once the niceties of dishing up and dressing are disregarded, a general slackness will set in... So insist on everything being done every day in the same style. Then, if a friend comes into dinner unexpectedly, you need have no anxieties. The dinner may be plain, even frugal, but it will be correct, even to the most minute details. (72)

Gardiner and Steel once again use negation to defend and define their rules around food. They do not “insist on everything being done every day in the same style” because they enjoy such luxury and

²⁴⁹ E.S.P., *‘What’ and ‘How’ or What Shall We Have? And How Shall We Have It?*, vii, cited in Leong-Salobir, *Food Culture in Colonial Asia*, p.75.

British familiarity. Instead, they argue that conventions should be followed to prevent problems. If a cook follows the “niceties” of presentation then “you need have no anxieties”, and can avoid “a general slackness” setting in. Thus, “even when he is in camp”, the smallest details of “dishing up and dressing” are expected to be followed, in order to maintain the illusion of Britishness. They argue that food should be “correct” - or presented according to British conventions - for the sake of avoiding “general slackness”, rather than because the conventions are actually enjoyable.

Some of Gardiner and Steel’s objections to servants’ misdemeanours and desire for convention do not seem to be primarily tied to Britishness. The criticisms from the passage below fall squarely into the category of hygiene.

If you keep your milk close to a dirty-smelling kitchen drain, and use water from a ghurra that has been standing in a dirty puddle of that dram, amongst the refuse of vegetables, chickens’ entrails, and Heaven knows what, you may poison your master or your master’s child, as surely as if you had put arsenic in their food. (228)

These criticisms understandably use hygiene-related terms - “dirty” “pure” or “contaminated. But these same hygiene related terms are used by Gardiner and Steel when describing servants not following convention. Straying from the recipe is treated as if it were as much a hygienic issue as using water “from a ghurra that has been standing in a dirty puddle”. Thus, in *Indian Housekeeper*, there is a clear correlation between what is conventional and British and what is “pure”. Mary Douglas argued that “our idea of dirt is compounded of two things, care for hygiene and respect for conventions.”²⁵⁰ This is most evidently the case throughout *Indian Housekeeper*. Gardiner and Steel’s understanding of what it is to be hygienic is inseparable from their understanding of conventions. Douglas also noted that “Purity is the enemy of change, of ambiguity and compromise.”²⁵¹ Thus, the insistence on following British conventions in camp allows the *memsahib* to maintain the purity of her surroundings. Through insistence upon order, Gardiner and Steel attempt to combat “change... ambiguity and compromise.”

²⁵⁰ Douglas, p.7.

²⁵¹ Douglas, p.163.

In the same vein, the authors attribute unpleasant tasting food to Indian servants' tendencies to stray from convention. The authors recount departures from what they view as British convention, such as boiling vegetables together, with a visceral disgust.

Indian vegetables are often called insipid, but the fault lies chiefly in the disgraceful way in which they are cooked. It is no uncommon thing to find them all boiling in one saucepan, or even in the soup, the result being one confused want of flavour. (283)

Once again, the critical tone reflects the fact that the recipe is a means of controlling the behaviour of the servant as much as it is a means of ensuring that food is delicious. The “disgraceful way in which [vegetables] are cooked”, and the criticism of the Indian cooks' methods, form the focus of the passage, rather than the benefits of the English methods. This dislike of boiling multiple vegetables together does seem to have been common practice at the time of *Indian Housekeeper's* publication. The 1907 edition of *Mrs. Beeton* also discourages boiling multiple vegetables together, unless for soups. It is not mentioned as something to avidly avoid as in *Indian Housekeeper*. However it is referenced as not ideal in the body of recipes. For example, even in a recipe for “Mixed Vegetables for Garnish”, where the distinct flavour of each vegetable would be lower in importance, Beeton notes “Wash and scrape the carrots and turnips...Boil them and the peas separately in salted water until tender...”²⁵² Yet her instructions do not, as Gardiner and Steel's do, deploy negation. Her recipe does not warn that mixing vegetables together is disgusting or “disgraceful”. In a recipe for - curiously - “vegetables, curry of” she makes some exceptions. Beeton notes “In boiling the vegetables it is as well to use 2 or 3 small stewpans, and divide them according to the time respectively required. Onion and celery would cook together, also the carrot and turnip, provided the former were given a few extra minutes.”²⁵³ It is possible that cooking vegetables together was seen as a particularly Indian technique, hence Gardiner and Steel's strong dislike of it. However, Douglas also famously described dirt as “matter out of place”.²⁵⁴ It seems that simply by taking vegetables “out of place”, they were considered inedible and “insipid” by the authors.

²⁵² Beeton, *Mrs. Beeton's Every-Day Cookery*, p.844.

²⁵³ Beeton, *Mrs. Beeton's Every-Day Cookery*, p.877.

²⁵⁴ Douglas, p.36.

Overall, Beeton's tone when discussing boiling vegetables together is notably milder than Gardiner and Steel's. Far from being a "disgraceful" practice, it is instead something that is less than ideal, but acceptable in certain circumstances. The aggressive tone of Gardiner and Steel's introduction reflects their strict obsession with order. Douglas's comments that the notion of dirt is strongly correlated with ideas surrounding convention and "place" can clearly be seen in this recipe's disgusted tone. Any contaminating behaviour which does not follow convention brings about renewed fears of the ambiguous and the composite, and becomes a reminder of the precarious nature of the *memsahib's* own identity.

It would seem by their treatment of literal dirt that to Gardiner and Steel no form of Englishness can be considered truly "out of place" in the Anglo-Indian home. Just as Gardiner and Steel reject all forms of Indian behaviour as contaminating, they take all forms of Englishness as purifying. When discussing hill stations, Gardiner and Steel reassure the reader about the state of the houses they might find there. They write "Do not be alarmed at the dirty state of the house at the beginning of the season – it is English people's dirt, not entirely natives'" (191) Douglas's argument that "our idea of dirt is compounded of two things, care for hygiene and respect for conventions" can also be seen in Gardiner and Steel's treatment of literal dirt.²⁵⁵ The "respect for conventions" with which English dirt imbues the house lends it a form of "purity", despite its fundamentally unhygienic nature. This welcoming of English dirt over Indian dirt is reminiscent of a line from Hardy, which Douglas also quotes in *Purity and Danger* - "I never fuss about dirt in its pure state and when I know what sort it is..."²⁵⁶ To Gardiner and Steel, English dirt in an English household "dirt in its pure state". Even in the form of literal dirt, Englishness provides a comforting barrier against the colonised world in an Anglo-Indian household.

Cultural and Knowledge Barriers in the Kitchen

²⁵⁵ Douglas, p.7.

²⁵⁶ Hardy, Thomas. 1998. *Far from the madding crowd*. New York: Doubleday, p.90, cited in Douglas, p.7.

It is not surprising then, in this context of rejection, fear and suspicion, that communication between servants and *memsahib* was often fraught and limited. The *memsahib* was taught to distrust her servants, denigrate them, and yet depend upon them to enable the smooth running of an Anglo-Indian household. However, rather than respond to seeing Indian cooks as pollutants by carefully correcting them, most *memsahib* did not interfere with their cooks. Instead, they sought to maximise physical distance from their cooks – e.g. through avoiding the kitchen, and using written recipes.

As was noted in the introduction to this thesis it was not uncommon for *memsahibs* to attempt only minimal interference with their servants. Carol Hyde, in a response to a questionnaire on life as a *memsahib* noted that the kitchen was “so primitive... that I couldn’t imagine how the cook produced the jolly good meals he did, and felt the less I interfered with him and his methods, the better. After all, he knew a lot more about cooking than I did.”²⁵⁷ The attitude of Carol Hyde reflects both humility and anxiety. On one hand, she is afraid of the “primitive” state of the kitchen. Yet she also welcomes the “jolly good” meals he produced. She seems wary, rather than distrusting, of his methods. There is a parallel between Hyde’s description of the kitchen as “primitive”, and Gardiner and Steel’s characterisation of it as a “black hole”. However, Hyde seems unconcerned by the kitchen’s “primitive state” so long as the cook produces good meals. This is unlike Gardiner and Steel’s characterisation of it, as a “savage” and non-functional place in need of civilising.

Procida’s article argues that reluctance to interfere in the kitchen was the norm in Anglo-Indian households. However, this hands-off attitude towards the cook was not only a common one among *memsahib*, but also among Anglo-Indian cookbooks. Procida noted that “both the realities of Anglo-Indian life and the model of domestic management propounded by the cookbooks necessitated that culinary supervision be exercised at a distance and with a light hand.”²⁵⁸ Procida argues that since

²⁵⁷ Carol Hyde, Responses to Memsahibs Questionnaire, CSAS. cited in Procida, p.133.

²⁵⁸ Procida, p.133.

cookery²⁵⁹ and language²⁶⁰ skills as well as motivation²⁶¹ to closely supervise cooks and translate recipes were limited among *memsahib*, the popularity of household manuals in India under Crown rule was not likely connected to their use as instructional devices. Procida argues, “while a few women may have used the European recipes in Anglo-Indian cookbooks to direct and instruct their cooks, it seems unlikely that many would have consulted Indian recipes for this end. The notion of Anglo-Indian women using cookbooks to instruct their cooks offers at best only a partial explanation for the uses of these texts.”²⁶² However, this is how Gardiner and Steel argue that their text should be used. Indeed, it is for this exact use case that Gardiner and Steel designed their recipes. Their comments that most of the “evil habits in which Indian cooks have been grounded and taught...are mentioned in the various recipes as things not to be done” corroborates their desire that recipes be used specifically to instruct their chefs. (70) The recipes in Gardiner and Steel, through the use of negation and direct commentary are established by the authors as tools to “direct and instruct” cooks.

Despite the fact that *memsahibs* did not typically attempt to correct the cooks’ methods in detail - “the less I interfered with him and his methods, the better” - Gardiner and Steel present not knowing how to intervene in the kitchen as embarrassing. Gardiner and Steel so strongly encourage mistresses to take charge in the kitchen, that they openly mock *memsahibs* who avoid confronting kitchen servants. They tease mistresses who didn’t want to enter the kitchens out of fear that “their appetite for breakfast might be marred by seeing the *khitmutgâr* using his toes as an efficient toast-rack”. Once again, Gardiner and Steel’s text is at odds with typical behaviour of *memsahibs*. There is thus a didactic element in how Gardiner and Steel advocate the use of the recipe. To treat it as an instructive tool was a choice on the behalf of Gardiner and Steel.

While many Anglo-Indian cookbooks advocated a hands-off approach to cookery, *Indian Housekeeper* takes pains to emphasise the importance of not only critiquing servants, but teaching

²⁵⁹ Procida, p.127.

²⁶⁰ Procida, p.134.

²⁶¹ Procida, p.137.

²⁶² Procida, p.137.

Indians the correct way of doing things. This is particularly striking since “Virtually no one in the Anglo-Indian community cooked.”²⁶³

Furthermore, culinary skills, and even a basic appreciation of the mechanics of meal preparation, had little utility in imperial society. This ignorance of cooking skills and disregard for the most basic culinary knowledge apparently remained a perversely constant characteristic of Anglo-Indian society during the very years when the Anglo- Indian cookbook flourished as a literary genre. Cooking was an almost unknown accomplishment among Anglo-Indian women before World War I and some did not even know where [their] own kitchen was.²⁶⁴

This account that “ignorance of cooking skills” was “a perversely constant characteristic” makes the tone and advice given in *Indian Housekeeper* all the more striking. Far from being understanding of the phobias or ignorance of their readers, Gardiner and Steel are openly critical. They do not tolerate the “ignorance of cookery” that was apparently the norm among their readers. They acknowledge under “Preliminary Remarks on Cooking” that “the number of ladies with a practical knowledge of cooking is few despite schools of cooking”. (223) They also tease that “even when some amount of training is gone through, it is apt to take the form of learning to make boned larks and truffles, or ice pudding and nougats, - dishes admirable in themselves, but not of much use as food staples.” (223) Rather than esteeming the high-class cookery of the elite cookery schools, they point out that “the knowledge really required by a mistress being of what we may call the practical, theoretical, and entirely didactic description, which will enable her to find reasonable fault with her servant.” (223) The terms Gardiner and Steel use to describe useful knowledge are “practical, theoretical, and entirely didactic”. (223) Here again, Gardiner and Steel use the recipe to control the behaviour of the *memsahib* as well as the Indian servant. Their recipes seek to instruct and correct *memsahibs* in the type of cookery knowledge they should study. Gardiner and Steel explain that they do not aim this cookbook at someone who will be preparing food themselves. Instead, it is specifically designed to imbue the readers with “theoretical, and entirely didactic” knowledge.

²⁶³ Procida, p.127.

²⁶⁴ Procida, p.127.

The introduction to cookery continues in the critical tone seen above.

We have all laughed at the young bride who said tentatively, "And if you please, cook, you needn't put the lumps in the butter sauce another time, for your master doesn't care for them"; but numbers of the laughers would be puzzled to tell how the evil was to be prevented, or how the lumps came. In the same way most people like clear, golden-brown, well-flavoured soup, and creamy rice puddings; but unless their cook knows how to send these to table they cannot tell what is lacking...It is this art of just appraisal and dispassionate judgment that the mistress must cultivate, and to aid her in the task we enumerate a few of the most common causes for the most glaring faults. (223)

Once again, Gardiner and Steel frame the recipe as a corrective measure. The "art of just appraisal and dispassionate judgement" is, they hope, refined through reading a text which explains in such detail "the most common causes for the most glaring faults". The use of prohibition in the recipes stems from their role as counterpoints to the "evil habits" of an Indian cook.

Thus, Gardiner and Steel intended for their recipes to be internalised by the reader and then used in a "theoretical" way when issuing verbal orders to servants. They see the recipe not as something to be cooked from by the *memsahib*, but as a reference for critiquing servants. The recipe is considered by Gardiner and Steel to be a tool for implementing and enabling order. Gardiner and Steel's encouragement that *memsahibs* should supervise servants closely was their response to the uncomfortable proximity of Indian bodies in the Anglo-Indian home. However, such a response went against what was common practice at the time in India. That is, to avoid meddling in the kitchen or even entering the kitchen entirely. Furthermore, since as noted above "ignorance of cooking skills" was "a perversely constant characteristic" few *memsahibs* would have had the thorough knowledge of cookery needed to issue useful instructions.

Language Barriers in the Kitchen

It is this lack of culinary knowledge which Gardiner and Steel purport to have prevented the "young bride" and her onlookers from correcting the servant. However, a key reason why *memsahib* did not intervene in the kitchen - as well as the lack of culinary knowledge - was the language barrier between colonists and colonised. As with Gardiner and Steel's characterisation of the "young bride" and her onlookers, the authors present behaviour that was common among *memsahibs* as embarrassing and

shameful. In encouraging readers to learn the local language, Gardiner and Steel openly criticise behaviour which was the norm for *memsahib*.

No sane English woman would dream of living, say, for twenty years, in Germany, Italy, or France, without making the attempt, at any rate, to learn the language. She would, in fact, feel that by neglecting to do so she would write herself down an ass. It would be well, therefore, if ladies in India were to ask themselves if a difference in longitude increases the latitude allowed in judging of a woman's intellect. (2)

Their incredulous tone that “no sane English woman” would ever live “for twenty years” without trying to learn the language in a European country echoes the authors’ earlier point that a *memsahib* should live her life in India as she would in Europe. “There is no reason whatever why the ordinary European routine should not be observed...Some modification, of course, there must be, *but as little as possible*.”²⁶⁵ Yet for most *memsahib* “the ordinary European routine” was not “observed”. Steel’s ability to speak at least one Indian language relatively fluently (she “learn[ed] to speak, read, and write Punjabi and the local language of whatever area her husband was posted to”²⁶⁶), and seeming confidence in giving clear verbal orders were not typical for a *memsahib*. Procida noted that some colonials learnt a smattering of the local language, mainly to instruct their servants.²⁶⁷ However, it was not typical for a *memsahib* to have the advanced linguistic and culinary skills to fluently correct the errors of a cook. The prevalence of extensive language barriers is not fully addressed in *Indian Housekeeper*. Gardiner and Steel strongly emphasise clear, in-person, verbal communication with servants as if it were the norm. They encourage their readers to speak confidently and clearly and in the native language of their servants. Indeed, they call it “the first duty of a mistress...to be able to give intelligible orders to her servants”. (2) However, most *memsahibs* could not give “intelligible orders” at all. Any phrases a *memsahib* learnt were used mostly “to avoid being cheated by the servants or to bark out commands to them.”²⁶⁸ As Procida noted, “Probably very few women possessed the linguistic knowledge and specialized vocabulary necessary to discuss sophisticated

²⁶⁵ Steel and Gardiner, 1893 (3rd edn.), p.5.

²⁶⁶ Crane and Johnston, ‘Introduction’, xii.

²⁶⁷ Procida, p.134.

²⁶⁸ Leong-Salobir, *Food Culture in Colonial Asia*, p.82.

culinary techniques”²⁶⁹ Despite Gardiner and Steel’s insistence that close supervision and corrective measures should be deployed by *memsahibs*, few had the language skills to do so.

There are, spread throughout diaries, phrase books and fictional accounts, numerous other accounts of interaction between *memsahibs* and their servants that reveal that the “specialised vocabulary” Gardiner and Steel expect their reader to develop was rare among *memsahibs*. Communication between servants and masters instead typically used a mixture of imperatives in local languages and English. Leong-Salobir gives the following example of an exchange between a British man living in Malaysia and his servant, taken from *Woodsmoke and Temple Flowers* (1992).

At about 8.30 he (John Falconer, husband) calls ‘Boy!’ who answers ‘*Tuan!* (Master)’ John says ‘*Makan!*’ (food), Boy replies ‘*Baik, Tuan*’ (Right, Master). He announces when breakfast is ready, with ‘*Makan siap*’, and down we go. 602²⁷⁰

Another example of an interaction in India was given as follows.

‘Mrs Tracey, says: “Now, Khansama, for *Hazree*, we must have a nice *Hosenai Kabob*, do you understand?”
 “Ah, *Memsahib!* You mean *Countree Koptan*.”
 “Well, well, Country Captain or *Hoosenai Kabob*, mind we have a good one, and bring some good *Mutchee* (fish) -- nice Hilsa Mutchee, you know -- and tell *Bobertchy* to “*khoob bager kero*” (fry it well).”
 “*Oure kootch?* (anything else)” says Emem Khan.
 “Yes, we must have a *chigree* (prawn) curry,” and then continues “for Tiffin let there be a *Mulgo-tanee*, some veal *cotelettes* with tomatoes; and as it is now cool weather we can have the *tunda Buddock* (cold duck) left from today’s *Khanna*”.
 “Shall I go and order from Spence’s a *Saklee Mutton?*” (His and the ordinary native way of saying “Saddle of Mutton”).²⁷¹

The two examples above of “mangled language and a childlike tone”²⁷² portray typical interactions between servants and masters in a colonial household as far from fluid. Although certain terminology in native languages, particularly food words (*makan*, *molgo-tanee*, *mutchee*) and enquiries or orders (*oure kootch*, *khoob bager kero*) seem to be understood by both parties, the sentences are very simple.

²⁶⁹ Procida, p.134.

²⁷⁰ Jean Falconer, *Woodsmoke and Temple Flowers: Memories of Malaya*, Edinburgh, The Pentland Press Ltd, 1992, 2-3, cited in Leong-Salobir, *Food Culture in Colonial Asia*, p.109.

²⁷¹ Laura Sykes, *Calcutta through British Eyes, 1690-1990*, Madras, Oxford University Press, 1992, 46. cited in Leong-Salobir, *Food Culture in Colonial Asia*, p.110.

²⁷² Leong-Salobir, *Food Culture in Colonial Asia*, p.110.

Furthermore, although some local language is used in the briefer interaction from *Woodsmoke and Temple Flowers*, there is more English in the longer exchange with the cook. The local words are mostly nouns that would be in daily use.

These relatively simple interactions do not portray attempts to give corrections to servants. An example of a *memsahib* attempting to correct her cook was modelled in a mock scene from a play in *A Friend in Need: English-Tamil Cookery Book* (1950).

INTRODUCTION²⁷³

I

Scene. -- The matey room at 8 a.m.

Enter Madam, temper slightly frayed, obvious touch of liver.

Madam.-- ‘Boy, that pudding list night was simply foul. Tell cook.’

Butler. --(*translating in Tamil*). ‘The doraisani says that the pudding was too simple and had a taste like a chicken.’

Madam.-- ‘Tell him that it ought to have been as light as a feather, but it was as heavy as lead.’

Butler.--(*translating in Tamil*). ‘The doraisani says that the pudding instead of weighing half tola like a chicken’s feathers, weighed two seers like a lead piece.’

Cook.--(*in Tamil*). ‘It wasn’t my fault if the pudding was wrong. You only gave me one egg instead of three, but I don’t see why that should make it taste like a chicken.’

Butler.--(*translating in English*). ‘Cook say he very sorry, but dinner very late and pudding all got spoilt.’

Madam.-- ‘Well, he’s fined one rupee.’

Butler.--(*translating in Tamil*). ‘Doraisani says one rupee fine.’

Cook.--(*bursting into English*). ‘Madam give salary. I go!’

(*curtain*)

This play, preceding as it did a bilingual cookbook, was likely set up in order to highlight the problems *memsahibs* had communicating with their servants. And yet the popularity of such books suggests that direct and verbal communication was often a problem in India, especially when more complex orders were given. Even when using an interpreter - which Gardiner and Steel do not advocate for - communication was difficult.

The high expectations that Gardiner and Steel had for their readers, and their insistence that they hold advanced conversations, were not reflected in the phrase books used by Anglo-Indians. For example.

²⁷³ The Ladies’ Committee, *A Friend in Need: English-Tamil Cookery Book*, Third Edition (Madras, India: F.I.N.S. Women’s Workshop, 1950), p.1.

The Memsahib's Manual: Being an Easy Guide to Learning Hindustani, with Some Advice on Health and the Household (1914) offers mostly phrase lists. The lists have titles such as “Orders to Servants”. That list consists of phrases like “this vegetable is quite raw” and “yesterday’s meat was very tough” or “if you do not carry out orders you will be dismissed at once.”²⁷⁴ These phrase books provide further evidence that even those *memsahibs* who attempted to learn the language, did not seek to learn it fluently, but merely only well enough to “bark orders” to servants. These language guides also support E.M. Forster’s wry comment in *A Passage to India* that a *memsahib* learnt Indian languages “only to speak to her servants, so she knew none of the politer forms and of the verbs only the imperative mood.”²⁷⁵ Thus, the frequency with which phrase books provided provision translations into Hindustani that were “both imperious and critical in tone”²⁷⁶ is further evidence of the rudeness and terseness typical in interactions between *memsahibs* and their servants.

Although Gardiner and Steel at one point advise their reader that “a little reasonable human sympathy is the best oil for the household machine,” their later statement that sometimes “autocratic high-handedness is the only weapon of any avail” seems to be more widely believed by their fellow Anglo-Indians. The linguistic skills among *memsahibs* were far from achieving the platonic ideal of a verbal order idealised by Gardiner and Steel. That is, one which is “quiet...authoritative, unyielding, yet kindly.” These examples of typical interaction between *memsahibs* and servants, and the construction of language guides, suggest that it would have been very difficult for most *memsahib* to teach a servant how to make a recipe in the manner Gardiner and Steel advise.

²⁷⁴ A.K. D-H, *The Memsahib's Manual: Being an Easy Guide to Learning Hindustani, with Some Advice on Health and the Household*, Calcutta & Simla, Thacker, Spink & Co., 1914, pp.25-30.

²⁷⁵ E. M. Forster, *A Passage to India*, ed. by Oliver Stallybrass, Penguin Classics, London [u.a.] : Penguin Books (London: Penguin books, 2005), p.34.

²⁷⁶ Leong-Salobir, *Food Culture in Colonial Asia*, p.112.

The Translated Recipe

Gardiner and Steel did supply translations of their recipes with *Indian Housekeeper* in a separate pamphlet. However, as with their introduction to the reluctantly included chapters on vegetarian cookery and “native dishes”, the authors make it clear that they do not condone the use of such material. Gardiner and Steel specifically contrast verbal instructions favourably with a translated recipe.

Details regarding the duties of the Bengal servants will be found below, with a few recipes for things required in their work. Each of these can be had in tract form, translated into Hindoo, so that they can be given to the servants; but this is never so efficacious as verbal order, quiet, authoritative, unyielding, yet kindly. (56)

The fact that Gardiner and Steel supplied a recipe “translated into Hindoo” represents, as with the inclusion of a “Native Dishes” chapter, a concession to the reader. Gardiner and Steel are clear that they favour dialogue over the use of a written recipe. And yet they also expect the *memsahib* to use recipes. As noted earlier, Gardiner and Steel strongly encouraged their readers to learn local languages. However, this was not a reflection of common practice. The authors’ dismissal of translated recipes was at odds with their readers’ desire for them.

There was a big market for bilingual and translated recipe books. They were bought not only by those living in colonial-era India but around Asia. In Hong Kong, readers could buy James Dyer Ball’s *The English-Chinese Cookery Book, Containing 200 Receipts in English and Chinese* (1890), and in India and Sri Lanka they could read *A Friend in Need: English-Tamil Cookery Book* (1937). As Procida noted with cookbooks, the size of the market for translated recipes does not necessarily correlate to the frequency of their use. However, as with cookbooks, they were undeniably popular texts. Their popularity was such that Gardiner and Steel too provided translations of their own recipes from the first edition of *Indian Housekeeper*, despite discouraging their use.

The main attraction of translations was the ability to overcome the language barrier between *memsahibs* and their servants. Translations would allow the *memsahib* to convey precise instructions. This would, as Gardiner and Steel noted, theoretically “simplify” interactions. The translation of

recipes in *Indian Housekeeper* also potentially allowed the *memsahib* to spend less time in close contact with cook. Explaining how to prepare food, such as Gardiner and Steel advocate in their anecdote about teaching a cook how to prepare gelatin, would typically require extensive close interaction in the kitchen. Issuing written recipes to servants instead of using dialogue to correct servants could potentially reduce and “simplify” interaction with servants was directly referenced in the introduction to *What to tell the cook; or the native cook’s assistant, being a choice collection of receipts for Indian cookery, pastry etc. etc.* (1910) where Publisher Higginbothams notes.

The object of this little work is not only to assist Native Cooks in preparing good dishes, but to save housekeepers the trouble of describing the *modus operandi*. The headings are in English, so a lady ordering a dinner has simply to mention the names of the various dishes and the Cook reads for himself in Tamil what is required.²⁷⁷

As can be evidenced from the stilted examples of interactions above, “describing the *modus operandi*” was likely a difficult task for many *memsahibs*. Pamphlets of translated recipes thus had a dual purpose. Firstly, they overcame language barriers. Secondly, they allowed *memsahib* to maintain social distance. However, the use of translated recipes depended upon the literacy of the cook. As noted by Gardiner and Steel, “the Cook reads for himself in Tamil what is required.” Such literacy was not necessarily that common. Gardiner and Steel acknowledge in introducing their own translations that many cooks would not have been literate.

In order to simplify the training of servants as far as possible the authors have arranged to issue the various chapters on the duties of servants in the form of pamphlets in Urdu and Hindi. The price of each pamphlet will be from one to two annas; and it is believed that they will be found of great use, as, even when the servants cannot read, they can get someone to read to them.

The Cookery Book will be simultaneously published in Urdu at the lowest possible price. (x)

Gardiner and Steel, along with other translators of recipes, thus provided written instructions for an audience who frequently could not read. Leong-Salobir said of this seemingly strange phenomenon, “It is only in the complex and peculiarity of colonial culture that a text was written for a target

²⁷⁷ Anonymous, *What to Tell the Cook; or the Native Cook’s Assistant, being a Choice Collection of Receipts for Indian Cookery, Pastry etc. etc.*, Madras: Higginbothams Ltd., 1910, 7th edition. cited in Leong-Salobir, ‘Spreading the Word: Using Cookbooks and Colonial Memoirs to Examine the Foodways of British Colonials in Asia, 1850–1900’, p.142

audience who could not read.”²⁷⁸ Yet as Goody noted in his closing chapter of *Domestication of the Savage Mind*, titled “The Grand Dichotomy Reconsidered”, the spoken interpretation of writing is a part of any society where literacy is not near universal.

One common feature of societies where literacy is confined to a particular group (that is to say, virtually all communities before recent times), is that the content of certain literate texts is communicated by literates to non-literates...The teacher expounds, the audience responds or memorises, but is not necessarily literate. Indeed, most schooling takes precisely this form, for this is the way one is supposed to teach.²⁷⁹

Historically it was not so strange to have a text, particularly an educational one, made for an audience which was not literate. “This is the way one is supposed to teach,” as Goody points out. However, the teaching method of reading aloud a textbook or holy book to a classroom was chosen to convey instructions across a physical distance. Through this method, one writer could educate many others. The mobility of the text could spread information even to parties who were not literate.

In contrast, in an Anglo-Indian household, the spoken interpretation of translated recipes was used to transmit knowledge while preserving social distance. In transferring the burden of educating a servant to another servant, a *memsahib* could avoid the need to learn the local language. She could also avoid spending time in the same physical space as a servant, or needing to think of ways to effectively teach them cookery. All of these steps would require considerable effort. Instead, translated recipes delegated education to another party, who would already be of the same social standing as their cook. Thus, translations of recipes could preserve social distance.

As well as disapproving of the use of a recipe in translation, and the lack of culinary knowledge of a *memsahib*, Gardiner and Steel also make it clear that they disapprove of her cooking food herself. As well as praising “theoretical” and “didactic” culinary knowledge, they specifically suggest that the *memsahib* should only supervise their servants cooking and correct through dialogue alone.

For instance, if the mistress wishes to teach the cook a new dish, let her give the order for everything, down to charcoal, to be ready at a given time, and the cook in attendance; and let

²⁷⁸ Leong-Salobir, ‘Spreading the Word: Using Cookbooks and Colonial Memoirs to Examine the Foodways of British Colonials in Asia, 1850–1900’, p.141.

²⁷⁹ Goody, *The Domestication of the Savage Mind*, p.151.

her do nothing herself that the servants can do, if only for this reason, that the only way of teaching is to see things done, not to let others see you do them. (9)

Gardiner and Steel's text is thus advocating a high degree of physical proximity with the servants which most *memsahib* sought to avoid. This, as noted above, likely stemmed from Gardiner and Steel's desire to control the servants in an effort to purify the Anglo-Indian home, combined with a desire to use dialogue to emphasise their authority in the home. But, once again, Gardiner and Steel do not fully acknowledge the difficulty that language barriers would present in actually implementing such a strategy of close supervision and intervention.

The Idealised Dialogue

Instead, the threatening presence of "dustoor" or Indian custom is evoked as the cause of problems in communication in the Anglo-Indian kitchen. The threat of "custom" is referenced in the very opening of *Indian Housekeeper*. Gardiner and Steel in their description of the Indian kitchen as a "black hole" say it is the "stilling, enervating atmosphere of custom" which "pervad[es] all things". It is also the Indian adherence to "custom" that they posit prevents the smooth running of the household. This frustration with custom continues throughout the text. For example, Gardiner and Steel state that "there are certain delusions current in cook-houses in India, such as the belief that it is the yolk of the egg which clears soup, against which it is useless to argue" and that in those instances "autocratic high-handedness is the only weapon of any avail." (70) "Autocratic high-handedness" is here offered as a "weapon" against "delusions" held by cooks. The authors do not acknowledge the difficulty of attempting to communicate across language barriers. Indian culture is invoked as the problem to overcome.

Gardiner and Steel's portrayals of a *memsahib*'s interaction with her servant present such an interaction as unimpeded by linguistic difficulties. They paint the servant as grateful for being liberated from his backwards, Indian customs. An such idealised example of "liberation" can be seen in their account of teaching an Indian servant to make gelatin. Despite "minute instructions" for making a potted sheep's head, "the result was failure." due to "dustoor". (71)

The reply to an indignant query as to why strict orders had been disobeyed, was that sheep's heads were always skinned - it was dustoor, i.e. custom; together with the remark that skinning or not skinning had nothing to do with the non-setting of the jelly, which every one knew came from bones and not skin. (71)

As noted earlier, throughout the text “custom” is a term invoked to imply what Gardiner and Steel perceive to be a very Indian irrationality and backwardness. The comment that “every one knew” gelatin was in bones and not skin implied that belief in this fallacy was endemic among Indians. This quotation also implies that making gelatin was common among Indian cooks. Although this might have been true for meat-eating Indians who had previously worked as chefs for the British, it is unlikely to be true of the population at large. It is most common to make gelatin from pig skin or calves’ feet. Pork and beef would have been avoided by many in India for religious reasons. This is perhaps why the author notes “real calves’ feet are seldom to be had in India” and advise that “sheep’s head and trotters make excellent jelly” as a substitute. Yet the ignorance of the cook is generalised as the ignorance of Indians more broadly. Not knowing how to prepare gelatin is presented as symptomatic of the folly and helplessness of colonised peoples who were “slave to custom”. Gardiner and Steel then present the education of the hapless servant as something he is grateful for. After being instructed to boil an unskinned head, the servant has a “new light on his face”.

He came next day with a new light on his face. “Mem Sahib,” he said, "do they by any chance make gelatine of skins, for, as the Lord sees me, I can hardly cut that jelly with a knife!" (71)

The religious connotations of the “new light” which appears on the servant’s face, and his reference to the Lord, frame the revelation of how to make gelatin as an almost spiritual one. The education of the Indian servant is thus framed as almost a service to the cook. His metaphorical enlightenment manifests in his face, which shines with a “new light” and he gives a “smile of wonder and relief”.

(71) The gratitude of the servant continues to be detailed in the next paragraph.

...he will give a smile of wonder and relief when she points out what he must have done to have caused that specific result. The consequent testimony, “Béshakk – áp such furmala hai aisa hua” (“Without doubt, your honour speaks truth - it was so”), will go further to raise a mistress in his estimation than any amount of theoretical knowledge she may display. (71)

Gardiner and Steel paint a portrait of interaction between *memsahib* and servant as hindered not by linguistic problems - she understands his “consequent testimony” perfectly well - but cultural ones. It is the presence of Indian customs which functions as a hindrance, rather than the confidence, knowledge or linguistic skills of the *memsahib*. As with their earlier comments about “English dirt”, Gardiner and Steel are not disturbed by the presence of “bones and skin” of a sheep head but by the presence of Indian culture. It is not the dead animal which is considered as abject but the misbehaving servant, the failure to follow orders. Although they describe boiling vegetables together as “disgraceful” and any oil visible in a stew as “disgusting”, Gardiner and Steel make no comment about the appearance of a boiling sheep’s head. The attention of the authors is entirely focussed on where the recipe has and has not been followed. To stray from the recipe is to be abject, to follow it is to be non-abject.

The use of positive language in the final sentence - practical knowledge “will go further to raise a mistress in his estimation than any amount of theoretical knowledge she may display” - is not typical for the book. Gardiner and Steel appear to expect that the *memsahib* would want to be esteemed by her servants. This could be an attempt to play to the vanity of the *memsahib*. However, it seems more likely that such a note was made to allay fears that contradicting a servant would anger him. The specific note that critiquing servants will improve a *memsahib*’s relationship with them suggests that many *memsahibs* feared this would not be the case. It also suggests that some readers were not respected by their servants. Dussart noted that “male servants’ resistance to female authority” is a “recurring theme”²⁸⁰ in interviews with Anglo-Indians. Maud Diver, in a letter dated 1857 noted “One bad trait...is the frequency with which they disregard the comfort and convenience of ladies, often their express orders, unless most directly enforced by the master.”²⁸¹ And “Mary Hobhouse wrote in 1872 that ‘tis difficult to make the male servants respect womankind”²⁸² From these accounts it

²⁸⁰ Dussart, p.103.

²⁸¹ March 10 1857, Letters of Maria Lydia Wood, MSS/Eur/B210/A, OIOC; [Maud Diver] ‘A Lady Resident’ *Englishwoman in India*, 60. cited in Dussart, p.103.

²⁸² Letters of Maria Lydia Wood, MSS/Eur/B210, OIOC; Mary Hobhouse *Letters from India 1872- 1877* (London, 1906), 9 cited in Dussart, p.103.

seems likely that many *memsahib* would have feared that critiquing servants would have not gone to plan. Either because their commands were “disregard[ed]” or because “womankind” was not respected.

The proximity of the speaker and the servant is also notable. Gardiner and Steel here revisit their characterisation of the Indian servant as a child, in need of guidance. This was possibly another tactic to make the idea of verbally confronting a male chef in the kitchen seem less intimidating to a *memsahib*. The servant is characterised as a child implicitly through his naïveté and “smile of wonder.” The seeming infallibility of the idealised mistress renders him child-like by comparison. They also directly compare the servant to a child. “Here was a case of sheer ignorance of facts well known to an English child; and it must never be forgotten that this is not the exception, but the rule” The childlike ignorance of the servant and their resulting “wonder” is thus established as the norm.

Gardiner and Steel’s portrayal of a *memsahib*’s interaction with her servant is unlike the stilted, brusque communication portrayed in phrase books or bilingual cookery books. Gardiner and Steel present the corrective Anglicising presence of the *memsahib* as not just a civilising presence, but a quasi-parental figure. The interaction between *memsahib* and servant presented below skirts many of the anxieties which the proximity and disciplining of Indian Servants were likely to induce. It elides the maleness of the kitchen, the insecurity and ignorance of the *memsahib* and the language barriers between servant and *memsahib*. Instead, the male servant is rendered tame through infantilization, an ignorant innocent. The servant gratefully receives instructions, in “wonder” at the enlightenment of English knowledge. And the language barriers are non-existent, thanks to the fluency of the mistress.

The use of verbal dialogue rather than the translated recipe is, as such, established by Gardiner and Steel as an opportunity to teach and enlighten servants. Such a preference for direct instruction reinforces Goody’s argument that dialogue is a more authoritative means of transmitting culinary information. However, *Indian Housekeeper* also shows how the written recipe can be a means of

preserving authority through its “Native Dishes” chapter. Gardiner and Steel’s avoidance of adopting the “subordinate position” towards their servants betrays the imperialism of the text.

Conclusion

The bareness of the recipe's form in *Indian Housekeeper* belies its complex role in India under Crown rule. The recipe's brevity and simplicity is often taken as evidence of its literary and intellectual insignificance. Despite studying the recipe, even Jack Goody asserted that although the recipe permitted the "accumulation of modes of preparation from many localities" it had "limited implications for the growth of knowledge."²⁸³ In contrast, Lisa Heldke argued that "cooking can illuminate our understanding of other forms of inquiry."²⁸⁴ Heldke points out that although "discussions of theory have come to be framed almost exclusively in terms of scientific models" cooking, too, is a type of theory-making.²⁸⁵ She eschews the "strict dichotomy between theory - the "knowledge gaining" activity" - and practice - the "getting-things-done" activity." "These are not separate domains of human life", Heldke argues, "but two interrelated, interdependent domains."²⁸⁶ This false dichotomy between the cerebral and the practical can be seen in Goody's favouring of recipes for medicine over recipes for food. One, he treats as a potentially "knowledge gaining" activity. The other, he classifies as a "getting-things-done" activity. In reality, the two are related constructs.

Furthermore, recipes do not only contribute to the growth of knowledge as a side effect of their practicality. They are frequently used purely for "knowledge gaining", read as an intellectual rather than practical exercise. A classic example of this is the popularity of Elizabeth David in Britain during post-war rationing. Paul Magee notes that "Elizabeth David insists upon correct ingredients and at times even furnishes addresses for their acquisition" but "such particulars should not lull one into thinking that *A Book of Mediterranean Food* (1950) was in any way a practical text."²⁸⁷

"Published in 1950, at a time when the meat ration was "a few ounces a week," and the public diet confined to little more than beans and potatoes, most of the recipes in the book simply could not be cooked. David's inclusion of dishes like Turkish stuffing for a whole roast sheep, only heightened the "spirit of defiance" in which the book was written, and by means of

²⁸³ Goody, *The Domestication of the Savage Mind*, p.143.

²⁸⁴ Lisa Heldke, 'Recipes for Theory Making', *Hypatia*, 3.2 (1988), 15–29, p.18.

²⁸⁵ Heldke, p.18.

²⁸⁶ Heldke, p.19.

²⁸⁷ Paul Magee, 'Introduction: Foreign Cookbooks', *Postcolonial Studies*, 8.1 (2005), 3–18 <<https://doi.org/10.1080/13688790500134372>>, p.6.

which it achieved its huge popularity. For the book's introductory aim ("I hope to give some idea of the lovely cookery of those regions") must be understood quite literally. David conveyed an "idea" of these cuisines, a possibility for their intellectual re-creation, a formula that would serve – in the absence of the food itself – "to bring a flavour of those blessed lands of sun and sea and olive trees into their English kitchens."²⁸⁸

Recipes written by Elizabeth David were enjoyed by their readers as an escapist exercise. "Most of the recipes in the book simply could not be cooked" as Magee observed. Their popularity stemmed not from their ability to satisfy a physical hunger, but an intellectual and psychological one. The "accumulation of modes of preparation from many localities"²⁸⁹ which Goody rejects is thus an equally intellectual pursuit.

Indian Housekeeper, despite purporting to present the realities of an Anglo-Indian household, in fact bears many similarities to *A Book of Mediterranean Food*. Just as David presents a fantasy of Mediterranean life to Britons whose diet was "confined to little more than beans and potatoes", *Indian Housekeeper* presents food as a corrective fantasy of imperial control to a readership which could barely cook and tended to avoid the kitchen. *Indian Housekeeper* encourages the use of dialogue despite widespread language barriers. And, its recipes overall do not represent the food which was most frequently eaten in Anglo-Indian households but instead represent the food which Gardiner and Steel desire to be eaten. Although not as immediately obvious a fantasy as David's *A Book of Mediterranean Food* in post-war Britain, both David's text and Gardiner and Steel's allow their readers to access an imaginary world. Both authors use the recipe to blend the functional with the fictional. Close analysis of the use of the recipe in *Indian Housekeeper* thus reveals how, despite its simplicity, the recipe is not a "reflection" of a culture. The act of recording a recipe is a creative and expressive one. As such, even in its simplest form, the recipe intervenes and shapes culture, functioning as a complex "process of codification" worthy of further study and literary analysis.

²⁸⁸ Magee, pp.6-7.

²⁸⁹ Goody, *The Domestication of the Savage Mind*, p.143.

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