

## Historical Context 1890 to 1920

**Abstract** This historical chapter will provide the context for the rest of the book by showing how food-related events correspond with the fiction of Joseph Conrad. For example, trade links with Malaysia and Singapore provide the backdrop for Conrad's first novel, *Almayer's Folly* (Chap. 3); while the transportation of food on foreign seas created the potential for shipwrecks and the realization of cannibalism, an act that threatened the notion of Europe as 'civilized' (Chap. 4). The growing politicisation of food in the late nineteenth century provides the context for *The Secret Agent* (Chap. 5) and uprisings in Russia based on food shortages and autocratic domination of the means of food production comprise the historical context for the final chapter on *Under Western Eyes*.

**Keywords** Steamships · Merchant Navy · Restaurants · Fish & Chips  
Cereals · Sugar

Konrad Korzeniowski, as a sailor in the British Merchant Service, was a cog in the colonial machine that linked the British economy with foreign markets. Britain's reliance on sea-trade was crucial in feeding the growing and increasingly industrial population of Europe. In the British colony of Natal on the south-east coast of Africa, sugar, tea, coffee, indigo, rice, tobacco, cotton and pineapples as well as wheat, oats, barley and potato were all cultivated and exported to Europe in the second half of the nineteenth century (Parkin 1895, pp. 172–178).

Conrad's fictional focus on imperial and foreign trade finds itself in Malaysia, where, before he was an author, the young Konrad Korzeniowski served on two trading ships, the iron barque, *Highland Forest* and the S.S. *Vidar*,<sup>1</sup> a small steamer (Najder 2007, p. 112). Indeed, South East Asia and the Malay Peninsula—under the control of the British at the end of the eighteenth and beginning of the nineteenth centuries—was intrinsic in supplying Europe with tin, sugar, rice, pepper, spice, gutta-percha<sup>2</sup> and tapioca (Parkin 1895, p. 232). Singapore, a colony of Britain from 1824,<sup>3</sup> was considered 'one of the great centres of the world's commerce' with most of the trade between Australia, China, Japan, the Far East and Europe passing through it (231). As such, it was also a culinary diaspora. Although it was owned by the British and used equally by the Dutch as a commercial entrepôt, tens of thousands of Chinese migrated to Singapore in the nineteenth century and it had been used for centuries by Arabs as a focus of commercial trading. Historians have described the island as consisting of 'a great variety of Malaysian and Muslim peoples from differing social and economic backgrounds but sharing a lingua franca and important elements of a common culture' (Roff 1964, p. 75). This common culture would have embedded a hybrid diet of food from Asia and Europe influenced by the domestic servant, usually a Malay or a Chinaman (Leon-Salobir 2011, p. 15). In Singapore between 1819 and 1939, the sourcing and preparing of food was down to the cook. The result was a fusion which consisted of curry, mulligatawny, kedgerree, pish-pash, 'chicken country captain' as well as traditional European fare such as caramel custard and chicken chop (16).

In Conrad's first novel, *Almayer's Folly* (1895), Singapore is not only the hub of civilization where Tom Lingard sends Almayer's daughter Nina to be educated, but also serves as the base for the English Captain Ford who travels to and from Singapore to Sambir in a steamship. Indeed, when Nina returns from Singapore, Almayer assumes that his now-civilized daughter will find the 'preponderance of rice on the family table' (1945, p. 35) abhorrent to her, a comment that is testament to the culinary diversity of Singapore.

Trade with Malaysia was an important source of food for Britain and at the end of the nineteenth century, tin became a major export to meet the growing demand for canned food. As well as tin, palm oil was also a major export. Again, mercantile products from England, the 'Manchester goods' mentioned in *Almayer's Folly*, served as useful bargaining tools despite heightening the political tensions that dominated the area. More importantly to the British, however, was control of the Malay Straits ceded

to Raffles in 1824 by the Sultan of Johore<sup>4</sup> for trade between the East and the West and, in particular, the trade from India under the control of the East India Company. The Straits Settlements had a tiny population of 200,000 in 1857 and were generally considered little more than ‘a scantily populated, jungle-covered wilderness politically divided into a series of small states of varying degrees and isolation’ made up of ‘riverine kampongs’ or rural settlements. By 1858, however, European sugar plantations comprised 10,720 acres of land in the south of Malaysia, providing Britain with this ever-popular food product. Bananas too were being exported out of Malaysia and South East Asia, amounting to an international trade of a ‘million tons in 1910’ (Flandrin and Montanari 1999, p. 466).

However, as Conrad shows in *Almayer’s Folly*, trade was hindered by a ‘hinterland of nine squabbling little Malay states, the Negri Sembilan’ (Havinden and Meredith 1993, p. 41) which resulted in a succession of wars which lasted for 40 years. English involvement in Malaysia did not take hold until the 1870s and 1880s, when the trade in tin, rice, pepper, gambier and tapioca was properly exploited. The wavering interest of the British is also a feature in *Almayer’s Folly* and one that Almayer blames as part of his own lack of success in trade.

There were also problems with importing food into the UK from abroad. Foreign meat was often infected with rinderpest<sup>5</sup> or foot and mouth and was sometimes spoiled or adulterated. As the century progressed, the late Victorians became increasingly anxious about the safety of food importations and groups such as the Tory anti-free traders and the Land Nationalisation Society (established in 1881) sought to reverse England’s dependency on foreign supplies (Gregory 2007, pp. 14–15).

Despite attempts to reignite British agriculture, the bleed of manpower from the countryside to the towns continued. By the end of the nineteenth century, 77% of the population of Great Britain lived in an urban area and in the first decade of the twentieth century, London had over seven million inhabitants. Between 1860 and 1900, the number of male agricultural labourers shrunk by more than 40%. In 1851, there were 63 millers in the county of Rutland, by 1911 there were only 22 (Fraser 1981, pp. 10–11), a statistic that marks the decline of bread as the ‘staff of life’.

During the 1880s, 2.5 million people left England to migrate abroad, mostly to America. Ironically, however, as overcrowding in the towns and cities became a problem during the 1890s, people also left to return to the countryside (10–11). In addition to this, during the 1880s and

1890s, 20,000 Jewish immigrants from Russia and Poland sought refuge in the East End of London (20). Although many of them were skilled in clothes making, they were forced, like many other labourers, to seek work in the local jam and meat factories where wages could be as low as three shillings a week (21) and the quality of the food reflected these poor rates of pay. In, *The Soul Market* (1907), a study of the labouring class, Olive Christian Malvery describes the preserved food factories as ‘The British “Jungle”’, a reference to Upton Sinclair’s damning portrayal of the Chicago meat-packing industry published the same year. Taking a job in a jam factory herself, Malvery describes the filthy state of the women workers who were ‘absolutely unfit to touch food that was meant for human consumption’ (92). In addition to this, the fruit used to make the jam was often rotting or adulterated with sweat from the workers. Worryingly, the cheapness of jam meant that it was eaten at two out of the three meals a day a working-class child would eat at the *fin de siècle* (Drummond and Wilbraham 1957, p. 332).

The decline in the agricultural workforce meant that Britain had to look abroad for its foodstuffs and with industrial output increasing—textiles and manufactured goods being used to trade with Africa and Malaysia—Britain and its people were gradually becoming more affluent and able to spend more money on food. Bread made up the bulk of a labouring family’s diet with bacon the main meat product, usually supplied from domestic pigs. Although pigs had always played a key role in the English diet, by this time it was becoming unacceptable for people to keep them in towns and cities. In addition to this, English bacon was considered too fatty for refined London tastes (Oddy 2003, p. 17). Imports of bacon from Ireland and Denmark became popular and with the development of transportation via trains from coastal areas, there was also an increase in the consumption of fish. By the 1890s, Britain was consuming 25 lb per head per year, making the fishing industry a lucrative one.

But by the end of the first decade of the twentieth century, 87% of butter and 76% of cheese was being imported (Oddy 1970, p. 20). Cheese from Canada, New Zealand and the United States was also commonplace. Foreign fruit also became more popular amongst the working and middle classes. After 1860 steamships were capable of importing oranges from as far afield as the Azores, Malta and Crete and pineapples were being brought over from the West Indies. Bananas became a popular staple with 6.7 million bunches imported each year from 1909

to 1913. Strangely, eggs although abundant in the UK were frequently imported from Russia as consumption rose from 45 per head per annum in the 1880s to 100 per annum in 1913 (Fraser 1981, p. 31).

## MEAT

Despite an increase in expenditure on food, methods for cooking were still limited in working-class households in England. Few poor families owned ovens and therefore meat was generally cooked in a pot on the hob or bought as ready-cooked or canned or preserved. It was also customary to take dishes to bakeries, where food could be cooked in ovens still warm from the morning's bread-baking. Many of the better off 'shook their heads at the way poor women bought "tins of salmon and potted meat, and various other preserved delicacies, rather than take the trouble to cook a wholesome meal of fresh food"' (Malvery 1907, p. 48). But potted and canned products were cheap, costing only 4d or 5d a pound. Much of this meat was imported from the great meat-packing and canning factories of Chicago. To add to their nutritional deficiencies, the lower classes were also the ones who became the consumers of convenience foods such as 'packet jellies, powdered gelatine, or ready-cut lump sugar and castor sugar, prepared and chopped suet, or stoned raisins' (Fraser 1981, pp. 40–41).

The variety and abundance of food arriving from the colonies changed the way that people in Britain ate their food and spent their money and the most significant impact came with the development of refrigerated meat products. In 1874 the first consignment was shipped from the United States to Britain by T.C. Eastman of New York<sup>6</sup> and, 2 years later, Charles Tellier, a Frenchman, succeeded in bringing a cargo of frozen meat all the way from Buenos Aires. By 1880 refrigerated ships were reliable enough to import frozen meat from Australia (Fraser 1981, p. 107). Before refrigeration became the norm, the most reliable method of transporting meat was to import live cattle from as far afield as Canada and the US. In 1877 T.C. Eastman shipped 1000 cattle a week across the Atlantic. The method, for obvious reasons, was not ideal; when it arrived in the dock the animals were in such a poor state they had to be either fattened up or slaughtered immediately. In many cases, the carcasses were then misleadingly sold on as Scotch beef.

Before the development of refrigerated ships, food producers had been looking for ways of meeting the public demand for meat products.

One method of providing cheap meat to the public was through concentrates. Part of the search for a meat product that would last long periods of time without rotting was motivated by the need to provide protein and vitamins to crews on merchant ships and for polar explorers who could spend up to 2 years living on preserved food. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, Sir John Franklin's failed voyage to the Arctic in search of the Northwest Passage created a scandal when it was suspected that the sailors had resorted to cannibalism. His second attempt in 1845 was even more disastrous. When John Rae finally discovered the fate of Franklin and his crew in 1854, 9 years after they had left England, there was enough hard evidence for Rae to make it publicly known that the men had this time resorted to cannibalism before dying from starvation.<sup>7</sup> Interestingly Rae's discovery has since been overshadowed by the 'official' version by Francis Leopold McClintock who did not once mention the word 'cannibalism' in his 1859 account.

The success and growth—not to mention the reputation—of the Empire depended on claims to new land and trade with foreign countries. But this was not to be at the expense of the European claim to civilized and moral behaviour, a claim that was severely undermined by sailors and explorers resorting to cannibalism, an act that was perceived during the Victorian era as a peculiarly 'savage' one. The discovery of a Northwest Passage would provide a trading route 3000 miles shorter than the established trading route with India and China via Cape Horn. But expeditions were thwarted time and again by issues surrounding food. During the era of Franklin, the only preserved meat product was pemmican, a mixture of dried meat and grease or fat (Brandt 2011, p. 90).

Towards the end of the nineteenth century, meat extracts became a popular staple and it was Bovril that became the market leader. Cheap, versatile and light, in 1904 Captain Scott endorsed Bovril for his trip to the Antarctic and in 1909 the explorer Ernest Shackleton became the face to the catchphrase, 'It must be Bovril' (Fraser 1981, p. 135). Somewhat ironically, Oxo Bouillon Trading Cards were imprinted with an image of the 'discoverer of the Northwest Passage', Sir John Franklin (Brandt 2011, p. 394). Conrad's satire of such blatant myth making is subtly conveyed in 'Heart of Darkness' in which he writes that the Thames is lauded as having 'known and served all the men of whom the nation is proud, from Sir Francis Drake to Sir John Franklin ... the great knights-errant of the sea' (1967, p. 47). But the somewhat disingenuous

advertising of the spurious nutritional properties of convenience meat products, in particular meat extract, is saved for the subject of Conrad's short story, 'An Anarchist' (1906), in which he criticizes the commercial and capitalist production of cheap food products. As Stephen Donovan points out, 'the real-life counterparts of B.O.S., Ltd played a pivotal role in South America's economic modernization' (2003, p. 75). But Conrad's concerns were about the huge profits that a few companies were making in the industry, 'the vertically-integrated corporation, supported by vast capital reserves and exercising direct control over every stage in the production process' (76).

Meat production, in all its guises, had become a big international business run by powerful American corporations. Public concern about the legitimacy and ethics of its practice was soon heightened by the publication of Upton Sinclair's novel *The Jungle* (1906a/1985, 1906b/1988), which highlighted the malpractices and adulterated food that was being shipped to England from the meat-packing factories of Chicago. Despite revelations about the quality of their products and a new Public Health Act in 1907 which was specifically related to food (French and Phillips 2003, pp. 442–470), meat manufacturers could not keep up with demand and began to look to Argentina for new sources of beef. The Argentine press warned of the 'Jungle' methods of American meat packers and feared monopolization by the Americans reducing the possibility of obtaining a good price for their cattle. At this time the British market made up 60% of the world trade in meat. During the 1880s and 1890s meat prices started to fall only to rise steeply in the first decade of the twentieth century. Dependence on the Argentine for a supply of meat became a grave concern, especially as the distributing companies in England were generally American owned. In 1880 one-sixth of Britain's meat supply was imported. By 1914 foreign markets were providing one-third of meat consumed in Britain (Fraser 1981, p. 154).

## FOOD IN THE MERCHANT AND ROYAL NAVIES

Ironically, the quest for an effective method of preserving meat had its impetus in providing protein not only for Polar explorers but also for sailors in the British merchant and Royal Navies. The navy—the country's largest buyer of cattle—suffered from the problem of how to stock their ships and feed their crews adequately for long periods of time away from land. Every British sailor drew a ration of four pounds of salt beef per

week (in addition to two of pork), which needed to be steeped in fresh water to be rendered edible. Even then it was an acquired taste. One account calls it ‘stony, fibrous, shrunken, dark and gristly—much like jerky, a modern snack food descendant’ (Rimas and Fraser 2008, p. 116).

In Conrad’s short story ‘Falk’ (1903) the ‘misfortune’ of the protagonist of the same name—a sailor in the Merchant Navy—is accelerated by the fact that ‘several barrels of meat were found spoiled on opening, and had been thrown overboard soon after leaving home, as a sanitary measure’ (1946, p. 228). The ‘misfortune’ which besets Falk is the necessity of eating another human being in order to survive. In *The Mirror of the Sea*, Conrad talks of the fear of being held up ‘at the very gates of the English Channel’ through unfavourable winds which can leave the sailors stranded and when ‘short rations became the order of the day, and the pinch of hunger under the breastbone grew familiar to every sailor’ (66). In the last two decades of the nineteenth century, the advent of refrigeration improved the quality and variety of food on board. As Neil Atkinson points out even with refrigeration and steamships, however, ‘fraudulent ship-provisioning’ was still a problem. On the steamer *Hinemoa* the crew were supplied with ‘rotten meat with maggots crawling on it’ (2001, p. 38), an echo of Conrad’s ‘Falk’.

Food onboard ship was a consistently contentious issue. Sailors would often spend many months at sea. Conrad’s voyage on *The Duke of Sutherland* from London to Sydney took just over 3 months.<sup>8</sup> In the event of a disaster, such as a shipwreck, the spectre of starvation was never far from sailors’ minds.<sup>9</sup> Even so, food on board was still considered monotonous.

On the *Duke of Sutherland* the daily food ration consisted of the following:

Bread or ‘hard tack’; salted beef (11/2Ibs) and pork (11/4Ibs) on alternate days; flour (1/2Ib per day) and peas on alternate days; 1Ib of rice per week; and daily allowances of tea (1/8oz), coffee (1/2oz), sugar (2oz), and water (3 quarts). This measure became known as the ‘pound and pint’. Sailors were issued with a ration of ‘Lime and Lemon Juice and Sugar’ to prevent scurvy. (Simmons 2010, p. 102)

Before refrigerated ships were introduced, preserving food for 3- or 4-month journeys proved difficult. The quality of the food was also dependent on the skills of the chef, known on sailing ships as ‘the



Doctor' (Atkinson 2001, p. 44). In *The Nigger of the 'Narcissus'* (1897), Podmore, the cook, is also known as 'Doctor' and proves to be a self-righteous vanguard of spiritual and physical health.

Before the 'Pound and Pint', introduced in the 1840s and 1850s, there was no standard of provisions for the crew and even after it was made a legal requirement, a sailor's diet consisted primarily of 'salt junk'—salted pork or horse—and 'bread', a product resembling a dog biscuit. In the second half of the nineteenth century, canned meat became a dietary staple on ships, replacing dried soups. Canning was first developed at the beginning of the nineteenth century by the Frenchman, Nicholas Appert. As the process was modified, it became a reliable way of preserving anything from corned beef to boiled mutton and by the middle of the century was made a part of the 'ordinary ration' of the Royal Navy (Drummond and Wilbraham 1957, p. 320). But canning did not come without its own scandals. After Stephen Goldner was awarded a contract to supply the Navy with tinned meat in 1845, Arctic explorers were finding that their supplies were spoiled on opening. As a result, in 1856 the Navy opened up its own canning factory at Deptford (320–321). Previous to this, Bryan Donkin had experimented with canned food, supplying the Royal Navy with 'preserved provisions'. The same year that Goldner received his commission to provide the Navy with tinned food, Franklin set off on his fatal voyage to the Arctic. Three of the bodies were recently forensically examined and discovered to contain high levels of lead. It is believed that the lead from the seals on the tin cans had poisoned them (Brandt 2011, p. 379).

When considering stories such as Franklin's, it is unsurprising that food was a subject matter close to every sailor's heart and once a ship had docked, sailors would often take advantage of local eating houses or food sold on the streets. In *The Mirror of the Sea*, Conrad relates a tale about his time on the *Duke of Sutherland*. Anchored in the New South Dock of Australia, 'while sitting on the rail' of the ship, Conrad describes the 'voice of a man crying "Hot saveloys!" at the end of George Street, where the cheap eating houses (sixpence a meal) were kept by Chinamen (Sun-kum-on's was not bad)'. Conrad continues that he has 'heard this most pertinacious pedlar (I wonder whether he is dead or has made a fortune)' and is 'fascinated by the monotony, the regularity, the abruptness of the recurring cry, and so exasperated at the absurd spell that I wished the fellow would choke himself to death with a mouthful of his own infamous wares' (1906, p. 84). Conrad's reaction implies that local

hawkers took advantage of sailors, selling them food that was barely an improvement on what they received on board. It also reflects Conrad's own enduring concerns about disingenuous food advertising.

## SUGAR

In 1877, Konrad Korzeniowski took a job as steward on the barque *Saint-Antoine*, which travelled around the West Indies before returning to Europe carrying a cargo of sugar. In his short story, 'A Smile of Fortune' (1912), the island 'Pearl' in the 'tropics' is a main port of call for colonialists exporting the product: 'All the population of the Pearl lives for it and by it. Sugar is their daily bread, as it were' (1914, p. 3). Conrad's fictional depiction of this idyllic island is somewhat undermined by the history of slavery in the West Indies as a means of cultivating sugar for export.<sup>10</sup> Huge profits were being made by the European empire through the transportation of African slaves to the West Indies and sugar became the 'first modern, global' commodity. The purchase of these African slaves was financed through the production and sale of rum, also made from refined sugar (Pilcher 2006, p. 17).<sup>11</sup> In the years 1880–1884 Britain imported £12 million worth of sugar, much of it coming from the West Indies (Fuchs 1905, pp. 126–130). The majority of it was used for making jam, marmalades and golden syrup as well for chocolate. Fry's cocoa factory employed 2000 people and used 250–300 tons of sugar every week. Not only did sugar provide employment for the working classes but it also gave them a cheap source of energy, even if it was nutritionally deficient (Pilcher 2006, p. 18). However, the driving force behind the popularity of sugar came through the fashion in drinking tea, coffee and chocolate which had been sweetened. Consequently, the English developed the reputation for having 'the sweetest tooth in Europe' and by the end of the eighteenth century, sugar had become England's leading import (Flandrin and Montanari 1999, p. 392).

Since the early 1700s, sugar had been a contentious political issue. In 1796, the farmer John Lawrence published *A Philosophical and Practical Treatise on Horses* in which he remarked, 'It has been said that the world could not have either gold, sugar, or coals but at the expense of human blood and human liberty' (Morton 1994, p. 16). Ethically, refraining from the purchase of sugar and sugar products would mean less money went to the government in the form of taxes. During the early 1800s,

abstaining from sugar could be interpreted as a way of putting pressure on the government as a protest against slave trading (19). But as the century progressed the taxes on sugar became less and less until in 1874 duty on imported sugar was abolished. In 1899 there was a call to put the tax back in order to pay for the Boer War. Despite opposition to this, in 1901 a small tax was indeed added (Fraser 1981, p. 169).

Sugar takes on a comical site of contention in Conrad's short story, 'An Outpost of Progress' (1897), in which two Belgian colonials having failed at home, find themselves on a Belgian trading post in Africa where they expect to 'let life run easily here! Just sit still and gather in the ivory those savages will bring' (1945, p. 90). Ironically, the two protagonists, finding they are unable to feed themselves, are reduced to scant provisions of 'rice and coffee; they drank the coffee without sugar' because 'the last fifteen lumps Kayerts had solemnly locked away in his box' (109). When Carlier announces, 'I mean to have sugar in my coffee to-day' (110) and Kayerts refuses to give it to him, a fight ensues ending in the death of both men.

The representation of sugar in this short story and in 'A Smile of Fortune' highlights the foodstuff as not only a cheap commodity—and almost a human right—but also a politically charged one. During the nineteenth century the argument about sugar tax was relieved by the growth in European beet sugar which negated the need for mass importation from the West Indies.

## FRUIT AND VEGETABLES

Throughout the nineteenth century imports of fruit, including bananas, pineapples, oranges, lemons, tangerines and many more, started to arrive in England from North Africa, the Middle East, Florida and California (Flandrin and Montanari 1999, p. 437). With the introduction of refrigerated ships, fruit and vegetables could be transported from the colonies without detrimental effect to the cargo. Before this, the transportation of even hardy vegetables such as potatoes resulted in much of the cargo being lost. Again, in Conrad's short story, 'A Smile of Fortune', the seventeen tons of potatoes that the narrator purchases in the tropical island of 'Pearl' is stored in the 'after-hatch' for 'more than a week' (1914, p. 92). During that journey the narrator describes how 'Whiffs from decaying potatoes pursued me on the poop, they mingled with my thoughts, with my food, poisoned my very dreams. They made an atmosphere of corruption for the ship' (91).

When refrigerated ships were introduced, perishable fruit and vegetables from the colonies such as South East Asia were no longer considered to be luxury items but became ‘items of mass consumption’ mainly available between November and April when home-grown fruit and vegetables were out of season (Flandrin and Montanari 1999, p. 465). This development would certainly account for the ‘violent blaze of light and colour’ that emanates from ‘the glowing heaps of oranges and lemons’ on the ‘only fruiterer’s stall’ in the ‘blackness of a wet London night’ in Conrad’s *The Secret Agent* (1947, p. 119).

## RICE

At the time that Conrad was writing, Burma was a British colony and its capital Rangoon (Yangon) was the centre of distribution for food—primarily rice—and timber to Europe. In the period to 1900 much of this rice was used for making starch and alcohol but later it comprised a significant part of the European food diet. The trade in rice during the nineteenth century was a complicated and carefully balanced market. Up until the First World War, rice was one of the world’s most important food products, consumed by around 50% of the global population. The main rice suppliers were China, India, Burma and Siam (Thailand). Up until the 1860s British India was the biggest exporter of rice, providing not only Europe but other Asian countries too. After 1867, when India suffered a famine, Burma took its place as the number one exporter. However, when Burma itself was short of supplies, China and Bombay took their turn in meeting the needs of other Asian and European countries. After 1900 rice was exported directly to the West Indies and Africa—rather than being re-routed from Europe—and Britain, Germany, Holland and Italy, all became major consumers of Burmese rice (Latham and Neal 1983, pp. 260–280).

Alfred Russel Wallace’s study, *The Malay Archipelago* (1869)—a work that Richard Curle described as Conrad’s ‘favourite bedside companion’ (1928, p. 120)—includes comments on the main trade of Lombok and Bali as that of ‘rice and coffee; the former grown on the plains, the latter on the hills. The rice is exported very largely to other islands of the Archipelago, to Singapore, and even to China’ (Wallace 2011, p. 146). The significance of rice in Malaysian and Indonesian culture is not confined to economics. Rice is ‘part of the tradition, religion and law of many

of the ethnic groups' (Van de Kroef 1952, p. 51). In Java, for example, rice constitutes many of the traditional folk legends. In some, one of the gods of rice, Dewi Shri, transforms herself into a ricebird (*Glatik*) who shows the peasants how to pick 'the rice kernels one by one from their stalks' (51). In Conrad's novel, *An Outcast of the Islands* (1896) a 'serried flock of white rice-birds rose above the trees with a faint scream, and hovered, swaying in a disordered mass that suddenly scattered in all directions, as if burst asunder by a silent explosion' (1924, pp. 250–251). The ricebirds form part of the order of the day as the women husk the morning rice. Conrad's allusion to them in his novel, although only in passing, signifies his understanding of their symbolic importance in the social fabric and the traditions of cultivating rice. In his *Malay Archipelago*, Wallace describes the role of rice in a ceremony in which he was the guest of honour.

In the evening the Orang Kaya,<sup>12</sup> came in full dress (a spangled velvet jacket, but no trousers), and invited me over to his house, where he gave me a seat of honour under a canopy of white calico and coloured handkerchiefs. The great verandah was crowded with people, and large plates of rice with cooked and fresh eggs were placed on the ground as presents for me. A very old man then dressed himself in bright-coloured cloths and many ornaments, and sitting at the door, murmured a long prayer or invocation, sprinkling rice from a basin he held in his hand. (2011, p. 59)

In a slightly less believable recount, Wallace tells how one Rajah made sacrifices of human heads to the temples in order to secure a good rice crop. More in keeping with Conrad's own fictionalized account of the part rice plays in Malaysian culture, Wallace also notes that women's work is centred around the preparation of rice, 'an hour's work every evening to pound the rice with a heavy wooden stamper, which violently strains every part of the body'. This, he maintains, is a part of the female routine which begins from the age of nine or ten and certainly accounts for the amount of time that Mrs. Almayer in *Almayer's Folly* spends preparing the 'family rice'. In addition to this, rice was also used as a way of taxing the population as detailed in an account by Wallace of the Rajah of Lombok, whose wealth was measured by the amount of rice he collected from his people. Wisely, he only took a small measure but in doing so also managed to secure a census of how many people lived on the island that he ruled. Significantly, the collected rice was termed 'Government rice' and handed out to people in times of hardship (147).

In Conrad's fiction Malay society is authoritatively represented by the place rice holds in its customs and daily life. However, in Jessie Conrad's cookbook, *A Handbook of Cookery for a Small House* (1923), rice is represented through the medium of its place in the English household. One of the most popular foods to incorporate the use of rice was curry which has a long history in England with the first dish being served in 1733 at The Norris Street Coffee House at Haymarket (Chaudhuri 1992, p. 238). The availability of spices such as turmeric—the main ingredient in curry—made it a popular and easy recipe. Although curry did not necessarily need to be accompanied by rice, Jessie Conrad stipulates 'The cooking of rice is the principal part in preparing a dish of curry' (1924, p. 55) and Mrs. Beeton in her *Book of Household Management* (1861) includes a specific recipe for cooking 'Boiled Rice for Curries, &c.' (2008, p. 278). In the 11 August 1888 edition of *The Saturday Review of Politics, Literature, Science and Art*, an anonymous writer devotes nearly three pages to an article entitled simply 'Curry', extolling the special place of the dish in English society. 'Curry', he begins, 'though commonly regarded as of Indian birth and of pure Eastern begetting, undoubtedly took its rise immediately from Europe'. Continuing to detail every possible combination of curry, the writer declares, 'Rice is a medium through which the curry flavour is conveyed, and, as a medium ought to be pure, neutral and natural ... Rice is a good, honest servant'.<sup>13</sup> This personification of rice echoes the Empire's view of its colonized subjects. In *Almayer's Folly*, Ali is the 'faithful servant' who cooks Almayer's rice. In 'Falk' it is the trusted Chinese cook that brings Falk his rice and fish.

Curry and rice also represent the swift appropriation of a colonial dish into the English diet in the same way that England appropriated people, customs and their land. Paradoxically, this romantic view of Eastern fare does not apply when the colonizer is forcibly subjected to a rice diet. Almayer in *Almayer's Folly* lives on a staple of rice and fish, considering his diet demeaning to his position as a white man. The British Colonial Administrator, Hugh Clifford, complained that it was impossible for a European to eat enough rice to comprise a satisfying diet. In his account of his journey through Trengganu and Kelantan, he writes: 'The bulk of those who formed the expedition—that is to say, the Malays and Dyaks—were accustomed to regard rice as their staple, and therefore it was no hardship to them to live upon the diet supplied. The Europeans and Sikhs, however, were not accustomed to live upon rice, and the

effect of the diet upon them was soon only too apparent ... To people unaccustomed to it, it is a physical impossibility to consume a quantity sufficient for health' (1897, p. 7). It is ironic, therefore, to consider the valued place of rice in European cooking as a foodstuff not essential to life but a commodity to be used at will.

## CEREALS

During the years 1880–1884 Britain was importing £183 million worth of food and £21 million worth of this was wheat (Fuchs 1905, pp. 126–130). Flandrin and Montanari explain how, despite increases in agricultural production, England was still unable to produce enough grain at competitive prices. Colonial and ex-colonial continents, such as Africa and the Americas, provided a seemingly 'inexhaustible' land resource that could be cultivated to provide England with cereals at prices significantly lower than European tariffs. 'This revolution in food supplies was also the result of rapid new rail and sea links' and while England abandoned 'uneconomical grain culture', they replaced it with manufacturing such as cotton, linen and tobacco (1999, p. 487) which they used to trade for food.

The moment when Marlow in Conrad's 'Heart of Darkness' remarks upon the emaciated African workers who are building a railway,<sup>14</sup> describing them as 'black shapes' that 'crouched, lay, sat between the trees' and who had been 'fed on unfamiliar food' until 'they sickened, became inefficient, and were then allowed to crawl away and rest' (1967, p. 66), reveals the effect of European intervention. Indigenous crops to the Congo, such as millet, were destroyed and replaced with maize which could be exported to Europe to provide a cheap means of cereal for the consumer. England's imports of grain were balanced by the export of manufactured goods. Conrad satirizes this 'trade' by drawing attention to the African whose 'black bones reclined at full length' who looked at Marlow with 'sunken eyes' and who 'had tied a bit of white worsted round his neck ... It looked startling round his black neck this bit of white thread from beyond the seas'. When Marlow remarks, 'Why? Where did he get it?. Was it a badge—an ornament—a charm—a propitiatory act? Was there any idea at all connected with it?' he expresses the irrelevancy of mercantile trade to the starving indigenous population whose crops have been destroyed to grow those preferred by the West (66–67).

## FISH AND CHIPS

In England during the second half of the nineteenth century, cheap convenient food was becoming the norm. When baked potatoes became available for sale on the streets, they were enthusiastically adopted as a staple of the working-class diet. Cooked in hired ovens, they were sold by ‘baked-potato-men’ from heated brass chimneys that could be wheeled around the streets. By 1851, there were over 300 of these tradesmen hawking this cheap, convenient and healthy food. At the same time improved transportation of fresh food through the use of railways, meant fish was becoming increasingly available. Fried fish, in particular, was a cheap and easy dietary choice. The two foods were quickly paired although it wasn’t until the 1860s that fried fish was being sold with deep-fried sliced potatoes (Groom 2004, p. 32). By the end of the 1880s the fish and chip shop was a ‘well established feature of working class areas’ (Fraser 1981, p. 108). Despite being generally greasy, smelly and dirty, they could provide a meal for six to eight for sixpence (109).

But fish and chips were also ideologically coded foods. In Ireland, this popular meal was seen as a usurper of ‘the enthroned Roast Beef of Old England’ which had been ‘ambushed by Francophile bandits: the quick, vernacular Robin-Hood radicalism of *fyshe* and *chippes*’ (Groom 2004, p. 34). Roland Barthes, writing in 1957, examined the ideology of the chip concluding that ‘*la frite*, chips, are the alimentary sign of Frenchness’ (1993, pp. 62–64). Considering the strained relations that existed between England and France the proliferation of the fish and chip shop symbolized not only an invasion of French cuisine but also a denationalization of food as foreign cuisine blurred the boundaries of national identity.

The proliferation of fish in the public and political mind is a subject tackled by Conrad in *The Secret Agent* (1907). On the London streets, a cab carries Winnie, her mother and Stevie through the streets of London as it ‘jolt[s] in front of a steamy, greasy shop in a blaze of gas and in the smell of fried fish’ (1947, p. 130). Meanwhile in the parliamentary offices of Sir Ethelred, the Assistant Commissioner, and Toodles, the ‘Private Secretary’ employ fish as a metaphor for the capture of the perpetrator of the Greenwich bombing. The analogy emphasizes the current political question of nationalizing the fisheries. Sir Ethelred is in the process of putting through the ‘Bill for the Nationalisation of the Fishers’<sup>15</sup> and as a consequence Toodles finds himself ‘buried in special books up to our necks—whole shelves full of them—with plates’ about fish (171).



The emphasis on the metaphorical allusion to fish—the ‘dog-fish’, the ‘sprat’, the ‘whale’ all used as terms to describe Mr. Vladimir—reinforces the relationship between political intrigue and fishing. Bearing in mind that part of the impetus for the nationalization of the fisheries was to protect UK stocks from foreign fishermen, questions of nationalism and foreign invasion become embedded in *The Secret Agent* through food.<sup>16</sup> It is also significant that the fisheries were big business. By 1913 Britain’s annual catch of fish was over one million tons (Fraser 1981, p. 163), offering the opportunity for substantial profits.

## VEGETARIANISM

In the nineteenth century the relationship between vegetarianism and social reform was becoming a Europe-wide phenomenon. The Russian writer Lev Nikolaevich Tolstoy inextricably linked vegetarianism with moral purity while his abstinence from both meat and sex was a conscious ethical and moral decision. In 1891 Tolstoy wrote a Preface to a translation of *The Ethics of Diet: A Catena of Authorities Deprecatory of the Practice of Flesh-Eating* (1883),<sup>17</sup> by the British vegetarian Howard Williams, who extolled the virtues of abstaining from meat. Tolstoy’s Preface was entitled ‘The First Step’ and included a disturbing portrayal of the Tula slaughterhouse and a description of how the workers kill the cattle. For Tolstoy vegetarianism was not about health but about the association between meat eating and violence not only towards animals but to fellow human beings (LeBlanc 1997, p. 84).

This humanitarian view of vegetarianism had also been developing in England since the 1840s and in 1891 the Humanitarian League was formed by Henry Salt and Edward Carpenter. In America in 1900 the Kellogg’s company was the largest manufacturer of vegetarian food while in 1875 the French began the Société Végétarienne de France (SVF), influenced by the growing vegetarian movement coming out of Switzerland, Germany and Belgium (Ouédraogo 2000, p. 203).

At the end of the century, humanitarianism, peaceful revolution and anarchy came together, often identifying and collectivizing itself through ideologically based vegetarianism. The political refugee Prince Kropotkin came to England to run *The Anarchist* and set up the Utopian-based commune, Clousden Hill in Northumberland, in 1895. Members produced their own food, striving for a complete withdrawal from the capitalist economy. Although a few of these communes sprung up around the

country, they soon disbanded when some members proved to be lazier than others or attracted those who just did not want to work. Clousden Hill was the longest-surviving, finally closing its doors in 1902. Ford Madox Ford writing under the pseudonym Daniel Chaucer wrote *The Simple Life Ltd* (1911), a satire of an anarchist, vegetarian co-operative. Communalism philosophy evolved around equality, sharing and freedom from the state. Meat eating and the production and marketing of meat was seen as wholly capitalistic and just as Shelley in the early nineteenth century had linked meat eating with violence and capitalism, so too did these ethical communes. With the advent of vegetarianism, food took on a new political and metaphorical symbolism. It was no longer just a commodity for trade but a symbol of ideological philosophizing.

In the 1890s the vegetarian movement sought members from the working classes, aligning itself with the ‘bohemian influx’ of socialism which also sought reforms in marriage, contraception and an end to the charlatanism of faith healing. However, not all socialists were convinced by the benefits of vegetarianism. Henry Hyndman, the leader of the Marxist Social Democratic Federation, condemned humanitarians, vegetarians and ‘arty-crafty’s and all the rest of them’, suggesting it kept ‘a lot of useless people alive’ (Gregory 2007, p. 158).

Writing into the twentieth century, social commentators such as George Orwell considered the association between socialism and vegetarianism a damaging one. In *The Road to Wigan Pier* (1937), he describes vegetarians as ‘cranks’ and considers that the ‘food-crank is by definition a person willing to cut himself off from human society in hopes of adding to the life of his carcass; that is a person out of touch with common humanity’ (1961, p. 147). As the twentieth century saw increases in food importations, Orwell regretted the sacrifice of British food and the effects of industrialization. ‘What the majority of English people mean by an apple is a lump of highly coloured cotton wool from America or Australia; they will devour these things, apparently with pleasure, and let the English apples rot under the trees’ (170).

## RESTAURANTS

The popularity of vegetarianism was reflected, however, in the abundance of vegetarian restaurants in London during the last two decades of the nineteenth century. Not only were they outlets for socialist and temperance material, but they were also popular destinations for the working

class seeking a cheap meal. St George's House Café in St Martin's Lane which opened in 1887, offered 'macaroni and egg cookery, together with special American dishes, curries etc' (Gregory 2007, pp. 135–137). This 'de-nationalization' of food was becoming more prevalent in nineteenth-century England not only through colonial imports but also due to foreigners arriving in London and opening up restaurants serving their own national food as well as that of other nationalities. In 1865, Soho was a home away from home for German immigrants with a number of German restaurants catering to its expatriate population (Panayi 1995, p. 100). Writing in 1899, Lieutenant Colonel Newnham Davis's *Dinners and Diners: Where & How to Dine in London* critiqued a variety of restaurants including *Romano's* which was run by 'a Roman', *Monico's* in Shaftesbury Avenue, owned by a Signor Giulio C. Nobile, and *Le Restaurant Des Gourmets* in Lisle Street, run by a 'burly Frenchman' and which sold not only French food but also Italian pâté and turbot. Most interesting is the *Tivoli* in The Strand. Owned by a M. Aubanel, it boasted a reliable Russian chef who cooked 'Russian hors-d'oeuvres'<sup>18</sup> pandering to the fashion for the upper class style of dining *a la russe* in which the food was carved and plated by the servants and served to the diners instead of the traditional method, *à la française* in which the guests/customers helped themselves from a selection of dishes. Newnham Davis goes on to articulate the variety of foods available to the discerning diner: 'not only France, but countries much farther afield are systematically pillaged that Londoners may dine, and I do not despair of some day eating Mangostines [an exotic East India fruit] for desert' (cited in McLaughlin 2000, p. 158).

In *The Secret Agent*, the Assistant Commissioner eats at 'a little Italian restaurant ...—one of those traps for the hungry' which has an 'atmosphere of fraudulent cookery mocking an abject mankind in the most pressing of its miserable necessities' (148). The narrator of *The Secret Agent* comments that 'the Italian restaurant is such a peculiarly British institution' and the people who eat in such establishments are 'as denationalised as the dishes set before them' (149). In Conrad's novel, the fine cooking and expansive menus of Lieutenant Colonel Newnham Davis are nowhere to be found. Instead the invasion of foreign restaurants selling 'fraudulent cookery' is juxtaposed against the influx of 'sham' anarchists that bring with them fraudulent ideologies.

In the second half of the nineteenth century, England became a safe haven for political refugees and was the only European country not to

refuse anarchists the right to live here. In Conrad's short stories and novels he uses restaurants as fronts for anarchist activities. In *The Secret Agent*, there is an implication that the Italian restaurant harbours anarchists. In 'The Informer' (1908), the Hermione Street operations are above 'a little Italian restaurant of the flyblown sort' where the 'comrades could get their meals ... unnoticed amongst the other customers' (1927, p. 78). Like the Assistant Commissioner in *The Secret Agent*, Italian food that 'denationalizes' offers a cover for foreigners allowing them to blend into cosmopolitan London.

The concept of the 'restaurant' as opposed to the hostelry, inn or table d'hôte was a French one with central Paris first opening its 'restorative bouillons'—the origins for the word 'restaurant'—in the 1760s. Unlike the table d'hôte which had set meal times and a shared buffet table from which people scrambled for their dinner, restaurants offered a more individual experience. Menus were printed and people could dine alone instead of sharing a table with strangers. Customers could also choose a specific meal and know exactly how much it was going to cost. As restaurants spread throughout Europe they began to cater for all nationalities. Whichever country they were in, Englishmen could order roast beef while Frenchmen could have salmon and chips allowing them to retain some of their national identity even when abroad (Grew 1999, pp. 80–82).

Restaurants were also an opportunity to experience a different culture and cuisine. When the Assistant Commissioner in *The Secret Agent* walks into the Italian restaurant he immediately 'seemed to lose some more of his identity' (148). After eating a 'short meal' he 'contemplated his own image with a melancholy and inquisitive gaze, then by sudden inspiration raised the collar of his jacket ... he completed it by giving an upward twist to the ends of his black moustache ... He was satisfied by the subtle modification of his personal aspect' (149). Although there is no historical evidence for restaurants being used as fronts for dangerous revolutionary activity, it makes perfect sense for Conrad to do so in a fictionalized form. Indeed, the psychological threat to identity through eating the food of the Other is made tangible by the actual threat of anarchist bomb plots.

It soon becomes clear in Conrad's writing that food and eating houses, when mixed with politics, hold negative connotations. At the beginning of 'The Informer', the restaurant in which the narrator and 'X' meet is a 'very good restaurant' but the narrator is soon appalled

when he considers that he and the ‘destructive publicist’ (73) share ‘the same taste in cooking’ (140) as if it confirms their shared inhumanity. When ‘X’ attacks a ‘*bombe glacée*’ Conrad is emphasizing the negative connotation between food and politics and in particular ‘sham’ anarchist activities. By using ‘Stone’s Dried Soup’ tins in which to conceal bombs in ‘The Informer’, Conrad makes fun of the idea of the anarchist threat to England by implying that anarchic propaganda by deed is possibly more appealing to the public than the ‘Stone’s Dried Soup’ that should have been inside the tins.

At the beginning of the short story ‘Falk’ in which a man’s moral code is tested after he resorts to eating human flesh in order to survive, the narrator and his listeners find themselves in a ‘small river-hostelry’ with ‘rotten’ planks, a ‘decrepit old waiter’ and ‘chipped plates’. The hostelry serves ‘chops’ which ‘recalled times more ancient still’ (145). Although at the beginning of the story the reader has no idea that cannibalism will be its subject, the nature of the food and the environment in which it is being eaten, creates the atmosphere for the ‘artless tales of experience—the tales of hunger and hunt’ (81). Similarly, later on in the story, the table d’hôte which sells ‘execrable’ chops warns the reader that its proprietor, Schomberg, is as fraudulent as his cooking. More importantly, however, is the fact that what Schomberg offers is supposed to represent a home away from home, a taste of Europe in a foreign country. The irony is that much of what Britain was eating at the end of the nineteenth century was foreign food from the colonies, Americas and Australia. In a more subtle way Conrad was also hinting at the fraudulent nature of imperialism through the prism of food.

## FOOD AND REVOLUTION

In *Under Western Eyes* (1911), Conrad attacks all aspects of the political system; the autocracy of nineteenth-century Russia, the ‘bland democracy’ of Geneva and the messianic fervour of Russian revolutionaries. Food, and in particular bread, becomes the medium through which Conrad directs his criticism. Within the unstable climate of pre-revolutionary Russia, food represents tradition, conflict and religion, while eating becomes a metaphorically cannibalistic activity which represents the savagery of autocracy.

Food—and the lack of it—played an important part in uprisings in nineteenth-century Russia and was the cause of the mutiny which broke

out in 1905 aboard the *Battleship Potemkin* when a member of the crew, a sailor called Omulchuck, complained about the quality of the soup. An illustrated London newspaper reported the details of the incident as follows:

The Russian Revolution spreads apace. Last week the entire Russian Navy, besides the inhabitants of nearly every big city in the country, seemed to have broken out into open revolt. The first act was sudden and dramatic. A sailor on board a man-of-war, the *Knjar Potemkin*, complained to an officer of the soup he had had for dinner. The officer shot him dead ... As we go to press it appears as if the whole of the Russian Navy are practically in a state of mutiny. (*The Penny Illustrated Paper and Illustrated Times* 8 July 1905, p. 2)

The mutiny was over by 15 July and the Roumanian Government' [*sic*] 'allowed the crew to disperse themselves into the country, out of reach of Russia's revenge'. But the events on the battleship stirred revolutionary ardour. 'There are reports of serious risings in no fewer than thirty-eight districts in the Government of Kherson, Poltava, Ekaterinoslav, and Torida' warned the same London newspaper (*The Penny Illustrated Paper and Illustrated Times* 15 July 1905, p. 18).

Exactly 1 year earlier, M. De Plehve,<sup>19</sup> the Russian Minister of the Interior, had been assassinated by a man named Egor Sazonov (Avrich 2007, p. 113). In the journal *Social Democrat*, Theo Rothstein, writing just after Plehve's assassination, described the minister as 'bestial and fiendish'.<sup>20</sup> Rothstein claims that in his role of minister, Plehve was responsible for numerous crimes against humanity as well as an incompetency in managing the national grain stores. The Minister of the Interior, as a government position in Tsarist Russia, had a lot to answer for. The state responsibility of feeding the Russian people was maintained through serfdom and autocracy. Therefore, when Miss Haldin remarks in *Under Western Eyes*, 'I would take liberty from any hand as a hungry man would snatch at a piece of bread', she brings two contradictory desires together. Man needs food but in order to get food he must work and in Russian society that means never being free.

In 1891 the worst famine of the century occurred. It affected 36 million people and 400,000 died of starvation (Smith and Christian 1984, p. 350). In an interview with one starving family, a reporter of the time writes:

I questioned the family, and discovered that their breadwinner, the father and husband, had died for his country in Manchuria, and a grateful Government thus attended to the needs of his dying wife and children. Their food was a semi-poisonous kind of weed, ground up with a little rye flour, acorns, and oak bar. (351)

The man died in the Russo/Japanese War,<sup>21</sup> that which Conrad believed would end with ‘a new political organism to take the place of a gigantic and dreaded phantom’ (*NLL*, 86).

The inclusion of these seemingly incidental references serve a greater purpose. Indeed bread has a special place in Russian society. In the nineteenth century 60% of arable land was given over to rye crops (16.5% to wheat). When Conrad talks about Russia as a phantom he means that it is a fantasy imagined by Peter the Great, an idea that does not exist, in the same way that bread exists as an ideological foodstuff. Russian bread should be ‘thick, not light, not doughy, and made well, out of fresh flour ... Good bread is the most important thing’ (Smith and Christian 1984, p. 258).<sup>22</sup> In *Under Western Eyes* the bread that Razumov considers is ‘stale’ indicates not only a dissatisfied and hungry people but also an obsolescent political system that deprives its people of both good bread and liberty.

This link between bread and liberty was used as a political tool by the Russian anarchist, Peter Kropotkin, whose publication, *I Khleb Volyn—Bread and Freedom*, was first published in 1903 and produced twenty-four editions. Printed in Geneva and Paris, the literature was smuggled into Russia between 1903 and 1907. Apart from extolling the virtues of Anarcho-communism, it also promoted unionist activity.<sup>23</sup> In the second edition, printed in September 1903, it called for the people to rise up against ‘Agrarian terror’, telling the peasants that they needed ‘neither tsar nor state’ only ‘land and liberty’ and calling for a return to the system which operated in medieval Russia in which autocracy did not exist and the local authority was decided via a town assembly. The village would live in freedom and people would take ‘bread, clothing and other supplies’ from ‘the common storehouse’.

The starvation of the Russian people serves as a backdrop for Conrad’s ‘historical process’, threading its way through *Under Western Eyes*. When Tekla remarks, ‘... was it not sin enough to live on a Government salary while half Russia was dying of hunger?’ she voices the economic split of Russia under an autocratic government (150).

With this in mind, it is not surprising that food is used by Conrad to convey the dislocated psyche of the Russian Empire and its people which is emphasized by the disparity of their diets.

## NOTES

1. Conrad's cargo on the *S.S. Vidar* was mainly resin while the *Highland Forest* contained 'merchandise' of chairs, nails, sheet iron as well as 100 cases of cornflour (trove.nla.gov.au).
2. The sap of this tree was used in the production of rubber.
3. Singapore was ceded to the British Government in 1824 by the Sultan of Johore.
4. Singapore was a free port with no duty being paid on any goods entering it.
5. In 1865 Rinderpest or 'Cattle Plague' was imported into England. The result was the devastation of the country's herds (Hardy 1993, p. 7).
6. 'The pioneers of retailing frozen food in Britain appear to have been John Bell and Sons of London and Glasgow. Already established as multiple retail butchers for some half a century, they opened their first frozen-meat shop in 1879. When they amalgamated with Eastman's in January 1889, Bell's had 330 frozen-meat shops' (Oddy 2003, p. 18).
7. In reply to Rae's suggestions of cannibalism on the Franklin expedition, the novelist Charles Dickens—himself obsessed with the subject of cannibalism—wrote an article in the publication *Household Words* suggesting that it was in fact the Inuit who had killed and eaten some of Franklin's men. He said that it was 'gigantically improbable' that Englishmen and Christians would have 'turned cannibal. Only savages did that' (Charles Dickens, 'The Lost Arctic Voyage' in *Household Words* Volume X, 2 and 9 December 1884, pp. 362–365 and 387–393). <http://www.djo.org.uk/household-words/volume-x/>.
8. 15 October 1878 'Duke of Sutherland' departs Port of London. 31 January 1879 arrives in Sydney (Simmons 2010, p. 107).
9. For a full account of the numerous incidents of shipwrecks during the nineteenth century, see Simpson (1986, Chap. 5).
10. Conrad based this story on his experiences in Mauritius—which is in the Indian Ocean. This was a British colony, but had been a French one up to 1810, and the planters were mostly French. Slavery there was abolished in 1835. Thereafter, work on the plantations was mostly done by indentured labourers from India. On the return voyage to Australia, the *Otago's* principal cargo was indeed sugar—Najder suggests that the potatoes were a side investment on the part of Conrad as captain.



11. Pilcher notes that between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries, 10 million Africans were uprooted in the trans-Atlantic trade (17).
12. Rich man and chief of the tribe (Wallace 2011, p. 56).
13. [bp.chadwyck.co.uk/articles/results](http://bp.chadwyck.co.uk/articles/results).
14. Marlow remarks earlier in the text, 'I came upon a boiler wallowing in the grass, then found a path leading up the hill. It turned aside for the boulders and also for an undersized railway truck lying there on its back with its wheels in the air' (1991, p. 15).
15. In 1886 Professor T.H. Huxley wrote an article entitled 'The Proposed Fisheries Board of Great Britain', in which he called for the nationalization of the fisheries of Great Britain in order to protect the fish around the UK from foreign fishers and ensure that particular breeds were preserved (*Science*, 7/167 (April 16, 1886): 344–346).
16. A related issue: on 21 October 1904, the Russian navy opened fire on the Hull fishing-fleet on the Dogger Bank: Conrad's long letter to *The Times* about this incident is in *CL3* 173–175.
17. See <https://archive.org/details/ethicsofdietcate00will> for full on-line text version.
18. [www.victorianlondon.org](http://www.victorianlondon.org).
19. Conrad indicates that it was de Plehve who Haldin assassinates (*CL4* 9).
20. 'The Assassination of de Plehve' in *Social Democrat*, Vol VIII, No. 8. August 1904. Transcribed by Ted Crawford.
21. Minister of the Interior, M. De Plehve was the man responsible for 'instigating a "small victorious war" against the Japanese' (Avrich 2007, p. 17).
22. Part of an interview conducted on Russian villagers by Soviet researchers in the 1950s.
23. For a full account of the Anarchist Movement in Russia, see Avrich (2007).

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<http://www.springer.com/978-3-319-56622-1>

Food in the Novels of Joseph Conrad

Eating as Narrative

Salmons, K.

2017, XIII, 127 p., Hardcover

ISBN: 978-3-319-56622-1