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At the Kitchen Table: Women and Food in Late Twentieth-Century U.S. Multiethnic and Global Women's Literature

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AT THE KITCHEN TABLE: WOMEN AND FOOD IN LATE TWENTIETH-
CENTURY U.S. MULTIETHNIC AND GLOBAL WOMEN'S LITERATURE

A Dissertation

Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies and Research

in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

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Title: At the Kitchen Table: Women and Food in Late Twentieth-Century U.S. Multiethnic and Global Women's Literature

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This dissertation offers a critical analysis of women as producers and consumers of food in selected novels by both U.S. multiethnic and global women writers and the ways in which these stories and protagonists represent, critique, and resist constructions of gendered identity as shaped by historical colonialism and late twentieth-century capitalist globalization through the manipulation of the production and consumption of food. The novels in this study include Edwidge Danticat's *Breath Eyes Memory* (1994), Tsitsi Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions* (1988), Cristina Garcia's *Dreaming in Cuban* (1993), and Helena Maria Viramontes's *Under the Feet of Jesus* (1995).

Using the metaphor of the food chain as figure that simultaneously connects women together in their shared relationships with food and yet restrictively binds them together as prisoners in a global market, I analyze the ways in which the control of food production and consumption has been used as a tool of historical colonization and more recently neo-imperialism and corporate globalization, and I investigate why capitalism, specifically, would thrive off of keeping women fractured, disembodied, poisoned, and starving. Ultimately, models of resistance emerge within the narratives as the protagonists develop ways to reject and opt out of these larger systems.