

## ARTICLE

# Putting the Accent on Authenticity: A Case Study of Celebrity Chef Gennaro 'Gino' D'Acampo

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This article offers an analysis of one of the most recognised representations of 'Italian-ness' in the form of the positioning of television chef Gino D'Acampo, with a view to demonstrating the implications of the functions of the stereotype from a methodological perspective, and raising practical questions about the ideals, prejudices and anxieties of contemporary British society. The first part of the article illustrates the ways in which D'Acampo's commercial and popular success is related to the projected image of his Italian identity. Providing a consideration of the limited and largely condescending treatment of his figure in Italian press, the essay suggests that he is literally 'made in Britain', and maps out the construction of his Italian-ness via a brief analysis of his media persona, output and relevant British press archive. The article explores the 'performance/ivity' of D'Acampo's Italian-ness, illustrating the insights to be gained from focussing on use-value, particularly in generating alternative readings of gender, femininity and domesticity. D'Acampo's negotiation of stereotyped images of the 'Italian mother' and 'mammoni' promotes recognition of how understandings of femininity are both class and nationality biased. The final part of the article returns to exchange-value, and the meaning of stereotypes as a reader-specific projection; a property of the subject-classifier, rather than object-classified. Tracing the prevalent associations of Italian-ness with notions of authenticity and nostalgia, the gaze is turned to contemporary British society and, in particular, to class-imbued anxieties in the elements of Italianità that are offered for consumption, and the ways in which they are presented to the consumer.

Italy has long been recognised by writers and travellers as a 'useful and necessary' point of reference, an 'Other' through which a sense of British identity has been developed (Pordzik 2005: 10, cf. Pfister and Hertel 2008, and Willman, this volume). D.H. Lawrence, one of the writers who embarked on such a journey, provides an ironic insight into the lived experience of a mutual investment in these stereotyped readings of Otherness: before the ink can dry in his sweeping characterisation of Sicilians who 'never leave off being amorously friendly with almost everybody, emitting a relentless physical familiarity that is quite bewildering to one not brought up near a volcano' (2007: 146), Lawrence bemoans the fact that 'to an Italian I am a perfected abstraction, England-coal-exchange' (185). When the same national,

ethno-geographical stereotyped interpretations that Lawrence offers (of Sicilians, Sardinians, Tuscans and Italians generally) are applied to his own person, he snaps: 'I am not England. I am not the British Isles on two legs' (184).

It is at the opposite end of the scale to Lawrence's frustration at being read as Britishness personified that we might place television personality and celebrity chef Gennaro 'Gino' D'Acampo, the 'walking compendium of all things Italian' (Barber 2011). Far from rejecting essentialist, some would say racist, British stereotypes of Italianness, D'Acampo seems to actively embrace his typecast role of the ethnic Italian. Given the ubiquity of 'the nation's favourite Italian chef', as one online retailer would have it, it is tempting to presume that D'Acampo is the very figure that Sprio has in mind when she writes that 'apart from a few mediated stereotypes perpetuated in the contemporary British media, the immigrant Italian presence in Britain still remains largely invisible' (2013: 19).<sup>1</sup> Precisely because of his level of visibility, this article proposes D'Acampo as a useful means to think through a national stereotype. Examining the positioning of Gino across a range of visual and print media from 2010 (when media interest in his figure increased substantially following his successful participation in the 2009 reality series, *I'm a Celebrity...Get Me Out Of Here!*), to the present, up to and including his most recent television series and tie-in publication *Gino's Hidden Italy: How to Cook Like a True Italian* (2016), the aim is to tease out some of the implications of D'Acampo's positioning as the quintessential authentic Italian, without losing sight of mobility as a lived experience and the practical opportunities that this performance of authenticity may afford. Though I have been unable to interview D'Acampo myself, I draw on the comments he makes in two published personal interviews with this objective in mind.

The article therefore takes an inductive approach, seeking to infer the meaning of authenticity for both D'Acampo and his consumers. In doing so, I also want to challenge a tendency within Modern Languages to presume that any research concerned in some way with 'actual people' must rely on sociological tools, quantitative data (and often lots of it), focus groups, questionnaires and so forth in order to be representative. This is a sterile myth that scholars of culture, in particular anthropologists and ethnographers, have long sought to debunk. Writing in the early 1980s, Hymes highlighted 'the small portion of cultural behaviour that people can be expected to report or describe, when asked, and the much smaller portion that an average person can be expected to manifest by doing on demand', concluding sceptically that 'some social research seems incredibly to assume that what there is to find out can be found out by asking' (1981: 84). Rather than staging consumer focus groups or relying on other essentially quantitative data, I offer a close critical reading of the position of 'Gino' across a range of specific sites in order to posit some of the meanings implicated in the appeal of this figure and indicate potential paths for future inquiry.

The first half of the article explores the public persona of Gino as a tactical performance of authenticity which is financially rewarding but works to fix D'Acampo as a self-perpetuating stereotype in light of de Certeau's, and subsequently Giard's, definition of 'tactic' (1984, 1998). It examines appearances on *This Morning*, a daytime television series and D'Acampo's first significant television role (2009–present); *Celebrity Juice*, a late-peak television comedy panel game (2014–present); *Gino's Italian Escape*, September–October 2013 and *Gino's Italian Escape: A Taste of the Sun*, September–October 2014 (two series of six thirty-minute

<sup>1</sup> 'Join the nation's favourite Italian chef, on his journey of discovery through Northern Italy, to reveal the secrets of real Italian food. From peach picking in Turin to truffle hunting in Piedmonte, Gino celebrates the best in local and seasonal Italian ingredients. Using traditional methods found in the kitchens of Italy, this book will introduce Gino's fans to 80 delicious new recipes, that will bring authentic Italian dining to your family table.' From the Amazon description of *Gino's Hidden Italy: How to cook like a true Italian* <<https://www.amazon.co.uk/Ginos-Hidden-Italy-cook-Italian-x/dp/1473646480>> (accessed 15 February 2017).

episodes broadcast at 8:00 p.m. on Fridays), and tie-in publication (2014), for which he is best known, together with his presentation in tabloid and broadsheet newspapers. I also take into account the limited media attention that his figure has received in Italy, commercial ventures and a guest television appearance on *Through the Keyhole* (2015).

The notion of the tactic is key to de Certeau's understanding of living in the modern world because he sees it as the means by which individuals render life meaningful in a consumer society (1998). The second half of the article pursues this theme by considering how far the appeal of D'Acampo's authentic cuisine may be related to social meaning. Probing further into the Italy represented by D'Acampo's food, I argue that the hybridity of the Italy that his public is encouraged, quite literally, to consume, works to undermine the distinction between 'insiders' and 'outsiders'. Reflecting also on the social media community animated via the Twitter handle @Ginofantastico, I argue that D'Acampo's emphasis on a practical conviviality, the sense of collectivity evoked by his cuisine, is key to interpreting the desirability of the authentic in this case.

### **Interpreting D'Acampo's Italianness as a tactical performance of authenticity**

According to de Certeau in *The Practice of Everyday Life*:

The space of a tactic is the space of the other. Thus it plays on and with a terrain imposed on it and organized by a foreign power. It does not have the means to keep itself, at a distance, in a position of withdrawal, foresight and self-collection: it is a manoeuvre 'within the enemy's field of vision'. This nowhere gives a tactic mobility, to be sure, but a mobility that must accept the chance offerings of the moment, and seize on the wing the possibilities that offer themselves at any given moment. It is a guileful ruse. In short, a tactic is the art of the weak. (1984: 37)

De Certeau is referring here to consumer practice and the way in which individuals operate within capitalist and institutional power structures, but I want to begin by developing the parallels between this evocation of 'mobility', of movement within 'the space of the other', of the position of weakness within a foreign power, with the practical experience of migration. This is not as much of a leap as it may first seem: the utility of authenticity in tactical terms has already been highlighted in the context of migrant culinary cultures on account of the possibility it offers for minority groups to resist processes of hegemonisation enforced by the dominant culture (Goldman 1992), and to extract economic advantage, because it represents 'a way for migrants to strategically mobilise their own ethnic identities in order to accrue economic capital from the outsiders who seek it' (Jonas 2013: 132). Following this line of argument, this first section will deconstruct D'Acampo's performance of authenticity as a tactic and analyse some of the connotations of its deployment.

In describing D'Acampo's self-presentation as a 'performance', I draw upon the misgivings that Tim Edensor expresses regarding Judith Butler's distinction between performance, as the self-conscious display of behaviour, and performativity, as the construction of identity through everyday communication and behaviour (Edensor 2002: 71, cf. Butler 1990). Edensor rejects Butler's clear-cut separation of performance from performativity, reasoning that 'apparently self-reflexive performances may become unreflexive "second nature" to the habituated actor, and unfamiliar surroundings may provoke acute self-awareness of iterative performances where none had previously been experienced' (Edensor 2002: 71, cf. Butler 1990). Edensor's reflections are particularly apt in the context of migration, and I think that D'Acampo's positioning cannot be read discretely from his lived experience of mobility: in the move from Italy to England, many unremarkable aspects of quotidian behaviour in D'Acampo's home

region – things like communicating with hand gestures, greeting a male friend with kisses and a ‘uè bello’ (‘hey beautiful’) or taking a tooth-brush in a small plastic case to work – suddenly become conspicuous, invite comment and prompt, precisely as Edensor describes, ‘an acute self-awareness’ of an Italian identity. So, when I describe D’Acampo’s position as a performance, I am not suggesting that his behaviour is a conscious *pretence*. Rather, I want to highlight the way that D’Acampo’s move from Italy to England has rendered him sensitive to the ways in which his behaviour might be read as stereotypically Italian and the opportunities that embodying this stereotype may present.

Surveying representations of D’Acampo in the British press alongside his television roles, it seems impossible to separate his popular and economic success from the performance of an authentic ethnic identity. A marked Italian accent, a passion for food and eating, a foregrounding of family ties and an almost aggressive display of masculinity which combines ‘feminine’ attributes and a ‘Latin lover’ attitude towards women are consistently referenced as D’Acampo’s defining, Italian characteristics. ‘The accent, the dazzling white teeth, the hugs and kisses (“A flirt? Me? Never!”), the passion for pasta’ (Barber 2011) are seized upon as indicators of Italianness, and through the recurring display of this Italianness, self-identity is explicitly linked with the idea of performance – ‘Gino D’Acampo could have come straight out of Central Casting’ (Barber 2011). Gino is presented as a literal embodiment of Italian authenticity; ‘if being “Italian” was an Olympic sport, then TV chef Gino D’Acampo would be in the running for a gold medal’ (Greenwood 2014). As per Barber’s comment, D’Acampo’s accent in particular is taken as a sign of authenticity. Much of the comedy that his persona generates depends on misunderstandings and mispronunciations of his Italian accent and especially by what sociolinguists call ‘mergers’ and ‘near mergers’, the inability of a speaker to produce two different vowel sounds, or to recognise the diverse vowel sounds they are able to produce. So his explanation to viewers of ITV’s *This Morning*, his first significant television role (2009–present),<sup>2</sup> that the correct pronunciation of an Italian dish is ‘lasagne’, plural, and not ‘lasagna’, singular, is overshadowed entirely by the comedy of reference to ‘shits’, rather than ‘sheets’ of lasagne; as co-hosts Holly Willoughby and Phil Schofield dissolve into laughter, they signal this subtle ridiculing of D’Acampo as legitimate.<sup>3</sup> Similar instances of mispronunciation have been structured as D’Acampo’s definitive contribution to dialogue on the set of *Celebrity Juice*, an ITV2 late-peak television comedy panel game. In this series, D’Acampo’s way of speaking is consistently mocked, questioned or rendered in some way the principle feature of his intervention, even giving rise to a spoof documentary that suggests Gino D’Acampo is actually ‘plain old John Champion’, a ‘Sheffield lad’ who adopted the identity of ‘Gino’ and developed an absurd false accent after working in an Italian restaurant.<sup>4</sup>

On the one hand, we can read this performance of authenticity as enabling, because it is *as* the quintessential Italian that D’Acampo is granted authority to comment on (and on behalf of) Italy and Italians. ‘Discover the secrets of real Italian food with Gino D’Acampo’, runs the banner advertisement for an upcoming live tour; learn ‘how to cook like a true Italian’ proclaims the subtitle of his latest recipe collection (2016).<sup>5</sup> D’Acampo’s lucrative television and publishing career (ten cookery books to date, each one featuring prominently in the Amazon online sales list on release), together with his import company, Bontà Italia (the

<sup>2</sup> D’Acampo’s first television appearances were in 2004 on *Too Many Cooks* and *Soapstar Superchef* (2007), but his role on *This Morning* is often misquoted as his first television appearance.

<sup>3</sup> *This Morning*, 5 October 2010.

<sup>4</sup> *This Morning*, 25 September 2014 <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o6kVP9z9XNU>> [accessed 3 February 2017].

<sup>5</sup> ‘Gino’s Italian Escape’ Tour, 21 April–11 May 2017 <<http://www.itv.com/ginositalianescape/live-tour>> [accessed 3 February 2017].

largest importer of Italian products to the UK), and restaurant chains My Restaurant and My Pasta Bar, situate him amongst a class of high-profile male Italian chefs currently enjoying great commercial success in the UK: household names such as Antonio Carluccio, Gennaro Contaldo, Giorgio Locatelli. In contrast to Carluccio and Locatelli, however, who were raised in middle-class families in the north of Italy, and unlike Contaldo, whose Amalfi coast childhood is cited only in terms of its culinary importance – and who is arguably known as much for his mentoring role and friendship with British celebrity chef Jamie Oliver (see below) as he is in his own right – D'Acampo's modest southern Italian origins are invoked in evaluations of his success, both in the British press, by D'Acampo himself:

I came from a very lower-working-class family in Torre del Greco. I always remember my mum and dad arguing a lot and one main reason was lack of money. I realised very young that I always wanted to make money so I'd never have the same arguments like my mum and dad. (D'Acampo in McBride 2014)

And invariably in the limited attention his figure has received in the Italian press:

Cuoco di professione, il giovane corallino, in Inghilterra, è una vera celebrità televisiva. Inoltre, il cuoco originario di Torre del Greco è diventato anche una star della Rete. Lui si definisce 'solo un ragazzo come tanti altri che ama la cucina' [...]. Niente male per un ragazzo diplomato all'Istituto alberghiero 'Luigi de Medici' di Napoli che confezionava panini in un fast food londinese. (Carnile 2013)

A cook by trade, the young 'corallino'<sup>6</sup> is a real TV celebrity in England. The chef from Torre del Greco has also become an online star [...]. Not bad at all for a lad with a certificate from 'Luigi de Medici' catering college in Naples, who used to pack up sandwiches in a London fast food chain.<sup>7</sup>

Quella di Gennaro da Torre del Greco è la classica storia dell'italiano di umili origini che ottiene grande successo all'estero [...]. Senza un penny, racconta, 'ho bussato a diverse porte, facendo tre lavori contemporaneamente'. Dalle 5.30 del mattino fino alle 11.30 di sera. (Baratta 2012)

The story of Gennaro from Torre del Greco is the classic one of the Italian of humble origins who achieves great success abroad. Without a penny, he recounts, 'I knocked on all sorts of doors, working three jobs at the same time'. From 5.30 in the morning until 11.30 at night.

Performing the cultural Other to British audiences and enabling them to virtually tour *his* Italy, D'Acampo's performance of authenticity can thus be read as part of a highly successful personal project of socio-economic self-realisation. This is a tactical deployment of authenticity that has paid off, at least in financial terms. And yet, the identification of D'Acampo as the guarantor of the 'real' and the 'true' brings with it more problematic connotations, as we shall now examine.

The recurrence of the possessive apostrophe marking D'Acampo's relationship with Italy is striking: viewers of *Gino's Hidden Italy*, *Gino's Islands in the Sun* or *Gino's Italian Escape* are invited to discover 'his beloved Italy'; My Pasta Bar and My Restaurant are the names of the two dining chains that D'Acampo owns and manages. One concern is that through his tenure

<sup>6</sup> 'Corallino', literally 'little coral', is a local nickname for people from the coastal town of Torre del Greco – historically, the coral industry was one of the town's most important trades and sources of employment.

<sup>7</sup> My translation from Italian, here and throughout.

of Italy via the performance of an Italian identity, the figure of D'Acampo emphasises not the sharing or synthesis of culture but notions of essentialised difference: culture-as-property is a fixed, bounded entity. Cultural boundaries are reified as part of ownership claims. As per one journalist's pithy comment, 'if it's traditional, how come it's yours?' (Rayner 2016). This is a construct that I will query in the second half of this article; what I want to focus on here are the implications of claiming to speak as an authentic cultural voice. Whilst this is often considered in terms of rights – who has the authority to speak for/on behalf of a community? – less attention is paid to the consequences of what it means to be *heard* on the premise of the authenticity of one's voice. Because the quest for the 'genuine' is also one that has been argued to fix those perceived to *be* authentic as primitive, excluding them from modernity (Skeggs 2004: 106; Jonas 2013: 132); speaking as an authentic voice can be as limiting as it is enabling, and D'Acampo is a telling case on this account. We have touched upon this issue with the function of D'Acampo's accent, which can be seen as a double-edged sword in that it affords him authority as an Italian but undermines him as the object of comedy. I think that it is possible to recognise the same fixing process in a tendency to focus on D'Acampo's physicality. From the display of his physical form – 'Gino D'Acampo Cooks Naked Live' on *This Morning*<sup>8</sup> – to the foregrounding of D'Acampo's physical desires in *Celebrity Juice*, D'Acampo seems actively encouraged to exhibit a lewd, primitive physicality. In a typical *Celebrity Juice* sequence, host Keith Lemon reads out – in an exaggeratedly laboured, anglicised Italian – alleged comments made by D'Acampo regarding panel member Fearne Cotton, 'personal-credo-Fearne-vestiti-mel-come-uno drag queen!' ('Personal-I-think-Fearne-clothes-bad-like a drag queen!'), before inviting D'Acampo to expand upon his sexual fantasies about the female Radio One DJ.<sup>9</sup> The dynamic on set might be said to recall in some ways that of a child encouraged by an elder peer to misbehave: the chauvinistic performance of 'Gino' and the humour this generates, once again, afford D'Acampo group belonging – in this case by undermining another identity on the grounds of gender. Similarly, in a guest appearance on comedy panel game *Through the Keyhole*, in which contestants must identify the celebrity owner of a home through visual clues, D'Acampo aggressively derides the sexual identity of the mystery homeowner: when shown feminist literature and aboriginal fertility statuettes as clues to the home of the academic Germaine Greer, his response, greeted by raucous laughter, is 'it must be a dyke'.<sup>10</sup>

By one account, this reading of Gino as the 'primitive male' can be partially related to his role as a celebrity chef. The celebrity chef is a media construct that contrives simultaneously to 'create class for the chef and to fundamentally undermine it', Hyman explains, proposing that 'through the mechanism of looking, the viewer/diner at once celebrates the chef as a genius, an artist, a genuinely famous guy, and undermines him, puts him in his place' (2008: 51). To this end, comparison of D'Acampo with British celebrity chef Jamie Oliver is revealing. Like D'Acampo, Oliver's popularity is related to an ebullient public persona – the Essex accent, a conscious evasion of high-brow or specific culinary language (Cronin 2017), and the childhood kitchen 'graft' he often cites is distinct from that of many of Oliver's English rivals.<sup>11</sup> But Oliver's international success and, perhaps most tellingly, his ability to sell Italian cuisine back to Italians – the Italian translation of *Jamie's Italy*, *Jamie Oliver: Il mio giro d'Italia* (Milano: TEA, 2012) is core stock in Italian national bookshop chain *La Feltrinelli*

<sup>8</sup> *This Morning*, 27 January 2011.

<sup>9</sup> *Celebrity Juice*, ITV2, 10 November 2011 <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-IAS9tds1wU>> (accessed 3 February 2017).

<sup>10</sup> *Through the Keyhole*, ITV, 29 August 2015.

<sup>11</sup> In contrast to the London upbringings of celebrity chefs such as Nigella Lawson, Heston Blumenthal, Anthony Worrall Thompson and Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall, Oliver's parents were publicans, and Oliver often talks about practising cooking in the kitchen of The Cricketers in Clavering (Essex) as a young boy.

– is testament to mobile authority that D'Acampo cannot claim, because Oliver's public status is not tied exclusively to the performance of an ethno-cultural identity in the same way that D'Acampo's is. Nor does it rely on the implicit contestation of other identities, be they ethno-cultural, sexual, gendered or otherwise. Put bluntly, are we likely to ever trust a cookbook on 'Gino's China'? As an embodiment of Italian authenticity, Gino is afforded authority to speak about Italian food in England but *only* about Italian food in England. His authority ultimately seems to be curtailed not because he gets his hands dirty in the kitchen but because it depends as much upon the construct of an essentialised Italian male identity as it does his culinary competence; it is D'Acampo's reliance on an ethno-cultural stereotype that 'puts him in his place', to use Hyman's words. In Greenwood's suggestion, cited previously, that D'Acampo 'would be in the running for a gold medal' if being Italian were a competitive sport (2014), it is the performance of an imagined Italian identity that is prized over kitchen skills. In this way, we can see how the tactic of authenticity works simultaneously to allow D'Acampo economic mobility and to fix him in the role of the self-perpetuating cultural stereotype of a primitive Italian male. As such, with his authentic accent and chauvinistic humour, D'Acampo becomes an ideal poster boy of 'backwards Italy' whose redemptive 'taming' in the kitchen is seized on as a chance for Britain to assert a distinctive social identity and pat itself on the back:

And he's unstinting in his praise of British society. 'When I came out of prison, there was a structure in place to help me get back on my feet. In Italy, you don't get a second chance. I've always found British people extremely civilised. You make a mistake, you pay for it – then you're allowed to start again with a clean slate'. (Barber, 2011)

Note how, in parading the gratitude that Gino indicates regarding his experience of rehabilitation in England, the journalist marks Gino's implicit debt to 'British society'. D'Acampo is cited subsequently in the same article: 'I was embraced with open arms when I left prison. That is something I'll remember for as long as I live'. I want to stress the significance of D'Acampo's performance of cultural authenticity in relation to this seemingly benign discourse of gratitude. It is important to acknowledge that the position of the debtor in which D'Acampo is located here is a fundamentally weak one. Going back to de Certeau's recognition that the tactic is primarily the art of the weak, D'Acampo's case invites further exploration of the power dynamics implied in speaking as an authentic voice.

### **'Bring back the cooking Gino': an experiential approach to cuisine and the social connotations of authenticity**

As Giard explains, the significance of the tactic in critical terms was cemented as part of an outline of a project proposing to conduct research into consumer practice, in which de Certeau proposed to sketch:

*A theory of everyday practices* in order to bring out of their murmuring the 'ways of operating' that, as a majority in social life, often only figure as 'resistances' or as apathies in relation to the development of sociocultural production. (Giard 1998: xx)

In this spirit, the concern in the second half of this article is to balance analysis of the media figure of Gino with a consideration of the more inclusive understanding of culture offered to a specific group of consumers – to readers of his cookbooks and viewers of cookery programmes – and the multiple levels of sociality to which they allude.

I was surprised to see several of D'Acampo's cookbooks and promotional material on display in Terroni's; the quiet aura of a bygone Italy invoked by the décor of this café and delicatessen in London's historic Italian quarter seemed at odds with the brashness of D'Acampo's Italian performance. Was it perhaps a misguided attempt to engage with the new crowd of consumers in the design hub of contemporary Clerkenwell? An equally surprising recommendation of D'Acampo's cookbooks invited me to think otherwise: he may be a vile personality on gossip shows, was the reasoning, but if you want to try Italian food, his cookbooks are the best – accessible, affordable and inspiring. The texts in question also have significant personal meaning to D'Acampo, as he cites them as his 'proudest achievement':

Definitely becoming an author because I never thought in a million years somebody like me who never liked school would be able to write 10 cookery books. I write them myself and spend a lot of time [on them]. If you asked me 15 years ago whether I'd ever write a book, I'd have said: 'C'mon, never!' (D'Acampo in McBride 2014)

To be sure, the D'Acampo that a reader may infer through his cookbooks, 'the implied author' (Booth 1961: 70–5), stands in marked contradiction to the quintessential stereotype that we have just discussed. Tellingly, whilst many users expressed amusement at D'Acampo's 'sassy attitude' of hyperbolic disgust when a guest chef on *This Morning* proposed a microwave mug recipe for spaghetti carbonara, culinary fans used the social media platform Twitter to express frustration at being unexpectedly greeted with an exaggerated performance of the Gino stereotype in this context.<sup>12</sup> As one tweeter summed up: 'when he's on this morning he needs to leave celebrity juice Gino behind and bring back the cooking Gino'.<sup>13</sup> Precisely because 'cooking Gino' gestures to a diverse audience, it seems important to counterbalance the circumscribed notion of authentic culture on which D'Acampo's essentialised performance relies with recognition of the more dynamic and inclusive understanding promoted by his style of cooking and the food itself.

In the television series *Gino's Italian Escape*, D'Acampo travels to various locations in Italy, exploring the origins and 'secrets' of regional recipes, before preparing a local dish. The exoticism implicit in the title is enhanced with the sensory appeal of close-ups of colourful foods, wide pans of sun-drenched landscapes and a backing soundtrack of opera music. Stereotypical associations are acknowledged at the start of each programme, with the opening credits informing the viewer that 'for Italians, the most important thing in life is food'.<sup>14</sup> We observe D'Acampo flanking a chef as he kneads pasta dough, explaining, 'he said the most important thing is love and passion to put in there. I'm with him.' This sequence introduces an important shift in the 'Latin lover' archetype evoked, however, in that D'Acampo is also our interpreter (explicitly positioning himself as such: '*He said*') and consequently situated in a role of authority: he is the viewer's guide on the gastronomic tour of Italy, the authoritative voice which selects the object of our gaze and renders it intelligible. Interactions portrayed within the programme between D'Acampo and the range of professionals involved in the hospitality and food industries enhance the complexity of this position and underline its fluid duality, because D'Acampo alternates between a culinary student – 'It would be impossible for me to come to Bologna and not to learn how to make the Bologna shape of pasta which is tortellini and tortelloni' – and teacher: the occasional grammatical and syntactical errors of a non-native English speaker that, as we have seen, are habitually a source of undermining comedy and ridicule, in this context allude to his belonging to a group in which the

<sup>12</sup> *This Morning*, 21 November 2016.

<sup>13</sup> Tweet from @gaz4944hotmal GazzaDoyle, '@thismorning @Ginofantastico when hes on this mornibg [sic] he needs to leave celebrity juice gino behind and bring back the cooking gino' 12:08 p.m., 21 November 2016.

<sup>14</sup> *Gino's Italian Escape: A Taste of the Sun*, ITV, 10 October 2014.

viewer would be an implicit outsider, and it is only with D'Acampo's translations, explanations and cultural insights that the viewer is able to interpret the significance of images, gestures and instructions. This is a dynamic that reinforces D'Acampo's relative position of power.

Why is D'Acampo's power in this context relevant? I think it goes beyond the fact that, in some programmes, co-presenters laugh at D'Acampo, and, in other programmes, he is both knowledgeable and a willing learner. What is interesting about the teacher/student construct is how it works to undermine the distinction between 'insider' and 'outsider'; by simultaneously inhabiting the positions of learner/cultural outsider and teacher/cultural insider, D'Acampo's liminality can destabilise the very stereotype he performs. For example, introducing *Gino's Italian Escape: Hidden Italy*, he challenges the authority associated with his embodiment of an authentic Italian identity by emphasising his *lack* of knowledge about Italy. Talking about his first visit to Lake Como as part of the programme, he explains how, as a southern Italian having grown up by the sea, he had to rethink his own prejudices against the north:

I was shocked because it was such a beautiful place [...]. The pond didn't look like a pond. It looked like the sea. The water was clean and clear, all the colourful houses on the shore, the mountains all around, the bars... It's incredible. And you can do anything you would do in the sea except taste the salt. People fish, water-ski, surf if there is wind, there are beaches, boats everywhere. I can see why those American stars are all going to Lago di Como now.

From this perspective, in contrast to the distinction between flat national stereotypes of 'Italian' and 'British' that circulate around D'Acampo's performance of authenticity, what is privileged is the diversity *within* cultures, and the surprising affiliations between and beyond them:

It's like another country. The landscape is completely different. The food is completely different. The dialect is completely different. I had no idea what some of them were talking about, even when they were speaking Italian. It was like talking with someone from Liverpool or Newcastle!

Significantly, this perspective is not confined to the oft-invoked regional differences between northern and southern Italy but reflected back onto D'Acampo's southern origins. Given that the 'cousin' cities of Palermo and Naples, the provincial capital of D'Acampo's hometown, are often synonymously considered as representative of southern Italian culture, it is noteworthy that the chef does not fall back on the authority that he could presume as a *meridionale*, but rather, in his cookbook *Gino's Islands in the Sun*, he writes of his eager anticipation of the opportunity that filming offered to travel to Sicily: 'I'd never visited the island so it was an entirely new adventure for me and I was really excited' (2015: 9). The exploration of cultural hybridity is celebrated, and across the range of his cookbooks and cookery programmes, the enthusiastic narratives that frame recipes can be seen to deconstruct the notion of authenticity itself:

I didn't know that northern Italian people do strudel. I thought it was an Austrian thing. I was like: 'Guys, I need to do something Italian. English people rely on me to show them Italian food, not strudel!' They said, 'Gino, strudel has been in our culture for centuries.' So they showed me how to make this beautiful strudel with the apples that they have, amaretto liqueur and raisins. (D'Acampo interviewed by Web, 2016)

I know chorizo is Spanish but it is so good I have stolen some for this recipe! There are two different types: 'eating' chorizo, which is like a salami that can be eaten raw, and 'cooking' chorizo which is like any other sausage but it's full of spices and paprika. (D'Acampo 2014a: 82)

These extracts indicate how D'Acampo's recipes revel in the spontaneous and hybrid nature of culinary culture as a lived experience, a line of thought that has been persuasively theoretically elaborated by Lisa Heldke in her call for alternative interpretations of authenticity (2005: 389–90). Heldke uses John Dewey's theory of aesthetics, which distinguishes between art as a product (e.g. a painting), and a 'work of art', which is what the product does in and with social experience (Heldke 388–99 cf. Dewey 1987). Applying this distinction to the work of cuisine, Heldke contrasts the notion of authenticity as an inherent stand-alone quality of a given dish – a notion that she connects to 'the view of selves as independent, hermetically sealed packages' – with an experiential conception of cuisine, situating eating authentic ethnic food as a conversation in which each party contributes (389–90). She explains:

When authenticity is understood to be a quality of exchange demands for authenticity end up being of a rather different sort. For instance, rather than identify dishes prepared 'just the way' they would be prepared 'in their native context' as representing 'the gold standard' of authenticity, we might valorize the gesture of a cook who recognises the limited familiarity of her (non-native) diners, and cooks 'to' them in a way that enables an interaction to develop. (389–90)

The stress on practicability within D'Acampo's cookbooks, a recurring emphasis on improvisation, simplicity and conviviality as the pleasurable elements of cooking, offers compelling evidence for the validity of this application of the term authentic. Heldke's reasoning also provides a model through which the aspiration to experience authentic ethnic cuisine can be visualised: rather than representing a form of cultural appropriation tied up with the need to distinguish the self socially (i.e. knowing the 'right' pairings of certain foods and wines, or how to eat a particular dish), it can be read as a cultural transaction, a desire for meaningful exchange. In such circumstances, as Jonas points out, the accrual of cultural capital is a consequence rather than an objective (2013: 117–37). This emphasis on the work of cuisine as a *social* activity is reinforced in web-based relations, in particular through Twitter. Via the @Ginofantastico handle, Gino's followers share images and responses to his recipes and dining venues as part of an online community. The undeniable utility of such interaction as (free, instant and virtually unlimited) promotional activity should not be seen as detracting from its capacity to create a sense of social cohesion. This is a possibility that we can interpret both through the communication enacted – as per **Figure 1**, the communication effected via @Ginofantastico is actively bi-directional, with shared images and comments retweeted and responded to directly on a daily basis – and the implicit sociality of food preparation – an act which in itself, as Giard indicates, bespeaks the anticipation of company (1998: 2013).

Even for those cooking and dining alone, @Ginofantastico renders visible a community bound by a commonality of skills, values and pleasures. In *Pronto! Let's Cook Italian in 20 Minutes*, D'Acampo situates his online fans as embarked on a shared project; dedicated to 'all my Twitter and Facebook followers for all your support over the years', the book is presented as a direct response to the requests and suggestions of this lively community (2014a).

The framing of cuisine as a form of social interaction is reinforced within the texts themselves. In line with Heldke's understanding of 'the authentic' as a quality of social exchange,

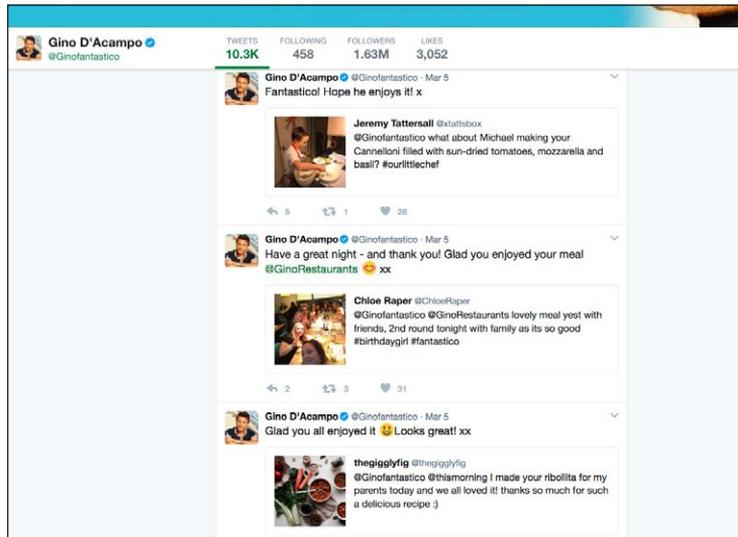


Figure 1: @Ginofantastico Twitter feed.

we might read the appeal of the authenticity of D'Acampo's cuisine as linked less to cultural boundaries and self-making, and, more sympathetically, to an insistence on the significance of cooking as an artisan activity which can strengthen social bonds:

The most important thing about this course [*antipasto*] is the care and time taken to plate the food; it reminds you and your guests that mealtimes are for relaxing, pleasure and indulgence, as well as opportunities to do a simple 'how was your day?' We often forget to do this in our busy lives, and yet it is so important to Italian families, and, I would argue, any family. So if nothing else, prepare a few of these dishes for your family, tuck in and enjoy being together with good food. (2014b: 14)

Perhaps most revealingly, one of the few instances when D'Acampo actually writes of authenticity is to contrast an experience in a Sardinian 'farmstay' with many tourist restaurants. After recommending the 'authentic experience' of a homely Sardinian *agriturismo* 'and I do mean homely, as they can literally be in somebody's home (I well remember, on one occasion, the shock of finding toothbrushes by the sink!)', D'Acampo offers a list of eight 'Sardinian Lessons for Life', which stress a conviviality achieved through quotidian acts of sociality, such as friendship – 'Laugh with friends – visit any village in Sardinia and I guarantee you will see people sitting in their doorsteps chatting and enjoying life' – appreciation of the natural environment – 'Whatever the weather, go out and enjoy it whenever you can – Fresh air is vital for health and well being' – and intergenerational contact – 'Celebrate your elders – Grandparents not only provide love, childcare and financial help, but carry a wealth of wisdom' (2015: 14–15). The problematic commodification of the authentic that we have observed enacted by the D'Acampo of *Celebrity Juice* is contradicted by the practical micro-strategies for meaningful, inclusive social experiences that his culinary texts offer. Thus, the desirability of the type of authenticity promoted by D'Acampo's culinary work may be more accurately associated with the notions of community implied in artisan production rather than bounded, exclusive notions of what and who 'belongs' culturally. Instead of obtaining specific ingredients or following to the letter an authentic recipe, what we see these

cookbooks foreground is the importance of a social meaning (preparing and consuming food together, respecting the natural environment) that becomes absent, obscured or irrelevant when ethnic cuisine is transported and mass produced for a new market. Viewed in this way, it seems that the convivial Italy of D'Acampo's culinary texts can be related to a wider, quantifiable revival of authentic or traditional modes of eating (Cook, Crang and Thorpe 1999: 235). It is therefore perhaps more productive to read D'Acampo's appeal in light of current qualms about mass production and future technological development; the sense of traditional community conjured by Italy's artisan cooking practices stands against the perceived 'dehumanisation' of culture in Western industrialised societies (Attfield 2000: 78, cf. Huyssen 2003, and Massey 1994). If, as Heldke suggests, consuming ethnic cuisine is the contemporary way of experiencing the premodern 'authentic Other' that travellers like Lawrence and his counterparts sought (2003: 393), might we conclude that the Italy that D'Acampo offers up for consumption is simply the most recent articulation of the self/Other construct embedded in the long history of Anglo-Italian relations?

### Conclusions

The improvisation of the work of cuisine and the hybridity of food itself that D'Acampo's cookbooks stress, together with the suggestive liminality of D'Acampo's position in programmes such as *Gino's Hidden Italy*, open up D'Acampo's presentation of Italy's culinary culture to critical interpretations that recognise cuisine as a site for cultural dialogue. In culinary terms, D'Acampo can be seen as a cultural mediator whose gastronomic journeys practically undermine notions of cultures as sealed compartments; D'Acampo's discovery of 'his' Italy, in all its surprising hybridity, blurs the boundary between 'insiders' and 'outsiders'. Consumer responses to this 'cooking Gino', shared via the online community of @Ginofantastico followers, privilege an interpretation of the overriding value of authenticity in terms of an everyday conviviality. The authentic here, then, seems more closely linked to ideas of artisan production and a sense of community. The aim of this article has been to present the multiple and contradictory implications of D'Acampo's positioning as the quintessential authentic Italian, and so I have not been able to explore here the relationship between the desirability of authentic cuisine and the perception of wider social anxiety or nostalgia, beyond signalling its relevance. A broader, ethnographic study of authentic cuisine as a consumer commodity (addressing the issue of reception, the meanings and values projected therein and how these ideas play out in quotidian practice) seems, however, a constructive route to pursue, particularly given the powerful contemporary currency of ideas of 'traditional Italy' within Britain.

D'Acampo's performance of an Italian identity, his tactical embodiment of the authentic, raises pertinent questions about the broader connotations of authenticity that merit investigation. Whilst the performance of this stereotype within D'Acampo's own life trajectory – from his working-class southern Italian origins, to commercial and popular success in England – has proved enabling, situating him as an authority on Italian culinary culture and bringing him financial reward, we have seen how it is restrictive; D'Acampo's position rests on the performance of a crude stereotype, which in turn frequently relies on the undermining of other identities. The underlying association of the authentic with the primitive, which we have seen clearly evidenced in the figure of D'Acampo, means that the supposed authority associated with speaking as an 'authentic voice' begs further attention. Acknowledging the appreciation that D'Acampo professes towards British society for the opportunities he has been offered, I have pointed to the awkward connotations that his figure reveals in apparently benign discourses of gratitude. In this sense, D'Acampo's case is a provocative illustration of why it ought not to be too surprising that the fiercest investors in 'the guileful ruse' of authentic

cultures as bounded, hierarchical entities of exclusive belonging are perhaps also those most sensitive to the weakness of their own position.

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