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0521026660 - The Poetics of Spice: Romantic Consumerism and the Exotic

Timothy Morton

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This book considers the literary and cultural significance of spice, and the spice trade, in Romantic literature, shedding new light on the impact of consumerism and capitalist ideology on writers of the period. Timothy Morton demonstrates how the emerging consumer culture was characterised by an ornate, figuratively rich mode of representation which he describes as ‘the poetics of spice’. This is the focal point for a probing analysis that addresses a host of related themes – exoticism, orientalism, colonialism, the slave trade, race and gender issues, and, above all, capitalism. Employing a mixture of Marxist, deconstructive and psychoanalytic theory, Morton explores how capitalist ideology was inscribed in the very materials of consumption. The book takes a wide historical view, surveying a range of literary, political, medical, travel, trade and philosophical texts and includes new readings of Milton, Coleridge, Keats, Landon, Shelley, Leigh Hunt, Helen Maria Williams, Erasmus Darwin, Charlotte Smith and Southey among many others.

TIMOTHY MORTON is Associate Professor of English at the University of Colorado at Boulder. He is author of *Shelley and the Revolution in Taste: The Body and the Natural World* (1995) and, with Nigel Smith, *Radicalism in British Literary Culture, 1650–1830* (forthcoming).

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# THE POETICS OF SPICE

*Romantic Consumerism and the Exotic*

TIMOTHY MORTON



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*For Stephen and Charles, my brothers*

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‘Gimme the tea, Guitar. Just the tea. No geography.’  
 ‘No geography? Okay, no geography. What about some history  
 in your tea? Or some sociopolitico – No. That’s still geography.  
 Goddam, Milk, I do believe my whole life’s geography.’

Toni Morrison, *Song of Solomon*, p. 114

we were ‘not so much sub-continent as sub-condiment’, as my  
 distinguished mother had it. ‘From the beginning what the  
 world wanted from bloody mother India was daylight-clear,’  
 she’d say. ‘They came for the hot stuff, just like any man calling  
 on a tart.’

Salman Rushdie, *The Moor’s Last Sigh*, p. 5.

Flavor most, put it on ya toast  
 Eat it an taste it an swallow it down  
 Imperial Flavor gives you da crown  
 Of the king called Flavor, da king of all flavors  
 Rolls an rolls an rolls of live savers.

Flavor Flav, ‘Cold Lampin with Flavor’, on Public Enemy, *It Takes a  
 Nation of Millions to Hold Us Back*

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