Acquired Tastes: Food as Relation and Memory in Franco-African Cultures and Women's Literature

A DISSERTATION
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF THE
UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA
BY

Déborah E. Lee-Ferrand

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Hakim Abderrezak

September 2020

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First of all, I would like to thank my committee members and especially my advisor, Professor Hakim Abderrezak, for his support and encouragement over the years. I am grateful for all he has taught me about Maghrebi literatures. Thank you also to Professor Susan Noakes from whom I learned so much. I never thought I would enjoy medieval literature, and it was a wonderful discovery. It is now one of the topics I have the most pleasure teaching and sharing with my students. I will always remember the day she invited me for brunch in a famous restaurant in St. Paul to celebrate my first article, which had been rejected, but that I was encouraged to rework before resubmitting it. As a true mentor, Professor Noakes taught me one of the most valuable lessons for an academic on that day. I am also thankful for Professor Maria Brewer, who agreed to be on my committee despite her retirement. She always provided insightful comments and suggestions that pushed further my inquiry into my research topic, and her attention to details is second to none. I will fondly remember our discussions on food and gastronomy over my years at the University in Minnesota. And finally, I would also like to thank Njeri Githire who introduced me to the domain of Food Studies.

I would also like to thank all my professors at the University of Minnesota without whom I would not be the interdisciplinary researcher and professor I am today, namely Professors Eileen Sivert, Judith Preckshot, Patricia Mougel and Christophe Wall-Romana.

Before thanking my family and friends, there is another person in particular who deserves to be acknowledged for her contribution to my dissertation. My longtime friend Nancy Lauritsen, who was a student of mine at the Alliance Française of Minneapolis nine years ago, read my entire dissertation. She gave me wonderful writing and content advice along the way, and I am truly grateful for her incredible contribution.

And a special thanks to my friend and twice colleague Andrea Gaytán Cuesta, who suggested part of my dissertation title, and to Maggie McColley who coached me during a time of daily contemplation of my empty computer screen.

I am also tremendously thankful to my family. First, to *mon petit lapinou* Hugo, who was very patient when I was telling him that I was working on my big book. When I told him I was going to be a doctor, he laughed and looked at me as if I was telling him a joke. After a pause, he looked at me again very seriously and told me that he was the only doctor because he has a doctor pajama-costume and a doctor playset. I guess I will have to buy such a pajama too if I want to be taken seriously by my own son. A huge thank-you also to my parents and my brother, who have always been here to support and encourage

me in the difficult times when I wanted to give up. My parents often travelled to the U.S. to help me so I would have more time to write. And I am grateful for my brother, who always accompanied me to restaurants during my time in Paris. I would not have succeeded either without my aunts, uncles and cousins, who have always been there to cheer for me and who told me to continue my PhD because they knew it was important for me. I was able to overcome many obstacles these last three years because of them. Finally, a big thanks to Nathan Martin and Esther Heideman for their support and for always being here for Hugo and me.

Writing a dissertation is sometimes a very lonesome endeavor. However, I was lucky enough to share this experience with my best-friend dissertation-writing buddy, Naseemah Ogunnaike. We spent many days and nights together talking about our research, writing, drinking tea and talking about being mothers and PhD students and dreaming about the day we will be defending. Although we did not envision it happening on Zoom. Naseemah, her husband, Damini Ogunnaike, and their son Jibril have become, for Hugo and me, our family away from home, and we are incredibly blessed to have them in our lives. Naseemah, you are next! I cannot wait to celebrate both our defenses and achievements together!

I would also like to thank all my friends near and far who have cheered for me along the way. My dissertation is also the product of several trips to conduct research. Thomas, Gaby, Juan and Severine Kimboo Bates introduced me to Martinique, and I am grateful for having discovered this beautiful island in their company. Victoire Ndong, Marie and Lamine Sarr and their extended family welcomed me in Senegal, and I am truly grateful for their incredible hospitality and for introducing me to their culture. Hugo does not remember this trip as he was only 6 months old, but he made life-long friends and I cannot wait to go back to visit everyone and conduct more research.

I am also very thankful for my colleagues and dear friends at the University of Minnesota with whom I have shared lots of meaningful moments both on a personal and professional level: François-Nicolas Vozel, Agnès Schaffauser, Marina Calas, Christopher Ice, Sarah Jones-Boardman, Charlotte Soulpin, Tracy Rutler, Abou-Bakar Mamah, Geneviève Young, Kate Droske, Lia Mitchell, Amgad Serour, Alexandre Dubois, and Veronica Menaldi.

I would also not be here without my life-long friends who have cheered for me along the way: Jennifer Carrière, Aurélie Cambon, Pauline Nègre, Céline Fayet, Annabelle Montille, Ashley Fallon, Merit and Jordan Anglin, Brock Reggi, Mathilde Verillaud, Brenna Galvin, Camila and Matias Valenzuela, Kelsey Bliss-Pollard, Marie Sprader, John

Ritten, Christina Selander Bouzouina, Ken Edstrom, Margaux and Charlie Snyder, Charles Diegel, Molly Charon, and Paul Fisher.

Last but not least, my friends and colleagues here at William and Mary encouraged me over the last three years: Jessica and Nathan Rabalais, Magali Compan, Antoine Constantin Caille, Jorge Terunika, Sara Mattavelli, Mariana Melo-Vega, Rebecca Bliley, Noël Blanco Mourelle, Matteo Cantarello, Giulia Pacini, Katherine Kulick, and Brett Brehm.

DEDICATION

To my son Hugo,
I love you all the way to France, Senegal, Martinique and Guadeloupe.
May we continue to travel together, try delicious foods, and cook with new and old friends all over the world

ABSTRACT

My dissertation investigates the parallels between food and literary productions that are particularly dominant in the role that France has played in the construction of both sub-Saharan and Caribbean culinary and literary art when it comes to recognition and prestige. It expands the study of francophone literature towards the material culture of food, as I posit that the birth of a literature concerned with gastronomical matters lessens the scarcity of African cookbooks, especially those destined for an African audience, and transforms literary writing into a pragmatic way of reclaiming oral cultures and experiences previously appropriated by France. Subsequently, it enables me to rethink and challenge the excluding dichotomy between high versus low cuisines and literary cultures as I document the current rise of sub-Saharan African cuisines from marginalization to an established cultural presence in the West outside of an all-encompassing ethnic niche. Finally, I demonstrate that the literary hybridity of *gastro-literature* echoes a culinary hybridization inherited from transnational and transdurational rhizomic connections inherited from global movements that redefine the notions of terroir and locavorism. Ultimately, I argue that gastro-literature participates in a greater movement of resistance and advocacy for social justice through the recognition and (re)definition of both culinary and literary sub-Saharan and Caribbean traditions free from the long-lasting influence of France.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF IMAGES

Introduction
The Birth of Sub-Saharan Gastro-literature

"When you have too much to do, start with a meal"
-African proverb[1]

As the celebrated Senegalese author, Aminata Sow Fall wrote, "Ce qui est dans l'assiette a forcément une histoire parce que, disons-le encore une fois, notre cuisine est le pur produit de notre histoire, de notre vision du monde, de nos rêves, de nos fantaisies et aussi de nos angoisses" (2002, 96). As Aminata Sow Fall emphasizes, food represents much more than a way to sustain ourselves, it is a reflection of who we are as individuals and as a community. It feeds our body but also our soul by making the relationship we have with food a complex one. And thus, this dissertation intends to share and study it. It is this (his)story of sub-Saharan African and Caribbean cuisines, as referred by Sow Fall, that my dissertation will contribute to as it brings together the past and present in the hope for a changed and more inclusive culinary future. My research will bring together culture, literature, food and cuisines[2] to inscribe itself in the greater field of food studies by analyzing gastro-literature from sub-Saharan African and Caribbean Women Writers.

When I started working on the significance of references to food in literature in 2009 as I was finishing my master's degree, I was enrolled in two classes at the University of Minnesota. The first one, taught by Professor Judith Preckshot, was entitled "Atelier de Littérature francophone: pédagogie et recherches" and the second one, with Professor

[1] The proverbs used in the incipits of each chapter are translations of proverbs from Annetta Miller's book *African Flavors: Recipes with Proverbs*.
[2] Cuisine refers to the style and manner of cooking and preparing ingredients that is particular to a certain group, region, culture or country. As we will see in the second chapter, not all cultures have a cuisine because it requires some theorization and writing down of communal standards.

Njeri Githire, a food-studies scholar, focused on "Black Women Writers in the Diaspora." It was during that time that I was introduced to the field of food studies and understood how important the study of material culture was for the understanding of literary texts from the African diaspora. I discovered that the reading of food and culinary passages in literature drastically changes the way to read a text. One of the outcomes of that semester was the writing of a conference paper on Mariama Bâ's famous *Une si longue lettre.* It investigated how the study of the symbolic economy of food informs its readers of the social, political, and economic power dynamic at play in this novel. This paper became the starting point of my investigation of food in francophone sub-Saharan African cultures and literatures. During my research, I realized how food remains a crucial, but shockingly ex-centered and understudied domain of culture that builds the history, economics, ecology, socio-politics, culture, and art of peoples around the world, even as these domains inform the study of food.

As I continued to explore the culinary trope in literature, I came across Calixthe Beyala's novel, *Comment cuisiner son mari à l'africaine* (2000), which tells the story of Aïssatou, a young woman of African descent living in Paris, who tries to seduce her neighbor, Bolobolo, through her mastery of West African recipes. Beyala is a native of Cameroon, although like her protagonist, she resides in metropolitan France where her work is also published. Her novel introduced me to a new kind of literary hybridity, as it mingled both narrative and recipes. In the genre that is gastro-literature, food becomes the narrative instead of being a subsidiary trope and it is represented through a socio-cultural lens. This term was popularized by sociologist Priscilla Parkhurst Ferguson in her book *Accounting for Taste: The Triumph of French Cuisine.* However, she reminds her readers

that this literary genre is not entirely new and is hardly exclusive to French literature (11), with pre-modern texts such as *Le Mesnagier de Paris*, a 14th century domestic treaty that includes recipes, and well-known gastro-novels published across the world. Reading Beyala's work redirected my work towards investigating this specific literary genre. In fact, Calixthe Belaya's work is hardly the only gastro-novel to be published by an author of the African diaspora in the twenty-first century, making that period a turning point for the publication of gastro-literature from sub-Saharan Africa, but also the Caribbean. In fact, many other women writers from the francophone countries of sub-Saharan Africa have also experimented with this genre. Senegalese writer, Aminata Sow Fall published a series of essays entitled *Un grain de vie et d'espérance* (2002). In it, she reflects on our current modes of consumption, asking questions such as "l'acte de manger, c'est quoi?" (9), "Quel est selon vous l'effet d'un repas conventionnel, avec des gestes retenus, des appréciations de table figées?" (63) or "Peut-on tout traduire en langage culinaire?" (84)? In turn, Léonora Miano, a Cameroonian author, wrote *Soulfood équatoriale* (2009), which was commissioned as part of a written collection entitled "Exquis d'écrivains" that features gastro-literature and more specifically food-memoirs from authors from around the world. Just like Sow Fall and Beyala, Miano's fragmented memoir mingles recipes and short stories while analyzing the nuances of Cameroonian food cultures, their origins, and their evolution through time. Through the study of food, she denounces the influence and continuous intrusion of (neo)colonial powers in Cameroon. Each chapter is named after a dish in which the narrator brings the readers on a culinary voyage through her childhood in Douala. The departure of this introspective quest into history and identity is initiated from the narrator's Parisian kitchen where she is preparing a *gombo*. Then Ivorian

Marguerite Abouet, famous for her comic book *Aya of Yopougon* brought together the genres of the cookbook and the comic book with *Délices d'Afrique: 50 recettes pour petits moments de confidences à partager* (2012). Her West African recipes detail, just like those written by her three compatriots, the personal struggles of her recurring characters along with their socio-cultural and economic concerns. Through the hybridity of her work, Abouet draws a literal and figurative picture of the history of her country's food culture. If style unites these texts that compose my corpus through the mingling of narration and recipes, the topics their authors tackle echo one other, as they concentrate on the search for identity and belonging, sexuality and seduction, or the phenomenon of globalization and industrialization of food. The ingredients mentioned in these works speak of culinary (his)stories, which testify to the evolution of cuisines. In these texts, ingredients are used to tell the tales of lands and people, therefore highlighting the cultural significance of dishes, which transport the readers beyond the spatial and temporal boundaries of these narratives.

As I continued investigating this genre, I realized female authors from the African diaspora were not the only ones experimenting with gastro-literature, and that cuisines and culinary matters are at the heart of several other literatures. Renowned Guadeloupean author Maryse Condé wrote *Victoire, les saveurs et les mots* in 2006, a biographical novel to honor her grandmother Victoire Elodie Quiddal, who was a cook for white families on the island. Condé's own passion for food and cooking was echoed in her memoir *Mets et merveilles* (2015), in which she invites the reader on a journey through her life and her culinary travels. As an oversea department, Guadeloupe benefits from a unique relationship with France that is both inclusive and elitist. While officially French, it is still perceived

and treated as if it does not belong and its people cannot identity as French. Therefore, like sub-Saharan gastro-literature, Condé's novels highlight a desire for recognition of francophone Caribbean literary and culinary identities and traditions free of colonial and neo-colonial influences. Reading Condé's novels reinstated my desire to include gastro-literature from the Caribbean within the scope of my inquiry. While I could have included the work of other authors from the Caribbean, my desire to focus on gastro-literature that includes recipes, either written in prose or in a list format as in cookbooks, excludes other texts such as Simone Schwartz Bart's *Un plat de porc aux bananes vertes or* Gisèle Pineau's *L'exil selon Julia*. Despite the fact that these Caribbean authors have also focused on questions such as taste and memory, their novels do not focus entirely on food, rather food is a secondary theme in their work. Therefore, Condé is not the sole author who has concentrated on gastro-literature, but her connection to the culture of the African continent is reflected both in the content of her works and the genre she chose to represent her voice. Condé's unusual past has brought her from her native Guadeloupe to France, West Africa and America, where she has in turn resided and worked. Therefore, she is as comfortable reflecting on the flavors, ingredients, cuisines and food cultures of the Caribbean, West Africa or even Louisiana. She sees herself as a global citizen and she defines her work as part of a "literature monde" breaking away from the francophone or Caribbean appellations[3]. Moreover, of particular significance for the inclusion of Condé's works is her acknowledgement of the links between the African and the North American continent not only through food, but also literature. In fact, she is highly vocal about the inequalities

[3] She is both one of the signatories of the manifesto entitled "Pour une "littérature-monde" en français" published in *Le Monde* on March 15th 2007, and the co-author of a book entitled *Pour une littérature monde* written by a collective of authors the same year.

and challenges when it comes to the recognition of authors of color and the publication of their book in France. By doing so, she highlights the cultural similarities and struggles between the two continents that unite black people. She tells the tales of ingredients and dishes travelling from one continent to the other through the Columbian exchange[4], the slave trade, and colonization. Through my dissertation corpus, a triangle of power[5] and rhizomic connections emerge between France and its former colonies -- in sub-Saharan Africa with Cameroon, Senegal and the Ivory Coast -- and in the French Caribbean with Guadeloupe. This power struggle ties together the culinary and bibliographical industry[6] through the common history of slavery that is at the heart of the food cultures I am focusing on.

Although gastro-literature has hardly been the domain of women – one could cite the examples of Jean-Anthelme Brillat-Savarin's *Physiologie du goût*, Emile Zola's *Grand dictionnaire de cuisine* or Malek Alloula's *Festin de l'exil* – cooking and writing about food have been cast as a female-centered activity in both sub-Saharan Africa and the Caribbean, thus explaining the lack of representation of this genre by male authors from these regions. However, in Maghrebi literature, men have predominantly been the voices

[4] This term, coined by historian Alfred Cosby, designates among other commodities the exchange of food crops and animals between the East and the West starting in the year 1492. This exchange altered what people ate on both sides of the Atlantic.

[5] Christopher Miller documents this historical triangular trade that is unique to the history of France and its involvement in the slave trade in his book entitled *The French Atlantic Triangle: Literature and Culture of the Slave Trade*. He describes it as a movement of "goods to Africa, captive Africans to the New World, and colonial products to the mother countries" (3). What he also calls the French Atlantic, and which peaked in the eighteenth century, accounts for the exchange of foodstuff between France, Africa, and the Caribbean. As we will see in my dissertation, the French Atlantic triangle as presented by Miller does not account as the sole reason, nor the biggest for the state of hybridity of our modern diets on the three continents, which are the result of a long-lasting history of food movements across the globe. However, it is the root of the culinary triangle I am focusing on.

[6] By bibliographical industry, I mean to encompass different areas of the production of books, such as authorship, publication, and distribution.

behind this genre. One could reference the work of Malek Alloula, mentioned above, and also Fellag's essay "Comment cuisiner un bon petit couscous." I could have indeed integrated the richness of this literature in my field of study, but I want to concentrate on women's writings and experiences in relation to the kitchen. Additionally, even though Maghreb is part of the African continent, its history and culture are very dissimilar to that of sub-Saharan Africa due to the differences in their colonial past. In fact, as I have previously stated, I am interested in the connections that have emerged through the history of slavery that have altered the food cultures in the regions I am focusing on. As food historian Jessica B. Harris points out in her book *High on the Hog: A Culinary Journey from Africa to America*, one can talk about a black cuisine that centers around women. Subsequently, the female authors that compose my corpus focus specifically on the experience of black people where women are the center of the black food experience.

As we will see throughout this dissertation, but mostly in Chapter Two on the parallels between the book and the culinary industries, men have historically appropriated the professional fields when it comes to the matters of cuisine and literature. They have concentrated on cooking in restaurants. And, preferring to literary genres that are seen as more noble, men have also left the publication of gastro-literature to women. The gendering of this literary genre might partially explain the late arrival of analytical work from scholars on the topic and the lack of interest for food as a valid and serious research topic in literature.

In fact, when I started researching the critical analysis of food in literature, I quickly realized that if much has been written on food by the sociologist, the anthropologist, and

the historian, much less has been written on the significance of food in literature and even less so on food in francophone African and Caribbean literatures. The first reason for this, as we have seen, is that food as a subject of writing reached its zenith in these literatures in the twenty-first century. In addition, the way we approach and study literature has greatly evolved because it has come to reflect not only the evolution of societies but also of academia. Topics that were previously conceived as "marginal" and "women's work" have garnished recognition and praise. This is the case in the field of food studies, a discipline that emerged in the 1980s, and that is now established thanks to the publication of several academic journals such as *Food Studies: An Interdisciplinary Journal* and *Food, Culture and Society*. Emily Contois, in the online issue of the *Graduate Journal of Food Studies*, defines it as "a burgeoning, interdisciplinary, inherently politicized field of scholarship, practice, and art that examines the relationship between food and all aspects of the human experience, including culture and biology, individuals and society, global pathways and local contexts." Above all, I would posit that the study of food has bridged the gap between the sciences, social sciences and the humanities. Indeed, it has brought together scholars from fields such as history, sociology or anthropology, environmental sciences, and literature, who have been investigating questions relating to food preparation and consumption in the wake of an increasing interest and development of Food Studies programs within universities worldwide. Among the many scholars who have contributed to this field are Caroline Counihan, Roland Barthes, Claude Lévi-Strauss, Krishendu Ray, Massimo Montanari, James McCann, Sydney Mintz, Priscilla Parkhurst Ferguson and Amy Trubek to name but a few. In their work, they have theorized the creation of cuisines, analyzed the way cuisines gain renown globally, and traced their history. They have

investigated the history of the circulation of ingredients and researched the evolution of the concept of terroir in an increasingly global and industrialized world, thus providing answers to fundamental questions addressing the way we eat, what we eat, and what it means for a personal and collective viewpoint. Much of what has been studied has focused on the West and cuisines that are more prominently represented and consumed as not all culinary traditions are seen as equals. In her book *L'exotisme culinaire: Essai sur les saveurs de l'Autre*, Faustine Régnier analyzes the number of recipes found in two French magazines, *Marie Claire* and *Mode & Travaux*, to establish a classification of the "cuisines exotiques" in the 20th century. Recipes from southern Europe come first, followed by the all englobing term "islands," the Maghreb, the United-Stated, Western Europe, the Middle East, and Eastern Europe, with no mention at all of sub-Saharan African cuisines (Régnier 237). Therefore, my research contributes to the expansion of the interdisciplinary field of food studies as it fills a gap in the analysis of both food and literature, especially that of sub-Saharan Africa and its diaspora. Valérie Loichot, author of *The Tropics Bite Back: Culinary Coups in Caribbean Literature*, and Njeri Githire, who wrote *Cannibal Writes: Eating Others in Caribbean and Indian Ocean Women's Writing* are the first scholars to have published manuscripts centering on food in francophone literature, and more specifically on the Caribbean. Articles or even collections of essays analyzing literary texts through the culinary lens are certainly more commonly found. However, if we look at the scholarship that has been written on food in francophone literatures, four main lines of study emerge: (1) identity and memory, (2) the complex relationship with France, (3) immigration, (4) sexuality, and (5) figures of pathological eating.

While my own research will only mention matters of immigration, sexuality and figures of pathological eating, I will however contribute to the discussions about the importance of identity and memory by showing how they become a metaphor for communal identity and socio-cultural matters. As Fran Osseo-Asare underlines in *Food Culture in Sub-Saharan Africa*, another definition of family and society in Western Africa is that of people who regularly eat from the same pot and who are not necessarily biologically related (26), thus putting food at the core of the community. Shirin Edwin, in her article entitled "Subverting Social Customs: The Representation of Food in Three West African Francophone Novels," analyses food iterations as conventions to uncover the sociopolitical issues that are at the heart of the literary texts and which constitute the memory of a community as well as individuals. She argues that hospitality or its refusal and the types of foods that are offered to guests become marks of friendship, mutual respect or lack thereof, and displays of social status. Besides being used to neutralize and end social relationships, food is also critically used to inform us of the caste system in Africa. Consequently, the culinary culture is deeply significant as a manner to encode social criticism in West African societies (Edwin 46). In this perspective, I will be building on the critical work that has been done in order to look at and beyond gastro-literature in order to concentrate on the culinary memory of recipes and how they were created and thereafter preserved in literature.

In addition to participating in the construction of a nation through the elaboration of a communal culinary identity, food also functions as an historical archive. In fact, food in literature informs us of movements and becomes a witness of both transnational and transdurational connections, and it testifies to complex relationships with France. Valérie

Loichot constructs food in literature as a form of cultural expression and political resistance against the influence of France. However, her book does not look at this from the bigger picture of food studies and culinary cultures, which will be the focus of my dissertation. Among the questions I will ask, I will analyze how France has shaped other culinary cultures, especially those of former colonies. To what extent did it also influence the way people eat and what they eat? If we take the example of the French Caribbean, its dependence on France is evidenced by the fact that most of the products consumed there are imported from mainland France. While Loichot concentrates solely on the Caribbean, as I will demonstrate, the study of food in Francophone sub-Saharan cultures is as much a tale of resistance as of social justice. According to Anig Uchenna Berthrand, author of *L'écriture bifocale d'Aminata Sow Fall: critique sociale et question de la femme dans Douceurs du bercail et Festins de la détresse d'Aminata Sow Fall,* Sow Fall aims to raise the consciousness on the matter of the economic dependence of Africa on the West (25). However, Uchenna Berthrand's analysis of two of Sow Fall's novels through a womanist[7] approach excluded Sow Fall's *Un grain de vie et d'espérance,* relegating food to a secondary trope. However, my research will show that food is one of the most visible and important markers of the economic dependence of Africa on the West. Sow Fall's *Un grain de vie et d'espérance,* along with the work of the other female African and Caribbean authors and scholars, nevertheless redefines the way to look at the influence of French gastronomy[8] on other cultures. In fact, as we will see in my research, French has codified

[7] Sow Fall is known to have rejected the term feminism as she does not see it as inclusive of African women. The term womanist was coined by Alice Walker to answer to this growing concern by black people and people of color in her book *In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens: Womanist Prose*.

[8] I conceive gastronomy as "l'art de la bonne chère" that is the art of good eating, which is the regulation of cooking and eating by sets of rules that can be specific to a culture.

the way to prepare and talk about food, but colonization has also altered the local diets and identities in its former colonies. France has engrafted "the illusion that eating French equals being French […]" (Loichot 7) because of a massive invasion of French food imports to the French Caribbean and francophone African countries.

Ultimately in my dissertation, I demonstrate how culinary cultures are evolving, which is reflected by this new wave of publications of gastro-literature that redefine the relationship with France and attempt to resist its cultural hegemony. I will argue that gastro-literature participates in a greater movement of resistance and advocacy for social justice through the recognition and (re)definition of both culinary and literary sub-Saharan and Caribbean traditions free from the long-lasting influence of France.

In particular, my research investigates how the production, consumption, and discussion (both literary and commercial) of food in sub-Saharan Africa and its diasporas throughout the colonial and post-colonial periods sheds new light on related dynamics in these societies. This project was born from several of my passions, the first one being food because of its power to bring people together, the second, literature, which can transport a reader beyond the physical constraints of a page, and finally francophone cultures, as I believe diversity is the core of our richness. This dissertation brings together these three areas in a discussion of what they represent and how they inform one another.

In fact, understanding and acknowledging the different culinary traditions of the French Caribbean and sub-Saharan Africa opens up new ways of reading the novels from these regions. The eating habits and cooking practices of protagonists give us insight into their socio-economic, racial, and psychological conditions. And the authors frequently use

various foods in subtle symbolic ways that have largely been ignored by literary criticism. The dynamics of creolization, hybridization, and pathways of cultural and material trade and influence can be clearly discerned in the history of a society's foodstuff. Thus, analyzing food serve as more than a metaphor, but rather as an important lens that can be used to understand the histories, dynamics, and literatures emerging from the various encounters between France, West African, and Caribbean societies. When closing the food-history-literature loop, much of the best non-archeological evidence we have for food practices in a region comes from the literature itself.

I explore these parallels between culinary and literary production in francophone West Africa and the Caribbean, and how both reveal the complex and unequal power dynamics involved as both authors and chefs (and author-chefs) attempt to use their creations to win prestige for themselves and their cultures among audiences both local and foreign. In particular, I investigate the role that France has played in the construction of the category of both culinary and literary "art," even while creative literary and culinary production has continued outside of these commoditized "high" traditions—primarily for local consumption.

In both the literary and culinary industries, France has dictated the structures of publishing houses and restaurants. On the one hand, African French-language literature published in France is regarded as "literature," while non-Europhone literary production is regarded as "folklore" of only ethnographic significance. In the culinary field, French terminology, techniques, and training enjoy a peculiarly global hegemony, but this is

especially true in its former colonies where representations of "African" cuisine[9] in literature, cookbooks, and restaurants both abroad and in metropoles on the continent are filtered through the French language, and made in French kitchens, according to French techniques, for French palates.

In this context, the growing trend in the publication of cookbooks by Africans for Africans, as well as the birth of a literature concerned with gastronomical matters, represent a way for these authors to reclaim and secure their cultural heritage, which was previously transmitted orally or non-discursively, thus securing knowledge that might otherwise be lost. The emergence of this new African gastro-literature is, much like the founding of "French cuisine," a project of words as much as it is of food—a collaboration between chefs, authors, and journalists to validate and interpret "African" food as culture—a culture worthy of respect, admiration, and even imitation.

The purpose of my research is to expand the limits of both postcolonial and food studies through the use of an interdisciplinary approach to my topic, therefore allowing the global integration of questions arising from textual productions in conjunction with food studies. Consequently, the organization of my dissertation is neither chronological nor focused on a specific literary work per chapter. Instead, I concentrate on and engage with

[9] While the terminology *African cuisine* is widely used, I will refrain from employing this term because it is used to signify black sub-Saharan culture. It excludes the Maghreb, which makes this terminology highly questionable. Moreover, I find the use of this term in the singular to be equally problematic as it does not account for the diversity of cuisines that can be found in sub-Saharan Africa. For this reason, I will use the term sub-Saharan cuisines to refer to the cuisines of three countries of the Sahel, namely, Cameroon, Senegal and Ivory Coast on which I focus in this present dissertation. As we will see, these cuisines share a number of components, whether through ingredients or dishes, with their neighboring countries, which shows the rhizomic connections that exist between cuisines. It will enable me to question the fact that people too often mistakenly believe that borders delimit cuisines from one another. Moreover, I focus on these three countries because of their rich literary and publication cultures and the similar complex relationship they entertain with France when it comes to both industries.

the gastro-literature that comprises my corpus in every chapter. This approach is reflective of how I envision the connection between literature and culture, that is, as two elements working together and informing one another. Moreover, the cooking terminology used by authors such as Miano, Beyala, Sow Fall or Condé demonstrates parallel evolutions of identities and cultural hybridizations inherited from colonial history, slavery and subsequent movements of people across time. From France to West Africa, all the way to the Caribbean and United States, readers discover through these texts a triangle of exchanges highlighting past, present and future political, economic, and cultural stakes of Africa's and the Caribbean's imposed dependence on Western European powers. Through the adoption of ingredients coming to Africa from European traders, but also the transplantation of African staples outside of the continent, my dissertation demonstrates how this extreme imbalance of political and economic power complicates or even shatters notions of *terroir* and locavore. Most of the food produced in Guadeloupe or Senegal is converted to cash crops for European processing and consumption, and local food consumption is driven by imports from French trading and manufacturing companies. The resulting culinary "hybridity" is further represented in the literary and linguistic "hybridity" of these and many other authors.

In that sense, the hybridity of my dissertation will echo the equal hybridity of the gastro-literature that comprises my corpus. Literature and cultures cannot be separated, and every text that I am analyzing will be put in direct communication with the cultures of the three geographical areas I am concentrating on and that are: sub-Saharan Africa, the French Caribbean, and metropolitan France. This approach will allow me to concentrate on a thematic analysis of the questions in play when it comes to the relationship between food,

identity, history, memory, representation, equity, and sustainability. My methodology will highlight the importance of addressing the issues in play from a transnational and transdurational perspective.

Chapter one, entitled "Oral to Written Recipes: The Transitioning Sub-Saharan Francophone African Heritage," discusses the transition from orality to written work when it comes to preserving recipes. Cookbooks in the West have been prevalent since the Middle Ages with some of most famous French texts being *Le Cuisinier françois* by Pierre de La Varenne, which details the culinary innovations of the 16th century, or *Le viandier* by Guillaume Taillevent, which first recorded recipes of Haute Cuisine. However, is only more recently that recipes from the Caribbean and sub-Saharan Africa have been recorded. I will therefore analyze the meaning of laying down culinary instructions on the page, and the challenges it represents. I will posit that literature and culinary cultures are intertwined and result in gastro-literature being the sole possible vector for the preservation of authentic West African and Caribbean culinary oral traditions.

In my second chapter, "Getting the Word Out: When the Low Becomes High in the Literary and Culinary Worlds," I will delve into the roots of cuisine and gastronomy. We will uncover how cuisines are created, and how France became a reference when it comes to matters of the palate. But while France is renowned to have codified the culinary world, it is equally known for its contribution to the literary world. Through a tour in the kitchen and in the publishing industry, I will analyze how France has had the upper hand in both literary and culinary productions, and how it has historically excluded women and minorities. However, we will see that not all foreign cuisines are perceived as equal, and that a hierarchy of taste exists. How are some ethnic cuisines able to rise above others? Can

we talk about sub-Saharan African or Caribbean haute cuisines? And do haute cuisines necessarily need to adopt the French style in order to be recognized as worthy of high-end restaurants?

As we will see in in chapter three, "Exiting the Ethnic Niche: The Transition in the Representation of Sub-Saharan African Cuisines in France," sub-Saharan chefs are bridging the gap and using the tools that built the renown of French cuisine to come to center stage. In doing so, they are reclaiming their heritage and redefining their culture, free of the influence of neo-colonial power. Magazines, culinary TV shows, culinary fairs, prized cookbooks and the promotion of products of the terroir are highlighting the diversity and richness of the cuisines of the continent and inscribing them on the foodie map in metropolitan France outside of the all-encompassing ethnic box.

And finally, in chapter 4, entitled "Sub-Saharan African and Caribbean Cuisines: The Taste of an Uprooted Terroir," I will conclude with an analysis of the web of influences between the triangle that is France, the French Caribbean and sub-Saharan Africa and how it has redefined what people eat and how people eat. In that perspective, I will ask what the meaning of terroir is and if it is still relevant to use such a term to describe the deep rhizomic connections that have altered the (agri)culture of sub-Saharan Africa and the Caribbean. But beyond food migrations and exchanges, I will look at the influence of globalization and industrialization and how these transformations are perceived by both chefs and authors. Ultimately, I will uncover how gastro-literature becomes a tool for social justice that challenges current social, economic, political, and (agri)cultural inequalities by advocating for the decolonization of the content of plate and for greater racial and gender representation in the culinary and literary worlds.

Chapter One:
Oral to Written Recipes:
The Transitioning Sub-Saharan Francophone African Heritage

"He who eats alone cannot talk about the taste of food to another"
– Cameroonian proverb

Scholars from different fields such as literature, history, sociology, and anthropology have long been studying and documenting orality and oral literature in West Africa and the Caribbean. In *The Interface Between the Written and the Oral*, Jack Goody analyzes the genre of the epic and oral poetry in Africa, arguing that:

> The problem with assigning a work to an oral or literate tradition is that we are not dealing with a clear-cut division. In the first place there is an important distinction between composition and performance, with a further possibility of having to differentiate between performance and transmission. Secondly, there is a meaningful sense in which all "literate forms" are composed orally, if we include the use of the silent voice, the inner ear. And there is also meaningful sense in which all earlier oral works are known only because they have been written down, usually by a literate member of that very society. (Goody 80)

As Goody clearly demonstrates, the boundary between oral and written literature is not as clear-cut as one might think, and it relies entirely on the necessity or desire to transition from composition to performance and finally to transmission. Scholars have looked at different genres when analyzing the transition from oral to written legacies, ranging from folktales, poetry, and epic compositions. But what scholars have failed to examine is the wider range of knowledge transmitted orally, where culinary cultures and recipes originated. With the birth of the first cookbooks depicting West African and Caribbean culinary traditions, published respectively in 1920 and 1966, we can observe the noticeable

transition of the circulation of recipes from the immediate sphere of family and friends to that of French metropolitan readers interested in consuming the exoticism of the colonies and the newly integrated overseas departments of Guadeloupe and Martinique, which offer a novel and tourist-class appeal. From *Cooking in West Africa: A Colonial Guide* written by Muriel Tew, and *Recettes de cuisine antillaise de Da Elodie* by Marie-Thérèse Julien Lung-Fou, to the adoption of the genre that is gastro-literature by both Caribbean and West African female writers, the intersectionality between the literary and culinary fields has greatly evolved and represents the necessity of preservation of a formerly entirely oral culture. In this perspective, it seems essential to question why these transformations were imperative and how they affected the recipes at play. In this first chapter, I will therefore be proposing a new approach to orality by looking at the representation of food in literature. I will argue that gastro-literature is a major vector for the preservation of authentic West African and Caribbean culinary oral traditions. I will first delve into the exploration of cookbooks as reinforcing relationships, then I will study the evolution of the cookbook and gastro-literature genres, and finally I will analyze their significance for African diasporic culture. My first chapter will focus on several works, including Léonora Miano*'s Soulfood équatoriale*, which was commissioned as part of a food series entitled "Exquis d'écrivains," along with Aminata Sow Fall's *Un grain de vie et d'espérance*, a reflection on the act of eating and preparing food in Senegal, and *Délices d'Afrique : 50 recettes pour petits moments de confidences à partager* by Marguerite Abouet, who brings together the cookbook and the graphic novel genre. Maryse Condé's gastro-novels, namely *Victoire, les saveurs et les mots*, a narrative of the story of her grandmother who was a cook for a

privileged family in the French Caribbean, and finally, *Mets* et *Merveilles*, will serve as a foretaste of Caribbean literature and culture.

Cookbooks as Relationships: Memory and Legacy

When looking at gastro-literature and the inclusion of recipes in literature, one is led to wonder, where they were sourced, and how did they become part of novels, social commentaries, and even literary criticism of gastro-literature. In the context of gastro-literature, similar patterns between the literary and culinary industry emerge. When literature becomes a way to reclaim, share, and immortalize memory and knowledge, then cookbooks, by establishing a relationship between authors and readers, transcend the orality that most often characterizes the sharing of recipes. The prime aspect of the culinary field that enabled it to become an industry was the passage from oral to written recipes as a way to inscribe traditions and tastes in a continuity for the generations to come[10]. Whether in their oral or written form, recipes are thus a form of communication that goes beyond the boundaries of time and space. Ultimately, language became the driving force and the power behind the possible reproduction of tastes, dishes, and cuisines. Historian James McCann, author of *Stirring the Pot: A History of African Cuisine,* reminds us that the culinary traditions in Africa, in contrast to France[11], have until recently been solely anchored in the oral domain. Cooking practices are no exception to this trend, as knowledge

[10] We will come back to this idea later on in this chapter.
[11] In her book *Haute Cuisine: How the French Invented the Culinary Profession,* Trubek dates the transition from orally transmitted recipes to cookbooks to the end of the 16th century, noting also that it marked the possibility for the creation of a "theory of cooking as much or more than a manual of action" that laid the ground for the creation of haute cuisine (11). It is equally important to note that the first cookbooks did not have the same format as we know them today, as recipes were written in a narrative form.

in general has been transmitted orally in sub-Saharan Africa. In fact, the oral transmission of knowledge is most often associated with the long-lasting tradition of the griot, who stands as guarantor of the personal narratives and history of his people.

Fig.1.1 Hospitalier, Louis. Native griot with his guitar [Afrique Occidentale (Sénégal) Dakar—Griot indigène avec sa guitare]. ca. 1900. Postcard. Metropolitan Museum, New York.

Dorothy Blair, author of *Senegalese Literature: A Critical History*, wrote that:

> The griots, their low caste notwithstanding, occupy a most important place in African Literature. At the courts of the former kings of West Africa, they were the sovereign's counselors and chroniclers, orators and praise-singers, professional entertainers-storytellers, poets, dancers, and clowns: in Amar Samb's words, "historian-philosophers, veritable live archives, subsisting at the expense of the superior class, at once poets and buffoons" (*Matraqué par le destin*, 8). Modern African writers owe them much of the raw material they have woven into new sophisticated literary forms." (13)

By tracing the origin of literature to the griots, Blair points out that both authors and chefs were born at the same time and in the same place, at the courts of kings, thus sharing an affiliation to a lower caste, and a reliance on oral traditions for the future of their craft[12].

[12] I would like to highlight that I do not posit orality as solely a craft of the past in opposition to the modern birth of literature. Both are still cohabitating in literature today, which I will highlight in greater length later on. Moreover, I would like to warn against the stereotypical and short-sighted association that is too often

The people of griot origin evolved in contemporary Senegal by bringing both of these worlds together, as underlined by Cornelia Panzacchi's article on "The Livelihoods of Traditional Griots in Modern Senegal." In nobles' feasts, "the griots play a very important role – they invite the guests, cook the food and sing praises" (195), thus bringing people together. By highlighting the reliance on orality in that tradition, Panzacchi demonstrates that orality is not a matter of the past that has been replaced and erased by the birth of a written tradition. However, it now seems essential to examine how the transition from oral to written culinary knowledge unfolded. To do so, one must investigate the origin of recipes to understand how they were permanently inked in the corpus of texts and cookbooks on which I am focusing.

For Léonora Miano in *Soulfood équatoriale*, the roots of a recipe are always a mystery. When one enquires about a dish and the steps taken for its preparation, she writes: "On haussera les épaules en prétendant avoir suivi la recette habituelle. Celle qui court depuis on ne sait trop quand sur la côte et ailleurs" (25). By pointing out the ephemeral and progressive transformation of a recipe, Miano emphasizes the orality of its origin, and the importance of word to mouth in the process of transmission of knowledge. Moreover, the use of the verb *courir* to evoke "[la recette] qui court" is reminiscent of the expression "un bruit qui court" thus foreshadowing and confirming the importance of hearsay in the development of West African food cultures. Besides having deeply influenced recipes, chatter and gossip are equally responsible for the creation and naming of Cameroonian

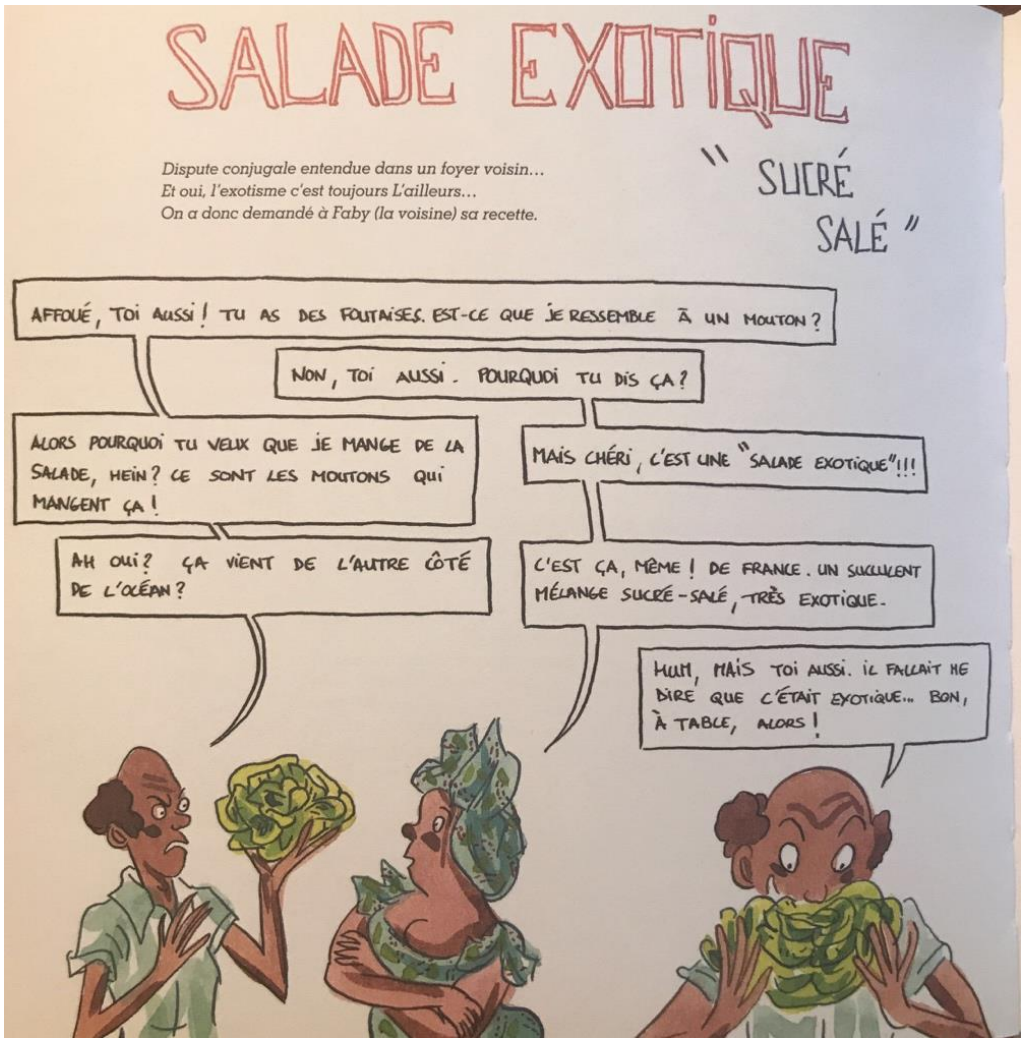
made between orality and the African continent versus literature and the West, and that needs to be complicated and further analyzed. As Eileen Julien argues in her book entitled *African Novels and the Question of Orality*, I believe it is important to see that African literature can belong to both, and that there is a continuity between these modes of languages that do not oppose one another, but on the contrary complete each other.

staples such as *jazz*[13] (18). The propagation of the name is evocative of a rumor, a music heard by the inhabitants of Douala without anyone knowing how it originated. Miano is left, along with her compatriots, to imagine and interpret the genesis of this dish: "Radio trottoir – qui passe ses journées à rapporter les secrets les plus inavouables des habitants de notre plaine côtière – ne nous a jamais dit si les haricots en sauce devaient également le nom de jazz au chant nocturne de l'intestin du saxophoniste" (22). With a pinch of humor and irony, Miano uses the running metaphor of the musicality of digestion to tackle how the origin of West African cuisines was heard through the grapevine. Marguerite Abouet, in her cookbook *Délices d'Afrique*, would concur, since she herself refers to a discussion between her neighbors as the source for her "salade exotique"[14] (20-21). However, as she transcribes this recipe, she shares credit between her neighbor, Faby, and her own ears that caught wind of the marital argument[15]. In a culinary culture where recipes are exchanged, caught in the air, transcribed and shared with others, one is led to wonder, what are some of the reasons for sharing, or on the contrary, declining to share recipes?

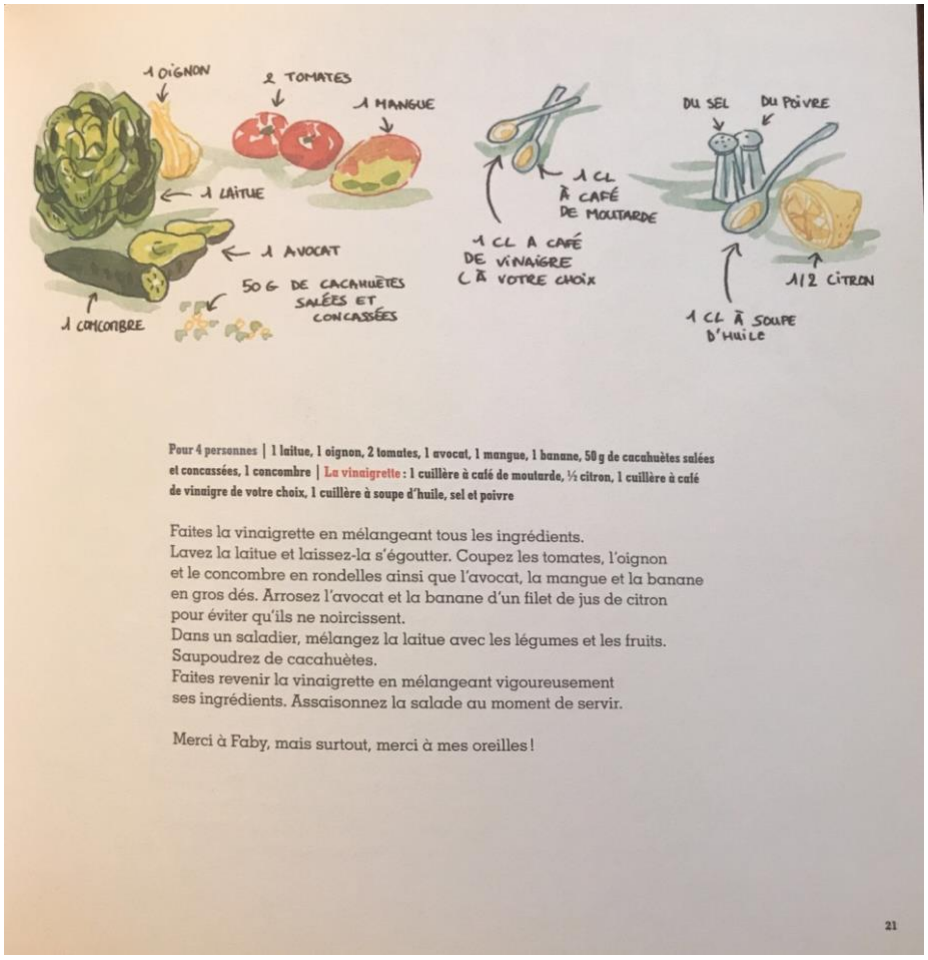
[13] *Jazz*, as explained by Miano, is red beans cooked in a tomato sauce with several ingredients such as garlic, onions, ginger, and sometimes dried shrimps. J*azz* is served in a bread called *pain chargé* and the final product is called a *saxophone* (17-22).

[14] The name of this salad refers with irony and mockery to France, which has appropriated the term exoticism to qualify Caribbean culture. Abouet repurposes the term to define anything coming from France in a reversal of expectations. The consumption of the exoticism of the Other is no more directed to former colonies in Africa or the Caribbean, but to their colonizer. This word choice stands as a clear statement for equality between Caribbean and French cuisines, and for the refusal of the former to be appropriated and marginalized by the latter. The irony contained in this passage is equally inspired by the history of French cuisine and its interest for sweet and sour tastes dating back to the medieval era, and which are miscontrued as having only penetrated French culture much later on with the growing interest for "exotic" cuisines.

[15] Faby's husband is mad at his wife for wanting to make him eat salad, which he argues is food fit for a sheep. She attempts to change his mind by showcasing its "exoticism."



1.2. "Salade exotique" (20) in *Délices d'Afrique: 50 recettes pour petits moments de confidences à partager* by Marguerite Abouet.



1.3. "Salade exotique" (21) *Délices d'Afrique: 50 recettes pour petits moments de confidences à partager* by Marguerite Abouet.

Abouet's cookbook addresses this divide that operates with modern cuisine as theorized by Parkhurst Ferguson, who writes that:

> Above all, because modern cuisines depend upon extensive communication with a heterogeneous and anonymous public, they must be written. Recipes are published, no longer handed down from one generation to the next or shared among neighbors. Paradoxically, this textuality of modern cuisine fixes food as traditional cuisines never can. (2004, 25)

Gastro-literature frames this transition from traditional to modern cuisine in the context of West Africa by answering to the need for a written legacy that adds to orality without superseding it. Equally, Miano demonstrates that refusing to share a recipe is not so much

an act of selfishness and impoliteness. On the contrary, it is a true act of hospitality, an invitation to come together that showcases the sociality of cooking and eating. According to her: "Les vrais gourmands conservent jalousement leur secret. Pour la bonne cause. Ils veulent qu'on revienne à leur table. Ils retiennent l'information pour préserver la joie d'offrir" (Miano 25). This dilemma is one inherited from the founding fathers of French cuisine, namely Brillat-Savarin and Grimod de la Reynière[16]. The *gourmands* revel in the communality of the table. The meal and the act of eating are both conceived as social constructs and not as solitary acts. The pleasure to invite and share dishes prepared for a guest trumps the decorum that takes for granted that, when asked, one should share the recipe enjoyed by the guests. This quote by Miano points to the prevalence of pleasure over concerns about securing a culinary heritage, thus preventing the transition of knowledge from the personal to the collective. I would like to argue that by keeping recipes a secret, the *gourmands* are refraining from participating in the elaboration and development of a cultural and national culinary heritage[17]. Ultimately, Miano, through her role as an author, and an outsider to the meal between the *gourmands* and their guests, becomes one of the guarantors and safe keeper of her country's culinary memory, culture, and history. In the same manner, addressing Caribbean cultural legacy, Condé's sole motivation for writing down her culinary knowledge and skills, which she inherited from her ancestors, is the hope that it will be carried on by her grandson, when she writes:

> Mounir, seul garçon d'une large couvée de petits-enfants, m'informa qu'il voulait devenir un chef cuisinier et me demanda de lui écrire quelques recettes. Un chef cuisinier ! […]

[16] See chapter two entitled "Inventing French cuisine" (49-82) in *Accounting for Taste: The triumph of French Cuisine* by Parkhurst Ferguson.

[17] Parkhurst Ferguson, in the first chapter of *French Food on the Table, on the Page, and in French Culture*, traces the creation of a French cuisine and culinary nationalism back to the fertility of the culinary discourses and texts that participated in establishing its worldwide prestige.

> Je me mis au travail car ce n'est pas chose facile de rédiger des recettes pour moi qui ne sais qu'improviser, pour qui le goûter encore et encore conduit seul à l'équilibre d'un plat. Je fis de mon mieux et ne ménageai pas ma peine. (Condé 2015, 376-77)

The passage from mouth to words symbolizes the importance of genealogy in the process of cultural inheritance[18]. The purpose itself of Condé's *Victoire, les saveurs et les mots* echoes the necessity of the link between generations. By focusing on the life of this grandmother she is unfamiliar with, she fills in the gap in her prehistory and reclaims a connection to her lineage and a culture that was not transmitted to her, as she equally conjures up in *Le Coeur à rire et à pleurer*[19]. Literature thus fills a gap left by unwritten and oral cultural legacies. In turn, we are led to question, what would have become of French cuisine if not for the authors that participated in its codification, and expansion? For Parkhurst Ferguson, "culinary preparations become a cuisine when, and only when, the preparations are articulated and formalized, and enter the public domain" (19) thus shedding light on the interdependence between food and writing.

---

[18] However, by omitting the publication of her recipes in her book, Condé mimics Miano's *gourmands*, who also refuse to share them to maintain the curiosity and fidelity of their guests.

[19] Condé reflects on the caesura from her Caribbean heritage, as her parents wanted to transmit to her the values, language and culture of metropolitan France over those of her native Guadeloupe. She writes: "Pour eux, la France n'était nullement le siège du pouvoir colonial. C'était véritablement la mère patrie et Paris, la Ville lumière qui seule donnait de l'éclat à leur existence" (1999, 11). Condé's parents are blinded by the radiance of mainland France that eclipses its dark colonial history. It is only later, as Condé continued her studies in France that she realized the paradoxical ignorance of her cultural heritage:

> Bien que ma couleur m'assimilât aux petit-nègres, coupeurs de cannes, amarreuses, pêcheurs, revendeuses, manœuvres sur les quais, que sais-je encore? j'étais plus éloignée d'eux que les donzelles à peu claire qui m'entouraient. Elles au moins parlaient couramment le créole, trompettaient bruyamment leurs rires et, sans vergogne, brennaient leur bondas au rythme des biguines. À croire que leurs parents ne leur avaient pas inculqué les bonnes manières ! À croire qu'ils ne partageaient pas le mépris des miens pour les traditions locales ! Comment cela était-il possible? (1999, 139)

The association between the expression "petit-nègres" and manual work underlines the cultural bias that she was bequeathed to her by her education. Aside from all coming from Guadeloupe, Condé and her classmates could not be more dissimilar. They embody local culture while Condé is a product of mainland French national identity and culture. Their laughter, dancing to Caribbean music, and use of creole are frowned upon because Condé considers them as a sign of being uncultivated, revealing that she inherited scorn for her own culture from her parents.

In West Africa, one can understand the link between literature and cuisine by analyzing the transition from oral to written knowledge, as cookbooks documenting culinary traditions are a modern construct having appeared only in the twentieth century[20]. In fact, until recently, it was frowned upon to write down recipes in West Africa, and this transition occurred only recently as documented in *Cooking the West African Way* by Vining Montgomerey (12). The Western idea of writing down recipes mostly destined sub-Saharan cookbooks to a Western audience, or to the African diaspora since such publications generally originate from the West[21]. By offering a connection to the motherland, they fill in the gap left by expatriation or immigration abroad, and offer the opportunity to recreate, experience, and jolt the memory of lost tastes. In the context of the immortalization of recipes and a cuisine, one must consider the fragmentation of orality and memory. Relying on oral knowledge as a representation of the past can be partially conceived as flawed because it does not give an accurate, global, and comprehensive representation of a culture. One could argument that it represents the opportunity and sensibility of writing opportunities thus questioning what we know of traditions, heritage, and authenticity when it comes to cookbooks. In this perspective, memory becomes one of the common cores of both food and written recipes. As Proust's madeleine famously exemplifies in *À la recherche du temps perdu*, taste conjures up memories of his childhood, and relationships. Literature stands equally as a driving force behind the passage from a personal to a collective memory that shaped national identity through food. Proust's

[20] The end of the 1920s and beginning of the 1930s mark the appearance of the first African cookbooks. Mars J.A. and E.M. Tooleyo wrote *The Kudeti Book of Yoruba Cookery*, which was first published in 1934, with a revised version being later published 2002, thus highlighting the rising appeal for African cookbooks in general.

[21] A study of the place of publication reveals France, Great Britain, and the United States as the leading publishers of sub-Saharan and Caribbean cookbooks.

madeleine does not belong solely to him anymore, but it belongs to French people as a whole, unifying individuals around a common symbol of childhood, memory, and French culture. In the same manner, Caribbean and West African gastro-novels solidify the ephemeral memory of tastes by recording recipes[22]. In addition to tastes, recipes are also a window into relationships, which is brought to the fore when Abouet writes in her incipit: "Il me suffit simplement de fermer les yeux pour retrouver les odeurs de mon enfance, l'ambiance des cuisines, et surtout le souvenir de ces femmes, leurs moments de rire, de retrouvailles, de bavardages, leurs petites histoires…" (7). Consequently, gastro-literature makes the long-lasting connection between taste, memory, and the community that is formed around the act of cooking, which reclaims knowledge most often transmitted by women.

Women as Guarantors of the Transmission of Culinary Knowledge

Ruth Finnegan, author of *Oral Literature in Africa,* argues that ""serious takes" like myths and oral history tend to be preserved by men" (375-76), thereby supporting the image of the griot as being always male. But if women were not the beholders of "serious takes," one is led to wonder, what was considered as adequate material for them to transmit? Should women be left behind, remaining in their kitchens and restricting themselves to familial matters and knowledge, only to instruct their daughters in a similar fashion? In her article entitled "From Orality to Writing: African Women Writers and the

[22] While for Beyala and Aminata Sow Fall recipes are incorporated in their traditional form to the text, with a list of ingredients, quantities, and instructions to complete them, for Condé in *Mets et Merveilles* and *Victoire, les saveurs et les mots*, recipes are merely suggested such as with the *malaré*: "[…] une tranche de "racines", arrosée d'une cuiller huile d'olive, frottée d'un bout de morue ou de hareng saur […]" (2006, 236). The opacity of the complete recipe would form a challenge for the cooking of this dish. However, it provides enough information to form an image and taste profile of the dish.

(Re)Inscription of Womanhood," Obioma Nnaemeka advocates for the role of women whom she sees not only as performers and carriers of cultural and community history and beliefs, but also as composers. She in turn argues the female griots reinvent and [re]inscribe women at the center of oral traditions through the use of women-centered perspectives. According to her, women have been transformed from speaking subjects to written objects because of the "collusion of the imperialistic subject and the patriarchal subject" (138). Women have been indeed the big losers of the battle to end colonization, as patriarchy took the place of colonialism**,** keeping the women in the domestic sphere while men's voices became liberated with the independence from colonial power. These inequalities are well exemplified by the birth of a male literature, which was the first to tackle matters touching on colonialism and post-colonialism, developing a line of thought that put the black man at the center of the reflection[23]. This transition can be analyzed along with the erasure of women from the oral literary scene to benefit the birth of a written literature. In the case of the analysis of gastro-literature through the scope of the francophone triptych that comprises West Africa, France, and the Caribbean, certain trends can be established. Men and women do not write about food in the same way. Igor Cusack, author of "Cookery Books and Celebrity Chefs: Men's Contribution to National Cuisines in Sub-Saharan Africa" remarks that most of the men who have written cookbooks were trained in the West and these publications display a variety of illustrations and color photographs about their country and culture of origin. Renowned Senegalese chef Pierre Thiam, author of the highly regarded cookbook entitled *Modern Senegalese Recipes from the Source to the*

[23] One can cite the work and legacy of Frantz Fanon, Aimé Césaire or Léopold Sédar Senghor, which well exemplify this point.

Bowl, is no exception and his cookbook well exemplifies Cusack's analysis[24]. Thoroughly documented, this cookbook offers a rich palette of traditional and Senegalese-inspired recipes that are supplemented with narratives about the origin of diverse staples that echo the history of Senegal and Senegalese cuisine. Embellished with pictures of spices, dishes, and locales, Thiam embarks his readers on a trip to his native country, thus widening the scope of knowledge gained to include the cultural specificities of ingredients and dishes. Additionally, he features fishermen, farmers, bakers, and palm oil producers, who are praised for their contribution to Senegalese gastronomy, while women are photographed showcasing their cooking skills or selling dishes at the market. Thiam's expertise as a chef is metonymically represented by his hand holding a spoon or a fork over one of his culinary creations, while women are exclusively photographed in the act of cooking. This dichotomy between the endowment of men and women in culinary culture is representative of the larger scope of cookbooks in West Africa and the Caribbean. Cusack contextualizes this trend within the growing movement of male celebrity chefs who also publish cookbooks (76). One is therefore compelled to question the authenticity of these recipes, especially if we consider Cusack's argument that the writing of cookbooks by men is already a translation and appropriation of women's culture.

Ultimately, the tradition of recipe sharing, whether in its oral form or written forms, is deeply linked to women and their expected role in society and especially their tie to the kitchen. The exchange of recipes in the domestic setting is the core of the creation of the cookbook genre. Food anthropologist Amy Trubek, in *Haute Cuisine: How the French*

[24] His cookbook was nominated for the James Beard Award for Best International Cookbook. He is also the author of *Yolele*, the first Senegalese cookbook published in English.

Invented the Culinary Profession, traces the origin of the cookbook to magazines that were published in France at the end of the 19th century, which turned to bourgeois women to establish an audience for the circulation of cooking lectures and recipes aimed at enhancing their culinary knowledge (84). If the association between a certain social class and cookbooks prevailed in the 19th century, today, a democratization has operated rendering cookbooks and recipes more accessible not only in France, but across the world. In books, magazines, or online, recipes are exchanged across class, cultures and borders. However, as Beyala evokes in *Comment cuisiner son mari à l'africain*, one can observe an antagonistic way of consuming knowledge between white and black women. Her main character expresses her disinterest in learning from magazines: "Je ne m'encombre pas le cerveau avec la lecture des magazines. […] "Trois recettes pour une ligne parfaite." (Beyala 113). The lack of representation and self-recognition in magazines leads her to refuse the consumption of both their words and their food[25]. If women are most often the targeted audience for recipes, there are also more female authors who write about food. In the culinary world, women are equally the main voices, having usually written more cookbooks than their male counterparts. Moreover, according to Cusack, women are the ones "appropriating ethnic, regional and even colonial recipes for the national cuisine" (2014, 70), consequently playing an essential role in the conceptualization and safekeeping of a communal and underrepresented knowledge in a culinary world, which is dominated by the aura of French cuisine. On the contrary, France stands as an oddity in the overall

[25] Therefore, if knowledge was first always transmitted orally, the development of written recipes has not been inclusive of the knowledge of black women, excluding them from recognition for their culinary skills and heritage. Their contribution is equally underrepresented in magazines, another medium of sharing of recipes. Therefore, by writing gastro-novels, women reclaim an opportunity to extend the reach of orality and to carry on their legacy.

history of the production of cookbooks, as Trubek and Parkhurst Ferguson both remark. In fact, most of the text productions that the latter examines in her research were written by men[26], which one can explain by her centering on gastronomy which, according to her own words, "owes its existence to founding fathers, not mothers" (2004, 93)[27]. Senegalese singer and griot Youssou N'Dour wrote *Sénégal: Cuisine Intime et Gourmande* as an homage to the maternal love for his mother and grandmother, whom he presents as talented cooks and the heirs of a long lineage of griots. As such, they literally and figuratively nourished their community: "Mais être griot, aux yeux de la société sénégalaise, ce n'est pas seulement le chant et la mémoire. Il faut aussi savoir incarner un art de vivre au quotidien. Être un vrai spécialiste des bonnes choses de la vie. Dont la cuisine est un des aspects les plus importants, évidemment. […]" (N'Dour 16). The mouth is the origin of all memories, which are transmitted verbally or through the senses. According to N'Dour, the cook and the griot share common didactic and emotional functions. In fact, the griots themselves are also carriers and producers of the culinary knowledge as underlined by Cornelia Panzacchi in her article "The Livelihoods of Traditional Griots in Modern Senegal," who writes that today, "griots play a very important role – they invite the guests, cook the food and sing praises" (195). In this sense, Youssou N'Dour embodies both these roles of the modern griots. In his cookbook, he transcribes and immortalizes traditions that

[26] It is important to note that her book entitled *Accounting for Taste: The Triumph of French Cuisine* mainly concentrates on the 19th century, an epoch marked by the heritage of Grimod de la Reynière, the gastronomic journalist, Carême, who wrote culinary treatises and Brillat-Savarin, who excelled in the cultural culinary commentary. All were men of great influence who participated in the creation of the culinary profession, a realm from which women were excluded, as we will see later on in the second and third chapters.

[27] This statement underlines the appropriation of knowledge and domination of the cooking scene by men in France. As Vanessa Postec documents in the chapter entitled "Histoires de familles à la sauce lyonnaise" in her book *Le goût des femmes à table*, women were not less involved than men in the production of a culinary culture as exemplified by "les mères" in Lyon (55-65). These women, who ran restaurants, can be considered as the founding mothers of French cuisine. However, their representation was undermined by the masculinization of this craft.

were bestowed upon him by the women in his family. Accordingly, mothers give food and language, hence offering the gift of both life and speech. They connect speech and experiences to give meaning and to create value that is the root of culture and cultural inheritance. As language givers, they hold a position of authority for the language they share and establish a sense of the sacred for their productions, as exemplified by the fact we refer to one's native language as the mother tongue. Ultimately, women embody fertility and transformation when it comes to both language and food preparation. As such, Condé transforms her grandmother's forgotten heritage into a perennial one through the alteration of transitory experiences into a written narration. She describes the goal of Victoire's semi-fictional biography when she writes: "Ce que je veux dire, c'est revendiquer l'héritage de cette femme qui apparemment n'en laissa pas. Établir le lien qui unit sa créativité à la mienne. Passer des saveurs, des couleurs, des odeurs de chairs ou des légumes à celles des mots." (Condé 2006, 104). Writing becomes a way to connect with this grandmother she longs for but never met, someone she recognizes in herself[28]. Creativity links both women across time and enables Maryse to understand parts of her grandmother's life by recreating and experiencing for herself the familiar smells, tastes, sights that Victoire once perceived[29]. The preservation of the matrilineage appears as a necessity as Condé repeatedly underlines through her work -- that women's history and the

[28] Maryse Condé had a difficult relationship with her own mother, who among other things frown upon and discarded her daughter's desire to explore her culinary talents. Condé recalls that her mother would have never allowed her to make a career of it, and that she herself carried on the same prejudices and expectations when it came to her own children (2015, 13 and 22). She documents these mother-daughter relationships in several of her writings such as in *Un Coeur à rire et à pleurer* and *Mets et merveilles*.

[29] Beyond the senses directly recalled by Condé's writing, the creative preparation of a meal engages all five senses including touch and sound. It epitomizes the living experience, and therefore gives a second life to the departed through the sharing of a sensibility.

history of women tend to be forgotten and discarded through the passing of time[30]. Her biography grants recognition to her grandmother, this talented cook forgotten by history, who should be recognized as one of the actors in the creation of a Caribbean cuisine. Condé is not the sole one to see and pursue this connection between physical and intellectual sustenance. Abouet underlines women's role in establishing a correlation between narrative and culinary innovation when she writes that: "Chaque plat raconte une histoire de vie, une anecdote, le plus souvent inventée par les femmes" (7). By pointing out the orality of food, Abouet shows that dishes contain a language of their own. In this perspective, the mouth and the tongue become the center of interactions and the creators of bonds that are the pillar of communities and society as a whole in the same way that Condé was able to find herself through the search for her creative roots. For both Youssou N'Dour and Pierre Thiam, the writing of their cookbooks serves as a pretext to explore their personal and communal memory as well as their affection for their mother tongue and their motherland[31].

The sociality of cooking is highly gendered and so is the transmission of its associated knowledge. The subtitle given by Abouet to her cookbook, *50 recettes pour petits moments de confidence à partager*, suggests the exclusion of men. Her main characters are women only, who invite the readers to join their small community. The use of the modifier "petit" and the action of confiding denote intimacy and sharing within a homogenous group. As such, cookbooks document and transcribe time spent among

[30] Both *Victoire, les saveurs et les mots*, and *Moi, Tituba…sorcière de Salem* exemplify this statement which we will later come back on at the end of this chapter.
[31] This homage to their mothers can also be analyzed as a proof of meal preparation as the cement for affect as we often say that one loves a mother who cooks.

women and the conversations that stemmed from it, modelling the kitchen as a learning territory:

> J'ai eu la chance de grandir au sein d'une tribu de femmes, au milieu des bruits de leurs grosses casseroles et des senteurs d'épices. J'ai appris à cuisiner, comme toute jeune africaine qui se respecte, en observant mes aînées. Je m'en suis tellement imprégnée que ces images font dorénavant partie de moi, de ma personnalité. (Abouet 7)

Abouet anchors learning to a kitchen that transforms and educates women by providing them with the tools to grow within a supportive environment, and which encourages duplication through the observation of this communal activity. Meal preparation becomes a sacred time to gossip, discuss, and be part of a community, a place where women come with a common goal: "Pour se raconter leurs problèmes, recevoir ou se donner des conseils" (Abouet, 7). As a social activity, it is centered on the exchange of a craft and a way of living and being. Aminata Sow Fall in *Un grain de vie et d'espérance*, reflects on the manner in which this knowledge is carried on from one generation to another when she writes:

> […] loin d'être le résultat d'un apprentissage formel avec des leçons, explications ou démonstrations, l'art culinaire s'acquiert traditionnellement par l'imprégnation et la pratique précoces. Il est inculqué à la fillette comme toutes les autres composantes de la culture qui doivent la modeler à l'image de la représentation idéale que la société s'est faite de la femme et de son rôle de mère nourricière.
> Mame Yandé avait une réputation bien établie de cuisinière émérite, infatigable, généreuse. Ngaye avait donc été entraînée très tôt sur le terrain d'excellence où se réalise le destin de toutes les femmes dans son environnement social. Dans l'espace ludique de ses rêves d'enfant d'abord : tout objet creux (boîte vide, pot, écuelle au manche cassé) devenait une marmite sur trois petites pierres et quelques brins de balai. Tout se mimait ensuite : l'ardeur à rallumer le bois récalcitrant ; les yeux qui picotent de l'effet de la fumée, de la chaleur et des oignons. Chaque geste de chaque étape de la préparation de tel ou tel plat et enfin le *yekk*, qui consiste à vider la marmite dans un grand plat, et le *seedelé*, l'arrangement des mets, avant le festin avec des convives imaginaires. (40-41)

Described as a tradition that cannot be formally taught, but on the contrary, which invites observation and reproduction as a mode of learning, meal preparation is a skill naturally acquired by women from a young age. Indeed, the practice is transmitted in an act of mothering that is the core of the modelling of young girls after their elders. From the moment they are born, the former are conditioned in a role that entraps them in the kitchen[32]. Pushed to conform and fit in, they have to reproduce a pattern inherited from their mother: "Tradition respectée: bonne cuisinière, de la mère à la fille…" (Sow Fall 58). Consequently, passing on recipes from mothers to daughters both serves as an acknowledgement of their contribution to the culinary field, and participates in the reproduction of patriarchal values[33], which challenge women's agency and their potential beyond their expected role of domesticity.

Cooking as Liberation from Illiteracy

The cult of domesticity has historically entrapped women in their kitchen, preventing their intellectual development, as they often could not attend school to prioritize domestic chores. In the context of sub-Saharan Africa, UNESCO estimates that in 2008

[32] Several of the authors that comprise my corpus tackle this matter as is the case of Abouet who projected the preparation of sustenance as the basis for community: ""Ma fille, la nourriture se partage, et partager son repas, c'est aimer les gens, alors cuisiner et manger tous ensemble, c'est s'aimer les uns les autres…"
Je n'avais pas compris du haut de mes neufs ans que j'allais pratiquer cet adage le restant de ma vie de femme." (5) Womanhood and food culture are intertwined and influence one another, highlighting women's lack of autonomy when it comes to their performativity in society. There are certain expectations that are associated with gender, and a woman's role is defined by other people's pleasure above her own. The responsibility to create a community lays on her shoulders as it originates from around the table.

[33] Sharing recipes is seen just as negatively in Beyala's novel: "[Bijou] persiste tant dans mes narines que, sans cesser de manger, je te donne la recette, comme un cadeau empoisonné" (100). The main protagonist considers this act as a display of defiance towards Bijou, who is her competitor for the heart of monsieur Bolobolo. As the two women duel it out using a cooking contest, the winner's skills will knowingly entrap her in a vicious circle of domesticity. Therefore, Beyala highlights the limitations of women, who can never entirely win.

more than 167 million adults were illiterate, thus shedding light on one of the reasons for the longstanding prominence of orality over written productions[34]. For Nnaemeka, the transition from oral to written literature represents the shift of the imperatives that once were based on age and sex, then changed to the command and knowledge of the colonizer's language (139). Thus, she argues that the delay in the arrival of women in the field of creative writing is to be imputed on the injustices of equal access to a colonial education. Carole Boyce Davies and Savory Fido agree with this explanation, adding nonetheless that the colonial education is to be blamed as much as the expected role in the family, and gender policies, which created more barriers for women to "engag[e] in pursuits apart from domestic ones." According to them, "after colonial education established the literary arts in general, a few women, through migration, or family privilege or exceptional brilliance and determination, or strong support from others, were able to publish their writing" (311)[35]. This argument is very much echoed by the lives of many of the women authors that comprise my corpus[36]. As Jack Goody underlines in *The Interface Between the Written and the Oral,* it is "with the advent of colonial rule, [that] the situation changed; [because] the value of literacy as a means of social and personal advancement was immediately clear"

[34] On September 2013, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization Institute of Statistics published a report entitled "Adult and youth literacy" stating that the adult literacy rate of Senegal was below 50% in 2011. According to another report by the same organization released in 2011 entitled "Regional Overview: Sub-Saharan Africa," "on average, literacy rates for women were three-quarters the level of those for men in 2008," showing great disparities when it comes to men's and women's access to an education (Sources: http://en.unesco.org/gem-report/sites/gem-report/files/191393e.pdf and http://www.uis.unesco.org/literacy/Documents/fs26-2013-literacy-en.pdf).

[35] However, it is important to shed light on the divergence of opinions when it comes to the reasons for the late arrival of women to creative writing. Maryse Condé herself rejects entirely the educational arguments, underlining that there was no such lack of educated women in other professional fields (1972, 132). As we examine the parallels in the role of women in the literary and culinary fields, we will delve further into the reasons for the lack of equal gender representation in certain domains in chapter two.

[36] We could think about Marguerite Abouet, Calixthe Beyala, Ken Bugul and even Maryse Condé, who all studied in mainland France.

(1987, 141-142)[37]. But the definition of literacy as a Western concept for the evaluation of a society and its members raises the questions of the use of other modes of performativity for social and personal advancement[38]. In the past in the Caribbean, many people, mostly people of color and especially women, also would not attend school. As a black woman[39], Condé's grandmother did not have the privilege to go to school. Her grandmother, Caldonia, who raised Victoire after the death of her mother, never thought about registering her for school (Condé 2006, 28). Caldonia, in her role as a housemaid for the Jovials, an influential family in Marie-Galante, passed her occupation onto her granddaughter, who herself became a maid and thereafter a cook for affluent families. Victoire's culinary talents and her creativity in the kitchen disentangled her from her grandmother's apron-strings and enabled her to grow on a personal and professional level despite her lack of formal education as underlined by the following quote:

> Plus que la musique où elle n'excellât jamais, ni à la guitare ni à la flûte, c'était sa manière d'exprimer un moi constamment refoulé, prisonnier de son analphabétisme, de sa bâtardise, de son sexe, de toute sa condition asservie. Quand elle inventait des assaisonnements, ou mariait des goûts, sa personnalité se libérait, s'épanouissait. Cuisiner, c'était son rhum Père Labat, sa ganja, son crack, son ecstasy. Alors, elle dominait le monde. Pour un temps, elle devenait Dieu. Là aussi, comme un écrivain. (Condé 2006, 123)

Her place in the kitchen paradoxically empowered her thus imposing the mouth and orality as a respected and powerful means of communication, on the same level as other celebrated

[37] Goody adds that "it is a mistake to think pre-colonial Africa as the dark continent unenlightened by the lamp of literacy" (1987, 139), and I completely agree with him. In fact, as I will establish, there are parallel modes of literacy.

[38] Orality fulfilled this role through the griot. As praise-singers, they were commissioned to chronicle the history of families in order for them to ground their social status, and gain benefit from it.

[39] According to Maryse Condé, she was actually quite fair skinned, which came at a surprise for her grandparents Caldonia and Félix, as well as the people of the village (2006, 23). Since Victoire's mother died in labor, no one knows for sure who was the father of Victoire, most westerners having already left the island because of the decline in profitability of the sugar cane plantation business.

arts such as music. By comparing Victoire, the cook, to a writer, Condé frames culinary knowledge as another sort of literacy -- that of reading the produce, the seasoning, the spices and knowing how to harmonize flavors. Victoire's skills allow her to express her inner self and to affirm her introverted personality, thus bridging the gap between herself and the people around her. In this perspective, the materiality of the dishes translates and conveys the hidden and the unsaid. The preparation of a light meal for Boniface equally testifies to the bond between the two of them:

> A quatre heures du matin, première levée de la maison, Victoire enfilait une wòbakò et se glissait dans la cuisine. […] Victoire tenait à préparer elle-même le *didiko* que Boniface emportait quai Lardenoy pour sa collation de dix heures. C'était sa manière de poursuivre une communication avec lui. Elle le savait friand de *blan manjé koko* et en emplissait une gamelle. (Condé 2006, 118)

The sharing of food acts as an alternative language that transcends time and space. Victoire's culinary creations become an extension of her feelings for her lover, and they further the attachment between the two by overcoming the distance that separates them as he leaves for work. The medium that is food brings people together, and Victoire uses it in an attempt to reconcile with her daughter after the colonial education drew a gap between her and Jeanne. As the first in her family to receive an education, Jeanne placed herself on the side of writing, while her mother belonged to a world of orality. Books opposed spoken words in a battle that made communication between the two women incredibly strenuous, giving prominence to the unsaid as underlined below:

> Victoire aurait aimé clamer son amour pour sa fille, de la seule manière dont elle était capable: en préparant un repas plus extraordinaire encore que celui des fiançailles. Un repas où elle déploierait ses trésors d'inventivité. Le menu était là dans sa tête comme l'ébauche du roman qui attestera le génie de son auteur. Mais Jeanne ne voulait pas traiter sa mère comme une servante. (Condé 2006, 228)

Misunderstandings between mother and daughter reach a climax during Jeanne's wedding, as Jeanne fails to look beyond her mother's role in the kitchen as a sign of her submissiveness. Jeanne sees education and literacy as the sole power that can extricate a woman from the kitchen. However, she strips her mother from her own agency as she misses seeing her mother's own aspirations. Condé relates with her grandmother on a creative level because she appreciates the parallelism between literature and cooking, which her mother could never do. For Victoire, cooking substitutes itself for words and liberates her from her own inability to voice or to lay down words on a page. Moreover, it symbolizes an inclusiveness that literature struggles to reach because of its alienating nature for non-educated people, while as the etymology of the word companion demonstrates, food has the power to bring all people together at the same table[40]. Victoire writes a narrative through the dishes she composes, thus demonstrating the power of what I would like to call food literacy, which is the ability to create and carry meaning through the marriage of produce, spices and diverse ingredients to be then translated into a discourse demonstrating culinary competences. As Condé expresses, Victoire did not know how to name her dishes, but she did not seem to care (2006, 104). The essential for her resides somewhere else, between the walls of her kitchen. Whether she is chopping herbs, stirring a pot, or plating up, cooking provides Victoire the same joy and feeling of contentment as reading does for her daughter and granddaughter. She devoted her life to a passion that carries her beyond the walls of her realm and empowers her sense of escape, just as literature does for her Maryse. Consequently, gastro-literature breaks the boundaries of both the culinary and literary worlds by embracing the best of both domains. It offers

[40] *Companion* is derived from the Latin *compāniō,* which translates to "one who eats bread with another."

the possibility to transcend the gap between author and reader who can equally share the tangible result of a reading experience.

From Invention to Reproduction: The Evolution of Genres

Inclusiveness is not the sole benefit that can be linked to gastro-literature and the transition to written culinary knowledge. As we ponder the direction of both literature and culinary culture, the passage from orality to literacy poses the dilemma of the selection and alteration of knowledge. Indeed, as Goody reflects, it is "impossible to know how much oral compositions have been altered and transformed into 'literary' texts in the course of being written down" (1987, 81). We are thus left to wonder, how the selection process occurred and what of past stories and recipes was kept, changed or even discarded? However, this transition is key as recipes allow for the re-creation of a lost taste, which Parkhurst Ferguson highlights when she writes: "By allowing repeated 'consumption' of the same meal or food, writing and reading neutralize the orality of food. Just as writing fixes speech, so too it stabilizes food" (2011, 31)[41]. Hence, the concept of the stabilization of food is fundamental for cooks and chefs alike. Condé, an avid cook and a writer, sees in repetition the dichotomy between the two arts she praises, the art of cooking and the art of writing:

> Moi qui me suis toujours refusée à hiérarchiser mes deux passions, aujourd'hui je suis bien forcée de constater que l'une possède une éclatante supériorité sur l'autre. L'écrivain, quand il vieillit, vit dans la terreur de radoter, de répéter toujours et encore le même ouvrage.

[41] The stabilization of food is the root of a cuisine and most and furthermost of a national cuisine, which both Parkhurst Ferguson (25), and Cusack (2014, 65), agree upon when it comes to France and Africa. Igor Cusack goes a step further by arguing that culinary culture is the basis of nation building in Africa, a claim which we will come back on in the second chapter.

> […] Pour la cuisinière, au contraire la répétition est gage d'excellence. Quand des amis exigent : "Fais-nous ce plat que tu réussis si bien", j'exulte et je m'affaire. (2015, 375)

If repetition denotes the death of creativity for the writer, it is the core of a cuisine. As Condé highlights, consistency is sought after by the diners, whether in a friendly setting or in a professional one such as in a restaurant. By recreating a dish to perfection, cooks and chefs alike demonstrate their mastery, and are able to retain their clientele, or as Condé exemplifies, the praise of the guests. By following her quote with two consecutive verbs conjugated in the first person of the singular to express an emotion and an action, she illustrates the communal dimension behind the cooking process as its driving force. The culinary text is thus essential because it "reconfigures an individual activity as a collective enterprise" (Parkhurst Ferguson 17), and without this process, we could not talk about a cuisine as it entails the articulation and formalization of culinary preparations as Parkhurst Ferguson theorized (19). Consequently, the evolution of cooking towards literacy is the essence of the establishment of a national cuisine that gave a framework for both the cooks and the chefs. Since taste is an ephemeral experience, recipes are necessary to the re-creation process therefore enabling a personal memory to become a communal one. Condé's novel, *Victoire, les saveurs et les mots* is an homage to her grandmother, and besides giving a voice to this voiceless grandmother, Condé immortalizes her legacy that she inscribes within the wider Caribbean food culture, which Victoire participated in carrying on and expanding. The tensions that exist between the orality of cooking and its written transcriptions hold onto the antagonistic relationship between reproduction and creation. Priscilla Parkhurst Ferguson reminds us of the predominance of orality in the cooking world when she writes: "The larger culinary culture remains importantly an oral

culture, and recipes, when they exist in written form, tend to be imprecise, serving more to log memory than offer instruction" (24). By considering the evolution of the cookbook, which changed during the 1700s to take the form with which we are familiar today, that of a list instead of the previous narrative style, we witness an increasing desire for codification and molding. Recipes dictate the do's and don'ts, leaving little agency to the cook[42]. For Condé, who learned to cook along with her family's maid, Adélia:

> Il ne fallait pas mélanger le sucré et le salé. Il ne fallait pas mélanger la viande et le poisson. Ni la viande et les crustacés. Le plantain ne se mangeait jamais vert ni les mangues. Le thon mêlé de curry était inconcevable. Il ne fallait pas mettre de tomates dans le court bouillon de poisson, seulement du beurre rouge. Le coq au vin se préparait avec du vin et non du rhum vieux. (Condé 2015, 80)

This list that is cadenced by the alternation of negations and the anaphoric repetition "Il ne fallait pas," draws attention to inherited culinary and gustatory limitations. By using the personal pronoun "il," which can be translated in English by "one should not", the author highlights the encompassing nature of the interdiction to the extent of signifying that "no one should." Therefore, one's creativity is limited by the core principle dictated by the references held by cookbooks and by previous generations of chefs and cooks. The dilution of a dish is often seen as an offense to a national cuisine, as underlined by Sow Fall, who stands on the side of tradition:

> La fantaisie, la nouveauté et la tradition

[42] Recently, renowned Spanish chef Ferran Adrià took a radical step away from the almighty dictation of recipe writing with his collaborative website elBulli, which encourages the creativity of cooks, chefs, farmers, culinary historians and food lovers in general, by proposing to learn about the history of ingredients before suggesting ingredients pairing and innovating cooking techniques, thus promoting and inviting the creativity of each and all. This website is furthermore available free of charge to anyone who wants to further their culinary knowledge, and it is the front of the elBulli foundation, which moto and purpose stand as "feeding creativity."

> Si l'on fait une escalope de veau avec une sauce de crevettes, c'est très inattendu. Selon vous, des plats de ce genre pourraient-ils s'imposer comme recette reconnue et acceptée ?
>
> L'innovation, certainement, mais sans aliéner l'identité d'un plat. L'escalope de veau et la sauce crevettes ont chacun des caractéristiques propres qui font que, selon les moments, les lieux, l'humeur et l'envie, on choisit l'une ou l'autre parce qu'on attend tel plaisir. […]
>
> Je suis pour l'authenticité des préparations culinaires. (91)

While she embraces the creative process that comes with the execution of a dish, she warns against the mismatch of flavors. By questioning the acceptance of a veal escalope cooked with a shrimp sauce, she is not commenting on the validity of such a course also known as surf-and-turf, but rather on the fusion of two cuisines, whose identity and history is ambivalently intertwined. Veal escalope belongs to Western culture, while shrimp sauce is an emblematic Senegalese staple. Sow Fall advocates for their consumption separately in order to genuinely enjoy the specificity of these components and to respect their authenticity. On the contrary, for Condé, recipes are meant to be altered as she declares: "Je n'avais aucun goût pour les plats traditionnels dont les recettes immuables semblent provenir de textes sacrés légués par nos ancêtres" (2015, 24). She sees in the writing down of recipes their stratification, and a decline in creativity triggered by the reverence granted to cookbooks. By comparing traditional recipes to sacred texts, she highlights the cultism that prevents the germination and renewal of the culinary world that can be analyzed as the amputation of the cook and chef alike. For Parkhurst Ferguson, this dichotomy between stabilization and creation is emblematic of the opposition between the cook, who relies on oral culinary knowledge to reproduce familiar recipes, and the chef who draws away from the family connections to anchor himself in a professional setting concerned with culinary innovation (21).

Condé challenges these assumptions with the portrait of her grandmother, who invented and reinvented staples of Caribbean cuisine as exemplified by the following menu:

> Ce furent chez les Walberg des agapes à la romaine, l'œuvre d'un véritable amphitryon. Jugez-en plutôt.
>
> Boudin aux ouassous
> Petit burgos aux pousses d'épinards
> et aux feuilles de siguine
> Langouste aux mangues vertes
> Porc caramélisé au vieux rhum Duquesnoy
> et au gingembre
> Fricassée de lapin aux oranges bourbonnaises
> Gratin de pommes de cythères vertes
> Gratin de bananes poto
> Salade de pourpier
> Trois sorbets : coco, fruit de la passion, citron
> Gâteau fouetté
>
> Quelle imagination hardie, quelle créativité ont présidé à l'élaboration de ces délices ! L'eau ne vous en vient-elle pas à la bouche, chers lecteurs. (2006, 121-122)

By qualifying the meal as being the product of a true "amphitryon," Condé is ironic about the role of the Walbergs in the making of this meal. In fact, her grandmother, Victoire, needs to be credited for it despite the fact it was paid for by the Walbergs, who should be relegated to a secondary role for this dinner. In this reference to mythology and the myth of Amphitryon, whose wife, Alcmena, was both impregnated by Zeus and her husband, Amphitryon stands for a metaphor for deception. In fact, Zeus took the appearance of Amphitryon in order to trick Alcmena and impregnate her. The Walbergs can be compared to Zeus, who presented this feast as their own doing. The use of the word "amphitryon," in its masculine singular form equally blurs the boundaries. Is it referring to the Walbergs or to Victoire? Who is deceiving whom? Condé could have used the feminine form, "amphitryonne," if she were talking about her grandmother. Even though her

grandmother's creativity might have been appropriated by the Walbergs, Condé points to the power and the exceptional talent displayed by Victoire. Because of this exceptional meal, she is presented as being much more than a common cook[43], crossing boundaries as explicated by the use of the qualifying adjective "hardie" that can be translated by "bold." The enumeration of dishes associated with the marriage between the French culinary tradition and Caribbean staples points to her creativity. Victoire reimagines typical French dishes such as "gratin" and "boudin," the first one being cooked with "pommes de cythères"[44], and the latter being prepared with "aoussous," a type of shrimp, instead of pig blood. Condé holds the readers as witnesses to Victoire's talent by making us salivate at the prospect of the bountifulness of dishes that is reminiscent of fine-dining restaurants and banquets, consequently challenging the assumptions too often associated with the capacities of a cook. While scholars see the passage from orality to written recipes as synonymous with both creativity and stability, it is also defined by the identity of the person behind the food. It can equally result in the stunting of inventiveness and imagination, which can be compared to that of a writer for whom these traits are essential for their trade. Moreover, Condé inscribes the dilemma between innovation and reproduction as the core of the intrinsic link between literature and gastronomy. She writes:

> D'après l'expérience que je venais de vivre, j'avais conclu qu'un même plat, en l'occurrence le mafé, diffère selon les peuples qui le préparent. Sur une base commune, arachide, tomate en boîte, viande, toutes les modifications sont permises. Cuisiner est un art. Il s'appuie donc sur la fantaisie, l'inventivité, la liberté de chacun. Les livres de cuisine ne sont que des gadgets pour gogos. Il n'existe pas de règles immuables, pas de directives contraignantes. (2015, 49)

[43] Cooks are most often associated with women, and the position of chef with masculinity. The inventory of dishes that is worthy of the work of an entire kitchen brigade adds to the exceptional talent and hard work of Victoire.

[44] Ambarellas ("pommes de cythères" in French) are native of Polynesia and arrived in the Caribbean in the 18th century.

Condé's travels have taught her, as displayed above, the complex identity of a dish, consequently rendering its immortalization on the page biased. As she skillfully judges, the "mafé," a staple of sub-Saharan Africa, is cooked differently depending on the origin of the people behind the stove[45]. According to her, cookbooks propose only a partial and monolithic representation of the complexity of this dish and likewise constrain its readers' knowledge. The textual rendering of knowledge constrains our conception of African and Caribbean cuisines to the era of colonization and post-colonization. Despite the longstanding history of intellectual and culinary productions in these regions, as readers, we are bound to a limited understanding of both. Therefore, gastro-literature produced by women can be theorized as an attempt to decolonize the culinary culture of the Caribbean and West Africa. Within the joust between reproduction and original creation lies the deontological question of infringement and unethical exploitation of someone else's intellectual property. How can one leave a signature in the culinary world? What belongs to whom? What are the boundaries and frontiers when it comes to culinary plagiarism? If in literature rules against appropriation and plagiarism are widely codified, it is not the case when it comes to culinary creativity. In fact, Condé herself refutes the existence of theft in cooking as she recalls a discussion with a friend:

> Nikki était un véritable chef. Ses spécialités était le poulet braisé aux girolles, la fricassée de cailles et le porc caramélisé aux pêches. Quand j'osai m'enquérir de ses recettes elle refusa catégoriquement de me les confier.

[45] In that sense, a parallelism can be drawn between culinary creativity and orality. Goody writes that "While it is right to emphasize the 'creative' aspect of much oral performance, which is often a combination of composition and commemoration, of creation and memory, one must also recognize the variability of this activity from performer to performer, from occasion to occasion and from 'genre to 'genre'" (1987, 81). Thus, if we extend Goody's reflection to the cooking world, the creation and production of a certain dish reveals what is behind the scene, literally drafting it as history on a plate, a tasteful narrative of its origin.

- La littérature est comme la cuisine, fit Debra moqueusement devant ma mine dépitée. Il faut se moquer des plagiats
- -Faux ! m'écriai-je. En cuisine il n'y a pas de plagiat. (2015 301)

The association between the title of chef and the name of her friend is reminiscent of the conversation about the definition of a cook versus that of a chef, whose originality in creation differentiates them as we previously discussed. The admiration for Nikki's ingenuity wins her the latter and a request for her recipes[46]. The use of the adverb "catégoriquement" to characterize the refusal to share her secrets highlights her stand against the reproduction of her recipes, and the preservation of their uniqueness. From the methods of preparation to the marriage of ingredients, it is her own identity she attempts to preserve. By comparing literature and cuisine, Condé, Debra, and Nikki reflect on the concept of intellectual property applied to something immaterial like an unwritten recipe. With recipes belonging more often to the oral domain, does the concept of intellectual property still apply as it would to a written literary manuscript? Under international copyright treaties and the laws ruling different countries, protection can be solely granted for an author's written production[47]. Beyond the law, there is the underlying moral code of conduct by which both chefs and cooks live by in the kitchen. This friendly dispute between Nikki and Condé sheds light on two opposite schools of thought, who respectively either believe in the sacred nature of intellectual property in the kitchen, as opposed to the ones who argue recipes cannot be owned, plagiarized or infringed upon. Who holds the right to

[46] As Cusack argues (69), women have historically been seen as on the side of the tradition while men are perceived as culinary innovators therefore pointing to another aspect of the rampant sexism in the cooking world, a topic we will further discuss in the second and third chapters.

[47] For example, in the United States, the U.S. Copyright Act, 17 U.S.C. §§ 101 – 810 provides protection against plagiarism, while in France safeguards are implemented by the articles L335-2 and following from the "Code de la Propriété Intellectuelle". As members of the World Intellectual Property Organization, Cameroun, France, Ivory Coast and Senegal equally enforce similar laws to protect the theft of written creative products.

reproduce, distribute and promote a recipe? Should discussion about the necessity of attribution and authorship be part of the culinary discourse? By writing food into being and reframing the tangibility of the conceptual creation of a tasting, authors of gastro-literature redefine the application of infringement right to recipes. While the law cannot protect either a list of ingredients nor the steps to complete a recipe, the copyright act can however be applied to the written expression of creativity. As a result, gastro-literature acts as a shield against all types of appropriation.

Culinary Appropriation and the Problem of the Voice: From Slave Narratives to Cookbooks

Historically, when we examine the writing down of oral knowledge in West Africa and the Caribbean, it is most often performed by outsiders. As we previously established, this is equally the case for the preservation of the culinary cultures. Black women's voices are secondary to that of white women, and Western or African men, who literally transcribed and appropriated others' knowledge. Condé describes in such terms the relationship between Victoire and Anne-Marie, who becomes the scribe of her recipes:

> Victoire n'appréciait pas du tout ce bruit autour de sa personne. C'est à regret qu'elle confiait à Anne-Marie le secret de ses compositions culinaires afin que celle-ci les baptise et les fasse imprimer. Comme un écrivain dont l'éditeur décide du nom, de la couverture, des illustrations de l'ouvrage, c'était en partie se dessaisir de sa création. Elle aurait préféré conserver le mystère. Et puis, pour elle, cuisiner n'impliquait aucun désir de vengeance vis-à-vis d'une société qui ne lui avait jamais fait de place. (2006, 123)

In a relationship reminiscent of that between slaves and the scribes who put words to their experiences, Victoire finds herself coerced into sharing her creations[48]. This lack of agency is foregrounded by the naming and printing of the recipes by Anne-Marie, who is compared to an editor. However, contrary to an editor who would work collaboratively with an author who willingly decides to share knowledge with potential readers, Victoire's reluctance to part with her tasteful brainchild is symptomatic of the relationship of power between herself and her master. By writing and naming someone else's creation into being, Anne-Marie appropriates for herself the recipes such as an editor appropriates the work of an author, which is underlined by the use of the verb "se dessaisir" [to relinquish] that is directly opposed to the action of "saisir" [to seize, or to take advantage of something]. Victoire's lack of agency over her own productions sheds light on the power of written words over oral productions, which is reminiscent of the power dynamic in immortalizing slaves' narratives[49]. Additionally, Condé debunks the idealization of the collaboration that happens between a creator and her editor as she writes:

> On peut certes imaginer une complicité entre Anne-Marie et Victoire qui se partageaient tout. L'une appelée à la rescousse pour apporter les dernières touches à l'œuvre culinaire. Cependant, je m'y refuse. Le Créateur est trop jaloux de son œuvre pour supporter "un partage" Victoire obéissait de

[48] Due to slaves' illiteracy, their narratives were often written down by educated white people who transcribed their oral tale. For instance, with *The History of Mary Prince*: *A West Indian Slave Narrative*, the annotation "narrated by herself" was added to the title to account for the transition from orality to a written testimony, as well as to counter any accusation of non-authenticity due to the filtering voice of her amanuensis.

[49] The transition from oral to written recipes raises similar questions to the transcribing of slave narratives as both are concerned with questions of authenticity as well as to know who benefits from this conversion in terms of outcome. Besides, just as Victoire frames food as a powerful tool against oppression, in the antebellum south, vengeance against enslavement and oppression was equally performed through the medium that is sustenance. Indeed, slaves had access to and prepared the staple that would reach their masters' table. The concerns over poison were prevalent. In a sense, Victoire sees herself as dependent if not subjugated to the desires of Anne-Marie, her master, in a way that echoes the history of her ancestors. Victoire is excluded from her own creation because she cannot, as a servant, sit at the same table as her masters, just like slaves were excluded from the reading experience of their own biographies due to their rank and illiteracy.

> mauvaise grâce à Anne-Marie. Il fallait lui tirer les informations de la bouche. (2006, 123)

What surfaces from the rendering of the interactions between Victoire and Anne-Marie is a ratio of power between the two women. However, if Anne-Marie, as Victoire's master, could be considered as having the advantage over her maid, this quote tempers this expectation. In fact, it highlights Anne-Marie's dependency on her maid. Her success in the high social sphere of Marie-Galante is attributable to the cooking talents of her cook, which is evidenced when Condé describes how Victoire was objectified by her master: "Anne-Marie fut assaillie de requêtes sur papier bristol émanant des familles les plus en vue. Pouvait-elle prêter Victoire pour tel ou tel repas de baptême, d'anniversaire, de noces ? Chaque fois, elle répondait avec délectation par la négative" (Condé 2006, 122). Victoire is reduced to an object, a prop for Anne-Marie's ambitions of power. Indeed, she wants to belong to the high society of her island, but even more so be sought after, a status that can only be acquired by proxy, thanks to the talents of her cook. Occurrences of the sharing of recipes, but also the sharing of Victoire herself, are imposed and forced on her, highlighting again her lack of freedom of movement. Information is forcibly taken from her, but nevertheless, she is not completely deprived of power, as she holds the possibility of withholding information from her master. By underlining that a "Creator" is too jealous to condone sharing her masterpiece, Condé gives her character the power to withhold information and rebel against the given order. Moreover, by drafting her grandmother into existence by calling her as a "Creator" with a capital C, Condé bestows on her god-like powers, thus shattering the image of the all-submissive maid. Therefore, her words and recipes, laid down on the pages, could be seen as a Bible of sorts, a masterpiece, immortalizing her creations and immortalizing her in the same way as Condé is giving a

new breath of life to her grandmother[50]. The sole traces of her grandmother and her gift have all been memorialized by words, letters, recipes published in newspapers (Condé 2006, 124), and postcolonial documents Condé was able to find when she attempted to put together the puzzle of the woman that Victoire was (Condé 2006, 106). When she writes: "Officiellement, Victoire fut donc engagée comme cuisinière au service des Walberg. Pourtant, aucun papier ne l'atteste" (2006, 104), Condé highlights the precarious nature of Victoire's social status. The lack of a contract or any documents relating to her employment participates in erasing her to the benefit of her masters who enjoy her creations without giving her the recognition and status she deserves. The Black female body is forgotten, erased from the collective and historical memory of the diaspora, a fact that Henry Louis Gates theorizes in *The Signifying Monkey*: *A Theory of African American Literary Criticism* by writing that Blackness signifies absence[51]. The use of an amanuensis, here Anne-Marie, raises the problem of the voice, that transcribed and appropriated the knowledge of the Black voice[52]. Where is the line between the voice of Anne-Marie and that of Victoire? The speech of the latter is veiled, as is her persona, by the dominant white

[50] Condé is no stranger to giving back a second life to women who have been forgotten by history. In her neo-slave narrative *Moi Tituba sorcière…noire de Salem*, she brings together the genres that are slave narratives and speculative fictions to fill in the blank of the past. She uses the same narrative techniques in *Victoire, les saveurs et les mots* as underlined in the following quotes: "Tel qu'il est, je livre le portait que je suis parvenue à tracer, dont je ne garantis certainement pas l'impartialité, ni même l'exactitude" (18). As a black woman, Condé is left to work with the crumbs left by Western supremacy and the disregard for black lives and their cultural heritage. It is the literal and figurative consumption of blackness that Condé invites us all to realize and confront. By filling the blanks of history, she attempts to give us more than a taste of the heritage of the Caribbean and African diaspora, but a full meal rich in flavors, perfumes, experiences, and relationships: a recreated meal, not necessarily authentic, but a meal nonetheless that satisfies the hunger.

[51] In his work, Gates questions the use of the language of the oppressor, a language that itself becomes a witness and accomplice to the erasure of the black body to give a voice to the flouted beings. He showed that this [re]appropriation signifies the necessary absorption and digestion of the Western literary canon on which African American literature, and by extension the literature of the African diaspora, inscribes its own essence to [re]define the notion of Blackness.

[52] Benoit Depardieu in Judith Misrahi-Barak's *Revisiting Slave Narratives* reinforces the issue of the use of amanuenses to convey the black experience voice (2005: 126) thus echoing the concerns of Gates we previously underlined.

voice of her scribe. It is important to note that such a working relationship itself is translated by “un nègre” in French, a pejorative designation that highlights both the unrecognized work of a person who writes for someone else, but also the process of appropriation that never gives credit for the completed labor. In the case of Condé’s grandmother, her white master arrogated to herself Victoire’s talents and by extension black Caribbean culture. French language consumes blackness and black culture, thus depriving a diaspora of its own inheritance, whether linguistic, historical or cultural. While Anne-Marie acts in ways that seem inclusive of her maid Victoire, such behaviors can be qualified as a façade for the exploitation of her person, as the following quote exemplifies:

> Victoire se trouva, comme un temps chez Anne-Marie, dans la position d’un écrivain forcé d’honorer des commandes d’éditeur. Très vite, son travail lui pèse, l’insupporte, devient corvée. Car la cuisine, comme l’écriture, ne peut s’épanouir que dans la plus totale liberté et ne supporte pas les contraintes. Foin des règles, des traités, des manifestes et des arts poétiques. Paradoxalement, Jeanne était constamment sur son dos, l’accablant de suggestions :
> - Si tu préparais ta splendide daube de langouste au citron et aux mangues vertes ?
> - Ou ta pintade aux raisins de Corinthe et au miel ?
> - Non ! ces gens-là, quoi qu’ils prétendent ont le palais encore frustre. Fais simplement une fricassée de poulet que tu serviras avec un gratin de pommes de cythères vertes.
> - Non ! plutôt du porc au safran et au lait de coco avec du riz créole.
>
> Victoire s’exécutait, sans bouderies apparentes, sans trahir sa mauvaise grâce. Passe encore si elle avait pu rester dans la cuisine avec les bonnes, face aux plats qu’elle s’était ingéniée à préparer. Or, là encore, Jeanne l’obligeait à s’habiller, à s’asseoir dans le salon parmi les invités, à manger à table avec eux, à entendre une conversation indéchiffrable à laquelle elle était incapable de prendre part. Les convives avaient beau l’accabler de compliments, elle avait l’impression d’être de trop. La dévotion que Jeanne lui manifestait ces soirs-là lui paraissait ostentatoire, théâtrale. (Condé 2006, 240-241)

For the preparation of these weekly business meals at Auguste and Jeanne’s, Victoire’s inventiveness is smothered and her creative process is controlled -- if not dictated -- by

Jeanne, who is obsessed with certain recipes, such as the "Gratin de pommes de cythères vertes" Victoire composed for the special dinner at the Walbergs (2006, 121-122). The pleasure of cooking becomes a chore and muffles her voice, which is highlighted by the association of the anaphoric repetition of "sans" that precedes the qualifying adjective "apparent," underlining her lack of autonomy. Victoire hides her feelings and puts on a mask to cope with her mistress' overwhelming behavior. The comparison and similarities between the art of writing and that of cooking are again featured to focus attention on the antagonism between freedom and subordination. Victoire is a puppet in the hands of her daughter who dictates and controls all her actions, from the way she dresses to her movements themselves. The theatricality and illusion of authenticity during the dinner unveil the inadequacy of the presence of Victoire, who can never belong in this picture and at the table of the hosts. Her position is in her kitchen behind her stove. Victoire's daughter, on the contrary, is the only one who is able to transition from behind the scenes to the dining room as she acts as a *doppelgänger* to Anne-Marie, who raised her as her own daughter[53]. Neither one of them is a doer, but instead they are consumers of Victoire's creativity and as such, Jeanne positions herself on the side of the masters. Victoire's gender and race are the source of her inability to transition to the dining room: she is refused the recognition and elevation in status given to chefs, a title traditionally associated with males. Therefore, by writing cookbooks, and exploring the genre that is gastro-literature, the authors I am focusing on literally extricate the cooks from their kitchen to give them a voice and the recognition they deserve.

[53] The status and education provided by the Wahlbergs to Jeanne, prevents her from enduring the same fate as her mother. This is equally the reason for the gap between Jeanne and Victoire, who fail to see eye to eye as illustrated repeatedly by Condé in her work.

From this perspective, Marguerite Abouet's comic book opens up new perspectives as it proposes a blend between genres. The hybridity of this literary genre and content make it belong to both the written and oral realms. The alliance between written recipes and speech bubbles represent the evolution of African literature and culinary writing as a whole. It fact, I would like to argue that *Délices d'Afrique: 50 recettes pour petits moments de confidences à partager* embodies the heritage of African literature, which stands at the crossroads of words and mouth, orality and writing. The creative voice behind a meal is forthwith projected on the front of the page and does not occupy a secondary role in getting the deserved recognition for the creative process. Abouet's cooks face their readers. We know who they are and what they look like. We penetrate their kitchen and witness a slice of their life. Abouet puts a face on the recipes she introduces us to when she invites Fatou, Kady and Tito, among others, to share their experiences, and the recipes they invent or reproduce to overcome their ups and downs. Therefore, we are shown that what cookbooks were unable to perform for Caribbean and West African cultures in terms of preservation and re-appropriation could only be performed through literature, and more specifically through gastro-literature.

To conclude, the growing interest in the genre of gastro-literature by Condé and West African female authors performs the transition from a predominantly oral culture to written literary works in order to reclaim and protect a rich culinary heritage once safeguarded by the griots. Abouet, Beyala, Condé, Miano, and Sow Fall come back to the origin of recipes to rewrite a history of gastronomical legacy and background, which shatters stereotypes of Caribbean and West African cuisines and advocates for

Afrocentrism. From the reproduction and sharing of family recipes to the invention of and contribution to the national tables, the Caribbean and West African meals are immortalized, codified and redefined. This process that is the association between food and words is that of the making of a cuisine. In that sense, not every society has a cuisine For Parkhurst Ferguson:

> Cuisine, like dining, turns the private into the public, the singular into a collective, the material into the cultural. It supplies the cultural code that enables societies to think with and about the food they consume. As cooking makes food fit to eat, so cuisine, with its formal and symbolic ordering of culinary practices, turns that act of nourishment into an object fit for intellectual consumption and aesthetic appreciation. (2004, 3)

The making of a cuisine is the first step towards the recognition of flavors, produce, and dishes abroad. The codification of meals into a cuisine enable its rise beyond the boundaries of its origin. Because recipes are laid down on the page, readers are metaphorically and literally invited to share the table of these authors, and frontiers are disbanded to offer anyone the opportunity to become the chef they aspire to be and act as real life doppelgängers to the characters who share their well-kept culinary secrets. Thus, far from the common association of blackness with unruly consumption and cannibalism that Loichot brands as the "colonial food disease" (viii)[54], refinement is no more a Western

[54] I entirely concur with Loichot, who wrote in her introduction to *The Tropics Bite Back: Culinary Coups in Caribbean Literature* that:

> Caribbean subjects confront with teeth and discourse insidious images such as that of the fiery tropical cannibal to take center stage on the kitchen table of the literary sense. Guadeloupean writer Maryse Condé has termed this common strategy of resistance to colonialism as act of *mordre en retour* or "biting back". Caribbean writers eat back at these representations by reclaiming images of pathological eating as culturally productive through actual gesture of cooking, by turning food, often presented in a discursive mode of production, by entrapping Western readers into their own trap, by practicing literary cannibalism, and eventually, by establishing a literature in a postcannibalistic moment outside antagonistic or revengeful relations. (x)

We will come back to stereotypes such as the trope of cannibalism later on when we will be discussing the transition in the representation of sub-Saharan African cuisines in France in chapter three.

prerogative, but becomes the new attainable standard for black cooks and chefs alike. The black figure is not anymore consumed by or consuming of Western culture, but is instead drafted in the role of creator of unique, exquisite, and authentic gustatory experiences. In this perspective it thus seems essential to analyze how these changes have affected the restaurant and literary industries in terms of the representation of sub-Saharan and Caribbean cultures. Can the products of these cultures shatter the stereotypes they have been associated with? Can they rise and be recognized in the highest culinary and literary spheres and break free from Western hegemony? In the next chapter, we will focus on the parallel between the publishing and the culinary industries in establishing hierarchies that have muted and controlled francophone black culinary and literary traditions in order for the West, and most specifically France, to preserve its supremacy.

Chapter Two:
Getting the Word Out:
When the Low Becomes High in the Literary and Culinary Worlds

"If the food is delicious, the tongue knows"
African proverb

The parallels between the literary and culinary traditions run deep, all the way to the source of both industries: the publishing house and the restaurant. Most publishing houses of francophone authors are in fact located in Paris, and the supremacy of French cuisine, which is renowned for techniques that elevate food standards from street food to fine dining, is well documented. In this chapter, we will examine how both industries owe their success to written productions in the development of both the literary and culinary arts when it comes to recognition and prestige. In fact, what Condé, Sow Fall, and Miano, among other authors, demonstrate, is that the literature of food opens up significant questions about the relationship between France, sub-Saharan Africa, and the Caribbean through the medium of food. I demonstrate that whereas France has had the upper hand over black francophone productions in both domains, its former colonies are now developing new opportunities for themselves in both the publishing and culinary industries, instead of consuming the breadcrumbs left by France. In fact, sub-African and Caribbean people want their share of the cake too, and they are investing in and developing their own businesses so as to exercise agency over the production and diffusion of their own culture for which they want recognition and acknowledgement. In this perspective, we will ask ourselves, what is gastronomy? Can we talk about Senegalese, Cameroonian or Caribbean gastronomy? Why is African food so underrepresented abroad? My argument stems from

the fact that in both the literary and culinary domains, black productions are perceived to require the translation by white voices if they want to be successfully exported. However, as underlined by the work of gastro-literature we analyzed in the previous chapter, this view is declining to make room for new global behaviors and interactions; the chef, the author, and the publisher are the mixed metaphor of this revolution as I will demonstrate in this chapter.

The Cook and the Chef: A History of Exclusion and the Story of a Fight for Power

Much as we talk about 'Molière's language' and 'Bocuse's palate', both the literary and culinary worlds have been dominated by white men, thus controlling and even excluding the opposite gender and race from both industries. In fact, throughout history, women have been ostracized from the professional kitchen to be kept within the walls of the domestic kitchen, as Jack Goody underlines in *Cooking, Cuisine and Class: A Study in Comparative Sociology,* when he writes:

> The aspect of sociology of cooking that bears on the sexual division of labour was a highly generalized one. From Egyptian times, the great courts of Europe and the Mediterranean employed men as cooks. It was they who took over the women's recipes for daily cooking and transformed them into a court cuisine. Stratification took a very different form in Africa. There it was women who cooked at the courts of kings, and there were few if any culinary changes from the recipes and processes of ordinary life. For such women were not cooking as household servants but as wives. (101)

By tracing the division in perception and recognition between men's and women's labor to the courts of the European kings, Goody points to the division between high and low

cuisine as the source of discrimination[55]. However, what Goody equally sheds light on is an essential dichotomy between Europe and Africa, as women in Africa were in charge of feeding the courts of kings, all the while performing their other duties as wives within a polygamous kingdom (1982, 101). This intricate pattern between their professional and domestic role deeply influenced and simplified the food that was served in the courts of African kings. Could these conditions explain the perceived lack of development and refinement of African cuisines? For one thing, the status imposed on women reduced their roles to that of invisible servants. Their worth was measured by their contribution in the kitchen and their capacity to become invisible as they served their masters. The intermingling of the personal and the professional kept women in the domestic kitchen, preventing their social ascension to the benefits granted to men. In fact, let's not forget that, historically, male cooks transitioned to the status of chef and the professional kitchen as a means to ascend the social ladder. Cooking professionals belonged to a lower social class both on the African and European continents, and the professionalization of their craft represented an opportunity to transition from the kitchen to the dining room.

In fact, in the love story between Jimmy and his girlfriend Mouna (56), Abouet herself highlights the power gained by a chef when it comes to climbing the social ladder. Mouna could never have hoped for their relationship to be accepted by her family due to the fact they belonged to different a social class. From "aide cuisinier de 'choukouya' to owner of a "maquis"[56], Jimmy's ascension in the kitchen is the reason he was granted permission by Mouna's father to marry her. Cooks were previously unable to benefit from

[55] It should be noted that the role of griot was also born within the court of Kings, and both the cooks and the griots belonged to a lower caste.
[56] In Ivory Coast, a *maquis* is a cheap open-air restaurant, where people meet to drink and eat traditional dishes such as the choukouya that is grilled marinated meat with spices.

the fruits of their labor, such as to dine out in restaurants or enjoy aspects of their clients' life. This switch in status historically elevated the cook to the rank of chef, which equaled that of the clients of their restaurant. As Mouna narrates:

> On n'était pas du même milieu. Moi, je suis de la classe d'une classe moyenne. C'est-à-dire une classe intermédiaire entre riches et pauvres, qui avait le minimum pour vivre à l'abri du besoin, ou tout le moins, qui parvenait à satisfaire les besoins de la vie courante sans trop de privations. Ce qui n'était pas le cas de Jimmy […]. (Abouet 56)

In her description of the hardships that separate Jimmy and herself, Mouna underlines the family's pressure that she finds a husband within her own social rank. The accent is put on the ability for a husband to provide for his family. As a cook, Jimmy could not claim to meet his own needs and those of another person, but as a chef, he accedes to this sought-after middle-class status opening new doors and possibilities for him: more power within society, a change in his perceived worth, and the personal potential created by increased value within his community. Therefore, cooking has always been linked to power and social class, a point that Condé frequently highlights in her writings. But what she emphasizes even more is gender discrimination when it comes to the possibility of entering the professional kitchen. A lady's place is not in the kitchen, as Condé's mother once told her: "- Les vraies dames ne se soucient pas de faire à manger" (Condé 2015, 223). By placing women above the mere physiological necessity for sustenance, Condé's mother fails to recognize the value of her own mother's work and passion as a cook. We could hypothesize that the reasons pushing her to shun this professional endeavor stemmed from the difficult mother-daughter relationship she experienced. As a result of the pressure Condé's mother put on Maryse as a child, the former constructed a legacy of exclusion and

disrepute for the food service profession. As Condé recalls, she conceived, from a young age, the act of entering the kitchen as a transgression against the family order:

> Ainsi le goût que m'avait inspiré la cuisine naquit largement du désir de ne pas me conformer à l'image de la petite fille modèle, chère à mes parents et à ma mère. Au lieu de massacrer La Lettre à Elise devant un parterre d'amis faussement admiratifs, je préférais entrer dans la cuisine. C'est le même désir de déplaire qui a accompagné mon entrée en littérature. (2015, 11)

Rebellion and non-conformity are the roots of her attraction to both cooking and writing, which she portrays as forbidden fruits, unfit for a model child. In this perspective, as she puts it, writing *Victoire, les saveurs et les mots* and *Mets et merveilles* becomes a provocation for her parents who perceived both the literary and the culinary paths as disreputable (2015, 12). In fact, her mother even stated: "Seules les personnes bêtes se passionnent pour la cuisine" (2015, 22). This sharp statement highlights her disapproval for this activity, which is echoed by the opinion of Adélia, one of the family maids who said to her : "- Je ne te comprends pas, commentait-elle, tu es la première à l'école mais tout ce qui t'intéresse c'est fourrer ton nez dans la cuisine" (Condé 2015, 21). The prejudices she heard growing up associating cooking and the lack of intelligence did not deter her interest for this craft, quite to the contrary. Unable to take her mind off the pleasure felt while she stood in a kitchen in the middle of ingredients and spices, Condé even compares her experience to that of coming out the closet: "par contre je me rappelais avec netteté l'enthousiasme qui brutalement s'était emparé de moi et qui m'avait poussée à sortir du *closet* comme un homosexuel qui se décide à révéler ses préférences sexuelles" (2015, 53). The happiness and desire that emanate from the act of cooking are experienced as shameful, but also as a part of her identity she cannot silence or ignore. One could even argue that by breaking away at a young age from her parents' guidance and their desire to

model their daughter in their image, Condé symbolically refuses their legacy and teaching, which are symbolized by the respectability of music as a hobby. On the contrary, cooking, whether as a vocation or a career, is not perceived as dignified enough for a girl from a good family, and her aspirations to make it her career were cut short:

> Je m'empressai, ravie :
> - Moi aussi, je voudrais être une cuisinière.
> A l'expression de ma mère, je sus que je faisais fausse route. Elle ne m'élevait pas pour devenir une cuisinière, même un chef. (Condé 2006, 15)

"Une cuisinière," a noun used both for the appliance (the stove) and the domestic female cooks, inherently inscribes and locks women in their traditional roles. Condé could read disapproval for her aspirations and talents on her mother's face. Even though it is made evident she resented her mother for it, later as a mother herself she questions her own ability to dismantle the inherited expectation she has for her children, especially her daughters: "Je le savais en effet. Sûr et certain, mes parents ne m'auraient jamais laissé me diriger dans cette voie. Mais qu'en était-il de moi ? Aurais-je accepté que mes filles deviennent chefs et non des juristes et des économistes ?" (2015, 13). Completely discarding the term "cuisinière," Condé cannot even conceive of them as chefs. Being a chef carries the idea of success and the shattering of expectations when it comes to the place women hold in a kitchen. Therefore, while women have been excluded from the professional kitchen, so has anyone who belonged in a higher social class, whether male or female. Not prestigious enough, it cannot compare with other careers, and Condé, like her friends, sees it as a hierarchically lower activity on the scale of prestige that peaks with her work as an intellectual. A renowned author, why would she lower herself to cook? How could she partake in an activity that has reduced the social mobility of women to domesticity? And

finally, how could she be a talented cook too? During a dinner, she faces the questioning of her guests:

> Je me rappelle les mines surprises de mes convives se léchant les babines après avoir savouré un chapon aux fruits confits ou un bar en portefeuille accompagné d'une purée de petits pois. Être une excellente cuisinière contribuait aussi pour moi à casser cette image d'intellectuelle, de militante et de féministe que l'on me colle trop aisément. (Condé 2015, 13).

Cooking becomes a rebellious act for a woman, especially for an educated woman and a feminist. A feminist should not be in the kitchen, a feminist should not be instrumental in an activity that built itself on the exclusion of the opposite gender. Condé, as a woman and a feminist is thus expected to keep within the boundaries and categories that people impose on her, that of a writer, and a thinker[57]. The enjoyment of her passion is thus accompanied by the hunger to break away from expectations. As people say in France, "on ne mélange pas les nappes et les torchons" [*don't get ideas above your station*], meaning that people should remain focused on their domain of expertise. An author is neither a suitable cook nor can she pretend to be a chef. The surprise of Condé's guests ultimately demonstrates their inability to fathom the talent and creativity of a *cuisinière*, not to mention that of an author.

Historically, women only gained access to the professional kitchen and the haute-cuisine scenery with much effort, which Parkhurst Ferguson summarizes well when she writes that "female associations are concerned with the domestic order; gastronomy occupied a public domain, which explains that, like chefs, the gastronome was invariably male" (93). But female chefs still face the same challenges and discrimination today:

[57] Manual labor is seen as a step down from intellectual work, thus ignoring the creative implications that come with the elaboration of a dish.

> The exclusion of women from the most public, upper reaches of the culinary world affected by professionalization over the nineteenth century is by no means entirely a thing of the past. Its hold remains particularly strong in elite French-oriented restaurants in France and wherever the French model supplies the standard. As a general rule and despite undeniable change, the "haut-er" one gets, the fewer women one finds. The association of cooking with women and domesticity was a hindrance to professional status. (Parkhurst Ferguson 156)

Only by restricting women to the domestic kitchen were men able to advance and establish control over the culinary industry and create the professionalization of their trade[58]. Men were thus able to construct the professional kitchen in their image and to make a career out of their craft. To begin with, the food itself is historically linked with manly and chivalrous, if not military attributes, thus excluding women[59]. We talk about *a brigade* to describe the regimented organization in hierarchical stages of the people running behind the scene of a restaurant. Daggers, now replaced by knives, are part of the figure of a chef, all amounting to sketch a portrait of virility. As we consider the representation of chefs in contemporary society, very little has changed. Cooking shows and culinary magazines well exemplify the enduring double standards between both genders. If we take the example of

[58] Women were also at first excluded from the main dining rooms in restaurants, which provided separate rooms where men and women could be regaled together. By the end of the 19th century, drawings and photographs showed women sitting in the main dining area, testifying to greater inclusion.

[59] Parkhurst Ferguson expresses the same idea when she writes that "the charismatic authority of the (customarily and most frequently still male chef), reinforced by a plethora of military metaphors, sets up against the domestic authority of the (archetype female) cook, dominated by comforting images of nurturing and the home" (20). As Vanessa Postec records in her book *Le goût des femmes à table*, it is not before the year 1951 with the first female chef that one can see a real caesura in this long-lasting hegemony of men over professional cooking in France (38). This initial advancement will not be confirmed before the beginning of the 1970s as feminist debates raged, which consecutively empowered women to unite, and resulted in the creation of the "Association des restauratrices cuisinières" (34). Therefore, professionalization prospects were scarce for women. Even the most renowned French male chefs tried to fight back against the success of female chefs' as they broke through the culinary industry. As quoted in Postec, Paul Bocuse himself, as the father of French cuisine, fought back against the opening of the kitchen and broke into: "les femmes sont certainement de bonnes cuisinières pour une cuisine dite de tradition […]", c'est une "cuisine nullement inventive". […] "Les femmes ne sont pas de bonnes cheftaines" (35). On the contrary, owing its existence to founding mothers and still dominated by the role of women, Caribbean and West African cuisines remained widely seen as homey and comforting.

Top Chef, one of the most successful recent culinary show in France with eleven seasons, one can see the clear gender divides in the professional kitchens. The symbol itself of the show is a chef's knife, while the opening credits feature the various chefs exercising their knives' skills, sharpening their knives or posing with them[60]. Most of the contestants and hosts are male, and most of the winners are male too. In fact, only two women won over the eleven seasons of the show. It is particularly poignant in a country where *la parité* [gender equality] is inscribed within the first article of the Constitution of the Fifth Republic drafted in 1958 stating that: "La loi favorise l'égal accès des femmes et des hommes aux mandats électoraux et fonctions électives, ainsi qu'aux responsabilités professionnelles et sociales." Women seem to be integrated to the show to fulfill a quota and display a more gender inclusive kitchen environment.

However, not all are equal and integrated in the culinary brotherhood. From the front of the house to the kitchen, the culinary industry has been historically dominated by the white male in the West. Memories of racist and discriminatory behaviors in cafés and restaurants experienced by inhabitants of the French colonies are narrated to Condé:

> Il raconta par exemple, qu'en 1889, élève au lycée Carnot, il avait été envoyé à Paris avec d'autres Guadeloupéens et des Martiniquais à l'exposition universelle. Il décrivait la stupeur des Parisiens quand ils poussaient la porte des cafés et des restaurants. Paniqués, certains consommateurs se précipitaient vers la sortie. Tous s'étonnaient bruyamment qu'ils puissent manier fourchettes et couteaux. (2006, 224)

[60] However, in the opening credits of season 9, a female contestant can be seen using a pastry brush as make up brush. One can see in this gesture the two sides of a coin. It can be construed either as an act of defiance from a chef asserting her femininity in a world dominated by men and where women are pressured to put aside their femininity, or it can be analyzed as the extreme femininization of this chef who cannot be portrayed as her male counterparts doing competitive or fighting gestures because of her gender. Whether it is a personal choice from the chef herself or a decision from the production firm.
In Star Chef, the Panafrican equivalent of Top Chef, women chefs are too outnumbered by their male counterparts.

While the 19th century witnessed the birth of restaurants in France as we know them today, it also set the rules of the industry as a whole. Restaurants were a show, a place to see and be seen, and in this perspective, this scene recounted to Condé stands as an extension of the human zoos of the universal exposition. This window into the colonies embodies the figurative consumption of the exotic bodies that were exposed for the enjoyment of French citizens, and this behavior represents the enduring prejudices that have burdened minorities until today. Entrapped on the side of the raw[61], they do not belong to the front of the house, nor do they belong fully in the kitchen either. They are reduced to doing menial labor by the chefs they work for and who dispossess them from their culinary heritage as exemplified below:

> Voilà pourquoi La Nouvelle-Orléans ne fut pas simplement pour moi une capitale gastronomique, la ville des beignets dégustées au quartier français, la reine de l'étouffée aux crevettes et du filet de gombo, de tous ces plats que les esclaves emportèrent avec eux quand leurs maîtres furent chassés d'Haïti à la fin du XVIIIe siècle. Je n'allais jamais déjeuner chez Gallatoire, lieu de rendez-vous où la bonne société se pare de ses plus beaux atours et se coiffe de larges capelines pour déguster du crabe façon Sardou. (Condé 2015, 143)

For Condé, New Orleans illustrates the colonization of ethnic cuisines and the historical exclusion of people of color from haute cuisine and fine dining. The city is glorified for its unique culinary heritage highly influenced by French cuisine[62], as it stands out in the

[61] A parallelism can be drawn with *The Raw and the Cooked* by anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss in which he opposes the binaries of nature versus culture, and theorizes a hierarchy of food preparations that equates different degrees of social prestige.

[62] In Gallatoire, the décor of the restaurant itself can be analyzed as a reminder of the French influence. The *fleur-de-lys* on the wallpaper evokes one of the French symbols, while the mirrors around the room are a significant reminder of the ones that adorned the front of the house in 19th century restaurants in Paris, granting to the clients the possibility to admire themselves as much as to observe their fellow diners. However, when it comes to the history of the *fleur-de-lys* in Louisiana, it's history is not without controversy, as it has been widely adopted as the emblem of the rebirth of New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina; but it is equally tainted with the blood of the slaves who were branded with that same symbol according to the *code noir* if they were caught trying to escape. In 1724, the *code noir* was adapted by Louisiana as a set of regulations to control the slave population.

American culinary scene. However, in Condé's condemnation, this success stems from the enslavement of the inhabitants of the Caribbean and the theft and appropriation of their traditions. Covered by the beautiful garments of the customers, the appalling history that is served on the plates is ignored and forgotten by all[63]. By refusing to dine in this restaurant, Condé forbids herself from endorsing its history and the injustices it represents, thus shedding light on the fact that haute cuisine has built itself on the exploitation of the Other. Consequently, through literature, women attempt to underline the shortfalls of the industry, call for its accountability, and deconstruct the legacy of the founding fathers of French cuisine. They illustrate the ethnocentrism that defines the worldwide culinary industry and that has created a long-lasting hierarchization of taste. As Bourdieu theorizes in *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, taste is a social construct. In fact, for Bourdieu, "taste is an acquired disposition to differentiate and appreciate" (468). It represents a symbolic hierarchy that is established by the socially dominant class in order to preserve their distinction from other social classes (469). In that sense, French cuisine follows the same pattern, and its exclusion of women and people of color is meant to preserve France's hegemony in the hierarchy of taste. However, one could also interpret such behavior as a sign of anxiety of a white male-dominated French cuisine towards cuisines and culinary productions presumed to be of a lower stature.

[63] In chapter 3, entitled "The Taste of Terroir," we will come back to the relationship between Africa, the Caribbean, America, and France that has influenced the food in these regions as we know it today.

The Historical Hegemony of French Cuisine

Besides being the cradle of the restaurant industry, France is equally known for the role it played in the birth of haute cuisine and the conceptualizing of fine dining. Not all cooking is classified as equal, and some dishes, restaurants, and cuisines are more prestigious than others. Parkhurst Ferguson writes:

> Cooking begins the primary transformative process that puts food in a state ready to be consumed. But if *cooking* involves chiefly the producer of the dish, gastronomy (a new term in the nineteenth-century Paris) points to the sophisticated diner, to the embodiment of Brillat-Savarin's ideal consumer: "Animals fill themselves, people eat, intelligent people alone know how to eat." (3)

The pleasure of selecting produce, the satisfaction of cooking, and the enjoyment of savoring a meal define the *gourmand*, as coined by Brillat-Savarin, who differentiates himself through the intellectualization of the eating process and the development of a rule of knowledge on how to eat well[64]. The question is, what set France apart, and how did it transform a cuisine into a haute cuisine? As anthropologist Sydney Mintz underlines, not every society has a cuisine, but no society can have a haute cuisine without first having a cuisine (1989, 187). If one desires to understand this process and the creation of culinary standards, one must look to France, which seems to be on top[65], as Condé discovered when she moved to France for her studies:

> En effet, invitée fréquemment à des déjeuners dominicaux chez mes camarades d'hypokhâgne, j'avais découvert à ma surprise que la France était le pays du bien-manger, qu'on y faisait ripaille et que les touristes

[64] The term "gourmand," which needs to be differentiated from the word "gourmet," was a new cultural figure that encompassed the "gourmand" and the aesthete. Eating became an art, and eating well meant knowing how to eat properly, according to matters of health, good practices and taste alike.

[65] While the recent years have seen a rise in the questioning of the enduring supremacy of French cuisine, I would like to set this examination aside to concentrate on the historical construction of French culinary heritage as the pillar of haute cuisine.

> affluaient de loin pour savourer le foie gras, le lapin aux pruneaux et les ris de veau. (2015, 30)

With a quasi-religious aura, France is regarded as the world-leading figure for the creation of canonical dishes that have seduced the entire world. However, scholars attribute this hegemony to different factors. The leading voices on the subject, Trubek and Parkhurst Ferguson see different trends as the reason for this success and the creation of a haute cuisine. In fact, Parkhurst Ferguson considers the tour de force of French cuisine to be that it is both national and cosmopolitan, arguing that the centralization, and the "attendant concentration of French cultural institution[s]" was a perfect conjecture unmatched by all other European countries (26)[66]. On the other hand, Trubek underlines that the process of the creation of a haute cuisine was less centralized as "Haute cuisine emerged from certain locales in France, promoted and produced by a fairly small group of chefs […]. Their promotional efforts after 1750 focused on developing and disseminating a system of cooking that they could control." (29). However, what comes through the expertise of both scholars is that this success is due entirely to the notion of power and control. For Trubek, the power of French cuisine emanated from the chefs, while Parkhurst Ferguson asserts that the culinary discourses and the literature were the driving force behind its hegemony and glory. For the creation of the power of French cuisine, she credits three men: the gastronomic journalist Grimod de la Reynière, Carême, who wrote culinary treatises, and Brillat-Savarin, who excelled in cultural culinary commentary. All in all, what transpires is the equal importance of the kitchen and authors' dens, which both bestowed French cuisine with its crest and position at the apex of nobility. The legacy of these founding

[66] Interestingly, Parkhurst Ferguson discards non-European countries from having the potential to compete, even though Chinese and Middle-Eastern cuisines have been highly regarded for centuries and have influenced French cuisine.

fathers rests within the ruling aura of French restaurants as Condé well describes: “Nous allâmes dîner à la brasserie Bofinger que dans le passé nous avions beaucoup fréquentée. J’aimais cet endroit, les ors et dorures, l’élégance des serveurs et les mines avec lesquelles ils charroyaient les plats aussi solennels que des prêtres distribuant l’eucharistie” (2015, 322). This pilgrimage-like dinner, at one of the most eminent brasseries in Paris, is echoed by the comparison between the servers and priests giving the holy communion. French cuisine is elevated to the highest rank, that of a godlike figure, served in a golden temple designed to honor it, thus joining Trubek’s ironic statement when she states that “whatever is French is important, whatever is not French is not important” (130). Therefore, like any godlike figure, French cuisine is destined to look down on the world beneath it, thus painting the portrait of a cuisine that is not inclusive, but rather rigid and centered on itself, which Condé does not fail to realize during her trips: “Comme à chaque fois Paris me regardait de haut, froide et distante comme une étrangère” (2015, 322). The personification of the city of Paris represents metonymically the French culture, nation, and citizens who look down on the outside thus continuing to establish a relationship of dominance over its former colonies, and even overseas departments. Being distant, arrogant, proud, and contemptuous characterizes the hexagon. Inclusion stops at the French borders, pointing to a deliberate debasing of the foreign to raise up French productions. While France represents the ideal of gastronomy, the ultimate high, is everything else doomed to remain in its shadow? If we look at sub-Saharan and Caribbean cuisines, they appear to be part of the low, the margin, never making it to the front of the stage, invariably exploited and controlled by the former colonial power. Woven into in a system of capitalism that has endured since colonization, these regions are still suffering from their past, which Condé

questions as the source of their inability to rise up culturally. She asks: "Une nouvelle objection me vint aussitôt à l'esprit: la culture et la cuisine d'un pays ne dépendent-elles pas aussi de sa condition socio-économique ?" (2015, 37). By questioning the association between the socio-economic history of a country and the state of its cuisine and culture, Condé points out the systemic inequalities that abide. Therefore, according to Condé, would it be inherently impossible for Senegalese cuisine to compete with French cuisine? Are African cuisines condemned to consume the crumbs left by colonization?

High African Cuisines?

Igor Cusack offers a partial answer to these questions in his article entitled "Cookery Books and Celebrity Chefs: Men's Contribution to National Cuisines in sub-Saharan Africa," where he states that "the very dominance of French culture in its former colonies, and the importance of French cuisine as a component of that culture, may have originally suppressed the more widespread emergence of well-defined national cuisines in francophone Africa" (68). French staples and fares have penetrated the culinary cultures of the diverse francophone sub-Saharan countries and have influenced the development of their unique identity and their demarcation from each other as well as from the former colonial power[67]. Interestingly, what Cusack highlights is both the inability of these countries to develop and coin their own national cuisines in such a culturally smothering environment, but also the fact this restriction has recently evolved. However, when looking at the African continent, my research shows that some flavors have succeeded in gaining

[67] We will further explore this trope in chapter four.

representation and reverence in the West, such as Ethiopian and North African cuisines. Respectively included in the fine-dining scene through chefs such as Chef Marcus Samuelson and Chef Dar Moha[68], they have prospered to stand outside of the all-inclusive category of ethnic restaurants to even steal the show in the gastronomical arena. Why do these cuisines seem to escape the pattern of high versus low that mirrors the North-South boundary? As historian James McCann argues in his book entitled *Stirring the Pot: A History of African Cuisine*, when it comes to Ethiopian cuisine, its success and integration in the Western culinary landscape began with the implantation of restaurants in Europe and North America in the 1980s. But what lies behind this success is the appeal of Ethiopian cuisine, which was coined as a national and international political influencer at a time when Ethiopia was seeking unity. In fact, there is no life ritual as important as sustaining oneself. It is part of daily life, but also of special occasions such as marriages. In this regard, food that places emphasis on elite cuisine ignores the complexity and varied nature of common cookery in everyday practice and by people of different regions. Subsequently, it similarly impacts the food and cuisine profiles that are consumed by a group. The importance of creating a cuisine is a quality well understood by Queen Taytu, who organized a Christian feast in 1887. Her banquet, influenced by Western customs and flavors, became her legacy and would propel Ethiopia onto the international scene.

[68] Marcus Samuelson has several restaurants in North America and Europe. He is the author of prized cookbooks and was the recipient in 1999 of the James Beard Award for "Rising Star Chef." On his end, Dar Moha has received the prize Gault & Millau for the best chef for Moroccan gastronomy. He is the owner of the eponymous restaurant in Marrakesh and has written the highly regarded gastronomical cookbook entitled "La cuisine de Moha. Les meilleures recettes de Marrakech." Interestingly, most food historians, when delving into African cuisines, completely obliterate Northern African fares to instead concentrate on the sub-Saharan region. However, if Ethiopian flavors have entered gastronomical restaurants worldwide, so have northern African staples.

2.1. Empress Taytu Betul (1880s) - Source: http://solarey.net/empress-taytu-betul/

As James McCann remarks, "the emperor and empress made Addis Ababa into a cultural capital from which a new national political culture was to emerge. Food and cookery were one expression of the attempt to assert a new national identity" (77). In fact, more than just participating in the creation of a recognized national identity, food and cookery also projected this newly created identity beyond the national borders to be recognized internationally. Therefore, by coining a cuisine from street food to a gastronomical banquet, Ethiopia challenged the belief that haute cuisine could only be French[69]. Queen Taytu understood this point and chose the style of the banquet, well implanted in the French tradition, for her feast. By giving value to the selection of produce, the presentation, the sequence, and the meaning of the food as underlined by McCann (67), she demonstrated

[69] If one looks at the definition of haute cuisine, the dictionary Merriam-Webster states that it is an "artful or elaborate cuisine, *especially*: traditionally elaborate French cuisine." By anchoring it in French tradition, it hints at excluding other cuisines, and more so the ones that would not adopt the French way as the way to elevate their fare.

that refinement was not exclusively the prerogative of the West. By adopting the culinary techniques, the codes of preparing, serving and entertaining, chefs demonstrate that the French may have theorized haute cuisine, but ultimately, they developed a set of tools to be used worldwide.

The question of the formation of a distinct cuisine is essential for understanding the relationship between the hegemonic French cuisine and its satellites. And to understand this process, one must focus on the analysis of the debate between Jack Goody, who reflected upon and analyzed in depth the dichotomy of higher versus lower cuisine in *Cooking, Cuisine and Class: a Study in Comparative Sociology,* and Sydney Mintz who responded in an article entitled "Cuisine and haute cuisine: How they are linked?" The questions that led Goody's examination of the intersection between food and culture were similar to mine: "Why are traditional African cultures largely lacking a differentiated cuisine, even in great states with differentiated political structures? What are the conditions for the emergence of a high and low cuisine?" (1)[70]. Mintz based his model for understanding the development of a differentiated cuisine within a society on Michael Freeman's *Food in Chinese Culture,* who wrote that the four necessary "prerequisites" involved are: "the availability of ingredients, many sophisticated consumers, and cooks and diners free from convention of region and ritual" as well as agriculture (1989, 145). However, these four points represent a motive for contention between the two anthropologists, as Mintz does not find Goody's differentiation between a "low" and a "high" adequate. Mintz argues that it would signify a difference in foods consumed,

[70] It is important to note that his nuanced phrasing avoids specific implications with "the French usage to which Freeman calls attention" (Goody 98), preferring lower and higher cooking.

preparation, and eating from one group to another within the same society (186). For Goody, there is no doubt that cuisine hinges on a larger scale of class distinction, but also on history, as politics greatly impact the division between a low and high cuisine. Just like Goody, I do believe a peripheral vision, examining the conditions in which a cuisine rises, is key in comprehending this phenomenon. History and politics, both national and transnational, played a key role in building the aura of French cuisine that laid ground for the elaboration and recognition of a haute cuisine. Therefore, why would it be any different with the cuisines of other countries? However, one point of differentiation could lay in the fact that even with the existence of a privileged group within a society, the inherent societal hierarchization that ensues is not always paralleled by the establishment of hierarchical food customs (Goody 1989, 147). For Mintz, this difference can be explained by the fact that these societies do not express the value of someone in terms of food. In fact, in such societies, food would not be related to power (1989, 189), and would not have the capacity to elevate someone's status within society as it did in France. Therefore, the development of a restaurant industry in sub-Saharan Africa, patronized by the upper middle class and expatriates, plays a key role in the rise and recognition of the cuisines of the continent, thus connecting the concepts of food classism with that of identity and nation. These establishments could not, however, account as the sole contributors to the elaboration of a high African cuisine. The way we maintain social relationships defines the way we relate to and understand food, and on the African continent, restaurants do not constitute a place for socialization. As the Senegalese motto "Teranga", which means hospitality in Wolof exemplifies, inviting guest to share food in your home is a shared value. In this perspective, the work of anthropologist Diane Lyons, in "Integrating Africa Cuisines: Rural Cuisine

and Identity in Tigray, Highland Ethiopia," highlights an important dichotomy: "the emphasis on elite cuisine ignores the complexity and varied nature of common cookery in everyday practice" (348). Thus, could we understand that to build a national cuisine one should rely mostly on haute cuisine, therefore excluding other productions coming, for example, from different classes? Even though this theory could partially explain the longstanding success of both Ethiopian and Moroccan cuisines in the West, I find this argument quite restrictive as it does not account for other trends that have largely participated in establishing the renown of couscous, tajine, injera, or tibs[71]. In fact, both these cuisines have accomplished a real tour de force by escaping this binary and reductive pattern of high versus low. By integrating elements of high gastronomy such as the banquet, but also equally responding to what Claude Fischler calls "la mcdonalization des moeurs"[72] of French culture, both cuisines have managed to be adopted in the West, adapting their fares to both the fast-food culture and that of foodies who look for a refined

---

[71] In a survey conducted in 2011 by TNS Sofres, on which we will come back in chapter three, couscous was nominated by the French as one of their favorite dishes, to which Fellag reacts in his essay entitled "Comment réussir un bon petit couscous" by writing:

> J'ai récemment lu dans un magazine très sérieux un sondage qui affirme que le couscous est aujourd'hui le plat préféré des Français. Vous imaginez ma fierté en apprenant que le peuple qui a porté au sommet de ses possibilités l'art et le raffinement du bien-manger, mettrait en tête de son panthéon culinaire "La" création de mes ancêtres maghrébins ? Derrière ce compliment exceptionnel se cacherait-il une déclaration d'amour ? N'est-ce pas une manière pudique et détournée de nous dire que vous nous aimez enfin. (9)

This ironic realization well underlines the adoption of the dish in the French culinary landscape despite the growing tensions between the two communities. By highlighting the high standards of French gastronomy, Fellag points out the capacity of couscous to reach the elevated culinary spheres despite being originally a dish eaten with your hands.

[72] This term, coined in his article by the same name, refers to the ways in which the modes of consumption have changed with the rising industrialization and Americanization of the French food system. For France, as the second most profitable market for the American giant McDonald's, the success and temptation for fast foods is undeniable. Fischler ascribes this success to the appeal for transgression of the eating rules and regression to a stage where eating with your fingers is acceptable. However, McDonald's marketing strategies and its capacity to quickly adapt to a new market and its culture is equally the driving force behind its successful implantation.

and exclusive dining experience. Adapting to the ever-changing culinary French landscape might be the key to seducing the palate.

Paradoxically, while traditional French cuisine appears to have remained over the years hermetic to change and outside influences, haute cuisine promotes the importation and the use of foreign food staples. Goody highlights this contrast between higher cuisines as concerned with the "outside" when he writes:

> In terms of class and cuisine, the higher in the hierarchy, the wider the contacts, the broader the view.
> Thus, the higher cuisine inevitably had to acquire ingredients from "outside". Of nothing was this truer than for that most valuable elements in cooking, those exotic spices in which the trade expanded so rapidly following from the eastern conquest of Alexander. The word itself derives from the latin *species*, meaning a commodity of special distinction or value in contrast to the articles or ordinary commerce. (105)

What Goody stresses in this quote is not only a system of global commerce, which throughout time sustained an elite with delicacies, but also the result of several campaigns of colonization[73]. Looking at what Goody calls "high" and "low" cuisines therefore uncovers patterns of connections and exclusions within or between countries, but also within the culinary world itself[74]. However, if haute cuisine has this particularity of embracing foreign produce, it has only been a one-way street, one of appropriation that has historically discarded the foreign cuisines these goods emerged from as mere leftovers. Therefore, haute cuisine became one of the mediums that chefs representing less popular foreign tables have chosen to inscribe their flavor profile on the foodie map.

[73] We will return to this particular aspect of exchanges and globalization of produce, flavors and methods of preparation in chapter 3.
[74] We will come back to this in chapter three.

Consequently, the French aura inscribed its chefs and gastronomy at the heart of the culinary empire, putting them on an unattainable pedestal of power, thus reinforcing the separation between a high and a low cuisine. Could we then understand the emergence of a West African and Caribbean literature concerned with food as a way to establish and reclaim cultures that were never enabled to grow to their full potential? In fact, gastro-literature translates and sheds light on both the racial disparities in the representation of West African and Caribbean cultures as well as on the deeply ingrained "global hierarchy of taste," that is intended to keep French productions on a pedestal[75]. Until the twentieth century, in metropolitan France, both culinary and literary prizes have excluded diverse representation, giving a voice and platform to Western productions only. Therefore, authors aim to circulate, popularize, and codify their own cultures, and through gastro-literature find a way to fight the French monopoly over haute cuisine. They seek to challenge the sacred French table, thus defying "the weight of the colonial ideology that good taste only flowed from the direction of the conqueror" (Ray 3). Literature thus holds the power to raise peripheral cuisines to the same level as those of the West, to the level of haute cuisine.

The Publisher: The Matter of Peripheral Literatures

The culinary professions are not the only ones to have been influenced and codified by the almighty power of the French. In fact, when one thinks about books and publications, French literature comes to mind as its canon has imposed its stature worldwide. Molière,

[75] The term "global hierarchy of taste" refers to sociologist Krishendu Ray's argument in his book *The Ethnic restaurateur* to which we will return in chapter three. He argues, taking New York as a study ground, that there is a correlation between the prices on a menu for each cuisine and the amount of capital a nation has.

Proust, Victor Hugo, or Voltaire: writing, as much as professional cooking, is male, white, and metropolitan. But was the influence of the French through colonization so decisive as to operate this switch from orality to written work? And how did a book industry develop on the African continent? Ruth Bush notes, in *Publishing Africa in French: Literary Institutions and Decolonization 1945-1967*, that "the post-war publication of representations of sub-Saharan Africa of course linked closely back to the inter-war flourishing of black culture in Paris" (10). However, it is not until the 90's that publishing houses on the African continent entered the scene. Authors therefore had to negotiate this change from relying on mainland France to having the possibility of publishing their work in their native country. What hurdles did they have to overcome to be published and well distributed? By looking at the publication industry, we will delve deeper into the relationship between France and its former colonies to uncover the birth process of these literatures from sub-Saharan Africa and the Caribbean.

Gastro-literature opens up new possibilities for the inclusion and recognition of literature in popular culture in both the Caribbean and sub-Saharan Africa. If authors have struggled to get published and recognized, a point we will come back to later in this chapter, establishing a readership has also been one of the hardships faced in both these regions, and especially on the African continent where oral knowledge has historically been so prized. As with the restaurant industry, the literary industry caters to a privileged class, a class above concerns of subsistence on a daily basis, a class able to enjoy the pleasure of reading a book, or dining out and paying for a meal prepared by someone else. In that sense, African and Caribbean literary and culinary productions both target mostly a Western and diasporic clientele, but their sustainability and thriving depend on their

independence from the caprice of the Western markets. For instance, for Condé who grew up in Guadeloupe, books were always part of her upbringing, mostly because she belonged to a privileged class, but also because her parents wanted to raise her in the tradition of French intellectuals. In *Le Coeur à rire et à pleurer: contes vrais de mon enfance*, she evoked her childhood reading only French authors. Similarly, in sub-Saharan Africa, reading is still very much a luxury, as is a book. In fact, bookshelves are not part of most households. It should not come as a surprise that reading is not culturally ingrained in people's habits in all cultures[76]. In sub-Saharan Africa, a book represents a foreign object, an object belonging to a realm that is not the one of the familiarities of a home. However, if one considers the uniqueness of gastro-literature, it raises key questions concerning the belonging of this hybrid genre. Do these books belong in the library or do they belong in the kitchen? Conceptually, the inclusion of recipes and the focus on a daily and menial task such as cooking enables an easier access to literature by desacralizing it. The literary object is no longer physically unreachable, especially for people for whom the concept of a bookshelf in a house is foreign. However, it would be shortsighted to fail to consider the physical boundary that buying a book still represents nowadays in sub-Saharan Africa. Cameroonian author Max Lobe raises this same point in a column published in *Le Monde* entitled "Editeurs africains, mondialisez-vous donc !" where he asks : "Combien sont-ils aujourd'hui les auteurs africains qui peuvent se vanter d'être lus en Afrique ? Très peu. En tant qu'Africain, je suis bien conscient qu'acheter un livre n'est pas la préoccupation première du citoyen africain lambda." Being read as an African author first signifies

[76] In an interview for the televised program "7 jours sur la planète", Calixthe Beyala concludes that Africa's weakness to produce writers ensues directly from its lack of readers.

developing a wider readership on the continent. It signifies bridging the gap between authors and readers, making books more accessible, and shifting the value from the object itself to the content of the book. But how to attain such a goal, especially with non-utilitarian literature, when so many people have other priorities and even struggle to feed themselves and their family? How can one advocate for the power of literature, or bring people to gastro-literature when such an extensive gap endures between the leisure activity that is reading and the hard realities of life?

Julien Hage, author of "Les littératures francophones d'Afrique noire à la conquête de l'édition africaine (1914-1974)" traces back the development and the democratization of reading to the independence when he writes:

> Les indépendances et l'essor des universités africaines, on assiste à partir années 1960 à une diffusion élargie des textes, malgré les limites de l'alphabétisation et de l'accès matériel au livre, comme en témoigne l'écrivain sénégalais Boubacar Boris Diop :
> "Dans les années 70, cela faisait très chic de se promener sur campus de l'université de Dakar avec certains livres. C'était la grande époque des éditions Maspero et la faveur des étudiants allait bien évidemment aux textes Cheikh Anta Diop et de Mao-Tsé-toung, d'Amilcar Cabral et d'autres auteurs dont il n'était jamais question dans les amphis" (Diop 2003: 87). (99)

Boubacar Boris Diop and Julien Hage directly link the reverence for books to the development of education, and more specifically of higher education. With an increase in readership, a higher demand for publications is triggered that is translated in a rise in profits for the said publishers who are likewise able to boost the circulation of work by African authors. However, this quote also sheds light on the fact that even in the middle of the 70's, books were props giving a certain standing and countenance to the people who flaunted them in universities. Almost a delicacy, they were consumed not only for the status that was associated with them, but also for bringing new and polemical ideas to the discussion

table in universities that were not yet interested in discussing matters relating to race or communism. In that sense, they represented a sort of transgression as students looked forward to pushing the learning boundaries. What Diop's quote nevertheless underlines when he evokes "la grande époque" of publishing houses in the imperfect tense is a sense of nostalgia for this apparent "golden age" of publication that is over. Indeed, Robert Estivals also remarks in his article "Le livre en Afrique noire francophone," that even though since the 1960s the publishing industry in Africa has burgeoned, in the long run, publishing trades are not popular because they are not profitable (70)[77], which is an issue that is still relevant today. Publishers, academics or authors, all identify the lack of readership as one of the main reasons for the lack of revenue in this industry. Marie Agathe Amoikin-Fauquembergue, founder of the editions Eburnie in Ivory Coast, confirms that their clientele mostly consists of expatriated people, students, and the upper class (Lemancel). However, what Sow Fall points out in an interview entitled "L'universel est là, pas là-bas" published in a special issue by *Présence Africaine* on the matter of the publication industry is that there is no lack of interest and demand for literature from their African compatriots, but the high price tag is prohibitive. Therefore, the market has been revolving mostly around practical publications such as schoolbooks.

But can we really reduce the entire African continent to the idea that reading, and books in general, are not ingrained in the culture? If we established in the first chapter that orality is highly regarded and has prevailed over the years, one should not forget, however, that Africa is not solely concerned with its oral traditions, as gastro-literature nowadays

[77] Incidentally, the cooking trades share the same fate in sub-Saharan Africa, which we will come back to later on in this chapter when discussing the question of profit and sustainability of publishing houses.

exemplifies. But if we go back in time, literature has also been part of the African landscape for centuries. In fact, in the example of Mali, literature dates back to the Middle-ages; manuscripts that have stood the test of time and survived wars, as well as numerous historical events, are here to attest to it[78]. However, what transpires even today is a desire to frame "Orality Africa (passive and female) [as] the victim of writing/Europe (virile/aggressive)," which Eileen Julien warns us about, and rightly so (13). If orality has been dominant over the centuries, it is first and foremost a matter of material conditions that have limited and bridled the cultural evolution of written knowledge on the African continent, leaving it exposed to the exploitation from the West. Writing and literature existed before the arrival of Europeans and colonization, even though they are still unequally represented throughout the African continent today. In fact, some countries have flourishing literary markets, as in the case of Nigeria, which not only values its authors and their careers, but also holds all books, whether fictional, non-fictional, or educational, in high regard. Just as Africa is represented by a myriad of flavors, its literary landscapes and markets are facing diverse challenges and reflect contrasting and varied cultures.

However, African literatures, along with Caribbean literatures, are often clustered abroad under one big and vague umbrella of *littératures régionales* erasing any form of identity and singularity in the same manner as African cuisines are depicted. As the Senegalese novelist Boubacar Boris Diop declared when interviewed for the article "L'aventure ambiguë de l'écrivain africain":

[78] One can see such manuscripts at the Mamma Haidara Commemorative Library and the Library of Cheick Zayni Baye of Boujbeha in Timbuktu, which is renowned for its scholarly contribution to the extent of being often described as one of the main centers of the written traditions on the African continent. In fact, many books, starting in the 14th century, were written and copied in this city that is equally known for being a major commercial artery for travelling merchants.

> […] la littérature africaine échappe difficilement à son histoire. Née à Paris 'pour s'adresser à des Occidentaux' […] elle continue de graviter autour du centre que constitue la capitale française pour le monde littéraire et éditorial francophone, qu'il soit africain, belge, suisse ou antillais. Les auteurs y voient toujours une forme de reconnaissance et de gloire, une promotion garantie, un lectorat plus large.

African authors, as he underlines, are struggling to free themselves from the hegemony and authority of France when it comes to literary production and publication. It is equally important to point out that sub-Saharan African and Caribbean literatures have not always been recognized in France. In fact, as Hage underlines, it is not until the middle of the 1970s that "ces littératures noires" have been acknowledged by the publishing industry as well as the academic world (101). Indeed, only recently have scholars started studying peninsular literatures and literatures from the African continent, with limited classes being taught in universities and few works integrated to the curriculum of French middle and high schools. Postcolonial literatures are still marginalized compared with the prominence of African and African diasporic studies in the United States, pointing to France's difficulty in coming to terms with its colonial history. However, many of these authors reside in metropolitan France and in the West in general, as is the case for Calixthe Beyala, Maryse Condé, Marguerite Abouet and many others. They write in France, exclusively in French, and publish their work in the capital. While publishing houses have increasingly opened up on the African continent or in the French Caribbean, most authors still rely on the metropolitan French houses to get their work distributed widely. It is indeed hard to change the belief that publishing in Africa or in Martinique and Guadeloupe signifies staying on the periphery and the margins, while publishing in France guarantees that a work is more widely advertised, known, and read. Therefore, "French publishers […] have been described as 'culture brokers' (Casanova, 2004: 21), 'midwives' (Rabemananjara, quoted

in Jules-Rosette, 1998: 44), or more combative 'border guards' (Watts, 2005: 86)" (Bush 7), facilitating but even more controlling this market. In this perspective, it is hard to break this vicious circle – a circle that equally prevents the rise and wider development of a publishing industry outside of the hexagon, and that systematically imposes itself as the guarantor of a "black literature," all the while dividing the participants who could jeopardize this well-established and fruitful enterprise.

In *Mets et merveilles*, Condé addresses repeatedly these divisions when it comes to the classification of literatures. She refutes the existence of a bisection between metropolitan French literature and other francophone productions. Evoking this topic during a literary festival on the island of Ouessant, she recollects:

> Le thème était le suivant : Existe-t-il une littérature insulaire ? Personnellement, je ne le crois pas. Cela reviendrait à accorder trop d'importance à la provenance géographique et à ne pas tenir suffisamment compte des multiples éléments qui s'agrègent pour former une personnalité. Être née en Guadeloupe, dans une terre entourée d'eau de tous côtés, comme disaient les bons vieux manuels scolaires, me paraît moins important que d'avoir vécu si longtemps au États-Unis d'Amérique et d'y avoir trouvé ma 'liberté d'expression.' (Condé 2015, 366)

While she does not believe in the existence of an insular literature that would reduce her identity to her place of birth, she defends her individuality as being comprised of her many experiences and places where she has resided. In that sense, it becomes clear that others have imposed these labels on authors who are dispossessed of their creation and their own agency. One could compare the classification of literatures to the appropriation and interpretation of literary texts by scholars who lend intentions to authors these latter do not necessarily have. Condé herself has voiced this feeling of detachment from her text after its publication as it is appropriated by her readers and academics alike. However, it should not come as a surprise that it is in the United States, where she taught, and not in France,

that Condé found her "freedom of expression," far from the heavy past of the colonial power that oppressed her compatriots. Nevertheless, even though she associated the United States with a certain "freedom," the country stands short of recognizing her and integrating her work to a wider community as she stresses:

> Somme toute elle est banale, cette sensation de satisfaction après avoir rassasié ceux que nous aimons. La femme est aussi nourrice. Cependant il est un dernier sentiment que j'aborde avec une certaine circonspection car c'est peut-être le plus profond. La cuisine ne me venge-t-elle pas de l'écriture ? Pour moi qui ai tant de mal à m'intégrer dans la littérature guadeloupéenne, dans la littérature africaine et enfin dans la littérature africaine-américaine, pour moi qui ai connu tant de rejets et tant d'exclusions, la cuisine n'est-elle pas une voie plus commode de séduction ? (Condé 2015, 14)

Whether on her native island, on the African continent, or among African Americans, her struggle to find her niche, and a literary place to which she belonged, sheds light on the feeling of uprootedness that prevented her from feeling recognized. With writing, it seems as if she was always, as an author, left hungry for more: more inclusion, more acknowledgement, and a desire for fulfillment. Food and cooking provided this stability and sense of recognition she had been longing for. Therefore, the importance of her readership is trumped by her guests, who, while enjoying her culinary creations around her table, avenge her for her literary dissatisfaction. Physical sustenance outdoes intellectual nourishment. However, even as a recognized author, whose success in France opened doors to the American publishing industry, she still feels rejected from both realms as she writes: "L'éditrice de mes livres en traduction anglaise était une Africaine-Américaine. Je l'avais plusieurs fois invitée à dîner à la maison dans l'espoir de la séduire. Mais elle demeurait insaisissable" (Condé 2015, 294). Whether through the palate or through her prose, Condé is unable to win over her African-American publisher and to bridge the gap between them

even though American publishers have overall been more embracing of publishing gastro-literature and works on food[79]. She asserts that in literature, there is no sisterhood, and that the color of the skin does not amount to fraternity, thus echoing the following statement: "- En littérature, répliquais-je, il n'y a ni Blancs ni Noirs. La littérature est un territoire qui ne connaît pas les couleurs" (Condé 2015, 304). As Condé underlines, seeking in its community a readership is restrictive of the power of literature, which may not bring together people with similar experiences, but at the same time may bridge the gap between cultures and origins, even though they could not be further dissonant. Reading becomes a "communion" of sort (162), just like the sharing of a meal. By writing gastro-literature, authors, like Maryse Condé, aspire to widen their readership, but also challenge expectations about their voice and penmanship, and likely destroy boundaries that have until now separated both non-Western readers and authors.

Expectations, Prestige, and Prizes

The biggest hurdles of the hegemony of France being the main publisher of sub-Saharan African and Caribbean literature are the expectations that come with the content of their writing. When analyzing the genre of gastro-literature, one can see the tradition of writing down recipes and developing cookbooks as deeply linked to women and their

[79] Condé is well aware of the barriers existing in the French publishing industry, where houses specialize only in certain types of book, rarely branching out. Therefore, when interested in blending her passion for books and food, she turned to the Anglo-Saxon market as the following quotes demonstrates:

> […] elle compilait à l'intention d'une maison d'édition anglaise les recettes de peintres et d'écrivains connus dans un livre intitule *Modern Art Cookbook*. Ma première réaction fut la surprise: "Pourquoi penses-tu à moi?" Elle me répondit simplement : "Parce que ta cuisine est une des meilleures que je n'aie jamais goûtée." […] Ce livre *Modern Art Cookbook* allait être publié en Amérique et Angleterre. Ne pouvait-on pas imaginer que quelque chose de similaire soit édité en France? (Condé 2015, 10)

Condé's last question is therefore highly rhetorical as she condemns the stiffness of French culture.

expected role in society, as we previously established. It should not come as a surprise, then, that authors of gastro-literature are mostly female. In this perspective, the exchange of recipes in the domestic setting seems to be at the core of the creation of the cookbook genre that recently evolved to include fictional narratives. However, its inherent relation to women makes the cookbook "the most instrumental and for that reason the most feminized of the culinary genres […]. Both its utility and its association with women placed it low on a scale of prestige […]" as underlined by Parkhurst Ferguson (93). Condé herself struggled with the social pressure that conceives cooking as a low art: "Je donnai libre cours à ce talent, à cet art de la cuisine, peut-être mineur, féminin mais qui enchante le monde" (53). The association between a minor art form, gender, and pleasure is at the heart of the struggle for the publication of gastro-literature. Even as an established author, Condé is taken seriously neither by the guests she invites to her table for a meal, nor by her long-standing editor. Her work as an author is seen as respectable, while meal preparation is seen as a distraction and a step down from her career as a renowned author for which she is put on a pedestal. The self-questioning of her talent as an author, and her praise for her aptitude as a chef are nearly perceived as an insult:

> 'Je ne suis pas sûre d'être une bonne romancière mais je suis certaine d'être une cuisinière hors pair' Personne ne rit. Jamais. C'est que dans leur for intérieur mes convives sont choqués : 'Quel sacrilège ! pensent-ils. Comment a-t-elle l'audace de rapprocher littérature et cuisine ? Cela revient à mélanger les torchons avec les serviettes, du jute avec de la soie de Chine.' (Condé 2015, 14-15)

Therefore, the combination of literature and gastronomy as found in gastro-literature appears as a heresy, a desacralization of a higher art, an art born in the superior social circles removed from cooking. This separation between a both higher and lower form is the same reason her editor refused her idea for a cookbook:

> Otis Lebert est le patron du restaurant Le taxi jaune, en face de chez moi dans le Marais. Nous étions devenus amis à force de comparer nos recettes. Sur mon impulsion nous prîmes la décision d'écrire ensemble un livre de cuisine. Au terme de longues et fiévreuses discussions j'en fis la proposition à mon éditeur Laurent Laffont […]. A ma grande surprise il nous oppose un refus catégorique. Non seulement l'idée l'intéressait pas du tout, mais surtout, nous dit-il, le domaine des livres de cuisine appartenait principalement aux maisons spécialisées qui en assuraient la diffusion. (Condé 2015, 10-11)

Despite her past collaborations and friendship with the Laffont family, she was unable to convince them. Was it the viability of her project itself that triggered this refusal? Or was the inclusion of food in writing enough to cause distrust? One thing is certain, by highlighting that cookbooks are solely printed by specialized publishing houses, Laurent Laffont sheds light on a hidden literary hierarchy to which even Condé was oblivious. His "unequivocal refusal" hints at a standard for literature concerned by the purity of the literary genre, unspoiled by the materiality of food preparation[80]. In this perspective, it is also interesting to notice that her gastro-novel *Mets et merveilles* was published by an alternative editor, JC Lattès, a break from her long-standing collaboration with her first editor. It's hard to say if the reason behind this was skepticism towards a genre that could be seen as less attractive, and therefore less profitable, for a publisher like Laffont. Nevertheless, this experience points out the question of the value that is associated with different types of literatures. Even though the development of alternative modes of distribution such as paperbacks and online books have greatly democratized literature and struck a blow to the high and low division of literary publications, the value that is given to specific literatures is ensnared in questions of power that transcend the intrinsic qualities

[80] In a culture in which language is highly regulated and preserved from any potential harmful influence by l'Académie française, it is not so surprising to see a similar protectionism around French literature. France stands indeed as an oddity in the publishing industry, as Anglophone ones are more inclusive of a variety of genres and publications in regard to their catalogue.

of a book, and its potential for readership. These literatures represent what Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari call "une littérature mineure" in *Kafka, pour une littérature Mineure,* that is "une littérature mineure n'est pas celle d'une langue mineure, plutôt celle qu'une minorité fait dans une langue majeure" (29). In that sense, the authors that compose my corpus all chose to write in French despite the challenges that it represents and the necessity to deterritorialize this language. As the Jews from Prague that Deleuze and Guattari evoke, Francophone Africans and Caribbean writers are facing the inconceivability not to write, the issue of writing about their experiences and that of their peoples in French, but also the impossibility to do otherwise (29). Therefore, the authors that compose my corpus break away from the expectations and boundaries of literature to fulfill the three characteristics of a minor literature, which are:

> […] la deterritorialization de la langue, le branchement de l'individuel sur l'immédiat politique, l'agencement collectif d'énonciation. Autant dire que "mineur" ne qualifie plus certaines littératures, mais les conditions révolutionnaires de toute littérature au sein de celle qu'on appelle grande (ou établie). (33)

In fact, these black women writers deterritorialize language through the deterritorialization of both the literary and culinary fields. Through the use of the hybrid genre that is gastro-literature, Beyala, Miano, Condé, Abouet, and Sow Fall alter the way we perceive and consume literature. As we have seen, they also question the dichotomy between high and low in both domains. For example, West African cuisines are being deterritorialized as they are not eaten like they traditionally were. The house courtyard is replaced by restaurants or by a meal prepared in a Western kitchen and consumed with cutlery at a dining table. In turn, the integration of recipes in the literary work we are analyzing symbolizes this process of reterritorialization as conceived by Deleuze and Guattari. Both the literary product and

the minor literature evolve as they change and integrate the main literary system. Gastro-literature is a complex genre, a genre that represents a cultural collective through its recipes. But it is also a genre that is highly political because of the multi-dimensional significance of food. Therefore, gastro-literature holds in itself the power to revolutionize the literary and culinary worlds and to shatter expectations when it comes to both.

When dealing with literary expectations, bound on one hand to metropolitan French authors, and on the other to francophone authors, double standards endure, thus stressing the pressure on the latter to cater to Western tastes. By being almost exclusively published in France, and only restrictively exported and sold overseas, francophone authors have historically been bridled by their editors. According to Bush, "[i]n the immediate post-war years, African authorial identity continued to be commodified and instrumentalized by mainstream, commercial publishers in response to the taste of an implied metropolitan readership" (24). But what were these assumed Western readers' interests? For Condé, it is clear: "Les lecteurs préfèrent les histoires édifiantes, carrément menteuses: les mythes en un mot" (2015, 372). Reality and the truth are not selling points according to her, which is interesting if we consider that Condé strives at giving a second life and reconstructing the narratives of women forgotten by history in her writing. In *Moi, Tituba…Sorcière Noire de Salem*, and in *Victoire, les saveurs et les mots*, she blurs the boundaries of reality and imagination in these speculative fictions, where she fills in the gaps and shortcomings of historical records. But ultimately, what she hints at is the inability of Western readers to deal with an accurate and true rendering of the experience of minorities, those same minorities that history failed to remember. In her book entitled *Black Paris: The African Writers' Landscape,* Bennetta Jules-Rosette documents the discontent of authors who

grapple with securing a European readership that is not solely interested by a certain rendering of Africa that oscillates between exoticism and the continent's need to be saved by the West. Jerome Carlos, a Benin writer, thoroughly highlights the challenges writers are facing in Europe, as according to him, publishers' selections turn from African publications because of the "oversaturation, lack of interest, and cultural insensitivity" towards this type of literature (Jules-Rosette 124)[81]. Likewise, Veronique Tadjo echoes Carlo's argument as she expresses the difficulty of being published in Europe as an Ivorian writer. She identifies the lack of interest in Africa as the main reason for the weak consumer base for this kind of literature (Jules-Rosette 127)[82]. Additionally, Tadjo points out the dependency on the West for the viability of literary productions, and the necessity to reach this particular audience for securing recognition. Therefore, this overreliance on the West emboldens editors who pressure writers, which Sow Fall denounces in her interview in "L'universel est là, pas là-bas:"

> Mon premier texte est ainsi resté pendant trois ans chez l'éditeur, celui-ci voulant le changer pour que ce soit moins "local." J'ai refusé. Pour moi l'universel, il est là, et pas là-bas. L'universel tient à notre nature d'êtres humains et pas à notre lieu de vie. Enfant j'ai reçu le monde entier à travers les livres. Pourquoi cela ne pourrait pas fonctionner dans l'autre sens ?

Sow Fall underlines the narrow-mindedness and privileged status of Western readers whose expected tastes determine literary content, as exemplified by the editor's request to tone down the "local" flair of her text. The opposition between the concepts of "local" and

[81] One could say that African food faces the same problem when it comes to being recognized outside of Africa.

[82] This statement needs to be evaluated in light of Bush's analysis of the work of Jean-Yves Mollier, who points out that the discrepancy between the recognition and dissemination of different literatures of the African continent stem from "the dominant concerns of French intellectuals in this period" (Bush 6). The publication industry has developed more widely in the Maghreb, boosted by the greater metropolitan interest in these former colonies, and especially in the Algerian war. As Bush points out, sub-Saharan African literature was still represented in Parisians publication catalogues, but it was not as popular at the time.

“universal” serves to demonstrate the caesura between the attitudes of both parties who represent the two continents. Western readers appear to be protected from difference, from the unknown, and from feeling challenged, in order to prevent the potential sentiment of uncertainty and uneasiness that could ensue from reading. What is too foreign, too authentic is frowned upon in order to avoid shaking up sensibilities. However, what Sow Fall demonstrates is the loss for cross-cultural learning that this episode represents. Literature acts as an open window on the world that the West refuses to keep open. And it passes on the humanitarian and universal values it embodies. Therefore, for francophone authors, literature cannot be alienating for others. It also needs to have an aim and be engaged, whether it is documenting the political oppression of their country, fighting patriarchy, or opposing postcolonial hegemony. Could francophone authors be granted the same freedom as metropolitan authors to simply write for pleasure? Could a cookbook be just that? A work meant to share the instructions for the marriage of ingredients solely for the pleasure of communicating a taste of one’s culture? We ask francophone authors to be engaged in the same way we ask ethnic chefs to create authentic fares, holding them to higher standards than their Western counterparts. Such demands strip authors of their freedom and agency, therefore reinforcing the idea of belonging to “peripheral literatures.” In the same way, Condé is questioned and asked to justify her mobility and interest in traveling during a gathering with the press:

> Quelques années auparavant lors d’un des déjeuners de presse qu’affectionnait Simone Gallimard, une écrivaine connue m’avait demandé en m’entendant décrire mes nombreux voyages :
> - Que cherchez-vous à travers le monde ? (Condé 2015, 289)

Would such a question still be addressed to Condé if she was not a black female author from Guadeloupe? It is assumed by this fellow author that such travel narratives could only

be the result of restlessness and a personal quest aimed at resolving some lack of fulfillment. One could argue that such an abrupt question denotes a judgment and a sense of patronization from Condé's interlocutor, who supposes she is not in charge of her emotions, thus questioning her voice. Editors, readers, and fellow authors have therefore marked, if not altered, the francophone literary scene originating from sub-Saharan Africa and the Caribbean, shedding light on the hurdles authors had to overcome to be published either in France or even in Africa. Hage successfully summarizes this when he writes:

> De nombreux facteurs esthétiques, politiques et commerciaux ont longtemps entravé, encadré et déterminé l'émergence de cette expression littéraire : les difficultés rencontrées par ces auteurs pour s'approprier la langue et les usages de la littérature européenne, le manque de lecteurs et de reconnaissance qui dissuadait les grands éditeurs traditionnels d'investir dans des œuvres au succès commercial pour le moins aléatoire, enfin la censure, plus vive encore dans le cadre colonial, qui pouvait à l'occasion sanctionner des expressions historiques, culturelles, identitaires ou politiques jugées trop radicales ou revendicatives. (82)

Besides the topic of their book being perceived as not marketable enough, censorship has historically been similarly instrumental in determining the outcome of a book project. In fact, it pushed some authors to turn away from major publishing houses in favor of independent ones, which could not be tied "to a single political or aesthetic position, or dominant notion of literary value" as argued by Bush (58). However, censorship was hardly a European exception, and when it came to negotiating, women had to navigate the patriarchal systems of the bibliographical world, both in the West and in their country of origin. In fact, for Obioma Nnaemeka, author of "From Orality to Writing: African Women Writers and the (Re)Inscription of Womanhood," successful female authors never truly emancipated themselves from patriarchy. In her article, she points out that critics are most often males, and even more so white males, thus pushing women to reconcile themselves

with this male gaze in order to gain recognition. Women have had to negotiate the topics they have been wanting to tackle through their writing to avoid alienating this male gaze in charge of legitimizing their voice. Therefore, topics such as prostitution, and homosexuality as we can find in Ken Bugul's *Le baobab fou,* or patriarchy and polygamy in Mariama Bâ's *Une si longue lettre,* depicting a critical portrait of men, were highly polemical and generated mixed emotions when these books were respectively published in 1984 and 1979. As Nnaemeka continues her analysis of this trend, her argument lingers over Bâ's work that she sees as "limiting women [characters] to 'little happenings' and family matters," and therefore, she construes from this that "many African Women writers have restricted themselves to what [Nnaemeka] would call 'domestic literature,' or more specifically 'motherhood literature' defined in terms of the role that female characters are expected to play" (150). Identically to the culinary industry, women have hence struggled to extricate themselves from this perception that they are restricting themselves to the domestic sphere. Nevertheless, as both Bugul and Condé exemplify, these same authors, judged for their non-assuming topics are defying patriarchy, colonialism and postcolonialism, and redefining women's agency in society. Therefore, was does it take to be recognized and prized as professional authors?

What is the recipe for winning a literary prize? I would like to believe that it is a dash of talent as an author, a pinch of inventiveness, two cups of captivating prose, and an interesting topic. However, if we look at the statistics on the awarding of literary prizes for both French and Francophone work, a few aspects jump out. In fact, if we analyze the

attribution of a prize like the Prix Goncourt, which was created in 1903[83], we have to come to terms with the fact that only three authors from the Caribbean and sub-Saharan Africa have won it. The first one was René Marran, who was from Martinique, and who won the Prix Goncourt in 1921 for *Batouala*. Bush, rightly, links his success to the timing of the publication of his book which coincided with a period of greater interest in and printing of Black work in Paris (10). Patrick Chamoiseau from Martinique followed in his path more than seventy years later in 1992 with his novel *Texaco*, and the Franco-Senegalese author, Marie NDiaye, won for *Trois Femmes puissantes* in 2009. In 115 years, one can count on two hands the number of female authors or people of color who have won this prize, thus shedding light on the industry's enduring inequalities when it comes to recognition by one's peers. Condé herself notes the same bias in *Mets et merveilles* as she transcribes a remark by Aminata Sow Fall on the inclusion of African literature in literary prizes:

> On chuchotait que son roman *La Grève des battù* risquait d'être couronné par le prix Goncourt. Elle en riait :
> -Vous n'y pensez pas ! protestait-elle. Dans ce cas la France ne serait plus la France. (Condé 2015, 325)

Through the irony of her retort, Sow Fall hints at a France that is centered on itself, if not racist and sexist. How could a black woman aspire to such a distinguished award? However, behind the label of the nation, Sow Fall attacks the French literary landscape and the establishment of a French literary identity that excludes Francophone literary productions. In fact, as Bush remarks, "by defining competitive criteria for literary

[83] From savoring a meal to savoring a book, there is only one step, which is well symbolized by the alliance between literature and food that the Prix Goncourt embodies. In fact, since 1914, the meetings of the Academy Goncourt have been taking place in the Parisian restaurant Drouant, where the founder, Edmond de Goncourt, often used to dine. Every first Tuesday of each month, the 10 members that compose the jury share a meal in the "Salon Goncourt" on the first floor. The winner of the prize is also announced from the restaurant at the beginning of the month of November.

judgement, often within the lines of national borders, literary prizes can either encourage new work or preserve an existing literary order. The latter was particularly true in post-war France, where the juries for the Prix Goncourt and prizes of Académie Française tended to remain in situ for many years (Sapiro 1999: 317-76)" (92). Therefore, it won't come as a surprise that criticism arose in France in the last few years during prize season at the announcement of winners composed exclusively of white male authors[84]. In this perspective, for people of color and especially female authors, writing books becomes an act of bravery and resistance in the view of the hegemony of the West in terms of literature. They fight back through the content of their book – like Condé who called out France's chauvinism – but also with the literary genre they tackle. Through comic books, cookbooks, hybrid essays, biographies and autobiographies, the women who compose my corpus do not stay on the beaten paths that could lead more directly to success and fame. On the contrary, they innovate, and push further the boundaries of what is aesthetically and intellectually considered as valuable and meritorious contributions to the field. If we consider the types of work that are most likely to be applauded, novels top the charts across the board, with some prizes, like the Prix Goncourt being entirely devoted to this more highly regarded genre. Despite the creation of literary prizes dedicated to Francophone literatures, these prizes reproduce the same inequalities as they duplicate and reinforce the criteria developed in France. Therefore, when Bush and Ducournau aggregate the winning genres of the Grand Prix littéraire d'Afrique noire in "La littérature africaine de langue française, à quel(s) prix?," novels undoubtedly override all other categories:

[84] France counts six major literary awards: the Prix Renaudot, the Grand Prix de l'Académie Française, the Prix Médicis, the Prix Fémina and the Prix Interallié, and the Prix Goncourt, which is one of the most prestigious ones. Winning one of these prizes guarantees any author a significant increase in the diffusion and sales of their book, along with a notable rise in fame.

> Les 65 ouvrages primés de 1961 à 2012 comprennent une grande majorité de romans (42), loin devant les essais (7), les autobiographies (4), les recueils de poésie (3), les recueils de nouvelles (2), les recueils de contes de littérature traditionnelle (3), les ouvrages critiques (3), et seulement une pièce de théâtre. Cette prépondérance du genre romanesque aligne clairement le Grand Prix littéraire d'Afrique noire sur le modèle des grand prix littéraires français, qui lui ont toujours fait la part belle - la création du prix Goncourt ayant précisément servi à valoriser les romanciers exclus de fait de l'Académie française, tel Émile Zola, qui y fut refusé vingt-cinq fois. (554)

Therefore, awards that were meant and created to counter the exclusivity of alternate prizes have become themselves equally if not more ostracizing[85]. Consequently, the Francophone world has yet to emancipate itself from the long-lasting hegemonic literary influence of their former colonizer.

(R)evolution and (Post)colonial Control

To fully understand the North-South dynamics at play when it comes to the book industry, it is essential to go back to the long-lasting influence of colonialism well after decolonization. What was the cultural impact in the former colonies of this caesura from the hexagon on the bibliological level, that is on the history of books. For Robert Estivals, author of "Le livre en Afrique noire francophone," the answer becomes clearer when he states: "Le résultat est constant: l'existence d'un État politiquement indépendant conduit à

[85] Bush and Ducournau have additionally compiled the nationalities and gender of the recipients of the Grand Prix littéraire d'Afrique noire showing that one patriarchal system, in the form of colonialism, has been supplanted by another one in the post-colonial era and have noted that "Dix femmes ont été récompensées au total sur les 72 lauréats" (555).Women have thus been kept at the periphery of any intellectual reflections and productions as evidenced above, along with the disparities in the number of prizes per country. The discrepancies in the representation of women from one country to another draws attention to the previously mentioned lack of balance in the importance of literature throughout the African continent. One can certainly see a parallel to be drawn between the above list and the countries with a more dynamic book economy.

la création de structures bibliologiques étatiques sous la forme d'un modèle pyramidal en râteau comprenant des départements de scolarisation, d'édition, de bibliothèques" (60). If political independence equals the creation of state-funded bibliological structures, why did sub-Saharan Africa not benefit from it? Could it be explained by the ever-enduring hegemonic power of France that has prevented the rise of cultures disengaged from the influence of outside forces? For Estivals, the assessment is clear if one looks at the rise of schooling and the development of higher education in those regions, since implanting their book industry on new territory and building an equally new market with an increasing demand is critical for maintaining a cultural influence (64). France could therefore guarantee to uphold its grasp on its former colonies that were stripped of their own agency under false pretenses in order to retain control. Therefore, France created a vicious circle of dependency that ensured its help and presence would be needed to anchor the survival of the book industry on the African continent[86], all the while securing its overreliance on Western publishing houses[87]. As documented by Estivals' following analysis:

> On voit bien le calcul : la France, la Grande-Bretagne, les États-Unis pourront, devront aider les gouvernements désireux de poursuivre le développement culturel national. Mais à quel prix. Et, en échange de quoi ? La politique de l'ancienne métropole en matière de production et de distribution des livres consiste donc à maintenir plus longtemps possible le monopole de l'édition sur les anciennes colonies. On défendra d'abord le privilège du français comme langue unificatrice. On cherchera à déconseiller la nationalisation des entreprises d'imprimerie et d'édition qui peuvent se constituer dans les pays africains. On retardera la formation de papeteries industrielles. (65)

[86] As stated in the article *État des lieux de l'industrie du livre en Afrique*, it is estimated that in 2012, according to the *Bibliothèque Nationale de France*, the sub-Saharan bibliological industry represented 1.4 % of the world production.

[87] Some of the notable publishing houses located in France, which have played an important role in bringing out African literatures, are Robert Laffont, Présence Africaine, Seuil, and L'Harmattan. L'Harmattan's history is particularly noticeable as it was funded by a former French missionary who wanted "to give a voice to authors who did not have access to publication outlets in their countries, and to fill a gap in the French market for Third World publications" (Jules-Rosette 129).

The juxtaposition of the verbs "pouvoir" (to be able to) and "devoir" (must) symbolize this dominant-dominated rapport of power between North and South. It highlights the fact that these former colonies are at the mercy of the good will of their oppressor, who presents itself as a savior. Under these pretenses, France was thus able to reaffirm the durability of its linguistic supremacy up to the present[88]. Moreover, the anaphoric repetition of "on" [one] reveals the lack of accountability of mainland France, which Estivals critiques. This passive formulaic expression erases the nominalization of the subject, which becomes hidden behind an impersonal subject pronoun. Estivals identifies several key aspects, among which are the inadequacies in training for the actors of this industry, the lack of national funding[89], the economic burden of it all, and the language barrier. In the twentieth century, the challenges have remained very much the same. Nouvelles Editions Africaines Sénégalaises, Jimsaan (Senegal), Khoudia (Senegal), Kalaama (Senegal), Falia (Senegal), Panafrika/Silex/ Nouvelles du Sud (Senegal), Eburnie (Ivory Coast), COSMOS Publishers (Cameroon), CURE Series Publishers (Cameroon), NEC Publishers (Cameroon) are some of the publishers that can be found in Francophone sub-Saharan Africa. As to the Caribbean ones, they often display a greater connection to mainland France: Ibis Rouge Editions (founded in Guyana and implanted afterwards in Martinique and Guadeloupe), Keditions (Martinique), Caraïbéditions (Martinique). However, some differences are to be noted between the publishers in sub-Saharan African and the Caribbean, the first one being the

[88] The adoption of French as the national language has indeed smothered the rise of native languages.

[89] The decline of bookstores and the struggles of publishing houses is presented as being symptomatic of an absence of support and representation from African politicians and governments. In fact, African countries do not offer much assistance to publishing houses. They receive more assistance from France, which Paul Dakeyo, the founding editor of the Editions Silex and the former editorial director of Editions Nouvelles du Sud, both located on the African continent, directly links with freedom and the lack of censorship (Jules-Rosette 109).

type of books they produce. In fact, on the African continent, local publishers often print educational material[90], thus more directly investing in future generations and emphasizing the desire to break away from the long-lasting influence of French textbooks[91]. A second significant difference between the two regions resides in the publication in *créole* in the Caribbean with novels, traditional folktales, or even canonical French books being translated[92], thus participating in the liveliness and preservation of this language for future generations. On the contrary, in sub-Saharan Africa, the use of African languages is not as prominent even though there is a strong desire to change the current reality of the market. However, the questions that remain are, how to ensure the financial survival of these publishing structures? And can they achieve independence from the West?

The first difficulty resides in the fact that the African continent does not produce enough wood, thus relying on imports for the manufacturing of paper needed to feed the book industry. In this perspective, a total independence from the West hardly seems achievable. In fact, several publishing houses have turned towards the practice of co-publishing to ensure their survival, and to secure their aim to keep and promote African productions in Africa. However, the common phenomenon of co-publications can be problematic as underlined by Jules-Rosette's research. She points to the example of Hatier (133), a renowned French publisher, which co-published a series of books on Africa. Hatier selected the titles and the printing houses and merely sent the bill to the "Centre d'Etudes pour le Développement Africain" afterwards. However, Claude Connick, editor at Hatier

[90] It is more profitable and less volatile.
[91] A good example of this influence is the uprootedness felt by entire generations of schoolchildren who, even after the independence, read about their ancestors the Gauls in school textbooks, not understanding how they could be related, and therefore launching themselves in insensible and doomed quests to find a sense of belonging in the West. It is the example of Ken Bugul in *Le baobab fou*.
[92] Caraïbéditions's catalogue contains, for example, *L'étranger* by Camus or even Tintin in créole.

defended that move, saying that such co-publications enable the distribution of affordable books in Africa and did not see this at all as a "foreign intervention in publishing" (133). The mere existence of such methods used by publishing houses both in France and in Africa unveils Africa's inability to break from neocolonial patterns of dependence on France. Indeed, even successful African publishers such as Jimsaan, founded by renowned Senegalese authors, claim to have the highest quality requirements and professional methods because they are "identitical to French ones" when it comes to the publishing process, from the choice of manuscripts to their publication. Nevertheless, Jimsaan admits its inability to publish books according to international standards: "il n'existe pas d'imprimeur adéquat, en Afrique. Nous externalisons donc en France, alors qu'à terme, nous souhaiterions fonctionner en local" (Lemancel). In a parallelism to the global food industry, such a practice, is compared to the market of "green beans" by a journalist interviewed by Jules-Rosette for her book (114). Indeed, even if Senegal has an excellent crop year, the surplus is not sold in Africa where one could still make profits by selling the green beans at a low cost. Instead, they are frozen and shipped to France. After staying there for a while, they are shipped back to Africa and sold at a higher price: the currency exchange and cost of transport having taken a toll, will be reflected in the market price, a process that is decried and analyzed by Susanne Freidberg in *French Beans and Food Scares*. As Jules-Rosette remarks, direct inter-African exchange is prevented, establishing a cyclical neocolonial dependency on the West for intellectual and commodity trade. She points out, once the manuscripts were printed into books and shipped back to Africa, their market price was too high for local consumers, even for the elite. The growing interest for books and reading in the twentieth century has therefore given birth to a black market and

contraband in the last two decades. A special issue of *Africultures* (No. 57), devoted to the economy of the book industry on the African continent, sheds light of new practices. The article "L'accès au livre: au Nord des parterres de livres, au Sud des librairies par terre" highlights the scarcity of bookstores that are supplanted, and whose income is ironically supplemented, by what are called "librairies au poteau" or "librairies par terre" (respectively translated literally by "bookstore at the pole" and "bookstore on the ground"). These informal and often clandestine street businesses represent, as the article underlines, an additional 40% to the revenue stream of bookstores in sub-Saharan Africa. While they embody the democratization of the access to books and reading, these alternative modes of commercialization also undermine bookstores' successes. Ignace Hien, editor in Burkina Faso, denounces these mobile enterprises: "Les librairies par terre sont un manque à gagner car elles favorisent la piraterie. Leur spécialité est la vente de livres usagés, mais des livres neufs se retrouvent souvent sur leurs rayons, sans qu'on sache par quelle acrobatie" (Africultures). Piracy as well as the illegal reprinting of books are wide-spread practices on the continent and account for a major loss of revenue for the already struggling actors of the literary and publishing industry at all levels, from the authors to the bookstores.

Moreover, the hardships faced by authors, bookstores, and publishing houses point to the long-lasting lack of independence from France while trying to create a niche for literature within African culture. Even though the breakthrough of sub-Saharan African and Caribbean publishing houses has not happened, their successes have liberated the voices of African and Caribbean authors by giving them multiple options for printing. Consequently, it has equally diversified the topics and genres authors could tackle, thus redefining the hegemonic power of France over productions from the former colonies.

However, the bigger picture that appears is one of isolation and lack of means for these many sub-Saharan publishers, which struggle to unite across borders in order to bring Africa together to compete with the European market[93]. While the development of the internet and the installation of fiber optic cables in 2009 opened up new possibilities, online books have not yet widely democratized the access to reading on the continent. It neverthesless modified the chain of production. NGOs, like Nouvelles Editions Numériques Africaines, have been the driving force behind the funding of online books[94]. However, according to a 2014 study published by the Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie on French language in the world, contributions have fallen short because they did not boost commercial outcomes (456). The rise in independent structures, either focusing on publishing books or online books, nevertheless allows African and Caribbean authors and publishers greater oversight and freedom over their literary productions, thus engaging in the creation of African and Caribbean literary canons that are more liberated from Western influences.

As much as I would like to draw a clear picture of a revolution, the history of the bibliographical industry in sub-Saharan Africa and the Caribbean is much rather a process, an evolution, much like the implantation of sub-Saharan and Caribbean fares in the French

[93] A certain level of nationalism used to limit the circulation of books between countries. For example, it prevented a Cameroonian book from reaching the stalls of a vendor in Senegal, because it was not considered interesting. However, the stardom of contemporary authors across borders have changed the way people relate to the diverse literatures of the continent.

[94] According to the same report, in 2013, the Librairie Numérique Africaine (LNA) was created to focus on the purchase and the downloading of online books. Its catalogue comprises 118 publications from 12 publishing houses from the Ivory Coast, Cameroon, and Senegal. However, it represents an oddity in the larger publication market. The bigger online platforms merely promote the catalogues of publishing houses but do not offer the possibilities for online purchases or for acquiring online books (459).

landscape. It manifests itself as a negotiation between dependency and autonomy from the West that is still unrolling today, and which is echoed by the same (r)evolution, transformation, and desire for independence and recognition as the culinary cultures of these two regions. In this context, the literature and culinary industries both converge in the struggle between nationalism and globalization. However, both of these industries in Sub-Saharan African and the French Caribbean are thriving, being praised and recognized for their value as we have seen. Therefore, the alliance between the chef, the author and the publisher has broken down the high and low divisions that have kept sub-Saharan and Caribbean literary and culinary productions at the margin. In this perspective, it seems important to delve deeper into the rise of these cuisines and how they are being perceived in the French cultural landscape. What initiatives have chefs undertaken in order for their flavors, produce and dishes to be recognized? Have sub-Saharan cuisines been adopted in the same manner as Vietnamese or Japanese fares? In the next chapter, I will examine the implantation of sub-Saharan culinary cultures in France. I will analyze initiatives by chefs and businessmen as they attempt to feature and further define the flavors they promote.

Chapter Three:

Exiting the Ethnic Niche:
The Transition in the Representation of Sub-Saharan African Cuisines in France

"If you taste something good, you will want more of it"
-African proverb

Let's posit first that not all cuisines are perceived as equal. As we previously established, French cuisine has imposed itself as the reference in the matter of gastronomy, defining culinary terms, techniques, and establishing models of culinary production and consumption. In this regard, the question that remains is: What is the place devoted to other cuisines in the French landscape? I posit that n'doles and attiékés have struggled to find a market and a voice of their own, and that they are supplanted by other foreign fares. Naa Baako Ako-Adjei, a writer, published in *Gastronomica* an article entitled "How Not to Write about Africa: African Cuisines in Food Writing", where she analyzes the media coverage surrounding sub-Saharan African culinary cultures and concludes that:

> the limited space devoted to the cuisines of Africa and the misconceptions that color much of what is written about these cuisines by gourmet food magazines and newspapers mean that African cuisines remain in the culinary margins and are unlikely to establish a culinary presence beyond their current ethnic niche. (45)

A deep parallelism can be drawn between the perception and the rise of West African cuisines in the United States and in France. And even though I agree with Naa Baako Ako-Adjei, the specificity of the relationship between West Africa and France in terms of historical, socio-political, economic and cultural ties sharpen up when it comes to the rise in the visibility and appreciation of fufu, mafé or chicken yassa. In fact, the French culinary

landscape is changing to encompass the rise of this cuisine as chefs, authors and journalists come together to define and introduce it to a larger audience.

The Stereotyping of Ethnic Foods

When we look a bit closer at West African and Caribbean cuisines, we can see a difference in the way they have developed and are currently perceived in France. In fact, a study of newspaper articles and recipes demonstrates that whereas Caribbean food is widely associated with travel, its African counterparts are not represented as a destination[95]. Cookbooks and newspaper articles alike invite the readers to reproduce the food at home or to experience it in one of the restaurants available in France, but few are the references to travel to enjoy the food at the source. Turgeon calls "ethnosites": "des lieux déterritorialisés où les clients peuvent consommer une cuisine de l'autre chez eux" (163). Caribbean cuisine's online presence is mostly facilitated by tourism websites putting forward the desire of consumers for a change of scenery and the consumption of exoticism. In fact, rare are the articles theorizing or presenting Caribbean cuisine, thus suggesting a certain familiarity of the public with it. Diners are nevertheless invited to take a vacation across the ocean to relax on a beach of white sand while sipping on a cocktail and enjoying seafood, a stereotype that is embedded in the narration and illustrations accompanying recipes[96]. But when it comes to food culture, Martinique and Guadeloupe are caught in the

[95] The desire for exoticism needs to be consumed within the frontiers of the hexagon for West African cuisines, which can be explained by the negative stereotypes associated to them. Osé African Cuisine, a restaurant in Paris, conducted market research to understand why African cuisine was not popular in France because of its stereotyping (Revert).

[96] Besides articles, and online recipes, cookbooks equally carry on and reinforce such stereotypes buying into the dream inherited from the consuming colonizer attracted by spices and sugar, among the other new commodities that originated from these islands.

romanticization of its exoticism on one side and the monstrosity of the all-consuming Black Body on the other side[97]. Drafted and promoted by the colonial discourses, as Loichot underlines in her book *The Tropics Bite Back: Culinary Coups in Caribbean Literature,* it reduces:

> [the] Caribbean subjects to figure evoking pathological eating: the blood thirsty cannibal, the glutton, the bulimic, the uncouth eater, the starved, the happy-to-be-starved, the selfless *da* or Antillean mammy, the wet nurse whose milk evades her own children, the cunning cook, the sugary *doudou*, the fruity octoroon, the grinning *Banania*-man or docile Uncle Ben served at our kitchen table (viii)

Afflicted with these images of pathological eating, docility and thankful servitude, the colonial subject became the outward manifestation of food racism and the victim of what Loichot calls the "colonial food disease" (viii). The origin of the word cannibal itself is highlighted by both Loichot and Njeri Githire in her book *Cannibal Writes: Eating Others in Caribbean and Indian Ocean Women's Writing* (13-14) as construed. Actually, it:

> […] began with Columbus' mistake. "*Caríba*," screamed by *Carib* Amerindians calling out their names, morphed, in Columbus's ears, into an explorer's warning: *caníbal*. […] Instead of "carí," Columbus heard "cani," which is assimilated to the Latin canis, or dog, translated into the Greek *Cyno* carrying in its tow the suffix -*cephalus*, which invoked the monster imported from the ancient European myth. […] Metastazing from this linguistic error, Europeans and other Western colonizers, tourists, and readers have associated the Antilles with the primal act of eating […]. (vii)

Condé echoes these prejudices and the slandering of African, Caribbean and diasporic cultures when she writes : "Le mot "cannibale," dit-il, ne saurait avoir une connotation

[97] Condé addressed and revisited the orchestrated monstrosity of the Black body through diverse characters in her novels such as in *Moi, Tituba…Sorcière de Salem,* and also through the figure of the cannibal in *Histoire de la femme cannibale*. For Loichot, "if the "tropical other" as cannibal threatens to turn the European subject into food, then, the cannibal must be turned into food in order to be tamed and annihilated. […] The edible woman and man become digestible and assimilated in their metaphorical or metonymic association with ingestible products: bananas, sugar, rum and chocolate" (xix-xx) By pointing out the association between the Black body and edibles, Loichot highlights the use of objectification to gain control over it and undermine it.

positive car il faisait allusion à une pratique que les Africains n'avaient jamais connue et dont ils avaient été accusés à tort." (2015, 243). This stereotyping, downgrading and (neo)colonization of Caribbean and West African cultures and culinary heritages are the driving force behind the rise of chefs and authors whose intent is to change the prejudices associated with their traditions. Condé tackles this inheritance, which she imputes to the French school system that taught entire generations, including that of her mother, as the all-mighty supremacy of the West: "Ne comptons pas l'Afrique. Là, c'est la sauvagerie. Les cannibales se mangent les uns les autres en potée. […] Reste l'Europe. Placée au centre du monde, elle est l'héritage et le sommet de la civilisation antique" (2006, 130-131). The use of the adverb of location "là" differentiates a "there" made of savages and cannibals, from a Western "here", presented as the cradle and the height of civilization. The Caribbean, due to its historical and political specificities, seems to find itself halfway, both included but equally rejected, which Jeanne, Maryse's mother, embodies. She is pitied for the color of her skin. M. Roumegoux, the teacher hired by the Walbergs to teach her to write and read[98], sees as a handicap that prevented her from fully belonging, but at the same time, she is not associated either with these savages he described (2006, 131). The significant link between the islands and mainland France can be theorized as the reason for the integration for quite some time of Caribbean cuisine in the French landscape. While West African food also benefits from the tourism appeal, it is less visible. Until 2010, articles published in French newspapers that invited the readers to discover the richness of its culinary traditions were rare. In 2010, *Elle* magazine was imploring its reader to fall in

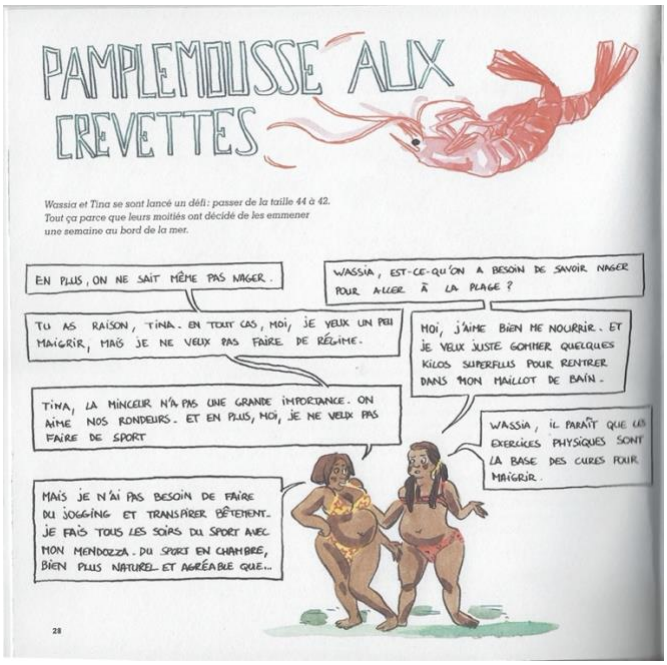
[98] However, M. Roumegoux, himself, despites his racially loaded comments, is described as a "bastard": "[le fils] d'un blanc pays et d'une Indienne" (Condé 2006, 130). His comment on Jeanne's impossibility to belong becomes ironic as his illegitimate upbringing challenges his belonging to what he claims is an old and renowned lineage.

love with African cuisine in an article entitled "Aimez la cuisine africaine." Its author intended to introduce its French readers to the diversity in foods. But can we talk about diversity if the article itself fails to acknowledge the plurality and heterogeneity of culinary identities within the African continent? By addressing African cuisine in the singular, the author of this article for *Elle*, like most of the articles written on this topic, assimilate all culinary cultures and cuisines in Africa under one category, thus forgetting about the history and culturally diverse identities within the continent[99]. However, intended to introduce French readers on a rather unknown cuisine, the article starts with an attempt at debunking the stereotype of its tastelessness before going on to explain the geography of the African continent thus presuming a lack of knowledge of the target audience[100]. *Elle* foresaw the start of a trend, which reached a larger audience starting in 2015 when more articles began to be published in mainstream French medias. *Le Monde*, *Le Figaro*, *L'Express* and *Le Nouvel Observateur* are among the newspapers that covered the rise of this new tendency, but with only around twenty articles published in the primary French media outlets until now, it is evident that African cuisines are still marginalized. Rich, unhealthy, bizarre, too spicy, unsophisticated – such are some of the stereotypes that these articles put forward first. In fact, what they all underline is the volition of chefs to change people's prejudices and assumptions. As addressed by the authors in my corpus, it is hard to part with the association of Africa and famine. For Condé, the *mafé*[101] symbolizes this linkage in the same way: "Ibrahima cuisinait invariablement un mafé. Le mafé est un plat

[99] Additionally, as I already established in the introduction, the terminology *African cuisine* came to become synonymous of black sub-Saharan culture, thus excluding the Maghreb.
[100] Despite *Elle* being a magazine intended for women, by "audience", I want to signify here French people in general.
[101] *Mafé* is a rich peanut stew with vegetables and meat. It is most often cooked with beef, chicken, or lamb.

originaire du Mali […]. Aussi le seul mot mafé s'associe pour moi à la pénurie alimentaire et l'indigence d'un pays" (2015, 40), while for Miano, it is the *jazz* that embodies the struggle for satiety : "C'est que le jazz est précieux. Quelques bouchées vous remplissent l'estomac, et dans les pays où on cherche la vie sans forcément la trouver, la satiété vaut son pesant d'or" (19). From Mali to Cameroon, it is the idea of a dearth of food that binds West African countries in the collective memory[102]. By highlighting that *jazz* street-food sellers entice their clients by pretending to offer them a little extra of the precious mix, but instead just add a few drizzles of the oil-based sauce, we see a glimpse of food anxiety as a result of a recurring history of famine. But what are the repercussions on the perception of the Black Body? Africans are either described as too fat or not enough. In that sense, West African food history seems to be doomed to fail the people that consume it. Abouet's hybrid cookbook represents this dilemma by bringing together the visual presentation of West African female bodies and the growing appeal for healthier recipes she shares with her readers. If Abouet highlights the attraction for some "rondeurs" [curves], she also points out that women are not spared by the seductiveness of a thinner body, as this extract from her cookbook demonstrates:

[102] All the countries of sub-Saharan Africa could be added by extension to this list, as they face the same struggles for sustainability as they fought and continue to fight food scarcity. However, these countries also share a deep and rich culinary history beyond geographic and political borders. For example, *mafé* is a dish that can be found in Senegal, Mali, Gambia or Mauritania.



3.1. "Pamplemousse aux crevettes" (28) in *Délices d'Afrique: 50 recettes pour petits moments de confidences à partager* by Marguerite Abouet.

The conversation between the two women highlights a sense of comfort and security with the curves of their body. Both characters are represented by Abouet in colorful bikinis while discussing their future vacation plans to the beach. Their bodies are celebrated for their inherent beauty, free of the shame and self-consciousness that so often accompany the representation of female bodies. They embrace their curves and reject diets and sport as a means to a thin body. They set their own standards for themselves, thus rejecting social pressures. In fact, they consecutively express their inability to swim and to fit comfortably in their bikinis, but it does not hinder their vacation plans or trigger a reassessment of their living style. The pleasure brought by the consuming of chicken yassa or a yam stew supplants all, and they assert their desire for eating without any guilt. Abouet thus reclaims the ability for the black body, whether male or female, for healthy food habits free of

pathological eating. This empowering message is even more significant if we account for the antithetical and paradoxical stereotyping of the African continent on par with shortages of food and episodes of famine, while most articles on African cuisines deal with the assumption they are making people fat. In fact, the connection between appearances, attraction and diet is also discussed in Beyala's novel, *Comment cuisiner son mari à l'africaine*, where African cuisines are associated with being overweight. In fact, from the first page of chapter one, the narrator Aissatou, who cooks African dishes to seduce her neighbor Bolobolo, warns her readers: "bien manger est une degradation parce que cela engendre une surabondance de chair; impure aux regards (Beyala 11). Aïssatou, who defines herself as a "Négresse blanche" (Beyala 21), resides in Paris and has internalized the association between beauty and a slender body that is presented as a Western ideal. On the contrary, most of the African women in the novel praise curves and a rounder body as a sign of health, wealth, but also as a testimony of womanhood. A curvy body is a desirable asset because it suggests that a woman enjoys eating and cooking, therefore making in turn a good spouse (Beyala 49). When Aïssatou goes to visit a marabout, the other women in the waiting room comment: "T'es trop maigre […]. Qu'est-ce que tu veux qu'un homme mange là dedans? Les os, les arrêtes ou quoi? Des os, même un chien appartenant à un blanc n'en veut pas" (Beyala 48). The association between body and sustenance reinforces the hypersexualization of the female body, that is metaphorically consumed by men. Therefore, a thin woman cannot satiate the physical appetite of her husband. The underlying message is that of the title of Beyala's novel, a woman needs to cook for her husband the African way in order to seduce him. In that perspective, Africans are the perpetual victims of their presumed inability to feed themselves enough and/or

appropriately. By reclaiming their right to represent their culture, chefs and authors alike are engaging in a healing process. This healing process is facilitated by food consumption that satiates unsatisfied stomachs in order to battle what I would call cultural bulimia[103].

The Rise of the Celebrity Chefs Behind African Cuisines

Only through this healing can West African and Caribbean food be free from the shackles of prejudices and stereotypes in order to exit the ethnic food niche. Articles from mainstream French media outlined, along with the press specializing in the coverage of the francophone world and cultures, the rise of this new trend. They documented the switch from a cuisine burdened by stereotypes, to the rebirth of an inheritance praised for its unity that is carried on by innovative, charismatic and talented chefs. Award-winning cookbooks, the high visibility of celebrity chefs, the organization of Afro-cooking fairs, the opening of food trucks and high-end restaurants, means that West African cuisines are not ostracized anymore. A new generation of chefs that is claiming their heritage with the intention to establish and reassert its value[104]. In order to foreground African staples, cooking had to exit the cocoon of the family kitchen. While the family kitchen is ruled by women in Africa, as Maryse Condé well reminds us, how could Adoremus Bokandé, a man, gain such dexterity and knowledge as she describes below? Born in Rwanda, he lost his entire family to the genocide and lived in orphanages before coming to the United States. Upon meeting

[103] I refer here to the unsatisfied stomachs both in a figurative and metaphorical way to signify the influence of the West on sub-Saharan Africa, and by extension Caribbean culture by way of colonization and its remnants.

[104] These chefs are the poster faces of the food they cook, and their active presence on social medias, from Facebook, to Twitter as well as their high numbers of followers testify of their influence and stardom.

at a university in Delaware, Condé's and Adoremus' love for cooking brought them together:

> Mais il me prit par mon point faible : la cuisine. Il s'amenait chez nous à l'improviste les bras chargées de sacs en papier brun débordant de toutes sortes d'ingrédients avec lesquels il préparait des plats savoureux. Sa spécialité consistait en des gratins d'igname ou de patates-douces qu'il accompagnait de boulettes de poisson servies dans une sauce aigre-douce, mélange de vinaigre, de tamarin et de piment. Admirative, je regardais ses grandes mains osseuses parer la viande et je me demandais comment il avait acquis cette habileté, cette science dans un domaine réservé exclusivement aux femmes en Afrique. (Condé 2015, 245)

Entering the professional kitchen is the key, as Adoremus embodies. In fact, he learned his way around a kitchen in a joint in Kigali, Rwanda. But for professional African chefs[105], one of the necessary stepping stones is, for the majority, the education they received abroad in France. Such is the case of Cameroonian Chef Christian Abégan who trained at the renowned Cordon Bleu in Paris, or Franco-Cameroonian Chef Loïc Dablé who worked at Georges V, among other prestigious tables. Such experiences gave them not only a mediatic platform to promote African gastronomy and talents but also a means to establish their careers. In fact, both Abégan and Dablé were participants in the Pan-African show "Starchef" as coach and judge respectively, which opened the doors to the set of the renowned television show "Le grand journal" on Canal + channel to Dablé in 2013. Cooking was thus redefined as a male-inclusive activity for sub-Saharan culture, while for the West, fine cuisine was not the realm of whiteness anymore. While more articles feature African male celebrity chefs, there are also many African women who are known for their culinary talents and who actively contribute to bringing African cuisines into the spotlight.

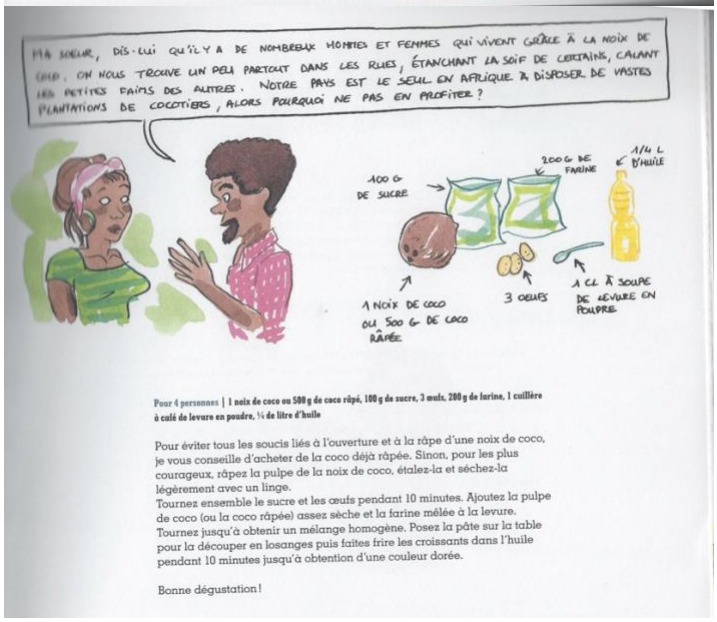
[105] I will use the denomination "African chefs" for the chefs I am presenting in this part of my dissertation even though some are Franco-African, born in France of African parents.

For example, Chef Rougui Dia, who is Franco-Senegalese worked at the renewed Michelin-starred restaurant *Petrossian*. She was also chef-de-cuisine at *Le Vraymonde* in Paris, which led to her having the nickname of 'Reine africaine de la cuisine parisienne.' She now owns her own restaurant in Paris as well as a bakery which specializes in rum baba, and authored a biography entitled *Le chef est une femme* in which she details her journey as a female chef. Just as French chefs have dominated the culinary scene in France, male chefs are equally the more dominant voices representing Caribbean and West African cuisines. Few women stand as exceptions within the pool of self-defined female cooks, who concentrate on a different kind of cuisine that is associated with motherly and traditional characteristics. But when it comes to attracting African men to a task culturally perceived as effeminate and reserved to women, as Abouet underlines in her work, the appeal of the benefits that can come with entrepreneurship are key. In order to attract men to the culinary world, the cuisine itself had to be relocated outside of the household in order to separate the menial daily tasks of preparing food from the lucrative career. This evolution in the culinary culture is well exemplified in the recipe of the *Croissant Lunaire au coco*, subtitled "Comment convaincre sa moitié au chômage de se reconvertir:"

CROISSANT LUNAIRE AU COCO

COMMENT CONVAINCRE SA MOITIÉ AU CHÔMAGE DE SE RECONVERTIR

C'est en se plaignant à son groupe de parole du chômage très prolongé de son mari, un dimanche ensoleillé, que Flora a découvert les bienfaits de la noix de coco sur sa future vie conjugale. En effet, un frère de parole lui a appris ce jour-là qu'il occupait un bon poste dans une société de la place lorsqu'il fut brutalement mis en congé technique. Il s'est depuis reconverti en vendeur de noix de coco. Flora remarque alors ses beaux habits, ses chaussures neuves, son teint ciré et surtout le beau pagne que portait son épouse et elle ne peut s'empêcher de leur poser cette question embarrassante :



Pour 4 personnes | 1 noix de coco ou 500 g de coco râpé, 100 g de sucre, 3 œufs, 200 g de farine, 1 cuillère à café de levure en poudre, ¼ de litre d'huile

Pour éviter tous les soucis liés à l'ouverture et à la râpe d'une noix de coco, je vous conseille d'acheter de la coco déjà râpée. Sinon, pour les plus courageux, râpez la pulpe de la noix de coco, étalez-la et séchez-la légèrement avec un linge.
Tournez ensemble le sucre et les œufs pendant 10 minutes. Ajoutez la pulpe de coco (ou la coco râpée) assez sèche et la farine mêlée à la levure. Tournez jusqu'à obtenir un mélange homogène. Posez la pâte sur la table pour la découper en losanges puis faites frire les croissants dans l'huile pendant 10 minutes jusqu'à obtention d'une couleur dorée.

Bonne dégustation !

3.2 "Croissant lunaire au coco" (100-101) in *Délices d'Afrique: 50 recettes pour petits moments de confidences à partager* by Marguerite Abouet.

In the illustration that accompanies this recipe, two different types of people are represented. In the foreground, Flora meets an acquaintance and his wife. As Abouet's characters point out in the dialogue, catering professions are seen as demeaning for a man,

so much so much that unemployment appears as a better prospect for Flora's husband. However, the lucrative features of the commercialization of foodstuffs that positively impacted the family's finances of Flora's friend completely alter people's perception of his work. His financial success, which is represented by his and his wife's new and expensive clothes, obliterates all stereotypes. Abouet's drawing suggest his status through the well-cut pants and shirt that he wears. His wife and he are elegant. Her status is equally highlighted in the refinement of her outfit. Her tailored dress matches her elaborate head-wrap. While Flora and she are both represented wearing similar outfits and colors, Flora's style is more casual. The similarities as well as the contrasts between the two women serve as a reminder of what Flora could become if her husband considered the growing pool of career opportunities within the food service industry. By exploiting the natural resources available in his country, his salary is the equivalent to that of an executive, thus rehabilitating the image of men as metaphorical, but also literal providers for their families. Moreover, his success is also emphasized by the symmetry of characters in the scene in the background. Two older women seem to console an older man. Could we see in this act the embodiment of this older generation of men that is refusing to rethink their role within society and within the household and thus finds itself struggling? As Flora displays, the African continent is witnessing a growing interest from the younger generation in and awareness of entrepreneurship opportunities when it comes to the table. Its staples and cuisines have caught the attention of entrepreneurs such as Kossi Modeste, who created and is now editor-in-chief of the first European culinary magazine devoted to African and Caribbean food, *Afro-cooking*. Surfing on the new popularity of African cuisines, he also started in 2018 the first edition of the festival of African Cuisines, "We Eat Africa" that

took place in Paris[106]. Cooking workshops and demonstrations, round tables, conferences, and tastings of exotic products are among the activities that were designed to introduce or further introduce attendees to the tastes of the African continent. Through these diverse innovations, what we are currently witnessing is an alliance between the chef, the businessman, the journalist, and the author who value a cuisine previously ignored and shunned. As Gabriel Stein, owner of *Osé Africain*, declared and is echoed through the many interviews of fellow restaurateurs: "C'est tous ensemble que nous ferons connaître et évoluer la cuisine africaine" (Revert). Collaboration, solidarity and media exposure are perceived as the key to succeed in expanding the market together, even though one can sense divergences as to how it is attainable.

Two different schools of thought emerge when it comes to the philosophy of African chefs. Just as Condé saw the positive aspects of altering recipes, while Sow Fall saw it as a threat to the authenticity of a cuisine, debates have emerged on how to invite French palates to taste and adopt foreign food and transform the perception of a cuisine that is seen as "ghéttoisée" (*Paris Match*) into a "canonical foodie experience." For chefs born in France of African descent, the trend seems to adopt Afro-fusion as a model. But does fusion really advocate for the potential of African cuisines, or on the contrary does it rather lead to confusion? The cross-pollination and the blending of the African culinary profiles, with flavors and techniques borrowed from others, is nevertheless frowned upon by most of the celebrity chefs. Female Chef Anto, who is originally from Gabon, analyzes this trend when she declares in an interview: "Ceux qui font la fusion sont souvent des

[106] The tickets to participate in the Festival were sold out more than a week before its starting date highlighting the current popularity of African cuisines in France.

jeunes d'origine africaine qui ont grandi en Europe. Ils se retrouvent pris entre deux feux et mélangent plusieurs influences alors même que la cuisine africaine est loin d'avoir été totalement exploitée" (Douïeb). She perceives this direction as the uprooting of a culinary culture that echoes the dual sense of belonging of binational chefs who do not understand fully the depth of the culture they mean to represent. Therefore, her stance is critical of the short-sightedness that embraces Afro-fusion at the expense of a fair representation of African cuisines, which she sees as needing to be explored first for their authenticity before being reinvented. Kossi Modeste echoes her opinion when he states: "Il n'y a pas que le mafé et le poulet yassa dans la cuisine africaine. Il existe en effet une multitude de recettes et de produits que nous devons encore faire découvrir avant de les mélanger à d'autres cuisines" (Douïeb). Interestingly, chefs such as Abégan stress that even Africans need to be educated about their own cuisines, as they are often unaware of their legacy *(Paris Match*). But in this extract, the use of the exclusive negation "que" underlines the limitations that now reduce the perception of African food by the patrons of Western restaurants to a few specific dishes. Both Chef Anto and Kossi Modeste, through their passion and work, aspire to introduce their heritage to Western diners and clients, but also hunger for discovering and rediscovering their own gastronomy. The diversity of the dishes offered on their respective menus aims at challenging the perception of what Westerners consider to be authentic African food, which, according to Chef Dablé is the key for its adoption on the same level as Asian and Maghrebi cuisines in France. He insists that it is impossible to rid African cuisine of its stereotypes and make it successful if chefs do not

respect its authenticity (*Le Monde* 2015)[107], thus raising the question of the definition of authenticity, especially in the African context[108]. As the experience itself of eating outside of the African continent encompasses going to a restaurant, with each guest eating their own dish with silverware[109], how is authenticity defined in an artificially recreated environment in order to please the patrons? For Garnier, it is important to analyze the negotiation process that involves the producer and consumer of a dish:

> Le rôle du restaurateur étranger consiste à construire de l'intelligibilité commune, c'est à dire à faire en sorte que le produit alimentaire étranger fasse sens pour le consommateur occidental, qu'il soit en d'autres termes, ingérable et attirant pour l'autre. Seulement, pour en faire sens, le produit alimentaire doit pouvoir être qualifié et identifié par le consommateur-mangeur. Nous rejoignons ici la posture de Jean-Pierre Warnier (1994) et Jean-Loup Amselle (2002) pour qui l'authenticité d'un bien relève moins de sa qualité intrinsèque que d'une création de sens, fruit de l'imagination sociale et de la réflexivité, laquelle est ensuite validée par les regards externes portés sur ce bien. (3)

What Garnier, and Warnier and Amselle before her, pointed out is a process of negotiation and adaptation to the culinary landscape of the host. Authenticity cannot be imposed by the restaurateur, but it has to be perceived as such by the clients who impose their understanding and perception of a foreign product. In order for this process of negotiation

---

[107] Interestingly, Dablé advocates for authentic cuisine all the while recognizing that the food he creates belongs to the Afro-fusion genre thus highlighting the arguable and idiosyncratic definition of authenticity. Moreover, he also dabbles with molecular gastronomy, which was coined in 1988 by founding fathers, Hervé This, a French physical chemist and Nicholas Kurtis, a British professor of physics. According to the Britannica encyclopedia: "Molecular gastronomy [..] focuses on the mechanisms of transformation that occur during culinary processes at the level of domestic and restaurant cooking, an area that had historically tended to rely heavily on tradition and anecdotal information." In that sense, molecular gastronomy echoes the struggles incurred by African cuisines to be theorized and recognized that we highlighted in the first chapter.

[108] In fact, Garnier makes an interesting point in her article ""Faire avec" les goûts des autres: La petite restauration africaine, une nouvelle venue dans les villes moyennes en France" when she writes: Si "l'ailleurs culinaire" est une alimentation de l'origine et des sources, ce qui fait de la "cuisine africaine" une cuisine authentique ne va donc pas de soi" (3). In a continent where food has been imported, exported and exchanged during centuries as we will see in the fourth chapter, the concept of authenticity can be debatable.

[109] Eating is traditionally conceived as a communal experience in West African countries. People gather in a courtyard and sit on the ground around a dish that is shared. No utensils are used, and instead, people eat the food with their hand. In this perspective, there is a sense of gentrification that comes alone with the passage from the courtyard to the restaurant dining table.

to occur, there needs to be a communication between both parties. Therefore, in the case of West African cuisines, which are sought after mainly for their exoticism, the flavors have to be exotic enough to fulfill the clients' expectations, without being too exotic in order to prevent alienation. It is this exact balance that chefs are currently seeking and debating, in an attempt to colonize the palate of French consumers, without having to surrender and compromise their own identity and that of their culture.

Rethinking African restaurants: the path to trendiness.

It is not coincidental that sub-Saharan African cuisines have now become trendy. In fact, one can say that we have entered the era of the "afro-cool," as *Le nouvel observateur* highlights in its article "A Paris, la gastronomie africaine s'impose". Surfing on the wave of successes of African literatures, fashion and art[110], African food has come into vogue thanks to a diversification of initiatives and an evolution in culinary approaches by catering professionals. In order to seduce and nurture a new clientele[111], chefs are adapting to the demand of the market and that of French culinary culture. In order to seduce and conquer Europeans, the necessity to present a cuisine that is aware of health and nutrition is decisive as highlighted in the following extract from "Zeste Afrique #3: quand la cuisine africaine fait les yeux doux aux bobos" published in *Le Point Afrique*:

> Originaire du Gabon, le chef Anto cuisine à domicile pour des clients "à 99% européens." Son crédo ? Garder le côté traditionnel de ses plats tout en les adaptant à sa clientèle. Pour ce faire, elle explique qu'il "faut savoir

[110] Literature prize winners, the success of the African wax cloth on catwalks and everyday fashion are among the signs that African culture is on a rise in the West.

[111] The African diaspora is not in fact the targeted clientele as they are already familiar with these flavor profiles. As Chef Anto underlines, 99% of her clients are Europeans and constitute the group that needs to be seduced so they would cross the threshold of these establishments (*Le Point Afrique*).

> alléger car les Européens font beaucoup plus attention à l'aspect diététique que les Africains." (2017)

The exploration and expansion of African cuisines towards the niche service of home catering embraces a market that is still unexplored. Additionally, it breaks down the boundaries and stereotypes that have hindered the successful adoption of these flavors into the French culinary landscape[112]. By bringing African staples inside the houses of the clients, Chef Anto transforms foreign dishes into something familiar. She provides a taste of exoticism and foreignness, while making diners accustomed to and even intimate with, the different courses that she adapts to their palates. Her dishes, as many West African staples, are gluten free. Wheat is rarely used in the sub-Saharan food, and recipes are easily adaptable to vegetarians and vegans alike. Chefs have tinkered with their menus by also cooking with organic produce (*Le Monde* 2015). Additionally, new courses, such as deserts and appetizers have appeared on menus[113]. These are paired with French wine at Waly-Faye, the Parisian reference for African cooking. These breaks in the tradition testify to the hybridization of the cuisine that is served in France and includes what Barthes calls "la boisson totem [de la France]" in his work *Mythologies* (80). What could be described and qualified as a certain alienation in the representation of sub-Saharan customs abroad shows

[112] As for Chef Abégan, he sees the association between health and African cuisine as intrinsic to its essence as he declared: ""La cuisine est aussi une affaire de santé publique" rappelle Chef Abégan en décrivant les marmites débordantes d'huile et d'additifs alimentaires. "Cela n'a rien d'africain!" (*Paris Match*). Therefore, he points to a denaturation over time of what he considers as authentic African staples, which have been altered by the industrialization of food, a subject we will discuss in the next chapter.

[113] Chef Anto's online presence well exemplifies the trend that is the inclusion of pastries to the meals, even though she claims she is herself not a big fan of them because sweets are not customary of her family's culinary traditions. Desserts, along with appetizers, are equally included in most cookbook. Abouet highlights in her gastrocomic that appetizers were not customary and were imposed in the meal by women. As her father embodies, most men deemed this course superficial, unnecessary and even a tease towards them. She recalls that he would say: "[…] l'entrée est une pure supercherie, inventée par les femmes dans l'intention de "blaguer le ventre des pauvres hommes qu'ils sont". L'entrée selon lui ne servait donc à rien. Il valait mieux passer au plat de résistance" (Abouet 14).

the overwhelming cultural influence of the former colonizing power that continues to bend the rules and demand the integration of its codes, even though these codes are in conflict with the high number of practicing Muslims[114] in the African continent as a whole. As Gisèle Harrus-Révidi wrote in *Psychanalyse de la gourmandise*: "Manger un aliment interdit par la famille peut être comparé au fait de perdre sa langue naturelle, d'assimiler l'étranger et donc de s'assimiler à l'étranger » (99-100). This assimilation of the forbidden fruit, here alcohol, which belongs to the Western gustatory canon, embodies both the uprootedness of authentic West-African cooking, but also its evolution. If alcohol passed the door of the restaurant, isn't it proof of a strong desire for French acceptance? As Barthes underscores : "un diplôme de bonne intégration est décerné à qui pratique le vin : savoir boire est une technique nationale qui sert à qualifier le français" (82), a statement that is still as relevant today. By including wine on their menus, restaurateurs are trying to inscribe and integrate their cuisine on the French culinary map by combining sub-Saharan African culinary profiles with the culinary traditions of the host country. In this perspective, should we talk about fusion, or instead of the hybridization that is the "métissage" of the culinary experience one can have in West-African eateries in France? If the notion of *métissage* can be conceived as problematic, it should be read in the view of Laplantine's article "L'anthropologie genre métis" where he envisions it and define it as: "[un processus qui] mêle (mais ne mélange pas), distingue (mais ne sépare pas définitivement), superpose (mais dans un mouvement tremble), entrelace (mais ne confond pas) les imaginaires et les mémoires" (143-11). In turn, *Merriam-Webster* proposes that

[114] The 2014 census recorded 42.9% of Muslims in Ivory Coast, while 94% of the population declares itself of Muslim confession in Senegal, and it represents about 20.9% of the population in Cameroon.

fusion in cuisine be defined as "food prepared using techniques and ingredients of two or more ethnic or regional cuisines." However, for Collins the term fusion references "the fusion of two or more things [that] involves joining them together to form one thing." This latter definition, in opposition to the former, implies that the final product is different from the original one, thus highlighting the creation of something completely altered, namely here, a new African cuisine. The question that now emerges is to decide whether or not these changes come under the term Afro-fusion. Is it necessary to set the limit that should be set when it comes to the alliance between African and other cuisines? May Chef Anto and her fellow chefs be mistaken when they oppose Afro-fusion, which they consider a threat? Aren't all cuisines the result of a fusion of some sort? In this context, while the term *fusion* is the accepted culinary term, what is involved here is rather a certain hybridization, which I believe better renders the process that is occurring as the cuisine is not denatured, or completely distinct, but is instead altered, which some consider an act of improvement and modernization. All in all, the founder of the restaurant Osé African Cuisine, Gabriel Stein, conveys in an interview to TV5 Monde what well summarizes the initiatives of African chefs when he states: "Nous avons voulu faire une cuisine africaine qui ressemble à la jeunesse, à la fois moderne, accessible, urbaine" (Revert). He highlights the potential for renewal of these ancestral recipes. For people do not enjoy the communality of eating a common dish with their hands, African cooking responds to the evolution of eating behaviors in France[115]. African flavors can be found in the form of

[115] These African chefs-entrepreneurs are also focusing on their marketing approach. For example, chef Dablé created the *Dablé group* to promote "a contemporary vision of African gastronomy." The owner of Osé African Cuisine, as for him, wants to create a franchise, an economic paragon created by McDonalds, which has conquered the French market through its marketing model. Much more than just a restaurant, it is an entrepreneurial vision that these chefs embody.

home-made dishes in food trucks like *Black Spoon* in the business center of La Defense, or in upscale restaurants such as in the gastronomical restaurant in the Dapper museum, reviewed by *Le Monde* in glowing terms:

> Le menu dégustation est un ravissement. Une expérience gustative qui amène la satiété non par l'abondance des plats mais par l'extrême variété des saveurs, des couleurs, et des textures. L'hibiscus, dont on apprécie l'acidité et le côté astringent dans le jus de bissap, se révèle délicatement fruité et long en bouche quand il est présenté en coulis sur une panna cotta à l'huile d'olive. (2015)

The focus on small, delicate and flavorful dishes that are perfectly balanced illustrates the influence of fine dining and subsequently that of French gastronomy as a model for Dablé who adopts its codes and techniques all the while marrying them with the flavors of his family's country of origin. If we think about the French gastronomic meal, which entered the list of the intangible heritage of the UNESCO in 2010, it highlights the selection of produce, the table décor, the succession of well-selected dishes and the sociability and pleasure of sharing a moment of appreciation with friends or family as fundamentals to French culture. For Chef Anto, African culinary cultures are traditionally concerned with different preoccupations, which she addresses when she states: "Dans de nombreux restaurants africains, le dressage de l'assiette n'est souvent pas à la hauteur des attentes même si le goût y est" (*Le Point Afrique*, 2017). However, her style of cooking and her plating represent a caesura as she focuses just as much on taste as aesthetic. Along with the elevation of the food, the restaurants themselves had to reflect the changes that happened on the plate: "Ici, pas de service interminable, ni de serveur en boubou. L'Afrique et ses saveurs se retrouvent dans l'assiette uniquement" (Revert).

No more indigenous masks on the walls, or images of the savanna and its fauna. In fact, the rebirth of African cuisines has come with the redesign of the dining room.

Actually, the imaginary representation of the African restaurant does not do justice to the décor and atmosphere that currently participate in the success and the rise of African eateries on the foodies' radar[116]. The rethinking of the dining room is well exemplified by the prominent restaurant Waly-Fay in the 11th arrondissement of Paris, which inhabits a repurposed toy factory, formerly old and derelict. Trendy design, modern and warm, fashionable – restaurant reviews rave equally on the décor as on the content of the plate itself.

3.4 Photo of the Waly-Faye restaurant – Source: L'Express Styles

The inside is inspired by refined lofts with exposed steel beams, and wood-paneled walls to warm up the atmosphere. The menu and specialties are written down on a massive chalkboard, which blackness echoes the color of the frames of the front windows all the

[116] Entrepreneurs are literally putting African cultures on the map in Paris with the creation of a touristic guide to African culture called "Little Africa." It greatly participates in the success of these establishments and the fact that, as underlined by *Nouvel Observateur*, restaurants do not rely anymore on word-to mouth for revenue.

while contrasting with the red bricks on which it is affixed. As Aminata Sow Fall advocates: "C'est une erreur de croire que l'esthétique en art culinaire et les sentiments qui en découlent sont la préoccupation exclusive des sociétés qui ont élaboré un discours et des analyses pertinentes sur le sujet, et ont développé des moyens d'expression et de diffusion considérables" (28). Sleek, modern designs and beautifully dressed plates are not exclusively the attribute of France. If in fact many African chefs agree that they are appropriating the codes and techniques used by French cuisine to pull themselves to the top, then we can argue that it is due to France's reputation as the culinary canon that theorized and rules gastronomy.

All in all, convincing people to step into the restaurant is the biggest step before having them try out the food. In this perspective, we can definitively conclude that the alliance between the chef-entrepreneurs and the journalists that painted a new portrait of West African gastronomy and the locations where it can be savored in the hexagon are responsible for the growing success of these flavors that are being propelled out of the ethnic niche that they were previously occupying.

Exiting the "Ethnic" Niche

When thinking about successful ethnic food in France, the flavors of China and Vietnam come to mind[117], more recently we witnessed the success of sushi. But the foreign

[117] Condé recognizes the supremacy of certain ethnic cuisines over others highlighting a process of globalization:

> […] La cuisine chinoise s'est imposée à travers le monde. Même ceux qui n'y ont jamais goûté ont entendu parler du potage aux ailerons de requin, du canard laqué ou du poulet aux champignons noirs. Ce qui fait la différence, c'est la succulence de ces mets archi-connus. Je ne saurais décrire le repas que nous fîmes dans cette humble demeure, entourés d'inconnus aux visages souriants. (Condé 2015, 352-53)

fare that truly managed to seduce the French is North African cuisine. In 2011, in a survey conducted by TNS Sofres, couscous was voted the third favorite dish behind duck breast fillets, and mussels and fries, in that order, highlighting its adoption by the French public. Could West-African food ever gain the same popularity? Chefs are quite optimistic when it comes to the rise of their cuisine. So much that Kossi Modeste declared: "Je suis un optimiste. Dans quelques années, on dégustera le yassa ou le tiep bou dienn comme on mange un couscous ou une pizza aujourd'hui" (Revert), which is echoed by Dablé's statement : "Je pense que dans vingt ou trente ans, on arrivera à se situer au même niveau que la cuisine asiatique en France" (Winnie Kabuiku). Always compared to other cuisines, West-African culinary cultures struggle to stand on their own and are often blended together with the cuisines of the rest of the continent. In France, they subsist in the shade of Maghrebi staples. But between cultural and economic stakes[118], what does it mean to be catalogued as an "ethnic" cuisine? And what does it take for a cuisine to exit this ethnic niche? First of all, the term *ethnic* itself stands as problematic. The word entered the French language in the 13th century to signify "paganism," before being first used in the 16th century to qualify a people, but it is only in the 19th century that it came to be associated

---

In this respect, she joins emblematic French historian Fernand Braudel, author of *Civilization and Capitalism, 15th-18th Century*, who finds much commonalities between Chinese and French cuisine:

> Chinese cookery, which has taken over so many restaurants in the West today, belongs to a very ancient tradition, over a thousand years old, with unchanged rituals, elaborate recipes: one that is extremely attentive both in the sensual and literary sense to the range of tastes and their combinations, displaying a respect for the art of eating which is shared only by the French. (188)

Braudel attributes its success to the ritualization around the meals and the theoretization that echoes the creation and establishment of the national French culinary culture that Parkhurst Ferguson links to De la Reynière, Carême and Brillat-Savarin. In this context, eating is as much an activity of the mind as it is an act of survival.

[118] Let's not forget that opening a restaurant remains a medium for integration, but also survival for immigrants in France, whose living conditions have been deteriorating when it comes to lodging and employments since the 1990s as underlined by Garnier who states: "Dans ce contexte, le créneau de la restauration exotique apparaît aussi comme un moyen de contourner la discrimination du marché du travail et de lutter contre une certaine forme d'indignité" (6).

with the concept of race and ethnicity. As underscored by Krishnendu Ray, author of *The Ethnic Restaurateur*:

> The term itself is one of the signs of unequal relationship between the self-proclaimed normative center of the Euro-American imagination, its dominating institutions, and numerous categories of others such as the foreigner, the tourist, the exile, the stranger, the immigrant, etc…, in a rich semiotic universe of slippery, relational selfhoods and Otherness. (4)

What Ray successfully highlights is the power relationship between the dominant norm and the peripheral Others that gets translated in the perception and branding of food and cuisines. It is evident that ensnaring a culture within the label of *ethnic* food signifies the stripping away of the identity and uniqueness of a cuisine, a culture and its people by uprooting it in an a-geographical context. This all-encompassing term echoes Said's work, which highlighted the conflation between cultures that participated in the elaboration of a repository of preconceived images, which constructed an Orient as one homogeneous whole. Therefore, the term *ethnic* is reductive, and contributes to the establishment of a "hierarchy of taste" as noted by Ray who argues that:

> Nothing devalues a cuisine more than proximity to subordinate others. That explains not only the rise, fall, and rise again of Italian cuisine in America, but also the difficulty of Chinese, Mexican, and Soul food to break away, in dominant American eyes, from the contamination effect of low-class association. Poor, mobile people are rarely accorded cultural capita. The circulation of taste through the social architecture of class and race allows for the creation of a subcultural niche, say for the best taco, genuine dim-sum, or most authentic fried chicken, yet rarely assures a position among elite food cultures. (97)

Even though Ray's analysis focuses on the American market, we can certainly extend it to the hexagon. While I agree with his analysis of the perception of ethnic food as being ensnared with matters of race, class, and ethnicity, it is important to also highlight that just as couscous demonstrates in the French culinary landscape, some dishes do succeed in

leaving the ethnic niche. Used by French chefs and journalists alike, the term *ethnic* in association with gastronomy is however highly influenced by American culture in an attempt to sound cool, trendy, and create a sense of belonging to a larger movement that have propelled foreign fares to the front stage[119]. However, in the light of the problematic adoption of this term, one is led to reflect about a more appropriate substitute. Should we prefer the labels of *world cuisine*, or *exotic cuisine* that we see mainly used in recipes? Equally questionable, I would like to consider that in parallel to the rise of West African cuisines, these chefs have taken back control of their image, their culture and their food, thus stopping the West from continuing to build and control a certain image of Otherness that is ultimately stemming from these terms. The term ethnic is no longer used to describe a culinary culture consumed only by immigrants and ethnic minorities, but instead to the new rising movement I have been documenting.

Through their contribution to the elaboration of a sought-after African terroir, chefs are investing in a campaign of seduction to democratize African staples. In fact, if a majority of people consume a staple outside of the ethnic community it originates from, it stops being ethnic and instead is regarded for its intrinsic qualities thus having the power to advocate for the reevaluation of a whole cuisine. Senegalese chef Pierre Thiam is in this regard the most well-known advocate for the promotion of fonio, an ancient grain that he endorses as a solution to the world food crisis. Indeed, it lost its appeal when the colonization by the French influenced the staples of Senegal, replacing this grain by rice. Nutritionally richer, faster to cook, and less water thirsty, it is the perfect grain to grow

[119] A major difference between both cultures is the ease and the flexibility in the usage of the term "ethnic" in the American jargon compared to that of France. However, the fact it is used broadly highlights the internalization of the values and perception of foreign fares as being devoid of diversity.

across the semi-dry Sahel region that runs from Senegal and Mauritania, all the way to Eritrea. This cereal is appealing both to Western and African sensibilities, cultures and evolving food habits. Its recognition goes beyond that of the culinary field, as fonio is recognized and acknowledged in Alain Mabanckou's and Abdourahman Waberi's *Dictionnaire enjoué des cultures africaines* (156-159), where they praise this grain and through Chef Pierre Thiam's activism to bring back this environmentally friendly grain that belongs to the family of the millet. Articles have sprouted across the world: in the *New York Times*, *Saveur*, *CNN*, *The Guardian*, *RFI*, *Femina* or *La Dépêche*, without forgetting the institution that is the James Beard Foundation. All relay Thiam's enthusiasm, vision and entrepreneurship for the wide adoption of this grain that many perceive as the new quinoa. New textures, produce and flavors are thus appearing on the shelves of supermarkets and delicatessens alike. Nathalie Schermann, a Congolese chef who cooked in the kitchens of a luxury hotel in Versailles also created her own line of high-end African produce such as "Velours de noix de cola, velours de fleur d'hibiscus, crème de piment, crème de safou" (Douïeb). Her products are carried by the Galeries Lafayette, heightening their accessibility and participating in the democratization and popularization of African cooking. Finally, with cookbooks mixing both a historical and scientific approach, both Chefs Thiam's *Senegal: Modern Senegalese Recipes from the Source to the Bowl* and Abégan's first cookbook *Le Patrimoine Culinaire africain* aim to educate and highlight the plurality of products of the African terroir, which originate from different horizons. The multiplication of commercial initiatives around African terroir testify of a strong desire to advocate for the taste, depth and importance of West-African cooking as a global fare: not

a cuisine synonymous of poverty, famine and diseases, but a cuisine that can thrive in the most refined professional kitchens next to its French cousin.

The twenty-first century became a turning point in sub-Saharan cuisines, which have shed their negative stereotypes to rise to the top of the trendy food map. However, as I demonstrated, it is not only a matter of savor, but it is much more complex. This revolution happened as much in the kitchen as outside of it. In fact, we owe this growing success to the writer, the journalist and the chefs, who are coming together as taste makers. They have given a voice to the past, present and future actors of these cuisines, who have built their richness. People like Chef Pierre Thiam or Chef Anto are promoting and popularizing these new flavors in the metropolitan landscape in order to give them the power to rise from their ethnic niche, be recognized by the French and even compete with their cuisine. However, if French cuisine owed its creation to the founding fathers that were Grimod De la Reynière, Brillat-Savarin, and Carême, the rise of contemporary sub-Saharan gastronomical cultures is equally empowered by men and women from the African diaspora. The passage from the oral to the written, in the form of articles, cookbooks, and novels, has been the driving force behind the rise of these cuisines just like with French cuisine in the 19th century. Even though one cannot predict for sure the future success of this trend, the multiplication of initiatives and companies in Europe, Africa, and America that promote dishes like jollof rice, chicken yassa or kedjenou testify of their inscription on the foodie menus. However, as we have seen, these cuisines are evolving rapidly under the pressure of globalization thus endangering the ongoing process to define and redefine them in a manner that honors the essence and identity of these cuisines. While globalization

is often misconceived as a contemporary phenomenon, in the next chapter, I will analyze the deep rhizomic connections that have altered culinary cultures in both sub-Saharan Africa and the Caribbean over centuries.

Chapter Four:
The Taste of an Uprooted Terroir

"Millet is the soul of food"
-Tanzanian proverb

"There is no medicine as active as good food"
-Nigerian Proverb

When talking about food, the manner in which food is grown and where it is cultivated is as important, if not more, than the act of eating and cooking. Indeed, if we have focused so far on the sociological aspects of eating, preparing and serving fares, food is as much an anthropological and historical testimony of matters of the past. In fact, the ingredients mentioned in gastro-literature speak of culinary stories and histories, which testify to the growth of cuisines. And it is rightly so that Miano writes that for her, "La civilisation est avant tout dans l'assiette" (15). Ingredients are used to tell the tales of lands and people, therefore highlighting the cultural significance of dishes that transport the readers beyond the mere spatial and temporal boundaries of these narratives. As the historian James McCann observes in his work, many food staples are often erroneously understood as being native to the African continent but cannot be sustainably grown there. However, they have been widely adopted by farmers and consumers despite the resulting entrapment in a vicious cycle of dependence on imports, reproducing a scheme inherited from the colonial era. The Caribbean has equally been impacted with its culinary culture being reshaped by both the slave trade and colonization. But what ensues from this sought-after authenticity restaurateurs and customers widely discuss and desire? Can we speak of authentic Caribbean and sub-Saharan cuisines in this context? Or is it a mere illusion? Does

the concept of eating locally, or as the French put it consuming the "terroir," even makes sense in such a context? Gastro-literature challenges and pushes the boundaries of how we think about daily material life and the cultures around us. It translates the evolution of identities and cultural hybridizations inherited from colonial history, slavery and movements of people across time. From France to Cameroon and Senegal, all the way to the Caribbean and the United States, the readers discover through these texts a triangle of exchanges highlighting political, economic, and cultural stakes, of the past, present and future. Through the questioning of origins emerges a (re)definition of the question of individual, communal and national identity in the context of the impact of material exchanges, waves of colonization and the redrawing of frontiers over time.

The Rhizomic Terroir

As we discuss the origin of food, it is hard to avoid associating it with the notion of *terroir* so dear to the French. The term first appears in 1212 as *tieroir* to signify "territory." However, it is not until 1283 that it will be linked to agricultural practices to finally give birth to the *goust du terroir* in 1549. This "taste of terroir," as it can be translated, made the correlation between the unique properties of the soil of a region and the taste, character, and properties of its produce. First used for wine, it has grown to market a wide range of local ingredients as a "gauge for normalcy and authenticity," as Parker notes in his reference book *Tasting French Terroir: The History of an Idea* (4). A concept born and codified in France[120], its uniqueness and originality have imposed the untranslated word of

[120] The notion of *terroir* has given birth to a set of official laws controlling the origin and modes of production of foodstuff according to a set of expectations defined under the charts of specific appellations of origin

terroir outside of the national borders to be uniformly used abroad. However, beyond merely describing the taste of a place, the term evokes and conjures the five senses. The tastes, the smells and perfumes, the noises, songs, accents and oral traditions, the customs of a locale as well as the written texts that take their root in a specific land define the identity of the people who are from there or live there. Nevertheless, one reason for the difficulty of translating the term terroir first comes from the fact that it means something different for different people. In her book entitled *The Taste of a Place: A Cultural Journey into Terroir*, Amy Trubek proceeds to identify six different definitions for the term terroir in France: the humanist, scientific, geographical, cultural, agricultural and viticultural definitions. The polysemy of the word terroir demonstrates that it is as much a matter of nature as it is of culture. Terroir is the result of humanity's influence and proceedings that have altered the biosphere and our surrounding environment whether it be natural or cultural. In that sense, it is not immutable and it has also altered our taste. As seen in Pierre Bourdieu's *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, our understanding of what "we believe is in good taste […] shape what we think *tastes good*" (Trubek 8), which is in turn influenced by our belonging to a social and economic class. Bourdieu states that:

> Taste classifies, and it classifies the classifier. Social subjects, classified by their classifications, distinguish themselves by the distinctions they make, between the beautiful and the ugly, the distinguished and the vulgar, in which their position in the objective classifications is expressed or betrayed. (xxix)

While the definition of the word terroir is variable, our perception of terroir is equally changeable. For example, the word terroir is seen as positive when associated with food,

---

casually called *AOC* (Appelation d'Origine Contrôlée). These determine the quality of a product and have become a reference for consumers.

giving products of the terroir a quasi-elitist status. However, when it is used in relation to someone's accent or a person itself, terroir is seen as negative and unrefined. Therefore, terroir is about classification, about defining a high versus low culture according to our "habitus" as Bourdieu puts it (165-166). Our connection to the terroir is reflected by what we consume and how we consume it, and by the value we attach to the produce of terroirs. In that sense, terroir is all around us and inspires us to connect to our roots. As evoked by Parker, the idea of terroir itself becomes a marker of identity since:

> The tradition in France of linking the food each person consumes to his or her character dates back to theories on the humors popular throughout Europe in the Middle Ages. The practice became all the more common when Renaissance France began to construct a part of the country's cultural identity by evoking the causal power of land to create differences in food, language, and people. (Parker 1)

What we consume defines who we are in more ways that we realize, and by linking individuals to a geographical space, it equally connects us to people who eat the same food and share the same culture. Condé reinforces this idea in *Mets et merveilles* as she writes: "Un pays étranger, c'est d'abord une cuisine différente. […] La cuisine traduit le caractère de ses habitants et transfigure l'imagination. Visiter un supermarché est aussi instructif que parcourir un musée ou une salle d'exposition" (2015, 31). Food, and even more so cuisines -- as the result of an agricultural, economic, political, philosophical, and cultural process -- echo and materialize our fundamental identities. Condé is absolutely right to describe the experience of shopping in a supermarket to that of visiting a museum. In fact, nourishment is at the core of both our personal, communal and national character. Thus, it should not be a surprise that the idea of *terroir* is at the heart of nation building[121].

---

[121] As Parker remarks:

> In 1961, the literary critic Roland Barthes evoked terroir as he summed up the power of food and drink in France in terms of culinary nationalism and nostalgia, two themes the

By highlighting regional personalities and establishing a feeling of pride in one's sense of belonging to a land, people, as we have seen with Queen Taytu, have historically come together as one.

By resorting to gastro-literature and addressing the matters of the origin of food, Condé, Miano, Sow Fall, Beyala, and Abouet affirm and define their own identity. Eating is making choices, and these choices are defined by: our individuality, culture, environment, and history. Whether or not we make these choices consciously or not, by preparing and eating certain foods and not others, we exercise our social, cultural and political power. In this context, alimentation is used in literature as a way for authors to express their views and address a wide range of societal issues. It acts as a tool to protect and preserve their culture, as we have already addressed, hence highlighting the importance of eating local produce and cuisines and ultimately turning to the terroir. Carolyn De la Peña and Benjamin Lawrance coined the term "locavore" in their book *Local Foods Meet Global Foodways: Tasting History* to define "an individual who promotes the practice of eating a diet consisting of food harvested from within a 'local' era," a trend that Miano highly promotes. Indeed, she takes a stand for the advancement and preservation of local culinary cultures when she writes: "Il y a des choses qui voyagent mal et qui ne devraient pas prendre l'avion. C'est dans leur milieu naturel qu'il faut les découvrir, et comprendre en les goûtant ce que sont les gens qui s'en nourrissent" (Miano 56). For Miano,

---

> preceding pages have traced back to the Renaissance. He explains that "food allows people (I am speaking hereof French themes) to partake each day of the national past […] it upholds the memory of the terroir in modern life […]. One can say that, through their food, the French live to some extent the continuity of their nation. (154)

Indeed, if the French cannot be described as the most patriotic people, one element that remains constant is their pride and passion for their culinary culture. It has given birth to a quasi-sacralization of *terroir*, which many local and national initiatives strive to preserve.

appreciating food is appreciating the culture it originates from, but even more importantly, it is a way to connect with people and to understand the core of who they are. She argues that specialties should be eaten in their natural environment and that transposing them to a place where they do not belong is a denaturalization[122]. But any kind of denaturalization is equally an alteration of a culture, as harvests, fishing, and hunting have historically dictated what we eat according to the seasons. Therefore, for a locavore, the *terroir* is of prime importance as it constitutes a playground of some sort, the origin of all the food consumed. However, as Parker accurately discusses:

> […] although terroir is often defined as the flavor of "origin" it is important to draw attention to the fact that a first origin or birthplace is not what users have in mind when they employ the word. A person or plant can be transplanted after birth and the power of the new terroir will hold. Thus, terroir is sometimes, but not always, synonymous with original provenance. (9)

---

[122] Cookbooks, such as Abouet's represent this antithesis. Their first goal is the wide-spread dissemination of regional knowledge and the reproduction of recipes beyond its frontier. However, the transplantation and detteritorialization of *poulet yassa*, a recipe from Senegal is decried even by the author herself, who writes: "Mes copines, vous avez compris que je ne peux pas vous donner la vraie recette du yassa, mais une qui ressemble à toutes les autres […]" (Abouet 74). She presents her own cookbook as a fraud presenting an alternative semblance of the dishes from her region. Her main character shares her disappointment when, during a trip in Senegal, she asks her Senegalese friend Fatima for the recipe. Fatima refuses, stating :

> Ma copine, je t'aime, tu le sais bien, mais je ne pense pas que tu puisses aussi bien réussir le Yassa, même avec ma recette.
>
> - Fatima, je ne suis pas aussi nulle en cuisine, tu sais.
> - Le Yassa est sénégalais, il représente notre pays. Je veux bien encore qu'on le cuisine chez nos voisins africains mais en Europe ? Ça, là, je ne peux pas le supporter. Ils doivent cuisiner ça n'importe comment !
> - Fatima, c'est plutôt valorisant que ce plat s'exporte – il est à la tête d'affiche de tous les grands restaurants africains dans le monde !
> - Pff ! Toi aussi. C'est pour ça qu'il doit être mauvais. Le Yassa, ce n'est pas que du poulet, de la moutarde et du citron. C'est beaucoup d'amour, le plaisir de cuisiner, la joie de le partager avec la famille et les gens qu'on aime. C'est le plaisir de manger tous ensemble dans la même assiette. Et surtout, c'est une marinade faite la veille. Donc, ma copine, sache que "même si on a faim, on ne met pas la main dans la marmite de sa belle-mère. Il y a des choses qu'on ne fait pas." (Abouet 74)

As Fatima expresses, when one reproduces a dish outside of where it originates from, the cultural environment in which it is prepared and the conditions in which it is eaten cannot be met. *Poulet yassa* is a dish about love, community and hospitality. Restaurants and Europeans cultures cannot pretend to understand and uphold those conditions and values and therefore Fatima, as well as Abouet, refuse to share the true recipe with their African friend and us, readers. By refusing to share this recipe, aren't they both refusing hospitality, which is also the core identity of this dish and Senegalese culture as a whole?

In that sense, *terroir* is evolving, and adaptable to the extent of being described as rhizomatic. If we examine the work of Deleuze and Guattari on rhizomes in *Milles Plateaux (Vol. 2 – Capitalisme et Schizophrénie)*, they identity six different principles of the rhizome: the principles of connection, heterogeneity, multiplicity, insignificant rupture, and the principles of cartography and decalcomania (13-21). For Deleuze and Guattari, the rhizomic plateaus describe the overlaps of non-hierarchical connections that can be compared to the overlapping terroirs that function much like tectonic plates. In fact, the frontiers of a terroir are invisible and ever shifting. In that respect, does a terroir stop where another one begins? As my research on terroir will demonstrate, terroir resembles an invisible overlap of multiple identities and cultures. The rhizomic connections, which link the different terroirs together, signify that there is no center, thus defying a supposed hierarchical system. For Deleuze and Guattari: "Il n'y a pas de points ou de positions dans un rhizome, comme on en trouve dans une structure, un arbre, une racine. Il n'y a que des lignes." (14). Therefore, all terroirs, even though distinct, are interconnected and draw a map of polycentric connections. In that sense, the different terroirs are interacting and influencing each other. This model echoes and follows the migrations and movements of people and it opens up the possibilities of individuals attaching importance to multiple terroirs. Therefore, Parker sheds light on our capacity, as human beings, to set roots in our place of choice and find a home in a cuisine that is not necessarily that of our birthplace. People have the same propensity for naturalizing as plants and cuisines do. Parker definitively complicates the assumptions most people have of this notion, and his definition of *terroir* brings to light the different meanings we attach to the term. His definition

questions our conception of origin and exclusivity, especially when we talk about food, thus demonstrating that no terroir is immutable.

For Miano, a native of Cameroon, the genesis of *gombo* becomes the original myth, as she places food as the source of all things. In *Soulfood équatoriale*, she narrates the culinary evolution of her country, but also of civilizations as a whole. From her Parisian kitchen, she describes herself cooking and being transported to the foundation of everything:

> Je coupe le gombo en fines rondelles, et laisse voguer ma mémoire (…) Les peuples du monde connaissent à présent bien des rives. Toutes ne sont que des imitations de ce rivage-ci. Le mien. Le lieu où le monde a commencé. Ceci est la vérité. Les *Sawas* transmettent cela à leur descendance, de génération en génération. (12)

The preparation of the dish coincides with the birth of the world, but also that of her birth country. As Miano reminds her readers both at the beginning and the end of her book, the origin of the name Cameroon is directly linked to the crawfish that could be fished in the "Rio dos Camerões," literally translated as "the crawfish river," named as such by the Portuguese in the 15th century. Afterwards, the name evolved, with people pronouncing it as they saw fit: "Camerones. Cameroons. Kamerun. Cameroun" (14). The name itself of the country suggests the diversity of foreigners that came through this land, and whose languages and accents directly contributed and affected the development of this people. Merchants, travelers, colonizers, etc., all influenced the naming, and furthermore the identity, of this nation. More than just a name, this equally redefined the *terroir*, bringing with them new ingredients that would forever change the culinary identities of the continent. Thereby, for Miano, taste does not belong to a specific group, culture, or country. She deeply condemns this attitude as being chauvinistic, especially in regard to an incident

that happened to her fellow Franco-Cameroonian author Gaston Kelman. She describes the heated polemic around the reception of one of his books:

> Il y a quelques années, un écrivain français d'origine camerounaise s'est attiré l'ire des Africains installés en France, pour avoir intitulé son livre : *Je suis noir et je n'aime pas le manioc*. On a crié à la traîtrise, au déni des origines.
>
> Pourtant, il n'y a pas de raison objective qu'un Africain aime le manioc, tubercule implanté en Afrique par les Portugais qui le firent venir d'Amazonie, par les navires destinés au commerce des esclaves.
>
> Cet aliment s'est si bien intégré aux cultures afro-caribéennes, qui ont épuisé les manières de l'utiliser, que le simple fait de prétendre ne pas en manger devient synonyme de complexe de couleur.
>
> En réalité, les Africains les plus chauvins seraient bien incapables de dire ce que mangeaient leurs ancêtres avant l'arrivée du manioc. Il y avait autre chose bien sûr, mais pour ce qui est des féculents, le manioc a détrôné tous les autres – à l'exception de l'igname. (30)

These reactions assume that tastes, and food choices should be dictated by one's origin and the culture we were born into. Does one really betray their *terroir* and identity by refusing to consume certain staples? Should we be bound to like the staple favored by our cuisine? The refusal of the taste of manioc is conceived as a refusal to belong to the community, and even more so to the diasporic community, thus highlighting that food holds the power to unite as well as divide. It is highly compelling that Miano emphasizes that the feeling of betrayal is solely experienced as such by Africans residing in France, therefore demonstrating a greater attachment to a particular and distorted understanding of their terroir. Nostalgia and memory for a far-removed land can be considered as the root for this polemic that negates the reality of cultural hybridizations. Brought by the Portuguese from Amazonia in the sixteenth century, the integration of cassava to the African culinary landscape testifies to these rhizomatic world connections that are hardly visible or even known. Miano argues that even the most chauvinistic of Africans would be incapable of describing what their ancestors ate, which underlines the deep roots of certain ingredients.

In this respect, no terroir or cuisine can claim its independence from others, having been influenced in many different ways by the naturalization of produce or techniques. Hence, for Miano, taste is not a matter of belonging to a group of people, a culture, a race or even a nation; or -- it is the result of a personal process that is independent, even though also influenced by our belonging to a place and its *terroir*. Accordingly, this same ancestral culture that is so venerated by some for its alleged purity was never synonymous with the exclusion of foreign imports. In fact, she recalls the tales inherited by her ancestors that were carried on orally from one generation to the next:

> La tradition orale de nos peuples rapporte bien des histoires du temps jadis, mais aucune, cependant, où il soit question de tourner le dos aux aliments venus d'ailleurs.
> Ainsi, il n'y eu jamais de manifestations contre le manioc. Les tribus les plus guerrières, celles dont la parole de nos pères rapporte la résistance face à la traite négrière, n'allèrent pas jusqu'à refuser le manioc. (31)

As Miano's quote posits, even the more engaged of Cameroonians did not refrain from consuming foreign staples brought by colonization or neo-colonization. The "tropicalization" of the name of some of these ingredients, such as salted fish, which was renamed "solo" in Cameroon (39), witnesses the undeniable impact of the different waves of colonization on Cameroonian culture. Miano's essay thus exhorts the reader to consider the value that we give to the origin of material culture, such as foodstuff, therefore questioning the foundation of the notion of locavore. Yes, a person's diet can definitively consist solely of locally grown food. However, the notion of local, as we have noted is unsettled and debatable in light of global movements.

Terroir or Soul Food?

Miano repeateadly highlights our long-standing history as global citizens, a concept often shortsightedly considered as contemporary. However, while we are increasingly connected to one another beyond borders, the rhizomic connections run deep underground, and link the continents together. These inter-continental food migrations draw a picture of a triangle of influence from Europe to Africa all the way to America[123]. This is well exemplified by the title itself of Miano's essay, *Soulfood équatoriale,* that draws attention to the African roots of soul food. Miano links this cuisine to the deportation of African slaves to the American continent as she writes:

> Bien sûr, n'importe quelle personne attachée à la cuisine de sa grand-mère, à celle de son terroir, aurait tout à fait raison de la considérer comme sa *soul food,* la nourriture qui touche et remplit l'âme. Cependant, ce terme se rapporte, avant tout à la cuisine afro-américaine.
>
> Une alimentation mêlant des éléments venus d'Afrique et d'autres, trouvés sur place ou importés d'Europe.
>
> On raconte des histoires de déportés africains ayant conservé des graines dans leurs cheveux ou dans leurs oreilles durant le Passage du Milieu, cette traversée qui les emmenait pour un voyage sans retour. (27)

Besides naming a cuisine found in the south of the United States, could *soul food* be considered as the ethnic equivalent of *terroir*[124]? While the French have associated terroir with the notion of land, the abduction and robbing of African natives of their homeland could explain the transfer on a more enduring and perennial anchor, or -- family and community[125]. Indeed, both terms have in common the elaboration of a connection between

[123] And even Asia if we consider the influence of the Silk Road in the exchange and commercialization of spices.
[124] The term soul food was first used in print in 1964 in the context of the Black pride movement.
[125] This statement does not ignore that the conditions and realities of enslavement often meant the separation of families, as members were being sold as property to different owners, died during the Middle Passage or as a result of their treatment as slaves, or were killed.

a person and affect. However, the history of both terms differentiates them profoundly. As *terroir* refers to a hegemonic model, the term soul food emerges from the blood shed along the path of emancipation and freedom for the African and African-American people. Thereby, the naturalizing of African grains is at the root of the germination of a new food culture on the continent. While Miano anchors these claims in oral tales, the import to North America of knowledge in terms of culinary preparations, medicine, and tropical cultivations is undeniable. Slaves became, along with foodstuff, components of the material culture that came to the United States in these boats, as Miano describes:

> Aussi les navires était-ils chargés, sur les côtes africaines, de tubercules tels que l'igname, qui sert encore aujourd'hui, dans la *soul food*.
>
> C'est aussi par ces bateaux que le sorgho, les haricots rouges, le riz ou le gombo – appelé *kingang* en douala, *kingombo* en tshiluba, *ochingombo* en umbundu – furent introduits en Amérique.
>
> La *soul food* prend donc ses racines dans la période de l'esclavage étasunien, en devenant un des tous premiers éléments de métissage entre des peuples appelés à vivre ensemble. De fait.
>
> On sait que les esclaves servant dans les maisons des planteurs du sud apportèrent leur savoir-faire et leurs plantes africaines sur la table. […]
>
> Ceux qui ont eu la chance de goûter la cuisine créole de la Nouvelle Orléans, qui n'a rien à voir avec les hot-dogs et les hamburgers, savent que cette vérité ne se discute pas.
>
> Parmi les plats issus de la période de l'esclavage, citons : le *catalu* qui se prépare également dans la Caraïbe, et dont le nom viendrait de l'appellation mandingue d'une plante proche de l'épinard […]. (Miano 28-29)

Besides being smuggled, African staples were also knowingly brought on board the ships to sustain the slaves and the crew during the crossing of the Atlantic Ocean[126]. Called

[126] The slaves, while dehumanized and considered as merchandise, were also regarded as an investment. Therefore, as such, their survival and health across the Atlantic was critical to this economic trade. McCann's research refers to Ludewig Ferdinand Romer's *A Reliable account of Coast of Guinea* (1760), as to what slaves were being fed on their journey across the Atlantic:

> Bosnian [Romer's editor] noted that an English ship captain, after filling his ship full of slaves, went to the "Portuguese Island [Sao Tomé], where he stored himself with Provisions for his Goods." We do not know the precise cargo of provisions, but for crossing the Atlantic one eighteenth-century rations list for captives' weekly diet includes the following: "Sunday—pork, beans, porridge, tobacco; Monday—beans, porridge, tobacco,

differently in the languages spoken by slaves aboard the slave ships, the ingredients that arrived in America and also in the Caribbean had been harvested and eaten across the African continent. By evoking the cuisine of New Orleans and that of plantations, Miano reminds us of the pivotal role played by slaves in the development of a culinary terroir in America far from the fast-food industry that often defines it. However, while Miano accurately features the hybridity of soul food, its roots began well before the Atlantic slave trade with expeditions and explorations of the new continent, which equally participated in the creation of a complex culinary diaspora and the redefinition of culinary frontiers[127].

While the culinary *terroir* is defined in France as being linked with the frontier of the nation, the regions or the departments, when we look at the African continent, the frontiers delimiting the countries have evolved over time. It has deeply influenced and complicated the definition of cuisines according to national boundaries due not only to the evolving history of the continent, but also because of deeply ingrained intra-continental exchanges. Therefore, it is not surprising that dishes and culinary heritage — from common ingredients to cooking techniques — are often shared across borders, highlighting their regionalism over their nationalism. Let's start with *mafé*, which constitutes one of the many

---

> brandy; Tuesday—beans, porridge, tobacco; Wednesday—beans, porridge, brandy; Thursday—pork, beans, porridge, brandy; Friday—beans, porridge, tobacco; Saturday—*millie* (twice), brandy. (118)

This list constitutes a provisional plan of what slave traders intended to feed slaves, but as McCann remarks, the reality might have been very different.

[127] As Condé looks back on her travels and culinary experiences, she is dismayed by the lack of gastronomy in the United States: "Les repas consistaient en hamburgers de la pire espèce: viande hachée granuleuse, rondelles de tomates sans goût, petits pains spongieux, mal dégivrés. Après moult réflexions j'en vins à la conclusion qu'il faut de l'oppression et donc de la rébellion pour créer une culture authentique" (2015, 374). She propounds that a cuisine can only be born in oppression, suggesting that the only authentic and interesting cuisine in the United States is in fact soul food. Most of the other types of dishes and cuisines in the United States have been brought by immigrants from all over the world and therefore cannot truly be claimed as American, at the contrary to hamburgers.

While outside influences on African cuisines are often studied, one should not forget that they have in turn equally contributed to the development of other cuisines across the world, and especially on the American continent for example in Louisiana.

examples of this trend that Condé underlines in *Mets et merveilles*. As she describes her first tasting of the dish during her trip to Guinea, she states in her chapter entitled "Les multiples variations sur le mafé": "Ibrahima cuisinait invariablement le mafé. Le mafé est un plat originaire du Mali […]. Aussi le seul mot mafé s'associe pour moi à la pénurie alimentaire et l'indigence d'un pays" (Condé 2015, 40). The use of the adjective "invariablement" [constantly], along with the mention of the dire history of famine in Guinea suggests her lukewarm opinion of the dish[128]. In fact, she associates her stay in the country with the dissociation of food from an art, as it becomes solely a means to sustenance and survival as food was scarce (Condé 2015, 39). However, this fragrant peanut stew is one of the dishes that can be found in several West African countries and that culturally unites different ethnicities. Its renown has even crossed the sea and mafé is a dish that is featured on menus abroad and well known by patrons. Nevertheless, she reconsidered her opinion of the dish to describe it as "une délicieuse surprise" when Ibrahima, a Peul that she hired to cook for her during her stay in Guinea and "her boy-cuisinier" as she calls him, prepared some for her and a friend in Martinique (Condé 2015, 40). Found in Mali, Senegal and Guinea, McCann equally underlines the belonging of *mafé* to a vast region and underscores that:

> The historical origins of mafé, or Senegalese groundnut stew, are obscure, though there are a fair number of clues to its historical geography. Senegalese usually accept its origins as a Malian dish called *tigh-dege-na* (Bambara/Mandinka), and one could argue that its ingredients are a dead giveaway that the cook has been trained in a savanna ecology. Its characteristic ingredient, groundnut paste, is a New World, post-Columbian foodstuff that became a mainstay across the African savanna belt from Senegal to Niger and also in places like the northeast Congo. (132-133)

[128] It is important to acknowledge that the African terroir is still struggling with its history of famine, a result of monoculture and the alteration of diets on the African continent through colonization or even industrialization. Even though the state of famine is related to the African terroir, it is not my topic and therefore I will not delve into it further.

What McCann draws attention to here is not only the existence of a shared culinary terroir beyond national borders, but even more so the exchange in training and the teaching of techniques between ethnic groups. The second time Condé tried mafé in Ghana, she recounted her experience in very different terms: "À ce moment la serveuse m'apporta mon plat de mafé. Un délice mais radicalement différent de celui que j'avais goûté À la reine Pokou. Ni poisson fumé ni crustacés. Il était assaisonné de tamarin des Indes et parfumé à l'anis" (Condé 2015, 46). The use of ameliorative adjectives, opposed by the connector "mais" [but] to her first meal of mafé, stresses her newfound appreciation for the dish. Maybe the result of a personal preference for spices instead of fish and seafood, *mafé* has the particularity to be slightly different depending on the cook, and its origin[129]. In fact, the owner of the restaurant, from Guinea-Bissau, a former steward and world traveler was influenced by his mother's recipes. Many of the dishes like mafé share the same trans-continental appeal. In fact, Miano evokes another dish that is mostly prevalent in the English-speaking parts of West Africa: "Pratiquement chaque pays africain a ses recettes de *pepe soup*, depuis que les Ghanéens ont inventé ce brouet, et qu'il s'est répandu, on ne sait pas trop comment, partout où notre continent produit des bouches à nourrir" (89). This

[129] The story of the Queen Abla Pokou echoes the idea of connection between African people due to trans-continental migrations. She led her people from Ghana to Ivory Coast to escape a fraternal war for the throne of the Ashanti Confederation of Ghana. Through this migration, her people brought along their culture, including their culinary traditions, and therefore naturalized this knowledge into a new terroir. The legend says that her journey almost came to an end as they encountered a raging river that prevented them from escaping their pursuers. The river Comoé, was the last obstacle to their arrival to promised land, as it acts as a natural frontier between Ghana and the Ivory Coast. However, Queen Pokou, to save her people had to sacrifice her son to appease the river, who claimed their most precious procession. Immediately, the river calmed, and the people were able to safely cross, thus escaping a dire fate. Several versions exist of this episode of the crossing of the river, but one mentions a tree. According to some griots, a silk-cotton tree that was on the other bank bent its trunk, which allowed people to cross over. The symbolism of the tree is highly significant to this imagery of the naturalizing of people, cultivation, produce and culture as a whole into a new environment.

pepper soup that is primarily composed of meat, and spices -- namely chili peppers and nutmeg -- is also supplemented with different proteins (shrimp, oxtail, beef, chicken, game meat, tripe, etc.) and ingredients (tomatoes, onions, garlic, sweet peppers and additional spices) depending on the cook and the region[130]. However, if Miano emphasizes that no one really knows how the recipe spread across the continent, there are several concrete explanations. First of all, the historian McCann draws attention to the vital role of language, since "West Africa from Senegal to Cameroon is a coherent language region where cultures, politics, and religion overlap. Creole and pidgin languages allow[ed] communication between trade partners and men and women of different language groups" (119), thus explaining the ease for these trans-continental culinary influences and exchanges[131]. In fact, the entire West Coast has historically been linked together through the second main explanation, commerce, which was facilitated by:

> The Djula [who] were Mandinka people from Mali who served as trade entrepreneurs, blacksmiths, and clerics. Cultural crosscurrent also traveled along Africa's Atlantic costal rim from Saint Louis (in Senegal) to the Gold Coast to Douala in Cameroon, further stirring the mix of cultural exchange and creativity in foods. These influences were the founding ingredients of West Africa's linguistic and culinary grammars. (McCann 114)

And finally, last but not least, West Africa benefited from a similar ecology, and as such, it had a homogenous crop production and similar staples that explained the development

[130] Spices embody transnationnal connections and kitchen shelves, like Condé's, clearly showcase the diverse origins of the myriad of ingredients that compose a dish: "Les étagères étaient remplies de pots contenant les épices les plus hétéroclites : safran, noix de muscade, cannelle, piment, poivre, cerfeuil, marjolaine, bois d'Inde. Dans cette caverne d'Ali Baba toutes les odeurs se mêlaient" (2015, 21). In fact, spices like pepper seeds and dried pods arrived via Arab, Indian, and Portuguese traders directly from Brazil, Mesoamerica, and the Caribbean (McCann 60).

[131] Food exchanges are also a story of appropriation as Abouet reminds her readers: "Mais je peux vous dire que chez nous, en Côte d'Ivoire, tout commence toujours par une "première fois" et les Ivoiriens ont la réputation de s'approprier assez vite les choses et surtout celles qui sont bonnes. Ils ont alors transformé "première fois" en acte de tous les jours" (80). The reproduction of savored dishes or ingredients accounts for the adoption in their repertoire of foreign staple.

of an overlapping culinary identity. In that sense, the environmental communality clarifies the grouping of recipes from different countries in cookbooks such as in Abouet's, who explains in the foreword: "Toutes ces recettes de terroir proviennent essentiellement des pays africains de l'Ouest" (8)[132]. Therefore, edible goods had been exchanged across borders between people in West Africa way before the start of colonization in the 19th and 20th century, a point that is too often neglected in favor of a more dramatic account of the changes that led to the evolution of African culinary landscape throughout history.

While intra-continental exchanges deeply modelled the taste, techniques, and flavors of sub-Saharan-Africa, the region's (agri)culture was also altered by the influences of the West. In fact, the agricultural landscape was impacted even before European colonization that carried on from around 1185 to the mid-1970s. McCann explains that:

> When Europeans first arrived at the coasts of West Africa and East Africa before 1500, they found a huge range of "foreign" crops and fruits already well adopted by African farmers and cooks. Each of these geographic connections flavored African cookery, influencing the evolution of distinctive African cuisines in differing regions. (24)

The adoption of foreign ingredients testifies to the continent's long-standing relationships with other regions, both close but also far-removed. Beyond what we often attribute to influences implemented by political ramifications, the different cultures present on the African continent were equally altered by connections with foreigners, be it the work of missionaries, teachers who implemented Western curriculums, or even through the work Africans performed in trade forts:

> The workers in these coastal fort gardens were no doubt local Africans who had their own farms in the area. No doubt they had lent some of their own

[132] However, the similarities in culinary styles, flavors and ingredients still does not justify the use of the adjective African in the singular in most cookbooks to define all the cuisines available on the continent.

> seeds or borrowed a few from their European settlers. West African cooks (and farmers) had a huge variety from which to choose. (McCann 116)

Therefore, many dishes result from these exchanges of seeds, foodstuff, and agricultural knowledge that gave birth to the multiculturalism that defines African cuisines. As we previously established, the Columbian exchange brought several crops to Africa[133], one of the main ones being maize. It is thought to have arrived in 1500 CE from the New World, but it was only appropriated as a crop in the seventeenth century as it came to replace native grains. Its adoption within West Africa testifies to its enticing agricultural benefits as in fact the new yield could produce a lot of food. Its poor nutritional value in comparison to native grains such as sorghum and millet did not deter people from its extensive use in cuisine (McCann 46-47), but it undeniably started to reshape both the economy and the agricultural landscape. Other examples of this trend are detailed by the agronomist Serge Volper in *Une histoire des plantes coloniales*. Indeed, he demonstrates how the development of an agricultural industry in sub-Saharan Africa was used to justify the colonial investment in the wake of an interest in products such as coffee or chocolate, which were becoming commodities of mass consumption in the West. This desire for sweetness symbolized the imperialism era both literally and symbolically[134]. Besides deeply influencing the African continent, it also entirely redefined the economy and (agri)cultural scenery of the Caribbean. In fact, in *Victoire, les saveurs et les mots*, Condé evokes the birth of this transitional history that led to a region producing mainly sugar, rum, bananas,

[133] This bilateral exchange spread roughly from 1500 to 1900.

[134] While the association between sugar, sweetness, imperialism, power and sexuality could be further developed in view of the texts that comprise my corpus, especially the work of Beyala, Condé and Miano, it is not the focus of my work here. I would however like to emphasize the work of anthropologist Sidney Mintz on the topic whose book *Sweetness and Power: The Place of Sugar in Modern History* retraces the history of sugar from the colonies to its redefinition of our modern modes of consumptions and its effects on the industrialization.

coffee, cacao, and vanilla[135]. The terroir thus became a victim of the entrepreneurial adventures of French colonists and their descendants: "Les Dulieu-Beaufort étaient le symbole des aléas de fortune de certains blancs pays. Ils avaient successivement cultivé le tabac et de l'indigo ; mis sur pied une boniferie, qui produisait, à les en croire, le meilleur café de Guadeloupe" (80). By evoking the financial mishaps of this *béké* family, Condé sheds light on the inability of the Caribbean people to fight back against the French hegemony that dispossessed them of their own land, as well as any oversight and involvement in the economic prosperity of their region. The inability of this family to sustain the growth of a single crop, jumping from one market to another, highlights the succession of failed enterprises that affected the lifelong development of the terroir. In fact, the uniformed overproduction of certain staples created an imbalance that destroyed the capacity of the islands to sustain themselves thus relying heavily, if not almost solely, until today on imports from the hexagon. For Loichot, this equates to the disparagement of local productions as "trash," which pushed Martinique into what "Françoise Vergès has called an economy of debt" (3). It equally left the economy at the mercy of competing foreign productions, which Condé denounces when she writes: "Les économistes nous apprennent qu'une poussée de la production européenne de sucre de betterave commençait de déséquilibrer le marché antillais" (26). In fact, both Guadeloupe and Martinique have a longstanding history of financial instability attributable to the whims of their main economy. Therefore, both the regions of sub-Saharan Africa and the Caribbean have seen their cultures challenged if not eradicated. In the early 1920s, this industrialization of agriculture in sub-Saharan Africa modified the culture of picking, harvesting, and bartering

[135] Secondary cultures include, but are not restricted to, coconut, cotton, pineapple, and cassava.

to replace it by a plantation model that would benefit the French and ensure the production of certain crops that were profitable and in high demand in the West (Volper 41). Therefore, this system of exploitation of the land deeply reformed the food staples cultivated by the locals. By altering and investing in the agricultural economy of its sub-Saharan colonies, France changed the culture and even the identity of its colonies. In that sense, it is important to acknowledge that besides constituting an important economic and political stake, food can also act as a springboard for cultural colonization.

Foodstuffs have been one of the major driving forces behind colonization, and it left an undeniable mark on the cultures and eating habits of the concerned regions with the inclusion of new ingredients, dishes and the transformation of local agriculture. Agronomists and historians are joined by authors such as Léonora Miano, who underlines in *Soulfood Equatoriale* that dishes like *foufou* or *ndole* would not exist without the introduction of new plants coming from Europe and the New World (29). They stand as emblems of different waves of colonization, different campaigns of industrialization of African agriculture, but even more so as the establishment of neo-colonial dependence on imports. Marguerite Abouet directly calls out to her reader about what can be considered as the biggest disruption of the sub-Saharan culinary and (agri)cultural terroir:

> Vous connaissez tous le riz ? Alors je vous passe l'histoire de son origine, celle de ses cultures, ses 120 variétés, son expansion, les systèmes sociaux nés de sa culture…Mais je peux vous dire qu'en Côte d'Ivoire, on pense riz, on vit riz, on respire riz. Je suis entièrement faite de riz. Pourquoi ? Il est l'aliment de base le plus consommé chez les Ivoiriens et dans toute l'Afrique. C'est la première céréale mondiale destinée à la consommation. (Abouet 88)

Rice is often mistaken for one of these fundamental African ingredients. However, only one type of rice, out of the 120 varieties that Abouet evokes, is native to the continent, and

that is *Oryza glaberrima*. The epistrophe in "riz," in "on pense riz, on vit riz, on respire riz," highlights the all-consuming, if not obsessive, relationship of the continent with this grain. It has even abated, if not obliterated, the presence of native grains on the African terroir such as fonio, millet, sorghum, and teff. Moreover, it also altered the perception and brought out prejudices against these grains, which are now considered as more rural and suitable for lower classes, thus framing the consumption of rice as a status statement. Rice is indeed more expensive, mostly due to the fact that it needs to be imported, as emphasized by Abouet who lists "riz parfumé chinois" in her section dedicated to sides (88). As McCann well summarizes, when it comes to the impact of colonization on the African terroir:

> It was African rice, or yam, or sorghum, versus starchy staples adopted and embraced from other world areas, such as maize and cassava (New World), Oryza sativa (Asian rice), or plantains/bananas (Southeast Asia, Indonesia), that African farmers quickly adapted to local farm ecologies. (33)

However, as we look into the local ecology, this transition was not without long-lasting repercussions. Igor Cusack, author of "African Cuisines: Recipes for Nation-Building?" highlights that Senegal is now the first country importing rice from Indochina, which he directly links to the enduring influence of colonialism when he writes:

> From about 1870, the French began growing ground nuts, so that by the 1930s over half of the agricultural land in Senegal was allocated to this crop. Meanwhile in Indochina the French were producing rice, so that importing rice to Africa made sense. As a result, the government of independent Senegal is burdened with an enormous rice import bill and wants to boost the consumption of local grains such as millet and sorghum. However, rice is easy to cook, while the local grains need more complex preparation. (210)

The evolution of food and food customs in Senegal are representative of the implementation of an industrial agriculture in sub-Saharan Africa as a whole that was

inherited from the colonial era and which currently defines the culinary identity of the region. The imports of foreign varieties of rice introduced in the different countries have created a system of entrapment in a vicious circle of debts and dependency on imports. Unable to produce as much as *Oryza glaberrima* and other African varieties of grains, these newly naturalized crops equally require more natural resources to grow, all the while impoverishing the soil. Besides growing better and producing more in these inhospitable soil conditions[136], native plants also generate crops that are more fulfilling and nourishing. Therefore, the alteration of the original sub-Saharan and Caribbean *terroirs* embodies the substitution of one patriarchal model (colonial) by another (economic). These global exchanges -- being the results of several waves of colonization, the history of slavery, commercial exchanges, or pan-African transactions -- have altered the concept of culinary regionalism. In this perspective, it is now subjective to evoke the terms of *locavore* or *terroir* to describe the African continent, as the link between certain foods and the soil to which they have been introduced has been perverted. Gastro-literature thus sheds light on patterns of continual neocolonial imperialism as sustainability is questioned[137].

From "taste of necessity" to "taste of luxury:" the Birth of sub-Saharan African and Caribbean Agency

When one thinks about terroir, the first thoughts that are associated with it are the ideas of sustainability and the protection of the soil and the culture that originates from it.

[136] Besides, Cusack, in another article entitled "Pots, pens and 'eating out of the body:' cuisine and the gendering of African nations," echoes the work of Osseo-Assare when he writes that the recent imports from the European Union of food surpluses have caused critical disruptions in the market of African home-produced products" (279).

[137] As we previously discussed, we can see a direct parallelism with the situation of the French Caribbean, which also endures the influence of France.

If we look at the terroirs of sub-Saharan Africa and the Caribbean, they face different challenges. The terroir of Martinique and Guadeloupe is directly geared towards exports and the tourism industry with very little room for the development of a less lucrative agricultural economy supplying the locals with edibles. In this sense, it is highly influenced by the hedonist values and the *gourmandise* associated with terroir in France. However, if we look at sub-Saharan Africa, more initiatives are to be noted, from the exploitation of the surplus of unused fruits for jams and juices, to the reintroduction of fonio in the agricultural landscape; there is a strong desire to create a more sustainable and autonomous terroir that could equally be exported and sought-after[138]. However, it remains evident that the appreciation for foreign imports is synonymous with power and prestige, while the products of the African "terroir" are labeled as rustic, lowly and unsophisticated, thus highlighting the efforts still to be made. As Parker well summarizes, this struggle between need and pleasure is characteristic of the work of Bourdieu, who:

> […] famously indicated in *La Distinction* (1979) [that] tastes (both literal and metaphorical) serve as a way of distinguishing individuals within societal hierarchies. Bourdieu's famous categorization in the culinary realm is between the *goût de nécessité* and the *goût de luxe*, with the former, the "taste of necessity," belonging to those who choose their preferences chiefly in terms of the foods that will physically sustain them. Generally speaking, the *goût de nécessité* gravitates toward foods that sit heavier, heartier, and is more caloric. The "taste of luxury" prefers foods that are lighter, more elegant, and finally less nutritive. By demonstrating the prerequisite "cultural capital" to know about these foods and the financial capital to afford them, discriminating eaters can frame themselves as belonging to a higher economic and intellectual class. When it comes to the cultural construction of terroir, eaters in early modern France made food choices in consideration to how those choices might allow access to higher levels of social standing. (8)

[138] Eating local, and consuming foods with a lower impact on resources are a growing concern among chefs and communities around the world. It is one of the main reasons why Pierre Thiam endorsed the role of promoter of fonio both on his continent of origin and abroad.

Thus, the notion of *terroir* as seen by Bourdieu acts as a filter that distinguishes people from one another through the discrimination between "*goût de nécessité*" and "*goût de luxe.*" He posits that only a privileged part of society can have access to "*goût de luxe,*" in the same way that the restaurant and literary industries are also exclusive and excluding. However, if we look at the way soul food is conceived, it is about drawing people in instead of keeping people out. It is "la nourriture qui touche et remplit l'âme" as Miano puts it (27), which is a marriage of flavors and produce that is about nurturing and accessibility. In fact, it embodies the values and represents the people who concocted it. However, in the light of the evolution and fast-changing identity of the sub-Saharan African and Caribbean culinary terroirs over time, what was at the heart and origin of soul food is now slowing evolving from "*goût de nécessité*" towards "*goût de luxe*"[139]. In fact, staples that were previously regarded as belonging to the category of "*goût de nécessité*" are likewise marketed as "*goût de luxe.*" This is how fonio has entered supermarkets like Whole Foods Market in America, a promoter of healthier, more high-end products for the upper middle-class. Promoted by celebrity chef Pierre Thiam, this embodiment of the sub-Saharan region is the focus point of his publication: *The Fonio Cookbook: An Ancient Grain Rediscovered*, published in November 2019, showing how publications play an essential role in the building of terroir. However, when Parker argues that these types of food tend to be less nutrititious and heavier, this can be perceived as an over-generalization that might not be as true nowadays in light of the evolution of health consciousness and diets[140]. Therefore,

[139] See chapter 2.3, "The Journalist: from Famine for the Podiums, the Transition in the Representation of sub-Saharan African Cuisines in France," in which I address the evolution of the sub-Saharan and Caribbean restaurants in France. The cuisines they represent have evolved and are now equally synonymous of gastronomy.

[140] In fact, health has become a high-income generating industry, powered by a search for an optimized diet centering on nutritiously healthy foods, especially for the upper classes.

“soul food” is evolving towards a definition of terroir that is more in-line with its French definition. In fact, if we look at how the concept of terroir become so ingrained and prevalent in French culture, some parallels with the current cultural evolution of the cuisines that are of interest for us become apparent. Parker explains this process by propounding that:

> Among the several plausible reasons why the concept of terroir found such fertile ground in the French imagination, three stand out. […] France’s particular cultural and social evolution engaged with the agricultural paradigm in several unexpected ways. One of the most important of these includes the construction of a specifically “French” literary identity during the Renaissance. The invention of the printing press and a proliferation of books in French (instead of Latin) coincided with a moment in which writers sought ways to depict themselves as possessing a separate French linguistic individuality. (5-6)

For him, the uniqueness of this occurrence resides in the marriage between the birth of a linguistic and literary cultural identity and a growing agricultural development. Eureka! Aren’t we currently witnessing the same development in pattern when it comes to Caribbean and sub-Saharan cultures? The emancipation of those regions from colonial and postcolonial influence granted them the leeway to develop and get hold of their literature and linguistic development, far from the hegemony of the French language, all the while rethinking their agricultural productions in term of sustainability and independence from imports. Even though these issues we have uncovered still endure today, people are now investing in the development of their own culinary savoir-faire and heritage. Therefore, the gastro-literature that composes my corpus, as well as the growing number of diverse publication and cookbooks, all actively participate in the development of the terroir (a term previously used by their oppressors). Authors inscribed it on the map by documenting and narrating the labor of their compatriots. Their literary productions are thus (re)defining it,

shedding the hedonistic values, the bucolic imagery, and flawless nostalgia inherited from the French, consequently engaging in a process of resistance and emancipation from culinary shackles inherited from colonization.

In sum, as history archives, food and even more so cuisines amount to the myriad of events and experiences that build cultures. Their representation in literature informs us of movements and becomes a witness to these intercultural and cross-diasporic rhizomic connections through time and space. In this perspective, Condé, Miano, Beyala and Sow Fall serve us a recipe to understand the historical long-lasting relationship between between Europe, Africa and the Americas. Ingredients, through many travels and exchanges continue to chip away at the concept of terroir and that of a homogenous and stable cuisine. As demonstrated, the links between the culinary cultures of these regions have changed what people eat, the way people eat, and how people prepare their meals, and as such, as Miano emphasizes: "Impossible de se nourrir en Afrique comme le faisait leurs ancêtres" (30), or in the Caribbean for that matter. By redefining and altering the tastes, the produce and the names of the sub-Saharan African and Caribbean *terroirs*, France, among other colonial powers and outside influences, has modified and imposed identities on these regions. In this context, *terroir* is as much a matter of (inter)national as (neo)colonial identity. The study of food in literature unveils and unravels the map between the different terroirs and cuisines, drawing the picture of a cultural *métissage*, as Miano suggests it, that is mimicked by the literary hybridity of gastro-literature. While this *exercice de style* embraces this diversity as much as it denounces it, it is less forgiving with regard to the recent industrialization that threatens the culinary heritage of these regions.

Towards the Industrialization of the Postcolonial Terroir: The Commercialization of Taste

While the study of these gastro-novels reveals a renewed attention to the (re)construction of the terroir, the authors also denounce the growing industrialization and globalization of their culinary cultures, to the point of drawing a portrait of food imperialism emerging from growing capitalists' investments. In *Géopolitique du goût: La guerre culinaire*, Christian Boudan states:

> À la raison culinaire classique s'est progressivement substituée une rationalité économique qui veut que le produit alimentaire et la préparation culinaire soient des produits industrialisés et standardisés comme les autres. Ils doivent être libérés le plus possible des contraintes qui étaient celles de l'agriculture et de ses fluctuations inhérentes au milieu naturel de production. (234)

The economic market that the industrialization of food represents hides the transmutation of an entire process of preparation, consumption and socialization. In fact, the first aspect that Boudan highlights is the transformation of food as a product of consumption like any other product. It becomes a material object that is standardized, devoid of its singularity and its temporality. This represents a caesura from what food embodies, which is a living connection to the soil it originates from. By disrupting the natural relationship between the production of foodstuff, agricultural constraints, and timely consumption, investors have been able to increase their profit margins. Edible goods that were grown only in certain regions of the world can now be grown elsewhere with the same ease. Commodities that were also only available during a certain season are now grown all year long, which disrupts not only the ecosystems, but also regional and local food cultures. These alterations in the produce we can consume and when we can consume it are representative

of our contemporary modes of consumption, which as Condé evokes, become a blessing for pregnant women. In fact, the character of Jeanne, during her third pregnancy, embodies the ability to eat dishes that are off-season (2006, 313). However, as the literature we are concentrating on reveals, the evolution into modes of production is not without creating other issues. In fact, through the process of the industrialization of food production, people have become disconnected from the growing and preparation of their plate's content, thus creating anxieties, which the authors in my corpus express through gastro-literature. Condé judges one of her sisters for the way she feeds her family: "Elle nourrissait sa fille de petits pots qui commençaient à faire leur apparition dans les pharmacies et sur les rayons des supermarchés. Quant à son mari elle lui servait avec désinvolture du poulet rôti, acheté chez le traiteur du coin" (2015, 29). Her residence in the banlieue of Paris and her demanding career as a social worker are blamed for her disconnection from her culinary heritage. As we have seen, while her grandmother, Victoire, used to garden and take a lot of pleasure in cooking, this excerpt points to the evolution of society that has dehumanized food consumption by reducing it to sustenance. The notion of pleasure, which is associated with the preparation of a dish and its consumption, has disappeared. Eating is not a social construct anymore as each member of the family eats separately. While Condé's sister seems oblivious to the consequences of her food choices, Condé sees them as problematic, which is highlighted by the fact she directly follows up with the marital problems of the couple. In fact, to explain that her sister's husband is cheating, Condé states: "Moi, je compris qu'il avait cédé à la séduction de la cuisine française", thus linking his affair with a French woman to his stomach (2015, 30). The caesura from cooking is seen as having precipitated the demise of the couple. In that sense, the industrialization of food is seen as

destructive. Jean-Pierre Poulain, renowned sociologist and author of *Sociologies de l'alimentation,* theorizes Condé's anxiety as to her sister's food choices:

> Conséquence de la perte du contact avec la filière de production, l'aliment devient un simple objet de consommation sur lequel règnent des 'chefs de produits' et des 'spécialistes en marketing.' […]
> Des nourritures en abondance, certes, mais de moins en moins identifiées, connues et surtout de plus en plus angoissantes. Car l'aliment n'est pas un produit de consommation banal, il s'incorpore. Il entre dans le corps du mangeur, devient le mangeur lui-même, participant physiquement et symboliquement au maintien de son intégrité et à la construction de son identité. Manger, c'est aussi un acte qui relie l'homme à la nature, au réel. La cuisine et les manières de table d'une société sont une façon originale de régler les rapports entre la nature et la culture. Industrialisée, la nourriture suscite des questions, qui peuvent rapidement se transformer en angoisses. D'où vient-elle ? Quelle transformation a-t-elle subie ? Par qui a-t-elle été manipulée ? (39)

Food products become objectified and stripped from their unique characteristics. Food is commercialized like any other object, devoid of its intrinsic and essential nature which is to nourish and sustain. Notions of taste and pleasure are trumped by convenience. Food producers are stripped of the fruit of their labor and the connection with the customers. The social and human characteristics that define food are traded for a profit-based and capitalistic approach that further blurs our connection to and knowledge of the content of our plates. However, contrary to other items brought to market in contemporary society, food penetrates our body. And as Poulain clearly emphasizes, we are the food we eat. Therefore, the growing disconnect and inability to control what we put in our body has increased the disconnect within ourselves and between each other. By ingesting certain edible goods, we perform an identity statement as consumption acts as a marker of singularity. It represents who we are as individuals and inscribes us as members of a defined group. Therefore, changes in diets are significant in identifying transformations and redefinitions in values, whether personal or communal.

Meat consumption, as underlined by the gastro-literary works that comprise my corpus, represents one of the biggest evolutions in terms of food habits as well as one of the greatest sources of anxiety and controversy. If we look closer at the evolution of the West African diets as described by Beyala who integrates traditional recipes into her novel, we can observe a change in the types of meat consumed over time. Nicki Hitchcott, in her article entitled "*Comment cuisiner son mari à l'africaine*: Calixthe Beyala's Recipes for Migrant Identity," states that the twenty-four recipes the narrator Aïssatou uses to seduce her neighbor Souleymane Bolobolo are identified as "authentically African in Western cookbooks" (211). The use of unconventional proteins such as crocodile or porcupine marks these recipes as exotic, which according to Hitchcott participates in the reclaiming of what is presented an "authentic" African culture in opposition to a culinary culture influenced by France, Aïssatou's country of residence. Hitchcott adds that it represents a powerful statement of "identity and difference, but also a nostalgic and "invented" one" (217) as these recipes do not represent accurately African cooking. Therefore, Aïssatou's recipes simultaneously promote and undermine a sense of cultural specificity so that Aïssatou herself exemplifies the diasporic figure of the exile (220). Promotion of cultural belonging is indeed the key for the cultural reclaiming of one's identity and the healing of cultural alienation that is linked to both colonization and immigration. In fact, antelope, boa, crocodile, and porcupine are among the ingredients listed in Beyala's novel. While they belong equally to the culinary landscape of African cuisines, they have been increasingly replaced by meats that have been historically imported from other continents

such as chicken, beef or goat, and that are seen as more acceptable[141]. In *Food Culture in Sub-Saharan Africa*, Fran Osseo-Asare depicts West African diets as mostly plant-based, which she explains partly with the difficulty of some regions to raise cattle due to mosquito-based diseases. Animal consumption, with the exception of fish and seafood, was not a daily ritual, but much more often reserved for special occasions. In fact, she states that "cattle is regarded as wealth and not slaughtered unless absolutely necessary" (Osseo-Asare 30). In *Comment cuisiner son mari à l'Africaine*, this dilemma between the consumption of bush meat and meat raised for slaughterhouse is exemplified by the conversation between Bolobolo and Bijou, one of his suitors who is fighting for his affection by trying to conquer his stomach:

> - Quand est-ce que tu pourras nous préparer un boa ? demande monsieur Bolobolo.
> - Tu ne vas pas encourager une telle barbarie ! s'exclame Bijou avec l'exaspération de ceux qui se savent dévalués.
>
> Elle dit que l'alimentation des nègres est contre nature; elle dit qu'à ce rythme il n'y aura plus de faune et que nous finirons par rendre la terre aussi nue que la paume de la main. (Beyala 105)

Bijou expresses her disapproval of Bolobolo's demand and associates the consumption of bush meats with lack of sustainability. "Barbaric," "against nature" are some of the adjectives used to describe these traditions that are accused of leading to the extinction of the local African fauna. This reaction can be seen as a direct result of the industrialization of food that has cut the connection between the consumer and local foodstuffs both in

[141] Fran Osseo-Asare traces back the origin of cattle to various places outside of the continent. "Cattle, sheep, and goats came from outside of Africa in several waves from southwest and central Asian sources and likely spread across the area gradually from the Senegal River valley. Cattle may also have been introduced from the east […]" (6). While European colonization did not introduce animal farming to the continent, it is however the influence behind a shift in diet and the growing industrialization of meat produce.

Europe and on the African continent[142]. In fact, as the preparation of our food -- from planting and harvesting, fishing and hunting -- is increasingly delocalized and absorbed by commercial prospects, the connection to the soil and the land is equally severed. Ingredients are not directly linked anymore to the nature that surrounds us, which is emphasized by the corpus of texts that comprise my analysis[143]. Hunting is thus perceived as barbaric while gardening becomes a hobby instead of being recognized as a way to sustain oneself. Therefore, buying industrially raised packaged meat in a supermarket is seen as more appropriate than consuming meat that has been hunted. In this context, Poulain's argument about meat-eating is highly relevant in explaining Bijou's behaviour towards meat consumption when he remarks that:

> La production animale est sur ce plan particulièrement significative de la modernité alimentaire. Conçue sur un mode taylorisé, alors même que ce modèle est profondément rejeté dans la sphère de l'organisation des activités productives humaines, elle contribue à une chosification de l'animal destiné à l'alimentation. Réduit à l'ordre de matière première, la viande s'en trouve désanimalisée, dévitalisée. Simultanément et de façon paradoxalement compensatoire, l'animal vivant à l''état de nature' s'en trouve personnifié. (36)

---

[142] Renan Larue, in his book *Le végétarisme et ses ennemis: Vingt-cinq siècles de débats* points to the 20th century as a turning point in the constitution of people's diet in the West. He writes:

> Le XXe siècle voit naître et se développer en Occident un phénomène totalement inédit dans l'histoire de l'humanité – l'industrialisation de l'élevage – qui permet des gains de productivité à peine croyables et modifie la diète quotidienne d'une grande partie de la population. Jamais, à aucun moment, on n'aura consommé autant de produits d'origine animale (219).

Therefore, meat establishes the perfect example to analyze the evolution of food customs and the impact of industrialization on the cultures at play.

[143] This is exemplified by Abouet's rendering of the recipe of *ragout d'igname* that is also referred to as a "plat de tradition" (82). Yams, for the Akan peoples, can only be sold and consumed each year after the celebration of an official ceremony meant to honor the revered tuber. It is considered bad luck to not respect this tradition. Abouet directly addresses her readers, who are mostly composed of foreigners or members of the African diaspora, as is the case in the other texts in my corpus, to educate them. She highlights the disconnect between the ones she ironically calls "les déracinés" [the uprooted] and the ingredients, such as tis root from the continent. They ignore the signifiance of these ingredients in cultures and the ceremonies that come with their preparation : "Mais en même temps, si vous trouvez l'igname dans les boutiques exotiques de France, c'est que le légume a pris l'avion ou le bateau. Donc pas d'inquiétude, y a prescription" (Abouet 82).

Why does Bijou perceive eating a boa as barbaric and a danger for the sustainability of the ecosystem, while she does not see the consumption of other meats in the same way? As consumers, we have been conditioned to think about certain meats as acceptable while we shun others. But what is at the root of such judgements? As Poulain stresses, it is not necessarily our concern for the animals' well-being or the protection of the environment that dictates our behavior and choices, but much more so the dehumanization of certain living beings in society and the influence of the meat industry that codifies what we eat as a group and a society. Therefore, much like Bijou, we, as a people, become desensitized to the eating of specific animals while we rebel and yell murder for the killing of others, whose life we value more. This determination, as Poulain demonstrates, results from the personification of wildlife, while we do not mind that other animals' blood be through the industrialization that is represented by the Taylorist approach to meat production[144]. This is what Melanie Joyce refers to as "carnism" in her book *Why we Love Dogs, Eat Pigs, and Wear Cows?*, which establishes the distinction between species and their classification in the edible and non-edible categories based on subjective and fluctuating constructs that are regional as well as cultural. Miano suggests the impact of culture on our values and taste as she recalls an episode from the childhood of her main protagonist and the trauma of having the goats which she and her sibling cared for, slaughtered:

> Cette chèvre n'est pas achetée, dépecée, morcelée, prête à rejoindre le fond de la marmite. On l'acquiert plusieurs mois avant le jour de l'an. Elle est engraissée dans la cour des maisons. Les enfants lui donnent un nom.
>
> Ils se font avoir tous les ans, puisque la chèvre passe invariablement à la casserole après qu'ils s'y sont attachés.

[144] I am referring to American engineer Frederick Taylor and the organization of work and productivity around an assembly-line.

> Mes sœurs et moi avons pleuré un bon nombre de chèvres. Jamais nous ne consentîmes à goûter leur cadavre. Surtout après avoir assisté au sacrifice qui ne nous fut jamais ni expliqué ni épargné.
>
> […] Ce cri était tellement désespéré, tellement…humain. Cela nous choquait beaucoup plus que les mises à mort régulières de poulets à braiser. Sans pouvoir en exposer la raison, les poulets nous paraissaient beaucoup moins proches de nous. (Miano 90-91)

Miano sheds light on society's influence in defining what is acceptable to eat or not. As children, the characters are still learning the cultural codes. They represent the fact that taste is acquired. For social scientist Claude Fischler, author of *L'Homnivore: Sur les fondamentaux de la biologie et de la philosophie,* taste relies on four factors: biological, psychological, cultural, and social (91). Eating animals belongs to the domain of culture, and not nature. It is a social construct and the children have been taught by the community around them, which meats are suitable for consumption, and which are not. Nevertheless, the emotional connection to the sheep they help raise further differentiates them from the other animals they consume without any afterthoughts, such as the chickens. The narrator points to the humanization of those sheep, who are named, and whose cries remind the children of their animals' consciousness. The geographical proximity, emphasized by the prepositional nominal group "dans la cour des maisons," shows that the children consider the sheep as belonging to their household. They are inside the familial boundaries of the courtyard, thus strengthening the emotional attachment to these animals. The knowledge of their destiny triggers childrens' questioning because they are not presented with store-bought meat on their plate, but with "cadavers." They have witnessed the different stages of life of this meat that is sitting on their plates: the growth of the animal, its human-like plea for understanding of its destiny, the sacrifice, the butchering of the meat, and its cooking and eating. The children embody the polysemy of the word "goût" in the sense

that the meat is both “pas à leur goût” [not to their taste] and “de mauvais goût” [eating those sheep is bad taste]. Taste triggers emotions and it is itself connected to emotions as we see in this excerpt. The industrialization of the meat production chain has desensitized people to the contact of their plate and has in part altered the way we raise animals for meat consumption. While Miano presents a local and more sustainable model, Beyala reminds her readers of the threat of both the industrialization of our food system and that of the consumption of wildlife. Beyala denounces both models in her work when she writes: “Si l’alimentation des Noirs détruit la nature, […] celle des Blancs, mécanisée et harmonisée, tue l’homme” (106). For her, meat consumption brings out questions about ethics and the conscious choice to eat other living beings. It equally endangers the fragile ecosystems as we consider the footprint and impact that meat production has on the global climate. While admitting the lack of sustainability of most current African diets and food habits, she harshly condemns the industrialization of food, cuisines, and by extension agriculture, a model originating from the West, which has accrued across the world and that she analyses as the doom of humanity. In fact, it directly challenges both our humanity as well as the livability on earth for generations to come. One could argue that if the first part of Beyala’s statement refers to localized issues, the second part encompasses the threat of globalization, highlighting the continuous intrusion and influence of Western habits on worldwide ecological, economic, political, sociological, and cultural matters.

Disintegration or Expansion of Rituals?

In addition to being a threat to sustainability, the industrialization and globalization of food bring changes to the terroir as an expression of our identity, values, traditions, and

singularity. Abouet, Condé, Miano and Beyala all account for the displacement and replacement of local identities by globalization[145]. From food prepared at home to dishes found on the menus of restaurants, palates across the world have adapted and adopted new flavour profiles, ingredients, and dishes. For example, Condé disapproves of the transformation of her friends' restaurant into a pizzeria:

> Elle avait transformé l'ancien restaurant d'Adélia, la Chaubette gourmande en pizzeria […]. Comme je m'offusquai elle expliqua :
> - C'est ce que les gens aiment à présent. La société a beaucoup changé. Les femmes travaillent au-dehors et n'ont pas de temps à passer devant leur potager. […] Les pizzas sont simples, faciles à avaler. Quand elles veulent des plats guadeloupéens elles vont au supermarché acheter du boudin, de la chiquetaille de morue en pots et de la pâte surgelée pour accras et dombowés. (2015, 88)

Gourmandise is replaced by convenience, traditional dishes by transplants -- resulting in the creation of a sense of anxiety that is linked to the loss of cultural and culinary identity. The transition from homemaker to being employed is introduced as the cause for the fragmentation of the regional culinary identity of Guadeloupe. In addition to the alteration of the dishes consumed, the eating behaviours have also adapted to the societal change. People are not only looking to shorten the time they spend in the kitchen, but also the time they spend in the dining room. They are resorting to the gobbling of dishes that are described by Condé as "faciles à avaler" [easy to swallow]. The garden has been replaced by the supermarket and the homemade boudin, by a store-bought equivalent, or a pizza. It symbolizes the delocalisation and dematerialization of food preparation. Restaurants are ready-to-eat businesses that redefine the terroirs and the culinary cultures, but equally

[145] It could also account for the evolving perception of what meats are acceptable in the case of Bijou and Bolobolo, who stand between cultures, since they are both Africans living in Paris.

reshape the way people eat. Therefore, entire ceremonies surrounding meals have evolved beyond the food itself. As Condé's excerpt demonstrates, the consumption and adoption of foreign taste profiles, produce, dishes, and cooking techniques result in a *métissage* of cultures that Poulain theorizes about when stating:

> Si la mondialisation arase certaines différences, elle est en même temps le moteur d'un processus de diversification-intégration. Elle implique à la fois des nouvelles différenciations, résultant des formes originales d'appropriation de produits ou de techniques, et le développement d'espaces communs servant de passerelle entre les modèles alimentaires. De ce point de vue, les restaurants de hamburgers, de pizzas… apparaissent comme des espaces intermédiaires communs, comme des produits transculturels. (33-34)

But what to make of it? Should we understand globalization as necessarily exercising a negative influence on regional cultures? Do these transnational products uproot the terroir and challenge existing culinary cultures? For Fischler, the mechanism of *métissage* triggers binary results that are at the root of a "mosaïque syncrétique universelle" and which brings together disintegration but also integration:

> En même temps, donc, qu'elle rabote les différences et les particularités locales, l'industrie agro-alimentaire expédiée dans les cinq continents des spécialités régionales exotiques, adaptées, ou standardisées. […] Ainsi, l'agro-business planétaire emprunte aux folklores culinaires qu'il a contribué à désintégrer pour en propulser des versions homogénéisées ou édulcorées aux quatre coins de l'univers. (190)

The "standardization," the "homogenization," and the "adaptation" of the culinary folklore that are exported and commercialized in other cultures are the key words that account for the displacement of food, while highlighting the erasure of the core identity of those products. Basing his argument on the work of Edgar Morin, Fischler's highlights that agribusiness does not create anything new -- it borrows and dismantles existing cultural

products to sell them and make a profit[146]. This schema consequently lays the groundwork for mass consumption and the destruction of terroir. Profits override culture, and North-South relationships become symbolic of the imperialism of mass market with the exploitation and exchange of products that are perceived as "exotic specialties." Examples of culinary shortcuts highlighting the influence of the growing imperialism of the culinary industrialization abound in the gastro-literature that is at the core of my analysis. It is consequently shedding light on widespread practices that are depicted as global culinary trends. Expatriates and foreigners are most often represented as using substitutes for local produce. In her article entitled "Mass Producing Food traditions for West Africans Abroad," Elisha P. Renne argues that "these time-saving, mass-produced, and hygienically packaged foodstuff [represent a way] to maintain social relations with their particular families, hometown associations, and religious groups, while also constituting national, regional, and global connections through the reinvention of food traditions" (616). In this context, she frames West African grocery stores present on the American continent as key players in the reproduction and maintenance of a connection to home. This analysis can be extended to grocery stores in Europe that are serving the African and Caribbean diasporas. Abouet's cookbook highlights this communal ritual for expatriates and lovers of African cuisines as she incorporates advice on where to find some of the ingredients used in her recipes: "Où trouver de l'attieké? Dans les épiceries afro-asiatiques, sous forme de boules. Il suffit de le faire chauffer au micro-onde (1 minute) et de séparer les grains. On le trouve aussi en paquets, déshydraté" (95). These shortcuts to the lengthy preparation of this dish

[146] In *L'esprit du Temps*, Morin analyzes cultural industry and mass culture. He describes them as : "un veritable cracking analytique [qui] transforme les crus naturels en produits culturels homogénéisés pour la consommation massive" (85). The comparison to wine illustrates the dismantling of the terroir that is cultural here.

from Ivory Coast echo the transformation of the familial sphere and women's desire to spend less time in the kitchen starting in the 80's[147] (Fischler 2001, 186). Traditionally, the cassava couscous is prepared in villages by groups of women who ferment the cassava for several days in water. It is then dried in the sun and ground several times before being winnowed to finally be steamed. The failure to thoroughly prepare the cassava roots could have dire consequences as it contains hydrocyanic acid, whose ingestion can be lethal. The option to purchase prepared *attiéké* represents a significant time saving, even more so since it can be microwaved or bought dehydrated. It allows for its savoring anywhere in the world. Local neighborhood stores such as Afro-Caribbean and Afro-Asian grocery stores account for the distribution of those newly pre-cooked and packaged ingredients. From pre-shredded coconut (Abouet 101) to palm-tree oil and wine, machinery and food packaging have revolutionized what, when, and where we can eat certain staples for the biggest pleasure of cooks worldwide. For Abouet, women are the main beneficiary of these culinary feats:

> Heureusement, quelques génies ont eu la bonne idée de fabriquer des machines à extraire le jus de graines et à les mettre en boîte. Nous n'avons plus besoin de souffrir pour manger cette délicieuse préparation. Et je peux vous assurer que grâce à ces boîtes (à se procurer dans les boutiques afro-antillaises), le goût et la saveur de cette sauce sont également au rendez-vous. D'accord, ce n'est pas l'avis de ma mère qui me trouve bien paresseuse et je dois la supplier pour qu'elle goûte mon plat, ce qu'elle fait finalement tout en me dénigrant. (58)

The planting, harvesting, and conditioning of the grains into oil is depicted as a chore, a hardship that equals the time women used to spend in the kitchen preparing *Allocco*

[147] Fischler evokes the "feminization" of society when he refers to the evolution of the family unit from a traditional pattern to a mononuclear family and the transformation in the division of chores due to the equal feminization of the workplace. However, according to Fischler, the biggest advancement lies in the manner female employees negotiate their new role and identity (186-187).

(Abouet 16), *Foufou* (Abouet 92) or *La sauce graine* (Abouet 58). The by-products of the palm tree are primary staples in African cooking and are used in a wide range of dishes, cosmetics, as well as in the construction and fishing industries (Abouet 34). However, the evolution in modes of preparation has created a chasm between generations as Abouet's quote shows[148]. There is an inherent difference in the understanding and perception of what cooking is. Aïssa, the main protagonist and narrator, is focused on the end product with disregard for the process and the different steps that should customarily be taken. On the contrary, her mother perceives this attitude as symptomatic of her daughter's character faults, and her lack of grit, to which Aïssa indirectly retorts: "la personne qui a dit "qu'une chose obtenue sans peine n'avait pas de valeur" est un sot!" (Abouet 58). According to her mother, the daughter who takes shortcuts does not deserve tasting the final product. One could understand her behavior as imbued with disappointment and fear for the loss of craftmanship, tradition, and ultimately, the destruction of personal and communal identity. If there is a perceived loss of taste, there is also a perceived revolution in the social web.

This process can be assimilated to what sociologist Claude Fischler calls "la macdonalization des mœurs." In his 1996 article of the same name, he analyzes the ways in which the modes of consumption have changed with the rising industrialization and Americanization of the French food system. France, as the second most profitable market for the American giant McDonald's, exemplifies the success and temptation of fast food, even though the country is still regarded as the epitome of terroir, gastronomy, and good

[148] Besides this discrepancy between generations, purists like Maryse Condé, perceive the mass-commercialization of food produce as no rival to home-cooking: "Malheureusement comme elle était une fervente adepte des surgelés Picard, entre nous il n'y avait pas de compétition culinaire" (2015, 362). The freezing of ingredients and dishes, that originated in the 1924 in the United States, has modified food habits as exemplified by Condé's friend, Amy, who lives in Nice.

food. When analyzing the reasons for this ironic trend, Fischler ascribes it to several parameters: the clever marketing strategies and the adaptation of McDonald's restaurants to the French culinary landscape, the growing attraction of dining outside of the household, the commercialization of prepared foods, as well as the appeal of looser eating rules and the regression to a stage where eating with your fingers is acceptable. Through Aïssatou, Beyala illustrates these trends that relinquish cooking to a thing of the past: "C'est bientôt l'heure du dîner, puis celle de se serrer dans les bras les uns des autres. Je grignote trois carottes râpées, très lentement, tout en dévisageant la télévision parce que mon repas a moins d'importance qu'une touffe d'herbes sauvages" (20-21). Eating dinner is not a social activity anymore and food preparation and sustenance are reduced to a chore, a secondary activity that is supplanted by the consumption of images through the television. Her main character is passive, and the irony of this extract that compares eating to the ruminating of a cow, sheds light on the industrialization of customs and the social web. The taste of a dish is not important anymore, the easiness in the preparation process is what matters. However, both Beyala and Miano underscore the importance of cooking in the household, especially for a woman. In fact, as suggested by the title of Beyala's novel, *Comment cuisiner son mari à l'africaine*, cooking well is the way to the heart. However, Maïmouna, an older woman who frequents the same marabout as Aïssatou, vehemently criticizes the thinning of traditions that are embodied by cooking skills that are, according to her, disappearing in the younger generation of women:

> Ces filles d'aujourd'hui ne savent même pas cuisiner ! toque-t-elle sans cesse. Et ça se veut des femmes ! » Parce qu'en matière culinaire, elle est la cheftaine. […] Parce qu'elle en a vu ici des femmes : des margouillates si paresseuses qu'elles bavardent en dormant ; des femmes flammes dont les vêtements aux couleurs soleil sont à vous envoyer vous pendre aux épis de maïs ; des femmes sucrées comme les pieds de cannes à sucre de la Guyane ;

> des femmes aux senteurs d'Orient qui vous ensorcellent l'odorat ; des femmes serpents qui vous refilent tendre baiser amical et se glissent dans le lit de votre époux ; des femmes araignées tisseuses de piège à l'ombre obscure des cœurs et elle en passe ! Bien sûr, en chef-taine-reine des cuisines, elle ne s'abaisserait pas jusqu'à citer les jeunes filles aux seins pas tout à fait sortis et qui procèdent aux détournements des maris. "Elles valent pas plus qu'un hamburger Coca !" Parce qu'au fond qu'ont-elles à proposer à monsieur avec des bonnes manières ? Des cheese-burgers. Des Mac-nuggets. Des XXL-burgers. Des royal-cheeses. Des doubles cheese-burgers ou des best-of. Elle tord sa bouche dans un mouvement de dégoût insurmontable. Des roulades de cochonneries plus bas que terre » La solution, achève-t-elle, c'est cuisiner un homme avec un crocodile sauce meunière ou des gambas aux épices. (Beyala 49)

Their status as women is inherently linked to their knowledge around a kitchen. The enumeration of the types of women that are judged by Maïmouna further highlights the fracture between the women she deems respectable and the others she calls "filles" [girls]. Laziness, wearing bright colors, perfumes that are compared to spices, and the analogy between the women she perceives as seductresses and snakes and spiders draw a picture of temptation. Moreover, the association between the Orient, sugar and spices, further amplifies the exoticism and sexuality. Women are gradually described as food and predators, strengthening the association between their deviant behaviors and their hypersexualization. They are considered a threat to families both through the inability to cook and the seducing of husbands. By refusing to be part of Maïmouna's kitchen brigade, they break the boundaries and refuse to conform. Maïmouna establishes their inferiority by comparing them to McDonald's menus. By comparison to a woman like the "cheftaine", these women are inconsistent, shallow, and transitory, which is symbolized by the enumeration of dishes from the menu of the King of American fast food[149]. This running

[149] Ironically, the word "chef" as we have seen, would exclude Maïmouna. She wants to be in charge, but she wants to be the perfect home cook, not a professional chef.

comparison between fast-food and a perceived change in values points to what I would like to call the macdonalization of home-makers. For Maïmouna, difference is a threat, as is the inclusion, in culture, of different codes and modes of consumption that come from the outsourcing of domestic tasks that are relegated to the commercial market. Therefore, "these girls" are to women what McDonald's is to gastronomy and cuisine from terroir. However, despite the opinion of Maïmouna, what Fischler would agree with is that the development of new food practices does not necessarily mean the dying out of others. While this younger generation Maïmouna is referencing is cooking less, they are still cooking. In fact, Aïssatou embodies this duality. She cooks the most elaborate dishes to conquer Bolobolo, but when she is alone, she abandons the complex traditional fares to eat fast-food: "C'est l'heure du souper. J'ouvre un sachet de véritable soupe chinoise aux nouilles et aux légumes. Le robinet d'eau chaude coule et dégage de la vapeur. Je choisis un bol bleu, serti de fleurs de lotus, parce qu'il fait "femme d'intérieur." Je mélange…mon repas est prêt" (Beyala 34). The expression "il fait" [it looks] associated with "femme d'intérieur" [housewife] reinforces the charade and the gimmicks. Aïssatou wants to appear as the perfect wife, which is the reason she cooks, but she could also be described as belonging to the category of women so decried by Maïmouna. Shortcuts in cooking have always existed, even if the acceleration of the industrialization of our food chain has made them more apparent.

As we have seen in the previous chapters, cooking traditional dishes does not necessarily stand for the exact reproduction of the ancestral recipe. In fact, in her chapter on *ndole* in *Soulfood équatoriale*, Miano describes how this dish is used by men to select a spouse. Because of the fastidious and long preparation of this specific fare, cooking

competitions are organized between potential suitors to test their patience and their sense of sacrifice. Some women substitute frozen ndolés for the fresh ingredients and buy peanuts that are already peeled and ground. As Miano underscores, the use of frozen ingredients represents a major challenge because the cook cannot control the taste of her dish. The industrial food companies are identified as the responsible party because very often their produce is not well cleaned and the quality of the ingredients is questionable. However, the mistrust and lack of confidence in certain members of the food processing industry does not apply to all products and shortcuts that are used in the kitchen. In fact, the sole winner of the battle between tradition and the new ways of executing complex dishes like ndolé is the Maggi cube, a symbol of the long-lasting imperialism of the West in matters of cooking (67). All these shortcuts are criticized for separating traditional dishes from their terroir. Every compromise affects the significance of each step in the preparation and thus equally undermines the integrity of the dish. The industrialization of food can be seen as endangering the foundation and the origin of a cuisine, its identity, and by extension, the culture it belongs to. Gastro-literature therefore voices the anxieties and the threats of globalization and industrialization when it comes to perpetuating and safeguarding of the dishes of terroir and their creation. However, if we can now eat pizza everywhere as we have previously seen, or cook Saka Saka anywhere, it does not necessarily threaten people's desire for the cuisine of their terroir. In fact, Fischler hints at the fact that these trends merely expand the reach of a people's plate. Building on Fischler's analysis, Poulain clarifies:

> Désintégration, car il y a bien une baisse de l'influence des modèles alimentaires et des particularismes qui les accompagnent, et intégration, car il se crée un espace social partagé par un nombre considérablement plus grand d'individus […] Notre lecture […] postule que la mondialisation des

> marchés génère un triple mouvement: disparition de certains particularismes, émergence de nouvelles formes alimentaires résultant de processus de métissage et diffusion à échelle transculturelle de certains produits et pratiques alimentaires trois mécanismes qui ne doivent pas seulement être lus comme destructeurs des cultures alimentaires mais qui participent aussi à leurs recompositions. (31)

I would like to build on both Fischler's and Poulain's work by adding that these new culinary models also contribute to the reconstruction of culinary cultures. In fact, as we previously established, there are a greater number of exchanges due to the industrialization and mass-commercialization of food products. These changes participate in the rebirth and preservation of certain dishes and ingredients that would otherwise be at risk of disappearing. Let's take the example of fonio that we previously put forward. Its exportation and commercialization in the West shows interest for this grain that almost disappeared from the plates of the peoples living in the Sahel region from where it originates. The appreciation of foreign imports abroad restores the image of these ingredients in their home country. Products of the "terroir" are often labeled as rustic, lowly, and unsophisticated, like the ethnic foods discussed in the third chapter. Therefore, it is also within the hand of the Other to determine matters of power and prestige.

Food imperialism: Nestlé and its conquest of the West African Market

As we discuss exports of foodstuff, imports of industrial food products from the West have also had a tremendous impact on the content of people's plates. Mireille Rosello, in her book entitled *Infiltrating Culture: Power and Identity in Contemporary Women's Writing*, develops this theme by using the "infiltrator" metaphor to deconstruct the concept

of a stable and immutable identity[150]. Thus, regionalism has been and still is continually challenged by outside influences, whether colonization, commercial exchanges, or industrial development. It seems almost impossible to completely resist the globalized mass consumption of foods because imports of products from the West and local cuisines are deeply intertwined. In fact, it would be impossible to make the "BH" (the beignets haricots) if not for the import of both the flour and the beans which are vestiges of the influence of colonization, and thus represent the globalization of food. For Miano in *Soulfood équatoriale*, both types of beignets testify to these changes in the culinary landscape:

> Les BH sont de deux sortes. Nature, ou à la farine de maïs et à la banane. Ils se mangent chauds, trempés dans les haricots rouges. Et quand on les avale, ce n'est pas dans l'estomac qu'ils descendent. Ils vous remplissent l'âme.
>
> Ce Soul food des berges du Wouri portait bien nom. Les BH sont en effet conformes à ce qui façonné la soul food des Afro-Américains. Les mouvements des peuples, la migration des aliments.
>
> La farine de blé utilisée pour les BH nature n'est pas africaine. Les haricots sont originaires des Amériques, et sont consommés sous diverses formes par les populations américaines de souche africaine. (36)

Therefore, food imports have expanded the culinary landscape of those countries such as in the case of wheat. Aminata Sow Fall in *Un grain de vie et d'espérance* conceives the acceptance of foreign influences as a result of history, and consequently as unproblematic. She writes:

> Le plaisir de manger est l'aboutissement d'un processus complexe qui se réalise à l'intérieur de chacun de nous à partir de notre caractère, nos goûts, notre histoire et notre environnement. C'est pourquoi il va de soi qu'on puisse raffoler de *tiebou dieune* au Sénégal ou vouer un culte à la bonne baguette française. (Sow Fall 2002, 81)

[150] She argues that she does not see in this concept of infiltration a "métissage" of "two cultures, two discourses, two races, [which] actually blend to produce a third term" (14), neither is she talking of assimilation and integration of foreigners, rather she sees it as a juxtaposition.

She does not see the consumption of flagship foods such as the French baguette as a betrayal of her own culture, but rather as the consequence of the history of sub-Saharan cultures as previously discussed. Miano echoes this opinion when she writes: "A l'origine, la *soul food* n'est pas de chez nous. Enfin, pas sous cette appellation" (27). The "tropicalization" of the name of foodstuffs that have been brought by the colonizers, such as with salted fish that became "solo" (Miano 39), attests to the undisputed and established impact left by the colonizers on African cultures. However, it was not really wheat and its subsidiaries such as baguettes and croissants, or even the name changes of pre-existing dishes that were the biggest influence on food, "but the colonial period's role in the expansion of scale of trade, centralization of power, and the emergence of national political life, which influenced Africa's kitchens and food stalls in a global marketplace of new ingredients, industrial foods, and consumer tastes for Coca-Cola, Uncle Ben's rice, and Maggi broth cubes" (McCann 27).

In fact, the big food corporations such as Nestlé have changed kitchen traditions. Its flagship product in African cuisines is the Maggi cube, a concentrated broth cube to be added to any dish for flavor. It does not need refrigeration, can resist extreme outside temperatures, and finally it does not expire, which makes it very attractive. It is present all over the continent and has been entirely adopted by cooks and chefs alike. In Senegal, the yellow and red cube is even nicknamed "corrige-madame" in reference to the fact that it is correcting women, which one can interpret as saving them from serving a bland and tasteless dish, but it can also mean to correct someone's faults. In fact, it is an economical way to give the taste of meat or fish to a dish without having to purchase these ingredients that are often quite expensive. Before the Maggi cube appeared on the continent, people

used to cook certain ingredients, like fish, in sea water. Marguerite Abouet devotes two entire pages to the Maggi cube, where she details the goal of its inventor, the Swiss Jules Maggi, who wanted to help provide a cost-effective cooking option for lower classes[151]: "Conçus à l'origine pour aider les travailleurs moins favorisés à mieux s'alimenter et à éviter les carences, les déshydratés Maggi ont ensuite engendré l'idée du cube Maggi" (13). Maggi is now everywhere on the African continent[152], which is why Abouet lists it in "Les indispensables" of Ivorian cuisine along with staple ingredients such as onions, tomatoes, ginger, and chili peppers (11-12). The yellow and red cube has gained notoriety thanks to aggressive marketing campaigns and its omnipresence in the urban and rural landscapes alike, as depicted by Abouet's drawing and the accompanying commentary:

> Le cube Maggi est porté aux nues dans les grandes villes comme dans les villages les plus reculés. À la télé, la radio, des affiches, des T-shirts et des casques, des slogans vantent les saveurs du petit cube maggi-que désormais décliné en maggi-poulet, maggi-oignon-épices, crevette... pour satisfaire tous les goûts ! (13)

Consumers unknowingly become walking advertisements for Maggi by wearing branded apparel. Beyond the simple t-shirts that are often distributed for free by brands, Maggi innovated and catered to its West African clientele by also offering African head wraps to women (Abouet 13). In addition, the colors themselves of the cube are meant to be attractive, friendly, all the while bringing out appetite while suggesting speed. In fact, the red and yellow are the primary colors used also by the McDonald's corporation for these same exact reasons. This approach embodies that the prodigious success of Maggi is

[151] It was invented in the early 1880s. However, as Christian Boudan underscores in his book *Géopolitique du goût*: La *guerre culinaire*, dried meat broths were not a novelty when Jules Maggi started to commercialize his products. They were actually already quite popular in the 18th century before canned meat appeared on the market and replaced them (231).

[152] It is also popular in the Caribbean, even though not to the same extent as on the African continent.

equally due to its smart, aggressive and culturally sensitive marketing techniques. Additionally, the brand has adapted to the diverse African markets by changing the taste and composition of its cubes according to the country where they are commercialized as detailed in the article from *Le Monde*, “En Afrique, le cube Maggi à toutes les sauces:” “La composition des cubes varie selon les latitudes. Celui qui est au Ghana, par exemple, aura un goût de crevettes que l'on ne retrouvera en Côte d’Ivoire, où l'on a remplacé l'amidon de maïs par du manioc. Au Nigéria en revanche, on mettra en avant le gout de graines de soja grillées…” Therefore, it is no surprise that it has colonized African kitchens by learning about the specificities and catering to the diversity of African cuisines. One could talk about a cult around the famous cube. Its popularity is linked to many stories, and much like a tale, Abouet narrates its arrival in West Africa:

> Une légende raconte qu'au temps des colons, un petit avion qui survolait un village laissa tomber un carton qui explosa en touchant le sol. Des milliers de petits cubes s’en échappèrent, s’éparpillant ainsi dans le village. On ne sait comment, l'un de ces cubes atterrit dans la sauce que cuisinait une villageoise, et son mari en adora le goût. Tout le village adopta les petits cubes et progressivement, tout le pays. (13)

The association between the literary-like incipit “une légende raconte” and the use of the simple past contribute to building the mythical aura of this condiment. Moreover, one can appreciate the serendipitous chain of events that enabled the tiny cube to fall directly from a plane into a woman’s stew in a village. However, as the tale recalls, it is her husband’s enjoyment of the dish that dictated and influenced the adoption of the cube within the culinary culture of the village and ultimately the country. By relegating the opinion of the wife, who is also the cook, as secondary, the story sheds light on the importance of food as

a bond for marriage[153]. In fact, some say : “Maggi, le secret de la bonne cuisine,” while others say “Maggi convaint ton mari de la bonne cuisine de son épouse” or even “Maggi t’évite d’avoir une co-épouse à la maison” (Abouet 13). Consequently, Maggi’s power does not reside uniquely in its taste, but in its capacity to advocate for a woman’s worth to her husband. The story of Maggi therefore represents a tale of power that shapes the private sphere, but also entered the communal cultural spheres. In fact, the reality of the arrival of the yellow and red cube is much more a tale of intrusion than adoption as stated by the article “En Afrique, le cube Maggi à toutes les sauces”:

> Son arrivée sur le marché coïncide quasiment avec la signature du traité de Berlin de 1885, qui régit les règles du commerce entre les puissances coloniales et ouvre la libre circulation des produits sur le continent. Au fond des pirogues, brinquebalés à dos d'hommes ou de chameaux, des milliers de cubes voyagent ainsi à travers les anciennes colonies.

Abouet denounces the history of Maggi, which “imposed” itself on the Ivory Coast culinary tradition (12). The use of the verb “imposer” reveals that the product of the brand was not sought after, and that the people of the Ivory Coast had no choice. Sylvie Durmelat refers to this process as “the gastronomic civilizing enterprise” in her article “Introduction: Colonial culinary encounters and imperial leftovers” as she evokes the North-South power dynamics that are made visible through the contents of a plate.

As we delve into the marketing strategies of Nestlé, the main example of this postcolonial civilizing enterprise lies in the ingredients added specifically to the cubes sold on the African continent. In the communication, “Petit mais puissant,” published directly on the French website of Nestlé, a scientific advisor in the nutrition department details the

[153] This constitutes the central plot of several narratives in my corpus as we have seen with Beyala, Condé, and Miano.

following: “Les cubes et tablettes bouillon Maggi ont été largement consommés dans toute la région, ce qui en fait un véhicule idéal pour un enrichissement en fer.” In fact, the Maggi broth cubes intended for the African continent have been enriched with iron since 2012. The addition of supplements in this staple is presented by the brand as a solution to widespread medical conditions such as anemia, diabetes, and cardio-vascular issues, to name but a few. However, not everyone sees Nestlé’s approach as benevolent[154]. On the contrary, many have voiced concerns when it comes to the ingredients list as expressed in the article “En Afrique, le cube Maggi à toutes les sauces”:

> Il n’empêche que l’ingrédient majoritaire est le sel. “Il est important de ne pas saler les plats qui sont préparés avec les cubes aromatiques puisqu'ils en contiennent déjà beaucoup, entre 40 et 50 %,” explique Florence Foucaut, membre de l’Agence française des diététiciens nutritionistes (AFDN). L'abus de sel peut développement de maladies cardiovasculaires, de l'hypertension et des insuffisances rénales.

As stressed by this nutritionist, a high level of salt in food can cause numerous health conditions. Thus, one is led to wonder if the health benefits of consuming the cubes are not countered by the dangers the product represents. Moreover, as repetitively underlined in the writings on the topic, most cooks do not use the Maggi cubes parsimoniously, and use a greater amount in one dish than is recommended. The overreliance on broth cubes for the development of the flavors of dishes happens at the expense of a longer, but much healthier cooking process. Ironically though, the African continent is well known for the bounty of spices that one can find in markets, and which used to be the basis of any dish. The mayor of Ouagadougou highlights this public health issue in an opinion column entitled “Il est

[154] Moreover, if we actually look at the estimated iron content that the Maggi cubes provide, it becomes evident that they play a meagre role in curbing any medical condition. In fact, Nestlé evaluates that people put in average 5 cubes in a meal for six people therefore bringing 15% of the daily recommended value in iron.

urgent que Ouagadougou retrouve une plus saine," published in *Le Monde*, in which he states:

> Dans toute l'Afrique subsaharienne, les gouvernements nationaux sont confrontés à des transformations majeures du régime alimentaire des populations, avec des pénuries d'aliments de base traditionnels et une disponibilité de plus en plus grande d'aliments transformés, option pratique et parfois peu chère.

Therefore, the industrialization of the diet has cut corners and irremediably changed former culinary traditions that were healthier. However, this outside influence and intrusion, that is clearly embodied by the Maggi cube, has also motivated acts of rebellion. For the longest time, as Miano argues in her book, "seule la marque Maggi convient, toutes les femmes *sawas* le savent" (67)[155]. Nevertheless, local entrepreneurs in sub-Saharan Africa have created their own brands of broth cubes as exemplified by Doli in Senegal or Tanty in Cameroon. Several companies, such as NTFoods, an African-born company, are taking on the Goliath of industrial food that is Nestlé. In a portrait painted by *Le Monde* in the article "Thierry Nyamen, l'ancien vendeur ambulant qui veut concurrencer Nestlé au Cameroun," the entrepreneur and figure behind the brand Tanty presents his product in glorious terms:

> Aujourd'hui, nous sommes leader dans la transformation des produits agricoles locaux. Nous sommes surtout leader dans la production des céréales infantiles faites avec des produits du terroir sur le marché national, grâce au travail acharné que nous abattons depuis seize ans, […] Je ne suis pas complexé. Sur le côté nutritionnel, nous avons des bio, sans engrais chimique. Il n'y a pas de comparaison. Au niveau des prix, nous sommes imbattables car nous sommes moins chers.

[155] The Sawas, from sáwá, meaning "coastline" in the duálá language, are a people composed of several ethnic groups who live on the coast of Cameroon.

Locally sourced, locally produced, organic, and cheaper than other brands, these alternatives represent a significant competition to the Nestlé brand on the African continent, which has lost ground in the recent years[156]. Consequently, this current trend towards the rejection and replacement of the famous Maggi cube embodies a decolonization of sub-Saharan cuisines, free from the gastronomic civilizing enterprise. Selecting produce and cooking stand as acts of rebellion.

All in all, gastro-literature paints a portrait of sub-Saharan African and Caribbean cuisines in constant evolution. The back and forth between globalization, industrialization, and a return to the terroir is at the core of current culinary trends and initiatives in both these regions. What readers are presented with is a map of culinary rhizomic connections between the continents that run deep, and that have affected and still affect how people eat and what people eat. In this sense, sub-Saharan and Caribbean cuisines are the result of their long-standing history and the multitude of exchanges beyond the assumed North-South corridor. However, consuming certain ingredients or not stand as an act of rebellion in these regions that are still fighting for their independence from outside power dynamics. Therefore, Condé, Miano, Sow Fall, and Beyala all partake in making of gastro-literature "une littérature engagée" [a committed literature] that denounces the culinary, cultural, social, political, and economic abuses. Far from unilaterally pointing out the industrialization of local culinary cultures as a threat to the transmission of the terroir and its knowledge, these authors temper the anxieties and fears that surround food culture. They

[156] In fact, one of the recent effects of the industrialization of food is a greater awareness of the correlation between foodstuff, health and the benefits of the terroir.

invite their readers to be aware, cautious, but ultimately, to understand that no culinary culture is an island, thus challenging deeply held notions of authenticity of a cuisine or that of local consumption.

Conclusion
Sub-Saharan Gastro-literature: A (His)story of Food and Social Justice

"There is no medicine as active as good food"
-Nigerian proverb

"Reconciliation is strengthened by eating together"
-Sudanese proverb

The development during the twenty-first century of gastro-literature in Francophone sub-Saharan Africa and the Caribbean is first and foremost a tale of social justice. Evoking gastro-literature is talking about gastro-resistance as food has historically been linked to resilience, defiance, and resistance for black people. The works of Beyala, Miano, Sow Fall, Abouet and Condé inscribe themselves in this same tradition. Gastro-literature is about celebrating cultural appreciation while opposing cultural appropriation. These black women writers are part of a growing movement to free their heritage from the influence of the West and redefine the dynamics between their countries of origin and France. They are advocating for Afrocentrism and Pan-Africanism in the memorializing of their culture. From this perspective, cuisine and gastro-literature embody actors of change. They advocate for greater representation and inclusion of diasporic cultures in France and on the international stage. While the publication of cookbooks still reflects the lack of inclusiveness of some cuisines in the culinary and publication landscapes, gastro-literature fills in the gap and rehabilitates the prestige of sub-Saharan African and Caribbean cuisines. It becomes a tool for change, whose goals are fourfold: (1) it is a genre that emerged to root people through common memories and traditions, (2) it defies French hegemony in the publication and food industries that constructed a perceived high versus

low culture, (3) it advocates for the power of literature to challenge the perception of cuisines, and (4) it points out the dangers of globalization and industrialization, therefore positioning gastro-literature as a tool of resistance and advocacy.

First of all, as I have demonstrated in my research, the transition from orality to written recipes in cookbooks and literary works embodies a desire to create a sense of identity, belonging and genealogy through food legacy. This transition has allowed for the grounding and rooting of people across the African and Caribbean diasporas by allowing for the reproduction of memories through taste and the cooking of recipes. Therefore, authors have framed gastro-literature and food as a powerful transnational and transdurational tool to bring people together. In that sense, gastro-literature is an inclusive genre that gives back voice and agency to the maker of iconic dishes, whose knowledge has been historically underrepresented in culinary culture and cookbooks. Through the shift from an oral to a written mode of transmission of recipes, Abouet, Miano, Beyala, Sow Fall and Condé have memorialized the traditions of their motherland and reclaimed the space and contributions of mothers to the elaboration of rich cuisines. By inscribing food at the core of their work, the female authors I am concentrating on fill a gap in the sub-Saharan and Caribbean cultures by participating in the construction and establishment of cuisines, which have been almost inexistent beforehand due to the lack of standardization brought in part by cookbooks. It is in this context that authors turned to gastro-literature as a way to protect, (re)claim, (re)appropriate and (re)define their food and culinary cultures.

As I unveiled in this dissertation, the culinary and literary industries have historically excluded women and minorities. The professional kitchen has remained the

realm of men relegating women to their domestic kitchen. Similarly, women have long been excluded from proclaimed higher literary genres and from recognition for their literary contributions. France has indeed succeeded in exerting control and power in both industries by creating a perception of high versus low cultures. In order to protect its hegemony, France has in turn limited and stunted the growth of foreign cuisines, preventing them for competing with its long-standing dominance, and it has similarly dictated and muzzled the development of diasporic literatures through its control over the publishing industry, among other factors. The gastro-literature that composes my corpus thus deeply challenges and shatters the boundaries that have championed ethnocentrism and sexism, and it exhorts the readers to see beyond these flawed binaries of high and low. As I have pointed out, France's culinary hegemony and the creation of Haute cuisine are based on the appropriation of foreign ingredients, highlighting the intrinsic power of foreign cuisines to rise and compete with their French counterpart. Therefore, writing as a black woman, and writing about food represents itself an act of resistance, and an act of defiance of this hierarchization of taste and cuisines. However, the history and challenges of both the culinary and publishing industries are not those of a revolution, but much more that of a process that originates from a desire for agency and recognition.

The books that compose my corpus highlight the essential role of gastro-literature in fighting stereotypes associates with sub-Saharan and Caribbean cuisines. These texts advocate for their diversity, their breadth and potential to rise and be recognized on their own outside of the all-encompassing ethnic food niche. Chefs and entrepreneurs engage in a healing process to take control of the content of their plates. They embark on collaborative and exploratory journeys that aim to survey, analyze and define the identity of their cuisine.

While chefs question the best way to honor their roots and anchor their cuisines in the French culinary landscape, they oscillate between fusion, or a more authentic approach. They reckon the importance of preserving their cuisines from outside influences as chefs acknowledge that the dishes and flavors they feature still have not been fully investigated. Despite their disagreement on how to best champion the flavors they grew up eating, they present a united front in wanting mixed metaphors. In an ironic turn of events, their success is based on the same formula that has made French cuisine the epitome of culinary traditions since the 19th century -- that is the alliance between chefs, authors and journalists. Consequently, gastro-literature plays an essential role in the construction of cuisines and their promotion, which could not be attained solely by chefs.

As we have established, the genre itself emerged to advocate for the decolonization of the culinary cultures of sub-Saharan Africa and the Caribbean, and to fight cultural appropriation. In fact, food has the power not only to colonize the palate, but also social, cultural, economic and political arenas. Staples have been travelling thanks to the migration of populations across the world that keeps redefining the concept of heterogeneous and stable national cuisines. Flavors, tastes and products have been evolving with the influence of commercial exchanges, different waves of colonization and subsequent immigration. And just as a cuisine evolves, so does the cultural identity of a nation. While some have been trying to protect and preserve their culinary identity against outside influences and globalization, many also see these changes as a natural and enriching evolution of customs and culture. The twenty-first century constitutes a time of growing anxiety towards the trends in the food industry and the evolution of culinary cultures in the regions on which I have been focusing. As I have demonstrated, industrialization and globalization have

created concerns about the loss of knowledge of ancestral and communal recipes due in part to the perceived decline in cooking in younger generations that increasingly rely on simpler recipes as well as pre-packaged and pre-cooked food. However, as I have argued, changes to African food traditions are nothing new. Ultimately, cuisines around the world are very much interconnected since preparations, cooking practices, ingredients, and dishes have been exchanged and have been travelling for centuries across the globe to define cuisines as we know them today. Therefore, chefs are literally and metaphorically unearthing their (pre)history and shedding light on the long-standing rhizomic connections that challenge our understanding of terroir and local consumption.

My research opens up new paths into the exploration of food cultures and food studies in light of the contribution of the field of literature. Moreover, scholars are beginning to switch their inquiries from the study of Western food cultures to uncover the complexity of understudied ones such as Francophone sub-Saharan African and Caribbean cuisines. Acquired tastes, concepts and terminology are being questioned, altered, and invented to answer to the growing pressure for equity at the table. Culinary cultures that were until recently unseen are now visible and even featured. While my dissertation aims to promote and play a role in the visibility of sub-Saharan and Caribbean food cultures, much more remains to be investigated, especially in light of the evolving field of gastro-literature. As I reflect on my desire to turn this dissertation into a manuscript for a major academic press, I will expand the scope of my inquiry into this genre by analyzing the work of authors who continue to promote their culinary (his)stories through this seemingly mundane but deep and powerful literary genre. In fact, Senegalese author, Ken Bugul, has

been working on a new publication that I hope will challenge and complete my examination of gastro-novels. She will, I am certain, be joined by several other authors, who will also be seduced by the didactic essence carried through food and gastro-literature, and which can advocate for sustainability as well as social, politic, economic, and cultural revolutions.

Moreover, as I conceive literature and culture as complementary and informing one another, this dissertation constitutes a first taste of the complex interconnections between both fields. I am excited to continue to explore and further analyze new initiatives from entrepreneurs and chefs from the three continents I have focused on -- that is Africa, Europe and America – in order to bring new perspectives to the growing and dynamic field of food studies. What I have highlighted through my inquiry into food cultures is the fact we are witnessing the first stages of the development and recognition of sub-Saharan cuisines outside of the all-encompassing ethnic food label as well as the redefinition of Caribbean cuisines outside of their exotic and idealized stereotypes. As I finish this dissertation, chef Pierre Thiam just launched a new line of products based on his featured sub-Saharan staple, fonio. During this pandemic, he has strengthened his global position as a social activist, advocating for the need for equity in kitchens, for a more sustainable agriculture globally and for more environmentally friendly modes of consumption. After having successfully promoted this grain in America, he is now turning towards the French market, a move I will be closely following. Similarly, new entrepreneurs are surfing on the trendiness of Afro-cooking to propose new products. The brand Tamba, born in France in September 2019, proposes ready-to-eat African dishes that are commercialized in mainstream French grocery stores. The release of its first three dishes – lamb in a mafé sauce, beef thiou app

and chicken yassa – was a real success and foresees the diversification and multiplication of similar businesses.

Nevertheless, as I write these lines, I feel the necessity to address the growing uncertainty of the future of the restaurant industry post Covid-19. One can simply hope that black-owned restaurants and food businesses will survive the hardships they are facing and that this crisis will not stunt the growth of these cuisines as well as their global recognition and praise. Many restaurants have remained opened and have fed the communities that have been hit the hardest. For example, during the shutdown, Chef Pierre Thiam has been operating his restaurant *Teranga* in the heart of Harlem to deliver meals for the health care personnel in New York hospitals. Others have provided meals for out-of-school children, people who have lost their jobs, and overall struggling individuals and communities, highlighting the healing power of food through hospitality, sharing and cooperation.

I would like to finish this inquiry of food cultures and the genre of gastro-literature by sharing in turn a recipe from the African continent in order to make my own dissertation a reflection of the hybridity of the work I am analyzing. Zimbabwean Peanut-butter Kale is a recipe that is especially dear to me as it was shared by my dissertation writing partner, Naseemah Mohammed Ogunnaike. With her authorization, I would like to share it in turn with you. Even though this recipe is not from sub-Saharan francophone Africa, but Zimbabwe, where my friend is from, the use of peanut butter is, as we have previously established, a shared culinary staple between many cuisines across the African continent. This recipe literally sustained my writing over the past three years, and I hope anyone who

reads these words will enjoy peanut-butter kale as much as I do. It will remain in my memory as the taste I associate with this dissertation, and a symbol of true friendship and collaboration.

Ingredients:

- one yellow onion
- one bunch of fresh kale
- ¼ of a cup of peanut butter
- warm water
- one tablespoon of oil
- two pinches of salt

Instructions:

- Heat up the oil in a large pan.
- Dice one yellow onion.
- Fry the onion in the pan until golden.
- In the meantime, thinly slice one bunch of kale. You can include the stems too.
- Add the kale to your pan, stir regularly.
- In a cup, mix the peanut butter, warm water and two pinches of salt. More peanut butter can be added to suit personal taste. Your mix should have the consistency of a thick sauce.
- Add the sauce to the pan and stir well to distribute it evenly.
- Then let it cook so the peanut butter can caramelize. Once the peanut sauce is caramelized all over, it is ready to be served.

Bon appétit!

Bibliography

Abégan, Christian. *Le Patrimoine Culinaire africain.* Paris: Editions Laffont, 2017.

Abouet, Marguerite. *Délices d'Afrique: 50 recettes pour petits moments de confidences à partager*. Paris: Editions Alternatives, 2012.
…, *Aya de Yopougon.* Paris: Gallimard, 2005.

Ako-Adjei, Naa Baako. "How Not to Write about Africa: African Cuisines in Food Writing." *Gastronomica* Vol. 15, No. 1 (Spring 2015): 44-55.

Alloula, Malek. *Festin de l'exil*. Paris: Françoise Truffaut, 2003.

Bâ, Mariama. *Une si longue lettre*. Paris: Motifs, 1979 (ed. 2001).

Barthes, Roland. *Mythologies*. Paris: *Mythologies*, 1957 (ed. 2014).

Beyala, Calixthe. *Comment cuisiner son mari à l'africaine*. Paris: Editions Albin Michel, 2000.

Blair, Dorothy. *Senegalese Literature: A Critical History*. New York: Twayne Publications, 1984.

Boudan, Christian. *Géopolitique du goût: La guerre culinaire*. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2004.

Bourdieu, Pierre. *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste.* London: Routledge, 1984 (2010).

Bourgueil, Isabelle. "L'accès au livre: au Nord des parterres de livres, au Sud des librairies par terre!," *Africultures*, Vol. 57, No. 4 (2003): 31-33.

Brillat-Savarin, Jean Anthelme. *Physiologie du goût*. Paris: Flammarion, 1825 (ed. 2017).

Brion, Christel. "A Paris, La Gastronomie Africaine S'impose." *Le Nouvel Observateur*, 16 Mar. 2017, https://o.nouvelobs.com/food/20170316.OBS6687/a-paris-la-gastronomie-africaine-s-impose.html.

Bugul, Ken. *Le baobab fou*. Paris: Présence Africaine, 2009 (ed. 2011).

Bush, Ruth. *Publishing Africa in French: Literary Institutions and Decolonization 1945-1967*. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2016.

Bush, Ruth and Claire Ducournau. "La littérature africaine de langue française, à quel(s) prix? Histoire d'une instance de légitimation littéraire méconnue (1924-2012)" *Cahiers d'études africaines* Vol. 3, No. 219 (2015): 535-568.

Camus, Albert. *L'étranger*. Paris: Editions Gallimard, 2012.

Chastanet, Monique, François-Xavier Fauvelle-Aymar and Dominique Juhé-Beautaton, eds. *Cuisine et société en Afrique: Histoire, saveurs et savoir-faire*. Paris: Editions Karthala, 2002.

Civitello, Linda. *Cuisine and Culture: A History of Food and People (Third Edition).* New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2011.

Counihan, Carole M. *The Anthropology of Food and Body: Gender, Meaning and Power*. New York: Routledge, 1999.

Counihan, Carole M. and Penny Van Esterik, eds. *Food and Culture: A Reader (Second Edition)*. New York: Routledge, 2008.

Condé, Maryse. *Mets et merveilles*. Paris : JC Lattès, 2015.
…, Victoire, les saveurs et les mots. Paris : Mercure de France, 2006.
…, *Le Coeur à rire et à pleurer*. Paris: Robert Laffont, 1999.
…, *Moi, Tituba Sorcière…Noire de Salem*. Paris : Mercure de France, 1986 (ed. 2007).

Contois, Emily. "From the Editor: Defining Food Studies and the Next Four Years." *Graduate Association for Food Studies*, 3 Mar. 2017, gradfoodstudies.org/2017/03/01 Contois, Emily. "From the Editor: Defining Food Studies and the Next Four Years." *Graduate Association for Food Studies*, 3 Mar. 2017, http://gradfoodstudies.org/2017/03/01/from-the-editor-defining-food-studies-and-the-next-four-years/.

Cussack, Igor. "Cookery Books and Celebrity Chefs: Men's Contribution to National Cuisines in Sub-Saharan Africa." *Food, Culture & Society* Vol. 17, No. 1 (2014): 65-80.
…, "Pots, Pens and "Eating Out of the Body": Cuisine and the Gendering of African Nations." *Nations and Nationalism* Vol. 9, No. 2 (2003): 277-296.
…, "African Cuisines: Recipes for Nation-Building ?" *Journal of African Cultural Studies* Vol. 12, No. 2 (Dec. 2000): 207-225.

Davies, Carole Boyce and Elaine Savory Fido. *Out of the Kumbla: Caribbean Women and Literature.* Michigan: Africa Research & Publications, 1990.

De la Peña, Carolyn and Benjamin Lawrance. *Local Foods Meet Global Foodways: Tasting History*. New York: Routledge, 2012.

De La Varenne, François Pierre. Le Cuisinier françois. Paris: Hachette Livre BNF, 1654 (ed. 2013).

Deleuze and Guattari. *A Thousand Plateaus. New York:* Bloomsbury Academic, 1988 (ed. 2013).
…, *Kafka, pour une littérature mineure*. Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1975.

Dia, Rougui. *Le chef est une femme*. Paris: Jean-Claude Gawsewitch, 2006.

Douïeb, David. "Zeste D'Afrique #3: Quand La Cuisine Africaine Fait Les Yeux Doux Aux Bobos." *Le Point*, 21 July 2017, www.lepoint.fr/culture/zeste-d-afrique-3-quand-la-cuisine-africaine-fait-les-yeux-doux-aux-bobos-21-07-2017-2144855_3.php.

Edwin, Shirin. "Subverting Social Customs: The Representation of Food in Three West African Francophone Novels." *Research in African Literatures* Vol. 39, No. 3 (Fall 2008): 39-50.

Esquivel, Laura. *Like Water for Chocolate*. London: Black Swann, 1989 (ed. 1993).

Estivals, Robert. "Le livre en Afrique noire francophone." *Communication & Languages* No. 46 (1980): 60-82.

Fellag. "Comment réussir un bon petit couscous." Paris: JC Lattès, 2003.

Giard, Luce et Pierre Mayol, *L'Invention du quotidien*, Vol. 2. *Habiter, cuisiner*. Présentation de Michel de Certeau. Paris: U.G.E., 1980.

Parkhurst Ferguson, Priscilla. *Accounting for Taste: The Triumph of French Cuisine*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2004.
…, in *French Food on the Table, on the Page, and in French Culture*. Edited by Lawrence R. Schehr and Allen S. Weiss. New York: Routledge, 2001.

Fischler, Claude. *L'Homnivore: Sur les fondamentaux de la biologie et de la philosophie* Paris : Odile Jacob, 2001.
…, "La macdonalization des mœurs" in Jean-Louis Flandrin and Massimo Montanari (éd.), *Histoire de l'alimentation*. Paris: Fayard, 1996: 251-278.

Finnegan, Ruth. *Oral Literature in Africa*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012.

Freeman, Michael. *Food in Chinese Culture*. New York: Yale University Press, 1978.

Freidberg, Susanne. *French Beans and Food Scares*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004.

Garnier ""Faire avec" les goûts des autres: La petite restauration africaine, une nouvelle venue dans les villes moyennes en France." *Anthropology of food* [Online]. Vol. 7 (December 2010). Online since 25 December 2010, connection on 16 May 2020. http://journals.openedition.org/aof/6576.

Gates, Henry Louis. *The Signifying Monkey: A Theory of African America Literary Criticism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989.

Gérard, Abigail. "L'homme Qui Veut Mettre L'Afrique à Table." *Paris Match*, 23 Mar. 2017, www.parismatch.com/Vivre/Gastronomie/L-homme-qui-veut-mettre-l-Afrique-a-table-1218455.

Githire, Njeri. *Cannibal Writes: Eating Others in Caribbean and Indian Ocean Women's Writing*. Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2014.

Goody, Jack. "The Recipe, the Prescription and the Experiment" in Carole M. Counihan's *The Anthropology of Food and Body: Gender, Meaning and Power*. New York: Routledge, 1999: 78-90.

…, *The Interface between the Written and the Oral*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987 (ed. 1993).

…, *Cooking, Cuisine and Class: a Study in Comparative Sociology.* New York: Cambridge University Press, 1982 (ed. 1996).

Hafner, Dorinda. *A Taste of Africa: Traditional and Modern African Cooking*. Berkeley: Ten Speed Press, 2002.

…, *A Taste of Africa: with over 100 traditional African recipes adapter for the modern cook*. Berkeley, California: Ten Speed Press, 1993.

Hage, Julien. "Les littératures francophones d'Afrique noire à la conquête de l'édition africaine (1914-1974)." *Gradhiva* No. 10 (2009): 80-105.

Harris, Jessica B. *High on the Hog: A Culinary Journey from Africa to America.* New York: Bloomsbury, 2011.

…, *Iron Pots and Wooden Spoons: Africa's Gifts to New World Cooking*. New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1989 (ed. 1999).

Harris, Joanne. *Chocolat: A Novel*. New York : Penguin Books, 1999.

Harrus-Révidi, Gisèle. *Psychanalyse de la gourmandise*. Paris: Editions Payot & Rivages, 1994.

Hansen, Art and Della E. McMillan, eds. *Food in Subsaharian Africa.* Boulder, Colorado: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1986 (ed. 2005).

Hitchcott, Nicki. *Women Writers in Francophone Africa.* New York: Berg Press, 2011.

Houston, Lynn Marie. *Food Culture in the Caribbean*. London: Greenwood Press, 2005.

Joyce, Melanie. *Why we Love Dogs, Eat Pigs, and Wear Cows?*: *An Introduction to Carnism*. San Francisco: Conari Press, 2009.

Jules-Rosette, Bennetta. *Black Paris: The African Writers' Landscape*. Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1998.

Julien, Eileen. *African Novels and the Question of Orality*. Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1992.

Kouagheu, Josiane. "Thierry Nyamen, l'Ancien Vendeur Ambulant Qui Veut Concurrencer Nestlé Au Cameroun." *Le Monde Afrique*, 6 Oct. 2016, www.lemonde.fr/afrique/article/2016/10/06/thierry-nyamen-l-ancien-vendeur-ambulant-qui-veut-concurrencer-nestle-au-cameroun_5009310_3212.html.

Laplantine, François. "L'anthropologie genre métis" in Christian Ghasarian (dir.), *De l'ethnographie à l'anthropologie reflexive.* Paris: Armand Colin, 2002, 143-15.

Larue, Renan. *Le végétarisme et ses ennemis: Vingt-cinq siècles de débats.* Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2015.

Le Bris, Michel and Jean Rouaud (dir.). *Pour une littérature monde*. Paris: Gallimard, 2007.

Les Recettes de cuisine antillaise de Da Elodie. Recueillies par Marie-Thérèse Julien Lung-Fou.

Lemancel, Anne-Laure. "Publier En Afrique Sub-Saharienne: Portraits Croisés De Trois Maisons d'Édition." *TV5 Monde*, 24 Nov. 2014, http://information.tv5monde.com/info/publier-en-afrique-sub-saharienne-portraits-croises-de-trois-maisons-d-edition-2277.

Lepidi, Pierre. "En Afrique, Le Cube Maggi à Toutes Les Sauces." *Le Monde*, 6 Mar. 2015, www.lemonde.fr/afrique/article/2015/03/06/en-afrique-du-cube-maggi-a-toutes-les-sauces_4588992_3212.html.

Levi-Strauss, Claude, *Mythologiques: Le cru et le cuit*. Paris: Plon, 1964 (ed. 2009).

"Littérature Africaine - Calixthe Beyala." *7 Jours Sur La Planète*, TV5 Monde, 7 Dec. 2017, www.dailymotion.com/video/xiauku.

Lobe, Max. "Editeurs africains, mondialisez-vous donc !" *Le Monde*, 24 April 2015.

Loichot, Valérie. *The Tropics Bite Back: Culinary Coups in Caribbean Literature*. Minneapolis, Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 2013.

Mabanckou, Alain and Abdourahman Waberi. *Dictionnaire enjoué des cultures africaines*. Paris: Fayard, 2019.

McCann, James C. *Stirring the Pot: A History of African Cuisine*. Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2009.

Magid, Annette M., ed. *You Are What You Eat: Literary Probes into the Palate*. Newcastle, UK: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2008.

Mars, J.A and E.M. Tooleyo. *The Kudeti Book of Yoruba Cookery*. CSS Bookshops, 1961.

Le Mesnagier de Paris. Paris: Le livre de poche, 1393 (ed. 1994).

Miano, Léonora. *Soulfood équatoriale*. Paris : NiL éditions, 2009.

Miller, Annetta. *African Flavors: Recipes with Proverbs*. San Bernardino, California: Annetta Miller, 2013.

Miller, Christopher L. *The French Atlantic Triangle: Literature and Culture of the Slave Trade*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2008.

Mintz, Sidney, W. *Tasting Food, Tasting Freedom: Excursions into Eating, Culture, and the Past*. New York: Beacon Press, 1996.

…, "Cuisine and haute cuisine: How they are linked?" *Food and Foodways: Explorations in the History and Culture of Human Nourishment* Vol.3, No.3 (1989): 185-190.

…, *Sweetness and Power: The Place of Sugar in Modern History*. New York: Penguin Books, 1985.

Misrahi Barak, Judith. *Revisiting Slave Narratives: Les avatars contemporains des récits d'esclaves.* Montpellier: Presses Universitaires de la Méditerranée, 2005.

Moha, Dar. *La cuisine de Moha. Les meilleures recettes de Marrakech*. Belgium: Editions de l'Acanthe, 2005.

Montanari, Massimo. *Le manger comme culture*. Bruxelles: Editions de l'Université de Bruxelles, 2004.

Montgomerey, Vining and Bertha and Constance Nabwire. *Cooking the West African Way*. Minneapolis, Minnesota: Lerner Books, 2010.

Morin, Edgar. *L'esprit du temps:* Essai sur la culture de masse. Paris: Grasset, 1962 (ed. 1975).

Ndinda, Joseph. *Ecriture et enjeux, mythes et représentations de l'alimentaire dans les littératures africaines*. Yaoundé, Cameroun: Edition CLÉ, 2011.

N'Dour, Youssou. *Sénégal: Cuisine Intime et Gourmande*. Paris: Editions de la Martinière, 2004.

NNaemeka, Obioma. "From Orality to Writing: African Women Writers and the (Re)Inscription of Womanhood." *Research in African Literatures* Vol. 25, No.4 (Winter, 1994): 137-157.

Osseo-Asare, Fran. *Food Culture in Sub-Saharan Africa*. London: Greenwood Press, 2005.

Panzacchi, Cornelia. "The Livelihoods of Traditional Griots in Modern Senegal." *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute* Vol. 64, No. 2 (1994): 190-210.

Parker, Thomas. *Tasting French Terroir: The History of an Idea*. Oakland, California: University of California Press, 2015.

Pineau, Gisèle, *L'Exil selon Julia*. Paris: Editions Stock, 1996.

Postec, Vanessa. *Le goût des femmes à table*. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2012.

Poulain, Jean-Pierre. *Sociologies de l'alimentation: Les mangeurs et l'espace social alimentaire*. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2002.

"Pour une "littérature-monde" en français." *Le Monde*. 15 March 2007. https://www.lemonde.fr/livres/article/2007/03/15/des-ecrivains-plaident-pour-un-roman-en-francais-ouvert-sur-le-monde_883572_3260.html.

Prince, Marie. *The History of Marie Prince: A West Indian Slave Narrative*. Mineola, New York: Dover Publications Inc., 1831 (ed. 2004).

Proust, Marcel. *A la recherche du temps perdu*. Paris: Gallimard, 1913 (ed. 1999).

Ray, Krishendu. *The Ethnic Restaurateur*. London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2016.

Régnier, Faustine. *L'exotisme culinaire: Essai sur les saveurs de l'Autre*. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2004.

Renne, Elisha P. "Mass Producing Food traditions for West Africans Abroad." American Anthropologist. Vol. 109, No. 4 (December 2007): 616-625.

Revert, Amélie. "La Cuisine Africaine Au Goût Du Jour." *TV5 Monde*, 26 July 2016, http://information.tv5monde.com/culture/la-cuisine-africaine-au-gout-du-jour-119983.

Romer, Ludewig Ferdinand. *A Reliable account of Coast of Guinea*. Translated and edited by Selena Axelrod Winsnes. New York: Diasporic Africa Press, 2013.

Rosello, Mireille. *Postcolonial Hospitality: The Immigrant as Guest*. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2001.

Samuelson, Marcus. *The Soul of a New Cuisine: A Discovery of the Foods and Flavors of Africa*. New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2006.

Sow Fall, Aminata. *Festins de la détresse*. France: L'Or des fous éditeurs, 2005.
…, *Un grain de vie et d'espérance*. Paris: Françoise Truffaut éditions, 2002.
…, *Douceurs du bercail*. Abidjan: Nouvelles éditions ivoiriennes, 1998.

Spang, Rebecca L. *The Invention of the Restaurant: Paris and Modern Gastronomic Culture*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2000.

Swartz-Bart, Simone and André. *Un plat de porc aux bananes vertes*. Paris: Point, 1967 (ed. 2015).

Taillevent, Guillaume. *Le viandier*. Paris: Hachette Livre BNF, 1892 (ed. 2012).

Terry, Bryant. *Afro-Vegan: Farm-Fresh African, Caribbean & Southern Flavors REMIXED*. Berkeley: Ten Speed Press, 2014.

Tervonen, Taïna. "L'aventure ambiguë de l'écrivain africain." *Africultures* Vol. 57, No. 4, (2003): 121-125.
… and Aminata Sow Fall. "L'universel est là, pas là-bas." *Africultures* Vol. 57, No. 4 (2003): 130-131.

Tew, Muriel. *Cooking in West Africa: A Colonial Guide*. London: Jeppestown Press, 2007.

Thiam, Pierre. *The Fonio Cookbook: An Ancient Rediscovered.* New York: Lake Isle Press, 2019.
…, Modern Senegalese Recipes from the Source to the Bowl. New York: Lake Isle Press, 2015.
…, *Yolele*! Recipes from the Heart of Senegal. New York: Lake Isle Press, 2008.

Thierry, Raphael. "Le livre en Afrique francophone." *Bulletin des bibliothèques de France (BBF) No. 5 (*2012): 82-83. http://bbf.enssib.fr/consulter/bbf-2012-05-0082-006.

Tipton-Martin, Toni. *The Jemima Code: Two Centuries of African American Cookbooks*. Austin, Texas: The University of Texas Press, 2015.

TNS Sofres. TNS Sofres, 2011, www.tns-sofres.com/sites/default/files/2011.10.21-plats.pdf.

Trubek, Amy B. *The Taste of Place: A Cultural Journey into Terroir*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008.
…, *Haute Cuisine: How the French Invented the Culinary Profession*. Philadelphia:

University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000.

Turgeon, Laurier. *Patrimoines métissés. Contextes coloniaux et post-coloniaux*. Laval, Canada: Presses Universitaire de l'Université Laval, 2003.

Uchenna Bethrand, Anih. *L'écriture biffocale d'Aminata Sow Fall: Critique sociale et question de la femme dans Douceurs du bercail et Festins de la détresse d'Aminata Sow Fall*. Sarrebruck, Allemagne: Éditions universitaires européennes, 2011.

Valdes Onanina, Hyppolite. "FICHE D'INFO: État des lieux de l'industrie du livre en Afrique." *Africa Check*, 23 Apr. 2017, http://fr.africacheck.org/factsheets/fiche-dinfo-etat-lieux-de-lindustrie-livre-afrique/.

Volper, Serge. *Une histoire des plantes coloniales*. Versailles, France: Éditions Quae, 2011.

Walker, Alice. *In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens: Womanist Prose*. New York: Mariners Book: 1983 (ed. 2004).

Winnie Kabuiku, Amanda. "La Cuisine Africaine, Nouvelle Tendance?" *Le Monde*, 27 July 2015, www.lemonde.fr/afrique/article/2015/08/18/la-cuisine-africaine-nouvelle-tendance_4729081_3212.html.

Zola, Emile. *Grand dictionnaire de cuisine*. Paris: Hachette Livres BNF, 1978 (ed. 2012).