



ole Taste: Eating Culture,

COOKING Culture in Anglophone

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In Questionable Taste: Eating Culture, Cooking Culture in Anglophone Postcolonial Texts



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Abstract

My dissertation produces an extensive and intensive study of the culture of food in postcolonial literature and cookbooks that describe particular regions and cultures. My interrogation treats novels and cookbooks that depict food and eating in Africa, South Asia, and the Caribbean to argue that while both cookbooks and novels depict as unstable the

connection between food and culture; the key difference lies in the manner in which each genre describes that instability. My dissertation uses memoir cookbooks (cookbooks that use the autobiographical accounts of their authors as a method of organizing content and providing context for recipes) and literary depictions of cooking and eating to trouble the neat tautology that establishes food and home as interchangeable cultural signifiers of equal weight. I evaluate the work that cookbooks do by comparing them to representations of cooking, eating and food in representative novels that frame depictions of citizenship and the nation in deeply ambivalent terms even as they depict delicious meals, well-laid family tables, and clean, productive kitchens. I use both cookbooks and novels to illustrate how the text under consideration in my dissertation act out the concerns that structure postcolonial critique. If regional cookbooks provide obscured or incomplete insight into the cultures they purport to authentically depict, then the novels I study provide openly ambivalent accounts of cultural identification. My dissertation begins by examining how pan-cultural cookbooks do the work of drawing multiple nations beneath the aegis of the global--and how this work fails to engage the problematic cosmopolitics of globality as revealed in two South Asian novels. I then examine African texts to analyze the difficulties that press bodies into motion--hunger and impoverishment, political disenfranchisement and oppression, and attenuated relationships with cultural traditions. The dissertation then moves to America via the Caribbean, examining diasporic longing in Cuban expatriates and the manner in which regional cookbooks and memoirs construct the past by reinventing the spaces that their authors have left behind.

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