

Food and Identity of the African Diaspora in the Postcolonial Literature: Two Case Studies.

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This paper provides two case studies: the novel *Comment cuisiner son mari à l'africaine* (2000) by the French-Cameroonian Calixthe Beyala and the short story *Salsicce* (2005) by the Somali-Italian Igiaba Scego. Through typical African recipes Beyala portrays the building of self-perception and the developing of a love story between a young African woman and an African man, living in the multiethnic quarter of Belleville in Paris and facing the mainstreaming Western gender patterns. For Scego, eating pork sausages symbolizes the choice to which culture a young Italian-Somali Muslim woman, living in Rome belongs, in the context of the discriminating Italian migration law.

Food is the most common way to approach the issue of identity. Eating means put into oneself something else and metabolize it; introjections linked to eating and food are full of psychoanalytic meanings. In the literary cases above, what one eats means who one is, to which culture one belongs or even how one negotiates one's belongings. Eating and food are powerful metaphors of one's identity, even of a gender identity as Beyala shows. Both the texts show the relevance of the link between food and body. Through the introjections of food into one's body not only one meets the otherness, for example by eating food coming from other countries and other cooking traditions. Through eating, one can also reaffirm one's own culture, eating traditional dishes. Or, as in the case of Scego's character, for a Somali woman with an Italian passport, eating pork sausages is a challenge to her Muslim identity. While Beyala's character learns to cook African dishes, thus coming back to her origins, Scego's anonymous character decides not to eat pork sausages: into a diasporic and globalized contexts, where it is increasingly easy to taste foreign food, choosing what to eat seems to be the contemporary way to reaffirm one's own subjectivity.

Postcolonial topics often involve the theme of re-appropriation of identity by formerly colonized people and especially by women. According to Spivak and bell hughes, writing is the way through which colonized people have the opportunity to become again subjects of their own lives and identities. Writing about food and cooking choices shows how rooted into one's body the building of identity is, and how diasporic subjects negotiate their identities.