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EMBODIED MEMORIES AND MEMORY DISHES: THE DIASPORIC CULINARY MEMOIR AS AN ALTERNATIVE LOCUS OF MEMORY. A READING OF LAURA SCHENONE'S *LOST RAVIOLI RECIPE OF HOBOKEN* AND AUSTIN CLARKE'S *PIG TAILS 'N' BREADFRUIT*

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Culinary memoirs, or "gastro-graphies," to use the term coined by Rosalia Baena (2006), have been popular since the mid-1990s, and their popularity evidences "an interest in how life writing embodies materiality" (Smith and Watson 148). At first sight, culinary memoirs are concerned with recollecting and sharing personal memories, often childhood memories, through unforgettable past meals, cooking lessons or family feuds at the dinner table. However as food can function as both memory and metaphor—for one's identity and legacy—ethnic and diasporic writers use the culinary memoir as a way to "tell stories of family and nation, ethnic heritage and diasporan mixing" (Smith and Watson 148). For instance the well-known food writer Madhur Jaffrey claims her Muslim and Hindu heritage and inscribes her family story into Indian history in her 2006 memoir, *Climbing the Mango Trees*. Personal and collective memories collide, and family stories become a way to (re)write History. The ethnic culinary memoir enables the autobiographical self to "claim for herself a sense of place, heritage, and history that may not be otherwise articulated" (Kelly 266). The genre, which Kelly proposes to call "autoethnography," allows the author to present her heritage as she knows it, which may imply a rewriting of generally known history, and "gives a place to articulate alternative voices and viewpoints" (Kelly 267). Since the 1970s, African American food writers have used memoirs and recipe books to claim a devalued legacy and offer an alternative view of American history, focusing on their African legacy. For instance, in *High on the Hog, A Culinary Journey from Africa to America*, Jessica Harris explains that "writing about the food of African Americans connects [her] to [her] forebears (Harris 2-3)—her enslaved ancestors, and through them, their African ancestors. Ethnic culinary memoirs revive and revalue cultures and communities, through food and "doing cooking" (Giard 1998), and doing so, often pay tribute to non-textual/embodied knowledge.

The interrelationships of food and memory have received growing theoretical attention in the past twenty years, as shown by Sutton's extensive analysis in *Remembrance of Repasts, An Anthropology of Food and Memory* (2001). The focus on issues of embodiment, material culture and memory in anthropology, sociology and history, include foodways, doing cooking, and previously undervalued texts such as recipe books. Historians such as Donna Gabaccia (*We Are what We Eat* 1998) have drawn alternative pictures of a nation's history through immigrants' foodways. Works such as *Eat My Words. Reading Women's Lives Through the Cookbooks They Wrote* (2002) by Janet Theophano, and *A Thousand Years over the Stove: A History of American Women Told Through Food, Recipes and Remembrances* (2003) by Laura Schenone have also drawn alternative versions of American history, focusing on women's everyday life practices and recipe books.

In this essay, I will analyze two diasporic gastrographies that gather personal and familial memories, recall women's gestures and craft, in order to look at world History, through food memories and stories. I will examine how *Pig Tails 'n' Breadfruit* (1999) by the Barbadian-Canadian writer Austin Clarke, and *The Lost Ravioli Recipes of Hoboken* (2008), by the American food writer Laura Schenone, focus on embodied memory, traces, imprints and residue, in order to address the opposition between textualized memories and non-textual memories and to write alternative histories. The authors' takes on history are also evidenced in the way specific dishes are presented as "memory dishes," that is to say traces and evidence of a family's, a region's or a nation's history.

In the opening chapter of *The Lost Ravioli Recipes of Hoboken,* Laura Schenone insists on a painful lack of family memories and stories. Her parents do not see their families anymore, and have, as she puts it, "no bridges to the past" (*Lost Recipes* 9). Although she knows that her great-grandparents immigrated from Europe in the early years of the twentieth century, she finds it difficult to feel connected to her complex European—Irish, German, Croatian and Italian—origins. Yet as an adult, with an interest in cooking and telling people's lives through the food they eat and cook, she decides to "seek [her] own culinary roots" (12). From the start,

the memoir is framed as a quest, a journey back into the past, an attempt to claim her heritage—through "an authentic old family recipe" (14). Such recipe would serve as a tangible trace, and tangible evidence, of her roots, a connection to a country she does not know, as well as a connection to ancestors she has never met:

> I decided to find an old recipe, […] a recipe I could *trace from my family, back into history*, further and further back, into *an ancient past*. […] [a] recipe that could take me to a landscape more beautiful than postindustrial New Jersey." (13, emphasis mine)

When she is told that one of her father's aunts was famous for a ravioli recipe she had inherited from her own Italian mother and that in Liguria, the family's ancestral region, the ravioli is "a crucial and beloved dish" (17), she thinks she has found the recipe that will connect her to her Italian heritage (11). She embarks on a quest to find this missing "piece of happy family history" (17), which will also help repair broken family connections, and provide her with stories, to replace the memories she never had.

The narrator opens the memoir with an object, which soon comes to embody the connection to the past. Although she has no memory of having eating Aunt Tessie's ravioli, she recalls an old and broken ravioli press that hung on the kitchen wall (16). Although the tool is dismissed as "a decoration, a relic," (*ibid*), it clearly serves a "prosthetic device," an "autotopographical object" (Gonzalez 140), a material trace that recalls the memory of her great-grandmother: "I understood vaguely that a great-grandmother and her daughters had come here from Italy, bringing the craft of pasta" (Schenone, *Lost Recipes* 16). As a relic, a remainder that is also a reminder, the tool functions as a "material site for memory" (Gonzalez 140). It is evidence of Adalgiza's very existence, and of her craft; it is also a trace of Laura's father's connection to his past, and, ultimately, of Laura's own connection to her Ligurian legacy: "My ancestors lived their lives in a certain way and they left behind these things for me—the ravioli press, the tools, the people who would keep the scraps that could be pieced together" (236). In the memoir, Laura's quest is shown to be (nearly) over when she eventually gets hold of her great-grandmother's checkered rolling pin, "a

huge thing, far bigger and thicker than [she has] ever seen, at least three feet long and perhaps three inches in diameter, dark wood, worn with age and experience" (235). Laura's own progress in making the ravioli dough is certified by her ability to use the ancient, heavy tool, the photograph of which is included in the book (235).

Generally speaking, the memoir reveals Schenone's fascination for handmade tools. When in Italy, Laura is shown familial handmade tools that are often a hundred years' old and have been passed down from mother to daughter. They are presented as material evidence of one's relationship to the past: "[m]ost Italians see food as part of their cultural heritage. Maria Carla and Guido showed me a ravioli cutter that was one hundred years old, passed down through the family" (39). The narrator believes that these prosthetic devices, which serve to cook traditional dishes and embody ancestral practices, are a means to go back to a pre-industrial past, to resist the dissolution of time. They are seen by her as a form of "temporal anchoring" (Huyssens, 7), which she longs for. One remark suggests that Schenone's obsession with memory "function[s] as a reaction formation against the accelerating technical processes that are transforming our *Lebenswelt* (lifeworld)" (Huyssens, 7): she explains she needs "an old recipe, a recipe that preceded the big machine of technological food" (Schenone, *Lost Recipes* 13).

The memoir includes photographs of Italian women cooking, in an attempt to capture and fix their gestures, to preserve them. The narrator feels the need to preserve a craft she feels, and fears, is disappearing—there are many references to the fact that fewer and fewer women still possess the art and craft of making pasta dough by hand. The Italian sections in the memoir are reminiscent of Carol Field's popular book on Italian foodways, *In Nonna's Kitchen,* complete with portraits of Italian grandmothers, and like Field's book, the memoir verges on "savage ethnography" (Sutton 147), if not imperialist nostalgia (*ibid*). Yet Schenone's memoir goes beyond nostalgia. She enlarges the scope of what constitutes history and knowledge, to include ordinary people's lives, and their craft. The inclusion of photographs of tools such

as checkered pins, Adalgiza's ravioli press, and *corzetti*[1] wooden stamps, that all serve to imprint patterns, serves two functions. They do reflect Schenone's attempt to "fix" elusive memories, through imprints, but they also create a pattern. Ultimately, a personal, physical map of memory and history can be traced. Places and, most importantly, the people who live there are conjured up. Collecting recipes, photographs, and recounting interviews with ordinary people who live (and do cooking) in the Ligurian hills, the memoir becomes an alternative archival locus, where the narratives of these ordinary people's lives could be stored.

Schenone's trips to Liguria enable her to better understand that dishes can be seen as memories of people's ways of life. The ravioli is a memory dish, one that is connected to local histories, both in Liguria, and in Hoboken, where many Italian immigrants settled. In Liguria she is told that originally, ravioli were poor people's food, filled with tough meat that had to be ground (132). The dish itself bears the memory of economic hardship, as peasants kept their farm animals as long as they could, and resilience. People used the wild herbs and edible weeds they found in the hills. Schenone defines the current filling as a memory: "the mixture of greens and herbs is called *preboggion*, or more accurately, the memory of *preboggion*, a mix of greens that grew wild up in the mountains and valleys" (58). Not only is the Genoese word untranslatable, it is also a trace, both of memory of the mountains, and a memory of how people lived there, and how they were used to make do with the little they could lay their hands on. Schenone meets local farmers, who have intimate knowledge of the region, and preserve "pockets of memory" (Sutton 166) of agricultural knowledge that have long existed on the margins of the world system.

Her trips will also change her negative views about the Hoboken ravioli. When she received Aunt Tessie's recipe, she dismissed it as "wrong," because its ingredients included frozen spinach and American cream cheese (Schenone 19). Although she is assured that this is indeed her great-grandmother's recipe, her assumption

1. *Corzetti*, the Ligurian specialty that Laura discovers during one of her trips to Liguria, is created by pressing a carved wooden stamp on dough, thus it bears a physical imprint of the region's traditions, as the region produced both the pasta and the wooden stamps.

that this is only a substitution recipe is one of the reasons why she decides to go to Liguria. Once there, her talks with Sergio Rossi, from the *Conservatorio delle Cucine Mediterranee,* enable her to understand that there is no such thing as an authentic regional recipe. As Rossi redefines authenticity in the context of a family, she understands that the ravioli recipe her cousin sent her is actually authentic. It is an authentic Schenone recipe that was passed down to Laura's cousin, and an authentic "Hoboken recipe." It is evidence of how Adalgiza adapted to life in America, using American ingredients to replace those she could not get. The piece of paper, the fac-simile of which is included in the memoir, turns into a treasure. At first a tangible trace of Laura's quest, it comes to embody a family tradition that can be handed down from women to women, as well as the (to be treasured) trace of an immigrant's life in America.

Laura's progress is measured by the ravioli she prepares with Adalgiza's rolling pin. Half of the ravioli she makes are Hoboken ravioli, the other half are made according to the recipe she was taught in Genoa. There is much debate among the guests as to which ravioli taste better. Yet both are authentic, but contain different realities, and conjure up different memories. Unsurprisingly, her father prefers the Hoboken ravioli (242)—in other words, eating his family's ravioli, her father is not simply tasting food, he is tasting memories.

The interviews Schenone conducts in Liguria usually confirm that people feel a deep attachment to their region, and culture. When Sergio Rossi explains, "the taste memories are in my blood and in my soul" (131), he does not refer to his own childhood memories, but to invisible memories and bonds that surface in his love of local food. This justifies Schenone's belief that although she was never fed Italian food as a child, she somehow inherited her love for Italian food. The memoir suggests a shift, from Italian roots to Ligurian roots. This is suggested when she wonders why she loves Liguria and the food from there:

> Is it possible certain foods can become programmed inside us? […] I mean, if a people lived intimately with a food for millennia, might they become biologically wired to love

> those foods, to feel connected to them? […] Is it possible that we have origins inside us? (212-213)

Relying on the metaphor of invisible wires or connections enables her to explain the sense of recognition she feels in the Ligurian hills, which she also reads as evidence of her roots and of invisible memories that exist inside her body.

This type of invisible memory is, perhaps, meant to compensate for another type of memory that she sorely misses, the type of memory that can be found "sedimented in the body" (Connerton 71). Most prominent at the beginning of the memoir are her struggles when she tries to make ravioli dough, due to the fact that her own body never received the bodily knowledge cooking requires: "the rhythm was never imprinted at an early age in my body" (*Lost Recipes*, 6). Schenone's memoir describes how she made several trips to Genoa, trying to meet women who would teach her the gestures. She can see that her teacher "worked entirely from memory" (39) and that "there was no hesitation in her gestures, no measuring tools. No written recipes. […] She had learned from her mother and her mother before her." (*ibid*). Schenone clearly believes that people normally inherit non-textual knowledge that "comes from one's body," in the words of the French sociologist Luce Giard. In "Doing Cooking," Giard explains that when she started to cook she realized that she possessed an "ancient knowledge" that "had crept into [her], slipping past [her] mind's surveillance, […] something that came from [her] body" (Giard 153). Since Schenone' body did not inherit these memories and knowledge, she finds it difficult to remember her friend's lessons and is forced to turn to cookbooks. Thus she defines her cooking project as a "translation" project (Schenone, *Lost Recipes* 6). In turn, the memoir itself reads as a translation project as Schenone attempts to translate the "poetry of gestures" (Giard 154) into words. Schenone's memoir is clearly concerned with how to reconcile embodied experience, non-textual memories, and textual knowledge.

As a food writer and scholar, it is no surprise that she turns to books to find some answers. She goes to the New York Public Library in order to "trace [the] family recipe from Adalgiza to antiquity" (Schenone, *Lost Recipes* 172). In the library, she

gets access to 17th century and 16th century Italian cookbooks, "trekking [her] way back through the centuries" and "[making] it all the way back to the fifteen century" (171). Schenone also points out that her travels back in time are also travels across the globe as her research on ravioli and pasta enables her to "chart the world trail of dumplings from east to west and around the world again" (175). She finds dumplings in Turkey (manti), in Central Asia—Uzbekistan, Azerbaijan—in Tibet, China, India, Korea, Japan, in Germany (klopse and maultaschen), Poland (pierogi), Ukraine (vushka), India (samosas), and Japan (gyosa). The quest for the lost ravioli recipes is not simply about finding her own roots, it turns into a project through which personal, familial and collective memories and history collide.

Personal, familial and historical memories also collide in Austin Clarke's gastrography, *Pig Tails 'n' Breadfruit,*[2] first published in 1999. Clarke, who moved to Canada in his twenties, was born in Barbados in 1934 and his gastrography opens with personal memories of his life on his native island in the late thirties and early forties. Rosalia Baena argues that each dish Clarke evokes is linked to the memory of a specific place, with each recipe "acting as a signpost on a map of memories" (Baena 110). I would argue, however, that they serve to introduce connections between personal memories and collective memory, and the island's history. Four childhood food memories serve as starting points. One of Clarke's "earliest memories of cooking food" (Clarke 6) is the memory of working in his mother's kitchen garden, a garden, which as I will show, evokes the back gardens planted and cared for by slaves. The next memory involves the smell of fried liver and of black pudding and souse (8), a dish that will later feature prominently in the memoir as "the ultimate in slave food" (162). Clarke's third memory is of eating burnt toast layered with "butter from Australia and jam from England"

2. Four editions were published, under various titles: *Pig Tails 'n Breadfruit: A Culinary Memoir* (New York, New Press, 1999); *Pigtails 'n' Breadfruit: The Rituals of Slave Food, A Barbadian Memoir* (Toronto, Random House, 1999); *Pig Tails 'n' Breadfruit - Anniversary Edition* (Ian Randle Publishers, 2014, and *Love and Sweet Food: A Culinary Memoir* (Toronto, Thomas Allen, 2004). The references in this essay are to the anniversary edition.

(10). It announces Clarke's geography lessons on the British Empire later in the chapter. His fourth memory involves looking at, and into, his mother's iron pot, and of getting burnt (10-11). He would be given bits of food by his mother, getting burnt in the process: "sometimes in a fit of compassion, a piece not quite cooked would be taken out and dropped into my hand. I would toss it from palm to palm in glee, and in pain, from the searing heat. (11). Clarke later evokes getting his mouth burnt, when he stole food from the pot (83-84). While taste memories matter, I find that touch, and body memories, are the stronger themes in the memoir. Body marks, including burns, and residues, from burnt food to trash used as fuel, seem to me to be Clarke's metaphors of choice for the traces of the past, and the connection between personal and historical memory. Clarke's childhood memories include pain and love as he points out that his mother's gift of burning food was "an act of love" (84). Clarke draws attention to the island's women's burns, which ~~she~~ M got while attempting to feed their families. When he describes the traditional method of cooking using a buck pot placed on three stones, he explains that the women would get burnt as they had to pull out pieces of wood from under the pot to regulate the heat: "all the time getting their two hands scorch and burn up" (86). The food itself often got burnt, leaving residues (16-17). The stove is evoked once again when Clarke asks his reader to picture a woman on her way home after a day's work on the plantation, stopping to pick up dried sugar cane joints, to use as fuel (79). In Clarke's vignette, the body of the woman whose hands get burnt when she cooks, also bears other marks: "Her arms and hands have suffered cuts from the sharp blades of the young sugar-cane plants she has been weeding, and her bare feet are sore and blistered from hitting the hard 'cane-breaks,' the narrow lanes of marl and stones she has to walk on to get from one field to another" (78-79). Although the scene takes place in the late 1930s, the word "plantation," the woman's scarred body, recalling the bodies of her ancestors who were whipped by the Plantation manager (101) previous evocations of slaves being whipped all emphasize the connection between life on the island before and after the abolition of slavery[3].

3. Barbados had been a plantocracy since 1641, and was still one long after the abolition of slavery. Clarke deliberately blurs boundaries between the period

From the start, the memoir foregrounds women's bodies, and much attention is devoted to the women's hands. Clarke describes his mother "feeling-up" her meats (217), and using her fingers to "mix the ingreasements, or what she calls the 'in-goodness'" (*ibid*). To "touch up" the food, to use one's fingers to rub in "the in-goodness" (217), means to "love up the food" (64). To touch up the food, it is implied, is to touch people through the food you prepare: "that way, the seasoning will work throughout the meat, like vibrations of love" (121). Clarke's words remind me of Gloria Wade-Gayles's evocation of her working class black community through her mother's gestures, as she points out that the women's "healings hands touch [people] through the food they prepare" (Wade-Gayles 99). Clarke points out that touching up the food has been inherited from the days of slavery: "One thing about cooking that comes from the slave days is that […] you have to touch up the food and love-up the food" (64). Clarke's mother's gesture is an ancestral gesture, it connects her to her ancestors. Clarke's mother's gesture, being a repetition of an ancestral gesture, is a memory of the days of slavery, but also of the love the women felt for their families.

Clarke's "vibrations of love" also remind me of Vertamae Grosvenor's claims in her 1970 cookbook[4] that she cooked "by vibration" and never measured anything (*Vibration Cooking* 3). Clarke points out that the cook's hand is the major implement for measurement (Clarke 2-3). He evokes methods of cooking that were "handed down" through time (4), relying on what Connerton calls "habit memory" (Connerton 70). In the introductory chapter, Clarke points to the paradox of writing a memoir

preceding the abolition of slavery and the colonial period succeeding the abolition of slavery. The point is to emphasize continuity, rather than just focus on slavery.

4. Vertamae Smart-Grosvenor's *Vibration Cooking or the Travel Notes of a Geechee Girl,* first published in 1970, is considered a major influence in African American cookbooks, for two reasons. Defining herself as a Geechee, Grosvenor claimed her African legacy. Grosvenor drew explicit connections between African American food, slavery and Africa: "some other things brought via the trade slave were sesame seeds, yams, cow peas (black-eyed peas), peanuts and so called-okra." (*Geechee Girl* 82). Secondly, the work is a mix, part cookbook, part memoir. Personal anecdotes are used to introduce the recipes.

with recipes since Barbadian cooks such as his mother would never use a cookbook:

> It is ironical to be suggesting a book about food cooked in Barbados, because in every self-respecting Barbadian household the woman (who does most of the cooking […]) would not be caught dead with a cookbook. To read a cookbook would suggest that she has not retained what her mother taught her. (3)

Hence Clarke's refusal to use the word "recipe," in tribute to "these formidable women" whose knowledge is based on "an oral tradition, on myth and on the inheritance of custom" (41). The gastrography is a translation project, and one of the questions it raises, is "how the culinary can resonate with writing and telling in terms of twists, cadence, phrasing or texture" (Kekeh-Dika 4). Clarke's choice of recurring terms (the same word can be repeated twice or three times), interjections, and Bajan words, help him create a narrative that, as pointed out by Andrée-Anne Kekeh-Dika, reflects "the imprints of the culinary on language" (Kekeh-Dika 4). In the end, Clarke performs a feat of magic of his own: he conveys a very strong connection, if not intimacy, between the world of print and the domain of cooking. This is best exemplified in the passage explaining how to make cou-cou: "when you can see the little pieces o' pig tails *punctuating* the breadfruit, then you know she done. You just made breadfruit cou-cou!" (Clarke 123-124, my emphasis). As pointed out by Andrée-Anne Kekeh-Dika, "the intimacy between cooking and the writer's labour is ingrained in Clarke's language–the literary drips into and melts with the ways of the kitchen" (Kekeh-Dika 3). I agree with Kekeh-Dika's conclusion that in this way Clarke encourages his readers to think about creation in process and to reconsider the contact zones between craft, writing, local knowledge and established writings" (4-5), but I also believe that when Clarke creates a sense of intimacy between food and language, he does so in order to recall the island's past, and the lives of the people who have been living there. In the chapter entitled "Privilege," which refers to a meal from rural areas blending rice, okras, pig tail and salt beef, Clarke suddenly switches to Bajan: "the way of cooking it has to be narrated in the native language of the

people who invented it: the Bajan language" (60). As a shortened and corrupted version of "Barbadian," the name the Portuguese explorers gave the island, the word "bajan" can be seen as a mark of cultural resistance through transformation. Clarke highlights culinary and linguistic inventions. The dish called "bun-bun" is a case in point. Clarke explains that cooking on the three-stone stove and regulating the heat under the buck pot often resulted in the food being burnt. Since nothing could be discarded, and everything could and would be used, the burnt food became a delicacy: "the bun-bun is the layer of food stuck to the bottom of the pot. It contains, in coagulated form […] all the good things" (17). Explaining the name of this dish, Clarke creates a metonymical connection between food, bodies, language, and history. "The term 'bun-bun' comes from 'burnt,' without the letter 'r' and the letter 't,' which at the end of a word is usually not pronounced. It is then hyphenated to give it significance, becoming 'bu'n-bu'n'" (17). The word "bun-bun" is shown to be a recalcitrant residue, just like the dish. Both result from invention and transformation. Barbadian dishes are residual traces, reminders of the island's past, and of its inhabitants' resilience and ingenuity.

The chapter on bakes provides an interesting example of a lingering trace bespeaking of both shame and ingenuity. Clarke explains that flour was imported from Canada, and came in big cotton bags with the name of the mill printed in blue lettering. Since "during the days of slavery and colonization, nothing was thrown away" (46), the women washed and bleached the bags and turned them into clothes. Clarke asks his reader to picture young men playing cricket in their sparkling white shirts, only to draw attention to a small speck of blue, "as large as a comma or a period" (47). The trace of the lettering, which Clarke describes as "a lingering fraction, perhaps part of the letter *C* in the word *Canada*" (47), is seen as a mark of shame betraying the boy's poverty: it "stamp[ed]" the young man "with the poorness of his social origin" (47-48). However, that trace was also evidence of how Barbadian women were able to transform discards into something useful, and doing so, to assimilate imported material. Clarke turns a mark of shame into evidence of creativity and resilience.

The anecdote is also a reminder of the positions of Canada and Barbados within the context of the British Empire's trade routes. Clarke repeatedly draws attention to travels and trade routes, "within the island/s and to and from the island/s" (Kekeh-Dika 7). Early in the memoir, he evokes the "fascinating kind of geography and sociology" he learnt as a child: "Rancid butter came from Australia. Thin, hard, bony smelly codfish, from Newfoundland. Biscuits and marmalades and toffees from England […] apples […] from Canada" (Clarke, 15). In the chapter devoted to "privilege," which is cooked with white rice, Clarke notes that rice had to be imported from Trinidad or Demerara.[5] The chapter entitled "Smoked Ham Hocks with Pig Tail and Rice" evokes unequal commercial exchanges between his two homes, Barbados and Canada, via a vignette. He asks his reader to picture a woman going home after her day's work on the plantation, stopping at a shop. Personifying the exchange, evoking one Barbadian sugar cane plantation worker, Clarke highlights hidden realities:

> In exchange for the rum made from sugar cane and from her labour in the sugar-cane fields, people in Canada send back this thin, white-scabbed, scabrous salt fish to Barbados. Canada also sends us Palmolive soap for washing her tired limbs, and apples—but she is too poor to purchase one of these nice English apples. (80)

The memoir also addresses the history of transatlantic crossings as it interweaves personal, collective and historical memory through dishes consumed by present-day Barbadians. In the chapter devoted to privilege, Clarke explains that Barbadian food is "slave food" (59, 60). I find that in Clarke's memoir, "slave food" has five different meanings. Slave food refers to the food slaves needed, which was "always heavy" because "it was intended for men and women who used to toil in the sugar cane fields sixteen hours a day" (89). One instance is the notorious breadfruit—the plant Joseph Banks decided to send to the West Indies to feed the slaves and that was brought to St Vincent and Jamaica in 1791 on board William Bligh's ship—to which Clarke devotes a chapter.

5. Now part of Guyana, this former Dutch colony, was ceded to Britain in 1815 and was part of British Guiana from 1831 to 1966.

However, contrary to the Antiguan-born American writer Jamaica Kincaid who launches an attack on the breadfruit and its shameful history in *My Garden (Book):* (Kincaid 133-135), Clarke describes the breadfruit as "a good thing": "from a bad, disreputable journey, a segment of the Middle Passage, a good thing spring up: a green and large harvest of breadfruits" (115). Clarke's paradoxical assertion is yet another example of his intent to bring together a shameful episode of history and the inhabitants' resilience. Not only did they turn the breadfruit into a dish, they also turned it into a saying, "a breadfruit head" (115).

Clarke himself defines slave food as based on left-overs: "Barbadians have always known that the food we eat is slave food, based on leavings, or left-overs, the remnants of the better cuts of meat eaten by the Plantation owners" (60). Thus Barbadians "invented" (27) black pudding and souse, the ultimate slave food, made from the entrails of a pig (pudding) and from parts such as trotters, ears, or snout (souse). The dish is a trace of the days of slavery and of the islanders' ability to make do with little. This shows that slave food is the food the people invented and transmitted. Explaining that black pudding and souse, "the food of the gods and of the slaves in Barbados," is "the sweetest thing ~~has been~~ 'handed down by our ancestors, African slaves, to each and everyone of us present day Wessindians'" (162), Clarke shows this dish is a "memory dish" (Carney and Rosomoff 177)—a dish that people in the Caribbean still cook today but is a trace of their history.

Slave food is also the food that the slaves were able to cook thanks to the crops ~~they could grow for themselves~~. Clarke explains that "dryfood"—sweet potatoes, yams, eddoes, yellow pumpkin, breadfruit, christophenes, squash and cassava—"originated with the slaves" (Clarke 68). Clarke's remark recalls the fact that initially slaves ~~grew~~ their own food on subsistence plots ~~and in their back yards,~~ as Carney and Rosomoff"s research[6] indicates (Carney and Rosomoff 125). Slaves also grew crops for their own consumption

6. Their research draws on seventeenth and eighteenth century accounts by slave ship owners, planters, and explorers, listing or mentioning the crops they carried, planted, or observed.

in their backyards, by their own initiative, "in the interstices of the plantation economy" (Carney and Rosomoff 177). Thus when Clark asks his readers to picture a woman slave growing an okra tree in her backyard (Clarke 102), he evokes "a shadow world of cultivation" (Carney and Rosomoff 125) that existed during slavery when provision grounds and back gardens "became the botanical gardens of the Atlantic world's dispossessed" (*ibid* 135). In the introductory chapter, Clarke evokes his mother's back garden, which he calls "the ground" (23), a word that recalls and preserves the tradition of the "plantation ground." The list of the crops Clarke's mother planted in her backyard—eddoes, yams, sweet potatoes, mango trees, avocado trees, pigeon-pea trees, and corn (23)—indicates it was a replica of a slave's back garden or a provision ground, as shown by Carney and Rosomoff's research (123-138).

Slave food is also the food slaves cooked with the crops they brought with them from Africa on board the slave ships. In the "gardens of the dispossessed," plantains, taro, yam, pigeon pea, pearl millet, guinea corn, rice and okra—crops that had come from Africa (Carney and Rosomoff, 123, 125, 134, 135)[7]—were planted. As the Clarkes' back garden shows, many crops directly recall the African heritage, and through them, so do Barbadian dishes made with greens and dryfood such as pigeons peas, plantains, taro, okra, eddoes, or yams. Slave food recalls dishes that had been cooked in Africa. The dish Clarke describes, cou-cou and okra, is a very good example of "memory dishes that attest to the African presence in the Americas" (Carney and Rosomoff 177). Clarke explains that Barbadian slaves invented cou-cou, although some people "could probably trace the origin of cou-cou back to fou-fou or some such African dish" (Clarke 100). In spite of this dismissal, Clarke does point to the African origin of cou-cou, as the dish is indeed similar to the West African dish called fou-fou, made in Ghana, Nigeria, and Cameroon, either from cassava or

7. Although some of these crops originated from Asia—taro, bananas or rice for instance—they had long been cultivated in Western Africa when the slave trade started and they were brought to the West Indies. Cassava, originally from South America, travelled back to the Americas. Both rice and corn had become staple crops in Western Africa by the seventeenth century.

corn, which had been introduced there in the 16th century. In other words, cou-cou with okra is both a Bajan invention, and a trace of an African heritage—all the more so as the word "okra" (Akan and Igbo) survived the transatlantic crossing. The names of some of these crops are in themselves traces of their African origin. Planters adopted the African names of plants such as "okra" or "eddo" (Fante), which have survived in Barbados (Carney and Rosomoff 140). The word "yam" is a trace of the word "nname," which a Portuguese planter adapted from the African name of the plant as used by his slaves (ibid, 139). The word retains a memory of its African origin, the Mandinka word "nyambi."

Clarke's anecdote about cou-cou reveals that slaves both introduced food from Africa and relied on their own know-how and traditions, which were also handed down. Therefore, slave food is also the food that the slaves could cook, thanks to their knowledge of agriculture—as Carney and Rosomoff's research shows,[8] slaves on sugar islands were indeed proficient in agriculture—and cooking practices. The gesture Clarke describes, a woman pounding corn, is clearly inherited from the ways women had pounded corn into a pulp in Africa. Carney and Rosomoff argue that "Africans and their descendants thus profoundly shaped the culinary traditions of slave societies, combining in new ways the foods of three continents in their struggles to secure daily sustenance" (138).

The food consumed in Barbados is therefore the trace of a complex legacy, and history. Clarke's memoir is a counter narrative, drawing attention to what was still largely undervalued and unacknowledged until the 1970s. Clarke himself points out that his family and community lived "in a kind of African compound, although none of [them] knew that term or understood that [their] arrangement of life had that African reference" (9). Clarke's admission recalls similar remarks by African-American cooks such as Vertamae Grosvenor. In her 1996 cookbook, Grosvenor pointed out that she did not know that there were cultural reasons why her family were such big rice eaters, nor that there were "African

8. Their research largely draws on seventeenth and eighteenth century accounts by slave ship owners, planters, and explorers listing or mentioning the crops they carried, planted, or observed.

retentions" in the way her grandmother made okra soup (*Americas' Family Kitchen* 16). By claiming her Geechee heritage,[9] Grosvenor praised a specific culture through specific foodways, and revalued her ancestors' skills and knowledge, which is also Clarke's intent.

As Kekeh-Dika remarks, Clarke's "often humorous introspection into local food usage shows his desire to probe the culinary dimension in order to bring unsuspected views on history, literature and science (botany) to the fore" (8). In this respect, Clarke's project is not that different from Jamaica Kincaid's way of addressing the history of transatlantic crossings through the craft of gardening, and the evocation of plant and crop routes in *My Garden (Book):*. Clarke's memoir draws connections between Caribbean islands, comparing Jamaican, Barbadian or Trinidadian dishes and foodways. Clarke compares Bajan black pudding and souse to its variants in Guyana, Trinidad, and Jamaica or recipes, highlighting differences, only to conclude on a common legacy: it has been "handed down by our ancestors, African slaves, to each and everyone of us present-day Wessindians" (Clarke 162). Through humor, Clarke evokes slavery, forced immigration, and indentured labor as he evokes dishes. For instance the chapter on pelau includes remarks about Trinidad's population, which is "made up of people with many different cultural backgrounds —Africans, Indians, Chinese people from Hong Kong and Jamaica, Pottogee people from Portugal and Guyana, and others thrown in and mix up" (192). Clarke's style creates a connection between the "mix up" in the population and the dish itself: "and out all these various tribes comes the dish, pelau" *(ibid*). Suggesting that pelau is "a black and Indian creation" (*ibid*), Clarke recalls the situation in Trinidad, when Indian indentured labor came to supply labor shortages, following the abolition of slavery, and worked alongside former slaves. Thus Pelau is not only an obvious symbol of Trinidad's "mix up," it is also a memory dish that recalls the

9. Grosvenor claimed her Geechee identity in her 1970 cookbook, *Vibration cooking or the Travel Notes of a Geechee Girl*, so doing she claimed her African legacy—Geechees (or Gullahs) in South Carolina descend from African slaves from rice-growing societies in the Senegal-Gambia region. Grosvenor was at the forefront of a broader movement to revalue Black Americans' African heritage, claiming their African legacy.

African and the Indian and Chinese presences on the American continent, and the history of Indian and Chinese indentured immigration. Clarke uses his own memories of food to encourage his readers to trace invisible or forgotten routes, and look at larger historical truths.

Although both Schenone's and Clarke's memoir are concerned with the interrelationships between memory, history and food, there are differences in their approaches, intents, and scopes. To start with, the authors write from very different positions. As a third generation Italian-American who has lost any connection to her Italian heritage/bloodline, and does not have any personal memories to start with, Laura Schenone writes a memoir that is framed as a journey to claim these roots and collect memories. One of the major themes in the memoir is the absence of inherited body memory, which would have connected her to her ancestors, through ancestral know-how, in a very direct way. The memoir also originates from this lack, which in turns informs both the opposition between written texts and gestures and Schenone's need to capture and fix gestures, via photographs and videos. The memoir tellingly opens with tangible traces of her legacy such as a recipe card and a tool. Laura Schenone's fascination with hand-made tools, I have argued, reveals her fears that some traditions and know-how are disappearing. By contrast, as a first generation immigrant, Clarke claims he has taken with him, in his heart, blood and mind, the memories of his mother, aunts, cousins and grandmothers (Clarke 40-41) as well as the island's foodways and recipes. The memoir suggests that he does not need any tangible evidence such as books or tools. Rather, Clarke's metaphors, body marks recalling physical sensation and touch memories, and residues, allow him to assert a connection to his island's past. Clarke's concern is that the island's past, and in particular the legacy of slavery, should be valued and understood. Thus he can be quite critical of those who have recently started cooking and serving traditional dishes, to *impress* others that they remember their cultural roots (66, my emphasis). Clarke chooses humor to give full meaning to memory dishes that recall both the island's painful past and their inhabitants' resilience and ingenuity as they

performed culinary miracles to feed their families. Slave food, Clarke implies, is also the food slave cooked with love.

We can, however, read beyond these differences. Both Clarke and Schenone draw attention to bodies, in particular women's bodies, and gestures. Both display an interest in alternative forms of memories and both evidence the bodily grounding of memory. Both Schenone and Clarke pay tribute to ordinary women's skills and gestures, and devalued knowledge. So doing, they challenge the scope of what constitutes knowledge, and history, to include these people's lives, stories, and non-textual knowledge. As argued by Parama Roy, "one can call the writing in and of the cookbook autoethnography in a minor mode" as it makes no overt claims to ethnographic comprehensiveness, being focused on the details of everyday life (Roy 169). Both writers turn the culinary memoir into an alternative site/locus of memory by offering alternatives to official representations of the past. In both, a family's dish is also served as a region's or nation' dish that is ultimately a "memory dish" evoking a family's journey, a nation's history, and, in Clarke's case, transatlantic crossings. Although Schenone's take on history is much smaller in scope than Clarke's, when she unearths the history of a small dish, she shows that it is evidence of people's lives, and journeys. The ravioli's ingredients retain a memory of a region's history, and, like Clarke's Barbadian memory dishes, the dish recalls how people made do with little. While resilience is merely suggested in Schenone, it is the focus of Clarke's memoir. Barbadian foodways began as "cuisines of survival" (Carney and Rosomoff 177) and Barbadian memory dishes also recall the island's shameful past, shameful trade routes, disreputable and tragic crossatlantic journeys. Yet what Clarke intends to show is that they also attest to a forgotten African legacy, both in terms of crops and craft. They also evidence the ways the island's women found the means to survive and feed their families. Clarke does not attempt to set the record straight regarding the history of Barbados. Or rather, drawing attention to the fact that Barbadian food is slave food, Clarke recalls the island's past, but he also highlights the role played by women, which challenges usual representations of slavery. His intent is to show that his female ancestors did not only live boring lives of drudgery, they found

the means to survive, fed and loved their families. Focusing on ordinary women's gestures and the ordinary practice of cooking, both Schenone's and Clarke's memoirs are meant to write a permanent record about these women.

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