Adele Wessell and Andrew Jones

Faith-based Homespace: decoding good taste in a monastery

Food is a crucial ingredient in defining historical identity. It plays a distinctive role in everyday life and is inextricably linked to the economic, social and political circuits of culture. Food and its traditions can be examined as historical texts in order to represent or communicate the narratives that communities tell about themselves. As such, food can be seen as a receptacle of cultural memory, a sign system capable of revealing official and hidden transcripts alike. Food comforts as well as nourishes, it provides an embodied experience of the past as well as a physical one. It 'is symbolically associated with the most deeply felt human experiences, and thus expresses things that are sometimes difficult to articulate in everyday language' *(*Farb & Armelagos, 1982, p. 9*)*.

Impressions of home and faith, concepts that are both everyday and profound, loom large in this paper. Using the example of home-building practices in an Australian monastery, we hope to illustrate the way food can operate as a system of communication, and can be used to understand different theories and approaches to communication. This work is a joint effort; Andrew has an interest in religion and colonialism and teaches media studies, while Adele has been working in food history. Our interests collided fruitfully in New Norcia, a small monastic town outside Perth in Western Australia. By looking at the history of this place where the monastery was founded in 1846, and where the first substantial introduction of Mediterranean food was made, we will discuss national cuisine as a discursive construction that can operate to conceal the histories of colonialism and its legacies.

Home is a repository of memory, inscribed with the associations between people, sites and time. The colonial project was carried out, however, by people who were displaced from these very associations which, might have articulated such deep roots to them. In the Australian context, acts of remembering took on a performative meaning within a charged field of contested moral and political claims to home. Our concern is with home-building practices centred on the production and consumption of food, the encoding and decoding of food, in terms of how Mediterranean meals were maintained and transformed in colonial Australia in the domestic space of a monastery. Following Stuart Hall, our emphasis is on the interpretation of the monastic code as a process of reproduction expressed through the consumption of food.

Stuart Hall's essay 'Encoding Decoding' (1980) was influential in opening the field of communications to new theoretical directions. Underscoring the active role of decoding in the process of cultural signification, Hall's work is pivotal in the development of British cultural studies. Hall's model represented a turn towards textual analysis as part of a three-pronged investigation of meaning construction. Focussing on communications media, Hall insisted that media institutions and their practices needed to be considered at the level of production, a close analysis should be applied to the text, and a variety of methods utilised for observing and recording the audience's interpretations and uses of those same texts. Hall acknowledged that texts were encoded to promote preferred readings in line with institutions and dominant ideologies. However, meaning is not fixed here in the text but forged at the moment of reception. Audiences were therefore appreciated as active, interpretive communities who would decode, negotiate and sometimes utterly reject a text's dominant meaning (Hall, 1980, p. 136). This turn towards the text and the creative activity of interpretation was accompanied by an insistence on contextualisation. Hall was interested in how the various stages of meaning construction interacted, and under what circumstances and cultural frameworks positions were struggled for.

Hall referred to several 'linked but distinctive moments – production, circulation, distribution/consumption, reproduction' (1980, p. 128) as part of the 'circuit of communication', which could be applied in food studies. The production and consumption of food are socially contingent practices that may be directly aligned in relation to each other, but that is not the exclusive vehicle of meaning. Our intention is to explore the Rule of St Benedict and its application in Australia, far removed from the Italy of the 6th century where it was first conceptualised and practiced. The monastic narratives of New Norcia demonstrate that interpretation and meaning are by no means fixed; rather, they are forged from the encounter between people and food, community and their environments, and cooks and eaters. All of these relations articulate constant and critical issues in everyday life that go well beyond our nutritional needs.

While tastes are subjective, they are also relative to culture, individual, yet shared. Food can be understood as encoded, organised into systems that provide the rules, explicit or implicit, and agreed upon by members of a culture or society. Foods carry meanings that can be read by people who understand the codes and it is used to disseminate those codes. While food is encoded with different layers or levels of meaning, it can also be read for different levels of meaning. The meaning depends on the context as well as the audience.

In colonial migration people took their food preferences with them when they left home, but maintaining their cooking and eating habits expressed cultural boundaries as well as individual subjectivities, and the production and consumption of food was a home-building practice. Historical factors are critical to food preferences and these can change over time, according to the way existing conditions converge with tradition to shape how foods are used. The availability of traditional foodstuffs, differences in the level of practical cooking knowledge, forms of cultural contact all have an important role to play in the development of what Pasi Falk calls a tastescape (1994, p. 68). Our use of tastescape links time and space; the actual foodstuffs that are consumed and the experiences, imaginings and beliefs we bring to the table. The early colonists were faced with a landscape and social setting devoid of familiar networks of meaning. Unhinged from the architecture of life at home; the streetscapes in which the family home is located, social organisation of village/town life, habits of behaviour that are located over time and space in larger places called “home”:

familiar food may have been one of the few comforts colonists could look forward to which communicated a sense of home. In the absence of these material, physical effects and locations of home, the kitchen works metonymically as the "mother country", and represents a retreat to the interior effects of home. Kitchen space is free of some of the striking and obvious differences that the colonial subject encounters outside: landscape, social organisation. Food could, therefore, provide a practice by which members of the empire could make themselves feel "at home".

Consuming food is an embodied, concrete, practical experience of the past. A dish invokes its own history, bringing it into the present moment. It resonates with the history of its creator and how it is ingested is dependent on and enhances the diner's sense of his or her past. In this way food traverses the boundaries between producer and consumer, encoding and decoding, between present and past, and in these interstitial spaces establishes new relations of meaning between the subject and cultural, social locations. Moreover, the rituals which meals perform invoke the past, bringing it into the present moment. Far from being bound by geography and material resources, culinary cultures can inhabit multiple times and places that mutually constitute each other and food can play a mediating role in the translation from one spatio-temporality to another (Harvey, 1996, p. 233). Colonial tastescapes were constructed in Europe *and* Australia through the consumption of food; they were both socially and personally subjective and created new subjectivities.

The consumption of food in the colonies can be considered as a home-building practice centred on the maintenance and transformation of meals. Colonists were displaced from the sites where they could articulate deep roots. As Penelope Lively writes,

> Displaced persons are displaced, not just in space but in time; they have been cut off from their own pasts ... If you cannot revisit your own origins – reach out and touch them from time to time – you are forever in some crucial sense untethered (as cited in Lowenthal, 1998, p. 9).

This invokes the importance of material sites of memory, and food provided a tangible link with the past. In simultaneously historicising the everyday and evoking the past, the preparation and consumption of food plays an essential role in defining historical identity and constructing a sense of the past.

The food consumed by colonists in Australia was not simply the residue of old food habits, or traces of colonial history, but a device to reaffirm cultural and historical bonds and sustain a shared sense of identity. Donna R Garbaccia describes the link between food and identity:

> It is easiest to see how food choices reflect the eaters identity … humans cling tenaciously to familiar foods because they become associated with nearly every dimension of human social and cultural life … food thus entwines intimately with much that makes a culture unique, binding taste and satiety to group loyalties. Eating habits both symbolize and mark the boundaries of cultures (1998, p. 8).

Food preferences then are not incidental to the formation of identity, merely reflecting the location of a cultural effect. Eating is the primary way in which we initiate and maintain human relationships. It therefore becomes a means of creating and embracing social memories as well as private experiences, since we eat communally as well as alone. The world is not exclusively experienced by any individual; rather it is a shared world. In Dussel's words, 'the world of *nosotros*, our world, (of our culture, of our region, our house, our life) is the place of shared existence' (1969, p. 105).

Sacramental foods are central to many religions, and the Catholicism practiced at New Norcia is no exception. Here such holy edibles extend food's nourishing function to the soul. Eating exposes the fallacy of self-sufficiency or autonomy by traversing the boundary lines between ourselves and the world. Indeed, the root of the word incorporation is in the body; it is a process concerned with embodiment and the bringing of bodies together (Kilgour, 1990, p. 9, 5-6). In the Catholic faith the mystery of the Eucharist plays out this identity complex in a fascinating way. At the moment of transubstantiation nutritional substances (the *sacramental* foods) are transformed into the blood and body of Christ, they do not change in essence; rather their consumption is intended to change those who partake of it. As Camporesi (1989) contends, God gives himself

> to us as food. Since nothing merges with us more intimately than food which, by means of natural heat, transforms itself into our own substance, and becomes one with us… "He who eats of my flesh and drinks of my blood shall remain in me and I in him [*Qui manducat meam carnem et bibit meum sanguinem, in me manet, et ego in eo*]." But there is a difference between other food and this one: whereas the former transforms itself into us and becomes our own substance, the latter transforms us into itself (Diotallevi, as cited in Camporesi, 1989, p. 227).

Communion is an act of ritual incorporation where the boundary between inside and outside, eater and eaten is problematicised by the consumption of the Host (the *holy morsel* is so aptly named).

There are only a handful of monasteries in Australia and New Norcia, located in Badimaya Country, 120km from Perth, is the only monastic town. New Norcia is a Benedictine community and the cornerstone of its monastic life are prayer, contemplation, and labour; all underpinned by the ideals and practices of its 6th century patron, St Benedict. Monasticism preceded Benedict of Nursia by some centuries, but he is widely considered the father of Western monasticism. His enduring influence on religious community life was his Rule, which he penned as a guide to the daily practicalities of life in a monastery. St. Benedict developed a guide for those wanting to live a communal life of disciplined devotion to God. A departure from the extreme austerities that had evolved in monastic traditions, St. Benedict's Rule is characterised by its elasticity, moderation and practical nature. Such a blueprint gave to religious life the malleability necessary to adapt to different locales and circumstances. St. Benedict developed his Rule from his own experiences. It is by no means merely a timetable for daily liturgical practice; rather it covers a range of daily concerns including the dispensation of food and drink and an appreciation for the importance of hospitality.

The Prologue and seventy-three chapters of St. Benedict's Rule provide detailed instruction on the practices of everyday monastic life and conduct. This coda addresses all aspects of monastic life, but many chapters specifically relate to food, suggesting its significance in faith, home building and the stability of a community. The Rule of St. Benedict demonstrates literally in words the complex ways in which meals can be read as a text that signifies a host of intersecting activities, values and traditions. In its production, preparation and modes of consumption, food articulates aspects of our needs and desires. Food can be a vehicle for an intimate expression of ourselves; our ideals, and who and how we love. Food is a constant reminder that we are social beings. The notion of service to one's community is a thread through St. Benedict's Rule, this is clearly stated in Chapter 35 where it is decreed that all monks engage in kitchen duties, ' Let the brethren serve one another, and let no one be excused from the kitchen service except by reason of sickness or occupation in some important work. For this service brings increase of reward and of charity' (as cited in *Holy Rule of St. Benedict*, n.d.).

Compassion is at the heart of Chapters 36 and 37, which puts a caveat on dietary restrictions for the aged and infirm:

> Let their weakness be always taken into account, and let them by no means be held to the rigor of the Rule with regard to food. On the contrary, let a kind consideration be shown to them, and let them eat before the regular hours (as cited in *Holy Rule of St. Benedict*, n.d.).

The dynamics of a mealtime reading are discussed in Chapter 38. Readers are permitted a light repast to sustain them through their performance, and they take their seat again at the table once their chosen passage is complete. Restricting the spoken word at the dining table facilitates listening, though gesturing for necessities is permitted. Both the quality and quantity of food is prescribed in Chapters 39 and 40:

> Let two kinds of cooked food, therefore, be sufficient for all the brethren. And if there be fruit or fresh vegetables, a third may be added. Let a pound of bread be sufficient for the day, whether there be only one meal or both dinner and supper. If they are to eat supper, let a third part of the pound be reserved by the Cellarer and be given at supper. If, however, the work hath been especially hard, it is left to the discretion and power of the Abbot to add something, if he think fit, barring above all things every excess, that a monk be not overtaken by indigestion. For nothing is so contrary to Christians as excess, as our Lord saith: "See that your hearts be not overcharged with surfeiting" (Lk 21:34). Let the same quantity of food, however, not be served out to young children but less than to older ones, observing measure in all things. But let all except the very weak and the sick abstain altogether from eating the flesh of four-footed animals (as cited in *Holy Rule of St. Benedict*, n.d.).

Mealtimes are set down in Chapter 41. 'And let no one presume to take food or drink before or after the appointed time.' Hospitality towards guests is outlined in Chapter 53:

> Let all guests who arrive be received like Christ, for He is going to say, "I came as a guest, and you received Me" (Matt. 25:35). And to all let due honor be shown, especially to the domestics of the faith and to pilgrims (as cited in *Holy Rule of St. Benedict*, n.d.).

For those that stray from the Benedictine communal path, punishments are issued and one of these is to be deprived the companionship of one's brethren at mealtimes, 'Let him get his food alone in such quantity and at such a time as the Abbot shall deem fit; and let him not be blessed by anyone passing by, nor the food that is given him' (as cited in *Holy Rule of St. Benedict*, n.d.).

St. Benedict fashioned his Holy Rule so that it could be applied beyond the monastery walls in the homes of religiously inclined lay folk. The Rule thus communicates a pathway to grace embedded in everyday practices, which reiterates the intimate and fundamental relationship between food and home. In contemporary terms, a "proper meal" is generally defined by a meal eaten with family and its preparation contributes to the production of both “family” and “home” (Bell & Valentine, 1997, p. 60). The titles used in monasteries give the space emotional legitimacy as home; a group of brothers are brethren. Indeed, the title “Dom” given to monks, especially Benedictines, links God, Domino with domestic and domicile. The use of such titles has the power to create a sense of family and a discursive right to home; a place to live and work. The concept of home has often conjured up an image of a settled community, a sense of stability, and familiarity. In settler societies, such as Australia, the colonisers did not go home, problematicising and fracturing the relationship between home and colony.

Travel, colonialism and migration have provided the conditions for an exchange of foods but colonising Australia was never intended as a gastronomic adventure. From the outset, native foods were largely overlooked or translated as inedible. In his journal James Cook wrote, ‘ The Land naturally produces hardly anything fit for Man to eat, and the Natives know nothing of Cultivation’ (Cook, 1893). A similar indifference infuses Dampier’s observations; ‘There is neither herb, root, pulse, nor any sort of grain for them to eat that we saw, nor any sort of bird or beast that they can catch, having no instruments’ (Dampier, 1967, p. 8). A strong correspondence then is exposed between cultural representations and the sensual experience of foods. Kalcik suggests a formula ‘not-so-strange food equals not-so-strange people’ (cited in Sutton, 2001, p. 6). What is edible is determined by the symbolic function of different foodstuffs; how the food is positioned within broader cultural differentiations. As Lévi Strauss put it, ‘food has to be good to think as well as to eat’ (1963, p.128).

The Benedictine monks Rosendo Salvado and Joseph Serra led the initial missionary party to the area they called New Norcia, named in deference after the Italian birthplace of their patron. The act of naming and possessing a land already occupied, ignoring, subverting, or appropriating Indigenous names and histories of the land is a primary colonising process. Because language is productive, rather than merely representational, it also serves to create histories and identities. As Tony Birch argues, ‘To name spaces is to “name histories” and also to create them’ (1996, p. 177). In the act of naming the new settlement after the birthplace of their patron in Italy the two monks produced and defined a sense of place that spoke to their own history. Dom Salvado and Dom Serra had met at the monastery of St Martin in Santiago de Compostella, which they fled together in the wake of the Spanish anti-clerical revolution of 1835. In Italy the two monks found themselves in the midst of a monastic revival led by Benedictine Pope Gregory XVI. Pope Gregory was keen to revitalise the foreign missionary work of previous centuries. At a farewell audience in June 1845 the Pope appealed:

> Remember, my sons, that you belong to the great family of our glorious patriarch, St. Benedict, your father and mine. You are about to enter on the path trodden by the illustrious apostles, who were our brethren. They converted a great part of the peoples of Europe to the Christian faith and procured for them the blessings of civilisation, whilst by their preaching and labours savage peoples were transformed into cultured nations. Go then and do honour to the habit you wear and may heaven bless your zeal and render your apostolate fruitful (as cited in Lennon, 1991).

Initial contact with the Nyungar Aborigines in the New Norcia district had the fundamental motivations of survival and the building of a rapport with the local inhabitants. Salvado's party made first contact with the Aborigines of the district at the beginning of March 1846. Tensions were alleyed when the missionaries made offerings of sugar, tea and bread; a rather motley cross continental repast facilitated by the intersections of colonial encounters from elsewhere. These foodstuffs, nevertheless, conveyed a message of companionship and a strategy of survival. Likewise, Dom Salvado's desire to learn the local Aboriginal languages demonstrated respect for the Spaniards hosts, and simultaneously a medium to acquire vital information. After a couple of months the Benedictine's food supplies reached exhaustion, Aboriginal knowledge of food sources became essential. Returning to Perth and travelling with a Badimaya guide who introduced him to the bush foods necessary to survive the trip, Salvado wrote of the unfamiliar fare: 'Kangaroo or possum sometimes made up our meal, but for supper I used to prefer roasted lizard, which under the circumstances, was a delicacy' (as cited in Lennon, 1991). It is important to note that it has only been recently that kangaroo meat has been widely available for purchase in Australia, despite its abundance and the environmental costs of livestock production.

Native produce was, by necessity, an important part of the diet for many colonialists during the 19th century, nevertheless few differences in food preparation show up in early Australian recipes; instead new ingredients were adapted to fit in with familiar culinary expectations in a new setting. Cookbooks functioned to normalise Anglocentric discourses and to marginalise the exploration of ethnic identity in many historical narratives. In the first book of recipes published in Australia, *The English and Australian Cookery Book*, which appeared in 1864, Edward Abbot evoked 'the roast beef of old England, oh!' (1864). The use of such a potent symbol of English identity in the 19th century may seem likely, and colonists (who could afford them) continued to rely on English cook books for many years after Abbot's publication. Abbot often drew on native and exotic ingredients to produce very familiar dishes using English methods and principles, such as kangaroo stuffed with beef suet, bread crumbs, parsley, shallots, marjoram, thyme, nutmeg, pepper, salt, cayenne and egg. It was not until the 1890s that a large body of locally written books became available but by this time food supply was widely held to be abundant; the cultivation of exotic foods in Australia, like wheat, sheep and cattle, had established a familiar and long-term food supply for English colonists. *Mrs Beeton's Cookery Book and Household Guide*, published in 1892, gave a selection of "Australian" recipes for the English: Kangaroo Tail Soup (ox tail soup), Roast Wallaby, compared to hare, Parrot Pie ('not unlike one made of pigeons') (Beeton, 1892). Recipes included in the new edition would land a modern cook in jail: Bandicoot and Tomatoes, Black Swan, roasted or boiled and Jugged Wallaby (Beeton, 1909). Mediterranean foods and ingredients, with few exceptions, do not make it into Australian cookbooks until many years later.

The reality of postcolonial experiences throughout the world is a history of migrations, displacements, and exile that tells different stories, all of which have a role in the production of culinary culture and the different types of cultural politics that envelop them. The taste for curry in England was in striking contrast to the attitudes of the British *in* India. As Nupur Chaudhuri argues,

> To protect their status as rulers and defend British culture in India, the Anglo-Indians during the nineteenth century chose racial exclusiveness and rejected Indian goods and dishes…Thus, even when the Victorians at home decorated their homes with Indian decorative objects and started to eat curry, nineteenth century memsahibs, to create a British lifestyle in the sub-continent, seem to have collectively rejected Indian objects in their colonial homes, and refused Indian dishes in their diet (as cited in Narayan, 1995, p. 66).

As Uma Narayan (1995) says, the appropriation of Indian cultural artefacts was easier for those in England who did not have to distinguish themselves from their colonial subjects. This practice is not exclusive to those groups trying to maintain an elevated status and defend British culture. Research on immigrant cuisines in the social sciences suggests that immigrants and ethnic minorities try to maintain their own cooking and eating habits as long as possible, even against strong pressures to change them (Mennell, Murcott, Otterloo, 1992, pp. 75-80). In Australia colonists ate Indigenous foods, but they concealed their consumption in familiar flavours, in the absence of references in cookbooks and by focusing their agricultural and livestock production on exotic foods imported from ‘home’.

The consumption of Mediterranean foods in Australia was important to the practice of self-identification. This relates to the context in which it is consumed. But it is important to recognise that this is dependent on the connections made within that place; the provision of food supplies, the knowledge about how to prepare them and what they symbolise. Doreen Massey (1995, p. 183), argues that ‘places, in fact, are always constructed out of articulations of social relations…which are not only internal to that locale but which link them to elsewhere’. Traditions, therefore, do not have to be ‘place-bound’ – they are a mass of interconnecting cultures, ideas, histories and so on. Traditions do not only belong in the past, they can be ‘actively built in the present also’ (Massey, 1995, p. 184). In New Norcia such traditions provide an alternative to the narratives of Anglo food and the dominance of protestant traditions in Australia, as well as the rejection of indigenous foods. The survival of colonists was dependent upon the knowledge and experience of Aboriginal people, thus complicating the history of eating in Australia.

The integration of radically different political and cultural systems that characterises the encounter between Christianity and other faith systems raises fundamental questions about notions of alterity, and the dynamics of exclusion in colonial and postcolonial societies. Dom Salvado's vision was to establish an Aboriginal mission as a self-sufficient agricultural village centred on the Monastery. The community would be based around agriculture, with an emphasis on practical farming and artisan skills. In the twentieth century, the emphasis of the mission shifted on to the orphanage and industrial school, but in the early period Badimaya people helped establish the mission's agricultural enterprises. Salvado's charismatic figure looms large over the early formative years of New Norcia. In accord with missionary discourses of the nineteenth century, his purpose was to "civilise" and evangelise according to the European ideals of the time, despite this common colonial conceit he did so with a consideration of Indigenous culture that was rare at the time (Spearritt, 1997, p. 3).

Western Australia was the most isolated of all the colonies and the project of acclimatisation had cultural and economic dimensions. The colony needed agricultural products to sustain itself and advance its economy, but the choices made by the Benedictine monks relate to their vocation and to where they had come from. Vines and grain were cultivated with a religious dedication or passion. Of their early agricultural labours Salvado (as cited in Lennon, 1991) commented, 'Father Serra directed the bullocks, and I guided the plough. Indeed I can say that I have watered the Australian soil with the sweat of my brow and with the blood of my lacerated feet'. By the time of Salvado's death in 1900, New Norcia was producing a variety of products including wine, olive oil, silk, soap and tobacco. A flourmill was constructed in 1879; by-products included breads, macaroni and spaghetti. Oil and bread and wine were also central to the history of settled agriculture and the first manufactured foodstuffs in Europe. All three have a role in Christian sacraments; religious ceremonies or acts regarded as imparting spiritual grace. This passage from the Gospel of Matthew brings together bread, wine and oil in what Maguelonne Toussaint-Samat terms 'the fundamental trinity' (1993, p. 203).

> And as they were eating, Jesus took the bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body.
>
> And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them saying, Drink ye all of it;
>
> For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.
>
> But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom.
>
> And when they had sung a hymn, they went out into the Mount of Olives.
>
> Mathew 26:26-30

Food is at the heart of our cultural imaginary, at a corporeal level it forms part of our common lexicon. The rituals of both sacrament and sacrifice are symbolically bound to the use of food and the Spanish word *salud* refers to both health and salvation. By assuming the shape of food and drink the Eucharist alone among the sacraments is received internally. Receiving the Host is fundamental to achieving the fullness of grace. Brillat-Savarin's aphorism 'Tell me what you eat; I will tell you who you are', has particular substance here, the wonder and distinction of the eucharistic event was – as Camporesi (1989, p. 230) points out, 'the assimilation of the divine into the human, and then to the passage and the fusion of the human into the divine – the crucible where the swallowed food becomes one with the swallower. There is, however, one fundamental difference'; as Cuniliati theologised in the 18th century, 'in the Eucharist … it is not the food that turns into the person who has received it, but rather the person who spiritually turns into the received food' (as cited in Camporesi, 1989, p. 230). In this sense food is not merely a reflection of, but is rather constitutive of identities. These identifications may be religious as well as ethnic, where the focus has largely been in colonial food studies. Through food we simultaneously incorporate our cultural identity and we communicate ourselves. We play with the menu to inflect it with our own experiences and tastes. The resulting melange of ingredients communicates a history of tradition, encounters and change.

The Benedictines did not introduce olives, wheat and grape vines to Australia, but New Norcia is identified as the site of the first significant cultivation of Mediterranean food. An annual banquet in the town celebrates its Mediterranean food culture – namely bread, wine and oil. Olive oil is rich with cultural symbolism and varied in its social applications. As well as being a culinary staple, the 'good oil' is used liberally as a medicinal agent, and is a ritual feature in many religious rites – Christenings, baptisms, consecration, offerings and burials to name a few. New Norcia produces cold pressed virgin olive oil for use as religious holy oils (Kailis, 1997). The monastery's vineyard still produces wine, which also has both sacramental and general uses. Ironically, the monasteries main oven is now used to produce Nut Cake, Pan Chocolatti and Almond Biscotti, which are available at Harvey Nichols and Selfridges – department stores in London. *The Empire does bite back!*

Food traditions are born from exchange. Food played a prominent role in the processes of enculturation in the colonies by passing on certain types of memories and histories. As long as the present is constructed as the exclusive site of multiculturalism in Australia and English traditions themselves are essentialised, Australian history will be rendered as an unbroken line back to the British Empire. The discourse of home can be called upon to create and sustain empire. Alternatively, the complexity and ambivalence of the concept can be restored.

The privileging of written and visual texts in postcolonial studies has meant other senses, taste and smell, are frequently neglected; and yet the consumption of olive oil and wine in the bush, provide an embodied, sensorial image of the past; a memory

Paul Connerton would locate as ‘sedimented in the body’; so always there, always remembered (1989, pp. 70-71). The bodily sense of memory is captured by the word *recordan* – to remember – which, via the Latin means to pass back through the heart. Memory’s rich etymology hints at the somatic influences of food and reminds us that the heart bears witness to sorrow and longing – it is a locale of memory's incarnation – a sensual remembrance. At the monastery in New Norcia the moments of production, consumption, of taste and faith come together, where food communicates a remembrance of home, of kitchen, of being on the inside of culture, which St. Benedict understood as so central to a communal life. Much has been written on the challenges of communication inherent in the colonial project. This scholarship needs to be extended to food as such a significant means of communicating. Hall (1980) provides one method for understanding how this worked. Food may be encoded with particular meanings by those engaged in its production or preparation, and these are central to their maintenance of eating patterns in new circumstances. However, Aboriginal people in New Norcia would have understood Mediterranean foods very differently, and certainly attached different meanings than the Spanish would have to their own foodways. A shift to understanding how meaning is constructed through decoding or consumption of texts or food, reveals the importance of reception. Not talking while you are eating may not just be a rule of good manners, that Benedictines would embrace, but may also be unnecessary given the richness of food as another form of communication.

References

Abbot, E. (1864). *The English and Australian Cookery Book*. London: Sampson Low, Son and Marsden.

Beeton, I. (1892). *Mrs Beeton's Cookery Book and Household Guide*. London: Ward.

Beeton, I. (nd c. 1909). *Mrs Beeton's Book of Household Management New Edition*. London and Melbourne: Ward, Lock and Co. Ltd.

Bell, D. & Valentine, G. (1997). *Consuming Geographies: We are where we eat*. London: Routledge.

Birch, T. (1996). A Land so Inviting and Still Without Inhabitants: Erasing Koori culture from (post-) colonial landscapes. In K. Darian-Smith, E. Gunner & S. Nuttall (Eds.) *Text, Theory, Space: Land, literature and history in South Africa and Australia*. (pp.173-88). London: Routledge.

Camporesi, P. (1989). The Consecrated Host: A Wondrous Excess, trans. A. Cancogne. In M. Feher (Ed.) *Fragments for a History of the Human Body Part One*. (pp. 221-38). New York: Zone.

Cook, James, & Wharton, W. J. L. & Libraries Board of South Australia. (1893). *Captain Cook's journal during his first voyage round the world made in H.M. Bark Endeavour, 1768-71 : a literal transcription of the original mss.* / With notes and introduction edited by Captain W. J. L. Wharton Elliot Stock, Libraries Board of South Australia, London : [Adelaide: Libraries Board of South Australia, 1968].

Connerton, P. (1989). *How Societies Remember*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Dampier, W. (1697). *A New Voyage Round the World*. St, Paul's Churchyard, London. Retreived from *http://sacred-texts.com/aus/awa/awa04.htm*

Dussel, E. (1969). *Catholicismo populare en Argentina,* Volume. 4 Buenos Aires: Editorial Bonum.

Falk, P. (1994). *The Consuming Body*. London: Sage.

Farb, P. & Armelago, G. (1982). Consuming Passions: The Anthropology of Eating. In D. Kirk & E. K. Eliason (Eds.), *Food and People*. (pp. 6-11). San Francisco: : Boyd and Fraser Publishers.

Garbaccia, D. R. (1998). *We Are What We Eat: Ethnic food and the Making of Americans*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Hall, S. (1980). Encoding/decoding. In Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (Ed.), *Culture, Media, Language: Working Papers in Cultural Studies, 1972-79*. (pp. 128-38). London: Hutchinson.

Harvey, D. (1996). *Justice, Nature and the Geography of Difference*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Holy Rule of St. Benedict | Christian Classics Ethereal Library. (n.d.). Retrieved from http://www.ccel.org/ccel/benedict/rule.xli.html

Kailis, G. S. (1997). Bread and Olives: New Norcia Style. *New Norcia Studies*, *5 , (October). pp. 28-43.*

Kilgour , M. (1990). *From Communion to Cannibalism: An Anatomy of Metaphors of Incorporation*. Princetown: Princetown University Press.

Lennon, S. (1991). *The Story of New Norcia prepared and published by the Benedictine community of New Norcia, Western Australia*. 7th edition. New Norcia: Frank Daniels Pty Ltd. W.A.

Lévi-Strauss, C. (1963). *Totemism*. Boston, Beacon Press.

Lowenthal, D. (1998). *The Heritage Crusade and the Spoils of History* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Massey, D. (1995). Places and Their Pasts. *History Workshop Journal*, 39(1):182-192.

Matthew 26:26-28 - Passage Lookup - King James Version ... (n.d.). Retrieved from http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew+26%3A26-28&version=KJV

Mennell, S. Murcott, A. & van Otterloo, A. H. (1992). *Sociology of Food: eating, diet and culture*. London: Sage.

Narayan, U. (1995). Eating Cultures: Incorporation, Identity and Indian Food. *Social Identities, 1*, 63-82.

Spearritt, P. (1997). Background to New Norcia. *New Norcia Studies*, *5* (October).

Sutton, D. E. (2001). *Remembrance of Repasts: An Anthropology of Food and Memory* Berg, Oxford. United Kingdom.

Toussaint-Samat, M. (1994). *A History of Food* trans. Anthea Bell Oxford: Blackwell.