Crossing Over:
Hosts, Guests and Tastes on a Sydney Street

Richard Mohr and Nadirsyah Hosen[1]

1 Introduction and argument

Food and eating are material necessities of life and, at the same time, elaborate cultural and symbolic markers. Food is worked from the earth or killed and butchered, it is bought with money and it is masticated, swallowed, digested, and its waste products expelled. It is fundamentally, corporeally, even bestially physical. Yet food is also subject to rules, regulations and rituals that are complex and diverse. That diversity derives from a wide world of beliefs, traditions and cultural practices.

Food is regulated in many formal and informal ways: by health, industry, ethical and religious codes as well as tastes and family practices. Regulation, practice and knowledge meet in disciplinary regimes. Coveney (2000) has explored the origins and development of a dominant modern Australian nutritional regime, based in the western European tradition and authorised by science. We can also identify competing regimes in contemporary Australia, based in alternative health, ethical, religious and cultural beliefs and traditions.

Food choices and practices, as markers of cultural difference, lend themselves to the study of hospitality, in both senses: as an industry and as a legal and ethical issue. This study analyses the signs, advertisements and products on display in the shops, cafes and restaurants on

Marrickville Road, a main street in a multicultural neighbourhood of inner suburban Sydney. Its aim is to explore the relations between hosts and guests to cast light on the place of food in the experience of immigration and the social and political life of a diverse community.

While disciplinary regimes unite norms, practice and knowledge to constrain and direct food choices, food preferences are also expressions of taste. Bourdieu has explored the tension between taste as pure freedom of choice, and as necessity, constrained by nutrition and economics.

> Even the field of primary tastes is organized according to the fundamental opposition, with the antithesis between quantity and quality, belly and palate, matter and manners, substance and form (Bourdieu 2010: 172).

This study is informed by questions as to how this opposition is mediated. Issues of quality, palate and manners are not purely personal, but are defined by a rich variety of cultural practices and beliefs. Bourdieu's magisterial study of taste contributed the notion of cultural capital to supplement the notion of economic capital. Social standing could thus be stratified along two axes. We draw on that work, and on some other studies that refer to it (see Bennett et al 1999; Warde & Martens 2000), to illuminate food choices that are based in cultural traditions and social standing.

Like the economic axis, Bourdieu's cultural axis of capital is linear: one may have more or less of it. Taking as our focus a multicultural neighbourhood, we immediately signal that the cultural dimension may itself be calibrated in a number of ways. Rich and fascinating as Bourdieu's research is, it reports on a very specific cultural milieu, where it is simply understood that pork and beans are less refined than beef, lamb and salads (Bourdieu 2010: 173; Bennett et al. 1999: 201). The added cultural dimensions that come with immigration and a diversity of ethnic groups living, eating and shopping side-by-side have been the subject of a profuse literature in themselves. Much of that literature is polemical. In the 1970s, countries like Australia and Canada proudly proclaimed themselves 'multicultural' (Castles 1995; Kymlicka 1995).

Today the notion, still supported by progressive politicians, is often a stalking-horse of the xenophobic right, and even linked to problems of social cohesion and terrorism.[2] Following a similarly contested trajectory, the diversity of food cultures is still celebrated at community festivals and 'Harmony Days' in schools and workplaces, and attacked in xenophobic diatribes about halal food. We inquire into the conditions for these opposing approaches to hospitality to explore the question of whether food unites or divides us.

Food is at once a material necessity and a symbolic statement of our status, ethics and identity. We refer to ethical, religious, legal and medical regimes in deciding what to eat. We also express something of ourselves in how we eat: food is an element of social identity and cultural capital. Food choices can therefore be divisive, when different dietary regimes are taken to represent essential elements of social identity, for instance when obesity and bad diet are related to moral failings, or when halal food is related to terrorism. On the other hand, food is often assumed to bridge cultural gaps. It is a universal need and desire that can be shared between cultures, even overcoming linguistic differences.

We argue that boundary anxieties are matched by fusion fantasies. The materiality of food can be cast as an ontological dread of pollution, while the presentation of food as a pathway to cultural capital and a desired identity betrays an anomic confusion. For Nancy (2004: §32), food deprived of its materiality is not incorporated, but crosses over, as a *traversée*, leaving merely a trace. Our street level analysis reveals more of how hospitality is experienced on Marrickville Road. Food becomes one of many points of connection in the negotiations of everyday life and increasing familiarity in urban streets and shops. Communities expand their culinary repertoires crossing the road one step at a time, rather than in a blender of fusion cuisine. As the guest becomes the host, and the host the guest, hospitality is more than an affirmation or invitation (Derrida 2000: 77). It is a multifaceted relationship expressed by food choices in an intricately layered social fabric.

2 Method and approach

Actual social relations always turn out to be more complicated and interesting than theoretical models or ideological diatribes, from whichever end of a political spectrum. Food choices, as we have said, are subject to taste, tradition and beliefs. They must also be fulfilled in a specific environment: the food must be available, affordable, and be able to be carried home and prepared. The ways in which various immigrant and host communities negotiate to meet these requirements in a multicultural neighbourhood can be explored from various points of view. Our focus is on the food that is presented, displayed and advertised in one such neighbourhood. By considering the designations and names of the shops and restaurants, and the marketing and the provenance of the food they sell, we delve into the respective roles of 'hosts' and 'guests'. The patterns of shopping and eating, selling and displaying, present a more varied picture than may be expected from terms like 'host society' and 'immigrant community'. As migrants from various countries and cultures open shops and restaurants, and as they sell to, buy from and employ people from the many different ethnicities in the area, it becomes increasingly difficult to classify roles of 'guest' and 'host'. The social backdrop to this study features a cast of *dramatis personae* including the Anglo-Australian family in the Vietnamese restaurant; the young first or second generation Asian immigrants in a fashionable coffee shop; the Portuguese housewife buying from the Spanish speaking employee in an Italian delicatessen; the elderly Greek men drinking coffee at the Turkish kebab shop. We hope to illuminate the diversity of these roles through an analysis of the signs on the shops, products and bus shelters of an inner suburban main street in Sydney.

The study focuses on Marrickville Road, the backbone of the Marrickville Local Government area (LGA) which has been a first point of arrival for successive waves of immigrants over several generations: Greeks, then Vietnamese, Chinese and more recently Pacific Islanders. Portuguese and Italians are also conspicuous at the Dulwich Hill end of the street. More recently the area has been

a destination for young professionals who migrate from the suburbs or from other Australian cities, rather than from Europe or Asia. The demography of Marrickville is far from typical of Australia as a whole: it has more immigrants, more atheists and more highly educated professionals.[3] The federal electorate that includes Marrickville has been called 'the most left-leaning' in Australia,[4] while local politics are fought out between left-Labor and the Greens.[5]

Data for this study was collected by documenting every retail food or drink outlet along the 2.7 km length of Marrickville Road, and for a block on either side (sampling only those areas reached from the main road without crossing any traffic streets or lanes). We recorded (by notes and photographs) all the signs on these premises, including many of the labels of goods displayed in the windows. We also sampled any other food or drink advertisements in the street during the study period (June – August 2012), which were mainly those on bus shelters. We then collected information from the council responsible for local government administration, covering policy, planning and publicity material relating to food, restaurants and shops in the study area. We used publicly available documents, supplemented by interviews with council staff to clarify policies in key areas of planning, community services, economic development, and food safety.

This data was interpreted by drawing on semiotic methods, participant observation of the shoppers and shopkeepers, and background literature on food, gastronomy and society. That literature included a number of media reports on political reactions to food and related aspects of multiculturalism. Since one of the authors was living in the street during the study period, the participant observation was simply that of a resident and consumer in the area. No interviews were conducted with shopkeepers or shoppers beyond the normal interactions of daily life.

Most of the findings have been drawn from reading the signs and advertisements visible from the street. We read the street in a broad sense, observing the patterns of use and commerce from one end to the other.[6] The broadest level at which one reads the street is in the pattern of food and other shops clustered within the urban fabric. At

the eastern (Sydenham) end of the road, under the flight path to Sydney airport, there are small factories, many involved in food processing. These were included in the sample only if they indicated that they sold to the public. In the middle of the street there are a great variety of small shops, many of them restaurants, cafes or retail food shops. Continuing westward, this commercial centre ends with the shopfront offices of the local members of parliament and then a number of imposing civic buildings: churches, a council hall and library, fire station and school. Several blocks of residential development, from grand federation houses to 1960s 'six-pack' flats, are followed by another commercial zone at the western (Dulwich Hill) end of the road, where coffee shops and restaurants mix with delicatessens and fresh food shops. Reading the street at somewhat closer range reveals juxtapositions of various businesses, and the image they present to the public: indications of the products sold, the name of the business and the languages displayed. On even closer inspection we were able to analyse the products displayed and advertised in the windows.

We report our findings according to three themes. In feeling our way through the profusion of data and signs that make up Marrickville Road, we have adopted a dialectical structure which explores alternative ways of seeing the street and its culinary semiotics. The article deals with these ways of seeing in turn: boundaries, then as an antithesis to this, fusion, and finally, conviviality.

Focussing first on regulation, we observed references to certification, such as food safety and the traces of planning policy. Food practices are bounded by restrictions and limits which include regulatory, religious, cultural and political constraints.[7] In this article we particularly focus on the boundaries imposed on food choice by cultural and political regimes. After these considerations of the ways food divides us, we consider an antithesis: 'fusion' cuisine and representations of multicultural sharing. New ways of eating and shopping are reflected, particularly through marketing, as producing new anxieties, which can be overcome by buying particular products or shopping at particular stores. These conflicting representations of food as divisive or expressive

of a new 'fusion' society are then contrasted with some insights into the food buying practices of various groups, as reflected in the products on display in various shops. From this analysis we conclude that conviviality (*con-vivere*: living together) is mediated through specific material practices of shopping and eating that link communities in widening circles. These points will be explained in the respective sections that follow.

A concluding section condenses these findings into responses to the questions we considered in the introduction. These questions include: What mediates food choices? Does food divide or unite hosts and guests? How do various communities negotiate their food requirements, and what does this tell us about hospitality?

3 Boundaries

Reading Marrickville Road, whether at the broadest level identifying the various uses of space, or at the fine-grained level through its signs, we are struck by obvious boundaries. These may be between different patterns of land use such as residential areas, rows of shops, or industrial areas. These patterns derive from zoning areas defined by Marrickville Council's Local Environmental Plan 2011. Other boundaries between various criteria of the edible or the ethical are expressed in the claims made on signs displayed on cafes, shops and restaurants: some claim their food is free range (e.g. a take-away chicken shop), while others indicate they use fair trade and organic products (e.g. coffee shops and cafes) or that their food is halal (e.g. take-away chicken shops; a butcher and convenience store; and a Pakistani restaurant). On the wall of a yeeros supplier and on a packet of Serbian rusks displayed in a shop window, we see that the products are certified by HACCP: the international system of Hazard and Critical Control Point risk management for food safety. Another boundary marker is signified in at least five different restaurants, cafes or take-away food shops that advertise their food as 'authentic'. These regulatory and semiotic boundaries reflect the many diverse ethical, health and religious criteria on which food choices are based. Eating is a material necessity, yet it

is culturally constructed through numerous symbolic and communal norms. Food seems to invite binary oppositions such as healthy or dangerous; free range or caged; halal or haram.

Gastronomy is a field swarming with rules, regulations and recommendations. The term 'gastronomy', which came into common use in France in 1801 (Robuchon 2001: 547), refers to the law or nomos of eating: 'the codification of specific rules [as] a means of realising new relations between people' (Onfray 1995: 47). By defining social norms in terms of food, gastronomy explicitly links class and culinary boundaries. Class has both material and cultural dimensions. On the first axis, the members of a particular class eat food required to sustain a certain level of physical work at an affordable cost (Bourdieu 2010: 173). The cultural dimensions of food choice are influenced by matters of taste as well as ethical or health criteria.

Cultural capital in culinary matters allows people to demonstrate 'discriminating taste when selecting places to go and things to eat' (Warde & Martens 2000: 69-70). As we have noted, culture has horizontal as well as vertical dimensions. That is to say, it can be based on geography–where we come from–as well as status. In their Australian study seeking to replicate aspects of Bourdieu's *Distinction* (2010), Bennett et al (1999: 201) are puzzled by the 'remarkable insularity' of the original French work. Focussing on film, television, books and music, they highlight the influences of foreign cultures on Australian tastes. That these are mainly from Britain and the United States betrays another insularity based on the English language. Language is less of a barrier to the transmission of culinary tastes. The most obvious cultural distinction among restaurants on Marrickville Road is along ethnic lines: the Vietnamese, Turkish, Greek, Portuguese, Thai, Lebanese, Peruvian, Pakistani and Nepalese establishments are immediately identifiable by their names, flags or explicit claims to the cuisine of a particular culture. The cultural markers of status are submerged under those of ethnicity.

Ethnic distinctions define boundaries between social groups, just as distinctions of class do. Whether these divisions are valued for the

diversity they offer, or form the basis of inter-group hostilities, depends on many social and political variables. Distinctions between culinary 'progressives' and 'reactionaries' (Onfray 1995: 64-6) may map onto similar political categories. We now explore some of the mechanisms by which the markers of different food cultures interact with and inform socio-political forces through food choices.

Choices may be influenced by a taste for the exotic, a search for new experiences. The many restaurants and coffee shops of Marrickvllle Road clearly cater to such tastes: they are associated with eleven different national or ethnic groups.[8] Another six are represented in delicatessens or other types of food stores. Even if the restaurants were originally mainly patronised by people from the same culture (Heath 2011: 56), most now have a diverse clientele reflecting the area's gentrifying and multicultural demography.

Studies in Québec, France and Britain have found that eating 'ethnic' food is regarded as a statement of exotic tastes and even sophistication (Turgeon & Pastinelli 2002: 259). Bourdieu linked exotic tastes in food to an excess of cultural over economic capital (Bourdieu 2010: 183). Social classes matching this description are well represented in Marrickville; indeed, what better description of the typical early stage gentrifier in an immigrant neighbourhood, than exotic tastes combined with low economic and high cultural capital. They are generally professional, highly educated younger people taking advantage of relatively low house prices. The abundance of restaurants and other food outlets from such a variety of nationalities constitutes one of the attractions of Marrickville to the new immigrants from the suburbs of Sydney and other cities.[9] These people combine the progressive politics, noted above, with 'progressive' tastes in food, as described by Onfray. They are 'neophiles' in Warde and Martens' terms (2000: 147-8), for whom boundaries are there to be crossed.[10]

'Neophobes' or conservatives, by contrast, are wary of new dishes. They are the British equivalent of Onfray's culinary reactionaries, who 'confuse nostalgia for their childhood with the dishes that were made then' (Onfray 1995: 65). While consumers in Marrickville appear to be

particularly open to new cultures and tastes, there is evidence of another boundary which draws strong reactions in other parts of Australia. We have mentioned some ethical and religious boundaries seen on Marrickville Road, marking suppliers of free range, fair trade and halal products. There were only three premises (out of 117) displaying 'halal' signs outside: a butcher (within a convenience store), a restaurant and a take away chicken shop; no other religious markers, such as 'kosher', were displayed. This small proportion of halal establishments closely reflects the proportion of Muslims in the Marrickville LGA, where Muslims make up 2.7% of all residents, only slightly above the national average.[11]

With low levels of religious affiliation across the board, social and political issues in Marrickville tend toward the secular. Religion only touches local politics in indirect ways, referencing remote religious conflicts.[12] While some consumers in Marrickville Road may choose halal food in accordance with their religious beliefs, this choice has become a target for Islamophobic movements taking advantage of fear and ignorance associated with 'anti-terror' propaganda in other parts of Australia, and expressed in national politics. Liberal Party politicians from South Australia and Western Australia have warned against eating halal food. A Western Australian member, Luke Simpkins, told the House of Representatives, 'By having Australians unwittingly eating Halal food we are all one step down the path towards the conversion (sic)' (*The West Australian* November 25 2011). Senator Cory Bernardi has also expressed his fear that 'hardline followers of Islam' are promoting 'cultural practices that must be opposed', such as halal meat slaughter. He said he did not 'want to eat meat butchered in the name of an ideology that is mired in sixth century brutality and is anathema to my own values' (Lewis *Herald Sun* February 9 2011). The *Sydney Morning Herald* devoted a feature article to a so-called 'Christian activist's' campaign against companies using halal certification 'to draw attention to the incremental extension of sharia into Australian culture' (*Sydney Morning Herald* 28 March 2013). During the 2013 Australian Federal election campaign, a candidate for the xenophobic One Nation Party distributed stickers reading 'Beware! Halal food funds terrorists',

which were posted on supermarket products (*Gympie Times* 25 July 2013). Halal certification, a boundary based on religious tradition, has been co-opted by a group of politically motivated crusaders as a marker for cultural and political differences. The absurdity of claims that unwitting consumers could somehow be converted or polluted by the food choices of others does not seem to dampen their appeal. Where there are boundaries, sides are chosen. The adventurous choose to cross them, while the xenophobic capitalise on fears of pollution. Food continues to be a cultural definer in the fluid atmosphere of multicultural Australia.

We now consider a final boundary marker displayed on at least five restaurants, cafes or take-away food shops advertising that their food is 'authentic' (two Vietnamese, two Turkish and one Greek). 'Authenticity' is another way of defining a culinary boundary, yet it is subject to a wide range of interpretations. Authenticity can appeal to Onfray's reactionaries, representing the food of their childhood, when it signifies some undisturbed tradition.[13] In the case of these ethnic restaurants, where the term is written in English, it communicates the 'genuinely' exotic nature of the food (Turgeon & Pastinelli 2002: 257). Other meanings of 'authentic' may be relevant in the culinary context. The ambiguity of the word is seen in the ancient art of food deception, practised by the Ancient Romans and more recently by UK chef Heston Blumenthal, where 'authentic' ingredients are dressed up to look like something entirely different (Alcock 2006). Highly personal approaches to cooking may also be considered 'authentic' in the sense that one is true to oneself (Golomb 1995: 10), even while ignoring or betraying tradition (Rubel 2006).

Some of these difficulties in defining authenticity may be summed up in the authors' reactions to one of the 'authentic' Turkish restaurants in Marrickville Road. Since we are no experts on Turkish food, our observations that the kofta was not what we expected may have been tinged with expectations of Arabic food. The fact that the restaurant is licensed to serve wine need not have detracted from the authenticity of a secular Turkish restaurant, but called into question the 'halal'

description that appears for the restaurant on various websites (though not on the restaurant itself). 'Authenticity', of course, should not be judged 'objectively', as to whether it is an accurate description of a particular cuisine or restaurant. Instead the term places it in a particular relationship to the clientele and their expectations (Gilmore & Pine 2007: 3-4). It is designed to appeal to progressives and neophiles who flourish in Marrickville, open to exotic food and hungry for new experiences.

Figure 1: Restaurant awning with metal sculptures, Marrickville Road.

Food choices are shot through with boundaries. Gastronomy codifies how one should eat, cultural capital places our tastes within a hierarchy of status, ethnicity defines the cuisines of different cultures, which may be eagerly devoured by neophiles and reviled by reactionaries. 'Authenticity' has a robust sense of standing as a marker for originality, or a special experience, yet it is a peculiarly moveable boundary.

4 Fusion

What if there were no boundaries such as those that declare food to be safe, halal or authentic? In Marrickville Road one can buy 'Fusion wraps' (at an Indian take-away) and 'Fusian noodles' were advertised on a bus shelter. If the older established restaurants and more faded signs proclaim the 'authentic', now 'fusion' is the preferred term of the contemporary food writer.[14] Authenticity gives way to fusion, gastronomy is replaced by gastro-anomie: the crisis of choice in societies where everything is available and the old codes and values have broken down (Fischler 1979: 206). Lacking the guidance of nomos, the rules are so dissipated and relaxed that the eating-individuals are thrown back on their own devices.[15] An excess of choice and abundance, combined with a proliferation of health and ethical constraints, leads to individual confusion within a rootless culture.

We have already suggested that some of the concern that leads to food codes and regulations may derive from the challenge of material incorporation: 'we are what we eat'. This well-worn phrase derives from an aphorism of one of the pioneers of 'gastronomy', Brillat-Savarin (to whom we will return below). In proposing that Australians could be converted to Islam by inadvertently eating halal food, Mr Simpkins evinced a similar ontological metaphysics. The fundamental material and, here, metaphysical, boundary is the lining of the digestive tract.

This determinism is negated if 'to eat is *not* to incorporate' (Nancy 2004: §32; our emphasis added). Nancy is the key exponent of a new idealism so extreme that the body is simply 'opened' to what is eaten, so that the flavour is inhaled. Incorporation through swallowing

(*l'intussusception*) is but a 'metaphysical chimera'. Eating is instead a crossing over (*traversées*) or balancing (ibid). Drinking does not involve the wine entering the stomach, but rather, leaving a film, 'a fine membrane in the mouth'. 'This body has wine' could replace the expression 'this wine has body' (§37). Nancy is the theorist of a post-materialist cuisine: *traversée*, molecular, fusion.

In this new idealist economy it is not what we eat that defines who we are, but our minds (*esprits*). The body is to force as the mind is to identity (Nancy 2004: §20). What we eat is, literally, immaterial to our social being. Who we are comes from other, spiritual sources. All the more reason for Fischler's isolated and anomic lone eater (*individu-mangeur*) to be anxious. Gastro-anomie is a crisis of nomos and, in the spirit of Durkheim's anomie, a crisis of identity. These points are best illustrated in three bus-shelter advertisements that appeared in Marrickville Road during the study period. One read 'Today I'm myself, tomorrow whoever I want' (James Squire beer); a few hundred metres away another read 'Camembert? Brie? They're the same (aren't they?)' with the tag, 'Tips, advice, prizes and fun' (Woolworths 'Fresh Fair'). Opposite that advertisement, we found the cryptic slogan, 'Eat the noodle, Live the noodle', with some Chinese text and a picture of the product (Fusian instant noodles).

The beer advertisement proposes a theory of identity every bit as wilful and idealistic as Nancy's. Identity has no material, cultural or historical roots, but springs from the mind: I will be whoever I want to be. The relationship of the product to the message is likewise immaterial and arbitrary. Merely by proposing this infinitely free identity, and juxtaposing it with the beer, the consumer is able to participate, not by incorporation, but by crossing over. The beer need not enter the stomach, where it may have material effects: quench thirst, cause bloating and inebriation. It leaves a film of fantasy, that tomorrow's self might be totally new and unconnected to today's.

Such dreams of personal 'development' and social mobility come at the price of a certain anxiety. The Woolworths advertisement recalls the challenge of cultural capital. We have proposed that Marrickville

residents may generally be richer in cultural capital than many other Australians. These advertisements are presumably part of national campaigns by major corporations and thus represent another Australia on Marrickville Road. In Marrickville, too, there must be people who would like to serve French style cheeses, and be able to discuss them, without looking foolish at their inability to know the difference between camembert and brie. Indeed, the difference may only become significant and worrying as a result of seeing the advertisement.

> Taste, then is found in what distinguishes necessity from conspicuous consumption, Weber's 'stylization of life', a systematic commitment which orients and organizes the most diverse practices–the choice of a vintage or a cheese or the decoration of a holiday home in the country (Bourdieu 2010: 48).

Aspirations to class mobility face two challenges: economic and cultural. In good economic times, in a rich country with egalitarian educational and employment opportunities,[16] many people may increase their economic capital. Incomes rise and financial security comes within their grasp. Yet, as Bourdieu (2010: 69-78) points out, cultural capital can lag behind, having its sources in both school *and* family. Like material heirlooms passed down from generation to generation, cultural capital takes longer to acquire. It can become a source of anxiety for the upwardly mobile: it cannot be bought with money, but marketing promises that it can be imparted, while one buys the cheese, with *tips* and *advice* from Woolworths. The *prize* is social success, a better life-style, and it even promises to be *fun*.

The Fusian noodles advertisement addresses identity and social anxiety in a more imaginative way. A red-headed Australian boy in shorts and a tee-shirt stands in what appears to be a Chinese restaurant, eating the instant noodles, while extraordinary feats of martial arts swirl around him. Even the well-dressed Chinese diners are a little frightened, but the boy can enjoy the spectacle while he eats the noodles. At one level, this advertisement promises all the excitement of a Jackie Chan film in a box of noodles. Yet it also has clear references to Australia's geo-political and demographic situation. With our economy

cruising in the slip-stream of extraordinary Chinese growth, a young Australian boy, surrounded by upwardly mobile Asian families and students, might have reason to be a little overwhelmed. But he can also participate: fusion cuisine (in a box) offers risk-free and enjoyable access to this exciting, but scary, world.

Figure 2: Bus shelter advertisement, Marrickville Road, July 2012.

There is an image of multiculturalism as a fusion of cultures, a happy mélange where we all eat fusion food and differences are eliminated. We can invent our identity by ourselves, free of cultural, historical or material baggage. The darker side of these advertisements, like the hang-over after too much beer, hints at the anxieties attached to social mobility and a changing world. Yet it is all pitched at the realm of the imagination. The beer, the cheese, the noodles leave a film of fantasy; they cross over, metaphysically, from the advertising image to the dreams and aspirations of the 'consumer'. This consumption is not the ingestion of real food and drink: it is a marketing version. This is not nutrition or sustenance, but it fulfils (or even creates) needs: for security, mobility or belonging.

5 Conviviality

In the earlier section on 'boundaries', we focused on the semiotic magic that makes food officially safe, halal, or politically anathema. It was still food, its very importance emphasised by the need to certify or regulate it. Then in the section on 'fusion', we explored the implications of a vision of food without boundaries, limited only by flights of fancy. Even at the level of ideas, food plays a symbolic, as much as a nutritional role. In this third take on the data that is revealed by the study of Marrickville Road we look in more detail at the products for sale and the shops that sell them. We return to the material presentation of the food, which reveals insights into the practices of eating and interaction in Marrickville (specifically) and in a multicultural society like Australia (more generally).

Many of the shops selling unprepared food, such as delicatessens, convenience stores, butchers and bakers, are identifiably from a particular cultural or national background. They display a Portuguese flag, the name of a Greek city, Arabic, Greek or Chinese writing, or a Vietnamese name. On the 'coffee and nuts' shop, the Arabic writing advertises, among other products, Brazilian coffee. A convenience store has a large sign saying that it sells 'All Bangladeshi, Indian, Nepales (sic), Pakistani, Fijian and Australian groceries'. The products displayed

are even more diverse: the 'special' displayed at the front of that shop during the study period was mi goreng instant noodles in cardboard cartons (brand 'Indo Mie', with Indonesian writing, no martial arts included).

Closer inspection of the products offered in these shops gives more insight into the pattern of ethnic distribution of food products. The Greek delicatessen sells Italian Bialetti coffee makers and Sirena tuna (an Italian-Australian brand), 'Bulgarian fetta', Portuguese olive oil and Greek cheeses. The Arabic shop sells Lebanese and Greek olive oil, Arabic and Australian ghee, Turkish 'style' coffee and Italian passata (tomato puree). Like the shop that advertises its South Asian and Fijian products, each of them expands their produce, and presumably their clientele, from an original ethnic or geographic base into surrounding areas. The circles expand from Greece to take in Bulgaria and the Mediterranean; from the Middle East to Greece, Turkey and Italy; from the Indian sub-continent to Fiji (with its substantial Indian population) and Indonesia. The span is increased in the photograph on the cover of Marrickville Council's publication *Eat Streets* (Heath 2011): a south east Asian family look admiringly at a Spanish paella. Here the vast geographic gap is bridged by a common ingredient, rice.

Like the elderly Greek men who gather regularly at the Turkish take-away food and coffee shop at the Dulwich Hill end of Marrickville Road, it seems that consumers seek out shops that sell familiar products, but the ripples spread. In the early stages of migration, shoppers are more selective, patronising shops where their own language is spoken, and the nearest approximation to the produce of the home country is available.[17] At a later stage, the shops expand their offerings to attract a wider range of customers, and some familiarity with English allows consumers to choose from a wider range of shops. The shops themselves accommodate related languages, such as the Italian delicatessen which employs a Spanish-speaker, who also speaks Italian and English. The third phase of this process, well under way in Marrickville, sees the second and third generations from migrant families grow up and establish their own households in Marrickville or nearby areas (perhaps

after their own parents or grandparents have gentrified in their own way, and moved out to greener, more suburban areas). As the subsequent generations grow up amongst a range of different cultures, having friends, partners and work companions themselves from a range of backgrounds, the ripples spread socially as well as commercially. This is a process that Ang has called 'diversity within diversity', and which 'unsettles the identity politics of multiculturalism and produces greater degrees of complexity than containable within the rhetoric of cultural recognition' (Noble 2011: 830).
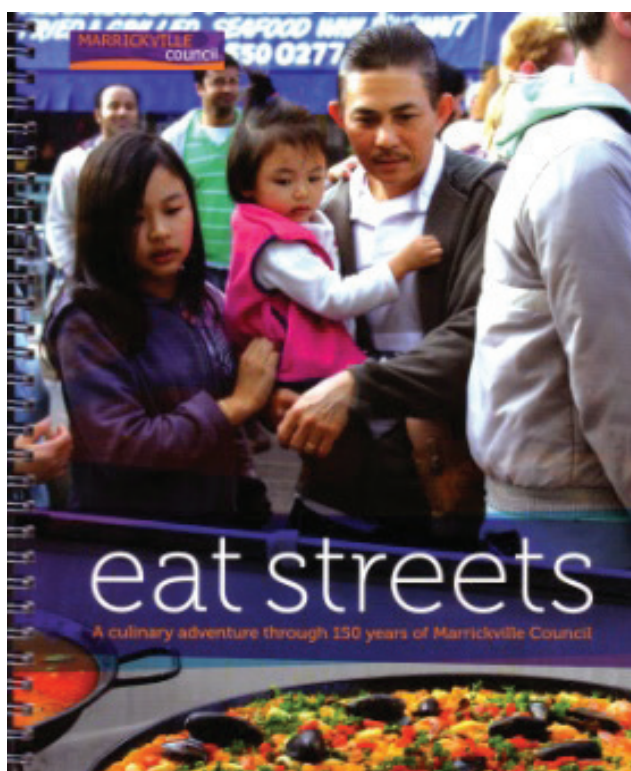

Figure 3: Marrickville Festival, 2007.
Cover of a local government publication (Heath 2011), reproduced with kind permission of Marrickville Council

Australians from Asian, British, European and Middle Eastern backgrounds, many of them now highly educated professionals, complete the pattern of interaction seen in nascent form in the widening range of products in these shops. A significantly expanded palette/palate of flavours and culinary techniques becomes available and familiar, from which people choose according to background, experience and taste. Taste itself can no longer be calibrated in a matrix like Bourdieu's, along economic and cultural axes: the cultural axis ramifies into different cultures and new hybrids. The factors Bourdieu identifies, such as early family experiences and social aspirations, continue to influence choices. Yet this takes place within an expanded social and cultural milieu. The dominant Anglo-Australian culture, from the time of Federation so wary of alien influences and indigenous threats, finally opened up to a wide range of immigrants. The ripples of immigration spread from the British Isles in increasing swathes across the Eurasian land mass, and included the nearby Pacific and Africa. In this process it has been the material and pragmatic interactions of hosts and guests, with other guests and hosts, that have created today's Marrickville Road.

Here we must return to the question of boundaries, but from another perspective. The boundary between the foreigner and the host is, for Derrida, a legal, an ethical and a linguistic one. The boundaries between people and nations pose ethical questions with legal counterpoints. These boundaries are addressed by law but also by lawlessness – *nomos* and *anomos* – since the ethical is always transgressive (Derrida 2000: 79).

> Does one give hospitality to a subject? to an identifiable subject? to a subject identifiable by name? to a legal subject? Or is hospitality rendered?, is it given to the other before they are identified, even before they are (posited or supposed to be) a subject, legal subject and subject nameable by their family name, etc.? (Derrida 2000: 29)

If we ask such questions about the subjects of hospitality on Marrickville Road, we find some surprising but simple answers. The subject of hospitality is immediately present, named or unnamed, legal

or illegal. The interaction of hospitality is framed by food regulation and certification, by development control plans and commercial requirements. The things that are traded and the places in which they are traded are subject to fine-grained and interlocking regulations and legal requirements. Like the intrusive telecommunications that impel Derrida's anxiety (and perhaps even, if inexplicably, lead to xenophobia)[18] these products enter the home, and even the body of the guest – who is also the host – but they are not uninvited. Perhaps the very materiality of food makes it less threatening than telecommunications, unless, for the xenophobes, it has been metaphysically transformed through religious certification. Where we trust our host – who is also the guest – not to poison us, or surreptitiously convert us, we enter this relationship, and the relationship enters our homes and bodies, willingly. This is not the arbitrary and wilful openness of Nancy's crossing over (*traversées)*, but a negotiated openness to foods which have become familiar, or which are recommended or certified by a particular authority or trusted supplier.

This highlights the significance of regulation and labelling, so that we know that the boundaries we place on food can be respected and that the haram or the unethical will not violate our bodies or homes. In a complex post-industrial society, where the food chain is invisible to the consumer, the face-to-face element of trust must be replaced by trust that is certified by regulation.[19] Yet we are still face to face with our shopkeeper, our restaurateur, or our waiter. These hosts might also be guests. Does the customer presume to ask a name or question the legal status of the host who is also a guest? Does the guest who is also a host ask the customer these questions? Before serving them alcohol, yes, if needed to ascertain that they are over 18. Otherwise the interactions take place in a public space structured, not by the electronic communications that perturb Derrida, but by daily commerce and consumption, against a background of formal and informal regulations. This daily consumption, in both the senses of marketing and of ingestion, builds up levels and patterns of living together, of con-viviality, even at the most fundamental, corporeal level, where questions of host and guest are intricately layered.

The 'host' society, often assumed to consist of an 'Anglo-Australian' monoculture, is in fact made up of many layers of immigration, both overseas and internal. In each of the businesses along the street, the 'host' – the shopkeeper, barista or restaurateur – may not have lived Australia for more than a generation, even though he or she may have lived or worked in Marrickville for longer than many of their customers. In this palimpsest, who is the host, or the host society? Is the guest the customer or the immigrant? The young professional in flight from suburbia, or the Greek or Vietnamese family, established in the area for two generations?

6 Conclusion: Food choices and community relations

We began this article discussing Bourdieu's identification of the fundamental oppositions underlying taste: belly and palate, substance and form. Taste is both physical and social, regulated by corporeal needs and by elaborate systems of certification and approbation. Before food crosses the material boundary of our digestive tract, or the door of our home, there are cultural demands that it should satisfy certain ethical, spiritual or health requirements that distinguish the edible from the inedible. Beyond the regulatory level, there are social norms that approve or shun novelty, value or denigrate foods of one or another cultural provenance. Menus for important events were commonly printed in French at the turn of the last century (Heath 2011). Italian, Thai and other cuisines have their fashionable moments (or decades). We have seen that the culturally rich but economically poor are more likely to be adventurous – in Marrickville as in Bourdieu's France. Taste in food is imbued with all these dimensions of culture and beliefs as well as stomach and substance.

Preferences in taste may have political as well as cultural and physical dimensions. Where social anxieties come to the fore, as in mobile societies which are still trying to regulate social boundaries, these distinctions can become more culturally, and even politically, charged. 'Gastronomy' was invented in revolutionary France as the bourgeoisie challenged the *ancien regime* in mortal combat.[20] A nomos

of the stomach proposed *how* food should be prepared and served, more than what could be eaten. In political situations where hosts feel threatened by guests, one culture by another, the rules of eating are scanned for what they say about the other culture, and how they might condemn it. Boundary lines and conflict zones between cultures can be defined by approaches to food. Again this can engage the metaphysics of incorporation, which requires food to be semiotically fit for consumption; it is to be 'our' food, not 'their' food.

Contrary to these divisive aspects of food preferences, it can be seen that, while the xenophobe expresses fear of Islam by attacking halal food, so the tolerant humanitarian expresses an openness to the Other through the mouth, the palate and the digestive tract. In looking for the foundations of inclusive approaches to food, and to explain the observed mix of cultures and cuisines on Marrickville Road, we turned to the notion of 'fusion' cuisine. This approach detaches food from its foundations in culture and tradition. The new mobile society relaxes the norms of gastronomy, as a set of rules or constraints.

We sought to explain this rootlessness by reference to Nancy's radically de-materialised approach to food and the body. Food need not challenge our identity since it is but an inhalation, passing through us on its way to being expressed in energy, activity. Yet we proposed that the freer identity-formation becomes, the more anxieties re-emerge, as gastronomy gives way to gastro-anomie. These are real anxieties in a mobile and unpredictable society: that our new identity may not match our circumstances; that our world is changing too fast; that we may not be up to the challenge of new geo-political forces. Marketing offered solutions, again, at the level of ideas and the imagination. Forget the ingredients of the noodles or the cholesterol levels in the cheeses. The imagination can be calmed by advertising as readily as it is perturbed.

In trying to overcome the strictures and norms – the nomos – regulating material ingestion, whether they be ethical, cultural or political, we simply flipped over into a new fundamental opposition: anomie replaces nomos. The imagination, the world of ideas and representations, detaches itself from the material world and floats

away: the ideal supplants the material. We had to find a way back to a world of everyday practices that includes sustenance and satisfaction.

The displays of products and the identification of the shops they are in tells a more intricate story of interaction in the satisfaction of daily needs. Residents and shoppers in Marrickville Road negotiate these needs by accessing the products available to them in different shops, which initially identify with and serve people from a particular culture. As cultures interact, people learn new languages and culinary and commercial discourses. Products and cuisines cross over into new communities, even creating new 'communities of consumption' in the process. People find 'points of connection' (Noble 2011: 838) in the shops and languages, in the foods and culinary techniques they can use. Food itself becomes one of many points of connection, not in a broad, 'anything-goes', deracinated extravaganza of fusion cuisine, but in the negotiations of everyday life, con-viviality and increasing familiarity. When the guest becomes the host, assimilation is inverted. New arrivals from Europe or Asia sell food to each other, then to broader and broader communities of immigrants. Australians from other backgrounds and other parts of the country move to the area, and discover the variety of foods available: they expand their repertoire step by step rather by leaping into an undifferentiated melting pot.

Montanari has shown how culinary traditions and preferences derive from an extensive root system, and blossom into a variety of outputs. The fixed point of these processes is not the roots, but the people currently living and eating together. 'Identity does not exist as the origin, but as the end point of this journey.' (Montanari 2006: 180).[21] Brillat-Savarin's original statement of the famous aphorism was 'Tell me what you eat and I will tell you who you are' (Montanari 2006: 99). This is not the oversimplified and deterministic 'we are what we eat', but may be glossed more appropriately, for the intricately graded differences and points of contact on Marrickville Road, as: We eat what we are, and what we have become.

Notes

1 This project has benefited from the range of work and commentary available on its first presentation at the symposium 'Law and Food: Cultural and religious perspectives' (Legal Intersections Research Centre, University of Wollongong, 18 July 2012). We also acknowledge the helpful commentary on later presentations at the Centre for International Governance and Justice, RegNet, ANU, Canberra (5-6 September 2012) and at Marrickville Council (26 July 2013), whose staff have been very cooperative throughout the research.

2 In a 2011 speech to the conservative Sydney Institute, the Minister for Immigration and Citizenship in the Australian Labor government forcefully promoted multiculturalism, while drawing attention to negative comments from mainstream conservative politicians including David Cameron and Angela Merkel. Chris Bowen, 'The Genius of Australian Multiculturalism', The Sydney Institute, 16 February 2011.

3 One in three households in the Marrickville LGA speaks more than one language at home (compared with 1 in 4 in NSW, and 1 in 5 in Australia.) The main languages spoken are Greek, Vietnamese, Arabic, Portuguese and Cantonese. Religious affiliation in Marrickville is less to the dominant churches than in other parts of NSW, while the greatest proportion profess no religious affiliation (33%). Eastern Orthodox and Buddhist adherents are respectively three times and twice as prevalent in Marrickville as in Australia as a whole. 35% of the adult population is university educated (NSW: 20%), and 36% are professionals (NSW: 23%). Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2011 Census.

4 'Vote Compass' online survey the ABC, during the 2013 Federal election campaign http://www.abc.net.au/news/2013-09-04/vote-compass-left-right-electorates/4929064 accessed 4 October 2013.

5 The Greens and Labor each have four councillors on Marrickville Council; the Liberals have two.

6 Sources on methods and examples of 'reading cities' include Benjamin (2002), Mohr (2006), Nas (2011) and Ricœur (2008).

7 For further discussion of regulation and certification arising from this study, see Mohr (2013).

8   In the study area in mid 2012 there were 117 different food and drink outlets, 62 of which had a sign indicating some specific cultural, national or language identification. Eighteen different cultures were identified, the most common being Vietnamese, Chinese, Greek Thai, Italian and Turkish.

9   In conversation one of the authors heard that the sister of an 'emigrant' from Sydney's famously white anglo Sutherland Shire had moved to Marrickville in search of multicultural stimulation. Such is the level of gentrification in that part of the suburb that she and her Marrickville neighbours found themselves surrounded by other Anglo-Australians, who had moved to the area for similar reasons.

10 A postcolonial reading sees this boundary-crossing as a form of appropriation (Turgeon & Pastinelli 2002).

11 Mosques are located in the neighbouring LGAs of Canterbury and Rockdale, which have a higher proportion of Muslim residents than Marrickville.

12 See Mohr (2013) on references to religious conflicts regarding the Middle East and Hindmarsh Island.

13 A Greek-born academic recently moved to Marrickville was amazed to find that the Greek psistaria, or rotisserie restaurant, which is labelled 'authentic', was unlike anything he had seen in Greece since his father took him to such places as a boy.

14 'Il gusto fusion dell Australia' headlined a travel piece in Italy's La Repubblica national daily in mid-2013, referring to 'Aboriginal flavours and unique trends', 'a true miracle of extraordinary interaction of … ethnicities and produce, curiosities and culture'. (Granello, *La Repubblica*, 22 May 2013: 40)

15 'Le système nomologique et les <<taxonomies>> alimentaires qui gouvernaient les choix ainsi émiettés ou relâchés, l'individu-mangeur se trouve livré à lui-même.' (Fischler 1979: 206).

16 These comments on economic and egalitarian conditions are necessarily relative, and we do not pretend to pronounce on their actual levels in contemporary Australia. Demographics and land values do reflect mobility in Marrickville.

17 This was observed in Cringila near Port Kembla, about 90 km south of Sydney, some twenty years ago, where a range of shops selling a very similar range of staple products coexisted within a few hundred metres on Lake Avenue, each catering to a different language group.

18 Derrida (2000: 47-53) suggests that 'a public space structured by the telephone, the fax, e-mail and the Internet' threatens the interiority of the home, whose perceived violation induces increasing xenophobia.

19 There are still elements of trust operating even in contemporary London: 'Tayyabs, a popular Punjabi curry house in the London borough of Tower Hamlets, Britain's most Muslim area, does not even bother with certificates. The manager says that he knows and trusts his suppliers and his customers know and trust him'. 'Food and religion: A meaty question. Who should regulate kosher and halal food?' *The Economist* 9 February 2013 http://www.economist.com/news/international/21571419-who-should-regulate-kosher-and-halal-food-meaty-question/print. Accessed 12 February 2013.

20 That is not to say that the pioneers of the term (one might say cult) were bourgeois revolutionaries. Brillat Savarin (1755-1837) was involved in politics, while Grimod de La Reynière (1758-1837) was a flamboyant and theatrical bon vivant. See Onfray (1995) chapter 2 on the latter. Bourdieu (2010: 61) quotes a long passage from de Pressac (1931) which emphasises the value of gastronomy for instructing the lower orders: 'There is such a thing as bad taste … and persons of refinement know this instinctively. For those who do not, rules are needed.'

21 'In questo intricato sistema di apporti e di rapporti non le radici, ma *noi* siamo il punto fisso: l'identità non esiste all'origine, bensì al termine del percorso.' (Montanari 2006: 160, emphasis in original.)

References

Alcock J P 2006 'The Ambiguity of Authenticity' in Hosking 2006: 33-43

Benjamin W 2002 *The Arcades Project* Bellknap Press of Harvard University Press Cambridge MA

Bennett T, M Emmison and J Frow 1999 *Accounting for Tastes: Australian Everyday Cultures* Cambridge University Press Cambridge UK

Bourdieu P 2010 *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* Routledge Classics Abingdon (Translation first published 1984)

Castles S 1995 'Multicultural Citizenship' Parliamentary Research Service Canberra

Coveney J 2000 *Food, Morals and Meaning: The Pleasure and Anxiety of Eating* Routledge London

Derrida J and A Dufourmantelle 2000 *Of Hospitality. Anne Dufourmantelle Invites Jacques Derrida to Respond* Stanford University Press Stanford

Fischler C 1979 'Gastro-nomie et gastro-anomie: Sagesse du corps et crise bioculturelle de l'alimentation moderne' *Communications* 31: 189-210

Gilmore J H and B J Pine II 2007 *Authenticity: What Consumers Really Want* Harvard Business School Press Boston

Golomb J 1995 *In Search of Authenticity: Existentialism from Kierkegaard to Camus* Routledge London

Heath E 2011 *Eat Streets: A Culinary Adventure through 150 years of Marrickville Council* Marrickville Council Marrickville

Hosking R ed 2006 *Authenticity in the Kitchen: Proceedings of the Oxford Symposium on Food and Cookery 2005* Prospect Totnes Devon

Kymlicka W 1995 *Multicultural Citizenship: A Liberal Theory of Minority Rights* Clarendon Press Oxford

Mohr R 2006 'Living Legal Fictions: constituting the state or submerging the signifier?' *International Journal for the Semiotics of Law* 19: 237-58

Mohr R 2013 'Rethinking the Secular: Religion, ethics and science in food regulation' *Working papers of the Centre for International Governance and Justice, RegNet, ANU* Canberra Available from regnet.anu.edu. au/publications/rethinking-secular-religion-ethics-and-science-food-regulation

Montanari M 2006 *Il cibo come cultura* Editori Laterza Roma

Nancy JL 2004 *58 indices sur le corps et Extension de l'âme* Éditions Nota Bene Québec

Nas PJM ed 2011 *Cities Full of Symbols: A Theory of Urban Space and Culture* Leiden University Press Leiden

Noble G 2011 '"Bumping into alterity": Transacting cultural complexities' *Continuum* 25: 827-40

Onfray M 1995 *La raison gourmande* Éditions Grasset & Fasquelle Paris

Ricœur P 2008 *Leggere la città* Città Aperta Troina

Robuchon J ed 2001 *Larousse Gastronomique* Hamlyn London

Rubel W 2006 'Eggs and Soldiers, English Tea, Smoked Milk, and *Pain Anniversaire*' in Hoskings ed 2006: 379-90

Turgeon L and M Pastinelli 2002 '"Eat The World": Postcolonial Encounters in Quebec City's Ethnic Restaurants' *Journal of American Folklore* 115: 247-68

Warde A and L Martens 2000 *Eating Out: Social Differentiation, Consumption and Pleasure* Cambridge University Press Port Chester NY