

Barossa Slow

The Representation and Rhetoric of Slow Food's Regional Cooking

CENTRAL TO THE RHETORIC of the Slow Food movement is the concept of regional cooking. It figures in the movement's manifesto, which exhorts members to become devotees of regional cuisine: "Let us rediscover the flavours and savours of regional cooking and banish the degrading effects of Fast Food."¹ Regional cooking is featured prominently in the literature generated by the movement's central office in Bra, Italy, especially in the pronouncements of the founder, Carlo Petrini, beginning in the 1980s and continuing into the present.² It is used in the Slow Food events mounted in some forty-seven countries, where a membership of about eighty thousand is organized into *convivia*, or local chapters. Regional cooking and the Slow Food movement in general enjoy extensive media coverage, which, in its international scope and affirmative character, must be the envy of other social movements.

But what is the place of regional cooking in a postmodern world in which the definition of regions is becoming increasingly arbitrary? How is regional cuisine to be conceptualized in a global epoch in which all kinds of boundaries, especially regional ones, are so easily crossed? If the postmodern era can be said to have one definitive quality, it is surely the facility with which people, capital, raw materials, and processed goods are moved from place to place.³ Can any other commodities rival foodstuffs and drinks in the ease with which they are shipped from one place to another? The more one takes a hard look at the very idea of a regional cuisine, the more improbable it sounds. At the least it warrants closer inspection.

One option is to turn from the centralized pronouncements of the Slow Food movement and to focus instead on what the term means to the local organizers of its many events.⁴ Generally, members of *convivia* from local communities are the ones who plan, orchestrate, and talk about the regional cuisines that they must literally put on the table. It is local organizers, too, who must satisfy the expectations of members who are often informed, critical, and demanding where all kinds of food and drink are concerned. So, when

those in charge are faced with translating into organizational practice the rhetoric of regional cooking, what do they come up with? What does "regional" mean for them, and how do their ideas about "cuisine" resonate with this culinary movement's membership?

This essay presents a case study of one such event, Barossa Slow, which was mounted by Australian members of the Slow Food movement in 2004; I bring to its analysis an anthropological perspective. Like other anthropologists, I place considerable emphasis on how people imagine and conceptualize, construct and constitute, their communities in innovative and creative ways, because these activities reveal fundamental mind-sets. Rather than assuming communities to have an objective existence that can be assessed according to a checklist of essential attributes, anthropologists study how people at the local level imagine their communities exist in the world, and then we consider how they talk about the qualities they believe constitute their distinctiveness.⁵ In the case of regional Slow Food events such as the Australian one described here, the event may turn out to be as much about the manufacture of myth as it is about the consumption of cuisine.

The Barossa as Rural Idyll

Mounted in the Barossa region of South Australia from April 2 to April 4, 2004, Barossa Slow drew together a substantial number of Slow Food members from different parts of the country and overseas. The high attendance was rather surprising since the Barossa is internationally renowned not for its food but as one of Australia's premier wine-growing regions. A major center for industrial agribusiness, it is an area of intensely concentrated corporate capitalism, fully articulated into the international political economy.

In the advance publicity for Barossa Slow, however, the dominant representations of the region made no mention of these global economic realities. Instead, much was made of the fact that the Barossa is located in a valley surrounded by

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low-lying hills. Everyone assumes that valleys are often cut off and isolated from the outside world and that what happens in them frequently lags behind developments elsewhere. Valley inhabitants are often said to possess traits and display qualities different from those over the hill, downriver, through the forest—in short, elsewhere. In other words, valleys are often places of cultural distinctiveness, and it was this stereotype that convivia organizers of Barossa Slow emphasized in the press announcements leading up to and in the course of the event proper.

Publicity photographs of the Barossa idealized it by depicting row upon row of mature vines—soft focus up front, extending as far as the eye could see into the distance—and using many warm browns and cool greens to capture the sense of a rich and bountiful rural environment. One photograph depicted a mature vineyard in the foreground, at a distance a single-story stone cottage and alongside the cottage an old stone church with a short spire. The entire scene was bathed in the warm glow of the afternoon sun. People were generally absent from this type of romantic representation of the rural, but in one image a sole winemaker mulled introspectively over a glass of (doubtless his own) red wine.

The text accompanying this pictorial idealization introduced two terms that laid the groundwork for the concept of a regional culture specific to the Barossa. Both “tradition” and “heritage” became intrinsic to Barossa Slow’s discourse: “The Barossa is the heart of Australian wine and home to

the country’s oldest and richest food traditions. The combination of this rich European heritage and the fresh vitality of Australia is embodied in its lifestyle and landscape.”⁶ Aboriginal settlement and indigenous food were thus instantly erased in favor of a historical perspective in which nothing of cultural consequence preceded the arrival of Europeans and their imported foodstuffs. With this historical baseline in place, an avalanche of terms and phrases could be unleashed to drive home the idea of a historically encompassing regional culture in which food had played a prominent part. “Oldest food traditions,” “rich in food traditions,” “the heritage of food,” “rich European heritage,” and (of particular note) “the preservation of culinary authenticity” were some of the phrases that entered into circulation.

A specially produced map of a “Food and Wine Trail” sent out with the event’s main brochure especially reinforced the idea of the Barossa as a distinct valley, a separate place in its own right. The trail linked some twenty-nine vineyards into a tour of a seemingly bounded, internally connected region. At each stage, Slow Food members could acquire an enhanced sense of the valley’s tradition and heritage status, so that at “historic Château Tanunda,” for example, it was possible to come “face-to-face...with 25 smaller, family-owned producers representing the time-honoured community, history and flavours of Barossa wine.” At Veritas Winery a similar but more hybrid experience was in the offing: “The Binders brought traditions of food and wine when they arrived in

the late 1940s. Adapting ingredients to Barossa produce...they have maintained centuries of Hungarian rituals.”

Guardians of Tradition

Under more normal circumstances, many Barossa residents, especially its older and long-standing population, primarily identify with particular localities inside the valley or on its margins. They usually feel that they belong to small towns like Tanunda or Angaston or to tiny settlements like Moculta, Lyndoch, or Keyneton, where property ownership, business interests, and extended family residence are intertwined. But this by no means precludes or qualifies identification with the Barossa as a broader region. Their sense of attachment and identification simply functions at a different level and in other situations. For the representational ambitions of Barossa Slow to be realized, however, this regional sense of place had to be emphatically elaborated. In particular, the Barossa Valley was to be presented in distinctive ways, such as having convivia organizers identify themselves as especially heritage-minded folk.

The European settlement of the area by Lutherans and Anglicans from Germany and the United Kingdom, respectively, took place in the early to mid-nineteenth century. When event organizers hosted meals, introduced tours, or simply welcomed visitors to Barossa Slow, they conscientiously associated themselves with this heritage by announcing that they were fourth-, fifth-, or even sixth-generation Barossans. Not only was thickness of Barossan blood held up as a key attribute, it was also linked with the claim that these people had been involved in many ways for a number of years in a sustained effort to recuperate Barossan traditions and culture. These were the folk on the ground, in short, who had preserved the region’s cultural heritage from outright loss.⁷

The claim of heritage became one of the recurrent means of endowing specific foods and drinks with an aura of authenticity. Few organizers boasted of having helped rescue more than one sphere of food or wine production. Each was considered intricate enough to demand any one individual’s full attention. Not least relevant was the notion that the valley’s culinary secrets had not been easily rendered up to those who were now the custodians of this cultural heritage. Visitors were expected to treat seriously the idea that older residents—by now quite a few deceased—had allowed their folk wisdom to be written down only by people they had come to trust over time. As the regional newspaper put it: “After generations of keeping family recipes secret, the Barossans have been persuaded to share them around.”⁸ Getting to that point had required time, effort, and commit-

ment, hence the concentration on individual rather than several items. All this was grist to the mill that allowed the event’s chair, Kath Newland, to declare: “We’ve got a real food culture that is still thriving today.”⁹ This claim upheld and reinforced the rhetoric that “Barossa Slow celebrates the heritage, the flavours, the rituals and the region’s produce in a weekend of authentic experiences.”¹⁰

Oral History and Authentic Experience

Working to preserve the Barossa’s original food culture was clearly considered the essence of community-mindedness. In this way residents could express their sense of belonging to the region as a whole over and above their attachment to specific locales inside the valley. Just as the region had been settled by community-minded Europeans of rural origin who placed a premium on quality food and drink, a commitment to maintain this 150-year-old culture was a recognized marker of contemporary membership. Status distinctions, business rivalries, and political differences—the cultural stuff that anthropologists have detailed as ubiquitous in socially intricate rural locales—were all put to one side in favor of such homogenizing, unifying terms as “the Valley” and “we Barossans.”

“Being Barossan” clearly meant more than appreciating wholesome foods. The ability to work with one’s hands, to improvise when the right technical equipment was unavailable, to engage in cooperative manual activities to realize community goals—all were mentioned at one time or another. Barossan sociability as an inherent trait was frequently discussed in the context of food appreciation, which was seen as a public expression of that sociability. Particular events were highlighted because they brought conviviality and cuisine together. Thus, the Saturday morning farmers’ market was incorporated into the Barossa Slow program on the grounds that, according to the event’s brochure, “this thriving market is known for its social buzz as well as its produce, so you will probably chat with new friends, dinner hosts and familiar faces.”

Not all social relations within the regional community were accorded the same merit, however. Equally intriguing as the foodstuffs that were held up as authentic was the prominence of certain roles that, more than others, were considered to embody commitment to community identity and continuity. All convivium members had in common an appreciation of oral history: this was the cultural capital they were putting on display. Accumulating the most prestige were the Barossa’s local historians, because their research had allowed them to populate the valley with

exceptional residents whose chief connectedness was through the culture of food.

The historians' representations of the Barossa included two dimensions. First, in the run-up to Barossa Slow, articles began to appear in magazines that clearly connected the past and the present and accorded responsibility for these links to especially innovative individuals. For example, Angela Heuzenroeder, the best known of the local historians, wrote in *Snail Pace*, Slow Food Australia's magazine: "In our valley people are still using methods and recipes that were part of a whole food culture brought by the first German-speaking settlers arriving from 1837 onwards. Thirty years ago, these foods were a common sight on Barossa tables and they are still known today."¹¹ Subsequently, a couple of weeks before the event, the same historian was the main source for an article that appeared in the state's only daily newspaper. After lamenting the extent to which "we have been forgetting traditional foods and how good they taste" and "reflecting on flavour, on fruit from the tree, on real tomatoes," Ms. Heuzenroeder cites pork as another example of lost flavor, one that is being "salvaged by Barossa tradition."

White pigs with little fat have been developed in recent years. It's the kind of pork you buy in the super-market. Flavourless.

But there is renewed interest in bacon with flavour, in looking at the old breeds of black pigs such as Berkshires which go back to the 18th century.

They produced marbled flesh with a lot more flavour. Joy and Colin Leinert have been a success story with this...these farmers have kept the old breed alive, they have kept tradition going.¹²

Evidently Heuzenroeder is doing much more than merely describing developments inside the community. Having previously established her credentials through publication of a well-researched salvage study of Barossa foodstuffs,¹³ she now provides an especially unified view of the regional community ("in our valley"), an equally integrated approach to its foodstuffs ("a whole food culture"), and a particular take on the critical role of "keeping tradition going" by honoring individuals for their contribution.¹⁴ The prepossessing image proffered is that of a harmonious and integrated regional place less than an hour's drive from the state capital yet fully committed to maintaining the genuineness of its original cooking practices.

The second and more substantial contribution from local historians became obvious as Barossa Slow got under way, for the locals doubled as guides on the event's tours. These activities are among the most popular of Slow Food programs in different parts of the world, and with good

reason. In making clear the physical and symbolic boundaries of a Slow Food region and its community base, a tour does not simply recognize such boundaries but establishes them definitively through its route. In our predominantly ocularcentric Western culture,¹⁵ tours to the specific sites in which specialized foods and drinks are produced can scarcely be equaled as a means of authenticating them before they are consumed.

The ostensible purpose of tours through "our valley" was evident enough: to draw visitors' attention to the cooking skills of individual residents and their families and to sample the products of their labor. Some of the tours available were titled the Pig, the Vine, the Orchard, the Wood Oven, and Offal, Offal, and More Offal. But in the many verbal exchanges between local notables and tour takers, it became clear that more was going on than these simple titles implied. Being celebrated in these encounters was the technology of the past and the social relations required to make it work.

Time and again, the solid, reliable, and durable qualities of productive equipment made decades earlier—in a few instances as far back as the nineteenth century—were verbally extolled and manually displayed, and always by comparison with the failings of their present-day equivalents. At one level, the detailed appreciation of old technology was an exercise in nostalgia, but that could be said about the Slow Food event as a whole. More revealing, as butchers, bakers, chefs, winemakers, and others detailed the merits of "the tried-and-tested ways of doing things," as one guide put it, they simultaneously established their identities as rural artisans who would not readily succumb to the ease or profitability of modern food-production techniques.

Across the board, these culinary craftsmen cultivated personae quite different from those of the mass manufacturers whose standardized and inferior products filled local supermarket shelves. In one case, an apiarist with a small farm at Moculta talked at length about the superiority of his honey and the quality of processed goods (glazed ham, for example) from his family-staffed firm. He traced his German origins back to the mid-nineteenth century before declaring: "We're a very traditional Barossa working farm, more traditional than most, probably more traditional than in Germany itself." From the design of his ancient hives through his use of queen bees to his extraction techniques, his reliance on tradition was integral to the quality of a product incomparable with mass-produced ones.

Especially important for virtually all concerned was the character of the social relations of production in these select enterprises. In addition to the producers' continually emphasizing that "a craftsman is only as good as the tools of

his trade,” they established the complementary point that an artisan works best if surrounded by similarly committed colleagues. Whether butcher, baker, or winemaker, each underscored the importance of working with others of equally deep conviction and of the close relations that bind them together. One winemaker, for example, gave eighteen Slow Food devotees dinner in a huge, high-ceilinged room just off the kitchen of the main house. In the course of the evening, he pointed out that, this being harvest time, it would normally be “my crew” of wine-making staff who would be eating together at the long table: they would bring wine from other vineyards and overseas, which they would discuss over the meal. Apart from encouraging everyone to produce still better wines, this tradition was one the winemaker had inherited from his own mentor, arguably the best known of all Barossa winemakers: “This is a tradition I picked up from Peter. It’s about keeping everyone on his toes...but it’s also about respect and loyalty, and eating together under the same roof is part of that.”

Drawing On All the Senses

Thus, a concern with product quality, traditional technology, and close social relations of production were established as imperative to the success of original regional produce. The last, possibly definitive but certainly unanticipated, requirement was that the artisans had to have all their senses about them. Repeatedly addressed in tours was the notion that, whether the end result was a loaf of bread or a glazed ham, a clear honey or a rich Shiraz, each producer drew extensively on a multisensual process of production. Creating regional produce was a wholly aesthetic activity in which looking, listening, smelling, tasting, and touching were all indispensable. Any contribution to the table of Barossa cooking required a well-developed sense of the aesthetic qualities of fine food and drink. But drawing on all one’s sensibilities was not something that came easily: it, too, was the product of personal commitment and training by well-established figures accustomed to investing their very beings in high-quality regional produce.

Following naturally from the aesthetic dimension was the necessary and willing expenditure of enormous amounts of labor and time in one’s work, an occupational ethos at odds with the attitudes presumed prevalent in the region’s fully modernized businesses. The idea of labor as a resource that could be restricted to an eight-hour workday, for example, played no part in the way this economic field functioned: “Anybody who watches the clock when he’s at work around here won’t last very long,” was the firm judgment of the

winemaker mentioned above. “Winemaking isn’t a job, it’s a way of life, you’re devoted to the business of making the best you can,” was the reinforcement provided by another. Implicit in these comments and others along similar lines was the understanding that out there—somewhere beyond the artisanal enclave of the Barossa—work and nonwork were clearly distinguished, hours spent at the former were clearly laid down, the relation between employer and employee was clear-cut. The result was that the goods produced out there were of little intrinsic value. By contrast, the culinary artisans of the Barossa were immensely proud of what they produced, in substantial part because their very selves were invested in the products of their sense-replete labors.

Field Notes from the Wood Oven Journey

The Apex Bakery is located in the center of Tanunda, the valley’s main settlement. The shop front looks directly onto the street, and the bakery proper is under the same roof to the rear. Building and décor are as unassuming as possible, with scarcely no advertising in evidence. The bakery’s reputation is such that publicity is unnecessary: it is famous for its wood-fired oven, which was installed in 1924, and for being a family-owned enterprise that Keith Fechner bought from the local man who had trained him there.

The bakery’s wood-fired Scotch Oven is the centerpiece of this tour. About forty “Slow Foodies” (as convivium members by now refer to one another) cram around it as the local historian who organized this encounter introduces Keith’s son, Johnny Fechner, as Nipper, nicknames, of course, being a defining feature of rural community life. Nipper explains the simplicity of the wood fire burning at one side of the cavernous oven that features an elementary arrangement of flues and dampers around it. The baker explains how he buys his basic ingredients, especially the highest-quality flour, from the surrounding farms, which are also the free source of firewood he personally gathers to ensure its suitability for the oven. Even the long-handled ladles¹⁶ for moving trays around the oven are the same ones that were in use when he became an apprentice at the age of twelve and was instructed not to ask questions but to “just watch,” which was how he learned his trade.

The dozen workers in the Apex Bakery are not referred to as employees because they are all relatives or very close associates. Jimmy, for example, is Nipper’s right-hand man and has “been with” him (note, not “employed by” him) for more than twenty years. As Nipper talks, his father, who is ninety and remarkably upright for his age, walks in and is introduced to the group as Chiney. Nipper has already

explained that his father “still has secrets about baking which he hasn’t let me in on yet.” He reveals in an ironic tone how in the 1970s, “when I was young and ambitious,” he tried to persuade his father to modernize the business. His father refused outright. “The lesson Dad taught me back then was never to take on the transnationals because you’ll always lose. He was right, of course. We’re still going strong. But lots of others have gone to the wall.”

The group applauds the old man’s perspicacity before moving through the bakery to hear Nipper detail the considerable age of other machinery. He describes how he begins his day at four o’clock each morning by lighting the wood fire, “and then, well y’know, I’m here until the day’s work is done.” A good deal depends on the performance of the oven because, even after all these years, there is always a degree of uncertainty as to when the baking will be done. The original Scotch Oven is valuable and unpredictable: it needs to be constantly monitored. Nipper speaks about the oven as if it has a mind of its own. Most assuredly, he will not leave the wood oven unattended: “Once I start work, this is where I stay until we’re finished for the day. You can’t just throw the [electric] switch like they do at Tip Top, and leave it. You have to stay with the job.”

Nipper then regales his visitors with several anecdotes about how Chiney and his predecessors refused to take even an annual holiday; they could not face the prospect of entrusting the oven with its idiosyncrasies to anyone else. On the very few occasions when they were forced (by exasperated spouses) to take a break from their labors, the worse came to the worst. “You have to be on top of the oven all the time,” Nipper insists, stressing the need to watch and listen to the oven and its fire and to smell, feel, and finally taste the breads, cakes, and pastries that emerge from it. By drawing on all the senses, he is able to produce foodstuffs of the highest quality and thereby ensure that at the end of each day all the bakery’s goods have sold. There is no wastage now, just as there was no wastage in the past.

Middle-Class Culture and the Myth of a Regional Cuisine

Taken as a whole, Barossa Slow was a great success. Attendees especially enjoyed the performative nature of many of the encounters, their theatrical dimension, which raises the question of how to assess the appeal of Barossa Slow as not so much a culinary event as a cultural experience.

The first point to emphasize is that Barossa Slow meant different things to different people. It was an event of multiple meanings and multiple significances, among which the

quality of food and drink was only one component, albeit a critical one. For some of its organizers, for example, Barossa Slow was a transparent opportunity for expanding their already established niches in the tourist trade or other forms of regional commerce; for others (as one young housewife expressed it to me), it was “just a labour of love, something that’s good and beneficial for Barossa folk generally”; for yet others, the effort expended proved worthwhile through some combination of material interests and cultural concerns.

Second, among those who attended but did not organize the events, an even broader range of interests and motives was at work. Quite a number of these people had unambiguously economic reasons for being present. With tourist enterprises already established elsewhere in South Australia or farther afield, these participants approached Barossa Slow as a source of fresh ideas and new contacts that could be incorporated into their current marketing strategies. A number of people attended in the company of local or interstate convivia members, allowing them to speak of their participation as an extension of the interest in food and drink that united them at home. For many—and especially the majority from the state metropolis—Barossa Slow was mainly an entertaining and informative break from the routines and pressures of everyday middle-class experience, although even within this category differences were apparent, such as those between, for example, people connected with Adelaide’s burgeoning gastronomy industry and those who went “just for the food.”

Thus, both rational and emotional forces ran inextricably together under the capacious umbrella of Barossa Slow as a cultural event, and this confluence provided another reason for its appeal. In interactional terms, a good deal of satisfaction and pleasure was derived by finding out why others were present and what their expectations were. One of the striking properties of this event was the ease with which it was possible to slip in and out of multiple conversations over a drink, during a meal, on a tour, and so on. Precisely because Barossa Slow was focused on the supposedly apolitical subject matter of food and drink,¹⁷ the very nature of the event allowed a degree of comfortable interaction unthinkable under most other circumstances. Accordingly, a good deal of conversation was geared to finding out whether material or nonmaterial concerns had brought one’s conversational partner to Barossa Slow, whether there was common ground worth pursuing with relative strangers, and whether to carry the current exchange further or to seek out yet other Slow Foodies for the remainder of the event.

Third, as this ethnographic account demonstrates, arguably the most important property of Barossa Slow was its providing



a substantive context for the expression and pursuit of cultural capital, which customarily informed the everyday lives of the attendees. This Slow Food event was constituted in such a way as to resonate with the cultural concerns that were already critical to some sections of Australia's increasingly affluent but also fragmented middle class.

As elsewhere in the late capitalist world, Australia's middle class has lost whatever cultural cohesion it might have had a quarter of a century ago; during the same period, it has acquired a remarkable level of consumer affluence. For some members of this class, cultural matters such as the preservation of heritage, the relevance of tradition, and the appeal of the rural, as well as questions about authenticity, originality, and value, are all broadly aesthetic issues that bring meaning to and create motivation for their middle-class lifestyles on a regular basis. From the practical preservation of heritage sites to the impractical questioning of modern values, these issues are what this segment of Australia's middle class is usually all about.

In symbolic terms, then, Barossa Slow provided a rich context in which a specific regional cuisine could be savored through a particular culture of class. Or, to put it the other way round, a culture of class could be expressed through the regional cooking so artfully presented by the Slow Food convivium. The order is not of concern: most important in giving value and satisfaction to the Slow Food membership

were the mutually constitutive cultural connections between cuisine and class.

None of this would have been possible, of course, without a good deal of idealization on all sides, and it will, I hope, be evident by this point that a good deal of myth-making underpinned much of the appeal of Barossa Slow. Indeed, the manufacture of myth was as integral as any other element in the cultural accounts offered by both convivium organizers and attendees. I use the term "myth" here to refer to the assemblage of social stereotypes, skewed representations, and biased accounts that are characteristic of all consumer experiences under late capitalist conditions. As Roland Barthes expresses it: "However paradoxical it might seem, myth hides nothing: its function is to distort, not to make disappear."¹⁸

In this respect it can legitimately be argued that the authorized account of Barossa community life and the region's community-mindedness was distinctly incomplete. As we have seen, Barossa Slow promulgated the image that here was a discrete physical region populated by an identifiable community committed to a "whole food culture." In reality, however, those involved in mounting the occasion comprised but a small and self-selected network of residents, while the majority of the region's population remained uninvolved and, one suspects, for the most part indifferent, precisely because this was a privileged—even

elite—event, in no sense a mass, popular one. In total, the residential population of the Barossa stands at about four thousand people, so only a small fraction was directly involved. Although absolute figures are not of major significance here, it must be noted that large segments of the population were excluded from any kind of participation—the substantial numbers of older retirees, unemployed and semiemployed youth, and casual, transient workers (on whom both tourist and wine industries extensively rely for labor), to mention but a few. These groups had no role to play in Barossa Slow. Nonetheless, they are all members of the Barossa community and contribute significantly to its economic and social functioning.

In other words, when the event's organizers and sponsors referred to the participation of "the community" in Barossa Slow, they were speaking of themselves. They imposed on the event as a whole their conceptions of community membership, their ideas about community participation, and their notions of where the boundaries of the community were to be drawn. Comparatively speaking, this behavior is neither exceptional nor untoward. Anthropological analyses of many other settings show that individual members conceptualize and talk about "our community" as if their views were shared by everyone else. That this is a wholly erroneous assumption often entails their learning some painful lessons when their actions result in internal community conflict. The difference is that in the particular instance of Barossa Slow, the skewed views of a select few became the distorted lens through which a substantial number of "captive" outsiders were expected to interpret this rich and variegated regional life.

In a similar vein, the ways in which the ordinary attendees were described and the roles they were assigned to play in the course of the event entailed considerable misrepresentation and distortion. One myth, for example, revolved around the way in which the experience of Barossa Slow might help people turn away from "Fast Food." Not surprisingly, Fast Food was repeatedly referred to in the most derogatory of terms; as indicated at the outset, the Slow Food movement at large aims "to banish the degrading effects of Fast Food." This is doubtless an admirable ambition, and it would be difficult to argue against it. But it is scarcely one that could find much purchase in the class-skewed world of those who attended Barossa Slow, for theirs is a world in which Fast Food is unlikely to play a significant part anyway.

The broadly liberal and (in the loosest sense) environmental *mentalité* of this class fragment, with its recurrent concern for heritage, authenticity, past technologies,

rural labor, and so on, is entirely at odds with a lifestyle in which Fast Food as a problem looms large. In addition, not only is this a middle-class fragment with a particular ethos and ideology, it is also a middle-aged one, so that if its members are to be found at all in such demonic settings as McDonald's, Kentucky Fried Chicken, or Hungry Jacks, then it will most likely be in the company of children, even grandchildren, who are being momentarily indulged. Thus the participants in Barossa Slow did not have to be converted from a universal Fast Food to a regional Slow Food, because the former was not part of their cultural constitution in the first place. Attendance at Barossa Slow—and, I tentatively suggest, at similar events elsewhere—was not so much about culinary conversion as about cultural consolidation.

Other examples of mythmaking in relation to both convivium organizers and ordinary members could be added to these. The stereotypes, skews, biases, and distortions that abounded throughout the duration of Barossa Slow were to be anticipated in a contemporary event where expectations are high, aspirations overdeveloped, and proliferating rhetoric and hyperbole become the order of the day. Despite these caveats, the multifaceted and polyvalent character of Barossa Slow was its most important contribution. While it was assuredly an interest in regional cooking that brought the event's participants together, the way in which it was organized and represented made it possible to encounter and reflect on, among other topics, the meaning of tradition, the nature of authenticity, the significance of artisanship, and the quality of past technologies.

For some, Barossa Slow brought home the material realities of wine production and tourism, while for others the event could be enjoyed for its imaginative rhetoric and emotive symbols. Most important of all, the event could be savored in a myriad of ways according to the participants' class and culture. Side by side with the consumption of regional cooking lay the prospect of variously reflecting on different ways of being in the postmodern world. Might it be in this respect, then, that for all the difference and distinction that the Slow Food movement attaches to regional cooking, events such as Barossa Slow are emblematic of the interpretative and reflexive prospects now held out more broadly by cooking and cuisine? ●

NOTES

This paper was written for the Third International Conference of the Research Centre for the History of Food and Drink at the University of Adelaide, July 12–14, 2004. I am obliged to the research center's director, Dr. A. Lynn Martin, for his comments on the initial paper. A later version received critical comment from two anonymous referees and the editor of this journal to whom I am likewise indebted.

1. The Slow Food manifesto was first published in 1987 in *Gambero Rosso*, a magazine supplement to the Communist daily *Il Manifesto*. It is available in English on the Slow Food Web site, www.slowfood.com.
2. See in particular Carlo Petrini and Benjamin Watson, eds., *Slow Food: Collected Thoughts on Taste, Tradition and the Honest Pleasures of Food* (White River Junction, VT: Chelsea Green Publishing Company, 2001); and Carlo Petrini, *Slow Food: The Case for Taste*, William McCuaig, trans. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001).
3. In anthropology this issue has been explored by Ulf Hannerz, "Notes on the Global Ecumene," *Public Culture* 1 (1989): no. 2, 66–75; Arjun Appadurai, "Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy," *Public Culture* 2 (1990): no. 2, 1–24; and Akhil Gupta and James Ferguson, "Beyond 'Culture': Space, Identity and the Politics of Difference," *Cultural Anthropology* 7 (1992): no. 1, 6–23. See also "Introduction: A World in Motion," *The Anthropology of Globalization: A Reader*, Jonathan Xavier Inda and Renato Rosaldo, eds. (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002), 1–34; and from sociology, John Urry, *Sociology beyond Societies: Mobilities for the Twenty-first Century* (London: Routledge, 2000).
4. An alternative approach from within anthropology is the more prescriptive route taken by Sidney Mintz, "Cuisine: High, Low and Not at All," *Tasting Food, Tasting Freedom: Excursions into Eating, Culture and the Past* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1996), 96: "I think a cuisine requires a population that eats that cuisine with sufficient frequency to consider themselves experts in it. They believe, and care that they believe, that they know what it consists of, how it is made and how it should taste. In short, a genuine cuisine has common social roots; it is the food of community, albeit often a very large community."
5. See in particular Anthony P. Cohen, *The Social Construction of Community* (London: Tavistock, 1985); and for a full length ethnography, Adrian Peace, *A World of Fine Difference: The Social Architecture of a Modern Irish Village* (Dublin: University College Dublin Press, 2001). The concept "imagined community" originates, of course, with Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983).
6. From the six-page *Barossa Slow Program*, Slow Food, South Australia, 2004.
7. Here as elsewhere a number of parallels can be drawn with the situation in Italy as described by Fabio Parasecoli, "Postrevolutionary Chowhounds: Food, Globalization and the Italian Left," *Gastronomica: The Journal of Food and Culture* 3 (2003): no. 3, 29–39, at 36: "Both Slow Food and Gambero Rossi emphasize the role of local communities and traditions, the manual skills and know-how of food producers, and their ties with a historically determined material culture."

8. *The Advertiser*, 24 March 2004.
9. On ABC Radio, Strelene South Australia, "The Joys of Slow Food in the Barossa Valley," 19 March 2004.
10. From the Slow Food Web site. See www.slowfood.southaustralia.com/.
11. Angela Heuzenroeder, "The Barossa in Bloom: Why the Barossa Is a Slow Food Haven," *Snail Pace* 4 (2004): no. 3, 1–2.
12. *The Advertiser*, 20 March 2004.
13. Angela Heuzenroeder, *Barossa Food: Recipes, History, Stories* (Adelaide: Wakefield Press, 1999). There are several texts of this type on the Barossa, the most recent and most notable being Maggie Beer, *Maggie's Table* (Ringwood: Penguin, 2001). In the book's introduction, the text is claimed to be "a celebration of home, a region and its seasons, farmers and their produce, traditional bakers and butchers who enjoy challenges, and it is about community."
14. As Jeremy MacClancy expresses it in "Food, Identity, Identification," *Researching Food Habits: Methods and Problems*, Helen Macbeth and Jeremy MacClancy, ed. (Oxford: Berghahn, 2004), 65: "All cookbooks have fictional dimensions. The question is: of what kind and to what degree? Some, for instance, act as deeply idealised folkloric records; the authors of these salvage ethnographies are concerned to 'save' seemingly traditional recipes before they are lost. Other books are lengthy expressions of cultural nostalgia.... The script here seems to be: 'this is the world we have already lost, but which we can try to recreate through cooking.'"
15. See the work of Martin Jay, *Downcast Eyes: The Denigration of Vision in Twentieth Century Thought* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1993); and "Scopic Regimes of Modernity," in *Modernity and Identity*, S. Lash and J. Friedman, eds. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992).
16. "Ladle" is the term used by Nipper, rather than "peel."
17. The emphasis here is on the word "supposedly," for, as is made clear in the following section, Barossa Slow is anything but apolitical by virtue of its class-skewed character. On the political dimension to food and foodways, see the varied contributions to *The Cultural Politics of Food and Eating: A Reader*, James L. Watson and Melissa L. Caldwell, eds. (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005).
18. Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, Annette Lavers, ed. and trans. (London: Paladin, 1973), 121.