



ESSE-8: LONDON 2006

29 August – 2 September 2006

S8. Beyond the Dining-Room: Representations of Food in Anglophone Literature and Culture

Friday 1 September: 2.30-4.30pm

Convenor: Jopi Nyman (University of Joensuu)

Email: jopi.nyman@joensuu.fi

Co-convenor: Pere Gallardo-Torrano (University of Rovira i Virgili)

Email: pere.gallardo@urv.net

Recent interest in the culture of food as is evident in the popularity of celebrity chefs and various forms of food writing has underlined the need for their critical study. The aim of this seminar is to address the increasingly important role and function of eating culture in Anglophone literary and cultural texts. To further discussion, we invite contributions dealing with the cultural representation of culinary practices. They may explore such possible issues as food and identity; food and writing; food, community and memory; and post/coloniality and food.

...Sweet Taste of India

Daniela Rogobete (University of Craiova)

This paper analyses the way in which some of the culinary metaphors used by Indian writers of English language suggest their preference for cultural hybridisation and eclecticism. Pickling and chutney making, spicing and mixing flavours become artistic expressions of fragmentation and intermingling, and illustrations of the narrative techniques meant to offer the Western reader a symbolic way of getting acquainted to the enchanting perfumes of India. These create a magic spell meant to lure everybody into a world of sights and smells where the “authentic taste of truth” lies just below the surface of things.

Sorority among the Pots: Female Communities in *Like Water for Chocolate* and *Chocolat*

Miriam López Rodríguez (University of Málaga)

The intention of my paper is to analyze how *Like Water for Chocolate* and *Chocolat* have many points in common, especially from the point of view of feminist literary criticism. These two novels present food as the only way of expression for women to whom patriarchal society has denied any other means of communication. The fact that this means of expression is an activity traditionally considered feminine and, therefore practiced within the house, allows the two protagonists to establish networks of

knowledge and support with other women and therefore create a source of resistance against those patriarchal ideas that oppress them.

**'An aroma of spices...magnified the sense of what it meant to live in England':
Travel, 'Real' Food and 'Misshapen' Identity**

Inga Bryden (University of Winchester)

This paper maps a cultural geography of 'Indian food' in contemporary Britain, focusing on how the meanings of 'migrant' food are transformed in the act of displacement. The mobility of food from one context to another is perhaps inseparable from notions of home, settlement and multi or cross-cultural expectations. An increased cultural presence and marketing of 'ethnic' food raises issues of consumption (of culture) and authenticity. Through focusing on contemporary literary and visual representations of specific 'Indian' foods the paper will facilitate discussion around a nexus of concerns - displaced and replaced food, ritual and memory - in the context of cultural debates about British-Asian identity.

**Writing Women, Writing Food: Reading a Few African-American Women's
Cookbooks**

Hélène Le Dantec-Lowry (University Paris 3, Sorbonne)

Some of the most innovative recent publications in women's history examine the correlation between women and food. Cookbooks are pertinent historical documents; those by Black women are part of an American genre, sharing traits with many by other American women: recipes are often interwoven with personal, familial and community recollections forming a lineage with their predecessors, and sometimes create a sisterhood with others beyond racial barriers; they are communal efforts that preserve history or re-create it, and attest to women's creativity. Examining recent books, I show that they also have their own specificities: they help Black women reclaim southern or American culinary history; and they show the diversity of Black culinary experience by giving African-American cuisine a universal aspect beyond the confines of the slave heritage and of a class and racial group, and by providing a diasporic dimension with ties to Africa.

Representation of Time in Cookery Articles

Eleonora Chiavetta (University of Palermo)

The paper presents a discourse analysis of 54 cookery articles from the monthly magazine *Good Housekeeping* (British Edition). The analysis focuses on the notion of time and its representation in the introductory sections which usually precede the very recipes. In *Good Housekeeping* articles time indicates the connection between food and time of the year, the connection between time and healthy eating, the relationship between food/cooking and the frantic rhythm of modern society (lack of time), and the connection between food and personal memories of past times. The analysis of the cookery articles sketches a profile of the discourse community of *Good Housekeeping*

readers, as (mostly) women who still consider cooking as an important social ritual to be maintained, and as a way to contrast unhealthy eating habits.

“We call it English ‘prosciutto’”: Narratives of Food, Travel and Nation in Paul Richardson’s *Cornucopia*

Jopi Nyman (University of Joensuu)

While most analyses of food in travel narratives focus on its significance as marking difference and Otherness, my aim is to explore a travel writer’s examination of her/his own culinary tradition. I will discuss British travel writing about Britain with particular reference to Paul Richardson’s *Cornucopia: A Gastronomic Tour of Britain* (2000), where Richardson travels through Britain in search of its culinary traditions. I will read Richardson’s narrative in the context of nation to suggest that its reconstruction of British culinary tradition(s) contributes to a reassessment of national identity.