

F.O.O.D. (Fighting Order Over Disorder):
An Analysis of Food and Its Significance in the Australian Novels of
Christina Stead, Patrick White and Thea Astley.

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A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
Department of Humanities
James Cook University
August 2007

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this thesis is to find a correlation between food as symbol and food as necessity, as represented in selected Australian novels by Christina Stead, Patrick White and Thea Astley. Food as a springboard to a unique interpretation of the selected novels has been under-utilised in academic research. Although comparatively few novels were selected for study, on the basis of fastidiousness, they facilitated a rigorous hermeneutical approach to the interpretation of food and its inherent symbolism. The principle behind the selection of these novels lies in the complexity of the prose and how that complexity elicits the “transformative powers of food” (Muncaster 1996, 31). The thesis examines both the literal and metaphorical representations of food in the novels and relates how food is an inextricable part of **ALL** aspects of life, both actual and fictional. Food sustains, nourishes and, intellectually, its many components offer unique interpretative tools for textual analysis.

Indeed, the overarching structure of the thesis is analogous with the processes of eating, digestion and defecation. For example, following a discussion of the inextricable link between food, quest and freedom in Chapter One, which uncovers contrary attitudes towards food in the novels discussed, the thesis presents a more complex psychoanalytic theory of mental disorders related to food in Chapter Two. The peripatetic nature of the mind and body and how this relates to food are reflected in the following chapter, which considers the nexus between dietetics, numerology and lexicology. A unique methodology is promulgated to examine how binaries such as black/white, reality/illusion and day/night are constructed, and how these relate to the significance of food in colonisation fiction. The final chapter relocates food to the corporeal through an examination of food in art and

considers how this representation relates to defecation. Ultimately, the argument underscores the significance of food in literature, by showing that in their many facets references to food are a multi-interpretative tool for producing an aetiological and phenomenological discussion. To conclude, food is from somewhere, it is a commodity, and in literature food is going somewhere.

STATEMENT OF SOURCES

DECLARATION

I declare that this thesis is my own work and has not been submitted in any form for another degree or diploma at any university or other institution of tertiary education.

Information derived from the published or unpublished work of others has been acknowledged in the text and a list of references is given.

Signature

Date

STATEMENT OF ACCESS

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ABBREVIATIONS

<i>A</i>	<i>The Acolyte</i>
<i>AS</i>	<i>The Aunt's Story</i>
<i>BLHF</i>	<i>A Boat Load of Home Folk</i>
<i>D</i>	<i>Drylands</i>
<i>DG</i>	<i>A Descant for Gossips</i>
<i>FG</i>	<i>Flaws in the Glass</i>
<i>FL</i>	<i>A Fringe of Leaves</i>
<i>FLA</i>	<i>For Love Alone</i>
<i>LD</i>	<i>The Living and the Dead</i>
<i>MMO</i>	<i>Memoirs of Many in One</i>
<i>PWS</i>	<i>Patrick White Speaks</i>
<i>RC</i>	<i>Riders in the Chariot</i>
<i>V</i>	<i>Voss</i>
<i>Viv</i>	<i>The Vivisector</i>
<i>VP</i>	<i>Vanishing Points</i>

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost I wish first to acknowledge my supervisor, Associate Professor Cheryl Taylor, for her consistent and erudite advice during the writing of this thesis. Her generosity, kindness and encouragement will continue to be appreciated.

For invaluable feedback on thesis writing in general I'm very much indebted to Dr. Rosemary Dunn. My heartfelt thanks also extend to Professor Tony Hassall whose final edit was highly constructive. I also wish to thank all at the Department of Humanities, especially those who offered advice at the School Seminar Series. Such invaluable input alleviated what could have been a lonely quest for thesis completion.

To all the other PhD candidates in the School of Humanities, in particular Shirley McLean, Gillian Barrett and Linda Wight for adding an element of levity to thesis writing; thank you for your discussions.

To my parents, who continue to have faith in my abilities no matter how far the distance, a very special thank you.

Finally, I'd like to express gratitude to my husband Chris for his kind and enduring support, without which this thesis would never have come to fruition.

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