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Food in contemporary migration experiences between Britain and Australia: A duoethnographic exploration

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ABSTRACT
In this paper we use duoethnography (collaborative autoethnography) to explore food in our migration experiences between Australia and Scotland. In doing so we highlight how autoethnography is underutilized in food scholarship. Previous research on food and migration highlights how migrants maintain and adapt homeland foodways. By contrast, we show how young migrants from high-income countries embed themselves in new food settings: through local food shopping, new recipes, cooking practices, and eating out. We demonstrate the importance to migrants’ food experiences of family relationships, ideas of home, processes of home-making, and changing individual identities. We argue that scholars should attend further to food in voluntary migrations amongst English-speaking nations in the contemporary globalized era. Further, we conclude that duoethnography amongst trusted friends who are also scholars offers a particularly valuable and appropriate method to probe emotional, sensory, and embodied aspects of food experience.

KEYWORDS
Australia; Scotland; duoethnography; food; migration; identity

Introduction
In this paper we use co-constructed autoethnography, or “duoethnography,” to explore food in contemporary migrations between Australia and the UK, focusing on our shared experiences as migrants between the cities of Adelaide, Australia, and Edinburgh, Scotland. Since nineteenth-century European settlement there has been a long history of British (including Scottish) migration to South Australia. In the twenty-first century, short- and long-term migrations in both directions are common amongst young middle-class adults, including highly skilled migrants such as academics. The two countries share a language and cultural similarities, and many residents in each place have family ties to the other. Our experiences as early-career food scholars migrating and traveling between these two cities offered us a unique...
opportunity to explore the food aspects of these migrations, and the value of autoethnography in food research. We draw on literatures on food, place, migration, and national identity in Australia and the UK, as well as wider literatures on emotion, memory, the senses, and the body.

Much previous literature on food and migration highlights how migrants maintain and adapt homeland culinary traditions in the new setting. As young food-conscious migrants from developed cosmopolitan countries, we embedded ourselves in new food settings as part of the migration process – through local food shopping, new recipes and cooking practices, and eating out. We demonstrate the critical importance in food experiences of migration of partner and family relationships, ideas of “home” and processes of home-making, and changing individual identities. Based on our duoethnography, we argue that food scholars should attend further to voluntary migration experiences between culturally cognate English-speaking countries in the contemporary globalized era, and how these differ from archetypical ethnic minority migrations depicted in the research literature to date.

Duoethnography requires trust (Norris and Sawyer 2012) and is by no means a comfortable nor a straightforward research process: it is intellectually and emotionally challenging, both individually and as a collaborative relationship. Not least, in this case, it has been an exercise in confronting our own privilege. In spite of this (arguably, because of it), we suggest that collaborative autoethnography by trusted friends who are also scholars offers a particularly valuable and appropriate method to probe emotional, sensory, and embodied aspects of food experience. We consider our experience of the duoethnographic research process here alongside the question of what autoethnography can, and cannot, offer to contemporary understandings of food and diversity in migration experiences.

**About us**

The personal nature of duoethnography means that we begin here by introducing ourselves (and our relationship) as coauthors. Christine was born and raised in Adelaide, to Australian parents of mixed European (including British) ancestry. After undergraduate and postgraduate studies at the University of Adelaide, she relocated to Edinburgh in 2008 to take up a postdoctoral position. She stayed on at the University of Edinburgh after this initial post ended in 2013, securing an independent fellowship researching cultural representations of the Scottish diet. She became a UK permanent resident in 2013, and citizen in 2016. She left academia in 2017 to pursue her interest in creative writing, and now lives in a small village in the north of England (Derbyshire). Christine’s family (parents and two younger sisters) live in Australia.
Jessie was born in Brighton, in the south of England, and moved to Yorkshire at 10 years old. Her parents are of English/Irish ancestry, and she has an older sister and two younger brothers. She studied at Liverpool John Moores University, then at the University of Leeds, and met her Australian partner in Manchester in 2001. In 2002 they moved to Adelaide, where Jessie undertook a PhD. In 2007 they returned to the UK, and their elder two children were born in Scotland in 2007 and 2009, where Jessie held a postdoctoral position at the University of Edinburgh. In 2011 she and her partner and children moved back to South Australia, where they still live; their third child was born in Adelaide in 2019. Jessie’s father and his partner, mother, and three siblings all live in Yorkshire.

The geographic and academic connections in our lives have been an ongoing feature of our relationship. We met as PhD students at the University of Adelaide in 2004, and became friends. When Jessie moved to Edinburgh in 2007, Christine rented and lived in her Adelaide home. Jessie living in Edinburgh already was a factor in Christine’s choice of cities in the UK to look for jobs, and after Christine moved there in 2008, we became colleagues again and renewed our friendship. Since Jessie moved back to Australia in 2011, we have caught up on our respective visits home, and began working collaboratively in 2014. Our academic and migration pathways have thus been intertwined for well over a decade, providing a unique and striking opportunity to reflect on our experiences of food and migration through duoethnography.

**Food and migration**

Previous research on food and migration, which clusters in the fields of anthropology, public health, and nutrition, focuses predominantly on the immigrant Other: that is, ethnically marked immigrants who are distinguishable from the dominant culture by their language, appearance, or cultural practices – including foodways. Manalansan (2006), for example, notes the stigma associated with the smells of migrant foods by the dominant culture. Especially in nutrition research, attention thus far has been to migrants from middle- and low-income countries to high-income countries, the impact of migration on their food practices, and hence on their nutrition and health (Burns 2004; Renzaho and Burns 2006). Thus, the food experiences of relatively well-to-do migrants, from and between Western (especially English-speaking) countries, are absent from the literature. Further, the existing literature explores migrant experiences within a wider community – or, at least, within a family. The experiences of people who migrate individually, and do not situate themselves within a wider group of migrants from their homeland, remain unexplored. Given the enormous
numbers of relatively privileged, English-speaking, solo migrants in the contemporary globalized era (not least academics), we suggest that their food experiences and practices offer an untapped and intriguing area to explore.

The anthropological literature shows that migrants use food to maintain a sense of national or ethnic identity from their homeland, by reproducing (to a greater or lesser extent) foodways from home. For example, in the British and Australian contexts, Rabikowska (2010) demonstrates such practices amongst Polish migrants in London, and Cardona (2004) amongst Cuban migrants in Sydney. As Holtzman (2006) writes, “[f]ood-centered nostalgia is a recurring theme in studies of diasporic or expatriate populations […] the longing evoked in diasporic individuals by the smells and tastes of a lost homeland” (367) – highlighting the significance of sensory memories of food in the migrant experience (see also Dundon 2005; Warin and Dennis 2005; Wise and Chapman 2005).

However, there has been rich and important work on food and migration that draws on personal stories and lived experiences to challenge essentialising and colonizing discourses around the meaning of food, cooking, and identity for migrants (see Abarca 2004; Berzok 2011; Khan 2014; Mata-Codesal and Abranches 2017; Walker 2012). Khan’s exploration of the experiences of Afghan people living between the UK and Pakistan, and description of “migration, returning and never arriving – wherein ‘return’ enfolds a nostalgic imaginary” (481-482) disrupts ideas about unilateral and aspirational migration and food practices. Though our own narratives are not in contexts of war or ethnic oppression, this resonates with our own “dilemmas of homeland and belonging” (482). Similarly, Abarca’s work draws on her own experiences and those of her relatives to demonstrate how the notion of “authentic” cooking, transported and reenacted in a new cultural context, reinforces constructed cultural boundaries and colonial hierarchies. Rather, she suggests that reframing the language of migrant food practices as fluid, creative, and original “diminishes the possibility for encompassing colonizing attitudes” (19). Abarca calls for critical observation, concern, and reflection on our own food practices in order to shed light on the ways that culture is not fixed or bounded, and avoid essentialism (20).

Our experiences, reported in this paper, suggest that (young, white, Anglophonic) people from Western nations may migrate without a clear sense of a distinct national food tradition which they seek to maintain elsewhere – rather seeking to explore and embed themselves within the destination food culture as part of complex processes of identity reformulation. As we show, these individual processes are closely interwoven with the rise in preferences for local, sustainable products in contemporary global food
culture. Our findings respond to the work of Abarca, providing critical observation of the ways that food experiences and practices of migrants from and between Anglophone nations are not linear re-enactments of authentic cooking. Neither can our accounts be defined as attempts to experience food practices of an imagined authentic Other culture within our migration destinations. Our work resonates with Holtzman’s caution against over-reliance in research on food and memory on “popular culture notions concerning how foods serve as markers for immigrant communities” (2006, 364), pointing to the need for careful empirical attention to a wider range of migrant food experiences. As Holtzman writes, “everyone has origins and ancestors, but not everyone performs them through food” (366).

**Autoethnography**

The first fruit of [the sociological] imagination – and the first lesson of the social science that embodies it – is the idea that the individual can understand his [sic] own experience and gauge his own fate only by locating himself within his period, that he can know his own chances in life only by becoming aware of those of all individuals in his circumstances. [...] The sociological imagination enables us to grasp history and biography and the relations between the two within society. That is its task and its promise. (Mills 1959, 5–6)

This passage from Mills is often quoted by those discussing the value of autoethnography (see, for example, Denzin 2014; Ettorre 2010). It crystallizes the argument that autoethnography, although criticized by some as self-indulgent (Sparkes 2002), is an acute act of critical social analysis. Autoethnography developed from earlier forms of narrative biographical inquiry (Denzin 2014, vii). It has gained prominence since the pioneering work of Ellis and Bochner (Ellis 1999, 1993; Ellis and Bochner 1992), who also preempted the emergence of duoethnography – more firmly established as “a dialogic methodology” by Norris and Sawyer in 2003.

Duoethnography has also been referred to as collaborative autoethnography, co-constructed autoethnography, collective biography, and collaborative writing (Denzin 2014, 26). Norris and Sawyer outline the key characteristics of duoethnography as:

a collaborative research methodology in which two or more researchers [...] juxtapose their life histories to provide multiple understandings of the world. Rather than uncover the meanings that people give to their lived experiences, duoethnography embraces the belief that meanings can be and often are transformed through the research act. [...] Readers witness researchers in the act of narrative exposure and reconceptualization [...] as they interrogate and reinscribe their previously held beliefs. (Norris and Sawyer 2012, 9-10).

Thus, the innovation in duoethnography is that it is not just a form of biography, but a dynamic process of meaning-making and critical reflection.
– developed through the dialogic space that thinking, talking, and writing together (as well as the subsequent reading of that writing) creates. Denzin states that duoethnographies “are disruptive, emergent, dialogic, transformative narratives. They are truthful fictions, critiquing the relationship between the personal, the political, and the historical” (27).

The explicit acknowledgement in duoethnography of the relationship between personal and political (Hanisch 1970, 2000) further underpins our choice of methodology as feminist academics. It is an act of feminist scholarship to write our lived experiences in a way that explores the broader social significance of our day-to-day lives, and contributes to socio-political debates about identity, privilege, and food. We explore our migration narratives as we experienced them in all their messy contradictions, rather than (as we might do in an academic CV) as strategic, successful career milestones. Our work has similarities to that of Cann and DeMeulenaere (2010, 2012), who through collective autoethnography explored the “possibilities and complexities” (Cann and DeMeulenaere 2012, 41) of intersecting personal and professional identities. Cann and DeMeulenaere state that the process of writing together provided the most profound learning where their experiences differed (op. cit. 51). Likewise, we explore the differences and divergences in our experiences, despite the connections we both have with the twin festival cities of Edinburgh and Adelaide, and our shared academic interests.

The processes of writing and reflecting on the emerging duoethnography have been both shared and iterative. We initially discussed potential collaboration in 2014, in the form of an anthology on experiences of academic migration and food. Yet each time we met, our conversations not surprisingly drifted to detailed accounts of our own migrations, and what part food played in our emotional and embodied experiences of those times. In this way we were drawn to the power and accessibility of our stories, rather than to a more traditional format of academic research. It felt instinctive that, as Norris and Sawyer suggest in their discussion of the tenets of duoethnography, sharing our stories of migration opens up a space to disrupt public health metanarratives around migration and nutrition in a way that is accessible to a broad audience and aligned with our ethical stance to research with not on others. We quickly decided to start writing down these stories when we met. Our data collection thus involved meeting annually over three visits that Christine made to Adelaide (2015-17), spending time together in a shared favorite location (often the Adelaide Central Market), and talking about and writing out our stories of food and migration.

Duoethnography requires the presence of two voices (polyvocal) and for those voices to be dialogic (Norris and Sawyer 2012, 13). At each meeting,
we would spend time writing about our respective food and migration experiences; reading and commenting on our own and each other’s emerging texts (orally and in written annotations on our respective documents); and discussing and making notes about emerging ideas and themes. While most of our writing occurred during these face-to-face meetings, we also occasionally continued our writing, and written commentary on one another’s narratives, away from these meetings. We also supplemented face-to-face meetings with Skype discussions, especially as we began to shape and draw our narratives and notes into article format – a process for which, in the nature of autoethnographic methodologies, neither of us had a blueprint.

The duoethnographic process has thus been exploratory, experimental, and intellectually and emotionally challenging, taking us into uncharted methodological territory. As Norris and Sawyer state, the methodological rigor of duoethnography, or the “trustworthiness” of the data, comes from the very process of collaborative reflexivity (20). We instinctively attended to the notion of “currere,” a concept adapted by Norris and Sawyer as a key tenet of duoethnography, where life experiences are considered as “curriculum” (op. cit. 12). We returned to past experiences, considered how our telling of those stories could provide new insight, analyzed those stories in dialogue, and subsequently synthesized our analysis through the presentation and writing of this paper. These four elements of currere enable “an act of self-interrogation” (op. cit. 13), unpacking and repacking the meanings we attach to our own experiences in tandem with an Other.

Autoethnography has been underutilized in food studies, and the published literature is both sparse and scattered. Most of the autoethnographic literature that touches on food and eating lies at the border between studies of food and studies of health, medicine, and the body, making it somewhat distant from our concerns here with national and ethnic identity, migration, and domestic cooking and eating. This includes the significant cluster of autoethnographic work on eating disorders (for example, Axelsen 2009; Holmes 2016; Saukko 2008; Tillmann 2009; Tillmann-Healy 1996), and relatedly the more limited autoethnographic literature on body weight and dieting (Dickson 2015; Johnson and Eaves 2013; Smailes 2014). Runestad (2016) uses autoethnography to explore her experience of food in hospital. Although culinary autobiographies and memoirs sit closer to our thematic concerns, these rarely incorporate the critical or methodological reflection (explicit or implicit) that defines scholarly or academic autoethnography (see Antoniou 2004; Tye 2010).

However, the contributions of Antoniou (2004), Brady (2011), Karanth (2014), and Andreatta (2015) offer a helpful starting point in considering the potential of autoethnographic methods in food studies. Antoniou (2004) explores the relationship between her Cypriot identity, gender, sexuality, and food – using an autoethnographic method that combines recipes, transcripts of her oral commentary in the kitchen as she cooks, and
reflections linking her cooking and commentary to the (feminist) research literature on ethnic identity and marginalization in contemporary Britain. Her focus on issues of national/ethnic identity, ideas of home and belonging, and memories and embodied experiences of food parallel our own concerns in this paper. Brady (2011) builds on Antoniou’s work (among others) and presents cooking as a collaborative, autoethnographic method of inquiry. As a dietitian interested in exploring the connections between food, power, and discourse in her field, Brady presents a tangible “recipe” for how to “generate collaborative, introspective narratives that bring to light the process by which our embodied selves are relationally performed, or ‘made social,’ through foodmaking” (325).

Karanth offers “auto-ethnographic reflections” (2014, 417) on past practices of South Indian hospitality toward young people from rural areas during their temporary sojourns away from home for education or examinations, interwoven with historical sociological interpretation, reflection, and critique. Andreatta (2015) offers a powerful performative autoethnography on “the experience of becoming and being a vegan within a hegemonic meat culture” in Argentina (478). In playscript format, her piece interweaves personal testimony or narrative, from childhood to the present day, with critical scholarly perspectives on veganism and human/non-human animal relations – the format highlighting key moment or “scenes” in her experience. Her piece makes visible the author’s personal, political, and scholarly journey. Drawing together Antoniou’s, Brady’s, Karanth’s and Andreatta’s work, we suggest that autoethnography may add particular value to food studies in populating areas where knowledge is scarce; offering especially rich and detailed empirical data; capturing embodied, sensory, and emotional aspects of food experience; and acknowledging and exploring the indivisibility of personal life experience and academic research.\(^2\)

**Migration as (culinary) process**

**Food, emotions, relationships**

I eat when I am happy, I cook when I am happy, and the experience of migration for me has been of gradually increasing happiness – a generalisation, but that is the overall trajectory. (Christine)

These memories are inseparable from the emotional upheaval and excitement of exploring a new life and a new love, that all felt fresh and completely different to what I had left behind. […] It is impossible to think of these migration transition phases in relation to food without them being deeply intertwined with the intimate relationships in my life at those times. (Jessie)

In our experiences of food and migration, we first highlight the significant role of emotions and intimate relationships. For Jessie, as she describes
above, the experience of migration is inseparable from her relationship with her partner and children. For Christine, a lack of local intimate relationships as a solo migrant to Edinburgh in 2008 – in other words, loneliness – was a defining feature of her experience, and the development of those relationships over the subsequent months and years was intimately entwined with a process of culinary reconnection. While the focus in the literature has been on migrants living in diasporic communities, the experiences of young voluntary migrants between English-speaking countries, who move on their own or as couples (often in cross-national relationships), contrast with these diasporic experiences. This contrast is represented, and can be productively explored, through food. We suggest that we experience intimacy not only with people, but also with places, and with food – and thus the alienation and rupture of migration may also be experienced in relation to all of these.

Jessie’s initial migration from the UK to Australia in 2003 stemmed from her relationship with her Australian partner, whom she met in the UK. They then traveled together for 4 months in South East Asia and China. Her experience of food and migration in Australia was inseparable (emotionally or practically) from this relationship and their travels:

Arriving in Adelaide in a travelling mindset meant I was still feeling inspired and passionate about all of the wonderful curries I had enjoyed along the way. So my memories of the first 6 months were of, night after night, taking it in turns with my partner to make huge vegetable curries out of the produce he brought home from a part-time job at the local fruit and veg shop. These were extravagant huge curries using ever more daringly big scoops of Thai green or red curry paste, whole bulbs of garlic, and cans of coconut milk. These nights of cooking and eating on a tight budget, whilst exploring what it was like to live together for the first time on our own are special memories that always come first when I think of moving to Adelaide. […] My partner and I shared an intense passion for food and eating, and this played a central role in the excitement and freedom I felt during a time when I was somewhat reconstructing myself as a global citizen (Jessie)

Jessie’s first child, Sol, was born shortly after she and her partner returned to the UK, in 2007. Jessie also highlighted the impossibility of separating the experience of new motherhood, and her close friendship with another new mother in Edinburgh, from her experiences of food and drink during the reverse migration:

In those sleep-deprived days I would relish pushing the buggy over to my friend’s house and carrying Sol all the way up to her fourth-floor tenement. We would get the babies down for a nap and then sit in her cosy kitchen, overlooking St Mary’s Cathedral, sipping giant mugs of strong tea from oversized Emma Bridgewater mugs. On weekends with our partners there to take the babies she would enjoy taking the time to cook us all a roast chicken with crispy skin and garlic, creamy mashed potatoes, and long, whole, roasted carrots and parsnips. But some days when it was just us during the week, we were ravenous from breastfeeding and juggling the little ones between us, we would giggle as we
indulged in the ease of preparing and eating gloopy, salty, microwaved macaroni cheese from a can, tuna mayonnaise sandwiches, or pasties from Greggs’ bakery. (Jessie)

The differences in our stories – a key tenet of duoethnography (Norris and Sawyer 2012, 17) – are most apparent here. Jessie’s experience of bonding and friendship after her moves to both Adelaide and Edinburgh contrast with Christine’s experience as a solo migrant between the same cities. For Christine, it was impossible to separate her early food experiences and practices in Edinburgh from the emotional challenges of dislocation and loneliness, geographic distance from intimate caring relationships with family in Australia, and related challenges to self-care:

[A]t home, I basically stopped cooking, at least for the first 6 months. I was living alone for the first time, I was appallingly lonely, although I didn’t recognise it because I filled as much time as possible with frenetic social activities. The dislocation from home and family, the post-PhD rebound effect, and the challenges of my first ‘real’, full-time job, heavy travel demands, not to mention living alone, all [... meant that] getting up and going to work was a challenge, let alone feeding myself. I don’t remember what I ate for breakfast during this time, nor for lunch, but I do remember that dinners were ready-meals from the Co-op store at the end of my street […], and not very nice ones at that. […] Food is the least of my worries looking back, yet perhaps it is representative of the overall experience. (Christine)

Christine’s sensory and emotional memories around food in her first months in Edinburgh are closely tied to memories of the kitchen in her flat – i.e., the space of food preparation. She described the “tiny, windowless galley kitchen, its paint spattered with oil from some previous tenant, so narrow that the oven opened against the wall, the lino embedded with dirt that resisted my scrubbing. The kitchen bench, sink, and stovetop faced a high blank wall […]. It’s not actually food that I remember. It’s its absence, the narrowness and blankness and emptiness of that kitchen.”

Although our migration experiences were very different, in both narratives there is a clear relationship between food and emotions. As we describe below, both of us reached out to food to pull ourselves through the vulnerability during challenging transitions. This speaks to Sutton’s discussion of the way in which, in migrant experiences, food can provide opportunities to navigate a “return to the whole” (2000, 122). For Jessie, this process came more quickly and deliberately following her most recent migration to Australia, in 2011. Christine’s experience was that of a gradual sense of reconnection and “rebuilding” of the self. In part, this rebuilding was facilitated through food; yet conversely, the rebuilding simultaneously facilitated a reconnection with food.

Rituals (re)created

We both described to one another (re)creating food and drink rituals in the early, difficult weeks and months post-migration, that would serve to
anchor us to both our new home and where we had come from. Having lived in Australia, Italian café and coffee culture was a significant anchor for us both – perhaps taken for granted until we moved to Scotland. Although the Italian Scots have a rich history in the café culture of Glasgow and Edinburgh, this is a much less significant part of life than in Australia, including Adelaide, where the postwar migration of large numbers of Italians effectively Italianised (and caffeinised) Australian food culture. Jessie described recreating their twice-daily coffee ritual at home with her partner, Pedro, on their move to Edinburgh in 2007:

I had lived five years highly caffeinated thanks to Adelaide’s Italian café scene. […] So to help us with the adjustment to parenthood and our new home of Edinburgh we invested in a Gaggia Classic espresso machine which has been used twice daily ever since, and remains the most important material item we collectively own. Quickly we re-established the routine of two coffees a day […] I clung on to these intimate food and drink rituals […] to buoy me through the overwhelming feelings of dislocation and readjustment. (Jessie)

Christine also created a “coping ritual” of visiting Italian restaurant and café Centotre (now Contini), in central Edinburgh, for hot chocolate after work, particularly on the dreich4 days of her first long Scottish winter:

I can still remember that hot chocolate: its warmth in my mouth, the thick comforting texture, its perfect presentation with a tiny stamped chocolate floating on its surface and a miniature crinkle-cut piece of sugared house shortbread on the side. It was served in a bowl-like white cup, the very thickness and weight of which were comforting, too, its ceramic curves warm in my hands. The warmth of the space and the warmth of the hot chocolate go together in my memory – and the temptation whenever I walked past to step inside and soothe myself in this way. (Christine)

Christine described how this ritual “made me feel at home because it reminded me so much of Cibo in Adelaide” – Cibo being Adelaide’s archetypal Italian restaurant and (later) café chain, serving similar rich Italian hot chocolate. Yet it was not just the hot chocolate, but the space of Centotre – in a converted bank on Edinburgh’s elegant George Street, with high ceilings, leather-lined booths, a jazz soundtrack, and bustling central bar – which reminded Christine so much of the original Cibo Ristorante and offered a “safe space” of familiarity, comfort, and reassurance during a time of personal and professional alienation. As the next section explores, significant spaces are at the heart of both our food memories around migration – where we cooked (or didn’t cook), ate, and drank – arguably more important, in some ways, than what we actually consumed.

**Pantries, kitchens, home-making**

In the weeks, months, and years post-migration, we both enacted deliberate rituals and practices of home-making which were simultaneously practical
and symbolic. In this paper we stress that migration is not an event, but a process (of home-making, embedding, and transformation) in which food plays an important practical and symbolic role. One of the key steps in this process for both of us was that of stocking the pantry or larder, as part of “building a home” post-migration. For Jessie, this step was also integral to her experience of creating a (sense of) family and home for her children – in part inspired by a close friend’s home, kitchen, and “well-stocked pantry.” In her migration back to Adelaide from Edinburgh in 2011, Jessie described this process intertwined with her nostalgia for the Adelaide Central Market (the heart of Adelaide and its food culture). Stocking the pantry tied her new family home to the market, and brought its sustenance into that home, creating a kind of imaginary umbilical cord:

High on my priority list of things I knew I wanted to entrench into our lives back in Adelaide was frequent access to the Central Market […]. So it began that I spent six months stocking our pantry with wholesome foods brought back from weekly excursions on the tram to the city. The kids, at least for a while, bought the idea that this was a treat for them, their compliance bought with milkshakes and banana bread as I sought to construct a shared intimacy with them, and with our adopted home, through food. (Jessie)

Christine also undertook a deliberate larder-stocking process that she saw as one of the final steps in a long process of adjustment and transformation that rooted her in place and gave her a sense of home in Scotland. While Jessie and her partner quite literally built a home and kitchen following their most recent migration to Adelaide, for Christine the process of creating (or finding) a home was one of repeated moves between rental properties that brought her closer to her own sense of a home – even if this was, in retrospect, externalizing an internal process of adjustment. She highlighted the centrality of the kitchen to these homes and to her own sense of self and happiness: “I have moved […] from an internal galley kitchen, ill-equipped; to a small but extremely well-equipped L-shaped kitchen, off a living room; to a huge eat-in kitchen with dining table and larder where I now spend most of my time” – and where she would host large groups of friends for meals. The pantry or larder – and kitchen – thus become symbols of migratory adjustment in the process of finding or creating a home, over and above the financial security and stability that these require and represent. In this experience, a space which matches one’s sense of self and/or family is key – but further, food (the “well-stocked pantry”) anchors the home and the people in it in place, and ties them to sources of provision and sustenance in the host culture.

Culinary (re)emplacement

What we see in our own migration narratives is a process of conscious or unconscious (re)emplacement, in which we (sought to) put down roots in
our new home/s via food. This is contrary to work that focuses on the maintenance of homeland foodways amongst migrants, and echoes Abarca’s description of multi-layered, creative food practices that cross-cut cultural and geographic boundaries. The ultimate and literal example of this process would be food growing, something neither of us described (as yet). But such (re)emplacement can also encompass choosing and eating local foods, shopping locally (overlapping with the pantry-stocking motif discussed above), cooking from local recipes and books, hosting (and being hosted by) local people for meals, and eating out. More generally, (re)emplacement may involve a sense of engaging with local food rhythms and seasons, and how these are experienced in and through the body. While such experiences and practices were particularly salient for Christine, Jessie’s narrative also shows that the destination food culture may be a “pull” factor in itself for voluntary migrants: for her and her partner, Adelaide’s cafes and Central Market were “a big draw-card in our decision to move back to Australia.” While they were living in Edinburgh, the Adelaide Central Market had become a treasured part of their return visits.

We had come to romanticise the coffee and bowls of pasta from Lucia’s. Remembering the perfectly crafted flat white, in small white cups, the espresso so strong it cut through the warm froth of milk with a rich tang. An order of Lucia’s pasta always seemed to take forever to be delivered out to the table. We would never be able to get a seat in the café itself so would sit out in the noisy, draughty, shared dining area of the market hall – repeatedly shifting the table number (as my stomach grumbled) to make sure it was visible to the waitresses who would eventually come out into the hubbub and thrust the bowl of pasta down with an air of something like disdain or boredom! The pasta always burnt my mouth – so hungry by then, and desperate to taste the cream and bacon in the carbonara sauce with the standard sprinkle of parmesan on top, that I could not wait for it to cool. I think of the market and think of shopping for avocados; giant big reed avocados with yellow, creamy flesh to chop into big chunks for salad or a bag of small hass avos for 5 dollars to mash onto a piece of hot toast with a good grind of salt and pepper. (Jessie)

As discussed above, shopping at the market therefore became a key mechanism by which Jessie sought to “(re)emplace” herself and her family after their second migration back to Adelaide. Yet, in contrast to previous research, Jessie’s nostalgia for the Central Market represented a longing for the foodways of more than one homeland. Her processes of embedding were not unilateral, and speak to the complex experiences of migrants who make multiple transitions across the world. Embedding in local foodways, being able to access the plentiful supplies of produce at the market, was an act of connecting new and old food practices.

I love having avocados on tap in Australia, yet the irony is that every time I eat one I am transported back to the wintery Christmas Days of my early teen years in Yorkshire. Christmas lunch was a grand affair celebrated in our farmhouse style
kitchen at the oversized pine table, in the warmth radiated from the big green Rayburn, not the burning Australian sun! Every year I would look forward to our starter, which would be half an avocado served with a spoonful of prawn cocktail (little prawns from the freezer mixed with Hellmann’s mayonnaise) dolloped in the pit where the stone had been carefully extracted. I remember my mum’s anticipation on Christmas morning as she prepared them – hoping that the very expensive little avocados – a once a year treat - would be ripe, not too hard, or stringy and brown, and that there would be enough for each of us to have our half. (Jessie)

This echoes Khan’s description of the “dilemmas of homeland and belonging” (2014, 482), in that Jessie’s repeated moves back and forth produced ambivalence and tension as she desired to be in both places at once, where acts of (re)emplacement effectively built a sense of belonging to two homelands. This, for Jessie, meant navigating the differences between accessible foodways in two different places, and (to take up Abarca’s language) the creation of “original” food practices that morph and adapt across cultural and geographic boundaries. For Christine, there were two distinct phases of “(re)emplacement” via food – the first unconscious, the second more deliberate. In the first phase, in the months immediately following her move, intermittent moments of connection to local food, foodways, and food businesses represented the first stages of an “embedding” or “emplacing” process. These included exploring local shops, including supermarkets as well as smaller independents, such as a nearby bakery/patisserie:

I had found the Manna House online before I moved, a bakery and patisserie at the end of my street, and it became another anchor for me in those first months in Scotland. I would buy fougasse, sea-salt and rosemary, and the olive oil would soak through the brown paper bag on my way home; I still remember the comforting taste of that salt. I also treated myself, over and over, to their patisseries: perfect, intricate things with multiple brightly-coloured layers – passionfruit or berries or chocolate – and smooth creamy comforting textures. They came in individual servings with cellophane collars, which I took great delight in peeling off. (Christine)

For Christine, the reliable quality, sensory comfort and joy delivered by high-end food businesses like the Manna House and Centotre drew her to them as steadying “anchors” after the profound personal disruption of migration; as time went on, these factors were joined by the familiarity of the friendly faces of the staff, as she became a “regular.”

Other forms of connection to local food and foodways in the months immediately following Christine’s move included entertaining new friends and colleagues at home; beginning to notice and learn differences between food cultures in Adelaide and Edinburgh; beginning to cook from British (rather than Australian) cookbooks; and occasionally eating out with new friends and colleagues. A key example was visiting friends in London for her first Christmas in the UK, 6 months after migrating, and making
chestnut, Stilton, and ale pie for Christmas lunch. This is a quintessentially British (vegetarian) Christmas option, and a far cry from any attempt to recreate Australian Christmas food: to the best of Christine’s knowledge, this was the first time she had ever eaten chestnuts. Another example Christine described from her early food memories in Scotland was going fruit-picking at a “PYO” (pick your own) fruit farm just outside Edinburgh. In the most literal sense, picking produce at a local farm connects the new migrant to place (land) via food – in this case, soft fruits such as blackcurrants which are not commonly grown and sold in South Australia’s much hotter climate, and which were therefore new to Christine.

In the longer term, Christine’s (re)emplacement in Edinburgh food culture was a process over some years, closely tied to her work as a food scholar. While there were many facets to this process, one of the key “technologies” for this (re)emplacement was local cookbooks – initially British, and then specifically Scottish:

[W]hen I first moved I made an effort to acquire British cookbooks and found that my Australian cookbooks didn’t make sense in the new place (for reasons both of available ingredients, but also the style of food that I found I wanted to eat) [...]. Later] I decided to start using the Scottish Kitchen Garden Cookbook as my main cookbook and blueprint for locally seasonal ingredients. [... T]his cookbook [... has] completely changed my relationship with Scottish food. I sometimes wonder whether I have actually become too slavish to the specific foods listed as seasonal at the start of each month’s chapter! As important as seasonality has been the sense of eating specifically local Scottish foods, albeit with an Italian Scots influence. [... From the Kitchen Garden Cookbook I’ve branched out to other British authors offering what seem to me to be locally and seasonally appropriate recipes, using the lists of seasonal ingredients from the KGC chapters [...]. (Christine)

Christine described making seasonal dishes such as root vegetable soups in autumn, and in winter, leek and thyme puff pastry tart, fish pie with kale, and cauliflower macaroni cheese.

These individual processes of (re)emplacement are inseparable from wider British and global movements toward local, seasonal food, and also from an increasingly confident Scottish food culture that has developed markedly in the last decade. What it means to “eat Scottish,” “cook Scottish,” “be Scottish” are all cultural constructions, which in the case of Scotland are under particularly active negotiation in the twenty-first century given the Scottish independence movement. The migrant’s individual trajectory of (re)emplacement intersects with these wider questions so that changing national and individual identities in this context can be said to be co-constructed. We highlighted above, in Jessie’s narrative, the relationship between migration, her changing food practices, new cross-national partner relationship, and revised sense of identity as a “global citizen.” Here we also show the crucial relationship between embodied emotions and identity, food, and place. As Christine later commented on her changing Scottish food habits:
Somehow this food feels right in a way that previous food I have cooked at different times of the year in Scotland has not. My body is unexpectedly happy with this food, despite the enormous quantities of starch and dairy; I feel much happier in the wintertime eating this way; much more rooted to place and the season. (Christine)

Conclusions

In this duoethnography we have reflected on our experiences of migration between Adelaide and Edinburgh through the lens of food, as young middle-class voluntary migrants moving between English-speaking Western nations. We demonstrate the significance of intimate relationships and emotions in the experience of food and migration, as well as the (re)creation of food and drink rituals which anchor us to our past and present homes. However, contrary to previous literature which stresses migrants’ attempts to maintain homeland food and culinary practices and experiences, we tell of the importance of processes of home-making and of “(re)emplacement,” in which our ties with our new host cities and nations were formed through food, and which in turn reshaped our own identities – personal, national, and global. We suggest, based on this, that there is much further work to be done on migrants’ practices of connecting with their new home via food, and exploring and creating new foodways. Such narratives might offer an important counterpoint to those of nostalgic processes of homeland identity maintenance.

This may be especially salient for migrants from highly globalized Western nations, who may leave without a strong sense of a “national” food culture that they take with them. We did not necessarily expect, as migrants, to encounter significant differences between Australian and British foodways: the two countries share a colonial history and deceptively similar (food) cultures. Yet the differences in place, and hence in food, are significant and disruptive, requiring reconnection on the part of migrants as part of the adjustment process. This paper raises questions of: what is Australian food? British food? Scottish food? – in the context of globalization. The differences between Anglophone food cultures, and the experiences of migrants moving between them, deserve further attention.

This paper is a retrospectively constructed interpretation of our experiences. We do not claim that our accounts are an exact relaying of our realities at the time of our relocations. Rather, in the collaborative retelling of our stories we create new narratives. As Riessman suggests, autoethnographic narratives can be likened to creative works of art or literature, in that “when evaluating the depiction of a landscape, viewers ask not whether it looks like the place, but whether it evokes the appearance of a place […] a painting or a poem does not depict a ‘reality’ but constitutes one” (Riessman 2008, 192–193). Indeed, the experience of duoethnography has
been transformative for us in a number of ways. The process has meant taking “an ethical stance toward the other. It is not about telling one’s stories to reify self; [rather it is] about telling one’s stories to assist both self and other in an act of ‘conscientization’ (Freire 1971)” (Norris and Sawyer 2012, 18). Our dialogue has highlighted for us as scholars the emotional demands we make of our research participants. It has also foregrounded care in the research process in ways not always so obvious in working with participant data: for example, as first author, and leading the writing process, Christine’s care for Jessie and her family was ever-present in her mind in working with Jessie’s narrative. Writing about ourselves also required a relationship of care. A key consideration for us both has been what to reveal to, and what to conceal from, our fellow food scholars who may read this work. Vulnerability is an important element of autoethnography and duoethnography, and we hope that this paper brings out emotive aspects of the migration experience that might not be disclosed in a standard sociological interview (or that might be edited out by the researcher as too sensitive). There was a strong experience in working with this material of exposure, and of seeing our own privilege reflected back at us – even writing about some of the most emotionally and financially difficult periods of our lives. Our middle-class dreams and practices have made for uncomfortable reading for us. Yet we also suggest that these experiences should be considered worthy of attention by food scholars, especially in political contexts (such as the contemporary UK) where white English-speaking migrants tend to be excluded from the category and stigma of “migrant” which is associated with cultural difference.

At the same time as reminding us of our privilege as highly mobile young academics, our work here serves to highlight the personal costs of academic careers today, especially for early-career scholars. Yet it is also an homage to the friendships (including our own) that emerge out of academic mobility and its challenges. This paper is also an ode to our twin cities of Adelaide and Edinburgh, and perhaps most of all, to the Adelaide Central Market, where much of this paper was written and discussed. The Central Market is at the heart of this duoethnography: at the heart of our migration experiences, our narratives, our writing process, and our friendship. The Market is simultaneously a space of comfort and familiar structure, and of possibility, sensorial delight, and surprise. In this space (actual and metaphoric) we have been able to confront, reflect on, and reassess our own experiences and positioning, as scholars, migrants, and friends. We therefore end this paper by calling for (feminist) scholarship that engages reflectively, emotionally, and viscerally with our food, our bodies, our relationships, and our loves. As a discipline, food studies has been willing to break new ground thematically: to go into the kitchen and write about something previously considered beneath the notice of the academy.
We now call on food studies to bring this pioneering spirit to its methodologies. Food is political, and it is personal – to us as food scholars and friends.

Notes

1. Numerous unpublished dissertations testify to the popularity of the method amongst research students, presumably because it circumvents the ethical and financial challenges of anthropological or sociological fieldwork.
2. Our thanks to Dr Andrew Dickson for drawing our attention to our framing of the relationship between the personal and the scholarly.
3. Greggs is a major bakery chain with shops across the United Kingdom.
4. “Dreich” is a Scots word generally used in reference to the weather, meaning dreary and bleak.
5. Since this paper was first drafted, Christine has taken on an allotment near her new home in Derbyshire.
6. Jessie also described building relationships with the local Edinburgh fishmonger, butcher, and greengrocer that were “really special” and which they mourned when they left.
7. Fruit-picking as a middle-class leisure activity contrasts markedly with the widespread experience of less privileged migrants as low-paid seasonal fruit-pickers. We discuss the issue of autoethnographic privilege further in our Conclusions.
8. The Kitchen Garden Cookbook is by Carina Contini (2014), who (with her husband) owns and runs Contini Ristorante (formerly Centotre, discussed above), and several other cafes and restaurants across Edinburgh. The word Scottish is not, in fact, part of the title, but Scots appears in the sub-title, A Year of Italian Scots Recipes.

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