

Chapter 7

Negotiating Relations

Food Politics after the Uluru Statement from the Heart

We thus enter a new time with a heavy backlog of unsolved older problems.

– W. E. H. Stanner, *After the Dreaming* (1991, 28)

In 1946 Elyne Mitchell published *Soil and Civilization*, in which she argued that Australians had ‘indiscriminately denuded our landscape’ (1946, 4). The introduction of sheep and rabbits and removal of trees had dramatically altered the conditions necessary for soil health and climatic stability. Sand choked the once-flowing streams, and the absence of humus meant the soils were incapable of absorbing rainwater. Mitchell blamed commercial farming for these developments and argued that those living in cities as well as the country need to ‘deeply know the land’ in order to ‘rebuild the living soil of Australia’ (1946, 5). For Mitchell, the greed of commercial farming and hubris of scientific interventions had disrupted the ‘organic rhythm of the universal life cycle’ (1946, 139). Mitchell’s solution to restoring this rhythm is the embrace of agricultural methods that work with natural cycles and organic materials.

Since Mitchell’s writings, food scholars and activists in Australia have continued to advocate for small-scale forms of agriculture as a means of regenerating the Australian landscape and repairing the damage caused by input-intensive commercial practices. As has been argued throughout, there have been clear and powerful articulations of the environmental, public health and social damage wrought by industrial agriculture. However, the full extent to which both small- and large-scale agriculture is implicated with historical and ongoing injustices toward Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples is not readily addressed. I consider it important to address

this silence not simply because agriculture benefits from past dispossession. This charge could be levelled at the automotive industry, the university sector or any activity that occupies and uses land in Australia. Agriculture, however, is uniquely implicated with dispossession on two fronts: 1) it was used as a biopolitical mark of distinction between 'civilised' and 'uncivilised'. Those who cultivated the land had a life worthy of respect and care; those who did not had a life that could be disallowed; and, 2) it physically occupied the continent by grazing livestock, planting crops, erecting fences and damming rivers, which instigated violent clashes and severely disrupted Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ways of life. I have argued throughout this book that these two aspects of agriculture cannot remain in silence if we sincerely desire food justice in Australia.

How can we talk about a just food system when the original inhabitants and traditional owners of the very land our food is grown on still struggle with past and present injustices? This chapter explores the possibility of food practices and cultures to provide a site for attending to this question. The chapter examines how the cultivation, distribution and preparation of food can provide a metaphorical and literal space for negotiating and restoring relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians. Simone Bignall argues that 'the passage of transition to postcolonial society relies upon participating communities to imagine strategically joyful modes of power and desire, and create these through common notions and local relations of practice, which, with repetition, can subsequently cause the broad emergence and establishment of postcolonial social existence' (2010b, 153). Following Bignall's suggestion for joyful engagements in the formation of postcolonial sociality, I contend that growing, preparing or eating food with others can be a joyful engagement that can foster agreement, mutuality and new forms of subjectivity. However, this is by no means an easy or straightforward process.

Notwithstanding the possibility of food to provide an avenue for negotiations, there are reasons to be suspicious. Patrick Dodson and Darryl Cronin observe that 'the Australian nation state appears to be stuck in a cycle of colonisation', and as such it is 'unable to deal with its colonial history or the status of Indigenous people' (2011, 192). The 'heavy backlog of unsolved older problems' identified by Stanner in 1968 remain, and new problems have been added to their number (1991, 28). The onus to work out how food politics can avoid repeating past injustices is on the non-Indigenous participants. As Morgan Brigg and Sarah Maddison demonstrate, there has been a long history of Indigenous peoples attempting to negotiate with British colonialists and later with Australian governments. The Coranderrk Petition (1886), Yirrkala bark petitions (1963), Wave Hill walk off (1966), the Barunga Statement (1988) and tent embassies in Canberra (1972), Heirisson

Island (2012) and Redfern (2014) are some of the examples of imaginative approaches to negotiation and performing sovereignty. The Uluru Statement from the Heart is the latest sincere and profound attempt by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to speak to the settler-state.

Despite this long history of creative resistances and engagements, 'Indigenous efforts to enter into dialogue with mainstream Australia have thus far received little or no reciprocal movement from the Settler State and its associated institutions' (Brigg and Maddison 2011, 5). Brigg and Maddison contend that this is because dialogue always has to be 'palatable to mainstream liberalism', and there is a 'take it or leave it' approach to negotiation (2011, 6). Brigg and Murphy argue that the 'mobilisation of Indigenous difference and interests are directed by the intellectual authority of liberalism – by "outsiders"' (2011, 20). The 'outsiders', according to Brigg and Murphy, are people who attempt to represent Aboriginal people, yet implicitly reinforce settler-colonial sovereignty and rely on liberal frameworks. Using liberal frameworks gives these representatives greater traction in mainstream Australia, as the mainstream can hear in their claims a 'warm echo of their own values and traditions' (Brigg and Murphy 2011, 21). The previous chapter explored how a critical ethos can be developed that does not depend on liberal frameworks and may offer new possibilities for resistance to governmental effects. Drawing on those insights, this chapter attempts to *hear* the Uluru Statement of the Heart and to begin thinking about what food politics in settler-colonial contexts such as Australia could look like.

Despite claims of a progressive and egalitarian politics that seeks to give voice for those oppressed or neglected by global capitalism, Australian alternative food discourse risks being part of the cycle that is unable to deal with colonial history of dispossession. Acknowledgement of these historical injustices and their present effects would, according to Dodson and Cronin, 'contribute to a process of repudiating the ideology of Settler Colonialism that has become ingrained into the practices and attitudes of Australians' (2011, 203). However, there needs to be more than acknowledgement. Tony Birch argues that the 'collective psyche of white Australia' needs to 'embrace the realities of living on and *in* Indigenous country' (2016, 364).

Nicolacopoulos and Vassilacopoulos go further to contend that 'it is not enough for us to remember and admit that to be white Australian is to be implicated in the violent dispossession of Indigenous peoples. It is not even enough for us to remember or admit to past injustices whose effects are still being suffered today. We need to make a deeper more reflective turn to the emptiness of our being' (2014, 103). Previous chapters sought to remember and admit past and present injustices; this concluding chapter seeks to ask:

How we can move forward? Specifically, how can contemporary forms of agriculture and food production be part of unsettling the narrative of settlement and the being of the occupier? Rather than a resettlement and repetition of the logics of colonisation, can small-scale agriculture and food production provide an avenue for negotiation and commonality?

AFTER THE ULURU STATEMENT

On 25 October 2017, it was leaked to the media that the Turnbull government would reject the Uluru Statement from the Heart. The following day the prime minister, attorney general and Indigenous affairs minister released a joint statement that the Uluru proposal was neither ‘desirable or capable of winning acceptance in a referendum’ (Office of the Prime Minister, Office of the Attorney General and Office of the Minister for Indigenous Affairs 2017). As outlined in the previous chapter, the Uluru Statement asked for ‘constitutional reforms to empower our people and take *a rightful place* in our own country’ (Referendum Council 2017). Specifically, this involved ‘the establishment of a First Nations Voice enshrined in the Constitution’ and ‘a Makarrata Commission to supervise a process of agreement-making between governments and First Nations and truth-telling about our history’ (Referendum Council 2017). Makarrata is a Yolngu word and practice that involves ‘*coming together after a struggle*’ (Referendum Council 2017).

In addition to these proposals, the Statement outlined the crises suffered by Indigenous Australians: ‘we are the most incarcerated people on the planet’; ‘children are aliened from their families at unprecedented rates’; and ‘our youth languish in detention’ (Referendum Council 2017). The Statement points to the structural and historical reasons for the crisis, which is ‘*the torment of our powerlessness*’ (Referendum Council 2017). The Voice in Parliament was designed to address this voiceless powerlessness, and the Makarrata Commission would negotiate a process of truth telling and formation of new relationships between Indigenous peoples and the settler-state. However, this was all swiftly rejected by the government.

From Cook’s interaction with the Guugu Yimithirr men at Cooktown in 1770 to the rejection of the Uluru Statement, the government has a long history of ignoring, wilfully mishearing or simply disregarding Indigenous requests. Following the government’s rejection of the Uluru Statement, some of the members of the Referendum Council emphasised that the State was not the only addressee, but also the people of Australia. Megan Davis clarifies that the Council ‘decided during the Uluru convention that the statement, the logic and motivation for our reforms should be directed to the Australian people because politicians are too self-interested to listen’ (2017). Although

the government may have rejected the Statement, there is an opportunity – and arguably an obligation – for the wider population to respond. This can and should occur in a variety of ways, such as advocating for the establishment a voice in the Constitution.

However, I wish to examine ways outside of state-sovereignty politics that may contribute to a deflating of the state's sovereignty. This is not to suggest that the State is irrelevant. However, as Bignall argues, 'postcolonisation not only calls for measures of formal justice acknowledging and addressing the state's failures to uphold indigenous human rights in the past and guaranteeing such human rights in the future, but also for a less mediated, more intimate kind of ethical assessment and commitment' (2010a, 78). This chapter looks to modes of engagement that are more akin to a critical ethos of counter-conduct and the right of the governed to intervene and to speak about the abuses of government. This approach does not focus on changing the constitution or the State as such. Rather, it seeks to alter and contest the governmental rationalities that silence, confine and restrict ways of living that challenge narratives of peaceful settlement, accepted sovereignty and productionist agriculture.

Specifically, I am interested in how those interested in a just and ethical food system should respond to the Uluru Statement. How can those of us concerned with food politics seek to listen, negotiate and collaborate with Indigenous Australians in ways that hear their voices and accept the invitation to walk toward a 'fair and truthful relationship with the people of Australia and a better future for our children based on justice and self-determination'? (Referendum Council 2017).

NEGOTIATIONS, PLAY AND JOYFUL ENGAGEMENTS

At the end of a published lecture given by Cornel West, the publishers wrote, 'The questions were inaudible. Only the answers are available' (West 1993, 77). In reading the answers, one can get a sense for what the questions were. But it is hard to be sure. Without being there or knowing the questions, the reader needs to trust that West is responding faithfully to the questioner. This is an example of the hermeneutic task, which Hans-Georg Gadamer describes as the imperative to reconstruct the question that a text (in the broadest sense) is the answer. To do this, 'we the interrogated must ourselves begin to ask questions' (2004, 367).

However, not all answers are sincere responses to questions. The effect of power relations in a dialogue means that answers may flow from a mishearing or even not hearing the question. The response from Australian political leaders to Aboriginal requests for constitutional reform is a case in point.

Although Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders have requested substantive changes that go beyond symbolic recognition, prime ministers have repeatedly answered by offering the very measures that were rejected. Megan Davis, who was involved in these processes, concluded that ‘although they seemed to be listening, they did not hear’ (2016). Gadamer describes the way a bad interlocutor asks ‘apparent questions’, questions to which they believe they already know the answer (2004, 357). Here we see the reverse – the apparent answer, where the person believes he knows the question that is being asked of him and so answers without really hearing. Like the apparent question, the apparent answer shuts down a dialogue and forecloses the prospect of it opening a space for new possibilities. On the occasions when the subaltern or voiceless speak of past wrongs and their continuing effect, there is an ethical duty to listen and hear. Failure to do so means that a genuine dialogue that opens up the possibility of negotiation cannot proceed.

Alternative food movements offer a potential site for hearing, dialogue and negotiation. Yet currently they risk repeating many of the same mistakes as mainstream politics, such as including and consulting Indigenous peoples as an afterthought. However, an advantage of alternative food spaces is a greater recognition and appreciation for land as a place of belonging that is more than an economic resource. As such, the negotiation between food sovereignty and Indigenous sovereignty does not need to be framed as a zero-sum game between Indigenous peoples and alternative food proponents. There is much overlap and mutual benefit, but this needs careful negotiation (Hemming, Rigney and Berg 2011). As Dobson and Cronin argue, there is significant overlap between the concerns and challenges facing the nation and the recognition of Indigenous rights. Examples they note that are relevant to the food sovereignty movement are climate change, northern development and regional governance. They lament that ‘the question of resolving the status of Indigenous people is not seen as connected to these other issues’ (2011, 198). That is, an Indigenous food sovereignty movement could serve the interests of alternative food advocates and Indigenous peoples. Furthermore, Indigenous communities, especially those in remote locations, suffer from food insecurity due to dysfunctionality of the industrial food system (Hume, O’Dea and Brimblecombe 2013; Hume et al. 2014; Johnston et al. 2007).

Importantly, these negotiations cannot be held on the terms and conditions of white Australia. As Brigg and Maddison note, debate often runs ‘the treadmill of European derived Settler-liberalism without asking questions about the social and political values that inform the terms of debate’ (2011, 5). Rather, spaces for dialogue and negotiation that are shaped and conditioned by Indigenous values and ideas need to be established. According to Dodson and Cronin, dialogue is a ‘first step in decolonising the colonial relationship between Indigenous people and the nation state’ (Dodson

and Cronin 2011, 190). However, there is much debate of the form such a dialogue should take. Dodson and Cronin have a more liberal conception of dialogue that serves to reveal the basic assumptions and the justifications behind the opinions and ideas being debated (Dodson and Cronin 2011, 199). This dialogue can lead to mutual understanding. Brigg and Murphy, however, propose a dialogue that is explicitly 'not aimed at establishing easy equivalences or progressing instrumental negotiation' (Brigg and Murphy 2011, 27). They suggest a dialogue that addresses the philosophical and historical forces that shape the political reality of contemporary Indigenous and settler approaches to governance.

Reading Gadamer and Foucault together, I construct an approach to dialogue that relies on a moral bond to foster humble listening and serious play. Gadamer and Foucault are uncommon bedfellows to be sure; however, their respective approaches to dialogue are cognizant of the historical forces shaping political reality. They also recognise the need for dialogue participants to adopt a particular attitude that is playful. For Gadamer, play is the structure of genuine dialogue. Gadamer says that entering a dialogue is like being absorbed by the to-and-fro play of a game. Whereas play often is thought of as light or frivolous, Gadamer contends that it has 'sacred seriousness' in which the participants lose themselves, giving the game an 'essence, independent of the consciousness of those who play' (2004, 103). That is, the subject of the game is not the player or players but the game itself. Like the to-and-fro of play, the question and answer of dialogue draws the interlocutors in and requires that they 'do not talk at cross purposes' but allow 'the subject matter [to be] developed in the conversation' (2004, 360–61). The participants coproduce the subject matter of the dialogue, with neither having control over it. This requires those engaged in the play of dialogue to risk something of themselves, to place their self into the dialogue and risk being transformed. Gadamer argues that a 'person who reflects himself out of the mutuality of such a relation changes this relationship and destroys its moral bond' (2004, 354). This moral bond is established through humble listening that opens one's self to the other. 'Without such openness', writes Gadamer, 'there is no genuine human bond. Belonging together always also means being able to listen to one another' (2004, 355).

Foucault is not known for his thought on discourse ethics or for having much time for the hermeneutics with which Gadamer is associated (Dreyfus and Rabinow 1983, xxiii; Kelly 1995). However, in a 1984 interview with Paul Rabinow, Foucault makes a series of remarks that are not dissimilar to Gadamer's account of play and dialogue. In response to Rabinow's opening question about polemics, Foucault states that he does not like to 'get involved in polemics' and prefers discussion (2000, 111). He elaborates that

in a discussion, ‘a whole morality is at stake, the morality that concerns the search for the truth and the relation to the other’ (2000, 111). Furthermore, he notes ‘the serious play of questions and answers’ (2000, 111). Foucault outlines a reciprocity of rights between the interlocutors that is immanent to and depends ‘only on the dialogue situation’ (2000, 111) – by which he means that the right to ask questions and to be answered sincerely depends on and occurs only in the context of the moral bond of a dialogue.

In discussing this interview, Patton argues that Foucault ‘distinguishes the language games of dialogue and polemic in terms of the rights of participants immanent to each of those games’ (2004, 52). For the participants in the dialogue game, there are ‘symmetrical rights’, whereas the participants in the polemic game have ‘asymmetrical rights’ (Patton 2004, 52). The polemicist does not recognise or respect the rights of the other to ask questions or have their questions answered. The Australian government, and in many instances the Australian public, has conducted a dialogue according to the norms of the polemic game. That is, ‘the other is not an equal partner engaged in a collaborative enterprise but an enemy to be overcome’ (Patton 2004, 53). In this case the ‘unequal-enemy’ does not have the right to ask or be answered and ‘the polemicist is the sole judge of the rights and privileges he assigns to himself in the course of this imaginary combat’ (Patton 2004, 53).

In combining these remarks from Gadamer and Foucault, we can isolate three main features of sincere dialogue: the moral bond between the participants that seeks to neutralize asymmetrical relations of power; humble listening to the other participant; and the serious play of to-and-fro that leads to cocreation of the subject matter of dialogue, which neither is in complete control of. I suggest that his approach to dialogue can open the possibility for different languages, voices and concepts to be heard (Dodson and Cronin 2011, 190). Lewis Gordon observes that decolonising knowledge is often characterised as a form of justice.¹ However, he suggests that we not only need to decolonise knowledge, but also decolonise justice. A dialogue that is humbly entered into and in which one risks oneself is an important path toward a decolonisation of justice as it helps to provide a space in which the concepts and procedures of justice are not always in the language of the dominant interlocutor. Gordon contends that Indigenous Australians have the problem of colonisation in their face, and as such have privileged access to it and views and theories about its effects, its weaknesses and ways to dismantle it. They do not have ‘special’ knowledge (à la Gnosticism), but as subjects of these power relations they do have knowledge and experience unique to their situation and views on the form justice needs to take.

An example of the Indigenous view of the form justice needs to take is *makarrata*. *Makarrata* is a deep and complex concept that I do not pretend to understand. The Referendum Council proposed a *Makarrata* Commission as

part of the Uluru Statement. Makarrata is a Yolngu word and practice of treaty or agreement making following a conflict between two parties. The Council does not elaborate on specifics of the Makarrata Commission as it did not fall within their terms of reference, but they state that its function is to supervise ‘agreement-making and facilitating a process of local and regional truth-telling’ (Referendum Council 2017, 2). Makarrata is a way for ‘a fair and honest relationship with government and a better future for our children based on justice and self-determination’ (Referendum Council 2017, 21). Yolngu elder Galarrwuy Yunupingu describes his father’s role in a makarrata that brought peace to a ‘terrible feud among the clans’ that was ‘very deep and very serious’ (Referendum Council 2017, 55). Yunupingu notes that it was not simply his father’s ‘status by right’ as an elder, but his character as a man who was responsible, caring and had ‘peace and harmony’ as a ‘way of life’, which enabled him to ‘bring about reconciliation’ (Referendum Council 2017, 55). As a Yolngu practice and concept, makarrata may not be necessarily appropriate for all Indigenous groups in Australia. The point, however, is that the norms of dialogue, as opposed to those of polemic or debate, open the possibility for different languages and concepts to be brought into the mutual cocreating play in which neither party controls the terms of reference or outcome. The to-and-fro of dialogue produces something new that they are both part of. This approach to dialogue may prove useful for negotiations between Indigenous and food activists, leading to multiple dialogues across multiple sites.

TOWARD AN UNSETTLING FOOD POLITICS

After the Turnbull government rejected the Uluru Statement, the Australian Food Sovereignty Alliance national committee issued a press release expressing its disappointment and calling for the prime minister to reconsider his decision (National Committee 2017). The press release went on to say that as ‘stewards of the land, our farmer members are endeavouring to work with the original owners of this country to create a more socially equitable and ecologically sustainable nation, and a truly food sovereign future’ (National Committee 2017). The practical implications of this statement are unclear. However, the AFSA put this endeavour into the context of its association with La Via Campesina and ‘solidarity with the global movement for recognition and inclusion of indigenous and First Nation Peoples everywhere, without whom there can be no true food sovereignty’ (National Committee 2017). This statement raises important political and practical questions regarding the relationship between food sovereignty and Indigenous peoples, particularly by making the inclusion and recognition of Indigenous peoples as the condition for ‘true food sovereignty’.

As discussed in chapter 3, food sovereignty has its conceptual and political roots in the struggles of peasant and Indigenous farmers in Central America. In this context, food sovereignty happily melds with decolonisation movements. However, in settler-colonial contexts such as Australia, New Zealand, Canada and the United States, there is friction between non-Indigenous farmers using food sovereignty rhetoric and decolonisation movements. As argued in chapter 5, alternative food politics, particularly food sovereignty, needs to be unsettled. Alternative food politics needs to listen to and be disturbed by settler-colonial history in a manner that leads to a reevaluation of the assumptions regarding land use, belonging and justice. However, I have also suggested that alternative food politics can be unsettling. By hearing Indigenous voices and working with Indigenous groups, alternative food politics can be part of the processes that push forward both Indigenous and regenerative agricultural concerns regarding greater control of land and waterways, environmental justice and a fair food system.

In recent years, Indigenous and non-Indigenous scholars have started to question what Indigenous food sovereignty looks like in a settler-colonial context. Although the bulk of this literature is from North America or New Zealand (Hutchings 2015; Desmarais and Wittman 2014; Whyte 2018; Coté 2016; Daigle 2017; Grey and Patel 2015; Stein et al. 2017; Whyte 2017), it can still provide some clues for thinking about Indigenous food sovereignty in Australia. Central themes in this literature are decolonisation, resistance against global capitalism and resurgence of Indigenous ways of life. Michelle Daigle describes Indigenous food sovereignty as a form of resistance to ‘colonial-capitalist legacies’ as well as ‘a more general political, legal and economic resurgence’ (2017, 5). Likewise, Charlotte Coté suggests that the decolonising effect of Indigenous food sovereignty ‘entails decreasing dependence on the globalized food system and revitalizing Indigenous foods systems and practices’ (2016, 2). Coté contends that the revitalisation or resurgence of Indigenous food practices and spirituality is a mark of distinction from the ‘rights-based discourse’ of other food movements and instead emphasises the ‘cultural responsibilities and relationships that Indigenous peoples have with their environment’ (2016, 2). Coté conceives of Indigenous food sovereignty as ‘positioned within a restorative framework that places responsibility and action on individuals and communities to repair and strengthen relationships to ancestral homelands weakened by colonialism, globalization and neoliberal policies’ (2016, 12).

In discussing the resurgence and resistance of indigenous peoples in the United States and Canada, Kyle Powys Whyte frames indigenous food sovereignty in terms of *collective continuance*, by which he means ‘the overall degree of adaptive capacity a society has when we take all its collective capacities into account’ (2018, 347). Whyte considers food systems to be

a collective capacity as ‘they motivate human institutions that produce or facilitate certain valuable goods, such as political sovereignty, nutrition and spirituality and avoid preventable harms, such as starvation and undernourishment’ (Whyte 2018, 353). Collective capacities of a food system describe an ecology of humans, nonhumans, entities and landscapes that enable and facilitate ‘adaptation to change’ (Whyte 2018, 353). According to Whyte, U.S. settler colonialism severely undermined the Indigenous food systems and thereby jeopardised their collective capacity to adapt and continue. In this framework, food sovereignty is control over the food system capacities necessary for a people to continue and adapt. For example, the collective continuity of the Karuk people in Northern California and parts of Oregon revolves around salmon ecologies – ‘without salmon there is no treaty’ (2018, 363). Yet, the interventions of settler-colonial governance has jeopardised these ecologies through various activities and laws, such as mining and outlawing traditional fishing methods (2018, 360). Whyte argues that the ‘[v]iolations of food sovereignty are one strategy of colonial societies . . . to undermine Indigenous collective continuance in Indigenous peoples’ own homelands’ (2018, 347).

Food Secure Canada is an organisation attempting to incorporate an Indigenous food sovereignty perspective into its approach. It introduced a seventh pillar to La Via Campesina’s six pillars of food sovereignty (discussed in chapter 3), which is ‘food is sacred’.² This pillar came via extensive consultation with Indigenous leaders, who described food as ‘intrinsic to who we are as persons and as peoples’ (Kneen 2012, 4). This seventh pillar is designed to account for past injustices and the present importance of Indigenous foodways in Canada. Cathleen Kneen, former chair of Food Secure Canada, outlines this pillar as helping to establish Indigenous food sovereignty by acknowledging Canadian Indigenous peoples’ belief in ‘the essential relationships between human beings and the natural elements, including all the other creatures’. Furthermore, it ‘means that those who provide food must be seen as central to the food system, it must be shared with everyone, and of course it cannot be commodified’ (Kneen 2012, 4).

Indigenous food sovereignty is not necessarily just for Indigenous peoples. According to Daigle, Indigenous food sovereignty is a space for solidarity and collective action among diverse actors. Daigle makes a crucial point regarding the scale of resistances. That is, ‘everyday acts of resurgence’ can be cultivated over time to open up ‘renewed possibilities for negotiations, engagements, power sharing and solidarity building amongst diverse sovereign actors and institutions at multiple levels’ (2017, 5–6). Small and everyday acts can develop over time into something that has a more widespread effect. However, such acts can be stunted and never proceed further than symbolism. This leads Daigle to ask a related question that appears

throughout this literature, and has been a focus of this book: ‘How might well-intentioned settler food activists impede Indigenous efforts for land reclamations and self-determination?’ (Daigle 2017, 16).

There has not been significant scholarly attention to Indigenous food sovereignty in Australia. A notable exception is Zane Ma Rhea (2016). Ma Rhea discusses Indigenous food sovereignty in the context of debates about an Australian national cuisine and ecological concerns with industrialised agriculture. Ma Rhea suggests that Indigenous food sovereignty could achieve three interrelated goals: 1) retrieve Indigenous food practices and incorporate them into a uniquely Australian cuisine; 2) develop an Indigenous food industry that serves the material and cultural interests of Indigenous communities; and 3) reintroduce food practices that are more suited to the Australian environment and do not exacerbate ecological damage (2016, 180ff). For this to be achieved, the nation must ‘acknowledge Indigenous Australians’ loss of food sovereignty’ as a result of colonisation and recognise the value and importance of Indigenous foodways for ‘Indigenous and non-Indigenous populations of Australia’ (2016, 182). Ma Rhea’s work on Indigenous food sovereignty in Australia will be discussed further below.

The AFSA also recently has moved toward exploring the relationship between Indigenous food practices and food sovereignty by running workshops with Bruce Pascoe and issuing statements regarding constitutional reform. In concluding its press release following the rejection of the Uluru Statement, the AFSA ‘implore the parliament to revisit its decisions, and to begin implementation of the recommendations this historic report and statement’ (National Committee 2017). However, there are things that the AFSA is doing in relation to Indigenous sovereignty that do not rely on the State. Following a series of public forums, the AFSA sought to incorporate Indigenous food sovereignty into the second edition of the *People’s Food Plan* (Parfitt et al. 2013). In addition to the concerns raised in the earlier version (discussed in chapter 5), the revised version states that ‘supporting a return to Indigenous food sovereignty’ is also a step toward achieving a ‘sustainable transformation of the current corporate food system’ (Parfitt et al. 2013, 10). However, it is also acknowledged that further work is needed ‘as regards the goals and proposed actions and engagements with the Indigenous population’ (Parfitt et al. 2013, 10).

In a new chapter – ‘Food Sovereignty for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples’ – the AFSA suggests that the loss of biodiversity and hunting rights are key issues facing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples (Parfitt et al. 2013, 21). The widespread decline and extinction of mammals, birds, frogs and plant species since colonisation are said to have undermined Indigenous food sovereignty in Australia (Parfitt et al. 2013, 21). Furthermore,

the current food system exacerbates the situation by trucking and flying food in from 'interstate markets and sold via retail outlets at vastly unaffordable prices' (Parfitt et al. 2013, 22). Solutions include 'supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders to have access to their traditional hunting and gathering practices' as well as programs on 'food planning and education around remote Indigenous gardens which reduces the reliance on costly foods from distant locations' (Parfitt et al. 2013, 22). The chapter concludes by stating that government policies and NGOs are dominated by "'white fella" thinking' and that a 'food sovereignty approach puts Aboriginal people at the centre of the decision making process and enables grassroots approach to food production and security' (Parfitt et al. 2013, 22).

The inclusion of this chapter in the *People's Food Plan* is an important development on the first version, which did not acknowledge the devastating effects of colonisation in Australia. However, like some of the literature on Indigenous food sovereignty in other settler-colonial contexts, there is an overwhelming focus on traditional Indigenous food practices and remote communities. Certainly, these are important issues. The capacity for Indigenous people in remote communities to hunt traditional foods and gather bush tucker is crucial for well-being and connection to country (Johnston et al. 2007). Likewise, the food insecurity faced by Indigenous peoples living in remote areas is a pressing public health concern (Browne, Hayes and Gleeson 2014). However, conceiving Indigenous food sovereignty as primarily concerned with traditional practices and remote communities relies on a rather narrow conception of indigeneity. This conception mirrors the settler-colonial imaginary that 'authentic' Indigenous people live 'out there' in the bush and that 'authentic' Indigenous culture is static.

Yin Paradies argues that narrow constructions of indigeneity can alienate individuals and fragment communities, particularly those living in urban contexts (2016, 25). Paradies contends that ideas of 'unique spirituality', 'relationship to land', 'Indigenous look' are 'fantasies of Indigeneity' (2016, 26–28). The expectation for Indigenous people to perform these identities does not account for heterogeneous experiences of 'actual Indigenous people who, by adapting and changing, have survived colonialism while unavoidably shedding their pristine primeval identity' (Paradies 2016, 28). Furthermore, narrowly constructed Indigenous identities can be used by the state in 'native title law' that recognises 'prior sovereignty only for those Indigenous people' who can prove continuing connection to traditional ways of life (Paradies 2016, 28). For many Indigenous people, even if they desire to live on country and eat traditional foods, the effects of colonisation and government policies of protectionism and assimilation mean that they no longer have the language, tribal connection or knowledge to engage in such practices (Paradies 2016, 25). Likewise, Ma Rhea observes that 'many Indigenous people know

little about such foods and no longer have access to their traditional food sources' (2016, 202). Paradies suggests that

we free Indigeneity from 'identity straitjackets' and recognize that, although the poor and the rich Indigene, the cultural reviver and the quintessential cosmopolitan, the fair, the dark, the good, the bad, and the disinterested may have little in common, they are nonetheless all equally but variously Indigenous. (2016, 30)

Adopting a broader and more inclusive definition of indigeneity has important implications for Indigenous food sovereignty. It is no longer only a matter of traditional foodways and remote living, but also includes the urban dweller, the gastronome, the peri-urban agrarian and the traditional revivalists. As argued in chapter 4, alternative food discourses need to give greater attention to dispossession and race in regional, peri-urban and urban areas. These are spaces that are heavily populated and have been physically transformed by settler colonialism. This is a call to unsettle the spaces that are most settled.

What does Indigenous food sovereignty look like in the Macedon Ranges region of Victoria or the Central Tablelands in New South Wales where a lot of regenerative agriculture and alternative food producers operate? Importantly, this is not only a question for producers, but also eaters. As discussed in chapter 5, if eating is an agricultural act, and agriculture is entwined with colonial dispossession, then eaters also have a responsibility to attend to this history. What does Indigenous food sovereignty look like in the urban farms and gardens of inner-city Melbourne, Sydney, Brisbane or Perth? What does Indigenous food sovereignty look like in our kitchens, restaurants and supermarket aisles? Or to borrow a question from Daigle, 'what do everyday practices of responsibility and accountability look like for settler food actors as they live and work on contested and occupied Indigenous lands?' (2017, 16).

POSSIBILITIES AND DANGERS

Joel Salatin, a globally prominent voice among small-scale farmers, famously described himself as a 'Christian-conservative-libertarian-environmentalist-lunatic'. Like Salatin, those engaged in small-scale farming and food production occupy an ambiguous place in the Australian social and political landscape. They are environmentalists, yet they do not seek to preserve or protect wilderness from human control. They are animal welfare advocates, yet many breed, slaughter and sell animals and animal products. They critique agri-capitalists, yet many are focused on creating and accessing new markets

to sell high-quality artisanal goods. I am not suggesting that these are contradictions, but tensions within a diverse group of people that at times can tear and fray. See, for example, the recent debates about whether or not Joel Salatin is a climate change sceptic and how this debate brings to the surface many other tensions around science, politics, theology and morality (Readfearn 2017). Considering the nuanced objectives and goals of small-scale regenerative agriculture, it is unsurprising that those engaged in these practices have unpredictable political allegiances. Likewise, the potential relationship between small-scale farmers and Indigenous groups will be unpredictable.

In their edited collection *Unstable Relations: Indigenous People and Environmentalism in Contemporary Australia*, Eve Vincent and Timothy Neale describe Indigenous-environmentalist relations as ‘persistently unstable’ (2016, 3). By that they mean the interests of environmentalists and Indigenous communities are diverse and continually changing via internal and external forces. As such, it is naive to assume a natural affinity between environmentalist projects protecting certain ecosystems or landscapes and Indigenous communities’ desire to have access and use of their traditional lands. Marcia Langton, for example, has been a vocal critic of environmentalists interfering with remote Indigenous communities who negotiate and work with mining companies (2013). However, it is equally naive to assume animosity and discord (Ritter 2014, 10).

Alternative food practitioners and advocates are not environmentalists in the sense discussed by the contributors to Vincent and Neale’s volume. However, they do have a comparable unstable relationship with Indigenous groups as well as the potential for creating something new and transformative. Vincent and Neale contend that ‘encounters between environmentalists and Indigenous people might prove profoundly transformative for all involved’ (2016, 5). Yet, they caution that these encounters ‘must be understood as both unequal and unstable’ (Vincent and Neale 2016, 5). It is imperative, therefore, that there be the moral bond of dialogue that fosters humble listening and serious play. Tony Birch, a contributor to the edition, contends that ‘new conversations, framed through humility, are required to shake Western discourses from a sense of arrogance and apathy’ (2016, 360). These new conversations will need to reject the view of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures as static (Hemming and Rigney 2008), or the ‘new noble savage’ who can only exist as caretakers of wilderness (Langton 2013).

Unfortunately, a number of contemporary examples of Indigenous-settler relations over food continue the logic of colonial exploitation, undermine Indigenous control over their foodways and characterise Indigenous peoples as ‘noble savages’ – for example, biopiracy and theft of the intellectual property regarding Indigenous knowledge of medicinal plants and foods (Watson

2007, 18; Ma Rhea 2016, 193, 199; Bosse 2016). Related to biopiracy is the commercialisation of 'native foods' or 'bush tukka' without the involvement, respect or benefit of Indigenous people or communities (Craw 2012). In recent years, guidelines have been developed for ethical engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in relation to research, industry and enterprises involving bush foods (Merne Altyerre-ipenhe Reference Group, Dougals and Walsh 2011). However, these guidelines are not enforceable and not followed by many commercial operations. A further example of negative Indigenous-settler interactions over food is the rise of nutritional primitivism in health-food movements (Gressier 2017; Knight 2015; Loyer 2016). The paleo diet, for example, claims that the human 'species took a wrong turn at the advent of agriculture' and seeks to re-create a diet based on 'politically problematic, and often inaccurate, imaginaries of both an ancestral past, and contemporary indigenous peoples' (Gressier 2017, 11). Ma Rhea also observes a 'growing niche marketability' of Indigenous foods as 'clean foods' that 'satisf[y] the health conscious' (2012, 23). In addition to the concerns around the commercialisation of Indigenous foods, there is something disquieting about high-end health-food companies marketing these products based on racialized views of Indigenous food and peoples.

These are examples of the undermining of Indigenous control over their food, knowledges and imagery. There are significant parallels to the scandals and general exploitation in the art world. In 2003 Richard Bell won the twentieth National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Arts Award with his entry 'Aboriginal Art: It's a White Thing'. Bell wrote an accompanying essay in which he argued, 'Aboriginal Art has become a product of the times. A commodity. The result of a concerted and sustained marketing strategy, albeit, one that has been loose and uncoordinated' (2002). Bell suggested that this industry does not serve the interests of Aboriginal people or artists who are Aboriginal as the 'key players in that industry are not Aboriginal. They are mostly White people' (2002). He concludes in saying, 'It is extremely doubtful whether Aboriginal People in Australia will ever be able to regain control of this important part of our culture. Obstacles and barriers have been cruelly and thoughtfully placed to deprive us of an equitable future' (Bell 2002). Similar questions could be posed to the Indigenous food industry: Who benefits? Who has control? To borrow Bell's provocation, is Aboriginal food a white thing? There is a real danger that Bell's critique could be applied to so-called progressive engagement with Indigenous foodways. Like in the art world, there needs to be greater oversight over the conditions under which native foods are produced and whether the sales and profits from these products and images benefit local Indigenous communities. This gives a form of sovereignty over the use of products and images to represent Indigenous communities.

Notwithstanding these negative examples of Indigenous-settler interactions over food, there are also more positive and socially engaged ways that encounters over food take place. Not all of these cases use the language of food sovereignty. However, as Desmarais and Wittman observe in Canada, ‘communities might not be using the language of food sovereignty but in fact are engaged in initiatives that fit within a food sovereignty framework’ (2014, 1157). That is, they are seeking to take control of their own food systems. There is a long history of Indigenous Australians seeking to take control of their food systems, despite opposition and violence from colonial governments and settlers. A prominent example is Coranderrk, an Aboriginal reserve near Healesville, Victoria (Cruickshank and Grimshaw 2015). During the 1860s, the residents in this reserve developed a productive farm and had some control over their lives (Furphy 2015, 97). However, by the 1870s a series of bureaucratic and economic interventions undermined the little autonomy they had, and the reserve was to be abandoned. In the midst of this turmoil, William Barak, the leader of the community at Coranderrk, petitioned the government to allow his people to manage the farm themselves (Furphy 2015, 108). Barak famously stated, ‘we will show the country that the station could self support itself’ (Nanni and James 2013). This is arguably one of the first declarations of Indigenous sovereignty or self-rule within the confines of settler-colonial governance, and it is intimately tied to food production and small-scale cultivation. Although Coranderrk is a rich and important historical case that could be examined in much greater detail for its relevance to Indigenous food sovereignty, instead I will point briefly to some recent forms of Indigenous food sovereignty in remote, regional and urban contexts.

Although Langton’s *Boyer Lectures* analysis is unfairly dismissive of environmental concerns, her argument that Aboriginal peoples need to be able to control resources is important (2013). Likewise, Pascoe’s attempt to correct the historical record regarding Indigenous food practices leads him toward rethinking the status quo of Australia’s agro-economy and the place of Indigenous peoples and knowledges. He states, ‘[i]f we can reform our view of how Aboriginal people were managing the national economy prior to colonisation, it could lead us to reform the ways we currently use resources and care for the land’ (2015a, 146). Yet, this should not just be in remote and regional areas, but in the cities and populated regions in the southeast of Australia. However, as Zane Ma Rhea observes, the colonial legacy of dispossession makes it ‘extremely complicated, retrospectively, to reinstate Aboriginal rights to food security to the fullest expression without disrupting the food security preferences of the descendants of the colonizing population of Victoria’ (2012, 18). This may be so, and the rights of descendants are protected by law, but as Ritter suggests, as ‘a matter of

normative preference, environmentalists (and I would add alternative food activists) should respect Indigenous peoples' right as traditional owners to make deals, particularly given the widespread statutory absence of any ability to veto development' (Ritter 2014, 8).

There are a number of different food projects in remote regions. For example, horticultural and cooking programs have been used in remote schools to improve child health outcomes and reduce costs associated with purchasing food, as well as develop confidence in growing and preparing food (Hume, O'Dea and Brimblecombe 2013). There also have been projects, such as the Remote Indigenous Gardens Network, which seek to help people grow native, as well as introduced, fruits and vegetables for commercial and private use. The objective of the network is 'to support local food production in and by remote Indigenous communities for food security, better health, wealth and wellbeing' (Remote Indigenous Gardens Network 2018). The network also assists in sharing knowledge, research development and advocacy. Importantly, these projects are not just about retrieving or preserving culture, but also economic and material security. These are just two examples of the many different groups and organisations that may not necessarily use the concept 'food sovereignty' but are seeking to strengthen the control of Aboriginal and Torres Strait peoples over their food systems.

As in the remote context, there are many different cases in regional Australia of practices that could be viewed as examples of Indigenous food sovereignty. Using crowd-funding, Pascoe has been working at revitalising certain seeds and plants that were part of Indigenous foodways. Pascoe and his colleagues have 'growing murnong or yam daisy (*Microseris lanceolata*), cumbungi (bulrush), warrigal greens, lilies and orchids. Experiments have begun with beverages made from daisy bush and saltbush and banksia flowers' (Pascoe 2015b). He also describes the importance of working with local elders, which 'allows us to induct the young Yuin people in Lore. The story of the ground and climate and plants has an historical cultural foundation which is intrinsic to the care of country' (2015b). This is not the only case of either revitalising projects or practices that continue Indigenous foodways in regional areas. The point is, however, that there are Indigenous food procurement practices already in regional areas, and that more could be possible if alternative food practitioners and regenerative farmers are able to enter into sincere dialogue and negotiations with elders and community leaders.

Finally, the urban context is also an important space for the emergence of Indigenous food sovereignty. A growing number of Indigenous cafes and celebrity chefs are exposing urban residents to Indigenous cuisine and food practices. Chefs such as Clayton Donovan and Mark Olive and cooking television shows such as *Kriol Kitchen* are significant in challenging stereotypes

and demonstrating an Indigenous-controlled representation of food cultures. Although much more work is needed, especially in relation to mutual collaborations and reclaiming spaces for Indigenous people, these urban practices are an important step towards challenging perceptions that Indigenous food and indigeneity is something that happens in remote areas.

CONCLUSION

In listening to Indigenous voices and making space for meaningful dialogue, new forms of engagement can unfold. These forms of engagement do not need to be formalised earnest exchanges or reliant on the State. Rather, they can be joyful and everyday. Bignall argues that the ‘starting point for postcolonial engagement is found by looking for examples of positive experience . . . of social connection’ (2010b, 235). Although there is a ‘majoritarian muddle of violence and hostility’, Bignall argues ‘there also exist minor modes of positive social engagement, quotidian acts of kindness, and exemplary practices of genuine care and concern that join participating bodies in mutual experience of joy’ (2010b, 235). Of course, such mutual experience of joy is predicated on the moral bond of the playful dialogue discussed above. If one participant does not commit to the play of the exchange, then rather than joy there will be a continuation and reinforcement of pain, anger and frustrations.

Food can be a site for such joyful engagements that negotiate difference and build new forms of social relations. Like the history of creative engagements and negotiations of Indigenous peoples with non-Indigenous settlers, perhaps food and land can be caught in the ‘unsettling winds first stirred by the bark petitions’, which ‘have continued to blow through the corridors of Settler institutions’ (Brigg and Maddison 2011, 4). Rather than opposing food sovereignty to Indigenous sovereignty, is it possible for a shared interest in food to provide a new and interesting avenue to decolonise and unsettle the nation–state and the industrial food system that is intimately tied to that state?

A potential catalyst for these transformative relations is climate change. If climate change is forcing us to critically rethink land use and how we design cities, as per the discussion in chapter 4, then we also need to use this as an opportunity to rethink the role of Indigenous land management, food practices and creative industries. Birch, and others such as Muir (2014), Flannery and Massy, notes ‘the usurpation of land not suited for wide-acre agricultural farming had led not only to the appropriation of Indigenous land, but also the destruction of local ecologies and the wasteful use of natural resources such as water and soil’ (Birch 2016, 361). He continues in stating that we need ‘equitable dialogue’ and to ‘find new ways and places to talk . . .

unless cultural and intellectual exchange is genuinely equitable, strategies for dealing with climate change within the wider Australian community will remain limited' (Birch 2016, 363). Likewise, Ma Rhea contends that given the concerns raised about European farming practices and the observable negative impacts in Victoria, 'it is important that the Aboriginal claim to country is acknowledged, ensuring that they are "at the table" by right and also in order that their ecological philosophies be part of any future considerations about food security in Victoria' (2012, 24). However, as discussed in chapter 4, it is not enough to invite Indigenous peoples to 'the table'. To continue the metaphor, they need to be involved in setting the table and designing the menu. That is, to be part of setting the terms and conditions of agreements, negotiations and collective actions. Of course, this requires non-Indigenous Australians to acknowledge the unequal relations of power and to willingly forgo some of the legal rights and privileges they have been granted by the colonial settler-state.

As discussed in the previous chapter regarding the tactical use of rights, the path forward does not necessarily rely on the government (as in the State), but can work within and against the governmental logics that seek to conduct, guide and administer life. Obviously, the State is involved in these processes, but it does not fully define or control them. As Birch writes in relation to climate change, '[s]olutions will not come from a reliance on government. In fact, progress on climate change will remain stifled if governments dominate discussions' (2016, 376–75). Food, the environment and climate change provide crucial sites for mutual negotiation among individuals and collectives. If a true dialogue is entered into, then new forms of engagement and governance can be developed. However, as Daryle Rigney and Steve Hemming warn, 'disengagement from State mechanisms is not a choice in settler societies where the relationship between Indigenous peoples and the State continues to be constructed and mediated in multiple political, economic, social and educational environments' (2014, 541). The State cannot be completely avoided, especially not by communities whose lives, bodies, practices and knowledges are overdetermined by the State. As such, the relations fostered via joyful engagements in nongovernment and civil societies contexts need to find ways to reshape and resist the State. Cutting off the king's head may not be possible, but following Watson's analysis discussed in the previous chapter, perhaps it can be deflated. Indigenous food sovereignty that enables Indigenous control, enjoyment and use of their foodways is one avenue that can be both joyful and also deflationary by showing the country, showing agribusiness, and showing the supermarkets that they cannot control all aspects of the food system and what foods people choose to procure, prepare and eat together.

NOTES

1. Gordon made these comments in the context of panel discussion on 'Justice and the Decolonization of Knowledge' at the Australasian Society for Continental Philosophy conference, University of Tasmania (La Caze et al. 2017).
2. I thank Alana Mann for drawing my attention to this resource.

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