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2017

# The End(s) of Freeganism and the Cultural Production of Food Waste

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## Recommended Citation

Cooks, Leda M., "The End(s) of Freeganism and the Cultural Production of Food Waste" (2017). *Perma/Culture: Imagining Alternatives in an Age of Crisis*. 54.

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## The End(s) of Freeganism and the Cultural Production of Food Waste.

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In Jonathon Miles 2013 novel *Want Not*, Crabtree, an older ex-inmate out on parole whose income comes from collecting cans from dumpsters/bins confronts Talmadge, a young Freegan picking out his next meal from a nearby dumpster. Maddened by the ridiculous scene of a seemingly well-off able-bodied white man picking produce out of the trash, Crabtree asks: “The fuck you *doing?*. . . You eating from the trash?” [emphasis original] (2013, 9). Talmadge says that yes, yes he is and that the excesses of capital are ruining society: people are starving while supermarkets dump perfectly good food. Crabtree responds that Talmadge is crazy if he thinks anything is changed by going through the garbage. Crabtree was with Bobby Seals and the Panthers, really making a difference, “but this shit. . . this shit is worthless man. You ain’t even got a right” (10). Talmadge offers to share his finds, but the frustrated can collector refuses him, preferring to collect cans for cash and to buy a meal where civilized people eat. Although the argument is framed in rather comical fashion, with Crabtree finding a used condom amidst Talmadge's "dinner," the underlying values (of autonomy, justice, choice, and capitalism) belie the tensions between symbolism and materialism of food and waste.

Although the movement has been around in various forms for many decades, Freeganism, and the Freegan lifestyle gained in notoriety in the US, UK, and Australia in the mid 2000s (Corliss 2014). Freegans (a term that combines “free” and “vegan”) are dedicated to participating as little as possible in a capitalist economy, choosing instead to forage and salvage unused or wasted consumer goods as a means of sustenance. According to Nguyen, Chen and Mukherjee, “Freeganism is a nexus of anti-consumerist and sustainability discourses” (2013, 1). In the mid 2000's Freegans brought visibility to the issue of food waste, revealing the diseases of capitalism through exposing its excesses at sites of disposal. While several ethnographic (e.g., Barnard 2016; Gross 2009; Corliss 2014), legal (e.g., Thomas 2010), medical (Tibetts 2013) and journalistic accounts (e.g., Friedman 2012) have worked to explain the movement's history, principles, members and practices, none have explored how Freegan discourses and practices

function in relation to newer movements for food waste and recovery. Such a comparison is useful, in order to examine both the sustainability of radical food movements and the ways such movements contribute to and are coopted by more popular movements for reducing and recovering food waste. This chapter looks at the discursive construction of Freeganism in academic and popular media coverage and in light of the more recent and widespread food waste and recovery movement. Building on the work of critical geographers, sociologists and other cultural studies scholars, the chapter explores the ways spaces and places for food, waste and bodies intersect in these movements' discourses, performances, and media coverage thereof.

Freeganism highlights ethical conundrums of participation in capitalist systems and social justice issues of autonomy over food choice. Freegans worry over a sustainable food system while utilizing the "spoils" of currently wasteful practices. Most Freegans are white, in their 20's to early 30's, well-educated, and middle and upper class (Barnard 2016), although certainly this profile does not represent all who choose to be part of the movement (Corliss 2014). By the end of the first decade of the 21st century, Freeganism gained a foothold in the US, UK, Canada and Australia, and in smaller numbers in Scandinavia, other parts of the EU, Brazil, Argentina, South Korea (Dettwyler 2011) and Japan ([japaninc.com](http://japaninc.com) 2007). Despite such recent growth, there is little evidence online or in news coverage that the groups still exist in all but the US, UK and Australia, and in these countries numbers have dwindled along with coverage of the movement (Barnard 2016). There are many reasons why Freeganism is losing members and popular support, not least of which are: the difficulties of adhering to Freegan principles in a sustainable manner; the transient and transitional status of many members; and, as this paper documents, the rise of the food waste and recovery movement and subsequent increased regulation of informal waste economies (Gille 2012; O'Brien 2012).

Revisiting the social history of trash (Strasser 1999), in this chapter I am interested in how, in media and scholarly reports, Freegans and their dumpsters have become spaces for an (anti?) capitalist politics of visibility and choice (resisting corporate waste) while the invisibility of hunger and lack of choice that often necessitates trash picking has been downplayed. The chapter then explores the ways the alternative food movement led to more effort toward food justice, opening avenues for large scale efforts to bring attention to food waste and recovery in the 2010's

(Bloom 2010; Stuart 2009). As news stories about Freegans waned, coverage of food waste grew exponentially (Cooks 2016). In such coverage, gone was the mention of corporate greed and its excesses, and of dumpster diving as (disgusting) spectacle; in its place are stories of hunger amidst a land of excess, where our oversupply of unused food should not be decreased, but might be redistributed to feed those in need.

The food recovery movement has focused on making the recovery of waste both part of the green economy and a solution for hunger. Rather than presuming ready-made connections between food waste reduction and social justice, or between environmental and food insecurity movements, this chapter asks how the environmental and social justice goals and means to those goals have been constructed both in the Freegan movement and the later food recovery movement. To do so, I look to the ways the movements have been described in scholarly and popular texts and performances. Although space limitations preclude an in-depth textual analysis, several paradoxes and tensions readily emerge in this analysis of the politics of in/visibility of waste and the food movement in the early part of the 21st century. To conclude, the chapter asks what is lost and what is gained when a more radical movement, its spaces and ideologies, is replaced by an ethics of moral responsibility in a neoliberal society?

### Food = Waste

This simple fact--that food and waste necessarily coexist--has been obscured in modern society for seemingly logical, but mostly political, economic, and social reasons. As food became part of a market economy, new means of valuation meant the separation of food from that which was less desired or could not be eaten. The positive valuing of matter constituted as food coincided with the negative valuing of waste as civilized societies developed (Mennell 1997; Strasser, 1999). Correspondingly, those higher in status in society were identified as such through the distance they could maintain between an aesthetics of consumption and the excess waste (viscera, labor etc.) that made such consumption possible. This meant, too, that the separation of food from waste was always symbolic as well as material: everyone needed to eat to survive, and so lesser gradations of food value aligned with lesser status groups. Although increasingly hidden from larger society, waste remained necessary to social production and indeed to survival. Food

waste was accorded different values in this hidden economy (Gille 2012), depending on access and choice over what was left over.

Martin O'Brien observes that "waste exhibits fundamental social political and economic vitality: any and all waste is a fundamental component of social organization that references political and economic interests, establishes (and disrupts) social relations and inspires technological development and bureaucratic regulation" (2012, 195). As societies developed and differentiated economies for food and for waste, so too valuations were made about spaces for consumption of food and for its disposal. That which was left over, no longer or never part of the labor of producing food, was designated for other spaces, to be picked up and reevaluated and designated once again. The regulation of spaces for disposal alluded to by O'Brien, also speaks to the regulation of spaces for those less valued in society. Throughout the development of "civilized" society, association with and proximity to sites of disposal, whether through employment (sorting and hauling waste), occupation (scavenging for food), or residence, has meant social invisibility, or visibility as an abject/object in need of charity. Nonetheless, such spatial and social designations can be politically and economically useful, both for their "hiddenness" (e.g., alternative il/legal economies) and for their potential for disruption, as first the homesteaders and later the Freegan movement amply demonstrated with varying degrees of success (Gross 2009) .

### **Freeganism: An anti/social movement?**

Freegans assert one main principle that guided their practices: the belief that Capitalism is ruining society, and that the planet and its people are suffering. Freegans have vowed to fight back, but how they do so has been left fairly open-ended and varies individually and among groups. For these reasons, Freeganism's status as a social movement is also debatable, with some scholars (Barnard 2011, 2016) calling it a New Social Movement, others calling it an anti-consumerist or sustainability movement (Corliss, 2014; Nguyen et al., 2013; Thomson 2016) and many others simply calling it a lifestyle, philosophy or set of practices (*Oprah Winfrey Show* 2008). While citing humankind's history of hunting, gathering, and scavenging, many scholarly accounts of Freeganism trace the movement's beginnings to "the Freegan Manifesto," a pamphlet and call to action originally written by Against Me! drummer Warren Oakes in 1999. The

Manifesto emerged in the contexts of the 1999 WTO Seattle protests and over globalization, multinationals, free trade agreements, and it built on the momentum among younger people to take collective action against inequities perpetuated through these policies and institutions. In 2005, the Manifesto was posted on the home page of [freegan.info](http://freegan.info) (the primary source for information about the Freegan movement). It is divided into sections explaining why Freeganism is an important activist movement against consumerism, its relationship to Veganism, and how to participate in Freegan activities. As a call to action, it is mostly focused on interventions at the individual level, though it (and presumably Freegans) espouses community, humanitarian and environmental ethics. The manifesto proposes a series of principles and actions that demonstrate a commitment to sustainability, interrupting capitalism and consumerism through il/legal activities, and discovering a life worth living apart from dehumanizing systems. Most all suggestions deal with food and its waste. While promoting activities such as dumpster diving and living off the grid, the manifesto encourages people to quit their jobs, and to stop wasting energy and commodities. Smaller steps and interruptions of business as usual are also encouraged, such as shoplifting, employee theft, foraging/ gardening, home canning and brewing, and the reuse of discarded goods. Although Freegans are often also Vegans, the section on Veganism clearly differentiates the two. Vegans are concerned first and foremost with boycotting and/or not eating animals or any animal products, while Freegans, the Manifesto states, boycott all products that are ruining people and the environment.

Freegan ideals embodied many anti-capitalist philosophers' critiques of waste as both expenditure of labor in the service of (privileged) others and as the excess necessary to the production of surplus commodities that drives those who have and divides them from those who have not. Thorstein Veblen (1899) discussed the dualities of waste in capitalist society: positive waste is conspicuous and conspicuously consumed in the form of leisure while negative waste is associated with matter not useful to capital. Ironically, even as Freegans tried to intervene in these dualities of waste in a consumer-driven society, they did so from a position of choice and racial (Freegans of Color? 2008) and economic privilege, often while holding steady jobs and owning property of the sort to which many hungry people have no access. Some Freegans acknowledged this contradiction (Barnard 2016) but felt strongly that any action to disrupt

capitalism as usual benefits hungry people and the environment. Freeganism also has defined itself in relation to other radical and counter cultural movements, namely anarchism: a rejection of governmental authority. Anarchist Freegans that "homestead" on abandoned property, do not have paying jobs or receive money, and scavenge or steal for all their personal needs may be seen as more ethically in line with Freegan philosophy but tend to live on the margins socially and legally and thus are less likely to be a visible part of the movement.

Other influences on the Manifesto were the counter-cuisine and punk movements of the 60's and 70's that fought the commodification and industrialization of food through growing, canning, and foraging and buying healthier but marginalized foods (Gross 2009; Corliss 2014). The fight against hegemony, for these movements, was enacted through diet. Mass production and consumption was making our bodies docile and accepting of the processed and fast food increasingly fed to them symbolically through the media and materially available in every expanding market. These movements celebrated the body as a site of (healthy) resistance through choosing to eat home grown and unprocessed food made with healthy ingredients. Most Freegans, however, prioritized anti-capitalism: thus, procurement of (any) wasted food was prized over any inherent nutritional or environmental value. Corliss observes that, "no matter what the food is and what it is made of, for a Freegan it holds value because it has been recovered, saved from the ideological grasp of 'waste' " (13). Likewise, Barnard (2016) notes that Freegans aren't just concerned with where food comes from but where it's going. Although sometimes associated with alternative food and food justice movements, such as organic, local and GMO free food, etc., this lack of criteria regarding "taste", nutrition or quality food is one of several practices that place Freeganism at the fringe of the alternative food movements.

These radical beliefs and practices contributed to Freegan notoriety by making food waste visible (although often as spectacle) for the mainstream US media audience. In the mid to late 2000's, at its peak, news and academic coverage of the groups mirrored each other in registering Freeganism as spectacle, as a fringe movement focused on food waste whose dumpster diving practices were reported for entertainment value. In a feature called "Living Off Trash" on the Toronto news program *16:9*, Freeganism is described as a remnant of the 1960's anti-globalization movements that advocates not "free love" but free trash. The reporter observed

that, "Freeganism exists not in spite of consumerism but because of it." Such news accounts often focused on "trash tours" (done precisely to attract media and public attention) that invite groups of reporters, newly minted and veteran Freegans to go through curbside trash bags or dumpsters behind high-end supermarkets and restaurants. While this vision of Freeganism often promoted the freshness and (healthy) quality of the food in these high end disposal sites (*New York Post* 2007; *CBS Early Show* 2007), off camera, Freegans generally targeted sites with less public visibility and greatest ease of access. Other media accounts (e.g., *Oprah* 2008; *CBS Early Show*) focused on Freegan anti-consumerist practices even as they noted (without irony) the high educational and financial status of many members. Given the movement's radical goal, to live their lives outside of capitalism, academic analyses of Freegans (Barnard 2011; Corliss 2014; Gross 2009) discuss the inevitable contradictions between living off of capitalism and its excesses while critiquing it: the range of employment, property ownership and income of many Freegans, as well as their primary means of coordinating and publicizing their movement (cell phones and the Internet). Nonetheless, Barnard (2016) argues that the movement exploded in the media (citing 600 stories about [freegan.info](http://freegan.info) by 2009) with groups starting up around the world. While this paper does not dispute the attention garnered by the movement by 2009, it does argue that the coverage was more for the Freegan spectacle of dumpster diving (Lindeman 2012) than the movement's substantive critique of food waste and capitalism.

Freeganism's displacement of bodies and spaces for discard and consumption raises questions about who belongs where and under what conditions. The potential to interrupt capitalism as usual through choosing to consume discarded items is inseparable from the inscriptions of poverty tied to some bodies and not others, implications for the cleanliness and dirtiness of those bodies as well as their un/authorized presence in those spaces. Critical geographers of food (Alkon and Agyeman 2011; Guthman, 2008, 2011; Ramirez 2015; Slocum 2011) have focused scholarly attention on the means through race, ethnicity, gender and class are implicated in alternative and mainstream food spaces. Rather than the straightforward designation of urban, suburban and rural spaces as food deserts/oases or obesogenic/leptogenic environments, these scholars are interested in the various ways social identities are (re)



constituted and represented in these domains. Less studied are the spaces of and for food waste and intersecting dynamics of need, economy, charity and taste.

The Manifesto includes a section on privilege, which states:

We, in America, have so much and so many people all over the world have so little. Why do we have more? Because we're number one! Other folks are literally starving so that we can have fully-stocked shelves at our supermarkets and health food stores. If this concerns you (as it should) you can protest the unbalanced distribution in America and the world by sacrificing some of your privilege and feeding yourself off of the ridiculous excess of food instead of consuming products from that supermarket shelves we are so unjustly privileged to have access to. (freegan.info)

Whether living off trash is a sacrifice of privilege or a demonstration of it is the tension in the argument between Talmadge and Crabtree that opens this paper and underlies definitions of freedom of (individual)choice and autonomy over diet that are basic to neoliberal society. The real problem for Freegans seems to be that the excessive and unlimited choices among commodities benefit an unjust and unsustainable system, and therefore they can reduce their own choices by living off of what is left over. Yet, the tension over the privilege to consume is not just over choice and sacrifice but that we all don't have the same or even nearly similar choices. Still, the movement's overt message: the need to reduce reliance on capital, places it as the more "alternative" of the multitude of alternative food movements to gain national and international attention in recent decades (e.g., "local," "organic," and "slow food" movements).

### **Alternative Food Movements and Food Recovery.**

As alternative food movements have become increasingly central to food politics, less attention has been paid to the discursive problems upon which these movements are constructed and the various solutions proposed. Critics of the term "alternative" in the alternative food movement have long pointed to the cooptation of (local, organic, artisanal) movement ideals by large corporate entities in order to reach better educated and higher economic niches while continuing to produce lesser "quality" industrialized food for the masses (Guthman 2008, 2011; Slocum 2011). This marketing of differentiated tastes and quality also corresponds to social marketing campaigns around issues designed to appeal to different demographics: local and

organic foods are often understood as a priority for well educated, high earning families, while access to any food, and preferably with a wide selection and cheap prices is (often, though not always) the priority for families with less income. The overlap of movement and (social and commodity) marketing "alternatives" have led to often confusing goals and means to those goals. What seems to be common across all goals is that we all need to eat healthier, yet the means to getting there are often hypocritical and contradictory. Food education and justice movements (and corporate versions of charity events) often emphasize "healthism" (Guthman 2008) and preach the benefits of healthy food and diet to presumably less educated, poorer populations, or those immigrant populations assumed to have an unhealthy diet because "they" don't eat what "we" do. Food sovereignty movements, which emerged precisely over the issue of colonial control over the (national) food chain, have increasing presence in the US at the community level (Broad 2015). Such movements often embrace nutritious food while trying to combat "healthism" and build collectively a sustainable food system that meets community standards for quality and taste. Yet, as Broad (2015) observes, community based food movements for sovereignty are often reliant on large corporate grants for their programs. The ethical assumptions that underlie discourses of food justice and sustainability enhance the image of large corporations through their involvement in local efforts for healthy diets. Community contributions and events by corporations also enhance the image of (their) "good" food while distracting us from the means through which such food is produced and marketed. The intertwining of social and corporate marketing, while beneficial to movements and the corporations that support them, often results in attention to food commodities (whether designated local, artisanal, organic, etc.) and obscures the unjust and unhealthy working conditions and wages across the food chain (Alkon and Agyeman 2011).

Within this suturing of food justice and food marketing, in the last five years attention to food waste has grown to the point of an almost daily news story of excess (Cooks 2016). We are told we eat too much, waste too much, but remarkably don't consume too much. Instead, one simple and markedly ethical solution, is to transfer our waste into the mouths of the hungry. In a December 1, 2014 article in the *Guardian*, Clare Druce argued that food insecurity has become the rallying cry of the food loss movement. As more people have less access to healthy food, tax

incentives and policy efforts are aimed at large corporations, not to get them to reduce production of surplus commodities, but to incentivize redistribution to food banks and shelters. Thus, corporate production and consumerism become part of the solution to both food waste and food security. Another, more recent and increasingly promoted solution is to repurpose food waste into new consumer products. Stories in popular news outlets such as the *New York Times*, *NPR*, *Huffington Post* and the *Washington Post* discuss new technologies that repurpose food waste into everything from plant and animal food to artisanal beers to paper plates.

These start-up businesses often get their funding and endorsements from food and popular celebrities such as Beyoncé, Michael Pollan, Michael Simon and Mario Batali, to name a few (Strom 2016). Tristram Stuart, longtime activist in the global food waste movement, helped to found an artisanal ale company (Hester, 2016). The startups are a win-win for celebrities who can associate their brand with an important social and environmental issue, increase their virtuosity in the public eye, and thus enhance their primary product: their image. Association with the repurposed food products and celebrities that make and use them also increases the social capital of the consumer. The aspects of food waste that capital tries to erase, its imperfections, its decomposing nature, remain invisible. All that remains is the "trace"-- the virtual food waste product-- and the good feeling that results from purchasing and eating ethical and tasty food. Hester (2016) cites food systems researcher Neff who observes, "When you're eating a food that would have been wasted, and tastes perfectly fine, there's no inconvenience to you."

As the stature of food waste as a social and environmental justice issue has grown, so too has its social marketing potential. Much like the local, organic and artisanal movements discussed above, the focus of policy and popular efforts to reduce waste is on food commodities, rather than the processes through which they are produced. The drivers of over production of food include: (1) consumer demand for overstocked displays of perishable, perfect foods, resulting in an over-abundance of perfect looking food that gets thrown out at the end of the day, (2) packaging of multiple fruits and vegetables, rather than selling in bulk, (3) misleading labeling ("sell by", "best by" and "use by" dates) (Milne 2012), and (4) cultural beliefs that discourage eating otherwise edible food. Also in the shadow of the products sold under the

"repurposed" food waste halo is the labor that goes into producing food, whether from food or from its "scraps" or waste. We are told to feel guilty about our excessive eating and our excessively wasting, but not told nearly as much or at all to demand less, rather than more, from the producers of much of our food.

### **Food Waste, Ethics and Affect**

The separation of food and/from waste may be social, historical and political, as this chapter has argued, but the matter of waste is not merely theoretical. The meanings and consequences of waste's construction may be more or less immediate depending on social position, but they are clearly experienced, and so appeals to reduce waste are situated among ethical positions that implicate religious discourses of charity and glutton and capitalist discourses of individualism and consumerism. These reasons for the waste problem largely propel the solutions on offer by food recovery efforts and policies, and so beg further attention. O'Brien (2012) notes that the moral dilemma of waste presents the world as it is and the world as it should be, and this dilemma blames individuals for the present circumstances without examining social structures and political economies. Building from O'Brien's argument, I would argue that, on a discursive level, the constant presentation of this ideal posits a world without waste; where in actuality this world without waste is no world at all. Waste is necessary to society and survival. And excessive waste is destructive to people and our environment. Somewhere between these sentences there are important questions to ask about the goals of activist efforts and how those goals are communicated, as environmental and social sustainability, and as solutions to hunger and waste reduction.

Without dismissing all ethical appeals to reduce waste where they tap into values for sustainability of people and the planet, critical scholars might ask how the framing of the waste problem and its solution re/create binaries and assigns status to those who have taste--who have choice over deciding what is quality food and what to throw away--and those who do not. Where not too long ago in media and academic discourse, dumpster diving was almost exclusively associated with hunger and dumpster divers were objects of pity and/or disgust (Eikenberry and Smith 2005), now food insecurity is tied to food recovery, and reuse can provide an unlimited supply of food aid. Is this the same articulation (Hall 1996) or power dynamics among bodies,

identities and food dressed in new discourse? While it may be argued that the visibility of hunger and the poor's alienation from capital has remained unchanged, or increased, the options for resolving hunger have become more politically and socially regulated via a capitalist system. In this manner, the guilt of wasting may be absolved through (regulated) acts of redistribution and charity, but not through reducing waste at the source: supposedly the primary goal of environmental policy efforts (EPA Food Waste Hierarchy). Other binaries separate (good) food from (bad) waste in popular media, and in scientific and social scientific research on the topic. These bipolarities signal that food must look perfect while waste is flawed, however these flaws are defined; food is clean, while waste is dirty; food is safe, waste is risky and potentially dangerous; food represents taste and quality, while waste is indicated by quantity and potential to satisfy hunger (Cooks 2016). While waste has the potential to become food, its value is predetermined by the commodity status of the food. The Ugly Produce movement (Figuerido, 2016) while noble in its intent to market flawed fruits and vegetables relies on a niche marketing strategy that seems intended to exoticise carrots with two legs, and will continue as long as such items are novelties that boost the progressive consumer's social status. For these reasons too, the edibility of the food/waste is a concern, not only because non-food-like (decomposing) waste is a cultural object of disgust and a potential health danger but also because decomposing food contains no (capital) value.

Uncertainty and risk are an inherent quality of food/ waste, and thus raise the questions both of the visibility and inevitable materiality of food and bodies. Thus, even as this chapter analyzes the social construction of food and waste, it does not deny its material de/composition nor its necessity for social life. Waste is visceral, embodied and primal, and for these reasons those with privilege and capital have developed classifications, institutions, and commodities to distance themselves from it. Yet, we exist in through and because of waste, and its classification as unnecessary and without value also shape current efforts to revalue it to existing systems of production and consumption. These divisions and classifications, created in the separation and positive valuing of food apart from negative valuation of waste perpetuate social inequities, and do further damage to the environment. Such revaluation already exists, and is more present in societies considered underdeveloped, where food status is less dependent on market valuation,

where hunger is a visible part of everyday life, and inequities harder to ignore. But these spaces too are changing, as markets, media and technology connect us all. While I'm wary of romanticizing poverty and waste, I'm curious about the mediating power of capital and its impact on bodies in relation to one another when it comes to a need as basic and universal as food.

We are at a significant juncture in the movement to reduce food waste: between the environmental crisis and concerns for sustainability of our food system and our social crisis of hunger and malnutrition. To value one over the other is taken to be unethical, yet we might ask how these two came to be connected in the first place? Freegans seemed to have asked these questions and their prioritizing of waste as the byproduct of capitalist excess(iveness) speaks to the commoditization of food and resulting inequities between haves and have nots. Disregarding the paradox of living off the very system you critique, Freegans rarely acknowledge that they have the privilege to disavow a system that others might dream of participating in order to live a good life. This, of course, is the tension captured between Talmadge and Crabtree that opened the chapter. Freegans are a metonymic device for both the commodity culture and the privilege attached to acts of resistance to the commoditization of food. If food is a commodity, then hunger too is tied to that commoditization. Crabtree might prefer cash to trash, if someone took the time to ask him. As long as food (and hunger) is commodified, Freeganism is unsustainable as a collective movement for change, and will likely remain at the fringes, as spectacle.

Sharp et al. (2015) observe that the word "alternative" itself raises possibility of different ways of acting, although as many have pointed out, always in reaction to current institutions and their practices. Critical food scholars have acknowledged the ways "quality", "good taste" and health, all accessible through certain forms of material, social and cultural capital, are promulgated and proselytized through the alternative food movement (Guthman 2008; Slocum 2011). Few scholars, if any, have looked at the ways such judgements are attributed, or not, to food waste and correspondingly, those who reuse it or for whom (e.g., aid recipients) it is recovered. Although advocacy for eating any food (waste) seems dubious at best, this nonjudgmental aspect of Freeganism provides an opening for an alternative food system that refuses to link judgements of taste and quality to social and cultural capital. It is this aspect of Freeganism that has all but disappeared in current efforts to reduce and recover food waste. What

if we all (not just those forced to do so) widened the possibilities for our diet to include food that appears to be, and is, imperfect? What if we were able to divorce--or at least temporarily uncouple--such food from an aesthetics of (capital) consumption and instead placed value on production or even, in the case of foraging, on food's unplanned or "accidental" creation. What would such valued food look like? What qualities become important?

Also, and acknowledging that we all are embodied in different ways in relation to social and cultural capital, what if we openly practiced thrift in buying and preserving food? Thrift is not unproblematic in its differential attribution to the bodies that perform it (Watson and Meah 2012) but, practiced collectively, might seek reduction and reuse, rather than simply cheaper commodities. Thrift is not a rejection of capital, but exists in tenuous relation to it. Thrift is (sometimes) attributed to those bodies who have social capital and poverty to those who do not, but as conspicuous consumption (Verblen 1899) has increased and become normalized, conspicuous thrift is to be hidden or disavowed if social status is to be maintained. If we can begin to view food waste as embodied and affective rather than simply disembodied quantities to be donated or commoditized (though I do not dismiss these among a range of options) we can open new and more sustainable possibilities for our food system, one in which food and waste are both inseparable and a necessity for life.

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